

Introduction: Putting It in Perspective

In this book, we invite you to be intentional about the legacy you will leave behind. The connectedness you build now with your colleagues and your network of learners will be long remembered by your staff. When we as professionals take the time to consider our legacy, our daily decisions alter slightly; they become deeper—a bit more intentional.

How do leaders develop stronger connections with their staff, students, and larger school community? Leaders don't always have the time to sit and ponder the countless decisions they are daily responsible for or to ponder whether those decisions build stronger connections or higher walls between them and the rest of their school community. What concerns us is that there are leaders who make decisions based on emotions over evidence. *Leading With Intention: How School Leaders Can Unlock Deeper Collaboration and Drive Results* is focused on helping leaders and teachers understand their thinking as educators, develop human interconnectedness as a school community, and engage in a reciprocal transfer of learning. This is a practical book, filled with research, content, stories, and places to process information, and it's focused on how we think, the choices we make when it comes to initiatives, and how we develop deeper academic and social-emotional connections with those with whom we work.

Leaders and teachers need time to process what they do, how they do it, and whom they do it with in order to move forward in positive ways to influence adult and student learning. This book will provide the space to process the information for those educators who want to put in the time.

Leaders and teachers need to understand who they are as learners. In *Leading With Intention*, we ask two fundamental questions:

- How do we, as leaders and teachers, engage in actions that have a positive impact on students?
- How do we, as teachers and leaders, evaluate our own impact?

Our experience has taught us that the most effective way to approach these questions is through stories. Research shows that stories can have a powerful impact on how we learn and how we engage with the learning. Your stories matter. Take the time to write your stories in this book when prompted because writing your own stories will help you understand your legacy as a leader and teacher.

Readers will be asked to engage in a metacognitive activity at the beginning of each chapter so that they are better prepared to tie their own learning needs to what is presented in the book. We begin each chapter with a KWLH chart, where we ask you to list what you know already about the topic, what you would like to learn, as well as what you have learned and how you feel you learned it. We ask that you consider the first two sections (KW) before reading each chapter and reserve the last two sections (LH) for filling out after you read it.

Throughout each chapter, there will be opportunities for reflection (*What's Your Story?*) and practical tips (*Leading With Intention*). You will also find stories about our experiences. This book will help leaders, teacher leaders, building leaders, and district leaders go from merely being on task to being deeply engaged in the work needed to not just impact student learning but also reconnect with why they entered the education profession in the first place.

This book focuses on the following areas:

- **Chapter 1: Self-Awareness.** We will focus on how self-awareness will make you not just a better leader but also a better learner. In meditation practices, there is often a focus called “being a witness” to our behaviors, reactions, and actions. Self-awareness is not just how we view ourselves, but how others view us.

- **Chapter 2: Fostering Human Interconnectedness.** Whether you are a school building leader, teacher leader, district leader, or facilitator of learning in workshops, it is important to foster a connectedness within the group around a common mission. Strong connections lead to deeper learning and impact.
- **Chapter 3: Collective Inquiry.** Due to a variety of situations that include being reactive, initiative fatigue, and a never-ending list of to-dos, we have found that leaders can lose sight of their true priorities for their school or district. We will help you define your three main priorities so that you can focus on them.
- **Chapter 4: Creating a Learning Network to Focus This Work.** Most facilitators of learning know why they are in a conference room facilitating learning, but we have found that many participants do not necessarily know why they are in the room. We will clearly define how leaders can take their priorities and connect them to the learning they attend.
- **Chapter 5: Creating Your Own Learning Environment.** Lastly, if you have developed self-awareness as a leader, learned ways to foster human interconnectedness, defined your priorities as a leader, and then learned the necessary elements of professional learning, you will be ready to design your own professional learning regardless of whether that learning is in a conference room, faculty meeting, or instructional leadership team meeting.

Our goal is that after reading this book, readers will

- Understand the importance of leadership self-awareness and metacognition
- Hone their human interconnectedness skills to help educators work in collectives
- Develop pedagogical knowledge to help focus initiatives on student learning
- Be able to set the conditions to engage in joint work
- Develop ideas about bringing a more coherent systemic focus to their work

We appreciate that you are willing to take this journey with us.

Mike and Peter

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