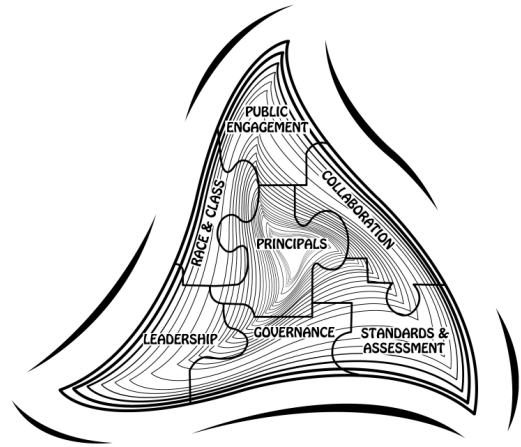


# Part I Orientation



As a school leader, you have a lot to do and little time to spare. Why should you spend any of it on another book about school leadership? Because the world is changing. You won't be able to get by with yesterday's ideas. Many of the lessons in this book can make a difference in children's lives . . . and some of them may save your career. This orientation introduces you to how that world is changing and what it means for the schools you lead.

## 1. Preface

So, you're sitting at the school superintendent's desk or you aspire to be behind it. Congratulations. It's a wonderful profession. Your career choice is a sign of your commitment to young people and your community. It's a good feeling, isn't it? Your family is proud of you. Your neighbors look up to you. But what are you going to do if any of the following scenarios unfolds?

- Directed by your board to bring student achievement up to national norms, you've created a national profile for your leadership. But the price has been high. Contention with principals and the teachers' union has alarmed and divided the board. And this morning your finance director insists on a private meeting, during which he drops a bombshell. The district is facing an immediate \$40 million budget hole, a consequence,

apparently, of the old computer system's inability to work with the new financial program. Your job's on the line.

- The telephone rings as you return from lunch with the union president. It's the local reporter who's been questioning district spending on technology. Today, he has a new issue. Some parents at one of your elementary schools are picketing the school about a library exhibit on the family. It seems the exhibit includes pictures of gay couples and their children. What do you say?

- Asked to make a presentation to the local business community about student achievement, you turn to your research director for data. What you learn is alarming. As you work through the numbers with her, it becomes apparent that respectable districtwide averages disguise an alarming achievement gap. The correlation between student performance and family income is almost perfect. Students from upper-income families (most of them white) perform very well on standardized tests; those from low-income families (many of them minority) are at the bottom of the educational pecking order. You can bury this information in your presentation to the business community, but can you live with yourself?

- While taking advantage of a professional-development opportunity that takes you out of town, you receive a call from your deputy. A crisis in the high school has erupted. Without a hearing, the principal suspended six boys for climbing onto the school roof to hang a banner as part of a Homecoming stunt. The father of one of the boys filed a lawsuit just as the local newspaper reported that the principal was inappropriately involved with a cheerleader. How do you respond?

There's nothing theoretical about any of these scenarios. Working with almost 200 superintendents in the past 10 years, the authors of this volume have heard variations on each of them. And each of these developments cost someone a job. We could cite dozens of similar examples. The truth is that the high-minded pursuit of what's best for children often runs into the rough realities of budget catastrophes, interest-group politics, human folly, and the residue and by-products of the nation's racial past. School superintendents have to be prepared to confront and deal with these challenges.

That's why this book is important. As a potential or current superintendent, you must understand that what you do not know can kill you professionally. The world is changing. Your world as an educator is changing with it. Where once school superintendents could be content to define themselves as

managers, today they must understand that they are leaders of learning who are simultaneously public figures.

This fieldbook can help you cope with challenges such as those we have described. It can't guarantee success. Nothing can. But it might help you avoid major blunders. It is called a "fieldbook" because it draws on the stories and accumulated experience of nearly 200 school leaders—members of the Danforth Foundation's Forum for the American School Superintendent—as they struggled with the problems of leading today's schools. (See Appendix A for list of Danforth Forum members.)

In an effort to improve learning, these superintendents examined the latest research on brain development and tried to understand how it applies to early childhood programs. They worried about how to respond to public demands for higher standards and new assessments. They fretted about how to defend a system in which they believed while the broader environment insisted that the system justify its own existence. They explored district governance with their boards and unions. And they wrestled with the challenges of race and class in the United States, the great fault lines in our national life. Although four of us developed what you read here, in a very real sense these superintendents wrote this fieldbook. You'll find their stories and the lessons of their experience here.

## Who This Book Is For

We have developed *The Superintendent's Fieldbook: A Guide for Leaders of Learning* with several audiences in mind:

- School superintendents in districts of all kinds (urban, rural, and suburban) who want to ratchet up their effectiveness will find this text a valuable resource. If you're a superintendent, this is the book you need as you struggle with the demanding leadership responsibilities of your position.
- Teachers, administrators, and deputy superintendents who are interested in moving into the superintendent's chair will gain a sense of the job's challenges. Experience is a great teacher. One definition of experience is "learning by making mistakes." Most of the school leadership mistakes that can be made have been made by the authors and contributors of this volume. Learn from them, without the pain.
- Principals interested in enhancing their own leadership will find a lot to use in this fieldbook. Here you can explore

school-level issues of leadership, public engagement, collaboration, and how to create better learning environments.

- School board members and union leaders worried about the sheer amount of public abuse that schools absorb can use this volume to move beyond today's sterile dialogue about governance. Some of what you find here may call into question how your district functions, but the exercises will offer positive ways to move forward.

- Schools and colleges of education preparing potential administrators will find this a useful text. Each of the authors of this volume is affiliated with a major university, and we understand the importance of improving professional preparation. This *Superintendent's Fieldbook* can support preparation programs by buttressing theory with practical insights and hands-on experience.

- Government officials and philanthropists interested in improving pre- and in-service professional administrator development can use this book as a guide. Too frequently, government and private funders find themselves trying to improve professional development without knowing exactly what to do. This volume provides some insights.

Although developed, in brief, for current and aspiring school superintendents, this fieldbook has much to offer a variety of school leaders and institutions of higher education.

## Overview

So, what is essential in a school leader? What should a fieldbook addressed to leaders incorporate? Do you need to be able to teach everything from the alphabet to calculus, trigonometry, and quantum physics? What about the budget? Perhaps you need to know how to design the spreadsheet that develops it. How about technology? Surely that's important in a new century. Should you be double-checking building wiring schematics?

Of course you shouldn't be doing any of those things. There aren't enough hours in the day, and you probably couldn't do most of them, anyway. (Well, all right, you could teach quantum physics. But the rest of that stuff is hard.) As superintendent, your job is to lead a district in which each of these tasks, among many others, is performed with a degree of excellence. You don't have to actually do them, but you do have to see that they're done. Those tasks define the superintendency of the previous century; this fieldbook helps you look ahead to the challenges of the new millennium.

*The Superintendent's Fieldbook* is divided into ten major "parts." These parts are laid out as follows:

I. *Orientation*. This is made up of a brief overview of how demands on school leaders are changing today, and an introduction to what we call the "commonplaces" of leadership. The rest of the fieldbook is organized around these commonplaces.

The commonplaces begin with the major elements that you need to worry about in terms of leading your organization—leadership itself and governance. Under leadership, we pay a lot of attention to metaphors of organization—images you carry around in your head that shape your understanding of leadership.

Next, the commonplaces drill down into the educational system to explore standards and assessment, race and class in our schools, and the imperative to develop school principals. The three final commonplaces step back and examine the system through a broader lens. They explore collaboration with other agencies of government and how to engage your community and its citizens productively. The last part asks what all of this means. How do the commonplaces of learning interact with the "images of organization" you have in your head to shape your leadership style.

II. *Leadership*. Here you'll learn how to think about your organization and how to distinguish between merely technical problems and "adaptive" challenges requiring deep-rooted institutional change. It's in this part that we introduce you to one of the central framing ideas of this fieldbook, the idea of "images of organization."

III. *Governance*. Do the ins-and-outs and headaches of dealing with school boards and unions bedevil you? Here you can find some answers. This part suggests that you need to understand not only how you think about your organization but also how your board and union members think about it as well. After all, you have your images; they have theirs.

IV. *Standards and Assessment*. With new demands for accountability and the No Child Left Behind legislation, it's a brave new world out there for school leaders. This part helps you make sense out of it.

V. *Race and Class*. These are the great fault lines in American life. They can also be a "third rail" that school leaders touch at their peril. Part V provides some ideas about how to approach this third rail and how to begin to close the achievement gap.

VI. *School Principals*. It's a truism, but still accurate, that schools are only as good as their principals. Here you'll find some exciting ideas about how to turn principals from building managers into leaders of learning.

VII. *Collaboration*. Think you can do it all by yourself? Think again. Who are your allies? What about the child protective services office? The employment security and public assistance offices? Medicaid and well-baby screening? This section touches on the many agencies concerned with child welfare in the United States and suggests some ways you can partner with them, particularly around early care and learning.

VIII. *Public Engagement*. You don't want to be the leader who turns around and finds no one behind her. Nor do you want to be the poor guy scurrying to get in front of the parade. School leaders, like most public officials, once thought of public engagement as public relations. It was enough to persuade the public to go along with the established policy. That no longer works. Today's public insists on helping develop that policy. This part suggests a new concept of "public engagement," one that encourages citizens to help create a shared vision of the future.

IX. *So What?* Here, the fieldbook pulls it all together, linking organizational images with the commonplaces to show how the combination can encourage certain kinds of behavior within your district. Are you curious about why your last district insisted on the party line while your new district promotes a lot of open discussion? Did your last district empower teachers and encourage a thousand flowers to bloom, while your new one specifies curriculum and assessment techniques in exquisite detail? The explanation probably lies in the different images that these districts hold of themselves. No matter what kind of school system you lead, or aspire to lead, you'll find it here.

X. *Appendices*. The final part is made up of appendices, primarily brief descriptions of the contributors to this volume and a description of the Danforth Forum.

Within each of these major sections, you will find a discussion of what these issues involve, along with vignettes describing what the issues look like on the ground. The districts discussed cover densely populated urban areas on the East and West coasts, sparsely populated local education agencies in the Southern and Plains states, and everything in between. You'll also find

something else here: tools you can use in your district to get a better handle on these challenges. Most of the time, the tools are exercises to use with administrators, teachers, citizens, and parents in your district. Sometimes they're a series of questions to ask yourself. However structured, the tools are valuable exercises. Finally, each part concludes with "questions for reflective practice," a series of provocative questions designed to encourage you and your colleagues to think deeply about what you are doing.

## How to Use the Fieldbook

If you're like most of us in education, you will be inclined to think you should start *The Superintendent's Fieldbook* on page one and continue until you reach the end. If you want to do that, by all means be our guest, but that's not what most people will find useful. A fieldbook is more like a reference manual than a textbook. Our inspiration came from Peter Senge's pioneering "fifth discipline" work and the fieldbooks associated with it. A fieldbook is something you should use as you need it. You will probably find that dipping in and out of the material as your needs change is the most profitable use of this fieldbook.

Some morning your challenge may be explaining student test results at a local community forum. You're likely to want to look at Parts IV (Standards and Assessment) and V (Race and Class), while ignoring the rest. The following week, you may find yourself with a major public relations crisis on your hands. Here, you're likely to find Parts II (Leadership) and VIII (Public Engagement) more immediately useful.

You may find the fieldbook useful as a guide to a series of seminars you might want to offer in your district. It benefits you little to possess a fine theoretical understanding of governance and organizational images if your board, administrators, or teachers don't know what you're talking about. The fieldbook and the exercises incorporated into it can help develop your understanding of the leadership team with which you work.

## 2. Introduction

### Leading Learning in New Times

It's been hard to turn anywhere in recent years without hearing about American schools and the challenges they face. Presidents

and members of Congress scrutinize American schools. Governors and legislators develop plans to improve them. Business leaders complain about them. Blue-ribbon commissions issue proclamations about them. And parents and other citizens worry about them. The energy behind school reform in recent decades is unprecedented in its depth, scope, intensity, and duration.

If you get nothing else from this book, understand this: your world as an educator has changed. It will never again be the same. You may have heard that before, in an intellectual sense. You're already saying, "Yes, I know that." But this book will help you understand these changes so that you can cope with them. What does it mean to lead schools in which the majority of students are children of color while the majority of teachers are white? How do you lead when citizens and local officials insist you do more with less and when national policies encourage private consumption at the expense of public investment?

Parallels to the current ferment in education can be found in few periods of our national history. The late nineteenth century, when Horace Mann and his colleagues invented the idea of public schools, comes to mind. A few years in the 1960s, as President Lyndon B. Johnson struggled to create the "Great Society," might qualify.

For sheer intensity and sustained interest in schools, however, the last two decades are nearly without equal. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education produced *A Nation at Risk*, with its stern warning of "a rising tide of mediocrity" in American life and American schools. By 1989, President George H. W. Bush had helped develop six National Educational Goals. Throughout the 1990s, states struggled to develop "aligned" educational systems, in which curriculum, assessment, and teacher training would be lined up with state standards. Much of this effort culminated in 2002 with the enactment of No Child Left Behind, legislation advanced by President George W. Bush to increase accountability, close the achievement gap, and open public schools to competition from private tutors and schools. (See Figure 1.1 for a primer on this legislation.) Nearly 20 years of intense focus on schools promise to transform how Americans define public education. These developments present you, as a school superintendent, with formidable leadership challenges. You can't afford to take them lightly.

These educational developments have been matched by equally powerful demographic changes. In most of the

*For a more complete summary of education policy developments in the past 20 years, and the general nature of the argument in support of standards-based reform, see David T. Kearns and James Harvey, A Legacy of Learning: Your Stake in Standards and New Kinds of Public Schools (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2000).*



**Figure 1.1** Did You Know? A Primer on No Child Left Behind

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, a comprehensive reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. (You can find the exact text of the law at [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html)). Among the key provisions of the new statute:

**Accountability**

- States create standards for what children should know and learn for all grades. Standards must be developed in math and reading immediately, and for science by the 2005–2006 school year.
- With standards in place, states must test every student's progress toward those standards. Beginning in the 2002–2003 school year, schools must administer tests at least once in each of three grade spans: grades 3–5, grades 6–9, and grades 10–12 in all schools, starting with math and reading. Science is to be added in each of the three grade spans in 2007–2008.
- By 2005–2006, every student, in each grade from 3 to 8, is to be tested annually in math and reading.
- Each state, school district, and school is now expected to make adequate yearly progress toward meeting state standards, judged by sorting test results for students who are economically disadvantaged, are from racial or ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English proficiency.
- School and district performance are publicly reported in district and state report cards that include individual school results.
- Within 12 years all students, from all subgroups, must perform at a proficient level under their state standards.
- If a school is found to be in need of improvement, it is to receive technical assistance and develop a two-year turn-around plan. Every student in such a school has the option of transferring.
- Schools not making adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years must continue to offer school choice and provide supplemental educational services to children, which parents will choose.
- Schools failing to make adequate progress for four consecutive years may also be required to replace staff and implement new curriculum.
- After five years, such schools will be identified for restructuring, which might involve staff firing, state takeover, private management, or conversion to charter status.

**Proven Education Methods**

- Beginning in 2002, millions of dollars were distributed to states for the president's Reading First plan, with the money tied to programs that use scientifically proven ways of teaching children to read.
- In addition, Early Reading First will help develop language and reading skills for preschool children, from low-income families.

**Choice**

- Starting in the 2002–2003 school year, parents with a child enrolled in a school identified as in need of improvement could transfer their child to a better-performing public school or public charter school.
- Parents with children in a school identified as in need of improvement are able to use federal education funds for "supplemental education services." Those services include tutoring, after-school services, and summer school programs.
- Starting in 2002, hundreds of millions of federal dollars could be used to establish and fund charter schools.

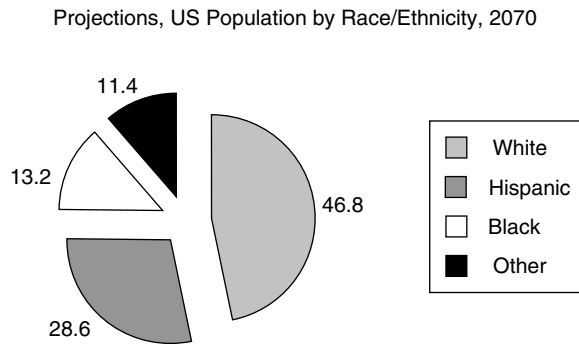
nation's major urban areas, minority students make up a majority of public school enrollment. And the face of minority America is changing. When President Johnson set out to create the Great Society, the term "minority" primarily referred to African Americans. As the nation enters fully into the twenty-first century, however, Hispanic and Latino Americans make up the largest minority population in the United States. Meanwhile, the number and proportion of Asian Americans is increasing rapidly.

In fact, it won't be long before white students are a minority in public schools. Indeed, sometime within the next two generations, assuming current trends and birth rates continue, white Americans will become a minority in the United States. We mention these developments not because they change our fundamental understanding of what the United States wants from its schools, but because they will profoundly change how we understand who we are. In fact, it's no exaggeration to say that you, as a school leader, will encounter sooner than most the effects of the changing face of America. Schools are a sort of "early indicator system" for the challenges communities encounter as their populations change. You need to be prepared for this.

As school superintendent, you also need to alert your community to the economic correlates of emerging demographic and educational realities (see Figure 1.2). If current trends are permitted to develop without thoughtful policy responses, the social structure in the United States will begin to resemble that of a Third World country. Despite its great riches, this will become a society in which a relatively small layer of wealthy and well-educated citizens (mostly white) enjoy all the blessings of American prosperity, while a large population of poor and badly educated citizens (mostly minority) struggle to make ends meet. This is not the America most of us want to bequeath to our children. The moral dimension of your work is the task of passing on to future generations the ideal of the United States as a beacon of hope in a world of want and oppression.

Troubled? Don't be. As one former superintendent put it, "leaders make their own good days." Franklin D. Roosevelt, he said, never "had a good day." Laid low by polio as a young man, President Roosevelt took office during the Great Depression and was then forced to lead the nation in a great global war, involving unprecedented carnage and loss of life around the world. He died before that

*A compelling case for new ways of organizing and governing public schools while engaging community interest can be found in Paul T. Hill, Christine Campbell, and James Harvey, It Takes a City: Getting Serious About Urban School Reform (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2000).*

**Figure 1.2** Changing U.S. Demographics, 2000–2070

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

war ended. Yet Roosevelt is universally remembered as the supreme optimist, the “Happy Warrior.” As a leader, you’ll have to make your own good days.

Which reminds us, the challenges are still piling up. The business community has imposed new concepts of management and markets on schools. Corporate titans have argued that the private sector needs to find some way into the schools to shake things up. Charter schools. Home schooling. Vouchers. All of these approaches owe something to the ethic of competition and the market.

As if the difficulties of dealing with a climate of public skepticism and changing demographics were not sufficient, you may be expected to respond with a financial hand tied behind your back. The 1990s were a bit of an anomaly for public finance. A burgeoning economy and an ebullient stock market promised rivers of cash for public services, including education. Unhappily, that period has ended, at least in the short run. As our schools move more fully into the twenty-first century, communities are casting a skeptical eye on municipal finances and requests for new levies. Even foundations are piling on. Once content to fund school efforts uncritically, they now show an increasing tendency to withhold awards when unhappy with progress. Many of these pressures are most acute in low-income rural and urban communities, precisely the places you are likely to wind up as a new superintendent (rural) or a savvy, experienced hand (urban). Aren’t you glad you got into this line of work?

It now turns out that an unusual idea has developed. It holds that people who were never trained to do the work of leading schools are better equipped to lead them than those who were. The thinking is that “leadership” is what is required, not competence in leading schools. The argument is that leaders who were trained in traditional school administration have demonstrably failed, leaving the field open to others. Many large urban systems have instead experimented with nontraditional leaders whom they have plucked out of the ranks of the military, law, and business, and even from the ranks of former professional basketball players and nonprofit managers.

This is a very interesting phenomenon that intimately involves you. In effect, it makes the following argument: because school superintendents have to be school experts, leaders, solid managers, and savvy public officials, effective superintendents can be found in any of these four labor pools. The implications of this view for institutions preparing superintendents, and for the competition you will encounter as you seek a superintendent's position, are intriguing. This view of the world argues that, to succeed as a superintendent, the training you are likely to need may be found just as easily in schools of government, public affairs, business administration, and communications as in traditional schools of education.

And, in fact, in many ways the experience of the Danforth Forum corroborates that insight. The professional development provided to superintendents during the 10 years the Danforth Forum existed drew from many sources. It called on Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, the University of Pittsburgh's Learning Research and Development Center, and the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, among others. Even a former CEO of the Xerox Corporation, David T. Kearns, and a university president, Lattie Coor of Arizona State University, offered their insights.

Because, you see, “leadership” is a large concept, one that is sketched out on a very big canvas by many prominent thinkers. It is only in understanding these concepts that you can develop a theory of action to guide your life—and your decisions—as a school leader. The next section in this first part breaks down this large concept into seven bite-sized nuggets. It introduces you to the bedrock organizing principle of this fieldbook—the seven “commonplaces” of school leadership. The remaining parts of the fieldbook develop each of these commonplaces in turn.

### 3. The “Commonplaces” of School Leadership

It's very easy for educators to get bogged down in complex theory. They can quickly lose sight of the practical issues involved in educating large numbers of students. In the 1960s and 1970s, the University of Chicago's Joseph J. Schwab warned teachers and administrators in uncompromising terms of the dangers of overreliance on theory. By its very nature, he wrote, theory “does not and cannot take account of all the matters which are crucial to questions of what, who, and how to teach. . . . [T]heories cannot be applied . . . to the solution of problems concerning . . . real individuals, small groups, or real institutions.”

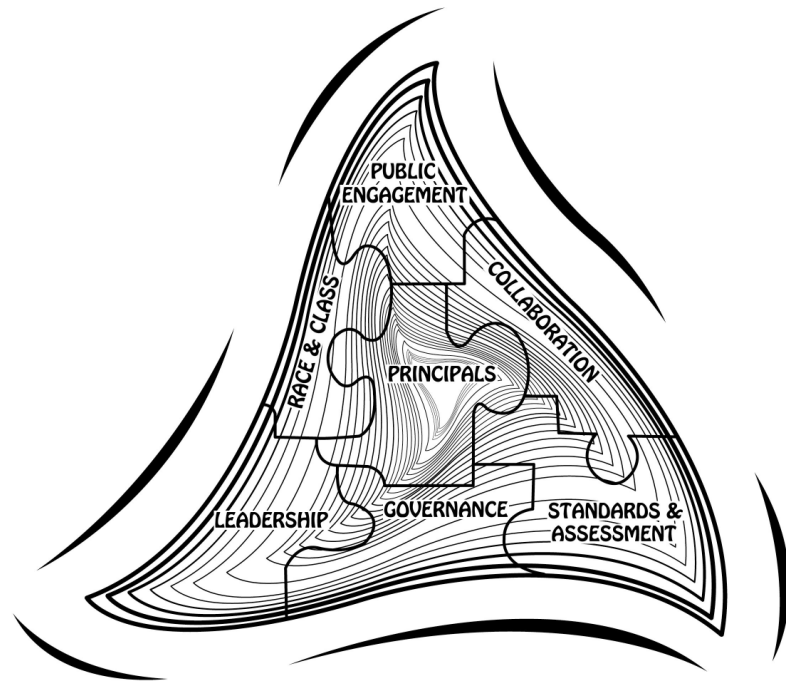
*See Joseph J. Schwab, Science, Curriculum and Liberal Education: Selected Essays, ed. Jan Westbury (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).*

In place of arcane and complex theory, Schwab argued that an adequate theory of instruction could rest on four relatively straightforward “commonplaces”: curriculum, teaching, learning, and community. These were Schwab's stakes in the ground. With them, educators could understand what they were doing. Without them, theory had little meaning.

If those are the commonplaces of instruction, what are the stakes in the ground for leadership today? What skills do you have to command as a school leader to do what you were hired to do? What are the “commonplaces” of school leadership today?

We believe there are seven, as shown in Figure 1.3. Although we call them the “commonplaces of leadership,” there is nothing simple about them. They are, however, stakes in the ground. You cannot be fully effective as a superintendent unless you master them. To develop them completely will require a very deep, clinical exposure to these ideas. It will take a lot of work. In fact, you might just need to unlearn a lot of what you've learned at great cost in dollars and time. What we describe here will sometimes contradict what you were taught in your formal preparation.

These seven concepts grew out of a major investment in a broad conceptual sweep of the state of public affairs in the United States. Over 10 years, with our colleagues in the Forum, we asked internationally renowned experts on public opinion (such as pollster Daniel Yankelovich of Public Agenda and Dean Kathleen Hall Jamieson of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania) to share with us their insights into how the public comes to judgment. We sought the advice of Harvard University's Ronald Heifetz, Martin Linsky, and Marc Roberts about the nature of leadership amid economic,

**Figure 1.3** The Commonplaces of School Leadership

demographic, social, and political change. We studied learning organizations with Lauren Resnick of the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and with Peter Senge's colleagues Charlotte Roberts and Nelda Cambron-McCabe. From author Lizbeth Schorr we extended our knowledge of what's involved in preschool development. All of this was rounded off by the personal stories of about 200 school superintendents.

From this activity, we learned that seven issues are rapidly becoming the "commonplaces" of the world of the modern school superintendent:

- You must *lead*. You will be expected to lead your school system, not simply manage its operations. The existing governance system and relations with unions may orient you around making sure the buses run on time, but you have to find a way to reshape governance and union-management relations so that the entire district focuses on learning. This volume will highlight the difference between adaptive and technical leadership and

will provide you with some advice on how to manage different issues as they ripen.

- You must lead within a *governance* structure that is hardly ideal. In some ways, you have an impossible job. You are simultaneously an educator, manager, budget-maker, public servant, politician, community leader, and local preacher. In each of these roles, you are subject to second-guessing by everyone around you, including the board to which you report and the teachers (and their union) you nominally supervise. You must find a way to work with your board and your unions.

- You must understand *standards and assessment*. You may have to become a data-driven field scientist to boost student achievement. You will need an expert grasp of what is required of you from federal and state officials in terms of standards—and how those standards are gauged by emerging assessments. These new developments carry with them powerful implications for your community, requiring you to demonstrate a confident grasp of data and analysis that has never before been expected of any public official. This book will provide you with practical advice on how and where to begin—whether you are the only professional in the central office or you oversee an office with hundreds of professionals.

- You must worry about *race and class* in your district and set out to close the achievement gap. Of all the imperatives, this one may be the most challenging, opening up all of the sores and wounds of the nation's racial past, while requiring of you a level of patience and dedication that will try most people's souls. In this volume, you will find tools for holding difficult conversations and advice from others who have gone before you.

- It goes without saying that you must develop your schools' *principals*. You will succeed or fail as a leader based on the quality of the leaders you put in place in schools. It's simple. Good schools require good principals. This book provides lessons from the field.

- You will have to learn how to *collaborate*. It is no longer sufficient to oversee a school system that worries about children from kindergarten through grade twelve and from 8:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon, 180 days a year. You have to worry about your students when they're not in school, persuading the community it needs to invest in them, while fending off those who think you should stick to your knitting. The fieldbook has some suggestions to offer and some compelling stories to tell.

- You must *engage your community*. The days of superintendents arriving with a mandate and imposing it on the community are over. You will have to work with your community to create a shared sense of what the community wants to accomplish through its schools. This fieldbook can show you how.

These seven “commonplaces,” then, frame the rest of this fieldbook. Our position is straightforward. These issues are the stakes in the ground framing leadership for twenty-first-century schools. They are the heart of the matter. You must also, obviously, be doing a lot of other things; if you are not intimately engaged in these seven, however, it is hard to know how you can succeed.

Think about that. What is more important to you as a superintendent (or potential superintendent) than leading your district, making governance work, understanding standards and assessment, worrying about race and class, developing school principals, collaborating with other community agencies, and engaging your community? Simply to ask the question is to answer it. If your priorities are elsewhere, there is a very good chance you're wasting your time.