

## Preface

**T**he impetus for writing this book comes from our desire to share with readers the power of metaphor as a remarkable tool for leadership development and organizational change. With the shadow of No Child Left Behind looming over the landscape of America's schools, educational leaders have focused their attention on the issue of accountability at the expense of creative and successful approaches to school reform. From countless conversations with principals and superintendents we've learned how leaders struggle to fit the square peg of their core values and intrinsic beliefs into the round hole of mandated competencies and the continual shrill calls to "get back to basics." The result of this quagmire is often evidenced by leaders' loss of vision, confused sense of mission, and frustrated purpose.

Our book is about another kind of "back to basics" that offers hope for our schools and inspiration for those seeking to reconcile their personal and professional goals with the call for productive institutional change. Because this is a book about metaphoric reframing, the term "on fertile ground" seems to resonate with our message. It suggests for us how contemporary writers on school leadership planted the seeds and nurtured the soil upon which our ideas germinated and began to grow. We reflected on the literature and discovered a provocative tool for helping individuals and organizations think creatively and act proactively to address the challenges confronting them.

We've titled our book *Leadership, Myth, & Metaphor* because it demonstrates how metaphors often reveal unconscious beliefs that influence leadership behaviors. For the past three years, more than 250 superintendents and principals attended a professional development project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation titled NHSALT (New Hampshire School Administrators Leading with Technology). During that period, extensive interviews explored administrators' core values and intrinsic beliefs through metaphor. One of the significant results of these meetings was that administrators not only identified an appropriate leadership

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metaphor for themselves, but were also motivated to apply reframing through metaphor to address organizational, pedagogical, and change issues that they were confronting in their schools. The successful use of metaphor at the organizational level confirmed for us its value as a meaningful tool that can be used systemically to move institutions to deeper levels of performance.

Our book identifies three leadership archetypes: the *Touchstone*, the *Advocate*, and the *Parent*. These exemplars characterize specific value orientations and administrative behaviors that leaders discussed by way of metaphor. Their reflections also addressed the need for practical and successful approaches to school reform and organizational change.

We realized it would seem whimsical if our work focused only on the spiritual archetypes of leaders. The real significance of this book resides in the final chapters, which discuss and demonstrate the uses of metaphor in the workplace. We've applied a developmental process that takes the reader from theoretical perspectives to real-world exemplars and finally back to the reader to integrate both theory and practice through a series of novel activities.

What follows is a progression of creation stories in the form of personal and institutional myths revealed by metaphor. We found a way to gain entry into the wisdom and compelling sense of purpose that inspire leaders to act on their intrinsic beliefs and move their organizations to higher quality performance, enhanced collective action, and proactive decision making and problem solving. Besides public and private school principals and superintendents, we believe this book is relevant to a broad spectrum of audiences, including college professors and campus leaders, business managers and corporate executives, organizers for philanthropic organizations, and professional association leaders. Our goal from the outset has been to bring any leader and institution from negative or self-limiting practices to more engaging, fulfilling, and effective work through metaphor.