Leading for Results: Transforming Teaching, Learning, and Relationships in Schools

Dennis Sparks. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2nd ed., 2007, pp. 248.
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Transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they had originally intended and thought possible; they set more challenging expectations and achieve higher performances (Bass & Avolio, 1994). *Leading for Results: Transforming Teaching, Learning, and Relationships in Schools* by Dr. Dennis Sparks serves as a useful guide for educators and educational leaders to promote and implement transformational leadership into their practice through a variety of strategies, methods, and applications. To encourage and challenge readers to transform their practice of teaching, learning, and relationship management within their institutions, this book focuses on the leader's role in actualizing human potential and unleashing individual and organizational energy (Sparks, 2007). This is a much-needed, practical tool for those working in the field of education, particularly in consideration of the lack of material which presents tangible ways to explore and implement transformational leadership techniques specifically within educational settings.

The format of the book includes narratives and activities in a variety of areas pertaining to transforming educational leadership. The text is divided into four major sections: clarity and creation, interpersonal influence, organizational culture, and professional learning and doing. Within each of these sections, chapters are devoted to a variety of methods, tools, and insights which lead the reader towards an understanding of the overarching goals of each section. The chapters focus on personal values and assumptions in relation to individual leadership approaches, as well as, the organization as a whole. Within each chapter, the "Leading for Results" subsections are filled with thought-provoking lessons which challenge the reader to reflect and confront his or her assumptions from an array of perspectives. The chapters are short and direct; Sparks clarifies his points in an easily readable, concise manner.

The intent of this book is for a discovery of authenticity in education, a notion which is explored in each chapter as the reader is lead towards a different understanding of his or her personal viewpoints. For example, chapter 4 focuses on the identification of ways to achieve goals and presents assumptions about goal-setting to foster discussion. The exercises in chapter 34 focus on the reader's views of the role of a leader in recognizing and alleviating anxiety. Other chapter topics include: changing habits, using genuine dialogue, and providing teachable points of view.

There are several areas where Sparks' writing could have been more inclusive of terminology relevant to educators and educational leaders outside of K-12 settings. That said, it is clear that the intended audience for this book are those in leadership positions within educational settings, broadly speaking, including adult education programs, higher education, and corporate training environments. Also, readers should not assume that a "leader" is one with managerial responsibility. This book is inclusive of educators and others who are in leadership roles, but not necessarily principals or administrators within their

respective institutions. Readers should also not be misled by the frequent use of K-12 terminology (*i.e.*, the words “principal”, “teacher”) which might indicate the content is more appropriate for K-12 leaders.

It is also worth noting that, since this book relies heavily on self-reflection, it may be perceived as not being effective for those who may not be inclined to write down thoughts, feelings, and opinions. The author takes a relaxed, open approach towards presenting and explaining the activities in the book while offering a set of useful tools. There is much to gain from the other elements included in this book; therefore readers should not be discouraged by the format.

The strengths of this book are its readability and applicability. The concise prose and consistent chapter structures throughout the book allow the reader to focus on the content and exercises, rather than being bogged down in irrelevant paragraphs. The content is relevant to various individuals, who hold a variety of roles and responsibilities, allowing for this book to be a useful, applicable tool for the field.

References

- Bass, B. M. & Avolio, B. J. (1994). *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sparks, D. (2007). *Leading for results: Transforming teaching, learning, and relationships in schools* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

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