

CHAPTER 2

TOWARD A DEEPENED THEORY OF CONSTRUCTIVIST LEADERSHIP

LINDA LAMBERT

... man grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts,
emerges ahead of his accomplishments ...

John Steinbeck
Sea of Cortez, 1941

As we have seen, during this past century concepts about learning and leading have been influenced by similar historical, philosophical, and cultural ideas. Learning and leading are intertwined because these conceptions arise from our understandings of what it is to be human. To be human is to learn, and to learn is to construct meaning and knowledge about the world. Constructivism, therefore, has emerged as an important educational perspective that is changing how educational researchers, writers, professional developers, and leaders view the world. This learning perspective has given rise to the recognition that constructivism is critical to adult and organizational learning. This perspective has also required a reexamination of the concept of leadership, and a new definition has taken form—a definition that we have called “constructivist leadership.” This book will once again examine the relationship between learning and leading and deepen the theory of constructivist leadership.

At the beginning of this new century, we can declare with some certainty that all humans bring to the process of learning personal schemas that have been formed by prior experiences, beliefs, values, sociocultural histories, and perceptions. When new experiences are encountered and mediated by reflection, inquiry, and social interaction, meaning and knowledge are constructed. Learning takes place, as does adult development. When actively engaged in reflective dialogue, adults become more com-

plex in their thinking about the world, more tolerant of diverse perspectives, more flexible and open toward new experiences. Personal and professional learning require an interactive professional culture if adults are to engage with one another in the processes of growth and development.

Despite this linkage between learning and leading, it is uncommon for adults to be members of coherent, dynamic educational communities in which they develop collective meaning together. This is perhaps more true today for teachers than it was a decade ago. Bound by rules, schedules, accountability policies, hierarchical roles, and timeworn practices, educators still experience cultures that limit interaction and mitigate against professional growth. They have few opportunities to engage in the reciprocal processes that would call forth their ideas and successful experiences and enable them to make sense of their world together. Nor are they experiencing the supported encounters with discrepant information about teaching and learning that are essential for moving toward significant change. While there is more emphasis today being placed on data, these data tend to be of a singular nature and the accompanying dialogue is often superficial. Any possibility for thoughtful conversation that would tease out underlying complexities is sabotaged by the desperate hunt for a solution, the quick fix. Hurried interactions of the sort that often characterize faculty room encounters and faculty meetings tend to draw on the sameness of teaching, reaffirming and reiterating familiar educational practices. Hurried solutions shield us from differences and therefore from challenges to our old ways of thinking while it “protects” us from growth.

Leadership that would change our schools and our communities must be cognizant of the essential actions needed to alter the lives of teachers in schools. Constructivist leadership addresses the need for sense-making, for coherence, and for seeing educational communities as growth-producing entities. Leadership that is formed around the principles of constructivist learning for adults capture these possibilities for learning. Leadership is being redefined. It is time to deepen the theory and attend it with examples of successful practices in schools and districts.

The concept of constructivist leadership is based on the same ideas that underlie constructivist learning: Adults, as well as children, learn through the processes of meaning and knowledge construction, inquiry, participation, and reflection. The function of leadership must be to engage people in the processes that create the conditions for learning and form common ground about teaching and learning. Schooling must be organized and led in such a way that these learning processes provide direction and momentum to human and educational development. This chapter will further

describe the influence that the constructivist perspective is having on our notions about leadership. We refer to constructivist leadership as

the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a shared purpose of schooling.

In this text, *leadership* is defined as a concept transcending individuals, roles, and behaviors. Therefore, anyone in the educational community—teachers, administrators, parents, students—can engage in leadership actions. As we deepen this theory of leadership, we combine and interpret assumptions regarding reciprocal processes, participation in educational communities, construction of meaning, and shared purpose of schooling that lead us toward an explanation of constructivist leadership. Further, we will expand our conception of reciprocity and community to examine the role that equity and spirituality hold in our expression of leadership.

Constructivist leadership continues to distinguish itself from prevailing notions of leadership that are influencing education and business in a number of ways, particularly in reference to who leads, the role of constructivist learning, and the need for community. However, our new definition no longer stands alone, as others have joined in the journey to frame leadership as a vital construct for human endeavor.

NOTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Rost (1991), in an extensive analysis of influential writers from 1900 through 1990, found a consistent picture of the conceptions of leadership:

Leadership is good management. . . . Leadership is great men and women with certain preferred traits influencing followers to do what the leaders wish in order to achieve group/organizational goals that reflect excellence defined as some kind of higher-level effectiveness. (p. 180)

Rost refers to this composite definition as the “industrial leadership paradigm,” which is hierarchical, individualistic, reductionistic, linear, and mechanical—ideas that are worlds away from the ideas in this book and the needs of today’s schools and society. At the beginning of this new century, it would be difficult to find anyone writing in this vein. Leadership has entered a new dimension (although there are charges that many leadership preparation programs are still based on those outdated ideas). The conver-

sation about leadership is broader, with a wider range of possibilities, than ever before.

Four sets of reactions to the concept of leadership are emerging. First, a call for the abandonment of the word and idea altogether in favor of another word and idea. Second, reframing leadership by changing its defined personal qualities within a larger, but constant, definition. Third, puzzlement about the meaning of the term . . . puzzlement from thinkers who were heretofore more sure. Fourth, redefining the concept, allowing leadership to take on new meanings and suppositions.

First, there is a call for the abandonment of the word and idea of leadership. In the winter of 1997, at a conference of the California Staff Development Council, Tom Sergiovanni asked if I would give up the word *leadership*. At the time, I replied that I might if he would consider giving up the word *followership*. Neither of us responded definitively to those challenges by abandoning our fondness for the concepts, but the request has lingered. Peter Block (1996) did abandon *leadership* in favor of *stewardship*, which he says “can be most simply defined as giving order to the dispersion of power. It requires us to systematically move choice and resources closer and closer to the bottom and edges of the organization. Leadership, in contrast, gives order to the centralization of power.”

In his recent reflections on leadership, Warren Bennis (2000) includes a chapter entitled “The End of Leadership.” Bennis calls for an abandonment of the archaic baggage that has situated leadership in top-down hierarchical models, sensing that this core metaphor may be so burdened with old meanings that it cannot be saved.

Second, there is a move to reframe leadership by changing its defined qualities within a larger, but constant, definition. Although Bennis calls for an end to leadership, he proceeds to reframe leadership by changing the defined qualities of the leader in these ways:

1. The New Leader understands and practices the power of appreciation.
2. They are connoisseurs of talent, more curators than creators.
3. The New Leader keeps reminding people of what is important.
4. The New Leader generates and sustains trust.
5. The New Leader and the Led are intimate allies. (2000, pp. 153–157)

Thus Bennis remains in the second category of responses to leadership. According to this way of thinking, leadership is something that leaders do with or to others (followers, the “Led”). Most writers, however, continue to use *leadership* and *leader* as interchangeable. “The problem with the

organization is leadership,” an analyst might claim when referring to a specific person, the leader. “The absence of leadership (a person in that role) resulted in confusion and continuing conflict.” Leadership means the sets of skills or actions held by a person in a particular role or position. What continues to change, however, is the collaborative, engaging language being used to describe the actions of the leader. Values of human endeavor are more explicit; control and manipulation are minimized.

These definitions play out in persistent patterns of process that characterize what leaders do or what leadership is. Whether a writer is describing leadership or leader, definitions inevitably fall into three parts: (1) what the leader does, (2) for or with whom the action is taken, and (3) toward what end the actions are taken. A few additional illustrative definitions from the work of these authors will clarify this three-dimensional analysis:

Carl Glickman (1998): Leaders engage others in the development of schools as democratic communities, thereby invoking broad scale participation and learning.

Ronald Heifetz (1994): Leaders mobilize people to tackle tough problems. Leadership is solving tough problems (p. 15). (This definition will fall under two categories.)

Parker Palmer (1998): Leaders “lead from the same model we have been exploring for teaching itself, creating a space centered on the great thing called teaching and learning around which a community of truth can gather” (p. 160).

Thomas Sergiovanni (2000): Leaders bring diverse people into a common cause by making the school a covenantal community. He also describes and uses the concept of constructivist leadership and Palmer’s (1998) ideas of spirituality as congruent with his own writings on moral leadership.

Barbara Kellerman (1999): “Leadership is the effort of leaders—who may hold, but do not necessarily hold, formal positions of authority—to engage followers in the joint pursuit of mutually agreed-on goals. These goals represent significant, rather than merely incremental, change” (p. 10).

Bruce J. Avolio (1999): Transformational leadership involves the process whereby leaders develop followers into leaders . . . the leader has a development plan in her or his head for each follower (p. 34).

Stoll and Fink (1996): Invitational Leadership is “about communicating invitational messages to individuals and groups with whom leaders interact in order to build and act on a shared and evolving vision of enhanced educational experiences for students” (p. 109).

Gene Hall (personal communication, 2001): Leadership is facilitating change so that all members of the organization become confident and competent users of the innovation. Confident means that they have resolved concerns for self and task, along with the arousal of concern about the impact on students the innovation is having. Competent means moving beyond the mechanical use of an innovation to include routine use and refinement, and the configuration of the innovation being used is seen as acceptable to ideal.

John Gardner (1990): Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group (followers) to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared with his or her followers. While this definition is more than a decade old, Gardner's work has been so influential in the field as to deserve retention.

Margaret Wheatley (1999): On effective leadership, the Leader's task is first to embody these principles—guiding visions, sincere values, organizational beliefs—and then to help the organization become the standard it has declared for itself. This work of leaders cannot be reversed, or either step ignored. In organizations where leaders do not practice what they preach, there are terrible disabling consequences (p. 130).

These writers adhere to leadership as something carried out by an individual, with or for others, toward a specific goal or outcome. Transformational leadership is consistently referred to as the most progressive of these descriptions in that it aims toward the deep transformation or emancipation of those led.

I am often asked the question, What is the difference between “constructivist leadership” and “transformational leadership”? The assumptions about the capacities of humans to grow and change are similar and complementary; indeed, constructivist leadership might be understood as arising from or growing out of many of the precepts of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership, studied more closely during the 1990s, has given rise to encouraging results. Transformational leaders help develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture, foster teacher development, and help teachers solve problems more effectively (Leithwood, 1992; Morgan, 1997; Avolio, 1999).

However, transformational leadership situates responsibility for the growth of others in the designated leader. It becomes paternal, although well-meaning, with such concepts as help, assist, and foster. Constructivist leadership separates leadership from leader and situates it in the patterns

of relationships among participants. Reciprocity requires that the formal leader is growing and changing in concert with others. Relationships are dynamic rather than directional. Further, in constructivist leadership, the learning that is transformational is anchored in constructivism and community.

Early in the 1990s, Leithwood (1992) predicted that transformational leadership would subsume instructional leadership as the dominant image of school administration. In 1994, Poplin observed that instructional leadership encompasses hierarchies and top-down leadership, where the leader is supposed to know the best form of instruction and closely monitors teachers' and students' work. She argued that instructional leadership had outlived its usefulness. In truth, now in the early years of the new century, the accountability climate has floated instructional leadership to the top once again. Two encouraging observations can be made: Now there is more puzzlement over what is meant by instructional leadership, and people are realizing that there are a myriad of instructional leadership tasks, not all of which may need to be performed by the principal (Olson, 2000). These new insights reveal a convergence of more traditional leadership thinking as described above and transformational and constructivist leadership perspectives (U.S. Department of Education, January 17, 2001).

Third, some writers are puzzled about the meaning of leadership. I'm persuaded that puzzlement about the concept of leadership is a promising state of affairs. It is a sign of a concept in transition when thinkers in their own field are less sure, more speculative about the notion of leadership than they were in the early 1990s. In 1992, Roland Barth said that *leaders* make happen that in which they believe while working with all in a community of leaders. Today (2001), Barth notes that this sounds somewhat self-centered and misses the notion of "what is in the collective best interest." How about "assisting/engaging the group to bring to life what is in its best interest? . . . or assisting the group to make happen what it believes in," I ask. "Oh well," he proclaims, "I'm not sure what leadership is." Unsureness, of course, may not be an apt description for thinking in transition. With each product of his prolific pen, Sergiovanni raises new issues and ideas about the concept. Unsureness can lead to abandoning the concept (or at least the word) altogether, or it can lead to a redefinition. New definitions are gathering strongly on the horizon.

Fourth, the movement to redefine the concept of leadership. Some writers are giving attention to redefining the concept of leadership and separating it from the interlocking sameness of leader. William Foster (1989) began this process when he described leadership as the reciprocal processes among leaders and followers working toward a common pur-

pose. Constructivist leadership is situated in this fourth category. Since 1995, there have been multiple shifts in understanding:

Charlotte Roberts, in Peter Senge and colleagues' newest work, *Schools That Learn* (2000), describes constructivist leadership and proceeds to define leadership as problem-solving (with Heifetz), engaging, leading learning, and learner, rather than authority-based (pp. 404, 414–418).

Ann Conzemius and Jan O'Neill (2001) integrate constructivist leadership and the concept of "leadership capacity" to describe "Leadership as the capacity of the school for broad-based, skillful participation in the creation and fulfillment of a vision focused on student learning" (p. 5).

Richard Ackerman, Gordon Donaldson, Jr., and Rebecca Van der Bogert (1996) view leadership as a process, a quest that entails learning to think and act as a leader in response to the ever-changing challenges of learning and dealing with growing children and the adults who care about them. While the authors write primarily about the principal's learning quest, the definition does not demand that it be attached to a specific person in a specific role.

Fritjof Capra, who in 1995 (personal conversation) adhered to the "great man" theory of leadership, meaning that one person with extraordinary, charismatic qualities should lead, in 1997 suggested that "In self-organizing systems, leadership is distributed, and responsibility becomes a capacity of the whole. Leadership, then, consists in continually facilitating the emergence of new structures, and incorporating the best of them into the organization's design" (pp. 8–9).

Howard Gardner (1995) defines leadership as "a process that occurs within the minds of individuals who live in a culture—a process that entails the capacities to create stories, to understand and evaluate these stories, and to appreciate the struggle among stories. Ultimately, certain kinds of stories will typically become predominant—in particular, kinds of stories that provide an adequate and timely sense of identity for individuals who live within a community or institution" (p. 22; in Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 169).

James Spillane, Richard Halverson, and John B. Diamond (2001) hold that leadership, cognition, and activity are situated within an interactive web of actors (leaders and followers), artifacts, and situations that they refer to as "distributed leadership." The situation, or context, is not an external force but an integral part of the leadership dynamic. Leadership is "stretched over" leaders, followers,

and activities within a reciprocal interdependency. School leadership, therefore, involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning.

Those who are redefining leadership situate it in the processes among us rather than in the skills or disposition of a leader. These processes include problem-solving; broad-based, skillful participation (leadership capacity); task enactment, conversations, and stories. Wilfred Drath (1998) uses the definition of constructivist leadership and concludes:

The idea of leadership that seems to be emerging calls for rethinking the source of leadership. It will no longer be thought of as something initiated by the leaders (or by followers) but understood to begin in the reciprocal connections of people working together. This is a significant change from even the most current ideas of leadership, which are still rooted in the ideas that leadership is a product of individual initiative and action. Even in the modern idea, it is still usually presumed that the (formal) leader initiates the shared process. (p. 414)

TOWARD A NEW CONCEPTION OF LEADERSHIP

Above we examined perspectives and dimensions of the definition of *leader* and *leadership*. Constructivist leadership falls into the fourth perspective: redefining. It has been redefined by suggesting that leadership is beyond person and role and embedded in the patterns of relationships we will refer to as “reciprocal processes.” These patterns enable participants in a community to construct meaning and knowledge together. We hold deep faith that, when individuals learn together in community, shared purpose and collective action emerges—shared purpose and action about what really matters. The balance of this chapter examines each dimension of this definition in turn:

The reciprocal processes that enable . . .
 participants in an educational community to construct meanings . . .
 that lead toward a shared purpose of schooling.

Since leadership is viewed as essentially the enabling reciprocal processes among people, leadership becomes manifest within the relationships in a community, manifest in the spaces, the fields among participants, rather than in a set of behaviors performed by an individual leader. The school culture, the field in which we work, is permeated with

opportunities for exercising leadership of this character. This culture, or field, among us is imbued with our histories, energies, emotions and thoughts, conflicts and affections. Greene (1988) finds in these spaces among us the possibilities for creating an authentic presence with each other . . . being real and vulnerable with each other in ways that engage us in genuine conversations. Hannah Arendt, Greene reminds us, called these spaces the “in-between” (quoted in Greene, 1988, p. 17). Vygotsky (1962) understood well the value of those fields, the in-between, as present in the “zone of proximal development” through which participants negotiate their own meanings, knowledge, and intelligence, influenced by social, cultural, and historical forces. He envisioned these spaces between and among people as being the central arena through which individuals in interaction make sense of what they think and believe and create new ideas and information. This is not unlike Kegan’s (1982) “zone of mediation” for meaning-making, through which individuals labor toward new understandings. To this extent, leadership provides us with a “third dimension”—a set of untapped opportunities that exist within the culture of the school. There are the individual minds of educators in the school community, the minds of others in that community, and the richness of ideas and questions as yet unexplored or unasked that exist among us.

In this book we propose that leadership inhabits these spaces, fields, or zones among educators in an educational community. Leadership, like energy, is not finite, not restricted by formal authority and power; it permeates a healthy culture and is undertaken by whoever sees a need or an opportunity. Occupying these “zones,” leadership is different from an act of leadership, for it can be omnipresent among and within all participants. Leadership possibilities permeate our interactions and inform our actions. A new teacher is having trouble? An experienced teacher might intervene, provide assistance, secure other resources and ideas, mentor. In a culture rich in leadership connections, this experienced teacher does not have to be recruited; he or she is a fully functioning professional leader. Barth (1988) seems to have had this notion in mind when he talked about a “community of leaders.” Lieberman (1985, 1988, 1992, 1994, 2001), in her extensive and continual discussions of the relationships in collaborative work, understands the criticalness of human interaction and the emergence of professionalism.

THE RECIPROCAL PROCESSES THAT ENABLE . . .

Constructivist leadership involves *the reciprocal processes that enable* participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead

toward a shared purpose of schooling. It is important to understand that the capacity for reciprocity is the result of time spent in meaning-making with others (Kegan, 1982). To be able to move outside oneself, to differentiate one's perceptions from those of another, to practice empathy, to move out of the self and observe the responses and thoughts of another—all are prerequisites to reciprocity. Reciprocity, or the mutual and dynamic interaction and exchange of ideas and concerns, requires a maturity that emerges from opportunities for meaning-making in sustainable communities over time. As adults, we need to be able to engage in processes of making sense or meaning of our lives and work together in educational communities if capacities for reciprocity are to be developed. "Knowledge is not *extended* from those who consider that they know to those who consider that they do not know," pointed out Paulo Freire in 1973; "knowledge is *built up* in the relations between human beings" (p. 109, emphasis added).

The reciprocal processes that enable us to construct meaning occur within that context of relationships. The creation and expansion of our possibilities and capacities for reciprocity occur in communities rich in relationships. We need to stop thinking of roles or people as fixed entities and instead view them as relationships, as patterns of relationships that involve one another: "Patterns do not 'contain' one another, but rather 'involve' one another" (Wheatley, 1992, p. 71). "Patterns that involve" is reminiscent of Bateson's "patterns which connect" (1972), which encompasses both the relationship and the pattern of meaning. These consistent, repetitive forms reveal patterns of relationships that evolve and deepen over time.

Equity is deeply embedded in these patterns. Without equity—a profound respect for the worthiness of each other—we have dominance, not reciprocity. Further, caring is the relational aspect of such reciprocity (O'Neil, 2001). Our schools, as well as our communities, are still haunted by grievous racism, classism, and sexism, both personal and institutional. Symbols of institutional racism are pattern producing. These patterns—tracking, grouping, packaged curricula designed to imprison the mind in mediocrity, homogeneous teaching forces, nonrepresentative governance structures—evoke and allow relationships of inequity. Unless this condition is set right, reciprocity of relationships will not be possible. "Setting right" deep historical wrongs will require new conceptions of leadership.

Reciprocal relationships, the meanings of which must be discussed and commonly construed in schools, are the basis through which we make sense of our world, continually define ourselves, care about others, and "coevolve," or grow together. With relationships, we give up predictability

for potentials. Potentials are those abilities within us that can develop or become actual, those personal passions and personal schemas that enable us to construct meaning and knowledge. They exist in possibilities; they are unpredictable, yet limitless; they are built on equitable relationships and connecting patterns; they are dynamic and paradoxical; and they are continuously renewing themselves. We must evoke or provoke potential (Wheatley, 1992)—it does not appear on command (or through “persuasion, recruitment, or enlistment”).

While the chapters ahead provide a more detailed look at reciprocal processes along with practical examples, it is essential here to portray what is meant by these processes. These portrayals are examples and will undoubtedly give rise to thoughts of other processes as the reader ponders them. *Reciprocal processes* are mutual learning processes such as listening, questioning, reflecting, and facilitating—those relational endeavors that weave a fine fabric of meaning. When they are framed within a constructivist learning design, they are understood as those that

- Evoke potential in a trusting environment
- Inquire into practice, thereby reconstructing old assumptions and myths
- Focus on the construction of meaning
- Frame actions that embody new behaviors and purposeful intentions

Those processes that *evoke potential in a trusting environment* are those that enable individuals to call forth memories, perceptions, and assumptions that underlie and inform their work. These recollections may be elicited in the form of stories, conversations, brainstorming, writing, or even reenactment. These evoked ideas, drawn forth from their yearnings (Kessler, 2000, p. 118) and deep beliefs, create an essential foundation for constructing meaning and knowledge together, for making our schemas explicit and public, thereby enabling us to understand how we and others are making sense of the world.

Those processes that *inquire into practice, thereby reconstructing old assumptions and myths* necessitate a reexamination of accepted ideas and traditional interpretations. To “reconstruct old assumptions” is to loosen one’s attachment, adherence, and dependency on the assumptions that formed current schemas in order to consider or entertain new assumptions. Confronting and processing new information or experiences that are different from those that formed the original schemas can cause an individual to disconnect from and reconstruct assumptions. This process can lead to the formation of new schemas and to changed perceptions

and behaviors. This aspect of the conversation involves posing questions that will cause dissonance and disequilibrium between the held beliefs and new information, gathering evidence or data, and reconceptualizing or redesigning the ideas in question. This “redesign” function may involve speculation, reframing, visioning, or imagining possibilities. As assumptions are reexamined, we can begin to make sense of new information and ideas.

Those processes that include the *focus on the construction of meaning* involve many of the same evocation processes described above (conversations, stories, writing) and entail combining or recombining these ideas so that they make sense to those involved. “Making sense” (constructing meaning) also requires the creation of new symbols or images (examples, metaphors, patterns) that form the basis for construal and interpretation. As adults share common experiences and common inquiry, assigned meanings converge, becoming more common than uncommon. Teachers and principals begin to agree on—or at least to understand—the interpretations that they are making about teaching and learning.

Those activities that *frame actions that embody new behaviors and purposeful intentions* involve the most practical aspect of the reciprocal processes. Such activities may include establishing new criteria, planning approaches, identifying emerging goals and outcomes, implementing new actions, evaluating progress, and redesigning or reframing the actions in response to the information generated by the process. These are the specific actions that emerge from the conversations.

These are spiraling processes, involving and building on each other and circling back upon themselves. New actions become the means through which other potentials are evoked, new information is generated, and deeper meanings are constructed.

The following scenario from a school we will call Raintree Middle School describes how these processes may join together: As a staff that has deliberately planned to develop a collaborative working culture, they meet together for a professional development day to discuss their reading program. Two teachers are facilitating the work of the day, aimed at discovering where they need to go with the teaching of reading. The leadership team and the professional development committee have planned this day together.

First activity: In small groups, staff are asked to recall how they now teach reading. When did they start doing it this way? Why is that so? They share experiences and stories. (*Evoking potential in a trusting environment*)

Second activity: They converse as a whole group. What patterns do we notice in how we teach reading? What questions do they raise? What do we want to know about how successful we've been? What evidence or data will tell us what we need to know? How will we organize ourselves to discover this information? (*Inquiring into practice thereby reconstructing old assumptions*)

Three weeks later. . . .

Third activity: They converse in groups with information and data posted around the room. What patterns do we see? Does this evidence support or challenge our current practice? In what ways? How do we make sense of this? (*Focus on the construction of meaning*)

Fourth activity: The last activity asks: Based on our conversations this morning, in what ways do we need to reshape our reading program? What different outcomes do we seek? Do we need more information—if so, what? (*Frame actions that embody new behaviors and purposeful intentions*)

The above example combines four phases of reciprocal processes involved in constructivism so that a staff can create together the parameters for their future work. These processes involve rethinking our structures as well. Structures provide the containers in which patterns of relationships occur. Structures are resources. The forms that support relationships are nodes of connections, channels of energy flow. Places or intersections where people and energy converge might include groups, such as leadership teams, study or action research teams; places, such as a professional library, faculty research and development center, even open supply closets or “user-friendly” faculty rooms; and events, such as workshops, district dialogue sessions, or parent conversations.

The essential criterion for enabling structures involves an element of high synergy, which Carlsen (1988) explains as the positive reaction and interaction that occur when people do things for themselves and at the same time do things for others (reciprocity). Carlsen recalls Buckminster Fuller's 1978 work, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*, in which he explains, “Synergy is the only word in our language that means the behavior of whole systems unpredicted by the separately observed behaviors of any of the system's separate parts or any subassembly of the system's parts” (quoted in Carlsen, 1988, p. 71). Larger than the sum of the parts, synergy in schools is the interaction dynamic arising from opportunities for mutual conversation, work, and action. It is the by-product of true

collegiality. We provide additional examples of school and district collegial structures in later chapters.

PARTICIPANTS IN AN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY TO CONSTRUCT MEANINGS . . .

In Chapter 1, we discussed the process of *meaning-making* as constructivism; above we discussed leadership as the “reciprocal processes that enable . . . participants in an educational community to construct meanings.” By participants we mean *all* members of the educational community, not segregated as leaders and followers. Leaders are teachers, administrators, parents, and students, as well as others who make the schools their purposeful place. Crusty old paradigms might warn us that “too many cooks spoil the stew”; new paradigms are making a different stew. The patterns of relationships in this new “stew” contain rich possibilities and exist outside traditional lines of authority, roles, established norms, rules, and policies. At any given time, roles and behaviors will shift among participants based on interest, expertise, experience, and responsibility. In more advanced school cultures, as in good marriages, roles are integrated or transcended.

Together we create and engage in experiences that we imbue with meaning, meanings informed by common experiences and also by our own personal schemas. The above example of the Raintree staff working through a process for creating common work agreements is illustrative of this leadership work in schools. Kegan (1982) advanced the idea that “meaning is, in its origins, a physical activity (grasping and seeing), a social activity (it requires another), a survival activity (in doing so, we live). Meaning understood in this way is the primary human motion, irreducible” (pp. 18–19). This understanding is critical to the role of constructivism within the context of community. This notion, born of negotiating experiences together, gives force and purposeful direction to community. The Raintree staff will never be quite the same; making meanings together changes us and creates momentum (motion and direction) for our work together.

Bateson’s (1972) concept of meaning as a synonym for *pattern* adds another rich dimension to our communal work: meaning-making for common patterns of understandings. When the Raintree staff members have practiced their new agreements for a few months, the pattern of their understandings will deepen. These practices will become the new “habits of mind.” There has been set in motion a patterning process that gives rhythm and purpose, force and direction, to the educational community.

Experiences with educational communities that have evolved from sustained collaborative work have created an understanding of communities as the primary context for professional growth. “The constraints of constructed knowledge,” point out Bransford, Goldman, and Pellegrino (1992, p. 116), “come largely from the community of which one is a member. In the absence of any community, we suppose that it would be possible for an individual to have an idiosyncratic view of the world—but then, because there is no community, the idiosyncrasy is irrelevant.” In a community, views are brought into harmony or we agree to disagree—either way, we consider the other. Drath (1998) refers to such shared meaning-making as “joint or reciprocal interpretation of experience, especially experiences that are readily open to multiple interpretations. . . . the reciprocal social processes by which a group of people agree on how to understand some phenomenon and what values to place on it” (p. 415).

Since constructivist learning is a social endeavor, community is essential for substantive and sustainable learning to occur. In our definition of constructivist leadership, the educational community is considered the medium for meaning-making, for human growth and development. In this chapter, community is defined in terms of its natural ecological qualities and its relationship to constructivist leadership.

Why is it important to understand communities as ecosystems? To understand that leadership is embedded in the patterns of relationships and meaning-making in a social organization is to notice that everything is connected. The system is dynamic, interdependent in its learning processes. One leader doesn’t direct the learning of others (although those participating as leaders frame, and invite others into, opportunities)—the learning of each is dependent upon the learning of the other and of the whole. This ecological portrait can change our schemas about social systems.

Fritjof Capra, author of *The Tao of Physics* (1975), *The Turning Point* (1982), and *The Web of Life* (1996) has given his attention for most of this decade to the application of the principles of ecology to work with whole-school cultural change and social transformation. This work is called “ecoliteracy,” meaning literacy in environmental principles and practices; by “ecology” they mean the guiding principles informing the development of all organisms and systems. In translating the concepts of ecology into social systems, Capra joined in the tradition of Gregory Bateson in psychology and anthropology; Bruce Joyce, Elliott Eisner, John Goodlad, and C. A. Bowers in education; Robert Kegan in psychology; Robert Bellah in philosophy and political science; and Theodore Roszak in political and

environmental philosophy. The principles of ecology are described by Capra (1993) as involving interdependence, sustainability, ecological cycles, energy flow, partnership, flexibility, diversity, and coevolution.

In order to create educational communities that function as ecological social systems, members of these communities work in *interdependence* with one another. They rely on and trust one another to provide the support and skills needed by the whole group. In order to evolve, educational communities must be *sustained* over time, since it takes time to deepen the spiral of meaning-making, seek shared purpose, and develop interdependent professional cultures. *Ecological cycles* require a fluid flow of information and feedback, spiraling processes that are essential to engagement with the disequilibrium that causes us to break set with old assumptions and construct meaning (often called a “cycle of inquiry”). The reciprocal processes described earlier in this chapter can be understood as an ecological cycle.

Biological systems are propelled by the *energy flow* of the sun. The energy driving social systems is meaning-making, which we have described as developmental, as motion. These energy sources keep communities in motion. To understand meaning-making as the primary energy source of a community is critical to the understanding of constructivist leadership, which relies on communities in motion.

Partnerships with parents and the broader community are essential if information and learning opportunities are to enter and leave the culture of the school.

Flexibility is basic to communities in motion if fluctuations, feedback, and surprises are to lead to change rather than disorientation in schools.

Diversity brings a complexity to the network of relationships that contains multiple perspectives and multiple resources and talents. Static, homogeneous, and inequitable relationships cannot challenge the thinking of its members, since individual and group thinking will stem from experiences and biases that are too similar. Diversity introduces the opportunity for participants to think and act in more complex ways. Such cognitive complexity involves the ability to understand and work with multiple perspectives; the capacity to think systemically; the yearning for reciprocity; and the ability to access, generate, and process vast sources of information. Diversity in the learning environment improves our possibilities for developing such complexity and therefore the possibilities for variance and productive dissonance.

Coevolution refers to the idea that as we work together in collaborative professional cultures, we grow together. This book focuses on the multiple means of learning in a professional culture, including shared leadership, conversations, common language, and the use of narrative. Bransford and colleagues (1992) describe knowledge as “a dialectic process”: “By continually negotiating the meaning of observations, data, hypotheses, and so forth, groups of individuals construct systems that are largely consistent with one another” (p. 116). This dialectic is an essential aspect of coevolution. Herein lies our confidence that a shared purpose will arrive from such dialogue.

A composite narrative of a social ecological community might be interpreted in this way: A community is an interconnected and complex web of reciprocal relationships sustained and informed by their purposeful actions. Complexity is manifest in the diversity of the system; and the more diverse, the more rich and complex. Such communities are flexible and open to information provided through feedback spirals, as well as unexpected fluctuations and surprises that contain possibilities. The coevolution, or shared growth, of the participants in this community is propelled by, and emerges from, the joint construction of meaning and knowledge and involves continual creation and adaptation.

To borrow generously from Carl Rogers’s (1959) concept of the “actualizing tendency” in individuals, these ecosystems are “actualizing communities” in the process of becoming more coherent and more growth-producing for both individuals and social groupings. In the process, these communities are responding to the dual nature of human beings to be both independent and interdependent, self-directed and interconnected. However, Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Sidler, and Tipton (1985) would remind us that to focus too deeply on the nature and needs of individual human beings may lead us to narrowly therapeutic interpretations of community, designing communities that are aimed primarily at meeting the needs of the individual. Rather, we must seek communities that serve the needs of the broader society as well as the needs of the individual.

The work of the new communitarians focuses primary concern on “the balance between social forces and the person, between community and autonomy, between the common good and liberty, between individual rights and social responsibilities” (Etzioni, 1998, p. x). These communities, Etzioni contends, are webs of social relations that encompass shared meanings and shared values. Unlike biological systems, these social communities are deeply moral, driven by shared values that encompass reciprocity, equity, and democracy. Educational communities of this character concurrently attend

to the professional development needs of the individual, to the professional culture of the group, to the engagement with the broader community, and to the outcomes of the students. Such educational communities have coherence, a wholeness and an integration that characterize sense-making.

Sergiovanni (2000) captured these understandings for schools as communities that enjoy discretion and choice:

1. Schools need to be defined as collections of people and ideas rather than as structures of brick and mortar.
2. Shared values that lead to the development of tightly knit communities of mind and heart need to be encouraged within schools, while at the same time respect for the defining differences that make a school unique need to be encouraged among schools.
3. Though some schools might function as schools within schools and others as free-standing schools connected to a larger complex of schools, all schools need to be tied together by common foundational values.
4. Layered loyalties to one's own school community and to the larger community of schools needs to be cultivated.
5. Nothing in the concepts of nested communities, neighborhoods within a city, or schools within schools should compromise the individual rights of students, parents, teachers, and other community members.
6. This emphasis on individual rights needs to be tempered by deliberately linking rights to responsibilities within a framework of commitment to civic virtue, defined as the willingness of all members of the community, individually and collectively, to sacrifice their self-interest on behalf of the common good.
7. Within practical limits, students and their families, as well as teachers, should be able to choose the particular school, school family, or schools within a school they wish to join. This "school" of choice should be part of a larger legal framework of school or schools and resourced in an equitable level.
8. Commitment to both individual rights and shared responsibilities that are connected to the common good should provide the basis for moral leadership. (pp. 72–73)

In spite of the promise of educational communities that are based on ecological principles, communities can become fragmented and incoherent without leadership. Leadership is the factor that enables meaning to be constructed together in that it engages people in the essential reciprocal processes. Without value-driven, purposeful leadership, communities can become balkanized, or focused on the self-serving purposes of an individual or a few individuals.

Studies of cult communities such as Synanon (Lambert, 1982) recognize that even though many of the aspects of community may exist (interdependencies, purpose, support, and security), individual and societal

growth can be dramatically restricted, then reversed. If flexibility and diversity are disallowed by acts of leadership by an individual who focuses on control and conformity, the rewards of community can become counterproductive. Organization and community can be amoral concepts. Cult-type communities may articulate a purpose, usually the designated leader's purpose; however, this would not produce a moral community. What is it that creates a shared purpose of schooling to which people freely commit?

THAT LEAD TOWARD A SHARED PURPOSE OF SCHOOLING

Before the middle of the last millennium, the Gutenberg printing press found itself esconced in a warehouse in Victor Hugo's Paris. In one particularly powerful scene in *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831/1978), a church archdeacon, on learning the purpose of the cumbersome machine, observed in outrage: "Alas and alack, small things overcome great ones! A tooth triumphs over a body. The Nile rat kills the crocodile, . . . the book will kill the building!" Hugo goes on to explain: "It was the terror and bewilderment felt by a man of the sanctuary before the luminous press of Gutenberg. . . . It was the cry of the prophet who already hears the restless surge of an emancipated mankind, who can see that future time when intelligence will undermine faith, opinion dethrone belief, and the world shake off Rome" (pp. 188–189). His prediction proved remarkably keen, for a fundamental shift in access to knowledge gave rise to the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment. For most of the last three centuries, the schools have been the center of knowledge for the "common man." Today, American schools have lost not only their monopoly on knowledge—even their corner on knowledge has shrunk.

Several educational figures had been paddling swiftly against the tide. In 1979, Goodlad published the small work *What Are Schools For?*, in which he set forth the knowledge and competencies that schools should teach. Hirsch (1988) claimed the centrality of a common knowledge base (albeit European), and Adler laid out his *Paideia Program* (1984) for "essential" knowledge. These statements and arguments for a common knowledge base gave additional credence to the role of schools as knowledge dispensers—purveyors of the canon—at a time when this ancient role is necessarily under scrutiny. Few have questioned the assumption that such content should serve as the foundation of schooling. Today, standards have set forth the current canon of knowledge to be learned.

Children can see the world and its people on television's National Geographic or Discovery series, experience news as it is made, observe re-creations of history, have access to the Library of Congress, and observe and fall victim to the conflict and violence on America's streets. Almost any question can be researched, any information can be found through the Internet. In schools, we can teach children how to pose the questions, to access, process, and challenge knowledge, but we are no longer the major knowledge provider. Yet we have returned with full force to the notion of a knowledge base, usually static, through the standards and testing movement. We have codified with the force of law those things that children need to know and be able to do. In the first chapter, we made the case that standards—properly used—had the potential for addressing the needs of all children. We need not let it lull us into believing that there is a static knowledge base and that learning it will create thoughtful citizens. It must occur within a supportive, vibrant community in which children and adults are continually making sense of their learning and their lives.

We agree with our colleagues from Dewey (1916) to Glickman (1998) that our major purpose in schools remains the preparation of children for democratic citizenship. However, our track record here is as wanting as our role in the knowledge business. It is not surprising that when we do not offer democratic learning opportunities for children and adults, as we generally do not, we cannot expect democratic actions. However, in those rare schools and institutions in which we seek to teach democracy through experience, we tend to seek our goals through individual involvement in decision making. Focusing on such summative actions as the polling booth and the moment of decision making does not engage the prerequisite lived experiences essential for democratic life. It is as true today as it was in 1985 when Bellah and colleagues reminded us that individuals remain individuals in this country; they have vague understandings of community but virtually no conception of interconnected, pluralistic communities or social vision.

An integrated concept of the good society or shared purpose can only be found in interconnected, ecological communities. We continue to propose that *the purpose of schooling is to engage children and adults within patterns of relationships in school communities that serve as centers for sustained growth*. Experiences in ecological communities can produce a shared purpose for schooling, encompassing aims that extend beyond self-interest to the growth and well-being of children, their families, and society. Moral educational communities come into existence as people learn to grow together. The purposes referenced in our definition of constructivist

leadership involve a commitment to the growth of children and adults as well as a commitment to communities and societies that sustain such growth.

If participants are constructing their own meanings and knowledge, how can we be assured that the shared purpose of schooling will entail such a moral commitment? This confidence arises from a faith in ecological communities as communities enabling their participants to coevolve morally. As this coevolution takes place, caring, equity, and justice seem to surface as guiding values (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1976). Poplin and Weeres (1993) claimed in the work *Voices from the Inside* that the process created shared meanings that led to a larger moral purpose—teachers reconnected with their reasons for going into teaching. There resides in each of us a deep yearning for community and purpose. When individuals and others share a common experience of growth in an educational community, they experience an increased responsibility for others. We become committed to “a cause beyond oneself” (Glickman, 1993, p. 15). Within the context of these lived experiences, diversity opens up possibilities, helping us see the multiple perspectives and worldviews of others, and transcend the “fault lines” of difference. This faith in the transformational capacities of communities continues to be echoed by others in Toronto schools, a Seattle high school, the National Writing Project network, and leadership preparation programs built around learning communities (Fullan, 1999; Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth, 2000; Lieberman and Wood, 2001; Norris, Barnett, Basom, & Yerkes, 2002).

This purpose of schooling demands a rethinking of all aspects of our educational institutions, a commitment to a new set of goals. Knowledge must serve as “grist for the mill” for both students and adults, a basis for framing big questions, for conversations, and for learning the thinking and collaborative skills essential to a democracy. Purpose, like vision, emerges from the conversations. This sense of renewed purpose can be made possible through the processes of constructivist leadership.

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF CONSTRUCTIVIST LEADERSHIP

Our discussion about purpose and community is in its essence a spiritual one. Constructivist leadership is a spiritual concept in that it embraces reciprocity and equity, meaning, learning, responsibility, community, and purpose. By “spiritual,” says Palmer (1998), “I mean the diverse ways we answer the heart’s longing to be connected with the largeness of life—a longing that animates love and work, especially the

work called teaching” (p. 5). He continues, “The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts—meaning heart in the ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self” (p. 11). Asa Hilliard (1991) asked us a decade ago if we had the will to educate all children. Such “will” can be found in the meaningful conversations in schools. Connectedness found in the conversations we have with each other includes essential questions framing the “largeness of life”:

How do we relate to each other?

What contributions are we making to each other and to the larger society?

How do we create community? How do we create caring communities?

What is our shared purpose?

What does it mean to educate all children?

Meaning-making requires “going to ground,” coming to understand our inner terrain and therefore our most profound successes, puzzlements, mistakes, and avoidances. When we confront our failures to teach all children, a form of remorse and anguish is inevitable. Such anguish can only be survived and acted upon in supportive communities; otherwise denial is the expedient response. Many of our urban schools live in a state of denial created by the lack of an authentic community in which to translate the knowledge of failure with many children into what Etzioni (1999) refers to as “civic repentance.” By civic repentance he means our capacity to acknowledge mistakes (privately and collectively), learn from them, get back in touch with our core values, and restructure our lives as professionals. This process, not to be mistaken for the lingering guilt that can result in illness, challenges us to create Palmer’s “community of truth,” a place where we can come face-to-face with the realities of our lives, embrace those truths, and learn from them. Such a community requires the “epistemological reality that knowledge is embedded in discursive community, and knowledge claims (any claim to truth) should therefore be evaluated and, where appropriate, modified in the context of cooperative enquiries with community members” (Etzioni, 1998, p. 64).

As adults in schools, we must model for and with children the value actions embedded in the large questions above. As we learn from and contribute to each other, so will students be encouraged and clear about their responsibilities and opportunities to commit to others beyond themselves. Programs that involve community service, peer teaching, service learning, problem-based learning with community agencies, involvement

of whole families in the educational process, and Internet connections with developing countries, all hold great promise for enabling our youth to find their spiritual centers as they live their lives with us.

In our conversations with each other, Whyte contends (1994), we uncover our innocence, what it is to be “awestruck with wonder, ripe with the dumbest questions, and thirsting to learn” (p. 290). Such joy need not only reside with small children. Joy, wonder, and imagination bring perspective: We take ourselves less seriously, and we are more attentive to the greater world and to finding a sense of home in the exquisite patterns of relationships. Whyte continues:

The new organization that honors the soul and the soul of the world will be what Peter Senge has called “the learning organization,” an organization that is as much concerned with what it serves as what it is, as much attentive to the greater world as the small world it has become, as much trying to learn from the exquisite patterns that inform that greater world as trying to impose its own pattern on something already complete. (p. 296)

ACTS OF LEADERSHIP

An “act of leadership,” as distinguished from role leadership, is the performance of actions (behaviors plus intention) that enable participants in a community to evoke potential within a trusting environment; to inquire into practice, thereby reconstructing old assumptions; to focus on the construction of meaning; or to frame actions based on new behaviors and purposeful intention. Everyone in the school community can perform an act of leadership. Leadership is an inclusive field of processes in which leaders do their work.

Those who perform acts of leadership need to have the following qualities:

- A sense of purpose and ethics, because honesty and trust are fundamental to relationships
- Facilitation skills, because framing, deepening, and moving the conversations about teaching and learning are fundamental to constructing meaning
- An understanding of constructivist learning for all humans
- A deep understanding of change and transitions, because change is not what we thought it was
- An understanding of context so that communities of memories can be continually drawn and enriched

- An intention to redistribute power and authority, for without such intention and action, none of us can lead
- A personal identity that allows for courage and risk, low ego needs, and a sense of possibilities.

Educators generally enter life's work with *a sense of purpose and ethics*. Perhaps it is primitive and sketchy, certainly it is vulnerable. A few years ago, I heard a young teacher, Susan, in her third year of teaching, say that she had entered the profession because she wanted to make a difference with kids. I have heard this statement of dedication hundreds of times. Midway through the second year, she had begun to question her options, her possibilities. Yet as she sat in an initial meeting to plan for a professional practice school, she reported that this feeling of purpose began to resurface. So easily lost; so easily regained. So vulnerable.

Perhaps all educators were Susans at one point. What has happened? Do educators still possess that sense of purpose with which they began their work? Can it be recaptured? We believe so. Those who initiate an act of leadership are usually those who have held on tight to their purposes or who have been reawakened, experiencing a pattern of relationships that has helped to resurface and perhaps redefine and extend those original compelling purposes into ethical behavior. For them, a sense of coherence and authenticity contributes to the establishment of trust in communal relationships. *Actions that reconnect us* with our values and purpose may include facilitating the development of a shared vision or difficult dialogues about the capacities of all children, and keeping the values agenda on the table.

Those performing acts of leadership find *facilitation skills* essential to creating engagement in reciprocal processes among leaders in a community. These skills are vital to everyone in "Leading the Conversations" (Chapter 3). When I entered my third year of teaching, I discovered in an interview that all teachers and administrators in my new school were expected to participate in 30 hours of training in open communication, shared decision making, problem solving, and accountability. This school, Bell Junior High in Golden, Colorado, was genuinely founded on these four principles, and everyone was a leader and expected to facilitate the processes. *Actions encompassing such facilitation* included convening and sustaining the conversation, asking questions that move the conversation deeper, and enabling other participants to learn from experiencing facilitation.

An understanding of constructivist learning for all humans enables leaders to pose questions and to frame actions that cause self-construction

and collegial interaction as well as the design of constructivist curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Constructivism is not an evolutionary understanding that has naturally emerged from our training and experiences in behaviorism. Constructivism is a significantly different paradigm that enables us to frame new questions and create learning based on passion, unique learning gifts and perceptions, community, and authentic work and assessment. *Actions that address this act of leadership* include designing faculty meetings based on what we know about human learning, keeping teaching and learning at the center of our conversations, and studying professional literature that sets forth ideas and strategies based on constructivism.

A deep understanding of change and transitions is also essential to jointly designing the sequencing, timing, and duration of reciprocal processes. Change that is constructivist in nature emerges from the meaning-making process and is therefore unpredictable and evolving. Preset objectives, as well as predetermined strategies and techniques that are too tightly drawn, violate the very nature of constructivism. Constructivists have goals, outcomes, and a repertoire of change strategies that focus talent and resources toward a shared purpose. Attempting to harness real change that is being pulled by intention, not pushed by prediction, is so complex that its understandings can only be constructed in the conversations among co-leaders in a learning community. *Acts of leadership* in this area include using multiple forms of communication to enable people to work through change at many levels, keeping the vision and values in the conversation so everyone will keep in touch with why they are involved in the change, and coaching and mentoring people through the sense-making process.

An understanding of the context is essential to the unity of “communities of memories,” which must be drawn forth and enriched and reinterpreted. Bellah and colleagues (1985) invite us to consider communities, in the sense in which we are using the term, as having history—in an important sense they are constituted by their past—and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a “community of memory,” one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community needs to be engaged in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative (p. 153). These composite and shared memories take on expanded meanings when retold together. They constitute a vital part of the meaning construction (and reconstruction) that goes on in schools. When a new principal enters a school, we advise him or her to talk with teachers, with families, with children, to find out about the memories. Embedded in these stories are the values and intentions that drive the work in the school, as well as the fears and lost hopes that form barriers to collective

work. Further, schools are a part of an ever-changing context of culture, the context from which the students come. To develop viable curriculum and relationships we must know these cultures. *Acts of leadership* may include learning together about the culture of the families who are a part of the school, developing responsive teaching and learning, storytelling, and developing a histomap of the history of the school and community.

An intention to redistribute power and authority followed by action that both relinquishes power from formal positions and evokes power from others is essential to constructivist leadership. Such realignment of power is central to reciprocity and equity, to creating shared responsibility for our work. Uneven power arrangements have historically resulted in blame and abdicated responsibility. “A learning leader’s work,” claim Frydman, Wilson, and Wyer (2000) “is about skillfully giving away power, surrendering control, and rendering capacity for leadership in others. The word ‘skillful’ is key here. The devolution of power involves letting go of the reins in such a way as to free the potential for self-organizing networks to emerge” (p. 228). Block (1996) provides several profound reasons for replacing leadership with stewardship and thereby redistributing power: Stewardship is about service to others, not centralizing power to accomplish one’s own ends; traditional governance is based on “sovereignty and a form of intimate colonialism” (p. 7). Leadership, he argues, has engendered dependency; our sense of purpose is disconnected from a sense of service. *Acts of leadership* that address these barriers may include truly involving others in reciprocal partnerships and governance, thereby gaining authority from the participants (Glickman, 1998); solving problems together instead of telling and directing; and holding continuing dialogue about the needs of children and their families.

The redistribution of power requires that formal leaders construe and interpret themselves as they construct meaning and knowledge with others. Their *sense of personal identity* allows for courage and risk, low ego needs, and a sense of possibilities. Personal identity forms in reflective interactions with others. They seek not so much to explain and describe, but to listen and to understand. These individuals have outgrown the need to “win” in the traditional sense, understanding that reciprocity and high personal regard reframe “winning” into concern for moving toward a shared purpose. With a growing clarity and confidence in the grounding values that guide their lives, these emerging leaders are able to cut through the cumbersome morass that sometimes envelopes our lives and ask the next essential question. Since personal efficacy is evolving in a trusting environment, these leaders work with others to create possibili-

ties for all children and educators. *Acts of leadership* may include raising questions for which no clear answer exists, admitting mistakes, and creating multiple forums for conversations.

Full participation leads to acts of leadership; being fully engaged in meaning-making activates one's drive toward purpose and community. One cannot help but lead; one is compelled to do so by the self-directed drive toward self-renewal and interdependency. Responsibility toward self and others surfaces as an essential developmental process. Paulo Freire's (1973) ideas have long been persuasive: "Humankind emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled" (p. 44). We would add strongly, "*to intervene*" and *to construct and to reintervene* in their realities. We have seen this over and over as staff emerge into the leadership arena: The next essential question is asked, ideas and traditions are challenged, people volunteer to lead, groups form, curiosity is aroused, verbal and nonverbal interactions change. My experiences in tough-to-change schools and institutions is that these actions begin to emerge during the first year of active engagement and gain momentum about 18 months into the process. It is the participation processes that create the meaning and the understandings (the reality) to which people then commit themselves. Without these participatory opportunities, commitment is not possible, only compliance and disengagement.

This vision of the potential of educational leaders may not only seem ideal, it *is* ideal—and it is possible. Constructivist leadership enables human growth that was previously reserved for the few. Others were followers, relegated to second-class citizenship and second-class growth. In our traditional systems, growth was a limited resource; in ecological communities, interdependence and reciprocity require equal partners.

CONCLUSION

Since the mid-1990s, leadership has been bandied about in energetic and new ways—a ball in the air, it has been discarded, repainted, reshaped. It has evoked lively discussion and stimulated many to wander into uncharted territory. Leadership is in transition. Among the trailblazers of this new path has been constructivist leadership, boldly separating itself from the "one leader" and embedding itself within the patterns of learning relationships in schools and organizations.

In 1998, this path led to the concept of "leadership capacity" or the broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership. It emphasizes

that leadership work is skillful and multidimensional, and that many need to be involved in such work. Further, it establishes the reciprocal learning processes of inquiry and reflection as cornerstones in the schoolhouse that ensure that all children are learning.

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