

Organization of the Book

Leadership for Resilient Schools and Communities is intended to help everyone become more resilient, but it is not enough to say to individuals, “Learn to be tougher, be more capable, cope better,” if the environments in which they exist deplete their resiliency capabilities. For this reason, *Leadership for Resilient Schools and Communities* is dedicated to helping you learn how to modify environments—classrooms, schools, and communities—in ways that move away from resiliency depletion and toward resiliency building.

All our knowledge has its origins in our perceptions.

—Leonardo da Vinci

In the process, you will be challenged to examine your biases, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs, all of which directly affect how you see your environment and how you react to it. During the process, you may find it demanding to reconceptualize how you view your school and community, but we think you will find it to be worthwhile.

Leadership for Resilient Schools and Communities is organized in three parts. Part I, which includes the first two chapters, explores the meaning of resiliency and why it is so important for school and community well-being. Chapter 1 presents basic information about resiliency and provides necessary definitions and language systems that will be used throughout the book. Chapter 2 explores the concept of community, which is illusive, partly because of our tendency to frequently and widely move about and partly because of the rapidly changing demographic composition in many of our communities. We believe that the meaning of community may be undergoing a significant change. Physical proximity is becoming less relevant as the defining basis for community. In fact, community can be defined as an attitude as well as a location.

Change your thoughts and you change your world.

—Norman Vincent Peale

Part II, which includes four chapters, focuses on strategies that promote resiliency for students, educators, schools, and communities. Chapter 3 centers on students, their strengths, and their needs and on how schools can help build their resiliency capacities. We emphasize how schools tend to limit their role in building student resiliency and what they can do to change this situation. Chapter 4 examines the resiliency of educators, their capabilities and difficulties, and how the schools’ environments in which they work affect them. Ways that schools can help educators enhance their own resiliency, and, in the process, help them to be better role models for their students are examined. Chapter 5 explores how schools and their leaders can support or detract from the resiliency needs of students, educators, and community members. With some forethought, there are ways that schools can be organized, structured, and operated in supportive ways. Chapter 6 focuses on communities, which are vitally important to the support and maintenance of our schools. Schools need to learn how to partner better with their communities so they can provide the most effective education for students. Because we also believe that schools need to take responsibility for supporting and sustaining their surrounding communities, the chapter also examines ways that they can become more proactive as partners with their communities.

Part III consists of two chapters. Chapter 7 presents ideas that can help schools and communities move toward resiliency. The chapter offers strategies for school leaders who are responsible for facilitating the introduction of resiliency in schools and communities. The emphasis is on concepts and skills required to manage and assess change.

Chapter 8 provides a summary of efforts under way in communities that, in one way or another, are aimed at the development of resilient schools and communities. Learning about these efforts can be quite helpful to those who want to improve resiliency in their schools and communities. For those who may be interested, basic information, including ways of making contact, is provided for these and other community resiliency initiatives. Resources that can be used to guide school and community resiliency efforts are also catalogued.

In addition, there is a set of handouts that relate to the book's exercises. These can be freely copied for use in your school and community setting.

Leadership for Resilient Schools and Communities is a highly interactive book. There are activities throughout the first six chapters that can help you develop a better understanding of the concepts and strategies presented. Included are ways of diagnosing current situations and implementing strategies for change, as well as questions, exercises, surveys, quotations, and other stimuli that are intended to help you and other members of your school and community dialogue and, hopefully, engage in activities that can spread resiliency. We strongly encourage you to pursue the activities that are suggested in the book to promote this purpose.

We have not suggested any sequencing or timeframes for the exercises because each situation is different (e.g., current dynamics, number of individuals involved, time available, and readiness to engage, which can vary from low interest, to concern, to commitment to take whatever steps are necessary to promote resiliency in the school and the community). Depending on the situation, the exercises can be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from awareness raising at short meetings to an in-depth focus at retreats dedicated to goal setting and action planning. If people are ready to engage, the more time that is committed the more comprehensive the discussion will be and the more likely it is that shared understandings and commitments will be developed. The intent is not to complete all the exercises but to select the ones that meet the needs of your school and community. Furthermore, to the extent that you are able to engage others, it can turn out to be the start of a journey toward the development of a healthier, more resilient school and community.

This second edition incorporates what we have learned as a result of resiliency efforts we have facilitated over the eight years since the first edition, titled *Spreading Resiliency: Making It Happen for Schools and Communities*, was published, in national settings as diverse as the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and New Zealand. Modifications in our thinking have also been affected by feedback we have received on our presentations at educator conferences and numerous workshops we have conducted in schools as well as the feedback we have received from educators who have used the book to improve their schools. We believe the incorporated changes will improve the usefulness of the book for readers. For example, definitions and language used in the resiliency model have been clarified so they are clearer and easier to understand and many exercises have been updated. In addition, we have put greater focus on the role of educational leaders, including specific tips at the end of relevant chapters, in the initiation, development, and institutionalization of resiliency efforts. We have also included a brief rating exercise at the end of the chapters for leaders to assess their own readiness to facilitate resiliency initiatives.

We would like to thank the many educators and community members whose input has helped us advance our thinking about resilient schools and communities. The collaboration between Nan Henderson and Mike Milstein (1996, 2002), which resulted in the publication of *Resiliency in Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators*, provided the basic framework for the understanding and further development of our work on resiliency. Our work with the Ashland, Oregon, community in pursuing community-wide resiliency, which is summarized in the Chapter 8, provided the initial stimulus for the development of the book. In particular, Dr. John Daggett, retired Superintendent of the Ashland Public Schools, provided the vision and leadership required to make the Ashland dream a reality and encouraged us to continue our efforts regarding community resiliency. To all the wonderful people who have shared thoughts and efforts with us so openly and freely, we give our heartfelt thanks. The contributions of the following reviewers are also gratefully acknowledged.

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We hope that you find resiliency as an approach to school and community improvement as exciting and important as we do. If you engage in efforts aimed at supporting the resiliency of your community and its members, we would appreciate hearing about your efforts.

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