

Foreword

It warms my heart to have the privilege of writing a foreword for a book titled *The Principal as Professional Development Leader*, particularly a book that will prove as useful to its readers as this one. For many years, I told anyone who would listen that it was critically important that principals view themselves as staff developers. But even some of the most talented principals would resist my claim, and I eventually understood that they do so because they could not see themselves as skillful presenters, trainers, or consultants—the responsibilities most commonly associated with being a “staff developer.”

As a result, I began to draw a distinction between staff development leaders and staff development providers. *The National Staff Development Council’s Staff Development Code of Ethics* makes this distinction:

Many individuals who make important decisions about staff development have not traditionally viewed themselves as “staff developers.” To help clarify the various staff development responsibilities assumed by school board members, teachers, administrators, and other school employees, this Code of Ethics divides these responsibilities into two categories: staff development leader and staff development provider.

Staff development leaders are individuals within a school, school district, university, state education agency, or other educational organization who plan, implement, coordinate, and/or evaluate staff development efforts. They include but are not limited to directors of staff development, superintendents, school board members, principals, curriculum coordinators, and teacher leaders.

Staff development providers use their knowledge and skills to promote adult learning or to help groups and organizations perform more effectively. They include trainers, facilitators, consultants, mentors, and instructional and leadership coaches.

The *Staff Development Code of Ethics* offers a number of principles that I am pleased to say Phyllis Lindstrom and Marsha Speck have emphasized in their book:

- Staff development leaders are committed to achieving school and district goals, particularly those addressing high levels of learning and performance for all students and staff members.
- Staff development leaders select staff development content and processes that are research based and proven in practice after examining various types of information about student and educator learning needs.
- Staff development leaders continuously improve their work through the ongoing evaluation of staff development's effectiveness in achieving school system and school student learning goals.
- Staff development leaders continuously improve their knowledge and skills.

The Staff Development Code of Ethics provides a broad and important context from which *The Principal as Professional Development Leader* can be viewed. First, they both recognize that school leadership is a moral endeavor. "Behavior that is regarded as ethical," the *Code of Ethics* says, "is described as beneficial to everyone involved, truthful and accurate, and based on a commitment to doing one's duty, keeping promises, and not causing harm." Lindstrom and Speck express it this way: "... America needs well-informed principals to focus on ensuring high-quality educational experiences for all students. This means improving the instruction in every classroom. It is no longer a luxury to conduct professional development in our schools."

Second, the *Code* and *The Principal as Professional Development Leader* make it clear that leaders matter and that the actions of individuals can have a profound effect on their organizations, particularly as mediated by the relationships and cultures they establish. "High-quality professional development," Lindstrom and Speck write, "is a means to help reculture the school and improvement practice. The principal as professional development leader must understand deeply how changes take place in the structure and culture of the school organization and create a culture that understands and values high-quality professional development."

Third, both the *Code* and this book recognize that, as Lindstrom and Speck explain it, "Professional development is a lifelong, collaborative learning process that nourishes the growth of individuals,

teams, and the school through a daily job-embedded, learner-centered focused approach." That learning begins when leaders understand that it is important that they embody the changes they seek in others and then continue to grow alongside teachers and students.

A number of phrases that Lindstrom and Speck use in their book resonate with me—*shared leadership*, *professional learning community*, and *job-embedded learning* are but a few. Likewise, their view that effective principals serve as builders, designers, implementers, and reflective leaders is in tune with what I also regard as essential leadership responsibilities. School leaders who give this book the sustained attention it deserves will be rewarded for their effort, as will the teachers and students for whom they work.

—Dennis Sparks

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