
Preface

For school leaders, effective decisions have become clouded with ever-growing uncertainty and skepticism, especially difficult decisions. Stakeholders of education maintain high expectations for accountability and expect “me-first” entitlement. In this complex environment, decisions can quickly backfire and blow up in the face of school leaders with adverse effects and unintended consequences. It appears at every juncture of decision making that school leaders are being criticized for their decisions by any one of a number of individuals or institutions, including their own employees. These criticisms and the negative environment they create can overwhelm a leader, adversely affecting decision making. Compound these oppositional forces with the loneliness often associated with decision making and untenable situations can manifest, costing a leader his or her position and creating professional and personal duress. Enormous pressures are being placed on our nation’s school leaders at the building and district level. These pressures are compounded when school leaders lack a sound decision-making pedagogy, often unintentionally projected as an attempt to be *all* things to *all* people.

Transformational decision making is a framework of considerations, created to give leaders the confidence to act decisively with a sound decision-making pedagogy. Whether day-to-day decisions, or divisive and difficult decisions, leaders embracing this pedagogy will find themselves leading in profoundly positive, meaningful ways. Stakeholders of education will also benefit from a transformational perspective as the vision, mission, and overall common good permeate decisions.

Transformational decision making will not script which decisions to make, but how to make decisions by providing a framework of sound decision-making considerations. Simply stated, this pedagogy better ensures successful leadership by encouraging leaders to ask the

question, "What is in the best interest of the institution I lead?" The genuine and thoughtful answer to this question requires a consistent decision-making pedagogy.

Thirteen chapters describe essential considerations for making decisions. Each chapter is predicated on decision-making leadership that is transformational in an institutional context. *Transformational decision making* means thinking and acting in ways that reflect the common good as the leadership imperative, not the individual good. *Institution* identifies the name of various school entities. This might include school corporations, schools, organizations, teams, departments, classrooms, or unions. To be considered an institution, the entity must be composed of stakeholders (i.e., a membership); have a purpose; and possess some type of formal or informal leadership (e.g., board president, superintendent, principal, teacher, coach, department chair, or spokesperson). An institution is intended to represent the common good of its stakeholders.

Armed with this understanding, the reader crafts a personal pedagogy of decision making based on essential themes that include, in part, the role of vision and mission, capacity for change, motivation, laws of nature, barriers to decision making, development of respect and rapport, empowerment and delegation, and the effects of the for-profit sector. Each chapter concludes with a conceptual framework, which includes concise, step-by-step considerations to inform the leader's decision making. Also included at the end of each chapter is a reflective thinking section, which includes several questions for individual reflection, group discussion, and team conversations. Based on the belief that great leaders ask great questions, both the conceptual framework and reflective thinking sections are immersed in a thought-provoking question format for the reader to reveal the values and beliefs associated with the decision-making considerations.

Readers are encouraged to complete the decision-making self-assessment. It is intended to establish the respondent's baseline perceptions about how to make decisions. This 40-item inventory is an essential first step toward the journey of developing a sound and effective decision-making pedagogy. When taken by multiple stakeholders, the assessment can also inform various institutions regarding their decision-making capacity.

The authors owe a great debt of gratitude to the school leaders who generously shared their wisdom, real-life stories, and testimonials. Their passion, enthusiasm, and commitment to the noble profession of education made the development of this book a truly rewarding experience.