

Module 5

How does sharing contribute to sustainable leadership?

Reading 5.1

Hargreaves, A. & Fink, D. (2004). The seven principles of sustainable leadership. *Educational Leadership*, 61(7), 8-13.

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The Seven Principles of Sustainable Leadership

Education leaders want to accomplish goals that matter, inspire others to join them in working toward those goals, and leave a lasting legacy.

Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink

A charismatic principal turns around an underperforming school—then sees all his work unravel within months of his subsequent promotion to the central office. The principal of a magnet school boosts her institution's reputation by attracting top students from across the city; meanwhile, the neighborhood school's test scores plummet as the magnet school steals its best students. Teachers in a high school watch four principals pass through their school in six years and conclude that they can easily wait out all future principals and their change agendas.

These examples of unsustainable leadership emerged in a Spencer Foundation-funded study of change during three decades in eight U.S. and Canadian high schools, as seen through the eyes of more than 200 teachers and administrators (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2004). The study found that a key force leading to meaningful, long-term change is leadership sustainability.

Most school leadership practices create temporary, localized flurries of change but little lasting or widespread improvement. The study found some exceptions, however. From the first day of their appointment, some leaders thought hard about how they might implement deep, broad, and long-lasting reforms.

The following examples from our study illustrate seven principles that together define sustainable leadership.¹

Sustainable Leadership Matters

The prime responsibility of all education leaders is to put in place learning that engages students intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Sustainable leadership goes beyond temporary gains in achievement scores to create lasting, meaningful improvements in learning (Glickman, 2002; Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2002). Two examples illustrate this point.

Talisman Park High School's principal reacted to a newly mandated 10th grade literacy test—which students would have to pass to graduate—by trying to shield his experienced staff from time-consuming test-related activities. He decided that the most expedient way to get good results was to concentrate on boosting the achievement of students who were likely to fall just below the passing grade. Although the strategy made the school's immediate scores look good, other students who really needed help with literacy were cast by the wayside.

Meanwhile, the principal of neighboring, more ethnically diverse Wayvern High School responded to the mandated test by concentrating on improving literacy for all students in the long run. Teachers worked together to audit and improve their literacy practices and,

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with the help of parents and the community, focused for an entire month on improving literacy learning for everyone. The first-year results were not dramatic. But by the second year, the school scored above the district mean, and by the third, the school had become the district's number-two performer—well ahead of privileged Tallsman Park, which had opted for the quick fix.

Sustainable Leadership Lasts

Sustainable leadership means planning and preparing for succession—not as an afterthought, but from the first day of a leader's appointment. Our study offered rare glimpses of thoughtful and effective succession management. One school, for example, built on its ebullient and optimistic principal's success in forging a democratically developed school improvement plan by grooming his assistant principal to replace him when he retired.

In general, however, our study showed that leadership succession is rarely successful. Charismatic leaders are followed by less-dynamic successors who cannot maintain the momentum of improvement. Leaders who turn around underperforming schools are prematurely transferred or promoted before their improvements have had a chance to stick.

The history of Stewart Heights High School illustrates the *revolving-door principalship* (MacMillan, 2000), or *carousel of leadership succession* (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003), that has become increasingly common in today's high-stakes, reform-driven climate. In the early 1990s, Stewart Heights had been drifting for years. Its aging staff was nostalgic for its days as a "village school" and had never accepted the challenges of its increasing urbanization and cultural diversity. The principal confessed that he did not have a particular direction or goal for the school. He just wanted to buffer his teachers from outside forces so they could concentrate on the classroom. When this principal retired, the district appointed dynamic, experienced, and somewhat abrasive Bill Matthews to replace him.

Matthews believed strongly that students came first. He communicated clear expectations and a relentless determination to provide "a service to kids and the community." By the end of Matthews' third year—after the school had made curriculum changes, planned for school improvement, restructured the guidance process, and created a more-welcoming physical environment—student and parent satisfaction had increased dramatically. Suddenly, however, Matthews was promoted to a district leadership role. With leadership shortages surfacing across the district, his assistants were transferred as well.

Into the chaos that was left behind, the district parachuted first-time principal Jim West. West would have preferred to feel his way carefully, but he and his unprepared assistants had to concentrate on implementing a newly mandated reform agenda. Within months, everything Matthews had achieved in school improvement came undone. Traditional power blocs, such as the department heads' group that had dominated before Matthews' arrival, reasserted their authority because West needed their support to ensure compliance with the mandated reforms. Like a deer in the headlights, West displayed a lack of decisiveness that led some teachers to regard him and his assistants as ineffectual. As one long-serving teacher commented, "Nice people. Can't cope."

Within just three years, West was moved on. In a school that had now seen four principals in six years, the staff had become cynical.

Sustainable leadership demands that leaders pay serious attention to leadership succession. We can achieve this goal by grooming successors to continue important reforms, by keeping successful leaders in schools longer when they are making great strides in promoting learning, by resisting the temptation to search for irreplaceable charismatic heroes to be the saviors of our schools, by requiring all district and school improvement plans to include succession plans, and by slowing down the rate of repeated successions so teachers do not cynically decide to "wait out" all their leaders (Fink & Brayman, in press).

Sustainable Leadership Spreads

One way for leaders to leave a lasting legacy is to ensure that others share and help

develop their vision. Leadership succession, therefore, means more than grooming the principal's successor. It means distributing leadership throughout the school's professional community so others can carry the torch after the principal has gone (Spillane, Halverson, & Drummond, 2001).

The founding principal of Durant, an alternative high school in a northeast U.S. city, believed that the school's original vision of fostering independent learning in real-life settings would survive only if teachers, students, and parents shared that vision. The principal emphasized dialogue and shared decision making, and the staff came to believe that "we were all administrators." Long after the principal's retirement, the teachers and other members of the school community continued to resist the standardizing policies of the district and state, holding fast to their founding vision by seeking waivers for their distinctive program.

Durant's neighbor, Sheldon High School, experienced the full effects of white flight to the suburbs and to magnet school competitors starting in the early 1980s. Sheldon saw its racial balance and intake of students with special needs shift dramatically as a result. The largely white teaching staff felt frustrated in the face of these changes and shut out of important school decisions.

As an outlet for their frustrations and leadership impulses, teachers turned increasingly to their union. As the union became more assertive, the district responded by appointing a succession of autocratic leaders—each one chosen with the idea that he could "stand up" to the union. The resulting standoff led to the school's almost complete inability to respond effectively to its changing student population. Teachers decried lack of disciplinary support from the principal's office and refused to change their own traditional practices.

These two scenarios show that sustainable leadership is not just the responsibility of the school administrator. In a highly complex world, no one leader, institution, or nation can control everything without help (Fullan, 2001). Sustainable leadership must be a shared responsibility.

Sustainable Leadership Is Socially Just

Sustainable leadership benefits all students and schools—not just a few at the expense of the rest. Sustainable leadership is aware of how lighthouse, magnet, and charter schools and their leaders can leave others in the shadows and is sensitive to how privileged communities can be tempted to skim the cream off the local leadership pool. Sustainable leadership recognizes and takes responsibility for the fact that schools affect one another in webs of mutual influence (Baker & Foote, in press). In this respect, sustainability is inextricably tied to issues of social justice.

For instance, Blue Mountain High School took great care not to raid all the best teachers, leaders, and students from nearby schools. In consultation with the school district and other high school principals, its principal operated a quota system so the school would not draw disproportionately from any one school or age group of teachers in the district. By attending to the needs of other schools, the principal not only exercised responsibility for social justice but also avoided inviting envy and resentment from neighboring schools.

By comparison, the one magnet school in our study, Barrett High School, prospered at the expense of its neighbors. The urban school was developed in the late 1980s to stem the tide of white flight out of the city by pursuing high standards and selecting appropriate students and teachers from other schools in the district. *U.S. News* described the school as one of the top 150 high schools in the United States. Some of the school's high-achieving students were drawn from a neighboring school. Once called the "jewel of the district," this second school now described itself ironically as the "special education magnet"—with low attendance, high violence rates, and a standardized curriculum that robbed teachers of their social mission and professional discretion. By concentrating excellence in specialized pockets, the district created a system of high standards, authentic learning, and flexible teaching for the more-privileged magnet schools and their teachers—but allotted soulless standardization to the rest.

Sustainable leadership is therefore not only about maintaining improvement in one's own

school. Leaders who care about sustainability accept responsibility for the schools and students that their own actions affect in the wider environment.

Sustainable Leadership Is Resourceful

Sustainable leadership systems provide intrinsic rewards and extrinsic incentives that attract and retain the best and brightest of the leadership pool. Such systems provide time and opportunity for leaders to network, learn from and support one another, and coach and mentor their successors. Sustainable leadership is thrifty without being cheap. It carefully husbands its resources in developing the talents of all its educators rather than lavishing rewards on a few proven stars. Sustainable leadership systems take care of their leaders and encourage leaders to take care of themselves.

Unfortunately, in all the schools in our study, reform demands, resource depletion, and a resulting rush to retirement have created rapid turnover among principals, along with devastating reductions in the numbers of assistant principals and such middle-level leaders as department heads. In addition, school districts have dramatically downsized support from consultants, assistant superintendents, and other officials, leaving principals feeling overwhelmed and alone. Cultures of supervision and personal support for school leaders have been replaced by the depersonalized demands of test-based accountability.

Teachers and school leaders who are burned out by excessive demands and diminishing resources have neither the physical energy nor the emotional capacity to develop professional learning communities (Byrne, 1994). The emotional health of leaders is a scarce resource. Unless reformers and policymakers care for leaders' personal and professional selves, they will engineer short-term gains only by mortgaging the entire future of leadership.

Even the most motivated and committed leaders can sustain themselves for only so long. Principal Charmaine Watson had built the foundation for a collaborative learning community at Talisman Park High School, but she was suddenly transferred after three years to another school. She left grieving for the work that she still needed to do. She took the same inspirational drive and commitment to building community to her next school, but in the new context of resource reductions and un-realistic implementation timelines, the system no longer supported collaboration. So Watson was now reduced to "modeling optimism" (Blackmore, 1996). The emotional strain of trying to remain positive in depressing times eventually took its toll, and after months of stress, she retired early.

Under this deluge of reform directives, some principals in our study hauled themselves up into district administration, escaped to the island of early retirement, were hospitalized when they drowned under the pressure, or narrowed their role from leadership to management so they could continue to cope. In the end, leadership can be sustainable only if it sustains leaders themselves.

Sustainable Leadership Promotes Diversity

Promoters of sustainability cultivate and re-create an environment that has the capacity to stimulate continuous improvement on a broad front. Supporters of sustainability enable people to adapt to and prosper in their increasingly complex environments by learning from one another's diverse practices (Capra, 1997).

Innovative schools create this diversity. Our study included three innovative schools; unfortunately, all three have regressed under the standardization agenda. For instance, the state exams have obliged Durant Alternative School to standardize its teaching and student assessments, turning school-developed history courses that once engaged students of diverse backgrounds into the abstract memory work of World History 1 and 2. Instead of building shared improvement, two principals in these innovative schools have found themselves having to force through implementation. When these once-loved leaders tried to "talk up" the questionable change agendas, many teachers felt that they had sold their schools and their souls to the district or state.

Standardization is the enemy of sustainability. Sustainable leadership recognizes and cultivates many kinds of excellence in learning, teaching, and leading, and it provides the networks for sharing these different kinds of excellence in cross-fertilizing processes of improvement (Giles & Hargreaves, in press; Louis & Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert,

2001). Sustainable leadership does not impose standardized templates on everyone.

Sustainable Leadership Is Activist

Standardized reform has exaggerated the problems of the traditional schools in our study, turning these schools into less-motivated versions of their former selves. Meanwhile, the innovative schools have lost some of their edge. Durant has proven the most resilient of all—not just because of its innovativeness or its strength as a learning community, but because of its activist leadership (Oakes, Quartz, & Lipton, 2000). Durant engages assertively with its environment in a pattern of mutual influence.

In the past few years, Durant's courageous new principal has activated his personal and professional networks and forged strategic alliances with the community in a tireless campaign to preserve the school's mission. He has written articles for local and state newspapers, appeared on radio and television programs, and supported students and parents who, in a symbolic gesture, protested in straitjackets outside the district offices. He organized conferences on the adverse effects of high-stakes testing and worked assiduously with his allies throughout the state to push for a request for group variance from the state tests, receiving for his efforts a temporary exclusion from state policy. Durant's story shows that, especially in an unhelpful environment, sustainable leadership must have an activist dimension.

Systems Must Support Sustainable Leadership

Our study found inspiring examples of leaders who did more than just manage change; they pursued and modeled sustainable leadership. Leaders develop sustainability by committing to and protecting deep learning in their schools; by trying to ensure that improvements last over time, especially after they have gone; by distributing leadership and responsibility to others; by considering the impact of their leadership on the schools and communities around them; by sustaining themselves so that they can persist with their vision and avoid burning out; by promoting and perpetuating diverse approaches to reform rather than standardized prescriptions for teaching and learning; and by engaging actively with their environments.

Most leaders want to accomplish goals that matter, inspire others to join them in working toward those goals, and leave a legacy after they have gone. Leaders don't usually let their schools down; the failure often rests with the systems in which they lead. The results of our study indicate that sustainable leadership cannot be left to individuals, however talented or dedicated they are. If we want change to matter, to spread, and to last, then the systems in which leaders do their work must make sustainability a priority.

Endnote

¹ Names of schools and individuals are pseudonyms.

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Reading 5.2

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Leadership & sustainability

System Thinkers
in Action

Michael Fullan
(2005)

A Joint Publication



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CHAPTER TWO

The Intriguing Nature of Sustainability

As the struggle to achieve large-scale reform evolves, sustainability is becoming a rallying concept, one that contains the elaboration of strategies essential for whole-system capacity building on an ongoing basis. This chapter attempts to lay out the emerging nature of what sustainability is, especially what built-in strategies simultaneously constitute and promote it.

LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS

The starting point is to observe that nothing tried so far really works. Local autonomy, whether it is the “let a thousand flowers bloom variety” or site-based management within a framework of external accountability, does not produce results on any scale; the command, control, and support strategy of informed prescription takes us some distance, but it is still surface stuff without any likelihood of lasting. Any solutions must be efficient, sophisticated, powerful, and amenable to action. As we move into more powerful concepts, the paralysis of excessive analysis will make matters worse, as will deep critiques without equally deep ideas for transcending identified problems. The solution will require us to use complexity and systems theory, but in my use of it, every abstract concept must be accompanied by a practical strategy that illustrates the concept in action. Solutions, in other words, must be theoretical and practical.

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This is why I dedicate this book to the new theoreticians—people working on the real problem of transforming real systems, learning by doing it.

I start by discussing eight main elements of an evolving sustainable system, but let’s be humble. Addressing the problem of sustainability is the ultimate, adaptive challenge, to use Heifetz’s words (Heifetz, 2003; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002):

An adaptive challenge is a problem for which solutions lie outside the current way of operating. We can distinguish technical problems, which are amenable to current expertise, from adaptive problems, which are not. (Heifetz, 2003, p. 70)

EIGHT ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is an adaptive challenge par excellence. As I see it, there are at least eight elements of sustainability:

1. Public service with a moral purpose
2. Commitment to changing context at all levels
3. Lateral capacity building through networks
4. Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships (encompassing both capacity building and accountability)
5. Deep learning
6. Dual commitment to short-term and long-term results
7. Cyclical energizing
8. The long lever of leadership

These eight elements are introduced in this chapter and pursued throughout the book. While I use them in relation to education, these very same strategies can be applied to any public service and to corporate institutions.

1. Public Service With a Moral Purpose

Chapman (2003) talks about the new agenda for public value.

situations and requirements; we must invest and develop institutions which are "learning systems," that is to say, systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation. (cited in Hargreaves, p. 74)

It is not Schon's fault that 30 years later, this advice remains 100% accurate but of little practical use. How do you enter the chicken-and-egg equation of starting down the path of generating learning systems in practice, especially in an era of transparent accountability? Again, this book is about providing a practical response to this question; and there is now more powerful (and practical in the high-yield sense) evidence that "changing the system" is an essential component of producing learning organizations.

Put another way, what is it going to take to address Tom Bentley's (2003) challenge?

Recent reform has shown that short-term improvements in key areas such as numeracy and literacy scores, hospital waiting times and street crime are possible. But embedding high expectations and performance permanently in the workings of public service organizations means changing "whole systems," often radically, and equipping them to adapt more effectively to ongoing change. (p. 9)

Changing whole systems means changing the entire context within which people work. Researchers are fond of observing that "context is everything," usually in reference to why a particular innovation succeeded in one situation but not another. Well, if context is everything, we must directly focus on how it can be changed for the better. It is not as impossible as it sounds, although it will take time and cumulative effort. The good news is that once it is under way, it has self-generating powers to go further.

Contexts are the structure and cultures within which one works. In the case of educators, the tri-level contexts are school/community, district, and system. The question is, can we identify strategies that will indeed change in a desirable direction the contexts that affect us? (Currently, these contexts have a neutral or adverse affect on what we do.)

On a small scale, Gladwell (2000) has already identified context as a key "tipping point": "The power of context says that what really

- The level of service provision is improved.
- The quality of service is increased.
- The equity or fairness with which service is delivered is increased.
- The service provision is more sustainable and takes into account the needs of future generations.
- The provision of the service is done in a way consistent with the expectations of a liberal diverse society.
- The service provision enhances the level of trust between government and citizens. (p. 128)

Barber (2004) advocates "the enabling state" (in contrast to "the minimalist state") in which strong public services:

- Are universal and diverse
- Respond to the needs and aspiration of citizens
- Compete with the private sector on quality

In Barber's model, quality of implementation and short- and long-term outcomes are just as crucial as purpose.

In examining moral purpose (Fullan, 2003b), I talked about how it must transcend the individual to become an organization and system quality in which collectivities are committed to three aspects of moral purpose: (1) raising the bar and closing the gap of student learning; (2) treating people with demanding respect (moral purpose is supportive, responsive, and demanding, depending on the circumstances); and (3) altering the social environment (e.g., other schools and districts) for the better.

Public value and moral purpose have always been the mission statements of democratic governments. This time it is different because the eight elements of sustainability, once pursued in combination, compel all levels of the system to take moral purpose seriously.

2. Commitment to Changing Context at All Levels

David Hargreaves (2003) reminds us of Donald Schon's observation, more than 30 years ago:

We must . . . become adept at learning. We must become able not only to transform our institutions, in response to changing

matters is the little things" (p. 150). And if you want to change people's behavior, "You need to create a community around them, where these new beliefs could be practical, expressed and nurtured" (p. 173). Drawing from complexity theory, I have already made the case that if you want to change systems, you need to increase the amount of purposeful interaction between and among *individuals* within and across the tri-levels, and indeed within and across *systems* (Fullan, 2003a).

Setting targets and mandatory "annual yearly progress," as in the case with No Child Left Behind, will change only a tiny slice of the context and is neither large enough nor powerful enough to motivate or give people the capacity to succeed. It is also crucial to emphasize that we are not talking about changing the context just for local schools; context change for all levels of the system is essential. New capacity and actions are required at all three levels and in their interactions across levels.

So, we need first of all to commit to pursuing public value through changing context. Then, at a more practical level, each of the remaining six elements soon to be discussed literally gives people new experiences, new capacities, and new insights into what should and can be accomplished. It gives people a taste of the power of new context, none more so than the discovery of lateral capacity building.

3. Lateral Capacity Building Through Networks

I say "discovery" because the sequence was as follows: greater accountability leading to the realization that support or capacity building was essential, which led to vertical capacity building with external trainers at the district or other levels, and then, in turn, to the realization that lateral capacity building across peers was a powerful learning strategy.

In Chapter 5, we will describe lateral capacity across schools, where principals and teacher leaders collaborate with other schools to learn from and contribute to school improvement, not only in individual schools, but also in the district as a whole.

The most systematic strategy-driven use of networks and collaboratives is evolving in England, partly as a response to the limitations of "informed prescription." For example, the government has launched a consultant leaders program in which 1,000 primary

school principals who have been successful at improving literacy achievement in their schools are linked (on a 4-to-1 basis) with 4,000 other school principals who want to learn to be more effective in this domain. Thus in this one strategy alone, 20% of all school principals in the country are involved in mutual learning.

Many of the new network strategies in England are being developed by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL). In two publications, NCSL describes "networked learning communities." In *Why Networked Learning Communities*, NCSL (2003b) states

Collaboration rather than competition is the motivation for hundreds of schools in this pioneering programme that will transform learning experiences for children, teachers and school leaders. (p. 1)

Another project, *Like No Other Initiative* (NCSL, 2003a), states

The proposition was that schools seeking to become professional learning communities could achieve this more appropriately and more profoundly by working together interdependently in networks. (p. 1)

Since 2002, more than 100 such networks have been funded. All in all, NCSL states that there are six forms of learning promoted in the networks: pupil learning, adult learning, leadership for learning and leadership development, schoolwide learning, school-to-school learning, and network-to-network learning.

In other initiatives, groups of Local Education Authorities (LEAs, or districts) are networked in order to learn from each other about specific topics, such as how to establish efficient and effective "assessing for learning" systems.

There are a number of obvious benefits from lateral strategies (see also D. Hargreaves, 2003, *Education Epidemic*). People learn best from peers (fellow travelers who are further down the road) if there is sufficient opportunity for ongoing, purposeful exchange; the system is designed to foster, develop, and disseminate innovative practices that work—discoveries, let's say, in relation to Heifetz's adaptive challenges ("solutions that lie outside the current way of operating"); leadership is developed and mobilized in many quarters;

and motivation and ownership at the local level are opened, a key ingredient for sustainability of effort and engagement.

Networks are potentially powerful but can have their downsides. First, there may come to be too many of them, adding clutter instead of focus. Second, they may exchange beliefs and opinions more than quality knowledge, and in any case, what are the processes that could determine the quality and use of knowledge? Third, networks are usually outside the line-authority; so the question is, how do potentially good ideas get out of the networks, so to speak, and into focused implementation, which requires intensity of effort over time in given settings? Networks are not ends in themselves, but must be assessed in terms of their contribution to changing the cultures of schools and districts in the direction of the eight elements of sustainability, including, as we are about to discuss, more effective, less cumbersome accountability schemes.

It is also important to note that lateral capacity is not the only strategy at work (in particular, the relationship to the other seven elements of sustainability must be highlighted). Complexity theory tells us that if you increase the amount of purposeful interaction and infuse it with the checks and balances of quality knowledge, *self-organizing* patterns (desirable outcomes) will accrue. This promise is not good enough for the sustainability-seeking society with a sense of urgency. This is why we need the new theoreticians who are working diligently to establish the eight elements of sustainability.

4. Intelligent Accountability and Vertical Relationships

Sustainable societies must solve (hold in dynamic "tension") the perennial change problem of how to get both local ownership (including capacity) and external accountability, and to get this in the entire system. We know that the problems have to be solved locally:

Solutions rely, at least in part, on the users themselves and their capacity to take shared responsibility for positive outcomes. In learning, health, work, and even parenting, positive outcomes arise from a combination of personal effort and wider social resources. (Bentley & Wilsdon, 2003, p. 20)

The question is, what is going to motivate people to seek positive outcomes, and when it comes to the public good, how are people

and groups to be held accountable? The answer is a mixture of collaboration and networks, on one hand, and what David Miliband, Minister of State for School Standards in Britain, calls "intelligent accountability," on the other hand. Networks and other professional learning communities (lateral capacity building) do build in a strong but not complete measure of accountability. As such communities interact around given problems, they generate better practices, shared commitment, and accountability to peers. As we will see in later chapters, collaborative cultures are demanding when it comes to results, and the demand is telling because it is peer based and up-close on a daily basis.

Vertical relationships (state/district, district/school, etc.) must also be strengthened. One aspect of vertical relationships involves support and resources; the other concerns accountability. Some aspects of accountability will come in the form of Elements 5 (deep learning) and 6 (short-term and long-term results). It will be difficult to get the balance of accountability right in terms of vertical authority: Too much intrusion demotivates people; too little permits drift, or worse.

To address this problem, we need to reintroduce a strategy that has been around for at least 20 years, namely, "self-evaluation," or "school self-review," as it is now called (see Hopkins, 2001; Macheath, Schratz, Meuret, & Jakobsen, 2000). In the past, self-evaluation has been touted as an alternative to top-down assessment. In fact, we need to conceive of self-evaluation and use it as a both/and solution. New tools for school self-review are now available with the latter goal in mind (several districts in England are now engaged in such development).

Miliband (2004), in a recent speech, put it this way in advocating

An accountability framework, which puts a premium on ensuring effective and ongoing self-evaluation in every school combined with more focused external inspection, linked closely to the improvement cycle of the school. (p. 6)

He then proposes

First, we will work with the profession to create a suite of materials that will help schools evaluate themselves honestly. The balance here is between making the process over-prescriptive, and making it just an occasional one-off event. In the best

schools it is continuous, searching and objective. Second, [we] will shortly be making proposals on inspection, which take full account of a school's self-evaluation. A critical test of the strong school will be the quality of its self-evaluation and how it is used to raise standards. Third, the Government and its partners at local and national level will increasingly use the information provided by a school's self-evaluation and development plan, alongside inspection, to inform outcomes about targeting support and challenge. (p. 8)

Despite David Miliband's reference to intelligent accountability, three unions in England just released a paper advocating that "assessment for learning" be reclaimed by the teaching profession. They say, in effect, that the government's intelligent accountability does not rely enough on teacher assessment and judgment.

The union leaders argue that teacher assessment is at the heart of effective learning. The type of assessment that best supports learning is one based on the day-to-day informed professional judgments that teachers make about pupils' learning achievement and their learning needs (Association of Teachers and Lecturers, National Union of Teachers and Professional Association of Teachers, 2004, p. 2).

In other words, the area of accountability and assessment (of and for learning) is going to be contentious no matter how skilled each side becomes at claiming they have the most balanced approach that is best for students and the public. So, it will be very difficult to combine self-evaluation and outside evaluation, but this is the sophistication of sustainability—for the latter to have a chance, *the whole system* must be involved in a codependent partnership, being open to addressing problems as they arise. The new theoreticians on both sides of the accountability issue should be able to come up with a workable approach, acknowledging that it will always be in dynamic tension.

Another critical reason why the whole system must be engaged and why vertical integration must harness horizontal creativity concerns the problem of overload, multiple innovations, and fragmentation or lack of coherence (Fullan, 2001). Education and the public service more broadly do not suffer from too few innovations, but rather from too many ad hoc, unconnected, superficial innovations. Vertical integration is not the only coherence-maker, but it is a key one. The system or organization itself must constantly work on

connecting the dots, capturing valuable emerging ideas and patterns. Coherence-making makes complexity simpler. Gathering and paying attention to quality data is learning toward coherence.

5. Deep Learning

Sustainability by our definition requires continuous improvement, adaptation, and collective problem solving in the face of complex challenges that keep arising. As Heifetz (2003) says, adaptive work "demands learning," "demands experimentation," and "difficult conversations." "Species evolve whereas cultures learn," says Heifetz (p. 75).

There are three big requirements for the data-driven society: drive out fear; set up a system of transparent data-gathering coupled with mechanisms for acting on the data; make sure *all* levels of the system are expected to learn from their experiences. Deep learning is for students, teachers, schools, districts, and governments if sustainability is to have any chance.

First, then, is to reduce the fear factor. One of W. E. Deming's (1986) prescriptions for success was "Drive out fear." In the *Education Epidemic*, David Hargreaves (2003) argues

Government must give active permission to schools to innovate and provide a climate in which failure can be given a different meaning as a necessary element in making progress, as is the case in the business world. . . . Mistakes can be accepted or even encouraged, provided that they are a means of improvement. (p. 36)

Hargreaves quotes

The fastest way to succeed is to double your failure rate. (Thomas Watson, IBM)
Fail often to succeed sooner. (Tom Kelley, IDEO)
You must learn to fail intelligently. Failing is one of the greatest arts in the world. One fails forward towards success. (Thomas Edison) (p. 35)

Or if you like, try the title of Farson and Keyes's (2002) *Whoever Makes the Most Mistakes Wins*.

Hyperbole aside, the point is to not fail stupidly (you are not allowed to keep making the same mistake) but to fail intelligently (forgive and remember). The latter is very much linked to sustainability. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000), in *The Knowing-Doing Gap*, devoted a whole chapter to "When Fear Prevents Acting on Knowledge." In organization after organization, they found that an atmosphere of fear and distrust prevented knowledge from being translated into action (p. 109).

Significantly, Pfeffer and Sutton (2002) identify two other "pernicious effects." One is that "fear causes a focus on the short run [driving] out consideration of the longer run" (pp. 124–125). The other problem is that "fear creates a focus on the individual rather than the collective" (p. 126). In a punitive culture, if I can blame others or others make mistakes, I am better off. Need I say that both the focus on the short run and excessive individualism are fatal for sustainability?

We also see why heavy-handed schemes like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in the United States and a prescriptive preoccupation with targets in England during the 1990s are bad for sustainability.

Second, capacities and means of acting on the data are critical for learning. Thus "assessment for learning" has become a powerful, high-yield tool for school improvement and student learning (see especially Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2003; Hill & Crevola, 2003; Stiggins, 2001). Critical aspects of the move toward more effective data use include (a) avoiding excessive assessment demands (Miliband (2004) talks about reducing necessary paper and information burden, which distract schools from their core business); (b) ensure that a range of data are collected—qualitative as well as quantitative. In *Leading in a Culture of Change* (Chapter 4, "Knowledge Building," Fullan, 2001), I cite several examples, including the U.S. Army's "After Action Reviews," which have three standardized questions: What was supposed to happen? What happened? And what accounts for the differences? This kind of learning is directed to the future, that is, to sustainable improvements.

Third, deep learning is for all levels of the system. At schools and districts, it means collaborative cultures of inquiry that alter the culture of learning in the organization away from dysfunctional and non-relationships toward the daily development of culture that can solve difficult or adaptive problems (see especially Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Perkins, 2003). The "curriculum" for doing this is contained in Kegan and Lahey's seven languages for transformation (e.g., from the

language of complaint to the language of commitment) and in Perkins's developmental leadership, which promotes "progressive interaction" that evokes the exchange of good ideas and fosters the cohesiveness of the group. These new ways of working involve deep changes in the culture of most organizations, and thus the training and development must be sophisticated and intense. Perkins emphasizes how difficult this is going to be. He makes the case that "regressive interaction" (poor knowledge exchange and weak social cohesion) is more likely to occur because it is easier than trying to create the more complex progressive cultures. More about Kegan and Lahey and Perkins later. The point here is that we need a critical mass of new leaders who can move school systems in the direction of deep learning.

And, of course, deep learning for the organization is a necessary condition for fostering deep learning for students of the kind portrayed by Bereiter (2002), Claxton (2002) National Research Council (1999), and others, which includes a greater voice and role for students to shape their own learning and understanding.

Finally, learning from data and experience is not just for schools, but for all levels equally, district and government as well. For example:

In reality, the system is truly transformed when its central bureaucracy is also transformed, itself becoming an example of the learning organization that it advocates for schools. (D. Hargreaves, 2003, p. 87)

Governments thus would have to rethink their relationships to districts and schools (combining intelligent accountability and lateral-capacity-building strategies, for instance), and they would have to develop habits and mechanisms for learning from their actions (internally in the organization and externally). In other words, they need to learn how to constantly adjust, revise, abandon, expand strategies, and so on, according to their efficacy.

6. Dual Commitment to Short-Term and Long-Term Results

Like most aspects of sustainability, things that look as if they are mutually exclusive have to be brought together. It's a pipe dream to argue only for the long-term goal of society, because the public

won't let you get away with it, nor should they. The new reality is that governments have to show progress in relation to social priorities (whether it be wait time for health service, street crime, or student achievement) *within one election term* (typically 4 years). Our knowledge base is such that there is no excuse for failing to design and implement strategies that get short-term results.

Of course, short-term progress can be accomplished at the expense of the mid- to long term (win the battle, lose the war), but it doesn't have to be. What I am advocating in this book is that governments and schools set aspirational targets, take action to obtain early results, and intervene in situations of terrible performance, all the while investing in the eight sustainability capacity-building elements described in this chapter. Over time, the system gets stronger, and fewer severe problems occur as they are preempted by corrective action sooner rather than later (see also Chapter 7).

Short-term results are also necessary to build trust with the public for longer-term investments. Michael Barber (2004) argues that it is necessary to

Create the virtuous circle where public education delivers results, the public gains confidence and is therefore willing to invest through taxation and, as a consequence, the system is able to improve further. It is for this reason that the long-term strategy requires short-term results. (p. 2)

This is the time to say that sustainability is resource hungry but in such a way that conserves, refocuses, and reduces waste, as well as results in *growing financial investment* over time (Barber & Fullan, 2004). It is a paradox that sustainability both produces and consumes more resources—none more valuable than individual and collective energy.

7. Cyclical Energizing

Sustain comes from the Latin word *sustineo*, which means “to keep up,” but this is misleading. Sustainability, on the contrary, is not linear. It is cyclical, for two fundamental reasons. One has to do with energy, and the other with periodic plateaus, where additional time and ingenuity are required for the next adaptive breakthrough. Loehr and Schwartz's (2003) “power of full engagement” argues that

“energy, not time” is the fundamental currency of high performance. They base their work on four principles:

Principle 1: Full engagement requires four separate but related sources of energy: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. (p. 9)

Principle 2: Because energy capacity diminishes both with overuse and with underuse, we must balance energy expenditure with intermittent energy renewal. (p. 11)

Principle 3: To build capacity, we must push beyond our normal limits, training in the same systematic way that elite athletes do. (p. 13)

Principle 4: Positive energy rituals—highly specific routines for managing energy—are key to full engagement and sustained high performance. (p. 14)

Loehr and Schwartz (2003) are talking about individuals, whereas we are interested as well in systems, but the same logic applies. They contrast the old paradigm with the new:

Manage time versus manage energy.

Avoid stress versus seek stress.

Life is a marathon versus life is a series of sprints.

Downtime is wasted versus downtime is productive time.

Rewards fuel performance versus purpose fuels performance. (p. 6)

If we want sustainability, we need to keep an eye on energy levels (overuse and underuse). Positive collaborative cultures will help because (a) they push for greater accomplishments, and (b) they avoid the debilitating effects of negative cultures. It is not hard work that tires us out as much as it is negative work. But collaborative cultures can become too intense and burn us out. What we need are combinations of full engagement with colleagues, along with less intensive activities that are associated with replenishment.

There is another reason why sustainability is cyclical. In many cases, for reasons stated earlier, we have seen achievement in literacy and mathematics improve over a 5-year period, only to have it

plateau or level off. It may be related to burnout, but this is not likely the main explanation. People are still putting in a lot of energy to maintain the same higher-level performance represented by the new plateau. If people were burning out, performance would likely *decline*.

A more likely explanation is that the set of strategies that brought initial success are not the ones—not powerful enough—to take us to higher levels. In these cases, we would expect the best learning organizations to investigate, learn, experiment, and develop better solutions. *This takes time*. (Incidentally, with the right kind of intelligent accountability, we would know whether organizations were engaged in quality problem-solving processes even if their short-term outcomes were not showing increases.)

While this new adaptive work is going on, we would not expect achievement scores to rise in a linear fashion, and any external assessment scheme that demanded “annual yearly progress” would be barking up the wrong tree.

Cyclical energizing is a powerful new idea. We don’t yet have the precision to know what cyclical energizing looks like in detail, but the concept needs to be a fundamental element of our sustainability strategizing.

8. The Long Lever of Leadership

Archimedes said, “Give me a lever long enough and I can change the world.” For sustainability, that lever is leadership—a certain kind of new leadership described in Chapters 4 through 7—leadership that operates very differently than is the case in the present, that is valued differently by societies seeking greater sustainability, and that helps produce other similar leaders to create a critical mass. This critical mass is the long lever of leadership. If a system is to be mobilized in the direction of sustainability, leadership at all levels must be the primary engine. The main work of these leaders is to help put into place the eight elements of sustainability; all eight simultaneously feeding on each other. To do this, we need a system laced with leaders who are trained to think in bigger terms and to act in ways that affect larger parts of the system as a whole: the new theoreticians.