The Foundational Principles of Fake Work and Real Work— and Knowing the Difference

Fake Work

A Road to Nowhere

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A basic understanding of the foundations of the Fake Work and Real Work discussion is critical. Before we get into our formula for success, we must ensure that we discuss the enemy and understand it. This chapter lays the cornerstones so you will understand how you ultimately thwart it.

Real Work and Fake Work Defined

Suppose you are building a road on a mountainside leading to the site for your new cabin. You have worked for months clearing sagebrush and aspen trees. You've moved rocks and filled in roadbed through the exhausting heat, the raging downpours, and even early snow. You've pushed forward, based on your best understanding of the surveyor's plans. The road winds over a dusty hill, cuts through the trees, moves along a rocky ridge, and then you find yourself at the end of the road, looking down from the edge of a cliff.

A ROAD TO NOWHERE

Fake Work looks and feels like that. The building of the road was purposeful. Your effort was admirable. The blood, sweat, and tears you poured into the project were real and your commitment was profound. However, none of that really matters! You are still left with a road to nowhere.

From the world of educators, we hear way too many people confess to experiencing something like the Road to Nowhere. They are dedicating long nights to demanding, difficult tasks that are too often hard to justify as valuable—work that will ultimately be ignored, dismissed, or discarded for various reasons.

What Is Real Work, and What Is Fake Work?

What is work? Is it crazy to even ask that question? Work is what you do at least five days a week, as much as fifty or more weeks out of the year.

Video 3: What Is Fake Work?

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You spend vast percentage of your life working, going to work, being at work, leaving work, and thinking about work—even when you're not at work!

Fake Work is effort under the illusion of value—sometimes known, sometimes unknown. Simply stated, **Fake Work in education is work that is not targeted or aligned with the goals and strategies of the school or organization.** And it happens when educators lose sight of these goals and focus on everything but the right thing—teaching and learning. This kind of work drains both the individual and the school system. Some examples of Fake Work in schools occur because you

- have initiative fatigue—lots of exciting ideas with no resources or plans to execute them;

- lack follow-through to support application of professional learning;

- attend or hold time-wasted, nonpurposeful meetings;

- do meaningless bureaucratic work—the countless reports and endless activities that have no impact on student learning;

- pursue too many needless activities in reaction to board expectations and requests that have nothing to do with strategic value, students, or learning;

- develop time-consuming assignments that students are required to do but have no impact on learning.

Real Work is work that is critical and aligned to the key goals and strategies of any educational organization or any school in preparing students for their future. Real Work must become the DNA of educators in every learning environment. Real Work, like Fake Work, applies to any organization: family, school, church, nonprofit, government agency, small company, or large corporation. Real Work is work that is essential for the short- and long-term survival of every organization.

Fake Work Negatively Influences School Boards, Administrators, Teachers, and Students

We have had serious concerns about work that was out of focus and off target for years. Prior to the publication of *Fake Work* (Peterson & Nielson, 2009), Dr. Brent Peterson, vice president of research at FranklinCovey and later as a part of The Work Itself Group, collected

massive amounts of data that were then corroborated by additional surveys by Dr. Peterson and Gaylan Nielson. The additional data were collected from businesses, government agencies, nonprofits, and educational organizations we were working with or consulting with.

We administered surveys to high-level leaders, managers, and direct reports throughout the organizations asking about their experience of work, then we compared the two sets of data to compare how workers felt about the work and how their managers perceived the workers' experiences. We continued to validate our findings. Our research and the research of dozens of other organizations show consistent issues—in every business, government, school system, or nonprofit organization. That research indicates the following:

- **87 percent** of workers are not satisfied with the results of their work.

- **81 percent** of workers do not feel a strong level of commitment to their organization's top priorities.

- **73 percent** of workers don't think their organization's goals are translated into specific work they can execute.

- **70 percent** of workers don't routinely plan how to support agreed-upon goals and tasks in their workgroups.

- **68 percent** of workers do not feel that their workgroup goals are translated into Real Work tasks. (Peterson & Nielson, 2009)

Statistics like these don't paint a particularly promising portrait of the individual workers responsible for driving the global economy we're all a part of. But if you look at the cultures these workers are a part of, the view isn't much better:

- **52 percent** of workers feel they are held accountable for reaching their commitments on time.

- **54 percent** of workers feel they have more creativity, resourcefulness, talent, and intelligence than their job requires or allows.

- **53 percent** of workers think the work they do doesn't count for anything.

- **56 percent** of workers don't clearly understand their organization's most important goals. (Peterson & Nielson, 2009)

The preceding data include our findings on the experiences of government workers. Although not published in our original work, Peterson examined the original data set again to pull out statistics specific to government workers:

- **90 percent** of managers say they are not focused on what matters (one in ten managers is truly focused on what matters).

- **85 percent** of workers cannot name their department or agency's yearly goals.

- **74 percent** of U.S. government employees cannot name a single goal of their agency or department.

- **79 percent** of workers don't think their organization's goals are translated into specific work tasks they can execute.

- **65 percent** of workers say they spend little time on tasks directly related to their department or agency's mission-critical objectives.

The first question educators should ask is where you are in all those numbers: Higher? Lower? And what are the consequences? These statistics tell you how and why Fake Work is infiltrating every work environment—even the best of them. Complete Exercise 1.1 to assess yourself and your district or school. Whether you look at work from an individual or organizational perspective, what you see may not be a pretty—nor a productive—picture.

Work Is Too Often Disconnected From Strategic Goals

The aforementioned numbers aren't suggesting that people don't work hard enough; they just don't feel their hard work makes much difference to their organization. Often they know their work is not focused on organizational strategies. Far more often, they don't know what those strategies are. The research suggests they're right on all counts.

When we ask about the strategic relevance of their work, individuals typically respond, "What strategy?" Or they answer, "Strategic work happens in someone else's department, not in mine." If people don't know how and why what they do supports their organization's strategies, it doesn't matter how hard they work. Ultimately, if a staff member's work doesn't connect them to the results that really count, they are doing Fake Work.

EXERCISE 1.1

Assess Yourself and Your District

Considering each of the issues below, how would you score yourself? Then how would your school district or school score? Finally, what indicators do you see that would justify your score—high, low, or medium?

Scoring

1 = Very poor in this area

4 = Developing in this area

7 = Moderately effective in this area

10 = Doing exceptional work in this area

ISSUE	MY SCORE	DISTRICT/ SCHOOL SCORE	INDICATIONS OF THE SCORES
Knowing and sharing goals			
Commitment to goals			
Translating goals into daily tasks			
Open to new ideas			
Being and holding others accountable			
Feeling valued and needed			
Satisfied with results			

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Fake Work erodes your quality of life and, therefore, your devotion and loyalty to any organization. When you get assigned a project, wrapped up in a new initiative, or tasked with designing a new communication campaign only to find out—a few months later—that all the work you've done has been ignored or, worse, thrown away, it's disheartening and debilitating.

Jenny, a middle school principal, identified it this way:

NOBODY ON OUR TEAM

My administrative team and I conducted a series of classroom walkthroughs to gauge the teachers' efforts at implementing the new math program that our campus agreed to use. We discovered that no two teachers were implementing the strategies as the program recommended, nor were teachers implementing the program with fidelity. I was horrified as I thought everyone knew the game plan and agreed with the implementation plan.

After pulling the teachers together to reassess the situation, I realized that very few were aligning their instructional program to the implementation plan because it just wasn't what they were focusing on within their professional learning community. The teachers let many little distractions take them away from focusing on the students' success.

We immediately owned the issue and spent several hours with teachers on how to align their planning around instructional strategies from the program. In a few weeks, student learning had improved just by adjusting the focus of the teachers' work.

Often, the difference between Real and Fake Work seems simple and straightforward. Many tell us that it is easy to identify Fake Work because it is so blatantly obvious. However, too often Fake Work is subtle and may seem like Real Work. Often Real Work is turned into Fake Work in a variety of ways:

- **Neglect:** When leaders give assignments, then stop focusing on them, then provide no attention, and finally just allow the assignment to fade into oblivion.

- **Changes**: When leaders make changes in priorities without letting everyone know. Leaders often don't help staff members understand the shift in priorities and don't help them reprioritize.

- **Initiative fatigue**: When staff members accept new initiatives, projects, and tasks knowing that it will dilute the others they are already working on. They make it worse by not clarifying the reasons for the new tasks, and then they don't discuss the problem. Overload is how tasks lose focus and value.

- **Rebellion**: While it isn't always open rebellion, some work is just put on the back burner because a staff member doesn't agree with its importance.

- **The pinball machine:** Too often, distractions steal focus and attention in a thousand ways—and this adds up to twenty other ways Fake Work is created from potential Real Work.

Perhaps some of the ways Real Work turns into Fake Work hit a chord with you as you realize that you, your department, or your campus has been on the receiving end of one, if not all, of the painful situations above.

One of the central office administrators we've worked with, Calvin, described the seismic wave of initiative fatigue that was taking over the educational priorities in his district this way:

DROWNING IN INITIATIVE FATIGUE

In a fast-growth district, with at least one school opening a year for the past ten years, we have our share of challenges. As executive director of teaching and learning, I have ten direct reports and will be adding two more next year.

However, my greatest challenge has been keeping up with all of the projects that everyone is involved in. We are working so hard at central office to provide services to our schools that we really can't say for sure if the services are working or not. For example, the other day I visited one of our elementary schools. The principal was glad to bend my ear over some things that were really bothering her. She was agitated, and I could sense the exasperation in her voice as she asked these two questions:

- Why are you people in central office trying to make our work more cumbersome and disconnected?
- Have you forgotten what it's like to work on a campus?

I was stunned by her confrontation and somewhat embarrassed. I knew she had every right to ask those questions, and I could feel her frustration. The more we talked, the more she identified program after program that she was supposed to implement and initiative upon initiative that the district (all of us at central office, myself included) had piled on her plate and the plates of her fellow principals.

I recognized the madness of it all. Everyone was overwhelmed with initiative fatigue both at the district level and at the schools. This had resulted in chaotic reactions, poor implementations, and confused teams. **Everything was a priority, which meant nothing was a priority.**

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When I returned to central office, I gathered my team for several hours to attack the problem:

- We reviewed every initiative we had identified.
- We conducted a cost-benefit analysis on each and created an effectiveness rubric to guide our decision-making.
- We began a process of strategic abandonment for those programs that were no longer effective.

I then scheduled a meeting with the superintendent to talk about what we had done and how I felt about what my team and I were creating at the campuses—staff who were overworked and underperforming.

> It's the deep secret, the subtle nuances of doing work that is not serving the highest goals of the organization that are hurting overall performance and stealing valuable, irreplaceable time that needs to be very focused on the right stuff—and only the right stuff.

The bottom line is that you know schools are full of hardworking, dedicated people who are frustrated because they can never get all their work done—ever. Everywhere you look, good work is occurring and it's very satisfying. However, it's the deep secret, the subtle nuances of doing work that is not serving the highest goals of the organization that are hurting overall performance and stealing valuable, irreplaceable time that needs to be very focused on the right stuff—and only the right stuff.

"Standing on the X": Focusing on the Point, the Pinnacle, and the Launching Pad for Success

Clearly, Fake Work is prominent and can be discouraging. But Real Work feeds everyone: accomplishment, contribution, value, and success.

So, let's get on the right spot—the X—the focal point of this book: working strategically for student success.

Dr. Robert Durón introduced us to the concept of "standing on the X." Dr. Durón, who was then the superintendent of San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD), is an inspired leader with a clear sense of direction. Working with him showed us how much he cared to get things right. Together, we walked through a process to focus his vision and cascade it through the district—to ensure Real Work was occurring everywhere. During our work, we saw a copy of the following letter. This letter helped us gain a deeper appreciation of clear, succinct messages that establish a symbol for a culture. Dr. Durón wrote this letter to his team at the beginning of the school year.

At the heart of the letter is this image of the X. This is a powerful symbol and it has dramatic implications for everyone in the district. Mostly, it says something about how he wanted everyone to imagine a culture.

Dr. Robert Durón's Letter to the SAISD Staff

Dear SAISD Team,

Thank you for a great start to an exciting year. Key to a great school year is a smooth start—and that does not happen accidentally. It requires good planning and coordination.

I am grateful for the hard work and commitment you have shown ensuring our students are welcomed to a new year—with schools that are comfortable learning environments and with staff who are prepared and enthusiastic about our students' success.

So what does "standing on the X" mean? Last May, during the graduation ceremonies, I noticed a spot on the stage marked with an X where students were supposed to stand while their names were being announced. I reflected on that spot and thought, "**This is what it is all about.**"

Whether we are preparing their meals, mending the fence that keeps them safe, drying their tears, or scolding them; whether we are grading their papers well into the night, cleaning up after them, planning that engaging lesson for them, meeting with their parents, or doing any of the dozens of other things we do each day—every employee in SAISD is working to see that every student has the opportunity to stand on that X.

I thought about how little the students know about what standing on that X means. Some are nervous, excited, and, quite frankly, a few seem almost aggravated at the whole pomp and circumstance of it all. In their youthful minds, however, none can know the importance of the accomplishment. They don't quite realize yet that by standing on that X, then taking a left, getting that diploma, and walking off the stage as a graduate, they are entitled to opportunities that will enhance their future forever.

The X represents a life that has been improved by education. We cannot expect an eighteen-year-old child to have that insight. That is why they depend on us. They depend on us not only to understand the importance of standing on that X, but to be motivated and inspired to do all we can to make that moment possible.

The brutal fact we must face is that far too many students won't stand on that X, and their lives are changed in the other direction. This is disastrous. It represents a failure on our part, not the child's. We must all believe we have the capability to ensure that ALL students will have the opportunity to graduate.

We've heard the expression:

"I will believe it when I see it."

We've heard the expression: "I will believe it when I see it." I prefer a different statement: "I will see it when I believe it."

Dr. Robert Durón, Associate Executive Director, Governance Services, Texas Association of School Boards

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I prefer a different statement:

"I will see it when I believe it."

Let us all commit to seeing that every student—from early childhood to high school senior—ultimately has the opportunity to stand on the X. It starts with a belief and our commitment to that belief.

Thanks again for a great start. I am thankful for each and every one of you—and wish each of you a successful school year!

Best regards,
Robert Durón

While X marks the spot on the stage, the ultimate journey is the process—the short- and long-term commitments made with each other to focus on student success. That process provides the building blocks that help a school facilitate student performance throughout its long commitment to the life of a student (see Exercise 1.2). Think about it:

EXERCISE 1.2

Creating Student Success

Consider the X in regard to your school district. What things must your district, your school, and you do differently and better to make that X a reality for many more students?

What must your school district leaders and staff do differently to achieve more student success?	
What must your school (or schools) do differently to achieve more student success?	
What must you do differently to achieve more student success?	

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that has to be a cohesive commitment at every level, preK to graduation. And all educators need that X as well, again and again, to sustain the values and rewards of Real Work.

Also, student success is a community effort. Students need help and support, and so do all educators—within a strong culture that is highly cooperative and interdependent. Teaching and learning is a highly complex process, and student success must be seen through the lens of the whole team—the whole institution.

The following story comes from a teacher named David:

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN

Alyssa is special. I mean she is special because she's smart. She's special because she is talented. She has amazing social skills. She is special because she is struggling with every class and barely getting by. She couldn't graduate with her middle school class because she had so many incomplete assignments and failing grades. High school just intensified the problems. So with so many assets, why is Alyssa struggling?

The easy answer is that she was so social and had so many friends that she just gave her classes no attention. Perhaps her parents didn't care? No, they were very involved in her education and knew every teacher and every counselor.

Teachers and counselors were befuddled and some just dismissed Alyssa as a flake. After putting her through a series of diagnostic tests, the issue was identified, but not the solution. Alyssa could not read or comprehend past a fifth-grade level. She had a neurological processing problem—a disconnect between hearing content and understanding it. Because of her charismatic nature, she was able to mask—for a few years—her inability to read and understand text at a high school level.

After her parents found help and helped get some accommodations, they worked with the school's speech pathologist and other specialists. Alyssa became a good student after some struggles and went on to graduate from college with straight A's in her junior and senior years.

David's story about Alyssa illustrates how critically a student's success is affected by the investment that the adults in the system provide. Having the ability to read is a human rights issue, and without that ability, students may be doomed to a life with limited choices.

With the school's attention, professional help, and hard work on Alyssa's part, she stood on that X and received her diploma. It was a moment of celebration for her, her parents, and the school.

Students can fall through the cracks even under the best circumstances. How does this happen—that a student can so easily fall through the cracks of a system whose entire focus is ensuring students' success? Unfortunately, it happens more than educators would like to admit. Too many stories similar to Alyssa's permeate schools where students have not received the help and support they needed. And who is to blame: The educators? The parents? The superintendents? The school boards? Or is it the failure of all for misdiagnosing their own priorities in the workplace because they are consumed with Fake Work?

The whole idea of standing on the X is about the art of educating people—the subtle nuances of getting things right and knowing that what you are doing is working. Because teaching and learning is as much art as science, more skill is required to know whether you are doing the right things. It forces everyone to communicate more and be more collaborative. Together, we have a better chance of diagnosing the work in front of us and knowing if it is Real.

Fake Work Is Illusive and Easily Misdiagnosed Because It Is Work—Often Hard Work

People have an instinctive and visceral response to Fake Work. Almost everyone has experienced it: doing it, seeing it done, and being a victim of it—and all the negative effects that go with the by-products of Fake Work. A common complaint is "we are buried in Fake Work." The changing work environment and the new forms of work developed over the last couple of decades make the issue of identifying Fake Work even more complex, and we want to explore that complexity. Ultimately, if Real Work and Fake Work can be exactly the same work—just under different circumstances—we can't be dismissive of the subtle and challenging questions required to know the difference.

Johanna shared this story that hits close to home for many of us:

People have an instinctive and visceral response to Fake Work. Almost everyone has experienced it: doing it, seeing it done, and being a victim of it.

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT: BLACK HOLE

I was handpicked by our new superintendent, Kirk—handpicked being a clue—to conduct a schoolwide curriculum assessment. The belief is that we had vastly different approaches to key curriculum in several schools in our district—especially in math and history. I was so busy that this extra assignment would have been a nightmare except for one small

thing: I thought it was long overdue and so critical. So I adjusted work schedules and priorities and made plans. I bargained with my kids and husband to justify my additional commitment of time and energy.

I was to work on this project with Ted and Rachel, and that was affirming. I like both of them and I like their work ethic. So we dug in. We had a planning meeting and clarified our goals and divided up tasks. I created an assessment tool and made appointments with every school in the district—both phone calls and on-site school visits. Before we met with everyone, we thought we should dive into some research and create baselines and criteria for all the data we would have to review.

So we had another meeting—a long meeting—to review our research on how others had approached the curriculum and how they had considered the content. All three of us were exhausted, having had to add this project to our other workload and projects. My husband was not happy when I canceled a weekend at the lake to get the project up and running. But we thought we had it together and were ready to launch the project officially and start getting some hard data the following Monday. And on Monday we jumped in all the way. We made calls, collected source materials, made visits, and looked through thousands of pages of content. Clearly, we could see this had value and would require a lot of work we hadn't anticipated.

Three weeks later, I started talking with several teachers. One of the many people I met with was Hank, a department chair. I was really interested to see how history teachers were or were not linked to a common curriculum in their high school. It was a really good meeting that ended with these questions from Hank: Why are you doing this again? And what happened to the work that was done two years before?

This, of course, was followed by an awkward silence from me. My head started spinning a bit. Then I asked about what had been done before. Hank didn't know the big picture, just his piece of it as he represented the history teachers in the process. What was clear was that, to some extent, this project had been started before with similar goals.

On the following Wednesday afternoon, in our administration meeting, I spoke about the curriculum assessment project, and Renee said, "That project was done over two years ago by two other members of the staff"—Rick, who was out that day, and Maria, who had retired when the last superintendent resigned.

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My team and I shared a collective sigh, then held our tongues. Kirk said, 'Well, that's good news. Maybe you three can meet with Rick and find out where we stand on this." I am not sure what my colleagues Ted and Rachel were thinking, but what I was thinking was not nice and couldn't be said around children or adults.

We met with Rick and found that they had gathered some very good data, but the project had been squashed during a busy and problematic period and had just been languishing until it dropped off the priority list with a quick shrug and a statement: "Let's put that on the back burner for now." Clearly, we had lost weeks of valuable time. I didn't dare tell my husband the story—for a long time. I thought about it a lot. I was in the administration when the former project was going on. None of us knew about it. We had been to fifty meetings since it began, and it was just a black hole that sucked in Rick and Maria and now the three of us.

These kinds of stories raise dozens of good questions about how Fake Work happens and how it is perpetuated:

- What is the strategic intent of the school district?

- What specific strategies does the district need to pursue to meet its key objectives? The first question is: Have leaders provided clarity to staff?

- Who should know about those strategies and be clear about how they affect their work priorities and processes? The easy answer is "everyone." This is a huge gap in schools—top to bottom.

- Who needs to know what fellow workers are doing? Once again, the answer is "everyone." We talk about alignment throughout this book because it is a critical building block for organizations.

- Should all members of the administrative team understand all the key projects? If not, alignment doesn't exist and duplication, overlap, and performance gaps prosper—allowing Fake Work to thrive.

As challenging as it sometimes is to know the right questions to ask or the answers, you must ask the critical question: Am I doing Fake Work?

EXERCISE 1.3

Fake Work Tally

When it comes to concerns about Fake Work, what questions should I be asking?

QUESTIONS	HOW, WHEN, WHERE, WHY
1. Are my coworkers doing Fake Work?	
2. How much Fake Work are we doing? Where do I see it?	
3. Where does Fake Work begin? Or get a foothold?	
4. Who has the ability to control it?	
5. How do leaders cause Fake Work?	
6. How do I cause Fake Work?	
7. How can work teams control the value of their work?	

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Exercise 1.3 helps you start thinking about the causes of Fake Work, which we explore throughout the book. Here, we need to start contemplating the origins and creators of Fake Work.

The unfortunate snake pit is the incredibly hard work going into a project or task that is time-consuming and exhausting for many dedicated people. It looks like work and feels like work. Usually people want

- to accomplish good work,
- to be responsible,
- to be proud of their work, and
- to help students develop a thirst for knowledge that will carry them into their future.

The Nature of Work Has Changed and Educators Are Overwhelmed With the New Reality

"A mistake repeated more than once is a decision."

Paulo Coelho

Education sits on firm bedrock—a rock-solid foundation. And because the institution is old, big, and rigid, it constantly begs the question: How do we change to meet the shifting needs of society? Education sits at the core of any investigation into modern work and work challenges.

Research on the changing nature of work shows monumental shifts in the kinds of work, the demands of time, and the volatility of work security.

More organizations expect unpaid time to be the norm. But for teachers and all educators, these conditions have been the norm for a long time. Our educators are pushed to the brink. This doesn't serve any of us well: not our children, not our teachers, not our society as a whole.

The following story is ours. As consultants, this is our enigma:

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED WORK?

When I walk into district offices or schools, I don't know what work is real, what is fake.

Tom, Myra, and Alexa are talking. They sound chummy and lighthearted. So is it work-related or about their gardening after work or having dinner together or going to the gym?

Jim is up to his eyes in manuals and is doing some intense analysis. He tells me he has been working on this project for months and is growing weary of it. I don't know if this is critical work or busy work.

I know many of these people. They are hardworking, dedicated, earnest people, and their work matters immensely to them.

We have had some key discussions and they are excited about improving and better understanding their work. Many of them will stay late. Many others are headed off to a school event—sports, a dance, a play—and they enjoy most of these extras in their lives.

I just spoke with some of their customers—principals, teachers, and staff—and most of them feel like they are not being well served. They see administrators as high-cost bureaucrats who don't know what is going on in schools.

This gap between what I perceive and how these folks are being perceived is painful. I don't want to say to the admin folks that their work is just not hitting the mark. But it must be explored.

And when we do explore that gap, there is one consistent revelation: almost everyone feels elevated by the chance to rethink their work in ways that are better serving students—helping them get to X.

Educators spend countless hours of work each day on a myriad of agendas—theirs and others'. Most probably would tell you that at the end of the day they worked hard but can't articulate what they accomplished. Most wouldn't know if anything had to do with the strategic intent of the organization. Here is only a small fraction of the work educators do:

- working through the sixty or more emails that came in overnight

- working on presentations, tomorrow's lesson plans, communications to staff and parents, and so on

- dealing with anxious and angry parents

- doing thoughtful analysis on mind-numbing spreadsheets

- sending and responding to an endless array of texts from coworkers

- attending yet another critical meeting—at least critical in someone's view

- launching a public relations campaign

- analyzing tons of test score data

- responding to board members' concerns from their constituents

- reflecting on the many conversations during the day that were time-wasters and had no purpose

However, what if every educator spent at least thirty minutes a day focusing on the strategies of the organization and reflecting on the contributions they made on that particular day? Would it impact the trajectory of the system to achieve the outcomes it has targeted? The answer should be inevitable, but try putting a banner up with the strong suggestion shown in Exercise 1.4.

EXERCISE 1.4

Assess Your Contributions to Strategic Goals

Spend at least thirty minutes today focusing on the strategies of your school or district. Reflect on the contributions you made to the strategies today.

In the next chapter, "Exploring the Origins of Fake Work in Education," we delve more deeply into the environment of Fake Work and take a closer look at what contributes to the challenges that seem to overwhelm us. It is easy to be glib about the Fake Work problem, and everyone claims to understand it. However, Fake Work exists in a complex world of issues and is eradicated only by awareness, clarity, and sound processes for attacking it.

After we expose the causes, we will examine each of them and provide paths out—the Paths to Real Work.