

# *Preface*

**W**elcome to the Superintendency! The process and fanfare are over; you've been offered and accepted the job of superintendent. You know the complexities and responsibilities this job brings and you understand the amount of time and commitment that is required. You know that you will face difficult challenges, experience professional growth beyond your imagination, and enjoy many rewards as you make a positive difference in this institution that is so crucial to the community it serves.

But . . . what you do today, tomorrow, and next week to establish yourself as the instructional leader? How you find out what the staff and community expectations are for your performance? Where are the landmines that could be waiting for you around the corner? How do you build key relationships that will help you be successful and help the school district to keep moving forward? What kinds of techniques and strategies can you use to communicate to your stakeholders? How do you implement new ideas for honoring the accomplishments of the past?

## **THE DESIGN OF THIS BOOK**

This book was designed as a practical guide to help you address these and many other situations and opportunities you will face as a superintendent, either new to the profession or new to the district. It was not designed to be a scholarly publication or a research book, even though many of the techniques and ideas contained inside are based on research. We know there are other books on the market that can provide you with theory and research about the school superintendency. This book fills a niche that exists in the application of theory in leadership and in the superintendency. The information contained in this book has been gathered from a variety of sources. We've used our experience as school superintendents, central office administrators, school principals, university professors, and leadership coaches to select the content for this book. We've also used information we have gathered from actual school superintendents we've worked with over the years.

## WHO IS THIS BOOK DESIGNED FOR?

This book was primarily designed to assist leaders who are new to the superintendency; however, an interesting situation arose during the peer review process of our initial manuscript. Many of the reviewers were veteran school superintendents and they mentioned to us that there were ideas and strategies in the manuscript they found to be helpful reminders for them as they thought about getting ready for the upcoming year or were assuming new positions. Several reviewers also said the book would be a good source of information for those superintendents with some experience who are new to a district. In light of this feedback the book provides strategies and concepts that both superintendents and aspiring superintendents will find helpful.

## LIMITATIONS OF THIS BOOK

Even with the comprehensive information provided, this book is somewhat limited in its approach. Leadership can be a complicated and district-specific endeavor. Some of the strategies outlined may not work in your particular situation or may need to be adjusted or modified to fit your specific situation. Because we have chosen to discuss a wide range of topics, we may not have addressed some of the topics in great depth. If you have particular needs that go beyond what we have provided related to a certain leadership behavior, you may need to consult other sources for assistance. We have tried to cover the major bases in relation to your needs for the first few years of your superintendency, but we know that it is impossible to provide every single resource new superintendents may need to be successful. Please keep the following in mind as you use this book:

- Even though the strategies and ideas outlined here have worked for others, they may need modification to work in your setting.
- Some of the strategies and ideas in this book fit better for some leadership styles than others. Carefully assess your own leadership style and see how you think it would fit within your selected strategy.
- The idea or strategy you are considering may be something entirely different than what your school district and its stakeholders have experienced in the past. In order to prepare them for this new way of thinking you may need to gradually get them ready for the new behavior. It may be necessary to “stage” or implement the strategy slowly.

- Gauge your own comfort level when selecting a possible idea or strategy. If you're not comfortable, it will be hard for you to follow through sincerely with the new idea.
- Develop an assessment plan so you can measure stakeholder response to the idea or strategy. This will let you know people's reactions and the proper pace for your implementation.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The ten chapters in this book have been developed to address the most common issues faced by new superintendents. Even though they follow a sequence, the book has not been designed to be read from cover to cover. First focus on the areas that particularly interest you or meet a concern you have at the moment; read these sections first to help you address your needs. Once you have completed this first review of the material, branch out and look at the other information contained in the text. You will find interesting and informative information that will assist you as you encounter opportunities and challenges in your new role.

## NEXT STEPS

We wish you well as you move forward into one of the most satisfying and challenging positions of your professional career. Your leadership has the potential to change lives and transform communities. Good luck on your journey and make the best of the experience!