

Introduction

“There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.”

—Edith Wharton

“It is essential in relationships and all tasks that we concentrate only on what is most significant and important.”

—Soren Kierkegaard

The modern world has brought many new essentials to our 21st-century way of life. What was previously not widely known or yet invented 100 years ago has now become essential. The examples are endless.

A United States passport was previously required only for travel to continents outside of North America. Current world conditions and border issues have now made a passport essential for travel even to our bordering countries of Canada and Mexico.

Paper tickets are now rare when traveling by air. What was once essential is now outmoded. E-tickets are everywhere. By checking in online and printing our own boarding pass, we can move to the front of the line for upgrades or notifications of flight cancellations. Obtaining an e-ticket and checking in online are essential to a smoother air-travel experience.

When cell phones first became available during the last part of the 20th century, they were a luxury. Now, they are essential to 21st-century life in all parts of the globe—even the most remote and least populated. Public phones and pay phones have literally disappeared. Heaven help us if our cell phones die, get lost, or are left behind. Being accessible by cell phone 24/7 has become an essential expectation in today’s world.

For many, access to a latte has become a new essential, replacing the morning cup of coffee or tea. In fact, it’s become so essential that Starbuck’s is now a point of interest (POI) on our GPS (Global Positioning System).

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Results, having always been important, have today become essential to survival. For years, small businesses have come and gone quickly for failing to achieve the needed financial results. In the last decade, schools have confronted a commendable new reality where it is no longer acceptable for some students to fail or for only a few to succeed. Our nation is committed to high quality education for all children. One might wonder how anyone would not be committed to this noble result. It becomes clear that embracing the lofty expectation depends on a specific class or a specific teacher. When my class or my school has numerous children with no parental involvement or supervision; when my class or my school has numerous children with no boundaries set at home for sleep, structure, behavior, or even drug use; when my class or school has several special-needs children who require special differentiated instruction; suddenly the word “results” goes from concern to anxiety and soon to a feeling of fear of responsibility for every child’s mastery of learning. For the first time, the leader’s job and identity is on the line, hanging on the success of every single child in less than 195 days. Is it right? Yes. Is the responsibility monumental? Yes, it is—in so many places and with so many children for so many teachers and principals. A “standardized test” has become a new essential; it has become high stakes accountability!

We celebrate Michael Fullan’s moral imperative that we must get results in our schools today, and we know that the school principal is the force and catalyst to make positive results happen. In many instances, structures and processes for getting results have not changed in years or even decades. We seem to be dealing with the same issues over and over with new names and faces as the players. And the results stay the same.

A case in point is the story of Jana, one of our clients who is a principal. The story is shared by our colleague and coach, Reba Schumacher.

I had coached Jana for several months prior to her first assignment as a school principal. I had, in fact, coached her through the process of applying for and accepting that first principal position. Things were progressing predictably during her first few months (typically known as the honeymoon stage) in her new role. Then one day in the middle of March, Jana called my home office desperate for coaching. She began by listing the conditions and issues at her campus that were keeping her awake at night, and she was unsure of the best approach for addressing her situation. She went on to say, “I would love any advice or words of wisdom you can offer.”

I asked Jana to tell me more, and she responded with a stream of frustrations beginning with, “I know great schools are made of great teams. Out of my five grade-level teams, three have positive attitudes; however, two teams do not, and those two teams are really putting a damper on the entire campus.” She went on to lament that adults were not following district and campus policies and guidelines, including violating the adult dress code, consistently arriving late for work, and allowing children free rein of the campus. She added that since adults were frequently violating the rules, students did not seem to be compelled to follow the rules either. Even though teachers were reluctant to enforce the student-behavior policy, they did expect Jana to single-handedly control student classroom behavior from the principal’s office while simultaneously increasing the campus’s crucially low adult and student attendance rates. She was now on a roll.

Without taking a breath, Jana launched into her next level of concerns, which revolved around the lack of challenging, engaged student learning and authentic assessments. She emphasized that ubiquitous and numerous worksheets and student art work created with dyed popcorn, paper streamers, and dried beans were not her idea of meaningful assessments. She mused that many of the teachers seemed hesitant to raise standards for students, fearful that it would require more work from them.

Just as suddenly as she had begun, Jana stopped, seemingly exhausted from the months of bottling her concerns. As I offered the gift of silence, waiting to see if any other concerns were coming, she pleaded tentatively, “I need your advice. Did you ever go through the same things?”

In a flash, I thought back to a day 21 years earlier as I sat with my superintendent, filling her ears with the same stories of sleepless nights and lack of teacher accountability. Because life is a series of ironies, I am now coaching Jana, who is currently the principal of the school where I began my first principalship 22 years earlier. As I reflected on her litany of concerns, I realized that in the midst of many technological and life progressions, some things in schools never change. Jana is reliving the challenges I had faced all those years ago.

What is changing is what I offer to Jana today that I did not offer even six years ago. The difference is coaching, my new essential. When she asks me for advice and words of wisdom, I offer committed listening, powerful questioning, and a space for her to create her own solutions.

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This story invites us to consider the degree to which schools have substantially changed through the decades. It reinforces the definition of insanity: “Keep doing what you’ve always done and expecting different results.” Leaders’ mindsets and actions must profoundly change in order to positively affect the dynamics for success inside schools.

What’s at stake? At stake is a future full of hope and possibility, resulting from a high quality education for all students. As schools serve more and more students from all walks of life—from the poorest to the most privileged, from the most challenged to the most gifted, from the most unlikely to the most likely—high quality schools are *essential*. High performing schools keep hope and possibility alive and create the necessary energy for preparing students to contribute to our society. The dedicated school leader’s mission is to achieve different and broader results. Because school leaders have the responsibility to deliver results, what is required is a new essential skill of leadership.

Until the individuals who lead our schools develop the attitudes, behaviors, and skills necessary to elicit the best from each staff member and student, lasting change is elusive. Schools must become, from top to bottom, places where everyone is respected for what is possible from within. Schools need to move from places that “correct” to places that “connect” for development and growth. Coaching provides the venue, rich with language and skills, to seek, find, and develop the best within. Coaching offers the pathway for new responses, new awareness, new results. Winston Churchill reminds us that “It’s not enough to do our best; we must do what is required.” *Powerful coaching skills are required; they are essential to transforming individuals, schools, and entire organizations.*

RESULTS Coaching is the new essential for today’s school leaders. Being a “coach-leader” is a key competency, a new identity, for anyone in the business of developing teachers, staff, and students. Because coaching language and skills require alignment of the integrity of one’s attitudes and behaviors, coaching continually strengthens emotional intelligence for self-awareness, self-control, motivation, social awareness, and skill enhancement. On a daily basis, coaching challenges the leader to walk the talk—to continuously grow and improve before modeling and leading others.

Why RESULTS Coaching?

RESULTS Coaching . . .

- is the navigation system for impacting new thinking and solution finding at every level of school systems.
- creates new pathways in the brain, resulting in new energy and motivation.

- teaches the power of articulated clear and established standards and expectations that are the springboard for the majority of conversations.
- teaches language that builds trust and scaffolds confidence and competence.
- models thinking processes that move people to action.
- focuses on goal clarity and multiple options leading to action and achievement.
- slows us down while allowing the brain to speed up. Reflection equals connections!
- promotes discovery and the illumination of the brilliance within each of us.

RESULTS Coaching offers a mnemonic scaffold or blueprint that guides a leader through conversations that will dramatically impact results and outcomes while building and maintaining trust and relationships. This scaffold creates the “turbo charge” to both small and dramatic changes that create new models of professional collaboration and ultimately results for kids. The model accelerates deep thinking and unleashes multiple ways to succeed. Quite simply it is as follows:

R . . . Resolve to change results

E . . . Establish goal clarity

S . . . Seek integrity

U . . . Unveil multiple pathways

L . . . Leverage options

T . . . Take action

S . . . Seize success

In the upcoming chapters, new pathways for joyful success and rewarding results will be revealed. Our commitment and deep passion for coaching as a process that holds the promise to transform leaders in powerful and essential ways will become transparent. We believe that if you resolve to embrace, practice, and integrate the ideas and processes in this book, your leadership will be transformed, and you will achieve the results you want for yourself, your teachers, and your students.

Chapter 1. The Coach Leader Mindset: The Cognitive Shift prepares the leader for a paradigm shift in supervisory roles and explains how and what the leader can be and do to transform a school community.

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Leaders will realize the critically important shift in leadership from telling and directing to creating meaning and empowering confidence and ownership in others. This new mindset is a new identity of the leader as a transparent, respectful partner, co-creator, and supporter of others through committed listening, believing, affirming, and eliciting the best in others.

Chapter 2. Intention: Being Purposeful focuses on the power of intention and provides a new way of thinking that moves our intentions to amazing actions as a result of being purposeful. Using the Intention Pyramid as a tool for moving from intention through attention to action, leaders will realize how being intentional and purposeful dramatically impact targeted results. How we “show up” in our work is examined through the lens of “having,” “being” and “doing.”

Chapter 3. Leader as Coach: The RESULTS Coaching Navigation System presents a powerful metaphoric visual of the RESULTS Coaching Navigation System that provides evidence of the significant complexity of the art and skill of coaching. Each component of this intricate system creates clarity for leaders as they walk in the role of today’s Coach Leader. Each component part is examined in a way that will provide understanding, examples, and benefits to the leader and those they inspire and support.

Chapter 4. Language: The Essential Connector educates readers about the power of a new language for leaders. The four concepts of levels of language, speaking the truth, making and keeping promises, and requests versus requirements hold the potential for dramatically changing the way leaders do their work. When understood and used intentionally, these concepts become the essential connector for today’s leader.

Chapter 5. Communication Skills: The New Essentials delves into the essential skills of coaching. Readers will learn about the communication skills of committed listening, paraphrasing, presuming positive intent resulting in powerful questions, and reflective feedback. For each skill, an opportunity for practice and deeper understanding is provided. To gain total integration of these new essentials, practice is a must!

Chapter 6. The Leader’s GPS: Guided Pathways for Success introduces a tool, which like the GPS in a car, becomes the roadmap for powerful conversations. Whether the conversation is solution focused, goal focused, planning focused, or reflection focused, readers can follow the pathway to the intended destination with permission to recalculate when needed!

Chapter 7. RESULTS Coaching Plan for Action: Essential for Unleashing Promise and Possibility helps build the leader’s internal resourcefulness and capacity to impact change. The RESULTS Coaching framework is described as a tool for transforming work in schools. It causes conversations to focus on the most important outcomes in a way that brings clarity, insight, and energy to action.

Our goal is to provide a guide that will inspire and motivate school leaders to commit to the use of new essential coaching behaviors for greater results for their schools and relationships.

“When educators speak with clarity, possibility, and accountability, and when they interact with others in respectful and mutually satisfying ways, they empower themselves and their organizations to produce extraordinary results.

Such interactions add purpose, joy, and energy to our lives and the lives of those with whom we relate and increase the organization’s capacity to engage in demanding, complex tasks and to sustain that effort over time.”

—*Dennis Sparks*