
Preface

As teachers in public schools, each of us has been educating our students for more than 25 years. Much of this time has been spent in the Kent City School District in Kent, Ohio. Between the two of us, we have more than 50 years of classroom and school experience.

As practitioners and observers of changes in public schools, we have been researching and writing about our observations and findings for only the past 16 years. While completing our doctoral studies and teaching in the evenings at Kent State University, we have concluded that there is a dimension of teaching, learning, and leading that should be described in writing. Numerous observations made and relationships formed in several school districts convinced us that this dimension deserved credence. We were compelled to write this book to give this dimension a name, a description, and a place in our peers' work toward meaningful school change; by doing so, we have defined a destination toward which we all should move to transform school culture. We call this dimension the *Humane Dimension*—a place in an organization where personal transformation is allowed to occur in a culture of compassion, trust, empowering relationships, and common purposes.

Our studies began in 1988, when we explored the perceptions of stakeholders who were involved in their school's budgeting and decision-making processes. Decisions about a range of topics (e.g., curricular programs, personnel, and budgeting of resources) were explored in an attempt to understand how stakeholders' involvement could improve final decisions and outcomes of the educational process. At the same time, Theodore Roosevelt High School in Kent, Ohio, was thriving as an exemplar of school reform that had not yet been noted as such in the literature by any other researchers. It was during the 1984–1985 school year that Roosevelt High School was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education with the prestigious Excellence in Education award, then under the leadership of Principal Marty Kane.

After our first major study, we decided to focus our efforts on the staff, students, and parents of Theodore Roosevelt High School in 1993. We wanted to develop local knowledge (Cochran-Smith, 1993) about the effectiveness of its programs. We began a series of action research projects to describe, document, and assess the school reform efforts of Roosevelt's

teachers and administrators. In 1997, we investigated the perceptions of five classroom teachers who were engaged in reform activities at Theodore Roosevelt High School. These five teacher reformers were facilitating four major reform projects in their school. Our study's research question focused on how power relations in the school affected their reform activities. A critical recommendation that resulted from this study is that power in schools must be reconceptualized as a relational concept characterized by parity and reciprocity.

After 1997, action research projects continued, and Theodore Roosevelt High School's growth increasingly became our focus. As we note in Chapter 1, the precise, cyclical nature of the Humane Dimension had become clear to us because of the natural flow of events during such a time of change in Roosevelt's history. By 2002, we had completed the first draft of the present book. We proceeded to conduct focus groups with teachers and administrators on both the components of the Humane Dimension and the elements of the transformed leadership and teacher cultures that we observed and later reported in our work. Excerpts from the focus group notes are featured throughout the book in sidebars called "Focus Group Response." During the 2003–2004 school year, the process of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999) was used to evaluate Roosevelt's past and to decide its future direction. At the time of this writing, enormous amounts of data that corroborate the cyclical nature of the Humane Dimension's four components have been collected at Roosevelt. Many of our subjects' comments contained in this book have been included.

We hope that this book will answer several important questions. The following list is not exhaustive but is a good beginning.

Q: How does the Humane Dimension relate to standards-based education?

A: The Humane Dimension describes a new context for educators to grow and to address the standards with renewed spirit.

Q: Is the Humane Dimension a theory?

A: No, it is a construct that we have developed. The four components (i.e., Communications Based on Trust, Empowering Relationships, Other-Centered Purpose, and Personal Transformation) are connected by a recursive cycle, which forms a foundation for organizational transformation.

Q: Is the Humane Dimension a cure for the many ills and challenges faced by educators?

A: No, it is one small piece of the complex puzzle of school reform. Many researchers clearly have made recommendations, which when used collectively, could underpin significant changes in public education.

School leaders—traditional administrators *and* teachers—will benefit from learning about the Humane Dimension and how to incorporate it into their practice. Educators and graduate students in areas of administration, curriculum, and instructional leadership may also find our humanistic approach a welcome addition to their courses.

Chapter 1, which defines the Humane Dimension, is followed by a chapter on each of its four components (i.e., Chapter 2, Communication Based on Trust; Chapter 3, Empowering Relationships; Chapter 4, Other-Centered Purpose; and Chapter 5, Personal and Organizational Transformation). Chapters 6 and 7 present the results of applying the Humane Dimension, namely, elements of transformed leadership and teacher cultures, respectively. Chapter 8, Handling Challenges and Pitfalls, advises readers on how to face their challenges or problems and deal with failure. Chapter 9, Evidence of the Humane Dimension in Schools, actually brings closure to the book and to the question of how to recognize the Humane Dimension when one sees it. We draw specific conclusions from the commentaries of some exemplary educators in our lives. Finally, the first four Resources provide detailed staff development activities that can promote and implement the Humane Dimension's four components, and the last two Resources present information on an overview of the Adventure Education Center in Columbus, Ohio, and a generic process of procedures for win/win negotiations, respectively.

At the end of each chapter, we provide a short list of reflective questions on incorporating the Humane Dimension into your work. You may want to jot down your responses for later review and to keep a record of your ideas as they occur while you read. We hope the Humane Dimension will find its way into your own practice and give guidance on enhancing the important work of school leadership.