

# Taking Charge in Changing Times

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## Signals for Change

- Consumers want more control, choice and personal service, including in their selection of public schools. Students – and their increasingly assertive parents – will drive educational choice and competition.
- Major shifts are occurring in the way education is being measured because of available data. Staff evaluations will be based on student achievement, usually measured by class performance on high-stakes mandated tests.

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## Signals for Change

- The pool of education professionals is becoming subject to forces within the business market, making way for staff and administrators from a variety of backgrounds.
- Business leaders are creating organizations and partnerships to support school reform.
- Technology is reconfiguring learning spaces, extending the school day, advancing specialized courses and speeding communications.

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## Nobody said being a school board officer would be easy ...

- Very dynamic, highly political environment today
- Breadth and complexity of issues is often overwhelming
- Increasing time commitments
- Potential for unpopular decisions greater than ever
- Deliberations can get ugly and personal

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## ... but this is ridiculous!

- The role of the local leader in education reform is unclear
- Change agents vs. trustees of the institution
- Increasingly difficult to get community leaders to run for the school board or volunteer support
- Decisions are made to appease specific constituent subgroups of the community
- Communication channels tend to be controlled by special interest groups

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## As a Result...

- Increasingly prescriptive and standardized state and federal mandates, standards, assessments and reporting procedures
- Regulatory and legislative limits, prohibitions and caps
- Mayoral and state takeovers leading to appointed boards and superintendents
- Charter schools managed by private, for-profit firms

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## ...Eroding School Authority

- Shrinking management rights at the bargaining table
- Legal challenges to management decisions
- Increasing number of single issue board candidates
- Negative media reports
- Vouchers for private/parochial school students

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## So Who Will Tackle These Issues?

### Education program issues:

- Individual learning styles vs. standardization
- Improving high school graduation rate
- Improving transition to employment
- Improving achievement of at-risk and special needs students
- Increasing early childhood education programs
- Pursuing equity while maintaining high academic standards

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## ...and These Issues?

### Staffing and compensation issues:

- Maintaining high teacher quality at every level
- Strong building-level leadership
- Effective professional development
- Impending staff shortages
- Screening out ineffective individuals
- Career ladders and performance contracts to make the education profession financially attractive and more competitive with business and industry

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### **...and These Issues?**

**Leadership and Management issues:**

- The impact of standardized testing
- Inter-district comparisons of student achievement
- Increasing community participation
- The need for independent sources of information
- Negative perceptions and constituent pressures
- Fiscal uncertainty due to uncontrollable conditions

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### **...and What About The Next 10 Years?**

- Financial support for public education
- Testing and accountability
- Widespread use of information technology
- Changing demographics
- Changing family structures and values
- Student health and safety concerns
- School violence
- Global living and competition
- Organizational decentralization

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***There is much you can do to bring about change regardless of what is going on around you in the larger organization.***

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## What type of leader do you want to be?

- The **Victim** overwhelmed by all the barriers to effecting change and blaming the system for the problems
- The **Dreamer** reflecting on numerous solutions but unable to implement any of them
- The **Doer** who will attempt to solve all problems single-handedly or await the instructions of others as to what should be done
- The **Leader** who will use a coordinated problem-solving approach to create a vision of what can occur, and then implement the vision

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*“Effective leadership does four things:  
develops followers,  
focuses on results,  
remains visible,  
and  
exercises responsibility.”*

Peter Drucker  
Leader in the Future

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## The True Leader

- A “pragmatic idealist”
- Able to dream and transform those dreams into significant actions
- Understands the nature of power and how to use it
- Can motivate followers to transcend self-interests for the good of the team as a whole
- Takes an active interest in the development of each team member
- Continually assesses the performance of the team

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## Take Charge ...

- Have courage, think the unthinkable, dream
- Explicitly address basic organizational values
- Force an external focus that is more concerned with needs, "markets," and responsiveness than with internal issues of organizational mechanics
- Establish the school's mission in terms of educational outcomes and measure all decisions against this standard of purpose

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## ...of your school's future...

- Don't sweat the small stuff
- Force forward thinking and a long-term view
- Engage more in creating than approving what has already been developed
- Optimize the richness of your school's diversity
- Define to whom your staff is legally and morally accountable
- Stay on task, make decisions without being impulsive

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## ...of your own future ...

- Acquire knowledge to ask the right questions
- Work out division of responsibility with superintendent
- Discipline staff members who violate Board policy or administrative regulations fairly, consistently and swiftly
- Develop a comfort level with media contacts, but do not manipulate media for personal gain
- Collaborate with others to influence state policy-making and funding

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**... or someone else will!**

- Be precise about what information is needed
- Balance over-control and complacency
- Deal with controversy openly and head-on
- Use time efficiently and productively
- Encourage many forms of community participation
- Exercise continuous oversight of educational programs

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***Be proud of what you are doing.***

***No other form of service is more  
honorable or important than that of a  
School Board Member!***

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