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LEADING With *Teacher Emotions* IN MIND



KENNETH LEITHWOOD • BRENDA BEATTY

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Kenneth Leithwood & Brenda Beatty

Kenneth Leithwood is a professor of educational leadership and policy at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

Brenda Beatty is a senior lecturer for the faculty of education at Monash University-Clayton in Victoria, Australia and a designer and director of the highly regarded Monash Master in School Leadership.

This book examines teachers' emotional well-being and how school leaders need to pay attention to the impact it has. The authors draw upon theory, empirical evidence and research to show how teacher performance can be affected by how they are feeling. Situations and examples given throughout the book come from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. They cite five clusters of emotion: job satisfaction and morale; stress, anxiety and burnout; individual and collective self-efficacy; commitment and engagement; and teacher motivation and educational reform.

Why does the school leadership need to be concerned about the emotional state of teachers? According to Leithwood and Beatty the five clusters are "significantly and quite directly influenced by school leadership and working conditions that teachers experience." This is an area that has not received the appreciation it should, given that teacher emotions impact significantly on student achievement. In their first footnote, the authors express their sympathy for most school leaders as they recognize the effort expended on behalf of students and staff. Criticism is offered not in a negative way but rather in an effort to assist those leaders for whom they have great respect. The purpose of the book is to offer guidance to school leaders in how they can become much more effective by paying attention to and understanding the emotions of their teachers.

Throughout the book direct quotes are used from teachers and principals interviewed in some of the studies used. More often than not the reader will recognize these comments as having a familiar ring. There are as many positive comments as there are negative. In Ontario in the past few years school leaders have been focusing more on the issues that they can control such as improving the disciplinary climate in their schools so that teachers and students can work in a safe environment and setting high expectations for all students. Teachers are being included in more decision-making, especially in the area of school improvement. Principals also recognize the need to be seen as instructional leaders by their staffs and to work toward creative ways to improve instruction at the classroom level. More work still needs to be done.

Each of the five clusters of emotions is discussed within its own easy-to-read chapter. Often the headings of many sections are posed as questions thus engaging the reader. "What Does It Matter?" draws the reader into the conversation, "Do I agree with what is being said or do I think this is just not realistic?" A conclusion is provided at the end of most chapters. They serve to leave the reader with more thoughts to ponder on the issue and quite often to think about their own leadership practices.

The authors consistently focus on the powerful influence the behaviour of school leaders has on teachers' working conditions. The last three chapters in the book deal with how the leader can address the emotional well-being of their teachers: *Setting Directions and Developing People*; *Redesigning the Organization and Managing the Instructional Program*; and *Leader Emotions*. Emotional leadership is about relationships and understanding the impact that emotions have on relationships. In order to be successful, leaders need to have self-knowledge about their emotions and the opportunity to reflect upon their practice. Engaging in conversation with trusted peers, as noted in Beatty's study of 25 principals from six different countries, served to affirm that leaders in education throughout the world face many of the same challenges in dealing with their own emotions related to their jobs.

Leading With Teacher Emotions in Mind is worth reading and reflecting upon. Ken Leithwood and Brenda Beatty provide the reader with suggestions as to how they can improve teachers' working conditions as well as their own emotional leadership. Some readers will feel they already do as much as they possibly can, given the restraints imposed by unions and their district. Others will find this resource has "aha" moments for them and will ponder next steps.

Teachers and leaders who let themselves be known by inviting each other into their emotional worlds can provide each with a greater sense of the other to great effect for the working conditions of both teachers and leaders and the benefit of society's children. (p. 149)

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