

The Main Idea's PD Suggestions for *From Leading to Succeeding*

While this book is short (exactly 100 pages), the ideas in it are big. Consider finding other leaders who want to improve their leadership capabilities and discuss each of the leadership elements introduced in the book. Below are a few exercises you can do on your own, with a leadership team at your own school, or with colleagues who are also school leaders.

Chapter 1: Purpose

⇒ [Shorten your mission](#)

Mission statements take a long time to create, and your school or district probably already has one. Rather than bringing together all stakeholders to create a new one, try to shorten your existing one. Keep in mind that high-performing organizations often have very short statements. Examples of the best mission statements include:

TED: Spreading ideas

The Humane Society: Celebrating animals, controlling cruelty

USO: Lifting the spirits of America's troops and their families

⇒ [Check if your recent initiatives pass the mission litmus test](#)

Once you have created a short mission statement, turn it into a few questions that can be used to test whether programs or initiatives at your school follow the mission. For example, the mission of the Santa Fe Community College is: Empower Students, Strengthen Community so they can ask the following about any initiative: Does it empower students? Does it strengthen community? Examine a few recent initiatives that you have implemented to see whether they pass the litmus test using your own questions. Once you do this, you can use these questions to assess whether *new* initiatives should be started at your school.

Chapter 2: Trust

⇒ [Admit a recent mistake](#)

Trust is the foundation for everything you do and it takes a great deal of effort to develop it. Below is just one approach you can try to build trust. Think back to one or several mistakes you've made recently and craft *and deliver to staff* your own *I Used to Think...and Now I Think* statements. These are the examples from the chapter that can help guide you:

"I used to think I could complete the school budget on my own, but under a tight deadline I neglected to have it reviewed by a colleague and ended up making several significant errors that almost cost our school several staff positions. Now, even if I think a document is complete, I always have it proofread by a colleague."

"When I saw a student smoking marijuana outside of a classroom, I grabbed the drugs and started screaming at him rather than following our protocol for dealing with this type of incident and including our trained security team. The student dropped out shortly after this incident. Now I've learned I need to stop and think through my reaction so I follow the school's protocol and ensure the proper disciplinary action rather than reacting without thinking."

Chapter 3: Focus

⇒ [Develop an implementation rubric](#)

Whenever you begin to implement a new initiative, it is helpful to determine how thoroughly the staff is implementing it. What may look like the failure of a new effort may turn out to be a lack of full implementation. To assess this, you can design an *implementation rubric*. This doesn't need to be complicated. Simply outline what 'needs improvement,' 'proficient,' and 'exemplary' implementation would look like. Try this right now for a recent initiative at your school/district:

Exemplary:

Proficient:

Needs Improvement:

⇒ [Determine your next leadership move for a few existing initiatives](#)

What should be your next leadership move for the initiatives at your school? Which initiatives should you invest in, re-evaluate, discard? Reeves developed a matrix (below) to help you make these decisions. Choose a few programs or practices to examine. First, design an *implementation rubric* for each one (see the preceding activity). Next, map each one onto the matrix below. For example, if two teachers began drastically increasing the amount of time they spend teaching nonfiction reading, put this on the matrix so you will know what next steps to take as a leader. See if you can identify one practice/initiative/program you could give up right now and one practice you would like to implement more fully across your school/district.

High Impact	LEAD	INVEST
Low Impact	WEED	EVALUATE
	Low Implementation	High Implementation

Chapter 4: Leverage

⇒ [Learn to calculate effect size and determine which approaches work best for your students](#)

Most strategies we implement in schools have *some* effect on student achievement. Rather than simply accepting all strategies with *any* positive effect, we need to focus our efforts on those strategies that have the *most* effect. As John Hattie argues, it's vital to "know thy impact." Hattie also says that to determine how much a strategy impacts student achievement, you don't need to be a researcher.

First, learn to calculate effect size for *one* initiative or program at your school. Simply create a spreadsheet with columns for the students' names, test results before trying a new teaching strategy, and test results after the implementation. Spreadsheets can automatically compute an effect size for the results. Learn how with this video explanation: <https://vimeo.com/57012651>. Or if you prefer, you can do this by hand (see the instructions in John Hattie's *Visible Learning for Teachers*). Once you learn how to calculate effect size, plan to do this for a few teaching strategies after which you can conduct discussions with teachers about dropping one or two of the least effective ones. Better yet, make it a habit to regularly check effect sizes to assess the impact of teaching strategies.

Chapter 5: Feedback

⇒ [Solicit feedback](#)

As Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen write in *Thanks for the Feedback*, "Nothing affects the learning culture of an organization more than the skill with which its executive team receives feedback." The first step in skillfully receiving feedback is to *solicit* it. After the next meeting you run, consider distributing the rubric below and asking your colleagues for feedback. If this proves useful, consider creating other rubrics to ask colleagues for feedback on other aspects of your leadership.

Rubric to Evaluate Leadership of Meetings		
Not meeting standards		
• Leader-focused, little deliberation	• Allows discussion to be monopolized by a few people	• Does not provide an agenda
• Blames students or parents rather than taking ownership of problems and does not empower teachers to make a difference in learning		
Progressing		
• Allows meeting to stray from the agenda	• Does not encourage more than a few people to contribute to discussions of teaching and learning	
• Establishes norms but does not enforce them		• Uses some review of student work as evidence for discussions of teaching and learning
Proficient		
• Asks follow-up questions	• Examines data and its connection to professional practices	
• Shares instructional strategies	• Establishes and enforces norms, especially participation by all	
• Distributes leadership	• Uses a clear agenda with a shared understanding of expectations	
• Conducts evidence-based discussions to determine what adults can do to improve teaching and learning		

Chapter 6: Change

⇒ [Assess change readiness for one new initiative from the past year](#)

To prepare for the next new initiative that comes to your school, examine how ready your school was for the *last* initiative. Think about one new change effort from the past year, and rate how ready both the school and you were for this initiative below. Then discuss these results with a leadership team to predict and plan for a more successful implementation of a change effort coming up.

Readiness for <i>systemic change and personal change</i>	Systemic Readiness (Rate 0 to 10)	Personal Readiness (Rate 0 to 10)
Planning: The plan was clear, detailed, and effectively communicated. I planned in advance the steps I would take and knew clearly how to make the change.		
Sense of Urgency: There was a widespread sense of the need for change. I knew the price of failing was greater than the price of changing.		
Stakeholder/Personal Support: All stakeholders understood and supported the change. My family/friends knew about the change and supported me.		
Leadership Focus: Senior leadership made the change a top priority long after initiation. I devoted time to initiating and maintaining the change.		
Impact on Results: The change had a measurable and significant impact on results. I can measure the results, and they are clear and significant.		

Chapter 7: Sustainability

⇒ [Write a letter to your successor now \(even if you have no plans to leave!\)](#)

Many leaders make the mistake of thinking about issues of sustainability once they plan to leave. Take a moment to write a letter to your successor now. Consider addressing the six other elements as a way to structure your letter. What is the school's purpose? What are the most successful ways you've found to develop trust? How do you help the school remain focused and which initiatives are the school's top priorities? Which are the highest leverage approaches? How is feedback addressed at the school? What might the next leader do to help sustain the most important initiatives at the school?