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CHAPTER 1

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AN ANSWER TO LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS

A NEW METAPHOR FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT



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Education is full of rich and colorful metaphors which often are used to describe a context or situation. For example, the need to have a steady supply of people to take on the role of school leaders is often described as a “pipeline.” Some school leadership scholars propose that we create a

principal pipeline so there is a steady supply of available, trained people ready to assume the role. While we like the analogy's implication of a predictable flow, we contend that the pipeline concept is flawed, and even perpetuates the challenge of scarcity. Why? Because a pipeline implies that the same commodity at entry point is what we expect to see at its terminus. Put water, oil, or gas in at point A; that's what you get at point Z.

A pipeline mentality also keeps us seeing growth as linear, which it's not. Traditionally, we begin with the classroom teacher who is promoted to teacher leader, then to AP, then to principal. We have often used the sheer march of time as the litmus test for readiness to assume positions as principals. However, the traditional pipeline isn't working so well which is why we are in this crisis.

We believe that a better metaphor is a winding tree-lined pathway because the development of APs must accommodate curves. Mentoring must have a plan for celebrating the peaks and vistas, and for coaching novices to anticipate the switchbacks and valleys. Further, pathways provide milestones to those hiking that trail, a reassuring sense that someone else has been here. Someone else has traveled this route and perhaps even left a sign of their passage. We will sketch out this analogy more in a moment, but for now, a bit about the place of dire concern from which the impetus for this book sprang.

A year ago, as we looked at earlier research and talked with aspiring leaders and veteran principals, we were shocked by the dearth of a firm, clear vision. Frameworks and protocols were few and far between, and when they existed, they were procedural. School principalship is a job that demands specific leadership attributes, and yet no one seemed to be operating with an established set of them. How can the preparation of leaders be purposeful and efficient without them? Where was a model that outlined the steps of the journey and inspired educators? We decided to develop a model ourselves.

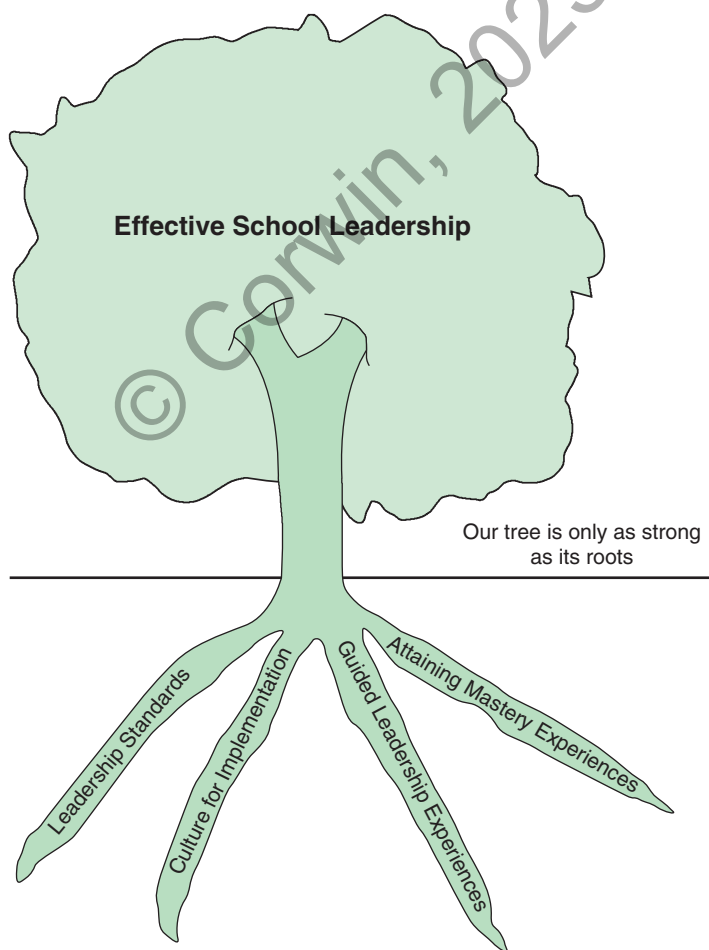
As Vince and I developed our model, we kept thinking about how steadfast leaders need to be and knew that roots were an important part of our thinking. On walks, we often see that a tree's roots are exposed at the surface, helping us appreciate how wide and deep they go, as they tap into the rich soil and water table to sustain the tree. As human beings, we often talk about our family roots; the customs, traditions, and people that ground us in who we are and keep us connected to what we value. In a leadership model, the roots, we knew, would give aspiring leaders steady, clear mentoring. We wrote down a first draft of the principles that grounded our thinking:

- *Leadership is not a linear progression*
- *Time cannot be the only determining factor for leadership effectiveness*
- *Across districts, there needs to be a higher degree of agreement regarding the attributes of effective leadership*

- *Practical experiences for aspiring leaders must be relevant and impactful*
- *Aspiring principals and leaders need clear, consistent communication at every step of the journey*

In reviewing our list, we saw that what each idea had in common was communication and relationship-building. Developing leaders must be centered on equipping all involved with the rules of engagement—from building trust to transparent standards. To us, the answer lay in harnessing the power of human motivation and knowing what supports people in becoming who they want to be. So, drawing upon the work of Albert Bandura and other seminal research, our model centers on self-efficacy and how social cognitive learning theory can help create conditions for better leadership preparation. Taken together, we affectionately call our model *The Roots of School Leader Preparation* (Figure 1.4).

FIGURE 1.4 THE ROOTS OF SCHOOL LEADER PREPARATION



FOUR ROOTS OF SCHOOL LEADER PREPARATION

Accounting for much of the leadership research and the research on implementation we think there are four essential roots that strengthen the preparation of our future leaders. They are:

1. Raising the Bar on Leadership Standards
2. Creating a Culture for Implementation
3. Planning Guided Leadership Experiences
4. Attaining Mastery Experiences

FOUR ROOTS OF SCHOOL LEADER PREPARATION



Leader Ready: Four Pathways to Prepare Aspiring School Leaders by Tim Cusack and Vince Bustamante.
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