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Depth

Learning and Integrity

Seek truth, create, and live up to the title of teacher.

Motto of East China Normal University, Shanghai

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❖ **PRINCIPLE 1**

Sustainable leadership matters. It preserves, protects, and promotes deep and broad learning for all in relationships of care for others.

A Sense of Purpose

For Winston Churchill, it was the defeat of Hitler and Nazi Germany; for Emmeline Pankhurst and Susan B. Anthony, it was votes for women; for Nelson Mandela, it was ending apartheid in South Africa; and for Martin Luther King, Jr., it was civil rights for all. Throughout history, leaders who made worthwhile and lasting contributions to society have been passionately, persistently, and courageously committed to compelling ideals and just causes that were meaningful in their time.

Sustainable leadership, like sustainable improvement, begins with a strong and unswerving sense of moral purpose. The core meaning of *sustain* is "to hold up; bear the weight of; be able to bear (strain, suffering, and the like) without collapse." Inner conviction,

unshakable faith, and a driving, hopeful sense of purpose that stretches far beyond the self—these are the inalienable elements of moral character that truly sustain people during times of overwhelming difficulty and almost unbearable suffering. Reflecting on his long imprisonment on Robben Island, where he was deprived of company, exercise, and even food during long periods of solitary confinement, Nelson Mandela put it like this: "The human body has an enormous capacity for adjusting to trying circumstances. I have found that one can bear the unbearable if one can keep one's spirits strong even when one's body is being tested. Strong convictions are the secret of surviving deprivation: your spirit can be full even when your stomach is empty."[1]

In the corporate world, a strong and shared sense of purpose also sustains businesses, holds them together, and enables them to persist even in the face of apparently insurmountable odds. The most long-lasting and successful businesses are driven and defined by enduring purposes and timeless values, not quarterly profits.[2] In *Built to Last*, Collins and Porras reported that when they studied companies that had maintained profitability over long periods of time, they "saw a core ideology that transcended pure economic considerations."[3] Jackson and Nelson's research in *Profits with Principles* confirms this finding: Explicitly linking profits with principles is a prerequisite for helping to restore trust and confidence while delivering long-term value to shareholders."[4]

Developing and renewing a compelling sense of purpose is central to sustainable leadership. Yet a disturbing finding of Collins and Porras's foundational study of companies that are built to last was that the nature of that purpose didn't always matter! "The critical issue is not whether a company has the "right" core ideology or a "likable" core ideology but whether it *has* a core ideology—likable or not—that gives guidance and inspiration to people inside that company."[5] It makes no difference whether you produce titanium parts that give people new knees or tobacco products that corrupt

their lungs; any purpose that motivates people internally seems to be enough to keep companies going. However, in the aftermath of widespread corporate scandals, more businesses are now pushing for a sense of purpose that is bigger and better than this, a moral purpose that is embedded in the essence of their products and that extends into the community and society beyond.

A growing number of companies are addressing the deeper purposes of sustainable corporate development by attending to the human value of what they produce, not just how they produce it. Product integrity matters; it is a qualifying criterion for companies included in responsible corporate development investment portfolios, for example.[6]

Gary Erickson is the founder and creator of the Clif Bar, a widely sold energy bar that began in his mother's kitchen and now has annual sales of $40 million. In *Raising the Bar: Integrity and Passion in Life and Business*, Erickson describes his quest to create a nutritious bar that would be more tasty and satisfying than existing alternatives, to defend and renew his private company in the face of tempting and lucrative buyout offers, and to extend his vision of sustainability in his personal life to sustainability in his business.

Clif Bar's philosophy of sustainability has five interconnected elements: "sustaining our brands, our company, our people, our community and our planet."[7] For Erickson, taking sustainability seriously means that "we want to be environmentally responsible and continually assess our business's impact on the environment . . . to minimize our ecological footprint on the earth."[8] Sustainability at Clif Bar also means wanting "to create and sustain a business where people can experience life, not just where they go to make a living."[9]

At the heart of Clif Bar's philosophy of sustainability is *product integrity*. Shareholder value isn't about getting the biggest possible quarterly returns. It is about "believing in the integrity of our products" and making a "tasty, healthy product." "That is our return, not increasing the profit margin at the expense of the ingredients."[10]

This purpose, embedded in the bar he named after his father, came from Erickson's own passions: his connection to and caring about the natural environment and the joys of baking in his mother's kitchen. Disappointed and disgusted by the tasteless, highly processed, and standardized ingredients of the only energy bar then available for his long cycle rides, Erickson set about creating a product whose brand vision would ultimately become "sustaining people in motion."[11]

Erickson discusses how the vision permeates the company: "At Clif Bar Inc., we delight in creating and savoring wholesome, delicious food. As bakers by trade and gourmet cooks on the side, we're energized by the joy people experience when they savor great food made with care. As athletes, we're committed to creating foods that sustain, nourish and support people through any endeavor. As concerned individuals, we want our business to contribute to a healthier, more sustainable planet. These ideals inspire and motivate our work."[12]

Product integrity is the core of sustainability. Sustenance is nourishment. And if our souls sustain our bodies, then learning sustains our souls. Nelson Mandela and his fellow political prisoners—the future leaders of South Africa—understood this very well in their darkest days on Robben Island when they agitated for the right to study, stole forbidden newspaper fragments from the sandwich wrappings discarded by their jailers, and conducted secret classes among

the urine and feces of the Africans' toilets, where the white guards were too repelled to tread.[13]

If the moral purpose of what we produce is important for corporate sustainability, it is even more important in education and public life. Schools, school systems, and educational change advocates cannot be indifferent to or evasive about just what the moral purpose of education should be. From the standpoint of sustainability, the heart of that purpose ought to be learning—something that is itself sustaining—and not just any learning, but learning that matters, spreads, and lasts a lifetime.

Like an excellent meal, deep, sustaining learning requires wholesome ingredients, a rich and varied menu, caring preparation, and pleasing presentation. The primary responsibility of all educational leaders is to sustain this kind of learning. It is this, not delivering the curriculum, implementing the government's or district's mandates, or giving a gloss to how the institution appears, that is at the center of sustainable leadership.

Not anything or everything needs sustaining or maintaining. There is no point in sustaining learning that is trivial or that disappears once it has been tested. Sustainable leadership fully understands the nature and process of student learning, engages directly and regularly with learning and teaching in classrooms, and promotes learning among other adults in order to find continuing ways to improve and expand the learning of students.[14]

Sustainable leadership doesn't equivocate. It puts learning at the center of everything leaders do. Students' learning comes first, then everyone else's in support of it.[15] Michael Knapp and his associates explain that leadership for learning means "creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students, professionals and the system," in which leaders "persistently and publicly focus . . . their own attention and that of others on learning and teaching."[16] To this end, Knapp and his colleagues argue, educational leaders who practice sustainable leadership establish a focus on learning by doing the following:

- Making it central to their own work
- Consistently communicating that student learning is a shared mission of students, teachers, administrators, and the community
- Articulating core values that support a focus on powerful, equitable learning
- Paying public attention to teaching[17]

It is easy to advocate for more instructional leadership,[18] to insist that all educational leaders should become leaders of learning.[19] It is harder to make leadership for learning a practical reality. And it is hardest of all to do this in policy and reform climates that repeatedly pull the plug on leaders' efforts to achieve depth and breadth of learning in their systems and their schools. In his review of the present state of educational administration, Joe Murphy concludes that "we have responded to the challenges of purpose and development largely by ignoring them, or at least failing to grapple with them thoughtfully."[20] The courage to be a leader of learning is most called for in uncongenial conditions dominated by school rankings, test scores, and short-term achievement targets. Sustainable leadership demands firm convictions about and unwavering commitments to enhancing deep and broad learning, not merely tested achievement, for *all* students.

In 2001, the Canadian province of Ontario introduced a high-stakes literacy test in tenth grade for virtually all students, who were required to pass in order to graduate. High stakes, high pressure!

Ivor Megson was the new principal at Talisman Park Secondary School. Recently promoted from assistant principal at Talisman Park, Megson was dedicated to his work as a leader but didn't like to rock the boat too much. Most of his staff had

been at the school for a long time. They liked being innovative in their own academic subjects but were skeptical and often cynical about larger-scale reform agendas. A coffee circle of embittered staff met every morning before school to complain about the government's almost daily initiatives and announcements. Like many principals, Megson saw it as his responsibility to buffer his staff from the deluge of reforms that descended on the school. This, he felt, was the best way he could help them.

With his staff, Megson therefore figured out the most minimal and least disruptive school response to the tenth-grade test, one that would produce the best results with the least amount of effort. Quickly, he and his staff began identifying a group of students who, pretests indicated, would fall just below the passing mark. The school's English department then coached these students intensively on literacy skills, so they would perform acceptably when the real test came around. From the staff's point of view, Megson's approach was appealing because most teachers could remain uninvolved in the literacy test.

Technically, the strategy worked; the school's results improved in comparison with the previous year. But teachers' energies are finite, and as staff concentrated on the students near the cutoff point, the ones who really needed help with literacy, who had little chance of passing, were cast by the wayside. In Talisman Park, authentic literacy and learning for all, especially for the most needy, were sacrificed for short-term results and the appearance of improvement.

Charmaine Watson was the principal of Wayvern High School, just down the road from Talisman Park. Wayvern was a culturally and ethnically diverse school and had a high number of students for whom English was a second language.

Wayvern had a lot to lose on the literacy test. Yet Watson's school made literacy, not passing the literacy test, one of their key improvement goals. Watson engaged all of her staff in inquiry about how to improve literacy skills to benefit all students in the long term instead of focusing on how to manipulate the short-term scores on the test. Working with large staff teams, across disciplines and with training support through workshops, Watson's school undertook an audit of existing literacy practices in classrooms, researched effective literacy strategies that might be helpful, and undertook a gap analysis to see what improvements were necessary. Teachers shared their literacy strategies across subjects, then dedicated a whole month to a high-profile focus on learning literacy skills in the school and with the community. They also continued a successful literacy initiative they had already implemented, in which everyone in the school read together for fifteen minutes a day. Watson harnessed her staff's learning in support of student learning.

The immediate results were not spectacular (as is usual with more sustainable change), but the staff and parents were confident that long-term improvement mattered most. Wayvern teachers were convinced that in future years, scores would increase and that they would reflect genuine learning and achievement rather than cynical manipulation of the testing process. The next year, Wayvern scored above the district mean, and in the third year, it was the second highest literacy performer among the twenty-two high schools in the district, far above leafy, suburban Talisman Park, which had gone for the quick fix.

One reform, two principals, two schools, different outcomes! Especially in the most adverse circumstances, the principals who are leaders of learning make the most lasting and inclusive improvements for students in their schools.

In the face of test-driven performance demands, Charmaine Watson and her colleagues refused to cave in, to trade their core values for unquestioning compliance, or to abandon authentic achievement for cynical attempts to boost test score gains. By building professional collaboration, creating opportunities for teacher leadership, and providing forums for teacher dialogue, Watson ensured that teachers never lost sight of their purpose of improving learning for all students. All teachers, not just those in the English Department, took responsibility for being teachers of literacy. Rather than treating the literacy test as a problem to be finessed with the least amount of upset for teachers, the principal and her staff used it as a catalyst to develop deep and sustainable learning for everyone, students and adults alike.

Sustainable leadership doesn't improve standards by thinking first about how to improve test scores. The price of overemphasizing the tested basics has become very evident in the United States, where social studies are increasingly being eclipsed by reading and mathematics.[21] Schools and systems that deal with the pressure to make annual literacy test gains (to meet, for example, the adequate yearly progress requirements of the United States' No Child Left Behind legislation or the yearly targets set by the United Kingdom's National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy) by pretesting students and then applying intensive coaching to a percentile of students that fall just below the passing mark are not creating sustainable improvement that matters. They are concentrating calculatively on the measured results instead of on the learning the results are supposed to measure. They are valuing what they measure, not measuring what they value. Sustainable leadership, however, improves literacy scores by focusing first on the deep need for literacy skills for all students, even those with little chance of getting above the passing mark in the first year.

For too long, a number of government reform strategies have put the cart before the horse, expending effort on testing, then achievement and achievement gaps, and leaving learning till last or omitting it altogether. This has led governments and educa-

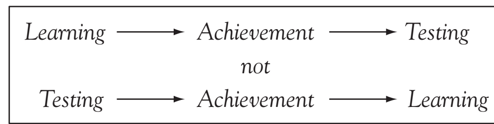

Figure 1.1. Standards and Sustainability

tional leaders to neglect or gloss over what exactly students are achieving. A more sustainable strategy is to focus on learning first, then achievement, then testing, so we never lose sight of the learning that truly matters as we strive to increase students' achievement in it (Figure 1.1.).

Sometimes the biggest impediment to understanding learning is not people's fixation with testing but their excitement about teaching. After spending time sitting in the classrooms of underperforming schools, Harvard professor Richard Elmore discovered that teachers are sometimes so excited about and committed to their teaching they don't really notice how or whether their students are learning. Teachers, he says, actually teach too hard! They give themselves no time or opportunity to step back, watch, and then respond to how their students are actually learning.[22]

The remainder of this chapter therefore looks more closely at two essential elements of leadership for learning:

- *Deep and broad learning* that satisfies our greater hunger for human growth and betterment
- *Slow knowing* that curbs our tendencies toward being fast school nations

Deep and Broad Learning

Learning is a preparation for life and also a part of life. The meaning of learning is embedded in the meaning of life. British management guru Charles Handy explains the connection between the two

through the concepts of greater and lesser hunger. In Africa, he explains, "they say there are two hungers, the lesser hunger and the greater hunger. The lesser hunger is for the things that sustain life, the goods and services, and the money to pay for them, which we all need."[23] In contrast, "the greater hunger is the answer to the question 'why?' for some understanding of what life is for."[24] Deep and broad learning addresses our greater hunger. It engages the quest to know, to understand, to communicate, and to leave the world a better place. Deep and broad learning for all students—and for all the adults who work with them—is therefore learning for meaning, learning for understanding, learning for life. It is learning that engages students in every sense—intellectually, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

These ideas about the basic purposes of learning have ancient roots. Five centuries before Christ, Confucius said, "Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous."[25] More than two millennia later, John Dewey connected education to the deep purposes of human renewal and sustainability: "The most notable distinction between living and inanimate things is that the former maintain themselves by renewal. . . . It is the very nature of life to strive to continue in being. Since this continuance can be secured only by constant renewal, life is a self-renewing process. What nutrition and reproduction are to physiological life, education is to social life."[26] For Dewey, the essence of education for renewal was learning for meaning and understanding—the ability "to grasp the meaning of a thing, an event or situation . . . in its relations to other things; to note how it operates or functions, what consequences follow from it; what causes it, what uses it can be put to."[27] Modern leadership scholars like Linda Lambert explain that "leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collaboratively. It involves opportunities to surface and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information and assumptions through continuing conversations; to inquire about

and generate ideas together; to seek to reflect upon and make sense of work in light of shared beliefs and new information; and to create actions that come out of these new understandings. Such is the core of leadership."[28]

In their work on leading learning, Bob Lingard and his colleagues, along with Queensland's department of education in Australia, address the characteristics of deep and broad learning in terms of what they call *productive pedagogies*. These are

- Intellectually *demanding*
- *Connected* to students' prior knowledge and to the world beyond them
- Provided within a *supportive* environment and learning process
- Prepared so as to engage students and their learning with cultural *differences*[29]

These principles are embedded in what Queensland policymakers call the *New Basics*, which, in addition to the old basics, they believe, are essential for students in new times. The New Basics comprise life pathways and social futures; multiliteracies (for example, print-based, oral, and visual literacy) and communications media; active citizenship; and environments and technologies.[30] This, the policymakers say, is not a "simplistic, paint-by-numbers system, and it doesn't buy into the argument that lots of tests will solve the complex problems we face."[31]

Despite or perhaps because of the galloping consumption that makes us into nations of shoppers and accumulators of gadgets, people still search for the greater hunger—"the answer to the question 'why' for some understanding of what life is for."[32] There is more to living than being a good consumer and producer, and there is more to education than the lesser hunger and human capital.

On December 26, 2004, one of our daughters was bathing on a beach in Thailand, alongside thousands of others seeking a brief respite from the cold northern winter. Inexplicably, the tide suddenly began to recede, like water draining from a bathtub. Exiting the ocean, she thought to glance over her shoulder for just a second. A terrifying sight met her eyes. Rushing toward her was a gigantic wave—part of the tsunami that devastated coastal communities across southern Asia. Taking no time to gather clothes or other belongings and begging others to flee, she sprinted for her life, escaping to higher ground with only seconds to spare.

Many others were much less fortunate. Parents, partners, children, and babies were swept to their death. Hundreds of thousands of poor fishermen and villagers across the region, whose flimsy homes afforded little protection, suffered similar tragic fates. Then, in the depths of despair, in the midst of this natural catastrophe and human tragedy, something remarkable happened. As news of the disaster spread and its appalling scale became apparent, and when governments at first appeared agonizingly slow to respond, there was a spontaneous eruption of human giving. The day after Christmas Day—the annual zenith of Western consumerism—with their bellies full and their presents strewn throughout their homes, people who had more than enough gave their money, their prayers, and their time to those who had lost everything. Public donations rapidly outstripped government contributions. Children handed over their weekly allowances. Homeless people went into banks and emptied their pockets. In less than a week, Britons alone raised 35 million pounds—one pound for every person in the country.[33]

Although capitalism may consume us and consumerism may distract us, moments like these remind us of the existence and the need for generosity of human spirit, for thinking about how we live together, for considering not just how we make a living but also how we live our lives.[34] Deep and broad learning that extends beyond the coverage of content, the basics of literacy, or the driving need for human capital is an essential part of the bigger and more hopeful narrative of what schools should do.

Just as the four food groups make up a broad and balanced nutritious diet, a sustaining program of learning must also address our greater as well as our lesser hunger. Toward the close of the twentieth century, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which promotes and supports sustainable development initiatives across the globe, produced a timeless and visionary document about the purposes of learning in a socially divided and conflict-ridden world. In *Learning: The Treasure Within*, the authors state, “Traditional responses to the demand for education that are essentially quantitative and knowledge-based are no longer appropriate. It is not enough to supply each child with a store of knowledge to be drawn on from then on. Each individual must be equipped to seize learning opportunities throughout life, both to broaden her and his knowledge, skills and attitudes, and to adapt to a changing, complex and interdependent world.”[35]

The UNESCO commission proposed “four fundamental types of learning which, throughout a person’s life, will be the pillars of knowledge”:[36]

- *Learning to know* includes the acquisition of a broad general knowledge; intellectual curiosity; the instruments of understanding; independence of judgment; and the impetus and foundation for continuing to learn throughout life. In addition, learning to know “presupposes learning to learn, calling upon the power of concentration, memory and thought.”[37]

- *Learning to do* involves the competence to put what one has learned into practice (even when it is unclear how future work will evolve), to deal with many situations, and to act creatively in and on one's environment. It includes teamwork, initiative, readiness to take risks, and the ability to process information and communicate with others and also to manage and resolve conflicts. Learning to do requires students to apply their learning within and beyond content areas. It calls for teaching, learning, and assessment that helps students understand the structures of academic disciplines, so they can apply them effectively in mathematics, science, the arts, and beyond.
- *Learning to be* addresses who we are and how we are with people. It incorporates our moral character, ethical judgment, and sense of personal responsibility, and it attends to all aspects of the self: mind and body, emotion and intellect, aesthetic sensitivity and spiritual values. People who have learned to be can understand themselves and their world and can solve their own problems. Learning to be means giving people the freedom of thought, judgment, feeling, and imagination they need in order to develop their talents and take control of their lives as much as possible.[38] In workshops that we conduct with educators, we often ask participants to give advice that will last a lifetime to "the child they used to be." People don't advise their younger selves to have better plans, produce or perform to higher standards, study more subjects, or spend more time at their desk. Instead, the most common answers include advice like "slow down," "live life to the fullest," "love God and love thy neighbor," "seize every opportunity," "go for it," "live each day like it is your last," and "feel good about yourself." What these adults, who are usually school leaders, find most important in their own lives is learning to be.
- *Learning to live together* calls on students and others to develop understanding of, respect for, and engagement with other people's cultures and spiritual values. It calls for empathy for others' points

of view, understanding of diversity and similarities among people, appreciation of interdependence, and the ability to engage in dialogue and debate in order to improve relationships, cooperate with others, and reduce violence and conflict. Learning to live together is an essential element of deep and broad learning in an increasingly multicultural world where millions of families and their children have been mired in decades or even centuries of racial hatred, religious bigotry, or totalitarian control.

To these four pillars, we would add a fifth: learning to live sustainably.

- *Learning to live sustainably* is about learning to respect and protect the earth that gives us life; to work with diverse others to secure the long-term benefits of economic and ecological life in all communities; to adopt behaviors and practices that minimize our ecological footprint on the world around us without depriving us of opportunities for development and fulfillment; and to coexist and cooperate with nature and natural design, whenever possible, rather than always seeking to conquer and control them.[39] This emphasis, which UNESCO terms *education for sustainable development*, is

> a new vision of education, a vision that helps people of all ages better understand the world in which they live, addressing the complexity and interconnectedness of problems such as poverty, wasteful consumption, environmental degradation, urban decay, population growth, health, conflict and the violation of human rights that threaten our future. This vision of education emphasizes a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to developing the knowledge and skills needed for a sustainable future as well as changes in values, behavior and lifestyles. This requires us to reorient education systems, policies and practices in order to empower everyone, young and old, to make decisions and act in culturally appropriate and

> locally relevant ways to redress the problems that threaten our common future.[40]

Because we live on an environmentally imperiled planet for which all of us have responsibility, this fifth pillar is as basic to learning today as are literacy and mathematics. If we cannot learn to live sustainably, we run the serious risk that we, as a species, may not be able to learn—or live—at all.

Learning to be, learning to live together, and learning to live sustainably are emotional, moral, and spiritual challenges, not merely cognitive and intellectual ones. All teaching and learning are emotional practices—in a good or a bad way, by intent or neglect.[41] Strong relationships with and emotional engagement among students provide essential prerequisites for civic responsibility, tolerance, and sustainability. When learners are diverse and demanding, caring means being responsive to students' varied cultures; inclusive of their own ideas when selecting curriculum content, defining learning targets, or sharing assessment criteria; and ready to involve their families and communities in lifting learning to higher levels. If learning isn't *personalized*—that is, customized to the meanings, prior knowledge, and life circumstances of each student experiencing it—then many students, especially the most disadvantaged, will scarcely learn at all.[42] The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, in its visionary initiative to transform high school behemoths into smaller learning communities, captures this spirit of deeper and broader learning, defining its quest as creating learning that is about rigor, relevance, and relationships.[43] It does not mean rigor first, then relevance, and relationships later, as an afterthought, but all three elements together.

These five pillars—learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together, and learning to live sustainably—represent deep and broad learning goals for schools and suggest criteria by which they should be held accountable. Yet schools mainly emphasize only the first two—learning to know and learning to do.

Almost a half century ago, R. E. Callahan argued that public education was dominated by a business-driven cult of efficiency.[44] More recently, Canadian writer Janet Stein observed that "when we define efficiency as an end, divorced from its larger purpose, it becomes nothing less than a cult."[45] Elliott Eisner points out that efficiency is "largely a virtue for the tasks we don't like to do; few of us like to eat a great meal efficiently or to participate in a wonderful conversation efficiently, or indeed to make love efficiently. What we enjoy the most we linger over. A school system designed with an overriding commitment to efficiency may produce outcomes that have little enduring quality."[46]

It is incomprehensible, for example, why many parts of Canada should be putting the majority of reform energy and resources into improving the old basics of literacy, when Canada is already the world's second highest performer in literacy achievement at age fifteen and needs to be challenged more ambitiously to develop the new basics that will make it less dependent on the boom and bust economy of national resources and more able to thrive in a creative and culturally diverse knowledge economy in which its people will always be able to invent themselves out of trouble.[47] This strategy—importing plausible solutions from overseas for problems that one's own country mainly doesn't have—is a familiar one in policy.

Most of the public measures of what matters in schools—good test scores, inspection reports, short-term achievement results, oversubscribed schools, customer satisfaction, adequate yearly progress—answer the demands of a performance culture of learning to know and learning to do (at least the most trivial interpretations of it) rather than the larger questions of whether students are learning in a deeper and broader sense that has lasting relevance for their present and future lives. The modern-day equivalent of efficiency is this emphasis on cultures of measurable performance.[48]

Leaders of learning have to be much more than orchestrators of other people's performances. Being a leader of learning means more than poring over and perseverating on achievement results and find-

ing quick ways to boost the figures or narrow the gaps. Rather, developing and preserving a sustaining product that matters means that leaders must

- *Be passionate advocates for and defenders of deep and broad learning* for all students with the public and among fellow professionals, against political and bureaucratic obsessions with prescribed basics, target-driven achievements, and school performance rankings
- *Commit to improving the old basics of literacy and math but not focusing on them to the exclusion of everything else, while also embracing the new basics* of creativity; communication in written, oral, and visual modes; engagement with new technologies; understanding and being able to work with social and cultural differences; and being aware of as well as committed to environmental sustainability
- *Put learning before testing* so that rising test scores reflect real improvements in authentic and productive learning, instead of narrowing the learning to get quick gains in testing
- *Make learning the paramount priority* in all leadership activity, so that in decisions about behavior, the budget, or the bus schedule, the first question is always "How will this help and not damage student learning?"
- *Become more knowledgeable about learning,* as is happening among female U.S. school superintendents who are much more likely than their male colleagues to come from instructional backgrounds[49]
- *Make learning transparent* among the educators in a school, through instituting peer-led walk-throughs and observations of classroom practice, reviews of examples

of student work among colleagues, peer coaching and mentoring, and processes that allow teachers to study one another's lessons[50]

- *Become omnipresent witnesses to learning* by being visible in classrooms and by monitoring (but not micro-managing) teachers' curriculum plans and responses to student work[51]
- *Demonstrate evidence-informed leadership by promoting active inquiry into learning* through critical reviews of research on best learning practices in general and investigations of learning strategies and achievement results in teachers' own schools and classrooms in particular[52]
- *Promote assessment for learning*, so that diagnostic assessment stimulates discussion about and provides usable feedback on students' learning, instead of perpetuating *assessment of learning* that merely passes judgment on learning after it is over and done with[53]
- *Engage students in discussions and decisions about their own learning*, recognizing that students are often highly knowledgeable and articulate about how they learn best[54]
- *Involve parents more in their children's learning* by encouraging shared homework assignments, interactive report cards, and three-way parent-teacher-student meetings, for example[55]
- *Model deep and broad adult learning* in their own leadership development and in the kinds of staff development they provide for others, so that deep engagement with educational change is never obstructed or obscured by the pressures for rapid implementation

of or in-service training on government or system priorities

- *Create the emotional conditions for learning* by developing smaller schools or smaller learning communities within existing ones; by allowing teachers to migrate from one grade to the next in order to remain with the same group of students; by personalizing learning for every student through the provision of individual mentoring and other measures; and by actively cultivating greater emotional literacy among students and staff so that they can work more effectively with those around them[56]

Slow Knowing

Still waters run deep. Deep learning is rarely rapid or rushed. Have you ever struggled to remember the name of a person or a book, only to find that it comes to you much later, when you are thinking about something else? Can you recall spending hours trying to solve a complex problem, only to discover that the solution emerged easily after you had slept on it? Do creative and innovative ideas ever come to you completely out of the blue? These are all examples of what psychologist Guy Claxton, in his book *Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind,* calls *slow knowing.*[57] Slow knowing, he says, is essential for our learning and our lives. It gives depth to our experience and provokes the greatest breakthroughs in human understanding. Slow knowing is vital in creative, knowledge-driven organizations and societies in which profitability depends on how well corporations and countries can draw on the creativity of all their citizens, not just a few, to reinvent and reskill themselves as economic circumstances change around them.[58] Slow knowing is also essential in addressing complex, interconnected problems such as global warming that will require increasing amounts of technical and social

ingenuity to resolve.[59] Yet slow knowing, which sows the seeds of creativity and ingenuity, is increasingly neglected in schools. Claxton makes the case for slow knowing: "The unconscious realms of the human mind will successfully accomplish a number of important tasks *if they are given the time*. They will learn patterns of a degree of subtlety which normal consciousness cannot even see; make sense out of situations that are too complex to analyze; and get to the bottom of certain difficult issues much more successfully than the questing intellect."[60] In other words, slow forms of knowing

- Are tolerant of the faint, fleeting, marginal and ambiguous
- Like to dwell on details that do not fit or immediately make sense
- Are relaxed, leisurely and playful
- Are willing to explore without knowing what they are looking for
- See ignorance and confusion as the ground from which understanding may spring
- Are receptive rather than proactive
- Are happy to relinquish the sense of control over the directions the mind spontaneously takes
- Treat seriously ideas that come out of the blue[61]

Deep learning is often slow learning. This sounds like a strange assertion after decades of associating slow learning with failure, disability, or backwardness. Slow learners are usually seen as people who should be helped, not admired. Yet learning that is not undertaken too fast or in a hurried way is at the heart of our capacity to incubate creative and innovative ideas; it is essential to our ability to walk around and ruminate on complex and difficult problems, then come up with unforeseen solutions; it is indispensable to a full

appreciation of music, poetry, and the arts; and it is integral to learning and being able to apply new practices until we become confident and competent in their use. Drawing on Claxton's ideas, Michael Fullan argues that slow knowing enables us to "respect the complexities of situations that do not have easy answers."[62] Questioning assumptions, not rushing to judgment, and understanding emotionally and intuitively as well as rationally and deliberately—these are the hallmarks of slower knowing.

The call for slower knowing might sound irresponsible in a fast-moving knowledge society that places a premium on quick thinking, creative brainstorming, agile organizations, and people's capacity to think and learn their way quickly out of trouble as the economy or other aspects of the environment change rapidly around them.[63] In *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It Is Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, Richard Florida judges that in today's knowledge societies, human creativity is "the ultimate economic resource."[64] In the United States, for example, 50 percent of the national wealth is produced by 30 percent of the population—the nation's creative class.[65] Further prosperity depends on the capacity to extend beyond this 30 percent, Florida argues, to tap the latent creativity of the underclasses and channel it into creative work that adds to the economy instead of draining welfare resources. Singapore stakes its future on turning all its schools into learning organizations, so that despite whatever economic shifts or downturns the nation has to face, its future generations will be able to reskill quickly and learn their way out of trouble.[66]

Creativity and quick thinking are also crucial in other areas of our lives, outside the economy. Whether it is attending to the problems of global warming, the depletion of nonrenewable resources, the accelerating gap between rich and poor, or just the irritations of intrusive cell phones or e-mail spam, the problems we are creating seem to be outrunning our capacity to solve them. Thomas

Homer-Dixon calls this problem the *ingenuity gap*—the mismatch between the increasing complexity of our world and our inability to deal with the fallout from the unpredictability and pace of events. Homer-Dixon explains that "today, a disturbingly large proportion of people in rich countries seem to believe that our technical experts have all the authority and knowledge to deftly manage our ever more complex world. These beliefs and the complacency they produce are often completely unwarranted: in fact we only have superficial control over the complex systems we've made and critically depend upon."[67]

So if we need quick thinking, nimble judgment, and urgent action, won't slow knowing take us completely in the wrong direction? In *Blink,* Malcolm Gladwell illustrates how many of our most important decisions are made in the blink of an eye.[68] The firefighter who knows just when a building is about to collapse, the emergency room doctor whose intuition tells her to operate even though all the test results suggest otherwise, and the teacher who senses just when to intervene with the right question or who can instantly tell when a student is lying each appreciate and rely on the power of intuitive and instantaneous judgment.

But intuition isn't always right. Sometimes people make the wrong call. Gut feelings can be tragically wrong. The difference is what's behind the intuition. Sixth-year Harvard resident and medical writer Atul Gawande shows that effective intuition is based on years of slowly accumulated knowledge, experience, and wisdom that good doctors can draw on and interpret in a second.[69] The highest-performing cystic fibrosis treatment center in the United States, for example, distinguishes itself from other centers not by having more resources, better equipment, more rational approaches to diagnosis, or more stringent evidence-based procedures but by its highly experienced doctors, who use many intuitive judgments in interactions with and diagnoses of particular patients.[70]

So creative thinking is paradoxical. Some of the best creative thinking is actually slow. We have to make space for it. But some-

times, whether among comedy script writers or crisis response teams, creativity has to be fast. Yet being able to act in the moment and think on your feet depends on deep knowledge and understanding, accumulated slowly and carefully over many years. Quick thinking and slow knowing are alter egos, not alternate paths.

Mostly, our schools give us neither quick thinking nor slow knowing. Instead, they provide high doses of content or endless diets of memorization and testing. If we read a poem at home, we do it quietly, personally, reflectively, letting it affect our thoughts and emotions. If we study a poem at school, our teachers demand that we analyze it, pick it to pieces, read it aloud, discuss it with a partner, or write another poem ourselves. We are rushed to perform and produce, not to ruminate and reflect.[71] Learning hasn't really gotten much better; it's just gotten faster.

We live in fast school nations.[72] Grand goals are converted into short-term targets. Three-quarters of England's primary-age children will be up to standard in literacy within three years, it's proclaimed, or the secretary of state for education will resign! (Actually, he was transferred to crime and prisons before his disappointing numbers came up.) Seventy-five percent of twelve-year-olds in Ontario will read at the required level within three years, the province's premier boldly asserts soon after election! American public schools must demonstrate measurable "adequate yearly progress" for all categories of children, every year, all the time—or they will be labeled underperformers! In the age of instant information, parents desperately want to believe that their schools can and will deliver immediate results, and politicians, educational administrators, and school improvers are far too eager to feed their opinion-polled delusions.

So the curriculum is crammed with more content, testing occurs more often, concepts are downloaded to younger age groups, more time is devoted to the tested basics, teachers give students less time to answer questions in class, and questions and curiosity begin to dry up. The result of all this frenetic activity is what distinguished child psychologist David Elkind calls the *hurried child.* Elkind

observes that "the factory model of schooling," with its increased emphasis on standardized testing as the sole measure of children's worth and "the progressive downward thrust of the curriculum" to ever-younger age groups is robbing children of their childhood.[73] The shrinking numbers of middle-class parents, who live in constant fear of losing their middle-class status, add to the problem by pushing their children too hard, pressing them into excessive amounts of scheduled activity, and leaving them little time for unstructured play.[74]

When children and their teachers are pushed for ever-improving performance, not only do teachers begin to deny and destroy the real depth of learning, but they are also tempted to do anything at all that will help them meet the short-term requirements of the targets and the tests. Schools and school districts start to treat targets in the same way that companies looking for a quick fix address quarterly returns. They turn into little Enrons of Educational Change. Many engage in creative accounting; a few even cheat.[75]

Don't get us wrong. High expectations for all students, especially the most disadvantaged, are essential. Having ways to monitor and measure progress toward meeting these expectations is vital. People can and sometimes should set targets together as part of a shared commitment, whether among congregation members launching a fundraising campaign for a new church steeple, among teachers and administrators setting achievement targets in a school district, or between a teacher and child agreeing to each do their part in helping the child master long division. Externally imposed targets are also sometimes necessary to make reluctant individuals or institutions comply with new policies—for example, pollution reduction targets for manufacturers.

But imposing short-term achievement targets on schools and students rather than agreeing on targets together raises two fundamental problems. First, when someone else sets targets for rather than with you, it communicates a lack of trust in your willingness to commit to or comply with them. While failure to achieve targets

that were agreed on together leads to feelings of disappointment or guilt that can spur us to try even harder next time, failure to achieve unwanted high-stakes targets that were set by others leads to feelings of fear and a preparedness to do anything at all, however cynical or corrupt, to ensure that the targets are met.

In his research on distributed leadership, Jim Spillane has found that schools with highly qualified teachers and effective leadership can use targets and achievement results to push staff to work harder to make real improvements in teaching and learning. Schools in poorer communities, with less qualified teachers and a bigger achievement mountain to climb, however, act out of fear and will adopt any solution, however educationally superficial or morally bankrupt, to improve the scores and get the system off their back.[76]

Second, ambitious short-term achievement targets of three years or less are, for most people, inherently unachievable. These demands fly in the face of everything that is known in the change literature. Better learning requires better teaching. Learning to teach better isn't quick or easy. Our own research has shown that even the very best teachers need time to become aware of new reform requirements, to understand what these requirements mean and interpret their implications for their own practice, to see successful examples of other people putting the reforms into action, to learn from coaches and trainers who can help them develop the new practices themselves, to practice the changes over and over again until they become confident with them, to observe how these changes affect their children, and to be able to measure and monitor the effects on learning.[77]

The only way to turn results around in a shorter time than it takes to go through this process is by faking them. Put an end to the art of teaching, and turn it into a paint-by-numbers profession. Coach and prep the children in test taking. Teach only what is on the test. Abandon everything that isn't tested. Introduce the test clumsily, so the first year's scores will be artificially depressed and improvement will appear to be greater in subsequent years. Put all

your efforts into coaching children who are just below the passing mark. Whisper or hint at the answers. Get children to chant out the right responses, long before they even see the questions. Arrange for the worst students to be absent. Transfer out those who will spoil the scores. Alter the entries, fiddle the books, exaggerate, cheat, lie. And if you can't make the numbers, then leave for another job before your numbers show up. These are just some of the ways that educators learn to meet other people's targets in low-trust systems that are rank with the odor of fear. Outright cheating—which is on the increase in the United Kingdom and in the United States—may be the outer limit of test-driven teaching, but in low-trust systems driven by imposed short-term targets, most teachers will find themselves somewhere on the continuum of creative accountancy that sacrifices depth of learning for the appearance of instant results.

Staff development trends merely replicate these tendencies. Deep and thoughtful professional learning is replaced by in-service training on political priorities. Time for inquiry is squeezed out by speed of implementation. Instructional practices are forced through via hurriedly constructed cascades of coaching, with each level of coaches having progressively less knowledge than the ones above them. Harried professionals beget hurried children.

In the face of all this stress, speed, and superficiality, a movement is growing for greater depth, slowness, and substance in our schools. This movement is modeled on the patient and purpose-driven practices of sustainable (and successful) corporate development. It takes its lead from the slow food and slow cities movements that were described in the Introduction.[78] As Maurice Holt, chief advocate of the slow schools movement, puts it, "You can't go on force-feeding pupils, and expect to get foie-gras."[79] "The slow school," says Holt, "is one which attends to philosophy, to tradition, to community, to moral choices. You have time not just to memorize, but to understand." Slow schools, he argues, must be like slow food—not standardized and homogeneous but grounded in understanding of and

prepared to work with the community. Slow knowing is cooked, not microwaved, tasty instead of bland, grown and prepared locally rather than delivered from afar. Slow schools should "look critically at coverage," linking kindred subjects together in a world where "less is definitely more."[80] Slow schooling

- Starts formal learning later
- Reduces testing
- Increases curriculum flexibility
- Emphasizes enjoyment
- Doesn't hurry the child
- Rehabilitates play alongside purpose[81]

If this sounds fanciful, nostalgic, or even a bit precious, consider the following. Children in Finland, the highest-achieving nation in the world in high school literacy, don't start formal school until age seven—later than almost every other developed nation. Learning *does* take place before that—in families, communities, and day care—but in a much less deliberate, skill-driven, and structured way.[82] As we showed in the Introduction, after years of standardization, the United Kingdom and much of Australia are reducing rather than increasing the prevalence and impact of educational testing. Japan, Singapore, and China are introducing more flexibility and creativity into the curriculum because their economic futures as knowledge societies depend on it. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, one of the United Kingdom's most visionary policy documents for educational reform was titled *Excellence and Enjoyment*.[83] Queensland ensures that its curriculum engages fully with the new basics as well as the old ones.[84] Steiner, Waldorf, and Montessori schools for years have produced outstandingly successful learning while retaining pleasure and creativity in the curriculum.[85] In practice and not just in theory, slower schooling is

begetting deeper learning. An overcrowded curriculum, scripted instruction, and standardized achievement testing only bedevil it.

Slow schooling doesn't mean relaxed expectations or comatose classrooms. Just as we sometimes have to microwave our food instead of cooking it conventionally, some teaching and learning also needs to remain fast-paced and snappy. But not all of it. Putting an end to fast schools means varying the speed, slowing things down from time to time. All learning, Claxton reminds us, should have its own pace.[86]

Slow knowing requires slow leading. Slow leading avoids rushing through the test score data looking for quick fixes and instant results. It doesn't hurry the curriculum through prescribed and scripted basics while ignoring learning in the rest. It doesn't make all learning earnest, productive, and testable, so that the school, its students, and its teachers begin to lose their soul and their spirit. Slow knowing and sustainable improvement don't move children and teachers along grindingly monotonous gradients of annual achievement increments to conform with short-term literacy targets or adequate yearly progress. Learning isn't instant or steady and doesn't always immediately show. Teachers sometimes need time to plateau and consolidate. Real learners have curves. What slow leading *does* require are leaders who

- Emphasize learning, then achievement, then testing, in that order, not the opposite
- Do not narrow the achievement gap in tested basics by widening the learning gap between children in wealthy suburbs, who get a rich and nourishing curriculum that flies far beyond the standards, and the urban and rural poor, who get only a staple diet of prescribed and standardized basics
- Resist the fast-paced karaoke curriculum and the compulsion to follow the bouncing ball of other people's scripts[87]

- Protect and promote deep learning in the arts, humanities, and health education
- Devise ways for children to take tests individually, when they are ready, instead of all at once
- Provide time for unstructured play and conversation with colleagues as well as children
- Act urgently for improvement; wait patiently for results
- Inquire into school problems, using an evidence-informed approach, before rushing toward solutions
- Understand and communicate that deep change takes time
- Retain depth in staff development, so there is time to think through and question changes before charging ahead to implement them

Conclusion

Change, improvement, and reform are, by themselves, indifferent to questions of moral purpose. Improvement can be narrow or superficial; reform can be wrong-headed or repressive; change may be not for the better but for the worse. Sustainability—in improvement and in leadership—however, is inherently and inalienably moral. The purpose of sustainability is to develop what matters and lasts for the benefit of all. What is sustained must count. In sustainable classrooms, as in sustainable corporations, the integrity of the product is paramount.

The central sustainable purpose of education is deep and broad learning; this is everyone's entitlement. Deep learning is often also slow learning—critical, penetrative, thoughtful, and ruminative. It is learning that engages people's feelings and connects with their lives. Deep learning is more like love than like lust. It isn't too preoccupied with performance. It cannot be hurried. Targets don't improve it. Tests rarely take its measure. And you can't do it just

because someone else says you should. Mae West put it best: "Anything worth doing is worth doing slowly."

Sustainable school leadership defends depth of learning against the expediency of immediate results. It is not afraid to proclaim that an overriding preoccupation with short-term targets, like an obsession with quarterly returns, is immoral and unworkable. It is courageous enough to say out loud what most educators already murmur in private—that short-term targets and adequate yearly progress are not only nonsense, but nonsense on stilts. Sustainable leadership creates and protects a nourishing, sustaining, and balanced diet of well-prepared and tasty learning that contrasts with "fast school" reform policies that emphasize quantity more than quality, standardized product and efficient delivery, and a restricted diet of minimal sufficiency. Sustainable educational leadership, in other words, puts learning first. Address learning seriously, and, over time, even in the medium term, results will take care of themselves. All other principles of sustainability are subsidiary to this one.