

# THE NEW ROLE OF SUPERINTENDENTS



**MICHAEL FULLAN  
&  
SANTIAGO RINCÓN-GALLARDO**

**CASS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**EDMONTON, ALBERTA  
MARCH 21, 2018**



New Pedagogies for  
**Deep Learning™**  
A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

## THEORY OF ACTION

- ▶ Know Yourself
- ▶ Develop a Team
- ▶ Build a Culture
- ▶ Build a System

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## THE BEAST OF DISTORTION

- Elusive Feedback:
- ▶ Circle the most meaningful quote from the seven.



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### Alberta Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard

Building Effective Relationships	6
Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning Learning	6
Visionary Leadership	4
Leading Learning	7
Ensuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education for All Students	5
School Authority, Operations, and Resources	8
Supporting Effective Governance	13
TOTAL ITEMS	49

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## INDELIBLE LEADERSHIP DEFINED

- ▶ Leaders who self-consciously focus on deep change and do so by mobilizing other leaders at all levels of the system, thereby building capacity for today and tomorrow. (p ix)
- ▶ Fosters innovation linked to impact.

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## UPLIFTING LEADERSHIP

- ▶ Leverage passion...mostly give people new experiences that lead them to realize passions they did not know they had.
- ▶ ...being human they are drawn to join and consequently become deeply immersed and committed to the cause.



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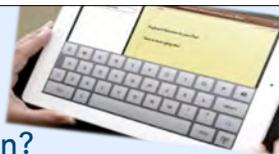
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## Quick Write

- ▶ How do you leverage passion?
- ▶ Why should anyone work in your school/district/organization?
- ▶ What will attract people to want to spend their energies in making something worthwhile happen?



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## NEW LEADERSHIP FOR DEEP WORK

- ▶ Cycles of trying things and making meaning
- ▶ Co-learning (among all) dominates
- ▶ Leaders listen, learn and ask questions
- ▶ Leaders help crystallize, articulate and feed back what they see
- ▶ Leaders act on emerging solutions, including focus on impact

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## LEAD AND LEARN

- ▶ Lead without Learning: You get it wrong
- ▶ Learn without Leading: You fail to inspire

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## LEADERSHIP FROM THE MIDDLE

A deliberate strategy that increases the capacity and internal coherence in the middle as it becomes a more effective partner upward to the state and downward to its schools and communities. (p. 49)

TOP FRAMES

MIDDLE STRENGTHENS

BOTTOM LIBERATES

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# LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE

People at levels below the top may be stuck with the policies of system leaders but they are not stuck with their mindsets.

Feeding the system is a matter of mobilizing new mindsets, and when they reach a certain scale, policies will change. (p. 47)

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## DEVELOPING LEADERS: BE ESSENTIAL AND DISPENSABLE

Leaders developing leaders, with focus and depth, is your legacy and it is how the world gets better. (p. 64)



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## Culture: Not Standards/Not PD

Build Culture so Your People Stay



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**IT'S TIME TO  
TRANSFORM  
LEARNING**

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## The Beast of Distortion

Freedom to Change: Four Strategies to Put your Inner Drive into Over Drive

Michael Fullan, 2015, Jossey-Bass/Ontario Principals' Council, pp 71-74.

Think specifically about yourself and ask, "What have I learned over the last couple of years arising from feedback I was given or that I picked up?" Consider others you live or work with most closely and ask what they have learned from feedback, whether it came from you or not. Be careful here—you may be biased in favor of yourself: "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3).

So enters one form of distortion, *the* central challenge of receiving feedback. Distortion stems from a conundrum we all face as humans: we want to learn, we want to be liked, and we want to like ourselves; but these three desires don't sit well together. Inevitably, they give rise to serious warping.

As Stone and Heen (2014) put it, "Receiving feedback sits at the intersection of . . . two needs—our drive to learn and our need for acceptance" (p. 8). And most of us have a higher opinion of ourselves than others do of us. (From our leadership work, I would say that the higher up you go in an organization, the greater the self-deception.) For example, 90 percent of managers believe that their performance in the workplace is in the top 10 percent, and 93 percent of American motorists believe that they are better-than-average drivers (Stone & Heen, p. 64). At the same time, Stone and Heen note, "We judge ourselves by our intentions, while others judge us by our impact" (p. 88).

More distortion arises because the motives behind what others say of us are oft en hard to discern, and people may not be clear themselves about why they are saying certain things. You can't be sure where they are coming from—was that supposed to be a helpful comment, or was it a dig? (Just because you are paranoid doesn't mean that the person is not out to get you.)

In short, you are living in a world of distorting mirrors, but you can learn how to correct for those distortions. Instead of trying to figure out the motives underlying the range of direct and indirect feedback you get in the course of the week (an exhausting and low-yield proposition), focus back on yourself as receiver and what it is you are trying to learn about yourself.

I asked our select dozen lead practitioners a couple of questions on feedback: "What's some painful feedback you received, and how did you go about accepting and using it well?" Here are some of the responses:

As superintendent, I would get a great deal of feedback. When I got feedback that was extremely critical, I always tried to find something I could react to affirmatively and use as a lesson to go forward.  
—*Superintendent*

Another superintendent referred to the time he was a young teacher:

Receiving no feedback is very difficult. It left me feeling unsure. It began to impact my self-confidence. My performance began to suffer because I was not sure how to proceed; and when I

did proceed, it felt as if I may not be moving in the correct direction . . . Again, this was all my perception because nothing was said. In the end, it actually paralyzed me, and I chose to leave that school and landed with a much different principal.

This same person, who went on to become chief superintendent of a large district, talked about how he learned to receive feedback:

I work hard to listen well, when my first inclination might be to respond defensively. I focus on understanding others' perspectives and ask for clarity if I am unclear. —*Superintendent*

Receiving no feedback or superficial feedback can be a bit deflating, but sometimes we must pull our own happiness wagon. I have like others received demotivating feedback. It might take a bit of time, but that too can be used as self-motivation to move forward. —*Secondary school principal*

I remember meeting a student I had taught several years later, and she proudly claimed that she had made it. She said she had been successful in spite of me. I took that message quite hard because I see myself as a strong advocate of students. The incident reminded me how powerful it is to be a teacher, and you always have to be careful about how you treat your student. —*Superintendent*

Painful feedback is still feedback, and it needs to be used to improve the situation. Last school year, I had our annual fi reside chat with teachers and staff at the school. Well, one teacher decided it would be a good time to give all the feedback necessary to turn the school into a much better learning and teaching environment. He gave me his feedback, which was: "Be more reliable; if a time and date are set, stick to it; more team planning is needed so we can get the work done; there are too many teachers who don't want to teach in the classroom." I took this feedback into the school year and made some changes. What I learned from this is: try and get more regular feedback before a teacher feels mounting frustration. And what I have learned about painful feedback is that there is usually a valid reason to be delivered. —*Elementary school principal*

Sometimes our perceived strengths can be our weaknesses:

My most painful feedback was when I was a teacher trying to become a teacher leader. I was told my "passion" came across as negative or in some cases like a bully. I was shocked! This was holding me back, and I knew I had to change. Although I knew I wasn't a bully, I also knew that I had to change the perception others had of me. I volunteered for every leadership opportunity possible. I asked my supervisors for feedback in group situations. Overall it turned out OK. Now my passions are looked at as passions. —*Elementary school principal*

I chose to consult these individuals because I know they are (they became) effective at their work. They are learners under all circumstances. They turned feedback to their advantage. That is what you need to strive for as well.