Each time I read a book written by Todd Whitaker, I find valuable tools in the pages. Often, I am able to immediately apply the ideas in my school. Leading School Change compartmentalizes management advice into nine valuable strategies for facing changes.

One of the introductory points that I found interesting encourages school leaders to take a hard look at what might be the true concerns caused by a procedural, structural, or cultural transformation before making an assumption and acting in a manner that might cause further challenges. Ideas are provided for making first impressions positive, identifying the social status of different types of employees, and finding ways to connect with everyone, from the newbies on staff to the potential burnouts.

This book guides readers through the process of reducing resistance to change, using emotions to encourage buy-in, and moving on to an action-based approach. Whitaker notes, “One way to get everyone on the bandwagon is to make it seem as if most of their colleagues are already on board.” He goes further to share that the need to belong is a very strong motivator and finding the right motivator for the right person is key to professional success.

Whitaker empathizes with teachers for the amount of self-confidence it takes to be in front of a classroom. With the right motivation and encouragement, every teacher can be his or her best. Our role as school principals is to provide a trusting culture that supports growth for all stakeholders.

Thanks to Whitaker, I have made a commitment to recognize the positive work happening in my elementary school. I know how important it is to show staff members that they are important to the success of our school. As Whitaker explains, “The very best teachers always make students feel valued.” The principal’s job is to reinforce positive contributions of the teachers and staff so they too feel that they make a difference in their daily work. I also plan to be more aware of when I should step back and allow others to take the lead. As Whitaker stresses, there are times when support comes from standing beside or behind your staff, and not from the front of the line.

Reviewed by Melissa D. Patschke, Principal, Upper Providence Elementary School, Royersford, Pennsylvania.

Season It With Fun offers educators motivational ideas for the school year. “People want to do a good job and, given the proper environment and encouragement, they will,” writes author Diane Hodges. She fills six chapters with “doable motivational activities and incentives” that will help ensure employees give their best all year.

Employees perform best when they are appreciated and recognized. Since motivators and rewards found in other careers are void in the field of education, leaders must provide that recognition and appreciation to ensure employees give their best each day. “Two basic ingredients are recognition and appreciation from colleagues, administrators, parents, students, and the community for a job well done,” Hodges writes. Throughout each chapter, novice or veteran educators will be able to add new ideas to their new or existing “celebration file.” Most of the ideas are low cost, but some are more time-consuming than others. From the survival recipe kit to the phone keypad serenade for “Happy Birthday,” all who read this book will find a number of good ideas.

Even though Hodges gives us ideas for each season of the year and includes many activities to recognize employees and students, readers might find the book lacks ideas and activities to help schools bring in parents and the community. This deficit seems to be the missing link.

For the successful veteran educator, Season It With Fun offers many ideas that are tried and true. On the other hand, finding new ideas will be a daunting task. For this very reason, I would not suggest this book for educators who have served successful and engaging years in the field.

On the other hand, novice educators will most likely find this book very beneficial. Even though new ideas are limited, the ideas will enable educators new to the profession to spice up the school environment with fun, recognition, and celebration.

Reviewed by Roma Windham Morris, Assistant Principal, Jefferson Middle School, Columbia, Mississippi.