
According to the authors of The Trust Factor: Strategies for School Leaders, trust—an essential resource for school improvement—is best understood through the metaphor that Stephen Covey uses in his book, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change. Covey explains that relationships, like bank accounts, are susceptible to deposits (Trust Builders) and withdrawals (Trust Busters). These deposits and withdrawals occur based on a leader’s actions and words that can lead to a trust deficit or surplus. A trust surplus can act as a buffer when we make mistakes, which we will, because we are all human.

The authors underscore that “the ability to model and maintain trusting relationships is a critical leadership skill. High trust provides the platform for change and innovation.” In an era of high accountability and systemic change, it is of utmost importance that administrators earn the trust of those they work with and for if they plan to effectively lead change.

The Trust Factor: Strategies for School Leaders is organized into three parts. Part I deals with Trust Busters, those behaviors that break down trust in educational relationships. Part II provides tactics that administrators can use as Trust Builders. The final section highlights ten Trust Boosters that are designed to help a leader who has already established trust enhance and sustain that culture. At the end of each section, an assessment is provided for self-reflection.

The book can best be summarized by a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson: “What you do speaks so loudly that I can not hear what you say.” Those we lead are watching our actions and responses to determine whether to continue to follow us. What will they decide?

As I reflect on this question, I know that this book will be a tool that I will keep close at hand. In a year when I am learning about a new evaluation system for teachers, as well as for myself as an administrator, trust is going to be a key factor.

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