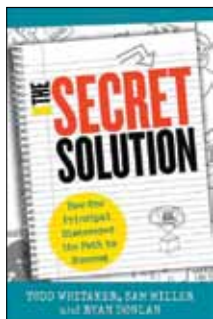


The Secret Solution: How One Principal Discovered the Path to Success. Todd Whitaker, Sam Miller, and Ryan Donlan. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2014, 107 pgs.

If you peruse any principal's bookshelf, you will likely find an extensive selection of titles on effective leadership and school improvement. Like every other book on a principal's shelf, *The Secret Solution: How One Principal Discovered the Path to Success*, by Todd Whitaker, Sam Miller, and Ryan Donlan, presents the "dos and don'ts" of leadership for new principals. But unlike other resources, this book is *fiction*. You read that correctly.



The narrative centers on Roger Rookie, the new principal of Anywhere Middle School, who is being honored with the state principals' association "Super Apple" award. The story opens in the moments before his big speech, as he reflects on his first year as a principal in an interview with newspaper reporter Carol Charming.

Roger recalls his path to success and his leadership style evolution, which transitioned from The Hibernator to The Glad-Hander to The Thumb to The Pathfinder. Each chapter in this case study ends with a reflective section for "deep thoughts" and "principal evaluation" on each leadership style. This reflection piece highlights the effects on the staff, the feelings of the leader himself, and the possible unintended consequences.

I began this book with mixed emotions, as I am a big fan (and Twitter follower) of Todd Whitaker. But at the same time, I felt the story to be a bit elementary (no pun intended), with the cast of characters having names

indicative of their personalities (Judy Slacker and Sandy Starr to name a few). But like the main character, I experienced an evolution during this read. I found myself not wanting to put the book down. As a first-year principal myself, I could relate to the scenarios and challenges that Roger faced as he struggled to find the perfect balance between climate and accountability.

All said and done, I appreciate the risk that Whitaker and his team took with the genre change, as it made this book both entertaining and educational. Maybe a follow-up could be a story from the perspective of Nellie Newcomer, the enthusiastic new teacher in this story, that focuses on the novice teacher.

Reviewed by Robert Shappell, principal of Wilbur Watts Intermediate School in Burlington City, New Jersey.

Digital Leadership: Changing Paradigms for Changing Times.

Eric Sheninger, Corwin Press, 2014, 227 pages.

If he awoke today, where in the world would Rip Van Winkle feel most comfortable? I think that Eric Sheninger, author of *Digital Leadership: Changing Paradigms for Changing Times*, would answer: today's schools and classrooms. Our children spend much of their time in environments that have changed the least, while the world has continued to evolve through increasing dominance of technology. Sheninger argues that educational leaders must model use of Web 2.0 approaches in order to engage, empower, and prepare students for the unknown jobs of the future.

Referencing the fundamental tech-



nology disconnect between students and schools, Sheninger presents the seven pillars of digital leadership:

- Communication;
- Public relations;
- Branding;
- Student engagement;
- Professional growth;
- Re-envisioning learning environments; and
- Opportunity.

Each pillar is addressed in one of the book's 12 chapters. Examples from elementary and secondary schools are key to each chapter, making replication feasible.

As emphasized throughout *Digital Leadership*, in order for our schools to change, school leadership must change. This book is a tool for those in the appropriate roles, from principals to superintendents, to make the necessary shifts in practice.

My own professional practice changed when I used social media to contact the author to help my own professional growth. How did I contact him? Twitter. I was already using Facebook for our school, but extended my use of social media to Twitter, Instagram, and blogging. Now, many of our teachers use some of the same platforms for their own professional growth.

In his book, Sheninger provides information about social media sites, as well as other technological tools to impact educators and students.

Sheninger makes the point that shifting toward digital leadership is not about doing more. In fact, he openly acknowledges that it's just as important to refrain from using technology if there isn't a good reason to do so. Digital leadership is really about connecting to the real world and, ultimately, transforming school cultures to better meet the needs of the students we serve.

Reviewed by Regina Stewman, principal of Sonora Elementary School in Springdale, Arkansas.