

Preface

Once on a record-breaking cold Chicago morning, my husband, then a young inner-city pastor, got a call from a disabled church member saying that she would like to go to church. Being both kind-hearted and bull-headed, he was determined to get her there despite the obstacles. He had to borrow a car, start it, and warm it up in subzero temperatures. With persistence, he was able to get the car started and running. Presently, however, the engine light came on and the smell of smoke ignited an alarming realization: the oil was frozen in the oil pan. Without lubrication, the engine overheated and died—entailing a costly repair to replace the engine. This incident provides an apt metaphor for what it is like to try to run a school without trust. Trust functions as a lubricant of organizational functioning; without it, the school is likely to experience the overheated friction of conflict as well as a lack of progress toward its admirable goals.

Schools once enjoyed the implicit trust of their communities, and school leaders felt they could take for granted the trust of their internal and external constituencies. School leadership was by and large a high-status, low-stress job. Now, too often, it is the reverse. We live in an era in which all of our social institutions have come under unprecedented scrutiny. This trend away from trust poses a special challenge for school leaders because trust is so vital for schools to fulfill their fundamental mission of educating students to be productive citizens. Yet trust seems ever more difficult to achieve

and maintain in the complex and rapidly changing world of the twenty-first century. In such a climate, understanding the nature and meaning of trust in schools has taken on added urgency and importance. School leaders need to better understand the dynamics of trust in order to reap its benefits for greater student achievement, as well as improved organizational adaptability and productivity.

Without trust, it is unlikely that schools can be successful in their efforts to improve. Nevertheless, the systematic study of trust in schools has been neglected. This book begins to fill that void. Although there is a burgeoning literature of trust outside the field of education, few educational scholars have mined this literature in order to understand the nature, meaning, and consequences of trust as it pertains specifically to the context of schools. This book brings to bear an extensive review of the literature across the social sciences to relationships of trust within schools, tapping both theoretical and empirical research spanning the past four decades. It also draws upon my own original research in over three hundred elementary and secondary schools.

This book offers practical, hands-on advice to educators on how to establish and maintain trust, as well as how to repair trust that has been damaged. The book centers around the case studies of three principals, one who has succeeded in cultivating the trust of her faculty and two who, although well-intentioned, have been unsuccessful in harnessing the vital resource of trust and whose schools are suffering impaired effectiveness as a result. It also explores the role of the school leader in fostering trust relationships among teachers, students, and parents. Although the names used are pseudonyms, the cases are based on real principals and interviews from teachers within their schools. All three led elementary schools with populations of primarily low-income and minority students within a few miles of each other in the same urban school district. But the similarities ended there. These cases provide vivid examples of how even well-meaning individuals can end up en-

gendering the distrust of their faculty and the high cost to be paid when this happens. They also help illustrate the contrasting productivity of a high-trust school.

Chapter One explores why trust matters in schools. This chapter introduces the three principals. Gloria Davies is an overzealous reformer who has alienated her faculty and is engaged in an intense power struggle. Fred Martin, the “keep-the-peace principal,” has lost the faith of his faculty by avoiding conflict. The resulting culture of distrust has a negative effect on his school’s effectiveness. Gloria and Fred evidence, respectively, the “fight” and “flight” responses to conflict. These two cases are contrasted with the story of Brenda Thompson, a “high-support, high-challenge principal,” who through caring and hard work has earned the trust of her faculty. Whereas Gloria took too much responsibility for the task of school improvement and Fred took too little, Brenda successfully balanced a concern for task with a concern for relationships within her school. Because changes in the social and political environment of schools have transformed the context for building trust in schools, school leaders need to be more attentive and exercise wisdom in issues of trust.

Although people generally have an intuitive understanding of what is meant by trust and have some basis on which they make trust judgments of others, trying to articulate a precise definition of trust is not easy. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive definition of trust as one’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent. Each of these facets is illustrated with stories about Brenda Thompson, who led Brookside Elementary, a school with a high level of trust in the principal and high trust among the faculty. Brenda demonstrated proficiency in all five facets of trust. She extended care to her faculty in a variety of ways, was respected as a person of high integrity and commitment, avoided hidden agendas, worked hard, and distinguished herself as an educational leader. These attributes enabled Brenda to evoke an extra measure

of effort from her teachers. Her trustworthy leadership was rewarded with above-average performance from Brookside students in measures of student achievement.

Trust is a complex and dynamic process. Chapter Three explores factors that influence the development of trust. The dynamics of initiating trust include such factors as institutional supports to fostering trust and the role that reputation plays. The role of personal factors such as the disposition to trust, values and attitudes, as well as moods and emotions are also explored. Authentic trust is the goal of this development process.

Chapter Four explores the dynamics of betrayal—what happens to provoke betrayal in a previously trusting relationship. This is illustrated by the story of Fred Martin, a well-meaning and affable principal. Fred's unwillingness to make hard decisions or to hold teachers accountable resulted in his faculty feeling unprotected, vulnerable, and betrayed. The steadfast avoidance of conflict on the part of this principal allowed a pervasive climate of distrust to emerge. The costs to the school of a culture of distrust included constricted communication, limited access to faculty insights through shared decision making, and reduced organizational citizenship and commitment.

Chapter Five examines revenge and the range of victim responses to betrayal. In this chapter the story is told of Gloria Davies, who took over the reins of an underperforming school determined to make positive change. Her methods, however, were seen as manipulative and unfair; they broke trust with the faculty. These tactics left teachers feeling alienated and distrustful, leading to resentment, power struggles, and sabotage. Her leadership resulted in a school impaired by a culture of control. It is hard to imagine that she will ultimately be successful in achieving the high hopes she had for the school.

In Chapter Six, the leader's role in fostering high-quality relationships among teachers in a school is explored. This chapter also

examines some of the positive outcomes of a trusting school environment, such as greater collaboration and a robust sense of collective efficacy that can fuel stronger motivation and persistence.

Chapter Seven examines the dynamics of building trust with students and parents. Barriers to trust can be met and overcome even in a challenging and diverse urban environment. Trust hits schools in their bottom line—student achievement. This chapter reports research that demonstrates this link.

Chapter Eight focuses on the hard work of trust repair and gives practical advice for repairing damaged trust in schools. As school leaders contemplate the high cost of broken trust and the arduous process of rebuilding trust that has been damaged, it may enhance their commitment to build and maintain trust in the first place. Trust is rebuilt through the “four A’s of absolution,” that is: admit it, apologize, ask forgiveness, and amend your ways. Trust restoration is also facilitated by constructive attitudes, clear boundaries, communication of promises and credible threats, and strategies for conflict resolution.

The final chapter focuses on the behavior of school leaders in becoming trustworthy leaders. Trust plays an important role in principals’ functions of visioning, modeling, coaching, managing, and mediating. The advice in this chapter is geared toward helping school leaders harness the powerful resource of trust to make their schools more productive.

In addition to the nine chapters, this book contains several useful appendices. The first includes four trust measures for school leaders and scholars interested in assessing the level of trust in schools. These surveys are accompanied by scoring directions and norms so that practitioners can compare the levels of trust in their schools with typical schools. Another appendix offers suggestions of how principals might address reporting the results to their faculty in a constructive manner. The third appendix provides details about the participants in the study that forms the basis of this book. Finally,

an appendix on directions for future research will guide scholars interested in contributing to a greater understanding of the dynamics of this important construct in schools.

There is no simple recipe for fostering trust. Building trust is a complex process requiring reflection and attention to context. The section titled Putting It into Action at the end of each chapter provides practical advice for putting these ideas to work in your school. The key points of each chapter are summarized in a bulleted list for easy reference. The chapter sections titled Questions for Reflection and Discussion invite the reader to explore how these ideas might be applied to trust development in his or her own setting, and might prove helpful to those who want to use this book as a part of a class, professional development series, or collaborative study group.

This book taps into insights from both theory and research across a variety of fields to argue that school leaders need to attend to establishing and maintaining trusting relationships within their schools. It provides practical advice on how to repair damaged trust and helps school leaders learn how they can overcome low trust within their schools and communities to establish effective working relationships. My hope is that this work will serve to ignite greater interest in learning more about the dimensions and dynamics of trustworthy leadership so that school leaders have ever more powerful tools to cultivate trust in schools.

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MEGAN TSCHANNEN-MORAN

Why Trust Matters

*I don't ask for much, I only want trust,
And you know, it don't come easy.*

Ringo Starr

Sometimes even principals with the best of intentions don't get it right. They are not able to lead their schools into the kind of productive working communities that they imagine and hope for. When these well-intentioned principals fail to earn the trust of their faculty and their larger school communities, their visions are doomed to frustration and failure. Consider the stories of Gloria and Fred, two principals leading schools in the same urban district.

Meaning Well

When Gloria Davies learned that she had been assigned to Lincoln Elementary School, one of the lowest-performing elementary schools in her district, she was determined to turn that school around. She believed that the primarily low-income students at Lincoln, many of whom lived in a nearby housing project, deserved a better education than they were getting. She wanted to implement a new, more powerful and rigorous curriculum, especially in reading. She wanted to get teachers fired up to make the changes that were required to turn the school around. And she was determined

to get rid of any teachers that didn't get on board. She believed she owed it to the students. Gloria was fond of saying, "I don't work for the teachers, I work for the students and their families."

Although Gloria is midway through her third year at the school, the school has failed to make the gains that she had hoped for. Gloria is mired in an intense power struggle with the faculty at Lincoln. She has been frustrated by union rules and procedures that have limited her authority. Faculty members have filed numerous union grievances against her for what are perceived as manipulative and heavy-handed methods. Building council meetings, a mechanism for shared decision making mandated by the district, have been reduced to a war of the rule books, each side quoting chapter and verse from the district contract or the union guidelines to bolster their position. Although Gloria has been successful in removing one untenured teacher, her attempts to remove veteran teachers have been met with resistance and rebellion that have gone well beyond the targeted teachers. Morale is extremely low, and student achievement scores have not risen significantly. In a self-protective move, Gloria confines herself to her office and is rarely seen about the school except to make unscheduled observations of teachers she is trying to remove. Unfortunately, Gloria's dreams of turning around this failing school have not materialized, because her methods have cost her the trust of her faculty and have led to resentment, power struggles, and sabotage.

Fred Martin, principal of Fremont Elementary, a few miles from Lincoln, is a friendly man with a warm smile and an easy-going disposition. He is generally well-liked by the teachers, students, and parents in his community. He is sympathetic to the difficult circumstances that many of his low-income students face, as well as the stresses inherent in teaching in an urban context. Fred considers himself a progressive principal, and delegates many important and controversial decisions to the building council. He views his low-key role with the council as empowering teachers as decision makers in the school. He sees himself as fair-minded and can usu-

ally see both sides of a conflict. Consequently, he is reluctant to make a decision that will be perceived as favoring one side or the other. He is disappointed that his students have done so poorly on the state assessments but feels that policymakers should be made to understand the challenges that he and his teachers face.

Fred's discomfort with and avoidance of conflict has not made for an absence of conflict at Fremont. On the contrary, without direct efforts to address conflict productively, discord and disagreements have escalated. Teachers feel angry and unsupported by Fred when they send misbehaving students to him for discipline and perceive that they receive little more than a fatherly chat. Teachers in conflict with one another are left to their own devices to resolve their differences. When they go to Fred, he wants to avoid taking sides and so avoids making any kind of judgment at all. Instead he refers them to the building council or tells them simply that they are going to need to work things out. As a result, long-standing grudges between teachers have simmered for years. Bitterness between the teachers and the teacher aides, many of whom are parents hired from the neighborhood, has become an entrenched part of the school culture. Teachers perceive that the aides are lazy and are not made to do the job they were hired to do, whereas the aides find the teachers unwelcoming, demanding, and rude. In the meantime, student achievement has failed to significantly improve, despite the increasing pressure of state and district accountability measures.

Though well intentioned, neither Gloria nor Fred has been successful at shaping a constructive school environment. What is missing in both circumstances is trust. Because neither principal is regarded as trustworthy by his or her faculty, neither has positive results to show for her and his efforts. On the one hand, Gloria, the overzealous reformer, was too impatient for change to foster the kinds of relationships she would need to align her faculty with the lofty vision she had for the school. Her heavy-handed tactics were seen as betrayals by the teachers in her school. Fred, on the other hand,

in trying to keep the peace by avoiding conflict, lost the trust of his faculty through benign neglect. His attempts to keep everybody happy resulted in a general malaise and perpetual undercurrent of unresolved tension in the school. Although teachers liked Fred and felt they could count on his sympathetic concern, they could not count on him to take action on their behalf because of his fear of making someone else angry. His teachers were left feeling vulnerable and unprotected.

These two principals are real-life examples of how principals often respond to resistance to change among their faculty by either overasserting their authority or withdrawing from the fray (Sarason, 1982). Both responses damage trust, and both hamper a principal's ability to lead. Gloria focused too narrowly on the task of school improvement and neglected the relationships that she needed to cultivate to get the job done. Although she is correct in thinking that her primary responsibility is for the education of her students, not for the comfort and ease of her teachers, she has failed to grasp that principals necessarily get their jobs done through other people. Fred, in contrast, has focused too much on relationships at the expense of the task. But because the task involves protecting the well-being of the members of the school community, Fred's avoidance of conflict has damaged the relationships he sought to enhance. By withdrawing, Fred has failed to provide the leadership, structure, and training to provide a quality education for the students in his care.

Both Fred and Gloria can also be seen as demonstrating problems of responsibility (Martin, 2002). Gloria has taken on too much responsibility for the change initiative in her school and so has interfered with teachers getting on board and taking ownership in the process. In vigorously asserting her authority, Gloria has made her point all too well that teachers are not in charge and do not have a say in the decisions that vitally affect their work life. Her actions have violated the sense of care that teachers expect from

their principal and caused them to question her integrity. Their trust in her has been damaged. Fred has taken too little responsibility, handing decisions over to teachers they do not have the expertise to make. He has not supported them adequately through mentoring and training to acquire the skills to contribute to the decisions necessary to run the school. He has not demonstrated the competence and reliability necessary to build trust, and so is not seen as trustworthy by his faculty and school community.

The problems these two principals evidence are not unusual. New principals, like Gloria, often feel the need to enter a school setting and create change. Inexperienced principals tend to be unsure of their authority and, as a result, a common mistake among novice school leaders is to be fairly forceful in establishing their authority within the school. Barth (1981) observed that, "Most people I know who are beginning principals enter their new roles as advocates, friends, helpers, supporters, often former colleagues of teachers. By December of their first year they have become adversaries, requirers, forcers, judges, and setters of limits" (p. 148). This approach can be counterproductive when trying to develop a high-trust school. Building trust requires patience and planning, whereas novice principals tend to have a "do it now" attitude.

Fred, however, apparently lacked important leadership skills such as conflict resolution skills and professional development training. Perhaps he also lacked the courage and the stamina to face the sometimes uncomfortable aspects of school leadership and especially school change. When he ran into resistance, he withdrew. Although empowering teachers to participate in important decisions within the school can be an effective means to reach higher-quality decisions, Fred needed to provide the leadership and training to help his teachers be successful at shared leadership. The teachers and students in his school needed more than a sympathetic ear to help resolve the conflicts they faced. They needed someone who could structure a process that would lead to productive solutions.

Doing Well

Although these two scenarios are not uncommon, principals need not follow either path. Brenda Thompson is principal of Brookside Elementary, a school that serves a student body similar to those at Lincoln and Fremont in the same urban district. Through trustworthy leadership, Brenda has earned the confidence of her faculty. By balancing a strong sense of care for the students and teachers of her school with high performance expectations, Brenda has fostered a schoolwide culture of trust. Responsibility for school improvement is shared. By working hard herself, Brenda sets an example and is able to command an extra measure of effort from her teachers. These efforts have been rewarded with above-average performance from Brookside students on measures of student achievement.

Brenda's care for her faculty and students is evidenced in her accessibility. Brenda is rarely in her office during the school day, preferring to spend her time in the hallways, classrooms, and cafeteria. She spends lunch recess on the playground. She is available to assist teachers and students as they engage in problem solving around the difficulties they face. She is a trusted advisor who listens well. She offers thoughtful and useful suggestions that demonstrate her expertise as an educator. She doesn't blame or make the teacher feel incompetent for having a problem or not knowing what to do. Her caring extends beyond the walls of the school; teachers, students, and parents seek her out for help with their lives outside of school as well. The tone of caring set by Brenda is echoed in the faculty's care for one another and for their students. The impetus for school improvement stems from this caring atmosphere. Caring fuels the enormous effort needed to sustain a positive school environment in this challenging context.

Brenda understands that the work of schools happens primarily through relationships, so she invests time and resources in nurturing those relationships. There are a number of annual traditions that foster good rapport, not just among the faculty but among the

students and their families as well. Brenda makes use of a local high-ropes course twice a year for a challenging, team-building experience with the third through fifth graders and their teachers. Parents are also invited along for the fun. Brenda wears jeans and hiking boots and joins right in, an amusing contrast for the students to her normally professional dress. An important community-building tradition at the school is an annual fall sleepover called Camp Night, when students and their parents, in mixed grade-level groups, participate in fun, hands-on learning experiences, have a meal provided by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and sleep at the school. Brenda structures time for the faculty to work together and share ideas and resources, allowing grade-level teams common planning time most days. The school is not free of conflict, but the strong sense of community supports the constructive resolution of the inevitable differences.

We can learn much about the vital role of trustworthy school leadership from the stories of these three principals. They are real principals, although their names have been changed and the distinguishing characteristics of their schools disguised. The voices of the teachers in their schools throughout the book are taken from actual interviews. The sidebar vignettes come from encounters with teachers and parents as well as exchanges with my students over the years I have been teaching and writing on this topic.

Principals and other school leaders need to earn the trust of the stakeholders in their school communities if they are to be successful. They need to understand how trust is built and how it is lost. Getting smarter about trust will help school leaders foster more successful schools.

Trust and Schools

When we turn a nostalgic eye toward schools in an earlier era, it seems that there was once a time that schools enjoyed the implicit trust of their communities. School leaders were highly respected and

largely unquestioned members of the community. Teachers were regarded as having valuable professional knowledge about how children learn and what was best for them. When a child was punished at school, parents accepted and reinforced the judgment of school officials. If those days ever really did exist, they are not what many who work in schools are currently experiencing.

It is important that school leaders not take the general distrust of their schools too personally. It is part of a larger pattern in society, shaped by economic, political, and social forces. We now live in an era when all of our social institutions are under unprecedented scrutiny. We are barraged by a steady stream of media attention to scandals, revealing how business leaders, politicians, church leaders, nonprofit executives, and school leaders have acted from self-interest rather than out of the interests of the constituents whom they purport to serve. These revelations erode the trust we once held for these institutions and undermine their basic legitimacy.

We tend to notice trust most when it has been damaged or destroyed (Baier, 1994). These days, it seems evident that trust in our society has indeed been injured. As life has grown more complex, as changing economic realities and changing expectations in society have made life less predictable, and as new forms of information dissemination have increased both the availability and desire for negative information, we are beginning to *notice* trust much more. In the midst of the media blitz of bad news, trust has emerged as a favorite theme of advertisers in promoting everything from investment firms to hair salons. Many seem to be longing for the days when trust came more easily.

Changing Expectations

Changed economic realities and social problems have led to mounting pressures on schools. Economically, the shift toward a more global economy has increased competition and forced changes in the outcomes society expects of schools. This economic shift has diminished the proportion of low-skilled jobs in developed coun-

tries. Our economy is dependent on a more highly skilled workforce and on a larger proportion of students who earn a high school diploma. Graduates must be proficient not just in basic skills but also in the ability to reason and solve complex problems. They must be able to work well in groups or teams, as the problems they will be likely to experience in the workplace will be too complex to be solved by an individual working alone. Schools are expected to provide a stronger workforce for continued economic competitiveness in a global marketplace. Although much of the criticism of schools in the popular media has been overblown, and our schools are doing a much better job than is frequently reported, pressure is being brought to bear on schools to adapt to a changing world (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

Equity

Social changes evident now include a greater awareness of inequality on the part of the average person. As more people have access to more information, they also gain greater consciousness of the discrepancies in opportunities and outcomes available to people from differing social strata. In our society, the value of equality has taken on ever-greater importance. Students take seriously the expectation of equal opportunities and the right of all citizens to participate in economic prosperity.

There is an increasing desire of the less powerful to have more control over those whose greater power vitally affects them. The ever more powerful knowledge possessed by professionals influences both individual and public welfare (Barber, 1983). With greater access to information through the Internet, many people are no longer content to accept the role of passive client. Doctors are finding that many of their patients are engaging in independent research about their conditions and come with detailed questions and recommendations for their treatment. Lawyers are encountering more clients who have read up on legal precedents and maneuvers that might be helpful to their case. Parents, too, are conducting

research and feeling ever more empowered as their children's advocates within the system and to question the professional knowledge and expertise of school personnel.

With increasing expectations and the disappointment of many of those expectations, trust in our schools has been damaged (Kozol, 1991; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In some ways, these dashed hopes and distrust are the result of the very success of public schools, with the increased knowledge and reasoning skills that a better educated public brings to its relations with professionals, experts, and other leaders. The success of our educational system has created the very conditions that enable the common person to think critically and to challenge the status quo. Consequently, better education has created greater need for trustworthiness on the part of leaders and professionals.

Much of the responsibility for realizing our society's vision of greater equity is vested in our schools. Consequently, higher expectations are especially brought to bear on those who educate our children. The actions of school professionals influence not just our children's current welfare but also their future educational and economic potential. Previously, schools functioned largely to sort and rank students for various strata of society. Notable exceptions helped to maintain the belief in our society as a meritocracy, where anyone with the ability and work ethic could overcome the deficiencies of their origins and prosper economically or politically. However, schools largely maintained the status quo in terms of social rank and prosperity. That role has come under attack and has largely been supplanted by the goal of fostering greater equality of opportunity and outcomes for all students, even those with disabilities and those from lower socioeconomic strata (Goodlad, 1984).

Schools, however, struggle to realize these new aspirations, especially those schools that serve high-poverty populations. A half-century after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to desegregate public schools, the dream of schools eliminating race and class distinctions and of providing equal opportunities to learn seems far

from becoming reality. As educators are charged with reducing the effects of economic disparities in our society, schools are increasingly feeling the brunt of public distrust. The professional knowledge possessed by educators is held suspect as much touted innovations (for example, open classrooms or new math) failed to bring the dramatic results they promised (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In addition, the values promoted by schools may be at odds with the conflicted values of a diverse society (Macedo, 2000).

Pressure for Change

In this time of societal and economic flux, political forces are brought to bear to pressure schools into making the necessary changes to meet our new, loftier goals for them. There is an urgency to identify and repair the problems that plague low-performing schools. As Gloria has learned, however, urgency is not enough to turn around a failing school. Standards have been imposed on schools because educators were not consistently accountable, thereby forfeiting the public's trust. Negative publicity has been used to shift schools from complacency to compliance with new accountability measures. Principals like Fred, however, resist and resent these measures when they don't have the means and know-how to foster a productive school culture. Principals like Gloria become impatient with the slow pace of change and try to force rapid change upon their reluctant faculty, generating resistance and resentment instead of improved outcomes. It takes the wisdom of a principal like Brenda to patiently apply both support and challenge to lead a school toward fruitful change.

Putting It into Action

Schools must garner trust and legitimacy in an era when these commodities are in short supply within the society at large. To be a trustworthy school leader, you must learn to create the conditions for trust to flourish within your school as well as between your

school and your community. School leaders who, like Brenda, earn the trust of the members of their school community are in a better position to accomplish the complex task of educating a diverse group of students in a changing world. Principals and teachers who trust each other can better work together in the service of solving the challenging problems of schooling. These leaders create a bond that helps inspire teachers to move to higher levels of effort and achievement. These leaders also create the conditions that foster trust between teachers, including structures and norms for behavior, and they assist them in resolving the inevitable conflicts that arise.

As citizens have become increasingly distrustful of their institutions and leaders, the trend away from trust creates a special challenge for schools because trust is so fundamental to their core mission. Schools need the trust of the parents who send their children to school, as well as that of the communities that sponsor and fund them. In order to learn, students must trust their teachers because, for much of what is learned in schools, students are asked to believe what teachers tell them and what they read without independent evidence. Students who do not trust their teachers or each other will be likely to divert energy into self-protection and away from engagement with the learning task. Moreover, students who do not feel trusted by their teachers and administrators may create barriers to learning as they distance themselves from schools and build an alienated, rebellious youth culture. They may, in fact, live down to the low expectations of a distrustful school environment. As a trustworthy school leader, you must model trusting relationships with students and parents and serve as an example for teachers to cultivate these trusting relationships as well.

Trust can no longer be taken for granted in schools. It must be conscientiously cultivated and sustained. As a school leader, you bear the largest responsibility for setting a tone of trust in your schools. It is time for school leaders to become knowledgeable about cultivating trust because trustworthy leadership is at the heart of successful schools.

Key Points About Why Trust Matters

- School leaders that have the trust of their communities are more likely to be successful in creating productive learning environments.
- Trust is a challenge for schools at this point in history, when all of our institutions are under unprecedented scrutiny.
- Much of the responsibility for realizing our society's vision of greater equity is vested in our schools. Consequently, higher expectations are especially brought to bear on those who educate our children.
- Without trust, schools are likely to flounder in their attempts to provide constructive educational environments and meet the lofty goals that our society has set for them because energy needed to solve the complex problem of educating a diverse group of students is diverted into self-protection.
- Trustworthy leadership is the heart of productive schools.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What are the signs that trust is either present or absent in your school? What are the effects you notice of the presence or absence of trust?
2. How do you know whether you are taking the appropriate amount of responsibility for continuous school improvement in your school? What skills and support do you need to provide teachers so they can assume a meaningful role in the change process? How can you avoid becoming discouraged by the inevitable resistance to change?
3. What steps can you take to foster trusting relationships between your school and your community when there is so much bad publicity about schools in the media?

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