

## FOREWORD

IN *PATHWAYS TO TEACHER LEADERSHIP*, Marya Levenson expands our understanding of teacher leadership. She shows how teachers learn to take leadership roles, not only *instructionally*, but also *institutionally* and in *education policy*. She engages us in a deeper look at each of these areas of leadership by helping us understand the various contexts in which teachers emerge as leaders—including charter schools and traditional public schools, teacher-led schools, and turnaround schools—and by examining the complexities that each of these leadership roles creates.

Levenson deftly guides us through a thicket of social, political, and educational issues with her own critical eye—never romanticizing teacher leadership, but rather offering an important alternative to the current “shame and blame” game in which teachers are held responsible for all the problems in education. She explains why teacher leadership is important and what it looks like in these various contexts. In a variety of authentic settings, we hear the teachers themselves tell us not only *how* they learn and lead, but how their world changes as they take on new responsibilities.

For example, the book follows two teachers as they become instructional leaders—one by introducing *action research*, the other by creating interdisciplinary *critical friends groups*. In each example, the teachers learn how to engage large numbers of their high school faculty members in their respective activities. Levenson reminds us, however, that both teachers have difficulty labeling “poor” teachers because of the power of the egalitarian ethic that pervades teaching that assumes that all teachers are alike—and that all teaching is the same.

What about teacher leadership in charter schools? Levenson explores this as well. Many teachers in these small urban schools are young, yet

they are quickly involved in the challenging task of helping to create schools, regardless of their teaching experience. They are still learning to teach even as many of them are thrust into leadership roles. Levenson explains why learning to teach and learning to lead often come too fast for people to handle both at once.

Most educators know about teachers who lead instructionally, but few recognize the intentional and influential role teachers can play in changing the culture of the adults in their schools. Levenson introduces us to teachers who take on institutional leadership roles in their schools. Some do it by their involvement in union activity, and some are able to cross administrative boundaries yet stay involved with their peers even as they take on administrative responsibilities. Some teachers lead informally, while others have formal leadership positions. Levenson also explores teachers' roles as mentors, department chairs, and others who assume leadership with a direct focus on affecting the culture of the school when it is in need of change. And she looks beyond the classroom and school settings to the emerging influence of teacher leaders on education policy.

*Pathways to Teacher Leadership* asks the key questions about teacher leadership—not only how it works and what the examples teach us, but the fundamentals of recognizing teachers as leaders in a variety of contexts. Can these various roles be sustained? Will teachers accept other teachers in leadership positions? What do principals need to do to support teacher leadership? How can they build the kind of trust needed for teachers to accept teacher leadership? And how can aspiring teacher leaders learn to navigate the political waters of their schools' cultures?

This book is full of jewels—examples, questions, reflections, advice, and the insights of thoughtful teachers who are willing to examine their leadership practices. It is a piece of scholarship, even as it often reads like a novel. In short, *Pathways to Teacher Leadership* is a fine addition to the field. It offers a critical understanding of teacher leadership that can help us move toward authentic school reform.

—Ann Lieberman  
*Senior Scholar, Stanford Center for  
Opportunity Policy in Education*