

This collection of strategies, ideas, techniques, and instructional best practices in creating engaging, inviting and affirming schools for the 21st century is transforming and empowering. This work present strategies for successful educational leaders, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

**201+ Strategies for Successfully Transforming Today's Schools:  
A Resource Guide for Educational Leaders, School  
Administrators, Teachers, Parents, and Students**

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# 201<sup>+</sup> Strategies *for* Successfully TRANSFORMING *Today's* Schools

A Resource Guide for Educational Leaders, School  
Administrators, Teachers, Parents, and Students



**Strategies for making Schools Great in the 21st Century**

**C.P. Gause, PhD.**

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**C. P. Gause, Ph. D.**

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## **Keys for Successful School Administrators**

Creating successful learning communities will require **school administrators** to do the following:

*First and foremost successful school administrators, along with the members of the learning communities in which they lead, must develop a vision of learning that promotes success.*

This process takes into account standards-driven curricula, federal legislation, and/or policies that speak to educational standards. The very core of this vision is based upon one “key” foundational and cultural leadership principle: **All members of the learning community regardless of backgrounds are provided opportunities for academic success.**

*Be able to answer the following questions, “What do we want?” and “How are we going to get there?”*

Successful educational leaders know, in order to answer those questions, they must engage in the following:

- Seeking information from all community members
- Being reflective in the data that is gathered
- Being knowledgeable regarding how to seek information
- Establishing a plan that is attainable and meaningful to EVERYONE
- Being goal oriented but not data driven
- Delegating and executing roles and duties but with AFFIRMATION
- Engaging in affective and effective listening
- Strategizing for goal-accomplishment and goal-attainment

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- Providing learning community members with RESOURCES
- Realizing you can not please everyone; however, you can RESPECT everyone

*Build open and trusting relationships with your students, faculty, staff, and parent community. This is the key to developing a successful school.*

Sustainable change, in a learning community, occurs when trusting relationships have been developed. People are willing to try new and innovating ideas when support from colleagues and supervisors is evident. This support comes in multiple forms, and successful administrators understand how to tap into specific resources to provide the right type of support for all members of the community, individually and collectively.

*Transform ordinary schools into vibrant learning communities that are creative, equitable, and “just.”*

Creative learning communities ignore rules; they seek to develop procedures for encouraging desirable behavior versus establishing levels of discipline and punishment. These communities also look for innovations in providing optimal learning experiences for their stakeholders. Creative learning communities remain on the cutting edge, and they do this by establishing new missions, thriving on unpredictability, and broadening their scope for new horizons. They avoid the mechanization, simplification, and predictability found in custodial organizations.

*Seek multiple methods and techniques to promote a school culture that is positive and inviting.*



Culture includes both past and present perceptions, and its perceived reality is reflected in its symbols, rituals, and purpose. The school's culture is a representation of what its members collectively develop as their vision; it is their self-concept. The school's culture reflects what the stakeholders value and what they express to others as being "important around here." In order for school reform to occur, educators must realize that the culture of the school and the way the school operates must be transformed inside and out, not only physically but mentally as well.

*Affirm, encourage, and support all members of the learning community.*

Teachers are the troops. They must be "handled with care" for the vision and mission of a successful learning community to be realized. It is the job, duty, and responsibility of the school administrator to provide all the necessary resources to insure effective instruction. Without adequate instructional tools, support, and preparation, teachers will not be effective in delivering a top-notch curriculum. The little things do matter.

*Schools that are successful are lead by transformative leaders.*

Transformative leaders continually seek out opportunities for improvement. These individuals look for solutions to problems and encourage the free exchange of ideas. No one has all of the answers. Problems are part fact and part perspective. When individuals come together to discuss issues, it opens the space for a "dialogic encounter." Within the discussion, people's perceptions often change and/or become redefined.

*Being an exceptional educational leader requires functioning as an effective school motivator, as well as an effective school administrator. This is accomplished by striving to "do things right" and by "doing the right thing."*

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Organizations are socially constructed realities that exist in the minds of their collective members as well as in the concrete sets of rules and regulations that those members develop. According to those rules and roles, educators are indeed accountable for the dissemination of knowledge. They are also accountable for the advancement of the human spirit! It is important to make organizations effective; it is important as well to foster humane social conditions. Remember: we need leaders who will respond to knowledge in ways that will benefit not only the organization and its members, but the social order as well.

*Create a culture of Equity.*

Equity is not treating everyone “fair” or “equal.” Thinking in these terms does not take into account the individual needs of community members. Equity or being equitable means you will provide resources and make decisions based upon what each teacher, parent, student, and/or staff member needs at that moment in time. Being equitable does not mean showing favoritism to certain individuals and/or groups of people.

*Be Inclusive.*

Much of school culture at all levels is designed to exclude and not include. Consider our meeting times, the separation of disciplines, the segregation of students, and the types of instruction presented. We separate individuals based on gender, age, color, identity, sexual orientation, and ability. Discover ways to bring EVERYONE together regardless of background, ability, and/or identity.

- Change the lunch schedule and let all students eat together as a community

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- Utilize instructional materials that celebrate diversity and globalization
- Establish vertical and horizontal planning teams
- Utilize community-partner resources to provide training in diversity
- Allow technology to open the doors for students to communicate across borders
- Identify difference as a strength and utilize it to empower EVERYONE

*Diversity is the key.*

Create a Culture of Diversity by celebrating difference. Establish a vision and mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by giving your school community resources for globalization. We have the ability to communicate via the Internet across the globe at a moment's notice. Utilize the World Wide Web and all of the applications available to empower your teachers and students to engage in cross-cultural communication.

*Create a Professional Learning Community (PLC)*

Professional Learning Communities are those designed and developed to increase students' academic success and academic achievement by focusing on instruction. All members of the learning community should receive training on establishing, maintaining, and sustaining Professional Learning Communities. The Internet is filled with many resources regarding establishing and sustaining Professional Learning Communities; take the time and search the web for PLC resources. To engage in the PLC development process, you must do the following:

- Be supportive of teachers and their ideas

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- Be visible and a part of the instructional day
- Lead by example
- Be an Instructional Leader
- Establish honest and “open” communication with EVERYONE
- Allow faculty, staff and students to grow and think critically
- Empower students to make instructional decision
- Do NOT utilize PLC’s to increase test scores
- Be open and responsive to change
- Have a commitment to change and rupture the status-quo

*Navigate and Negotiate the Political Climate*

School and district-level administrators must realize education is a political experience and paradigm. The selection of teachers, the funding of schools, and the communities in which reside within the school building are all guided by political forces. Successful educational leaders are not only aware of the political structures, they know how to navigate and negotiate the political terrain with ease and success. Successful administrators have the uncanny ability to engage in the “sea of politics” without abandoning the cargo and passengers of their ship.

*Empower and Facilitate, but Do Not Judge.*

Successful educational leaders facilitate the leadership and instructional process for members of the learning community. They do not judge or condemn. They inspire and transform the community by doing the following:

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- Providing a culture and climate where continuously learning takes place
- Facilitating the learning process
- Creating relationships and respect
- Leading with understanding and compassion
- Not being a YES-person, but facilitating the development of SOUND decisions
- Knowing the various cultures and sub-cultures within the school community
- Knowing the students, parents, teachers and other community members very well
- Understanding their job requires them to be available 24 hours of the day
- Identifying pockets of resistance and utilizing them as metrics for success

## **Instructional Best Practices for Teachers**

### **Strategies and Techniques for Teaching Reading (Literature)**

*Teachers should do more of the following:*

Read aloud to students daily

Schedule time for independent and group reading

Encourage students to choose their own reading materials

Expose students to multiple types and genres of literature

Encourage students to read fiction, nonfiction, science fiction, and mystery books

Model and discuss your own reading practices

Place emphasis on comprehension, context, and genre

Teach reading as a process:

- Use strategies that activate prior knowledge
- Help students make and test predictions
- Structure help during reading
- Provide after-reading applications

Encourage social and collaborative activities with much discussion and group by interest and book choice

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Silent reading should be followed by in-depth discussions

Teach literacy skills within the context of whole and meaningful literature

The Writing Process and Writing activities should occur before and after reading activities

Use content-specific text by discipline (e.g., historical novels in social studies)

Evaluate student progress by focusing on higher-order thinking skills

***Teachers should do less of the following:***

Emphasizing whole-class reading-group activities

Selecting all reading materials for individual/groups

Relying on basal readers

Keeping own reading habits private

Emphasizing reading sub-skills (word analysis, syllabication, and phonics)

Teaching the reading process as a single, one-step act

Emphasizing individual seat/desk work

Establishing reading groups by reading ability/level

Using extensive round-robin oral reading

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Teaching skills in phonics workbooks/drills in isolation

Limiting time to engage in the writing process

Discouraging pre-conventional spelling

Maintaining an established reading time

Focusing on individual low-level sub-skills

Measuring student reading success by a test score



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