**Compassionate Leadership in Response to Vulnerability: Opportunities for School Improvement and Renewal**

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**CALL FOR CHAPTER PROPOSALS**

Deadline for Submissions: April 15, 2022

**Purpose:**

Existing literature currently explores how compassion shapes professional practice and organizational functioning; however, much of this work originates from the fields of nursing, medicine, counseling, business, and management (Dewar et al., 2013; de Zulueta, 2016; Frost et al., 2006; Gilbert & Choden, 2014; Kanov et al., 2004; Trzeciak & Mazzarelli, 2019). This body of knowledge provides important insights about how care-providers and organizations can (re)center others’ well-being in their work and experience fulfillment and rejuvenation in the process. Unfortunately, **compassion is rarely discussed within the educational leadership literature.** This is considered a missed opportunity, as educational contexts are rife with struggle, hardship, and human suffering, and compassion has the potential to transform schools into places of healing, comfort, belonging, and connection amid this suffering. Thus, the **purpose of this volume is to** **consider how compassionate leadership can assist educational leaders** in demonstrating compassion within their work and transforming their schools into organizations of compassion. To accomplish this purpose, **the editors seek interdisciplinary perspectives** to provide an overview of compassionate care and leadership, to describe how leaders can develop the attributes and skills needed to demonstrate and nurture compassion within their schools, districts, and communities, and to demonstrate how compassionate leadership can directly support vulnerable populations within schools.

**Intended audience/use of book:**

This volume is designed as a tool to assist current and pre-service PK-12 leaders in developing compassionate attributes and skills for transforming their schools into organizations of compassion. Each chapter in the volume will focus on a central thesis related to compassion and **include a case vignette** that illustrates how the central thesis applies to leaders’ professional practice. Contributing authors will also include a list of reflective questions that can guide conversations within schools, districts, and/or graduate coursework. As such, the primary audiences for the volume include current PK-12 leaders, pre-service PK-12 leaders, and faculty in leadership preparation programs. Secondary audiences of the book include educational researchers and policymakers. As compassionate leadership is rarely discussed within educational leadership literature, it is anticipated that this volume will point to new areas of inquiry for educational researchers. The volume will also provide insights which could assist school boards and other policymakers in developing compassion-centered policies and practices.

**Sociopolitical context:**

Educational leadership is fraught with challenges and uncertainties. These challenges are wide-ranging, complex, and often difficult to navigate (Spillane & Lee, 2014), and they require leaders to employ highly sophisticated interpersonal (Lasater, 2016) and decision-making skills (Chitpin & Evers, 2015) amidst diminished public trust and increased public scrutiny (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). This complex environment has led many leaders to experience fatigue, distress, anxiety, depression, and burnout (Ray et al., 2019; Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020). In 2009 – ten years before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic – George Theoharis pointedly described how the pervasive barriers and subsequent stress and discouragement constantly facing educational leaders reflect a profession which “continues to move in the direction of impossibility” (p. 112). Yet ten years later, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the landscape of education and exponentially magnified the impossibility of the job.

But leaders are not alone in facing unprecedented challenges. In the last two years, people around the world have experienced unfathomable loss, heartbreak, and suffering as the result of: the COVID-19 pandemic; persistent inequities and subsequent social justice protests; war and violence; and catastrophic hurricanes, fires, floods, and other natural disasters. These events move beyond mere challenges. Rather, they represent crises, as they threaten the core structures, routines, values, and norms upon which people and organizations rely and they create a sense of shock, fear, urgency, disorder, and vulnerability at both the individual and organizational levels (Boin et al., 2017). Unfortunately, crises exacerbate existing inequities and compound the challenges facing marginalized students and families (Fortuna et al., 2020).

This collective pain, suffering, grief, and vulnerability manifests in schools. In fact, constant exposure to others’ pain, suffering, trauma, and grief can take a serious toll on teachers and leaders’ well-being (Cherkowski & Walker, 2018; Mahfouz, 2020; Shirley et al., 2020). As such, leaders are in critical need of a leadership approach that can assist them in embracing others’ suffering, cultivating individual and organizational responses to alleviate others’ suffering, and creating a collective sense of meaning, fulfillment, and rejuvenation through authentic engagement in others’ lives. Compassionate leadership offers such an approach. Compassionate leadership involves the purposeful cultivation of individual and organizational norms, practices, structures, and routines which encourage organizational members to recognize others’ vulnerability and suffering, emotionally engage with others in their suffering, and respond to this suffering in ways which are meaningful to the individual (Dewar et al., 2013). It is characterized by deep interpersonal connections, concern for others’ holistic well-being, trust, acceptance, caring conversations, distress tolerance, emotional attunement with others’ experiences, motivation to act in response to others’ needs and desires, and deliberate action to alleviate others’ pain and suffering (de Zulueta, 2016; Frost et al., 2006; Gilbert & Choden, 2014; Kanov et al., 2004).

**The moment is right to move the field toward a compassion-centered approach to leadership.** The COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing social injustices experienced worldwide created perpetual anxiety, stress, fear, uncertainty, loss, and grief for millions of people. Now more than ever, people need to give and receive compassion, and “this moment, perhaps more than any other, allows the norm of service to shine through” (Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020, p. 5). Thus, while this volume speaks to suffering, it is ultimately a volume of hope.

**Chapters:**

We encourage a broad range of contributions, including original research, case descriptions, conceptual or theoretical discussions, critical reflection essays, and compassion narratives. We especially encourage contributions that explore compassion from an interdisciplinary perspective and use the research on compassion in other fields (e.g., business, management, nursing, medicine, etc.) to inform the work of school leadership.

Potential questions to guide chapters may include but are not limited to:

*Part I: Compassionate Leadership – An Overview*

* What is compassionate leadership and care?
* How is compassion demonstrated in the helping professions?
* How do compassionate leaders create organizations of compassion?
* How does organizational compassion apply to school settings?
* How does compassion challenge or enhance existing perspectives on school improvement?

*Part II: Compassion Attributes and Skills*

* What attributes and skills are needed for leaders to demonstrate compassion and foster organizational compassion within their schools?
* What training or practices can assist leaders in building their capacity for compassion?
* How can school leaders nurture compassion within their schools, districts, and communities?
* Why is compassion particularly important in the context of vulnerability?

*Part III: Compassion in Context – Responding to Individual and Collective Vulnerability*

* How can compassionate leadership support students and families with substance use disorders?
* How can compassionate leadership inform school disciplinary processes and the discipline gap?
* How can compassionate leadership support military students and families?
* How can compassionate leadership support refugee students and families?
* How can compassionate leadership support incarcerated students and families?
* How can compassionate leadership support homeless students and families?
* How can compassionate leadership support students and families with severe and/or chronic mental health issues?
* How can compassionate leadership assist school leaders in responding to community crises (e.g., natural disasters)?
* How can compassionate leadership assist school leaders in responding to school crises (e.g., school shooting, school closure, etc.)?
* How can compassionate leadership inform special education processes?
* How can organizational compassion serve as an antidote to teacher and leader burnout?
* How can educator preparation programs train for compassionate leadership (e.g., compassion for teachers and administrators)?
* How can leaders practice self-compassion, and why is this important?

**To be clear, our conceptualization of compassionate leadership extends far beyond colloquial notions of compassion,** which tend to focus more on positive intentions and heartfelt emotions in response to others’ pain, suffering, and vulnerability. However, when we discuss compassionate leadership, we are referring to the willingness and ability of leaders to demonstrate compassion within their own practice, to cultivate organizational conditions which prompt collective noticing, feeling, and responding, and to center compassion within all aspects of the organization’s functioning. This involves **taking deliberate actions to alleviate the pain, suffering, and vulnerability experienced by others** in ways which are uniquely meaningful to them. **We encourage contributing authors to keep this conceptualization in mind as they respond to this call.**

**Submission Details:**

Potential contributors are invited to submit a proposal of no more than 500 words (not including references) by **April 15, 2022**. The proposal should include: 1) the chapter title; 2) authors’ names, titles, institutional affiliations; and, 3) a **chapter summary (500 word maximum)** describing the content of the chapter and its unique contributions to the volume. Proposals should be attached as a Word file and sent via email to: compassioncenteredleadership@gmail.com.

The editors will review proposal submissions and extend invitations to selected authors by May 1, 2022. At that time, selected authors will receive a guide for contributing authors, which will include chapter formatting requirements, word limits (estimate 6,000 - 7,000 words), etc. Full chapters will be due three months after invitations are extended (see projected timeline below). Full chapters will be reviewed by two peer-reviewers and contributing authors may be requested to serve as reviewers for the volume.

**Projected Timeline:**

March 1 – April 15, 2022: Call for chapter proposals issued and publicized.

April 15, 2022: Proposals submitted to editors.

May 1, 2022: Selected authors invited to submit full papers for review.

May 1, 2022 – August 15, 2022: Authors submit full manuscripts to editors.

August 16 – October 1, 2022: Manuscripts undergo peer review.

November 1, 2022: Editors send feedback to authors.

December 1, 2022: Revised manuscripts submitted to editors.

December 1, 2022- February 1, 2023: Editorial review of manuscripts.

February 1, 2023: Additional feedback provided to authors.

March 1, 2023: Authors submit final revised manuscripts to editors.

August 2023: Targeted publication date.

**LSI Book Series:**

This volume will be included in the Leadership for School Improvement (LSI) Book Series (<https://www.infoagepub.com/series/Leadership-for-School-Improvement>). This series is sponsored by the Leadership for School Improvement Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and is published by Information Age Publishing.

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