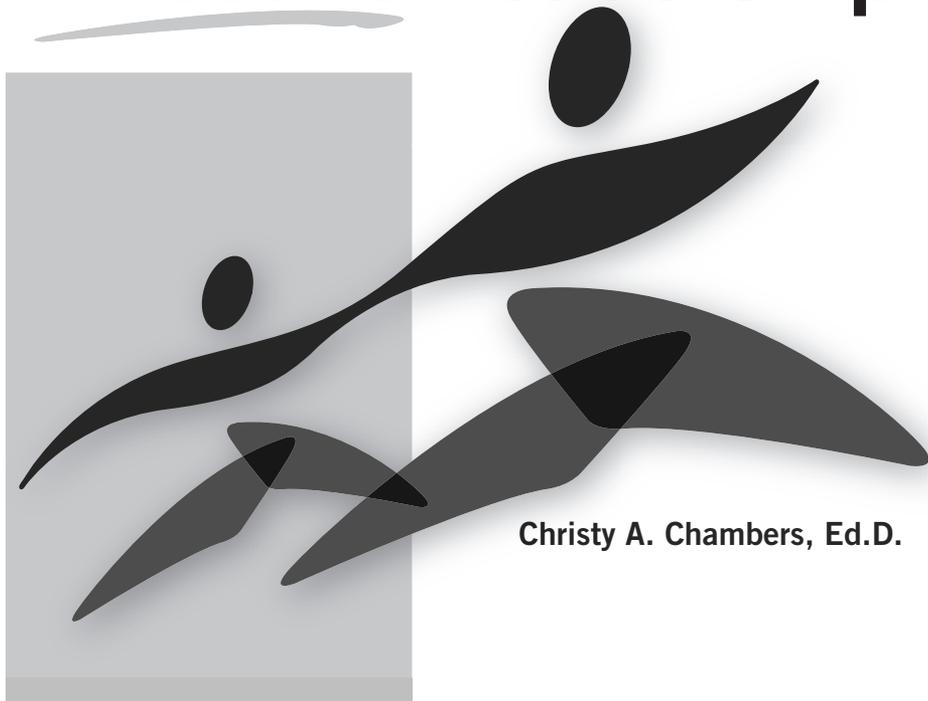


The Journey to Effective Leadership



Christy A. Chambers, Ed.D.

**Book 1: CASE Leadership Series
for Special Education Administrators**

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COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATORS
OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

The logo for the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) features a stylized camera icon with a white 'c' inside, followed by the word 'case' in a lowercase, sans-serif font. Above the logo, the words 'VISION · LEADERSHIP · EXCELLENCE' are written in a curved path.

About CASE

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) is an international professional educational organization affiliated with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Members are dedicated to the enhancement of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of each individual in society.

Those receiving special education services are individuals who possess basic rights and responsibilities and who command respect at all times. Special education embraces the right to a free, appropriate public education.

The mission of the Council of Administrators of Special Education, Inc. is to provide leadership and support to members by shaping policies and practices which impact the quality of education worldwide.

About the Author

With more than 25 years of experience as an administrator, Christy A. Chambers, Ed.D., has been a director/superintendent of three special education joint agreements. Increasing the capacity of local school districts to improve outcomes for students has been a hallmark of her career. Her capacity to lead change by restructuring and improving education delivery systems has led to significant reform within Illinois and has been recognized nationally. Dr. Chambers is the recipient of numerous state and national awards for leadership, including the CASE Harrie Selznick Distinguished Service Award 2008 and the CASE Outstanding Administrator of Special Education 2001. She is the author and frequent facilitator of the leadership workshops and academies “Leading with Heart in Times of Cardiac Arrest.”



Dr. Chambers received her undergraduate degree from Northern Illinois University and her Master’s and Doctoral degrees in special education administration from Illinois State University, where she was an Ada Welch Scholar and graduate fellowship recipient. She is the past president of the Council of Administrators of Special Education.

Dr. Chambers is co-founder and CEO of Beyond the Box, LLC, a consulting group providing education solutions to schools, parents, and organizations dedicated to improving education outcomes for children and their families.

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Foreword

Charged with the responsibility of educating and preparing students with disabilities to transition from school to a most productive adult life, special education administrators are depended upon for their leadership knowledge and skills. Although leadership has been a very popular topic for books, articles, and professional development, a vacuum of leadership research and publications in the field of special education administration is apparent. The effective special education leader must have knowledge and skills that go beyond knowing laws and rules and completion of paperwork. Whether new or veteran, the special education administrator faces towering challenges.

How can you build and ensure high-quality programs and increase achievement of students with disabilities? How do you recruit and retain high-quality teachers? How do you prioritize needs and ensure maximum return on leadership investments? Leadership! The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) offers this leadership series to fill the vacuum of information and resources needed to provide support to both the novice and the veteran special education administrator in times of great challenge and change.

Peter Drucker flatly states, “While there may be some born leaders, there are surely too few to depend on them. Leadership is something that must be learned.” And likewise, according to Warren Bennis, “The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born—that there is a genetic factor to leadership. This myth asserts that people simply either have certain charismatic qualities or not. That’s nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born” (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1997).

I agree with James Hunter—that leadership is some combination of genetics and environmental factors, mixed with a strong personality and a good education (2004). Leadership should be viewed as a skill that can be developed over time as a school administrator gains experiences, including the experience of mentoring new and aspiring administrators. I now have no doubt that leadership is a learned ability.

Leadership skill development may be considered comparable to developing other skills such as playing tennis, racing cars, or playing the guitar. Although you may not play tennis like Rafael Nadal, or win car races like the Earnhardts, or play the guitar like Eric Clapton, you can become more skilled in these activities with motivation, practice, and discipline, says Hunter. I would add good mentoring as a necessary

ingredient, whether that mentoring is from an individual, from studying the work of several experts in your field, or from professional organizations, like CASE.

CASE accepts the responsibility to mentor and develop leaders and offers this Leadership Series to aspiring leaders for guidance and support; the series is also intended for experienced administrators to reinforce and renew their vigor for their work as they, too, accept their responsibility to mentor new and aspiring administrators.

1 Management

Taking care of details

Introduction

The recent attention to leadership has been unprecedented in business and government as well as education. One aspect of the leadership discussion for the past several years has focused on the distinction between management and leadership. Although *leadership* and *management* are terms that are often used interchangeably, they are not the same. Understanding the differences between the two, identifying how they interact with one another, and then placing emphasis on both are critical to organizational effectiveness.

Although these concepts are frequently confused, several researchers have made a clear distinction. For example, Gardner (1990) suggests leadership is “the process of persuasion or example by which an individual or leadership team induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (p. 3). Further, he reserves the term *managers* for individuals who hold a directive post in an organization—presiding over the resources by which the organization functions, allocating resources prudently, and making the best possible use of people. In agreement, Tosi (1982) suggests “leading is an influence process, and managing may be seen as the act of making choices about the form and structure of those factors that fall within the boundaries of managerial discretion” (p. 233).

Management Functions

Management is about the things you do: planning, budgeting, organizing, problem solving, being in control, maintaining order, developing strategies. It is about coping with complexity. Management is the effort to make sense out of chaos and to clear up confusion. It can calm the workplace and restore a sense of order. Without good management, complex enterprises tend to become chaotic in ways that threaten their very existence.

There can be safety and security in focusing on management tasks. Everyone likes to cross tasks off the to-do list. And that is the role of the manager: create the to-do list and devote resources to ensure the tasks are completed on time. Managers look at the bottom line, move the paper, and focus on what needs to be done and when. The comfort zone of the manager is in the status quo and doing things right. Management is about

coping with complexity, bringing order and consistency out of potential chaos, and applying known solutions and strategies.

Leadership Functions

Leading is an influencing process. It is about planning for and leading change. The effective leader does not perform these functions in isolation but rather takes ultimate responsibility for making sure the function is accomplished in an effective manner. The leader develops and communicates the vision, demonstrates real ownership by sharing influence and authority, plans for and provides resources, provides training and development, mentors, and checks for progress. One of the most important functions of a leader is to mentor future leaders not only by example but also by intentional design.

A popular chart first developed by Mary Lippitt (1987) and modified by Ambrose (1987) demonstrates the impact of any missing component of leading change: establishing shared values, providing a clear vision, bringing skills to the work, offering incentives, providing necessary resources, and achieving an action plan that is owned by everyone.

Managing Complex Change

Values	Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action plan	= Meaningful change
	Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action plan	= Violation
Values		Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action plan	= Confusion
Values	Vision		Incentives	Resources	Action plan	= Anxiety
Values	Vision	Skills		Resources	Action plan	= Gradual change
Values	Vision	Skills	Incentives		Action plan	= Frustration
Values	Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources		= False starts

Comparing and Contrasting Management and Leadership

While leaders and managers may be viewed as having common foundational abilities, they differ with respect to their predominant tendencies. Leaders tend to be goal-oriented, while managers tend to be results-oriented. Managers attempt to adjust to change while leaders seek change. Think about these contrasting attitudes (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1997, pp. 9-10): Do you get caught up in accepting reality rather than investigating it? Copying rather than creating? Focusing on structure rather than people? Eyeing the bottom line rather than the horizon? Accepting the status quo rather than challenging it? Ultimately, good management levels the playing field. Be an excellent manager, have solid technical skills and abilities, know the content of your work, and be

skilled in accomplishing tasks. These are prerequisites to leadership. But simply knowing how to do the job has little to do with developing the skills necessary to inspire others to do the job well.

Leadership is influencing people to contribute their hearts, minds, spirits, creativity, and excellence and to give their all for their teams (Hunter, 2004, p. 33). Where managers have subordinates, leaders have followers. Leaders do not have subordinates—at least not when they are leading. Many educational leaders have subordinates, only because they are also managers. But when they want to lead, they have to give up formal authoritarian control, because to lead is to have followers, and following is always a voluntary activity (Gardner, 1990, p. 3).

Now that the value of both management and leadership functions has been discussed, it is important to compare the two to emphasize how effective leadership is necessary for effective special education services and to all aspects of education.

Good management brings a degree of order and consistency. This desire for order can also lure us into believing that we are secure and all is well in the school district when the environment is actually full of competing agendas. This changing and shifting environment is where leadership is needed. Where management is about coping, leadership is about change. More change requires more leadership (Kotter, 1997, p. 25). The research of Kouzes and Posner (1995) goes even further, providing clear evidence that high-performing leaders are always engaged in the work of leading change (p. 15).

According to Stephen Covey, “Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall” (2004, p. 101). The leader focuses on creating the mission and vision of the school district or organization, with emphasis on the process and the people. While the manager looks to the bottom line, the leader looks to the horizon and seeks the possibilities. The manager seeks the right answers, while the leader seeks the right questions. If you agree that the role of the leader is to take people on journeys where they have not been before then, by definition, they don’t know how to get there! Leaders instinctively challenge the status quo.

The Need for Both Management and Leadership

In many publications, readings, and presentations in which leadership and management functions are compared and contrasted, the author or speaker often de-emphasizes the value of management functions and

emphasizes the need for leadership functions, believing that managers work primarily with paper and leaders work with what matters—people. It's important to realize and respect that both are important—this is particularly true in education, especially special education. If paperwork does not get processed and basic work is not completed, leadership will not be effective. The special education director must ensure the department operates efficiently with all necessary, compliant forms and procedures consistently implemented. If the process is not managed, the school system or special education department will likely lose sight of mission and vision and staff then loses direction. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that management is necessary to keep on course and ensure everyone is on board and working toward the same vision. Strong management is a prerequisite to a well-run special education department.

On the other hand, for a special education department to go beyond effective operations and truly serve the needs of children and youth and their families, the special education director must also be an effective leader, one who is skilled in leading change. To lead change, the special education director challenges the status quo and focuses not only on doing things right, but on doing the right things for the right reasons.

In addition to considering how management and leadership are related, it may also be important to understand how the two functions often come into conflict with one another. As Yukl states: “The two processes have some incompatible elements; strong leadership can disrupt order and efficiency, and strong management can discourage risk taking and innovation” (2002, p. 6). Unfortunately, the desire for the status quo and “keeping the peace” can lead a school district or organization to be wary of innovation and risk taking. Leaders can also be impatient with managers when trying to move them in authoritarian ways to get on board with their program and plan for change. School districts must create environments where both managers and leaders can perform their valuable functions.

You know you are a leader if you...

- ...feel you know how to do things better and can do them without offending those in authority.
- ...are comfortable and actually enjoy being challenged.
- ...are not afraid to go into challenging meetings, where conflict and disagreement are anticipated, without all of the answers.
- ...credit other people for things you helped accomplish.
- ...take responsibility for actions or lack of results that you did not directly contribute to.

Does this list describe you on a consistent basis?

Summary and Conclusions

The functions of leadership and management are important to education. It is crucial that the basic functions of management be effectively accomplished, or initiatives for innovation, development, and change will not be viewed as credible. School districts must create environments where both managers and leaders can perform their valuable functions and where there is not an overemphasis on the status quo that can accompany an emphasis on management.

In the following chapters, we will continue to explore the roles and responsibilities of special education administrators given current challenges and initiatives in education as a whole.

Management and Leadership Checklist

How often do you exhibit these behaviors?

Competency	Always	Sometimes	Must Begin
I balance my focus on management and leadership functions.			
I emphasize doing the right things rather than only doing things right.			
I have strong management skills.			
I have well-developed leadership skills.			
I encourage others to commit their energy and enthusiasm to important changes in my school or district.			
I make sure that all processes run smoothly in my department.			