

## *Foreword*

As much as any professional work I have embarked upon, this book comes from my heart. It both thrills and humbles me like you cannot imagine.

It involves today's young people. It involves our future. Whether you are a concerned parent, a professional educator, or a foresighted business leader, I am confident you will find it to be an invigorating breath of fresh air, a reason to celebrate and an inspiring call for action. For what you are about to read unveils a budding trend that is gaining momentum in a growing number of schools across the United States and in various parts of the world. It is an exciting trend—one that is producing tangible, sustainable results.

From the get-go, I want you to know that I am not the mastermind behind the trend. Rather, credit goes to an expanding community of committed, creative, and caring professional educators who have synergistically joined forces with parents, civic leaders, and business proprietors to bring about a new level of hope in education.

To set the context, let me take you back a few years to what seems like yesterday. In 1989, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* was published. Its subtitle was “Restoring the Character Ethic.” The book caught a wave that even I had no way of anticipating, particularly in organizational arenas. Today, the *7 Habits* are still thriving in boardrooms, government offices, and corporate universities around the globe.

About the same time as the *7 Habits* book was launched, I was approached by Chuck Farnsworth, who at the time was superintendent of schools for a progressive district in Indiana. Chuck felt strongly that the *7 Habits* had an important role to play in the world of education, and he was passionately determined to lead the charge. He began by taking the habits

to school administrators and teachers. To date, nearly a half million professional educators have been trained in the *7 Habits*, with many of them being certified as school facilitators.

As we brought the *7 Habits* into schools, the focus remained on training adults, not students. That changed in 1998, when my son, Sean, wrote *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. Sean had been a Division I college football quarterback, which created frequent opportunities for him to be in front of teen audiences. He developed a sincere interest in young people that eventually propelled him to write the teen version. More than three million teen copies have now been sold, and Student Activity Guides have carried the habits to over a hundred thousand middle and high school students.

In the latter part of 1999, the *7 Habits* made another significant entry into schools. During a presentation in Washington, D.C., I was approached by an elementary school principal named Muriel Summers. She wanted to know if I thought the *7 Habits* could be taught to young children. I pointed her toward Sean's book, but she came back with the reply that she was referring to *very young* children—as young as five years old. I responded, “I don't know why not,” and then casually added that if she ever tried to do it to let me know how it went.

This book contains the account of what Muriel and her talented staff initiated following that brief encounter. It is a tremendous story, one that has been simmering, thickening, rippling, and gaining momentum (and even some notoriety) for some time, as the percentage of students achieving end-of-grade targets has gone from 84 to 97 percent and the school has gone from the brink of nearly being terminated as a magnet school to being named the number one magnet school in America. How? With great success they, and now scores of other schools, have been teaching the *7 Habits* and other leadership principles to elementary school students—yes, even five-year-olds. Their approach is unique and may even surprise you. Their intent has not been to prepare students to become CEOs or world leaders, but rather to teach them how to lead their individual lives and how to succeed in the twenty-first century. I believe you will discover in their approach some highly credible and principle-based solutions to some of the most discouraging dilemmas facing schools today.

In approaching the topic of education, I am keenly aware that today's

educators are constantly under a microscope and have been the targets of abundant negative press in recent years. Such is not the intent of this book. Rather than being a critic, I prefer to promote the good. I honestly believe that it is difficult to spend time in most any school these days without departing in absolute reverence of some incredible teachers—noble mentors who have sacrificed much to do what they love and what they believe will make a difference in young lives. To focus only on the negative in education while ignoring what the true heroes are doing would be a tragic act of ingratitude.

Some may view my efforts as self-serving. I acknowledge why some might feel that way, but I am willing to risk that perception because I so strongly believe in what these schools are doing for today's young people. Indeed, it is the profound successes that these schools are having that has inspired FranklinCovey to devote more of its mission toward partnering with schools, businesses, parents, and community leaders to create resources that will better enable young people to prepare for the world that awaits them—a world that none of us can fully predict. Likewise, it was the successes of these schools that ignited Sean's desire to write his recently released book, *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids*. Both this book and Sean's book—along with a whole series of new *The Leader in Me* resources and website materials—are vital components in FranklinCovey's effort to do more toward the betterment of societies and young people of all nations.

This book represents the combined efforts of many people. My partner, Boyd Craig, provided visionary leadership and direction to the entire team and project. Dr. David K. Hatch shepherded the research efforts with passion, dedication, and world class character and competence. He took my heart, put data behind it, and helped me transfer it to paper. Their efforts were competently supported by FranklinCovey's Education Solutions team, in particular Sarah Noble, Connie Spencer, Aaron Ashby, Sean Covey, Judy Yauch, Shawn Moon, and Stephanie Calton, and such road-tested consultants as Dr. Nancy Moore, Dr. Jane Knight, Gary McGuey, and Lonnie Moore, as well as Dr. Craig Pace and Dr. Dean Collinwood, who conducted early research for the book. Others such as Victoria Marrott contributed significant administrative support. The rest of my office team—Julie Gillman, Chelsea Johns, and Darla Salin—provide constant support to all of my work. More important, well over a hundred teachers, school superinten-

dents, principals, parents, professors, and school board members volunteered extensive input and rigorous review of the work. Their practical, tried-and-refined insights substantiate each page. My heartfelt gratitude extends to all who participated.

To gain a quick overview of what this book entails, I suggest that you skim through it from front to back while looking at the pictures and reading their captions. I also recommend that you visit [TheLeaderInMeBook.org](http://TheLeaderInMeBook.org) online to view video clips of schools and activities spoken of in this book.

As you view the various resources and traverse the pages of this book, I hope you feel my deep, personal commitment, and behind it all my firm belief in the potential of today's young people. As a grandparent, I am delighted with the possibilities this book may create for my grandchildren, their children, and eventually their children's children. I think nothing but the highest of them and want nothing short of the best for them. Likewise, as a global citizen, I feel a vested interest in the progress, well-being, and happiness of all young people. They are the society and hope of the future—*our* future—and I firmly desire that future to be in good hands. Finally, as a business executive, I want to be able to look into the eyes of today's young people and see a vibrant coming workforce, a pool of future leaders who are well prepared for the challenges that we all know lie ahead.

Indeed, it is my sincerest hope that this book will somehow spread its figurative wings and soar with a reach that will truly make a difference in the lives of young people the world over—now and for generations to come.

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