

BARUTI K. KAFELE

**IS MY SCHOOL
A BETTER SCHOOL
BECAUSE
I LEAD IT?**

ADVANCE UNCORRECTED COPY - NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION



1703 N. Beauregard St. • Alexandria, VA 22311-1714 USA
Phone: 800-933-2723 or 703-578-9600 • Fax: 703-575-5400
Website: www.ascd.org • E-mail: member@ascd.org
Author guidelines: www.ascd.org/write

Deborah S. Delisle, *Executive Director*; Stefani Roth, *Publisher*; Genny Ostertag, *Director, Content Acquisitions*; Julie Houtz, *Director, Book Editing & Production*; Joy Scott Ressler, *Editor*; Judi Connelly, *Associate Art Director*; Thomas Lytle, *Graphic Designer*; Keith Demmons, *Production Designer*; Mike Kalyan, *Director, Production Services*; Trinay Blake, *E-Publishing Specialist*; Audra Jefferson, *Production Specialist*.

Copyright © 2019 ASCD. All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce copies of this work in print or electronic format (including reproductions displayed on a secure intranet or stored in a retrieval system or other electronic storage device from which copies can be made or displayed) without the prior written permission of the publisher. By purchasing only authorized electronic or print editions and not participating in or encouraging piracy of copyrighted materials, you support the rights of authors and publishers. Readers who wish to reproduce or republish excerpts of this work in print or electronic format may do so for a small fee by contacting the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), 222 Rosewood Dr., Danvers, MA 01923, USA (phone: 978-750-8400; fax: 978-646-8600; web: www.copyright.com). To inquire about site licensing options or any other reuse, contact ASCD Permissions at www.ascd.org/permissions, or permissions@ascd.org, or 703-575-5749. For a list of vendors authorized to license ASCD e-books to institutions, see www.ascd.org/epubs. Send translation inquiries to translations@ascd.org.

ASCD® and ASCD LEARN. TEACH. LEAD.® are registered trademarks of ASCD. All other trademarks contained in this book are the property of, and reserved by, their respective owners, and are used for editorial and informational purposes only. No such use should be construed to imply sponsorship or endorsement of the book by the respective owners.

All web links in this book are correct as of the publication date below but may have become inactive or otherwise modified since that time. If you notice a deactivated or changed link, please e-mail books@ascd.org with the words “Link Update” in the subject line. In your message, please specify the web link, the book title, and the page number on which the link appears.

PAPERBACK ISBN: 978-1-4166-2689-3 ASCD product #120013 n10/18
PDF E-BOOK ISBN: 978-1-4166-2691-6; see Books in Print for other formats.

Quantity discounts are available: e-mail programteam@ascd.org or call 800-933-2723, ext. 5773, or 703-575-5773. For desk copies, go to www.ascd.org/desks.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kafele, Baruti K., author.

Title: Is my school a better school because I lead it? / Baruti K. Kafele.

Description: Alexandria, VA, USA : ASCD, [2018] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018028037 (print) | LCCN 2018035494 (ebook) | ISBN 9781416626916 (PDF) | ISBN 9781416626893 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Educational leadership. | School management and organization.

Classification: LCC LB2805 (ebook) | LCC LB2805 .I17198 2018 (print) | DDC 371.2--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018028037>

IS MY SCHOOL A BETTER SCHOOL BECAUSE I LEAD IT?

INTRODUCTION	ix
CHAPTER 1	
My Leadership Identity—Who I Am	1
CHAPTER 2	
My Leadership Presence—What I Represent	9
CHAPTER 3	
My Leadership Impact—My Influence	17
CHAPTER 4	
My Leadership Mission—My What	27
CHAPTER 5	
My Leadership Purpose—My Why	33
CHAPTER 6	
My Leadership Vision—My Where	43
CHAPTER 7	
My Leadership Value—My Worth	51
FINAL THOUGHTS	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY	63
INDEX	67
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	71

CHAPTER 3

My Leadership Impact—My Influence



ADVANCE UNCORRECTED COPY - NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Q11: How does my leadership impact my school's brand identity?

The power of corporate branding is all around us. Many of us only purchase certain products and shop in certain stores because we are loyal to specific brands, most often due to their perceived superiority. Accrued perceptions likewise create a branding identity for your school. Your school's brand is its identity within the building and without. As a school community, you must be in control of your brand identity or the outside community will define it for you based on how they perceive it, which may be counterproductive and inconsistent with the brand you are trying to project.

Your school's brand will be as attractive as your leadership is strong, clear, and effective. If you strive for excellence at all times while ensuring a supportive environment for all, both your leadership identity and your school's brand will be the envy of others. It is incumbent upon you to discuss with staff regularly how you wish for your school to be seen by the community and, most important, *to work consciously and consistently at achieving this end.*

Does your school's brand inspire loyalty? How does your leadership impact your school's brand? Does your school's brand accurately reflect the climate, culture, and performance at your school? Does your staff understand the significance of your

school's brand? Have you and your staff helped to mold the brand, or has it evolved haphazardly without your influence? Does your school's brand matter to *you*?

Q12: How does my leadership impact my school's *mission* and *vision*?

Put simply, a school's mission refers to *what the school is about*, and its vision to *where the school is going*. Your school's mission is the foundation upon which it stands. A school that is serious about its mission ensures that the mission statement is known to all—perhaps even recited by students and staff every morning. The same is true of a school's vision statement. As the leader of the school, you must see to it that both mission and vision statements are posted throughout the building, including in all classrooms.

True leadership means ensuring that the school is “walking” in its mission and vision daily. Everything in the school should be scrutinized through the dual lens of mission and vision, including (and most especially) student achievement scores. Mission and vision statements should be seen as living documents that drive the work of the school.

How does your leadership impact your school's mission and vision? Do you prioritize internalization of values related to the mission and vision? Are your school's mission and vision known to the community at large? Do they drive the work in your building? Do students and staff “walk” in your mission and vision? Is your mission and vision recited by your school community daily?

Q13: How does my leadership impact my school's climate and culture?

When I worked as a principal, I had a quiet ritual that I would engage in every year. On the nights before, of, and following graduation, I would enter the school's empty auditorium, sit where the graduates sat, and reflect deeply on the previous year as well as on the one to come.

On the first two nights, foremost on my mind was whether we had provided our graduates with an adequate overall environment for learning that would allow them to succeed in the future. On the third night, I would turn my thoughts to the incoming students, pondering whether our school's climate and culture were sufficiently welcoming while considering what adjustments would need to be made going into the start of the next school year. Starting with that third night, I was obsessed with what students would see, hear, feel, and experience throughout their first day of the new school year and beyond. This ritual was important to me, helping bring closure to the current school year while also building a bridge to the next one.

A school's climate can be likened to a collective mood and its culture to a shared lifestyle. In both cases, modeling begins at the top. Creating a climate and a culture that inspires and motivates students needs to be a priority. Another strategy I employed as a principal was twofold: a daily morning message, coupled with ongoing monthly meetings with students in small groups divided by grade and gender. I used these meetings to discuss anything and everything, but always with a view toward developing the climate and culture in a positive direction.

What do your students *see*, *hear*, *feel*, and *experience* as they walk into your building every morning, and how do they *act* when they're there? How do their actions affect the school's mood? What do you, as the school's leader, do to ensure that the mood is positive, vibrant, and focused on academic excellence?

Q14: How does my leadership impact the social-emotional needs of my students?

I have always chosen to work in urban schools with students of color from high-poverty environments, as I feel these schools can benefit the most from my specific skillset while also offering me the most professional fulfillment. Too often, the home experiences of students from these kinds of schools are unimaginable to educators and staff. This disconnect has profound implications for school leadership, because these same children walk through your front doors every day bringing their pain along with them.

Whenever I visit a school, I look for evidence that the principal is focused on meeting students' social-emotional needs. This can be something as simple as greeting students, preferably by name, as they arrive on campus, or delivering an uplifting and empowering message over the PA every morning.

Are the social-emotional needs of your students being met in your school? Are they a priority under your leadership? Are structures in place to ensure students' emotional safety and security? What programs are in place for your students to help meet students' needs? Two programs that I have really liked over the years are peer counseling and restorative practices

that enable students to be deeply engaged with one another in a variety of different situations.

Q15: How does my leadership impact my school's academic performance?

As a football fan, it's always interesting to observe the excitement around the Super Bowl every year. It reminds me of classroom visits of some school administrators, actually. Let me explain.

The football season for the most part attracts true football fans—people who both know and enjoy the game. They know the “Xs and the Os” of football. In other words, they know plays, they know offenses, and they know defenses. When a play goes awry, they understand why. When a play works, they also understand why. They know the players and their positions. They know the coaches and their assignments. They know penalties, and they know a bad call by a referee when they see one. In other words, they know football and they know the game inside and out.

The Super Bowl, on the other hand, in addition to attracting hard-core football fans, attracts casual fans and nonfans—those who don't really follow football and know little to nothing about the details of the game. But because it is Super Bowl time, which brings with it media intrigue and hype, many nonfans watch the game. Because they aren't “true” fans of the game, they don't really know what they are watching. They just want to see the execution of a good play—or maybe a good hit, a nice pass, or a long run for a score. Therefore,

they are easily dazzled and impressed in a way that the “true” fan would not be.

You might be asking, “What’s this got to do with leadership impact on academic performance?” Everything! Just as there are these two types of fans, there are also two types of school leaders who visit classrooms to observe instruction.

One type of leader thoroughly understands good pedagogy. This leader goes into the classroom with his or her own philosophy, beliefs, opinions, and ideas about how children learn and how they correlate with the instruction being observed. This leader understands that children learn differently and is therefore looking closely to see how the teacher’s instructional strategies are benefiting all of the learners as opposed to only a few. In other words, this leader is checking that the teacher is implementing equitable strategies that ensure that all of the students have an opportunity to learn.

The other type of leader, on the other hand, lacks a philosophy, beliefs, opinions, and ideas about how children learn. Like the nonfan referenced above, this leader is therefore easily dazzled and impressed by what appears to look like good instruction. In other words, although the teaching being observed “looks good,” this leader isn’t bringing a frame of reference of what works best for all of the learners in the classroom. Instead, via the motions and actions of the teacher, he or she has resolved that the instruction being observed is good instruction for all. This leader’s leadership, therefore, adversely impacts the school’s academic performance (because his or her actions are comparable to that of the nonfan—who doesn’t really understand the game).

School leaders must be prepared to engage as instructional leaders who fully understand instruction and work toward ultimately impacting the academic performance of their schools.

BIBLIOGRAPHY



- Hosey, A. (2017). *Superhero status: A superhero guide to leadership*. Powder Springs, GA: Garnett Publishing.
- Kafele, B. (2013). *Closing the attitude gap: How to fire up your students to strive for success*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Kafele, B. (2015). *The principal 50: Critical leadership questions for inspiring school-wide excellence*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Kafele, B. (2016). *The teacher 50: Critical questions for inspiring classroom excellence*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Linton, C. (2011). *The equity framework*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Lopez, N. (2016). *The bridge to brilliance*. New York: Viking.
- Muhammad, A. (2009). *Transforming school culture: How to overcome staff division*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Parrett, W. H. & Budge, K. M. (2012). *Turning high-poverty schools into high-performing schools*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Schwanke, J. (2016). *You're the principal! Now what?: Strategies and solutions for new school leaders*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Sterrett, W. (2011). *Insights into action: Successful school leaders share what works*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ADVANCE UNCORRECTED COPY - NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION



Baruti K. Kafele, a highly regarded urban educator in New Jersey for more than 20 years, is a distinguished master teacher and transformational school leader. As an elementary school teacher in East Orange, NJ, he was named East Orange School District and Essex County Public Schools Teacher of the Year, and he was a finalist for New Jersey State Teacher of the Year. As a middle and high school principal, he led the transformation of four different New Jersey urban schools, including Newark Tech—transforming it from a low-performing school in need of improvement to national recognition—recognized by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of America's best high schools.

Kafele, one of the most sought-after education speakers in North America, is the author of eight books, including his four ASCD best sellers—*Closing the Attitude Gap*, *Motivating Black Males to Achieve in School and in Life*, *The Principal 50*, and *The Teacher 50*. He is the recipient of more than 150 educational, professional, and community awards, including the prestigious Milken National Educator Award and the National Alliance of Black School Educators Hall of Fame Award. As well, he was inducted into the East Orange, New Jersey Hall of Fame, and the City of Dickinson, Texas, proclaimed February 8, 1998 Baruti Kafele Day. Kafele can be reached via his website—www.principalkafele.com.

Related ASCD Resources

At the time of publication, the following resources were available (ASCD stock numbers appear in parentheses):

Print Products

The Teacher 50: Critical Leadership Questions for Inspiring Classroom Excellence by Baruti K. Kafele (#117009)

The Principal 50: Critical Leadership Questions for Inspiring Schoolwide Excellence by Baruti K. Kafele (#115050)

Closing the Attitude Gap: How to Fire Up Your Students to Strive for Success by Baruti K. Kafele (#114006)

Motivating Black Males to Achieve in School and in Life by Baruti K. Kafele (#109013)

Align the Design: A Blueprint for School Improvement by Nancy Mooney and Ann Mausbach (#108005)

Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning by Mike Schmoker (#106045)

Schooling by Design: Mission, Action, and Achievement by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (#107018)

What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action by Robert J. Marzano (#102271)

Digital Products

DVD: *Motivating Black Males to Achieve in School and in Life* by Baruti K. Kafele (#611087)

For up-to-date information about ASCD resources, go to www.ascd.org. You can search the complete archives of *Educational Leadership* at www.ascd.org/el.

ASCD myTeachSource®

Download resources from a professional learning platform with hundreds of research-based best practices and tools for your classroom at <http://myteachsource.ascd.org/>.

For more information, send an e-mail to member@ascd.org; call 1-800-933-2723 or 703-578-9600; send a fax to 703-575-5400; or write to Information Services, ASCD, 1703 N. Beauregard St., Alexandria, VA 22311-1714 USA.