

STEPHEN J. VALENTINE
DR. RESHAN RICHARDS
SKETCHNOTES BY BRAD OVENELL-CARTER

BLENDING LEADERSHIP

SIX SIMPLE BELIEFS FOR
LEADING ONLINE AND OFF



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



DESIGN



MISSION



SHARING



MEETINGS



THE OFF-RAMP

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PRAISE FOR *BLENDING LEADERSHIP*

“*Blending Leadership* combines detailed research with narrative familiar to every educator as the authors explore and explain the rapidly evolving arena of leadership in a digital age. . . . As our school organizations become increasingly fluid and evolutionary, the effective leader will leverage technical literacy and abilities in ways that will amplify the effectiveness of our collective mission of great learning for each individual student. The book, written by co-authors with extensive experience in the trenches of great learning, brings to light opportunities for this leverage for teachers, administrators, and students across every facet of our schools.”

Grant Lichtman, author of *#EdJourney: A Roadmap to the Future of Education*

“In *Blending Leadership*, authors Valentine and Richards encourage independent school leaders to take a ‘design pause’ by using greater intention in how they communicate and collaborate. At a time when we all need to challenge our traditional thinking and the status quo for doing business as 21st century independent schools, *Blending Leadership* offers practical examples that demonstrate how independent schools have the potential to serve as catalysts for the very conversations we need to have the most.”

**Jeffrey Shields, president and CEO,
National Business Officers Association (NBOA)**

“This book captures the iterative exploration of Stephen Valentine and Reshan Richards as they seek to show how leadership really works. Sketchnotes by Brad Ovenell-Carter add a rich, visual dimension that create an engaging guide for a new generation of learners.”

**Mike Rohde, author of *The Sketchnote Handbook* and
*The Sketchnote Workbook***

“*Blending Leadership* comes at the perfect time for today’s digital leaders. The title captures the opportunities and challenges of leadership and the book recognizes that technology is not a zero sum

game. Successful approaches to digital leadership in today's schools are not binary. With colorful examples and lively metaphors, *Blending Leadership* is a practical guide that today's school leaders will call upon over and over again."

**Matt Levinson, head of school, University Prep, and author of
*From Fear to Facebook: One School's Journey***

"With riveting storytelling, Reshan and Steve tell the stories of K-12 educational leaders who are thriving in online, offline, and blended environments. A mix of theory and practical ideas, the text encourages you to make both big changes and small tweaks to the ways you communicate and organize learning."

Dr. Kristen Swanson, cofounder of the Edcamp Movement

"In the expertly crafted *Blending Leadership*, Valentine and Richards, along with the phenomenal sketchnotes of Ovenell-Carter, treat the reader to an insightful look at the ways that leaders can truly embrace a culture shift to become even more effective. The book offers deep examples that are well referenced and researched and has many anecdotes that help put the concepts into context. The practical suggestions of implementation are scaffolded and varied in their approach. This is leadership in practice as well as a must-read for educators everywhere."

**Adam Bellow, educational technologist and
founder of eduTecher/eduClipper**

"Valentine and Richards have created a practical technology-blended roadmap for school leaders in their book. With stories of successful practices, validation from leadership experts, and ideas on how to use technology effectively in a leadership role, their book is a must-read for administrators and aspiring administrators!"

**Kathy Schrock, educational technologist, kack! and adjunct
faculty, Wilkes University**

"In *Blending Leadership: Six Simple Steps for Leading Online and Off*, Reshan Richards and Stephen Valentine have created a thoughtful and invaluable guide for school administrators in an age of ubiquitous online connectivity. With their impressive understanding of conceptual frameworks and practical realities, Richards and Valentine adeptly convey that successful blended school leaders

‘lead the learning and lead by learning’ by helping others and learning themselves, and that effective school leaders of online learning do not operate in isolation, but rather are part of a broad, community plan for learning. . . . With *Blending Leadership*, school leaders now have a powerful guide and ally in their community’s online and offline developmental journey.”

Tom Daccord, director and cofounder of EdTechTeacher

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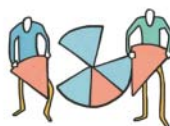
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Steve dedicates this book to Chloe, Hunter, and Amy.
Reshan dedicates this book to his late father-in-law, Robert A. Butler.

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PREFACE

This book started as a 60-minute presentation in which we explored and examined what school leadership looks like in online spaces. After the presentation, we looked at our pile of notes—scrawled on hotel pads and iPad screens—and decided to write down an expanded narrative, adding examples and expressing our beliefs.

At that time, Reshan was beginning his involvement with the Apple Distinguished Educators program, and he had learned the ins and outs of Apple's iBooks Author platform. Given the spontaneous nature of our project, we used that software to publish a first edition of our book. Our goals were to move fast, ship quickly, fix bugs as they appeared, and explore the dynamic possibilities—live Twitter feeds, swipe-ready images, open communication channels between reader and authors—of publishing online.

As we traveled and spoke about the electronic version of the book (everywhere from Boston to Philadelphia to Canada) and interacted with educators from around the country, we realized that the book was changing again.

Our core beliefs became clearer and clearer as people asked us tough questions or assured us that their experiences matched our own. And as we lived with our beliefs, taught with them at both secondary and graduate school levels, led with them, read with them in our heads, and showed up to meetings with them, they functioned as a kind of intellectual flypaper. We would turn to each other or email each other and say, “That was an example of cleaning up spaces” (Belief 2); or we would challenge each other to plan meetings differently rather than using the default mode of calling people together in a room (Belief 4).

We also learned that by shining a light so intensely on leadership in online spaces, we cast a shadow on what leadership looks like in offline spaces. Shift the light and you shift the shadow; shut off the light and you have all shadow. A simple truism emerged: it is both impossible and impractical to articulate a vision about leading online without articulating a vision about leading offline. If you move a leadership practice online, you are making an implicit statement about *all* leadership and followership in your organization, not just *some* leadership and followership in your organization. The same holds true, these days, for keeping leadership practices offline. When, for example, a leader says, “I’m going to cut this meeting short and ask that you all email me your final thoughts,” he is implying that the people

in the room are responsible enough and professional enough to follow through on an individualized task. He also may be reading the room and being respectful of people's energy and time. Likewise, when a leader shows up in your office to talk to you about something, she is implying that spending time with you is important and that some things are best handled face to face. Talking about leading online and leading offline should not be done in separate conversations. Deficiencies in one or the other reduce your leadership capacity.

Blind spots partially exposed and blinders off, we started writing again. We collected notes and ideas, attaching sticky notes to a printed PDF of the online text. We clipped important articles into our Evernote folder. Our original text—purposefully lean to share the stage with some of the functionalities made possible in a multi-touch book—became larger. And larger. We realized at some point that the iBooks version was like the demo a band makes on their way to figuring out how they really want their songs to sound.

This edition contains some new versions of older songs, some new beliefs (about the maker ethos and storytelling), fresh photos from Unsplash, gleanings from academic journals, ideas from popular researchers, approaches from practitioners, and insights from startup culture. The latter development has been informed by Reshan's recent transition from full-time work in a school to full-time work at his own New York City-based startup, another example of iteration in practice. At the end of each chapter, you will find "Things to Try." Consider these personal challenges to help you exercise your offline, online, and blended leadership muscles. They are guaranteed to alter your perspective and make you aware of opportunities that are just a few steps, or a few keystrokes, away. There are additional sketchnotes from Brad Ovenell-Carter, who has shared the following based on his experiences:

I love marginalia—those notes and doodles you find left in secondhand books by previous readers. They extend the conversation beyond the author and me, often giving another perspective on how to read the book in hand. Finding marginalia is usually a matter of chance, though I will admit that when choosing two copies of the same book I will leave the cleaner version on the shelf. It is even rarer to find marginalia now that we are moving to digital publications. But now, Steve and Reshan I think may have restored the practice . . . with this wonderful idea of taking those embellishments and baking them into their book as sketch notes.

*Sketchnoting is a visual form of note-taking, drawn in real time—in this case, as I read *Blending Leadership*. That was different. I have been sketchnoting at conferences and presentations for some time, but this is the first time I've drawn notes while reading*

a book. Reshan pointed out that reading is a “live” experience so sketchnoting a book shouldn’t be all that different. And he was right. I kept to the spirit of that and made my drawings on my first read through the manuscript. So, what you see here are those ideas that resonated for me, recorded as fresh and immediate as though Reshan and Steve were presenting their ideas from the stage.

Back to the story: As our text solidified into its new version, we also realized that, by publishing it exclusively online, we had missed readers who were interested in the concepts we were discussing but couldn’t access the book online. Many people still read in a traditional way, turning pages and writing in margins, and we want to connect with these people too.

Why begin a book about school leadership by talking about a pile of notes that became an online text that became the book you are holding? And why admit that so much has changed in our thinking?

Because this is partially a book about how we work in schools and how we *might* work in schools. We are committed to a set of ideas and a process for spreading them. We are trying to capture our evolving understandings and present them. We are trying to reach multiple constituents (in our case, readers) who listen and learn and access information in different ways. Is this not what school leadership is about, too? A constant riffing on a set of core beliefs, rapid prototyping to ensure that we apply what we learn, a continual evolution of program and curriculum—and people—to ensure that our missions play out on modern stages and fields and classrooms, offline and online?

Pulling up the curtain on our own working methods, on the story behind the story, is a critical part of our reflective process, a critical part of what we can share with you, and a critical part of what we hope to model for you. In the online edition and in interviews, we promised to treat each subsequent text like software code—updating it as new ideas presented themselves and the needs of our users (readers) changed. This book, made of paper by design, not default, isolates our core beliefs even more starkly, adds new examples, and generally presents our ideas in a more accessible manner.

That accessibility is important—all-important at this point. Leadership is, after all, almost everyone’s job in a school. Whether you are leading the entire school, the board, a department, a committee, a classroom, or a club, you can perform that duty with intention, with a growing number of tools, with a certain attitude, and with a certain mindset.

Our goal is to tell a current—and new—story of school leadership, to model how to make sense of the shifting context in which school leadership happens, and to speculate responsibly about where we think the story of

school leadership is headed. This time, our delivery device is a book. Next time? Who knows?

As you read, and react to what you read, please connect with us on Twitter—@reshanrichards, @sjvalentine, @blendingleaders—or Google Plus. We'll be listening.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink on a light background. The signature on the left is 'Reshan Richards' written in a cursive, stylized font. The signature on the right is 'S. J. Valentine' also written in a cursive, stylized font.

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More than a record of its authors' thoughts, a book is also a record of its authors' affiliations. We have been honored to know, and hope our book honors, the following:

The entire Montclair Kimberley Academy community. MKA is a generous, life-affirming school filled with curious, kind, creative, and supportive people. We defy anyone to join the school—as a teacher, student, or parent—and not be transformed for the better.

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Steve, for writing this book. Twice.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS & THE ARTIST

AUTHORS



Stephen J. Valentine is an educator, school leader, writer, and serial collaborator. He serves as the assistant head, Upper School, and director of Academic Leadership at Montclair Kimberley Academy and coordinating editor of *Klingbrief*, a publication of the Klingenstein Center at Columbia University. A frequent contributor to *Independent School* magazine, he also wrote *Everything but Teaching* (2009) and founded Refreshing Wednesday, a company that shapes and ships ideas. He holds degrees from the University of Virginia and Boston College.



Dr. Reshan Richards is an educator, researcher, and entrepreneur. The cofounder and chief learning officer of Explain Everything, Reshan is also adjunct assistant professor at Teachers College, Columbia University. Reshan's scholarly work focuses on the intersection of mobile learning, assessment, and design. An Apple Distinguished Educator and member of Mensa, Reshan has an EdD in Instructional Technology & Media from Teachers College, Columbia University, an EdM in Learning and Teaching from Harvard University and a BA in Music from Columbia University.

ARTIST



Brad Ovenell-Carter is the director of the Centre for Innovation at Mulgrave School in Vancouver, Canada. He never goes anywhere without two sketchbooks and a pencil.



Photo by Justin Leibow

INTRODUCTION

“Leaders ‘define reality’” (De Pree, 2004, p. 11). That idea, offered by Max De Pree in *Leadership Is an Art*, is as good a place as any to begin to think about leadership, online and off. It implies both thinking and doing, both strategy and tactics. A leader defining reality must establish the ways in which people interact; the attitudes and approaches an organizational culture will or will not tolerate; the ground rules and guidelines from which activity springs.

THE CASE FOR BLENDED LEADERSHIP

Anyone who works in schools knows that, increasingly, educational activity is shaped and sifted and moderated and facilitated as much online as it is offline. We post resources in online spaces like Canvas or Moodle or Blackboard, and then use those resources to support face-to-face discussions; students email us with questions (and excuses); classroom discussions

unfold and are archived for further use in spaces like Edmodo or Schoology; colleagues problem-solve and collaborate in person and then via Google Drive (and Edmodo and email and Blackboard and Moodle and so on). These spaces are all part of our educational reality.

So let's take a step back and think about this new (if you want to call it that) reality. Do you remember the first time you used Google Docs to collaborate? Have you ever taken a moment to study the class webpage where you post your assignments online? Like the food in your mom's proverbial refrigerator, these spaces didn't just appear. Someone outside your school decided to make them happen, and someone inside your school decided to make use of them. Someone made a decision to structure collaboration or instruction or information in a certain way, for a certain reason. The intentionality behind such decisions, we're positing, is a form of leadership.

Under-recognized and increasingly important, this kind of leadership has been quietly evolving and thoughtfully chronicled for at least two decades. Back in 1998, before Reshan or Steve had even entered the educational workforce, Pearl Rock Kane, director of the Klingenstein Center for Independent School Leadership, described leadership-via-network in her influential article, "Farewell, Lone Warrior."

Even in corporate America, the John Wayne school of management has given way to an approach that is less hierarchical and more collaborative. In all forms of American organizations there is a desire for participation and teamwork and strong evidence that such participation leads to greater effectiveness. Besides, in a rapidly changing world, even supremely gifted individuals can't handle the amount of work alone or know all they need to know. (Kane, 1998)

Seventeen years ago, Dr. Kane articulated a vision for leadership—less hierarchical and more collaborative—that would help leaders, both new and seasoned, gain a foothold in increasingly complex schools. Imagine trying to lead a school or department today without collecting multiple viewpoints when facing a problem; imagine trying to lead without delegating or sharing the burden of delivering on your school's mission. The distributed leadership model, described by Dr. Kane, has made school as we know it possible.

And, it can be argued, such distributed leadership began to reach its apex once people in schools were connected by computers and Web servers. Think about how naturally we now join our thoughts via email or a Google Doc or a Padlet wall. Think about the possibilities inherent in designing presentations, or building databases, via shared document workspaces. Think about the data you can examine, and the things you can see in the data you examine, if you have even a rudimentary understanding of Excel.