

# Tools FOR SCHOOLS

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS AND LEADERS

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“The fallacy of rationalism is the assumption that the social world can be altered by logical argument. The problem, as George Bernard Shaw observed, is that ‘reformers have the idea that change can be achieved by brute sanity.’”

— Michael Fullan

“People get the courage to try new things not because they are convinced to do so by a wealth of analytical evidence but because they feel something viscerally.”

— Gary Hamel

## APPEAL TO THE **heart** AS WELL AS THE HEAD

BY DENNIS SPARKS

**My assumptions: Initiating and maintaining the momentum of significant change requires experiences that appeal to the heart as well as the head. Intellectual engagement alone is usually insufficient to produce such changes.**

“People change what they do less because they are given analysis that shifts their *thinking* than because they are shown a truth that influences their *feelings*,” John Kotter and Dan Cohen argue in *The Heart of Change: Real-life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (2002, p.1). Emotion underlies lasting change, Kotter and Cohen believe, and that emotion is generated more by vivid stories and images — even images that disturb rather than uplift — than it is by research and analysis that provide logical reasons for change. Things that people can see, hear, and touch generate energy that is often lacking from more formal intellectual processes, Kotter and Cohen say. This emotion provides the passion and commitment that overcomes complacency and inertia and that enables individuals to change often difficult-to-break habits.

Pam Robbins, a consultant to schools, provides an example of such a process. In a letter to me, she wrote:

“Recently I had the opportunity to represent NSDC in an on-site consultation with Los Angeles Unified School District D. The superintendent, Ronni Ephraim who had recently come to District D, met with all of the administrators one morning to update them on the ‘State of the District.’ During the course of her remarks, she commended two administrators who

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## Appeal to the heart as well as the head

*Continued from p. 1*

handled a very tragic situation — the loss of an elementary student in a car accident — with empathy, care, and sympathy.

“As she continued with her remarks, Ephraim said that she wanted to leave the group with a ‘visual reminder’ of the challenges facing every school. At that point, she asked two staff members to ‘unroll’ a list of students who had not met proficiency in English language arts. The list was one-eighth of a mile long! It stretched four times across the ballroom in which we were seated. The group sat silently, in awe. The superintendent urged the audience not to think of the list as a ‘group’ of students, but rather as a series of individuals — each with their own needs, hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Ephraim added that a careful examination of the list would yield an awareness that many of the names represented African-American and Latino students. She noted that many of the same names could be found on the lists of non-proficient students in other disciplines as well.

“I was deeply moved by this experience and observed that most of the administrators sitting around me were as well. Following the

superintendent’s remarks, I met with middle and high school principals. Our ‘visual reminder’ became the foundation for examining the notion that schools that support the continuing development of students also support the continuing development of those who work with those students, as we addressed the topic of

“[I]t’s not a matter of having better information....It’s a matter of moral imagination, a wisdom of the heart.”

— Paul Ray & Sherry  
Ruth Anderson



### Join a *Leading for Results* study group online

Dennis Sparks has continued to develop chapters for the *Leading for Results* project. NSDC will be publishing a limited selection of new chapters online in the members-only web site ([members.nsd.org](http://members.nsd.org)) this spring.

The New Staff Development Communities are the online discussion areas of the newly launched members site. The Communities provide the ideal environment for small group discussion and problem solving. Therefore, NSDC will be scheduling *Leading for Results* discussion periods for each new chapter that is published online.

To learn more, visit [members.nsd.org](http://members.nsd.org).

using meetings as learning-focused, capacity-building opportunities.”

Research, data, and analysis have a role to play in improving teaching and learning. But without stories, images, and experiences that touch the heart, it is difficult to break through complacency and inertia to the sources of energy that are essential to sustained collaborative work, professional learning, and the development of new habits.

#### REFERENCE

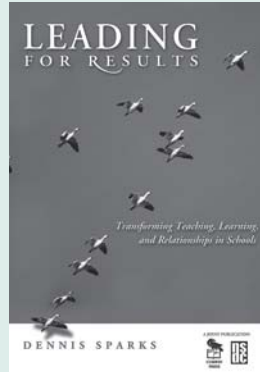
**Kotter, J. & Cohen, D. (2002).** *The heart of change: Real-life stories of how people change their organizations*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press. ■

This article is adapted from Chapter 21 of *Leading for Results: Transforming Teaching, Learning, and Relationships in Schools*, by Dennis Sparks, a joint publication of NSDC, Corwin Press, and NASSP. Copyright 2005.

## ABOUT LEADING FOR RESULTS

**N**SDC Executive Director Dennis Sparks wrote *Leading for Results* as a tool to inform school and district leaders' professional learning and to guide leaders' actions. He presents leading-edge ideas and practices about improving the quality of leadership, teaching, and student learning and asks readers to consider the implications of these ideas for their work.

While the book can be used in a variety of contexts, Sparks believes that a committed study group can best realize its potential value. Each chapter focuses on a single aspect of leadership, change, or organizational development, and chapters can be used in any order as starting



points for dialogue, learning, and action.

Sparks shares his assumptions about each topic, and invites readers to examine their assumptions. Reading each entry, he contends, is unlikely to improve understanding or encourage use of new ideas. Rather, readers will benefit from slowing down to ponder the meaning and implications of what they are reading.

Questions at the end of each entry are designed to invite such interaction with the material. Furthermore, readers are asked to discuss the ideas in groups and to engage in “next action thinking” — that is, to set in motion a series of goal-focused actions within a system of interpersonal accountability.

## SHARE YOUR STORIES.

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Share your stories with us in no more than 500 words. If we publish your submission, we'll give you a copy of our best-selling book, *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (NSDC, 2004).

Send your story to [joan.richardson@nsdc.org](mailto:joan.richardson@nsdc.org)

**Do this today — for yourself, for your colleagues.**

“Many so-called learning experiences don't provide opportunities for real thinking. Meetings are just thinly veiled attempts to persuade others ... to agree with the teacher's ... conclusions. Real thinking occurs only when everyone is engaged in exploring different viewpoints.”

— Susan Scott

# An Appeal to the Heart — In Action

**Comments to facilitators:** This tool is designed to accompany the lead article in this issue of *Tools for Schools*. The questions below ask participants to make explicit their assumptions and ideas about the role of the “heart” in change efforts and to then form an action plan.

**Time:** 1 hour or more. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for reading, at least 15 minutes for individual writing, and at least 30 minutes for sharing action plans, depending on the size of the group.

**Supplies:** Copies of the article, “Appeal to the heart as well as the head,” by Dennis Sparks, copies of the questions below, paper to write answers.

“There can be no knowledge without emotion. We may be aware of a truth, yet until we have felt its force, it is not ours. To the cognition of the brain must be added the experience of the soul.”

— Arnold Bennett

“The universe is made of stories, not atoms.”

— Muriel Rukeyser

## Directions

You can use the article and tool in a variety of settings — with a small group at a meeting, with an ongoing study group, or in a larger group workshop setting. Adapt the timing depending on your needs. Allow time to share action plans with a larger group when possible.

1. Think about times in your school when emotions — positive or negative — have been inspired through vivid stories, images, and experiences. What examples can you remember?
2. In what ways can emotion — or the “heart” — play a role in change efforts in your school or district? How does this balance with the role of the “head” in such efforts?
3. Action plan: Describe in detail one possibility for using compelling images, stories, and experiences to motivate and sustain change in your setting.
  - The appeal to the heart:
  - What it will accomplish:
  - Who will be involved:

Adapted from Chapter 21 of *Leading for Results: Transforming Teaching, Learning, and Relationships in Schools*, by Dennis Sparks. Corwin Press & NSDC, 2005.

# A “Day-in-the-Life” Scenario

**Comments to the facilitator:** Storytelling is an opportunity for the participants involved in change efforts to bring their right brains, their emotional selves, to the task. A scenario is a description of the future based on goals or planned actions. It is a way of making intentions visible in a detailed way.

Use this activity with groups that are setting goals or stymied as they try to find solutions to specific problems. The facilitator may already know what questions the group is trying to answer or each group might have different problems to address.

Scenarios can be useful and actionable if focused on a particular issue or question. An example: What will our school look like when more students in our 4th-grade classes are scoring at grade level in reading?

**Time:** 2+ hours

**Supplies:** Chart paper, markers, handouts with questions for writing scenarios.

## Directions

1. Distribute the handout on Page 6. Separate the larger group into smaller groups of three to five people.
2. Have each small group create a “day-in-the-life” scenario. You can have groups write about the same specific issue or question or have each address a different issue, depending on the group’s needs. Invite each group to select a spokesperson who will share the scenario with the larger group. *Time: 30-45 minutes.*
3. Invite all groups to share scenarios. Next, ask the larger group to list assumptions or ideas that are unusual or thought provoking. Write those assumptions on chart paper so everyone can view them. *Time: 60 minutes.*
4. Ask the group, “What actions do the themes and scenarios suggest?” Have the group generate a list of specific actions to take to achieve the desired outcomes. Write those actions on chart paper so everyone can view them. *Time: 30 minutes.*

“The universal love of stories is not a coincidence; our brains function by constructing narratives. Adults and children alike live, learn, and relate to others through stories. Unlike other forms of writing, stories engage our emotions and imagination in the process of learning.”

— Editors of *American Educator*

“The best way to predict the future is to invent it.”

— Alan Kay



# Visualizing Your School's History

**Comments to the facilitator:** Every school is full of amazing stories, challenges, and changes. This activity will help a school staff step back and see themselves as part of an ever-developing community with a rich history of efforts and achievements. The timeline can be posted for the whole school to see or it can be used just with staff members.

**Time:** Two to three hours. This activity could be done in one meeting or you could allow groups to spend time between two meetings developing timelines more fully.

**Supplies:** Chart paper, markers, masking tape, and artifacts from the school's history, including yearbooks, newsletters or annual reports, newspaper clippings about the school, etc.

## Directions

1. Ask each member of the group to identify the decade in which they began working at the school: 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, etc.
2. Divide the group according to the decades they identify. (Try to have at least three people per decade. Put two decades together if necessary.)
3. Give each group at least one sheet of chart paper and ask members to identify the key elements of the decade. Suggest these questions for them to consider:
  - *Who were the school leaders — both formal and informal — during that decade?*
  - *What were the crises and challenges of the decade? What were the school's successes?*
  - *What were the prevailing ideologies?*
  - *Where were the main curriculum features at that time?*
  - *How was the school schedule organized?*
  - *What clothing, music, and hairstyles were popular at the time?*
  - *What specific concerns did students have at the time?*

Give each group 20 to 30 minutes to reminisce and jot down the key events.

4. Ask each group to post its decade's history on the wall. Arrange the decades in chronological order along the wall.
5. Ask the group to reflect aloud about the themes and patterns they see in these lists. Record these on a separate chart. *Time: 60-90 minutes.*

**"The farther  
backward you can  
look, the farther  
forward you are likely  
to see."**

— Winston Churchill

**"We can draw lessons  
from the past, but we  
cannot live in it."**

— Lyndon B. Johnson

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#### NSDC STAFF

##### Executive director

Dennis Sparks  
dennis.sparks@nsdc.org

##### Deputy executive director

Stephanie Hirsh  
stephanie.hirsh@nsdc.org

##### Director of publications

Joan Richardson  
joan.richardson@nsdc.org

##### Director of special projects

Joellen Killion  
joellen.killion@nsdc.org

##### Director of business services

Leslie Miller  
leslie.miller@nsdc.org

##### Web editor

Tracy Crow  
tracy.crow@nsdc.org

##### Distinguished senior fellow

Hayes Mizell  
hayes.mizell@nsdc.org

**Editor:** Joan Richardson

**Designer:** Sue Chevalier

#### MAIN BUSINESS OFFICE

5995 Fairfield Road, #4  
Oxford OH 45056  
(513) 523-6029  
(800) 727-7288  
(513) 523-0638 (fax)  
E-mail: NSDCoffice@nsdc.org  
Web site: www.nsdco.org

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**Postmaster:** Send address changes to the National Staff Development Council, 5995 Fairfield Road, #4, Oxford, OH 45056.

# New web site for NSDC members only

The members-only area of the NSDC web site has been redesigned and expanded, thanks to an exciting partnership with Microsoft Partners in Learning.

Features include:

- **New Staff Development Communities:** Discussion areas designed to support collaboration and information sharing among members with similar concerns.
- **NSDC Members Library:** Full archives of NSDC publications, links to valuable web resources, and a special collection of staff development tools organized in one place.
- **Professional Development in the News:** links to current news stories about professional development policies and practices.

You'll find everything you've come to expect from NSDC's web site plus more!

NSDC thanks the Microsoft Partners in Learning Program for its support in building this site for members.

#### TO LOG INTO THE NEW WEB SITE, FOLLOW THESE EASY STEPS:

1. Go to **members.nsdco.org**.
2. Use your NSDC membership ID (on the mailing label of this publication) and the password **learning** in the box that opens.
3. Fill out a quick profile of yourself for members to see.
4. Create a unique password.
5. Use your NSDC membership ID and new password to access the entire site.

Questions? E-mail [tracy.crow@nsdc.org](mailto:tracy.crow@nsdc.org) for answers.

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