

## A NEW MODEL OF LEARNING-ORIENTED SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

This book offers a new model of learning-oriented school leadership that facilitates transformational learning. I define *transformational learning* as learning that helps adults better manage the complexities of work and life. In contrast to *informational learning*, which focuses on increasing the amount of knowledge and skills a person possesses and is often the goal of traditional inservice professional development programs, transformational learning constitutes a qualitative shift in *how* a person organizes, understands, and actively makes sense of his or her experience. When transformational learning occurs, a person develops increased capacities (i.e., cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) for better managing the complexities of daily life and work. This increase in capacities enables people to take broader perspectives on themselves and others—and on their work and life (Cranton, 1994; Mezirow, 1991, 2000). For this to occur, attention needs to be paid to shaping school contexts wherein adults have opportunities to examine their own assumptions (i.e., taken-for-granted beliefs that guide thought and action) and convictions in the learning process. In other words, we hold our assumptions as big Truths and rarely question them unless provided with opportunities to consider them.

Examining assumptions is essential for the development of lasting change and the successful implementation of new practices. While both informational and transformational learning opportunities are important, ~~informational learning provides the foundation for transformational learning~~ ~~by providing the knowledge and skills necessary to examine their~~ ~~own assumptions and convictions~~ ~~and to question them~~ ~~unless provided with opportunities to consider them~~. Working so creates opportunities for development. My learning-oriented school leadership model presents the principal as professional developer and educator and employs adult developmental principles to inform leadership practices that support teacher learning.

### The Four Pillars of the Model

The principals in this study employ four mutually reinforcing initiatives that support adult growth and development; they form the four pillars on which the weight of this new learning-oriented model rests. They are (1) teaming/partnering with colleagues within and outside of the school, (2) providing teachers with leadership roles, (3) engaging in collegial inquiry, and (4) mentoring.

#### *Teaming*

Working in teams enables teachers to question their own and other people's philosophies of teaching and learning, consider the meaning of the ways in which they implement the school's core values in the

curriculum and school context, reflect on the meaning of their school's mission, and engage in collaborative decision making. Teaming is a practice that creates an opportunity for teachers to share their diverse perspectives and learn about one another's ideas. This practice creates a context wherein teachers can explore new and diverse perspectives and grow.

#### *Providing Leadership Roles*

By assuming leadership roles, teachers share power and decision-making authority. A leadership role is an opportunity to raise not only one's own consciousness but also a group's consciousness with regard to ideas. These roles are a way for principals to share their own leadership and to practice distributive leadership, since the roles enable the school to benefit from teachers' expertise and knowledge. I use the term "providing leadership roles" rather than the commonly used term "distributive leadership" because of the intention behind these roles, which is to not merely distribute leadership duties. In contrast to assigning tasks, "providing leadership roles" offers supports and challenges to the person who assumes such a role so that he or she can grow from them.

#### *Engaging in Collegial Inquiry*

"Collegial inquiry" is an example of a larger developmental concept known as "reflective practice," which can occur individually or in groups. In this book, I define collegial inquiry as a shared dialogue in a reflective context that involves reflecting on one's assumptions, convictions, and values as part of the learning process. Collegial inquiry is a practice that creates a context for teachers to reflect on their practices, proposals for change, and schoolwide issues (e.g., developing a school mission). It enables principals to provide teachers and staff, and themselves as well, with opportunities to develop more complex perspectives by listening to and learning from one another.

#### *Mentoring*

When adults engage in mentoring, it creates an opportunity for each person to broaden perspectives, examine assumptions, and share expertise. The practice of mentoring invites teachers to share leadership. Mentoring takes myriad forms, including pairing experienced teachers with new teachers, pairing teachers who have deep knowledge of school mission with other teachers, and pairing experienced teachers with graduate student interns from local universities. Mentoring enables adults to explore their own thinking and contradictions, enhancing self-development.

### Underpinnings of the Model: Adult Learning and Development

Scholarship on adult development and learning, like the staff development literature, discusses how principals can benefit from reframing their practices in a developmental perspective (Brookfield, 1987, 1995; Kegan, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 1984, 2001; Levine, 1989; Mezirow, 2000; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; York-Barr et al., 2001). Adult developmental theory can be a strong tool for understanding *how* adults develop during engagement in professional development programs (Drago-Severson, Helsing, Kegan, Broderick, Popp, & Portnow, 2001; Drago-Severson, Helsing, Kegan, Broderick, Portnow, & Popp, 2001; Kegan, 1994).

Developmentalists have criticized current approaches to supporting teacher development (Kegan et al., 2001; Kegan & Lahey, 2001), arguing that adults at various stages of ego and intellectual development respond differently in terms of their understanding of the options provided by these programs. In fact, Kegan (1994) contends that much of what is expected and needed from teachers for them to succeed and grow within widely used staff development models demands something more than an increase in their fund of knowledge or skills (i.e., informational learning). It may demand changes in the ways they know and understand their experiences (i.e., transformational learning). In other words, the expectations intrinsic to some of the models may in fact be beyond the developmental capacities of those using them. Knowledge about theories of adult development can be a robust tool for considering how to better support the development of adults in schools. Yet the role of principals in supporting teacher development is only beginning to be explored.

Since this book draws centrally on the work of Kegan (1982, 1994, 2000) to shed light on *how* the practices employed by the 25 principals in this study support teachers' transformational learning, I will discuss his framework in the next chapter. There is a hopefulness in this new model of learning-oriented school leadership. It offers a way to support adult learning within schools—so that teachers do not have to leave schools to grow and have time to reflect. The simplicity and power of the model is the power of paid attention for the development of not only a skill set, but the person.

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the study on which this book is based and presented its methodology, including sample selection, data collection, and analysis. The study was guided by three principles. First, principals are key to supporting teacher learning and envisioning how schools can better support this learning. Second, leadership that promotes teacher development also fosters the learning of children. Finally, schools need to be contexts for both adult and youth development. Based on these

premises, I investigated the following question: What would school leadership look like if designed to support adult development?

My findings inform a new learning-oriented model of school leadership, which is supported by four pillars: teaming, providing leadership roles, collegial inquiry, and mentoring. In practice, these tools contribute to the effectiveness of leadership in service of teachers' transformational learning and professional development. Through case examples, this book focuses primarily on successful leadership practices to assist school leaders in their efforts to better support teacher learning, growth, and development.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Please take a moment to reflect on these questions. They are intended to help you consider the ideas discussed in this chapter and can be used for internal reflection or to open up a group discussion.

1. What are two or three practices you engage in to support your own or other people's learning? How are they working?
2. In what ways does this chapter help you in thinking about the practices you named above? What, if anything, resonates with your own experiences?
3. If you were a participant in this research, how would you respond to the research questions presented in this chapter?

## NOTES

1. Peggy Kemp, Director of School Partnerships at Harvard University and Dr. Millie Pierce, Director of Harvard University's Principal Center, assisted me in creating a list of principals who fit the selection criteria for supporting adult development in their school contexts.

2. I thank Deborah Helsing and Kristina Pinto for their contributions to different phases of data analysis. Collaborating with each of them at different points in the analysis was an invaluable resource that strengthened this work.

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## *Constructive- Developmental Theory and Adult Development*

Throughout this book, I draw primarily on principles of psychologist Robert Kegan's (1982, 1994, 2000) constructive-developmental theory to interpret the principals' practices that support transformational learning. I also employ this theory to call attention to the diverse ways in which teachers might experience the practices constituting my learning-oriented model of school leadership and to show that supports for teacher growth need to take different forms, depending on individual needs. This chapter provides an overview of the key ideas from Kegan's (1982, 1994, 2000) framework.

Constructive-developmental theory and theories of adult learning offer tools for understanding and reviewing leadership practices and models of teacher development that can inform practice. Certainly, there are other frameworks that could be employed to understand and illuminate different aspects of leadership practice, and I draw on other sources as well in my analysis (Brookfield, 1987, 1995; Daloz, 1986, 1999; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; York-Barr et al., 2001). For example, the principals' stories could be interpreted through the lens of women's development (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982), gender and leadership (Shakeshaft, Nowell, & Perry, 2000), intellectual and ethical development (Gardner, 1983; Perry, 1970), or moral

development and exemplary leadership (Kohlberg, 1969, 1984; Sergiovanni, 2000; Sobol, 2002). However, while these frameworks are valuable and could enhance our understanding of particular dimensions of the principals' leadership, I chose Kegan's constructive-developmental theory as the lens for several reasons.

First, it focuses on a person as an active meaning maker of experience, considering both interpersonal and internal experiences, particularly how they intersect in one's work. While other frameworks may address this, it is central in constructive-developmental theory. Second, many developmentally oriented theories focus primarily on children's development and articulate adult development secondarily or in less depth than Kegan's theory does. Third, this theory offers hopeful principles about how to support adult growth so that we can better manage the complexities of 21st-century life, especially in terms of the workplace. Last, it emphasizes that development is *not* the same thing as intelligence and attends to a broad range of aspects of the self. These include the emotional, cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal realms of experience. My primary interest was in learning how these principals support adults' transformational learning, that is, changes in *how* a person knows, rather than in *what* a person knows. It was important that I highlight the developmental principles informing their practices and the supports and challenges that foster growth, making this framework a good fit.

Interestingly, in disseminating this work to the principals in this study, *nearly all* of them wanted to learn more about the ways in which this framework could inform their practices. In fact, when I explained some of the key features of the different ways in which adults make sense of their experiences, many of the principals nodded in agreement. They told me that this framework helped them to understand differences they noticed in themselves and their teachers, gave them a language to talk about these differences, and provided ideas about how to better support growth in their schools. By employing this framework, my learning-oriented model for school leadership makes important linkages between theory and practice.

In this chapter, I present an overview of the theory's (a) theoretical principles, (b) three essential "ways of knowing" that are most common to adulthood, and (c) the central aspects of a "holding environment" (Kegan 1982, 1994). In my writing, I use meaning making and ways of knowing interchangeably to express how individuals make sense of their experiences. A "holding environment" is a context that supports growth. Similar to supporting a child's growth, holding environments offer developmentally appropriate supports *and* challenges to adults who make sense of their experiences in qualitatively different ways. Here, I will describe the characteristics of the different ways in which we, as adults, make sense of our experiences. First, I introduce the concept of transformational learning, because it is essential to the discussion of constructive-developmental theory.

## ABOUT TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING

As I said earlier, like Kegan (2000), I distinguish between transformational learning—learning that helps adults to develop capacities to better manage the complexities of work and life—and informational learning—increases in knowledge and skills that are also important and can support changes in adults' attitudes and possibly their competencies.<sup>1</sup>

While informational learning is certainly important and needed, my primary purpose in this research was to understand the practices these principals implemented in their schools that were oriented toward supporting teachers' *transformational* learning, as Kegan (1994) defines the concept:

An *informational* stance leaves the form as it is and focuses on changing what people know; it is essentially a *training* model for personal change. I would contrast this with a *transformational* stance, which places the form itself at risk for change and focuses on changes in how people know; it is essentially an *educational* model for personal change. (pp. 163–164)

Informational learning—new skills and information—increases *what* a person knows, whereas transformational learning changes *how* a person knows, as Kegan (1994) explains. In other words, the adult has enhanced his or her capacities (cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) to manage the complexities of work.

There is an intimate connection between transformational learning and self-examination (Brookfield, 1987, 1995; Cranton, 1994, 1996; Mezirow, 1991, 1994, 1996, 2000). Increases in developmental capacity broaden adults' perspectives on both themselves and others (Kegan, 1982, 1994). For this kind of change to occur, attention needs to be devoted to both the context and to the ways in which an adult is interpreting his or her experience so that the context can provide both supports and challenges that are developmentally appropriate. In transformational learning, adults undergo a *development* and profound change in the very way they *construct* or *make sense of* experience. This kind of change is at the core of constructive- developmental theory, as Kegan describes it (1982, 1994).

## KEGAN'S CONSTRUCTIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

Constructive-developmental theories of adult growth and development stem from a 30-year tradition that closely traces how individuals make sense of their internal and external experiences (Basseches, 1984; Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2000; King & Kitchener, 1994; Piaget, 1952).

### Basic Principles

The principles of Kegan's constructive-developmental theory are based on two key ideas: one, that people construct—or *actively make sense of*—the reality in which they live (with respect to cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development) and, two, that people (and their constructions of reality) can *change or develop* over time with developmentally appropriate supports and challenges. The first basic principle of constructive-developmental theory is that growth and development *are* lifelong processes. Development is an interactive process between the person and the environment (Kegan, 1982). In other words, development always occurs in some context. Development or growth, according to Kegan's theory (1982, 1994), is a process of increasing differentiation and internalization; as human beings, we are involved in a process of growth in which we are constantly (and gradually) renegotiating what is *self* and what constitutes *other* (Drago-Severson, in press). A person's meaning system—through which all experience is filtered and understood—is referred to as a way of knowing, a developmental level, an order of consciousness, or a stage (Kegan, 1994).

The second basic principle of constructive-developmental theory is that development involves a *qualitative change* in the ways in which a person makes sense or constructs his or her experience—rather than an acquisition of more skills and knowledge. Crucial to growth, according to this theory, are both the *structure* and the *process* of meaning making. Meaning making is an activity by which the self emerges from being embedded in or subject to and identified with a culture (e.g., its needs, its interpersonal mutuality, or its own authorship and ideology). As the self emerges, it is able to take the previous culture it was identified with as object and *reflect on it*. Put simply, we cannot take a perspective on what we are *subject* to because we are embedded in it and identified with it. It is not separate from our selves. In contrast, that which is taken as *object* can be organized and reflected upon by the self. In other words, what a person can take as object are aspects of our experiences that we can reflect on, look at, be responsible for, and take control of. A person's *way of knowing* dictates how learning experiences will be taken in, managed, handled, used, and understood.

For instance, a way of knowing shapes how a person understands his or her role and responsibilities as a teacher, leader, and learner, and how that person thinks about what makes a good student, what makes a good leader, and what constitutes a good employee/community member. A person constructs meaning with the same way of knowing across different domains of life (e.g., work, parenting, partnering), except under extraordinarily rare circumstances (see Kegan, 1994).

People learning this theory often ask whether a higher way of knowing is considered a "better" way of knowing. It is important to consider



this question in terms of the "goodness of fit" (Kegan, 1994) or match between a person's way of knowing and the challenges he or she faces. If a person's way of knowing is adequate to meet the challenges or inherent developmental demands of work or life, then it would not necessarily be better to operate from a more complex meaning system (Drago-Severson, Helsing, Kegan, Broderick, Portnow, & Popp, 2001). If that way of knowing is not sufficient to meet those cultural challenges or expectations, then a development in his or her way of knowing would help that individual to better manage the complexities of work and/or life. This in no way means that a person is a better person for having a more complex way of knowing (Drago-Severson, Helsing, Kegan, Broderick, Portnow, & Popp, 2001; Drago-Severson, in press).

### Ways of Knowing

Kegan's constructive-developmental theory consists of five qualitatively different systems of meaning making, or ways of making sense of reality.<sup>2</sup> The first of these five systems describes the meaning making of young children, and the last describes a mostly theoretical meaning making system that is rarely found in any population and, if present, has not been detected before midlife (Kegan, 1994). Because of this, I will describe the three qualitatively different ways of knowing that are most common in adulthood: *the instrumental way of knowing*, *the socializing way of knowing*, and *the self-authoring way of knowing*. Here, I focus on the characteristics of these ways of knowing; however, it is important to note that there are also four identifiable transition stages between each of them (for a full discussion of this, please see Lahey et al., 1988). Moving from one developmental level to another is a progression of increasing complexity in an individual's developmental capacities. Table 2.1 summarizes the essential characteristics of the instrumental, socializing, and self-authoring ways of knowing.

*The Instrumental Way of Knowing:* A person who has an instrumental way of knowing primarily has a "What do you have that can help me?/What do I have that can help you?" perspective on work and life. A strength of this way of knowing is that the person understands that observable events, processes, and situations have realities separate from his or her own point of view, but understands the world in highly concrete terms. While instrumental knowers are able to take perspective on and control their impulses, they do not have this same type of perspective-taking capacity on their own needs, desires, and interests. Generally, others' interests are important only if they interfere with their own, and the instrumental knower cannot take another's perspective fully.

*The Socializing Way of Knowing:* A person who makes meaning primarily with a socializing way of knowing has grown to have an enhanced capacity for reflection. Unlike instrumental knowers, socializing knowers

**Table 2.1** Stages, Ways of Knowing, and/or Developmental Levels of Kegan's Constructive-Developmental Theory

<i>Stage</i> → <i>Way of Knowing</i> →	<i>Stage 0</i> <i>Incorporative</i>	<i>Stage 1</i> <i>Impulsive</i>	<i>Stage 2</i> <i>Instrumental</i>	<i>Stage 3</i> <i>Socializing</i>	<i>Stage 4</i> <i>Self-Authoring</i>	<i>Stage 5</i> <i>Interindividual</i>
Underlying structure of thinking <i>Subject</i> (S): what a person is identified with <i>Object</i> (O): what a person can hold out, look at, take a perspective on	S: Reflexes (sensing, moving) O: None	S: Impulses, perceptions O: Reflexes (sensing, moving)	S: Needs, interests, wishes O: Impulses, perceptions	S: The interpersonal, mutuality O: Needs, interests, wishes	S: Authorship, identity, psychic administration, ideology O: The interpersonal, mutuality	S: Interindividuality, interpenetrability of self-systems O: Authorship, identity, psychic administration, ideology
How the self defines itself			Orients to self-interests, purposes, wants, concrete needs.	Orients to valued others' (external authority) expectations and opinions.	Orients to self's values, own internal authority.	Orients to multiple self-systems, open to learning from other people.
Orienting considerations/concerns			Dependence on rules, decisions are based on what the self will acquire.	Dependence on external authority, acceptance and affiliation are crucial. Self feels responsible for other's feelings; holds others responsible for own feelings.	Reliance on own internally generated values and standards. Criticism is evaluated and used according to one's own personal standards. Concern	Committed to self-exploration. Engaging with conflict is an opportunity to let others inform and shape one's own thinking.

Stage → Way of Knowing →	Stage 0 <i>Incorporative</i>	Stage 1 <i>Impulsive</i>	Stage 2 <i>Instrumental</i>	Stage 3 <i>Socializing</i>	Stage 4 <i>Self-Authoring</i>	Stage 5 <i>Interindividual</i>
				Criticism and conflict are threats to the self.	with one's own competence and performance. Holds contradictory feelings simultaneously. Conflict can be potentially useful and can lead to clarification of issues and more effective solutions.	Conflict is basic to life and opportunities to enhance thinking.
Guiding questions for self			"Will I get punished?" "What's in it for me?"	"Will you (a valued other/authority) still like/value me?" "Will you (a valued other/authority) still think I am a good person?" "Am I meeting your expectations of me?"	"Am I maintaining my own standards and values?" "Am I competent?" "Am I living, working, loving to the best of my ability?" "Am I achieving my goals and reaching for my ideals?"	"How can other people's thinking help me to enhance my own?" "How can I seek out information & opinions from others to help me modify my own ways of understanding?"

SOURCE: A similar version of this table appears in Drago-Severson (2002), "Underlying Structure." Row 1 of Table 2.1 is from Kegan (1982), *The Evolving Self* (pp. 86-87).

are able to think abstractly, make generalizations, and *reflect* on their own and others' actions. With this way of knowing, people have the capacity to subordinate their own needs and desires to the needs and desires of others. Socializing knowers orient to their own internal psychological states, feel responsible for other people's feelings, and hold others responsible for their own feelings. However, they are not yet able to have a perspective on their relationships because they are identified with them, so much so that reality is co-constructed. For socializing knowers, others' approval and acceptance is of ultimate importance. Other people, and often societal expectations, are experienced not simply as resources to be used by the self but also as the origin of internal confirmation, orientation, or authority (Drago-Severson, Helsing, Kegan, Broderick, Portnow, & Popp, 2001; Drago-Severson, in press; Kegan et al., 2001a; Popp & Portnow, 2001).

*The Self-Authoring Way of Knowing:* People with a self-authoring way of knowing have the capacity to take responsibility for and ownership of their own internal authority. They have the capacity to generate (and identify with) their own abstract values, principles, and longer-term purposes and are able to prioritize and integrate competing values. Self-authoring knowers can assess the expectations and demands of others and compare them with their own internal standards and judgment. With this way of knowing, individuals author—and internally generate—their own systems of beliefs or personal ideologies. They have the capacity to reflect on and regulate their relationships. A limitation to this way of knowing is that the self cannot take a perspective on its own autonomy or its own self-system, which manages relationships because it is embedded in its own assertions, theories, ideals, and principles.

### **Why Ways of Knowing Matter When Supporting Teacher Learning**

Understanding Kegan's theory of constructive-development and the attendant ways of knowing will help readers understand the developmental basis of the principals' practices as well as how teachers and other adults might experience participation in programs aimed at supporting their learning. For example, it is likely that within any school context, adults will be making meaning of their experiences in developmentally different ways. Attention and mindfulness to this kind of developmental diversity can, I suggest, help to make schools even better places of learning. Kegan's theory suggests that teachers at different developmental positions will experience learning opportunities differently—depending on their way of knowing. By shedding light on the unrecognized demands that professional development models or opportunities make on adults' self-knowledge, this theory can inform leadership practices. It is a person's way of knowing that guides how lessons and experiences will be taken, managed, and understood.



In some cases, the professional development models employed in schools may not provide a good match with the developmental level of teachers they are designed to benefit. As Table P.1 shows, assumptions about adults not only drive the models but also, importantly, may inhibit efforts to help teachers benefit from learning experiences. In some cases, teachers may need to have a self-authoring way of knowing in order to participate effectively in implementation. This means that they must be able to *take stands for what they believe in, exercise authority, act upon their values and beliefs, take responsibility for themselves, and own their work*. Socializing knowers do not yet have the developmental capacities to do these things; they look to external authorities for answers and solutions.

Constructive-developmental theory provides a new way of thinking about supporting teacher growth. It involves more than merely giving information and/or developing skills (though these are certainly important in today's school world); it also attends to how individuals cognitively organize their experiences and to the ways in which transformational learning can be facilitated. As Kegan and Lahey (1984) have noted, "People do not *grow* by having their realities only confirmed. They grow by having them challenged, as well, and being supported to listen to, rather than defend against, that challenge" (p. 226).

A developmental perspective helps adults in schools move away from labeling teachers on the basis of behaviors (Levine, 1989). It provides a lens through which to view and understand people's attitudes, behaviors, and expectations and helps us to understand how to support and challenge growth for individuals at diverse levels of perception. Principals who are mindful of and attend to this developmental diversity (in addition to forms of diversity such as ethnicity) will be better equipped to support teacher learning.

As Table 2.2 shows, adults with different ways of knowing have qualitatively different capacities for self-reflection and perspective taking when making decisions and when engaging in the collaborative work that is common to professional development initiatives in schools. For instance, instrumental knowers believe that decisions have "right and wrong" aspects to them—with no in-between. When engaging in decision making, these knowers will focus on following the correct steps and rules in order to make the "right" decisions so that they can achieve concrete goals. For them, there is a right and a wrong way to do things. Socializing knowers, when engaging in the decision-making process, need to feel accepted by the group and especially valued authorities within the group, avoid conflict, and look for consensus. They orient toward arriving at one agreed-upon group decision. In decision-making situations, these teachers will look to valued others or authorities for direction, guidance, and validation of progress. For them, decisions are made based upon loyalty or allegiance to valued others. In contrast, self-authoring knowers

**Table 2.2** A Developmental Perspective on How Adults With Different Ways of Knowing Experience Different Aspects of Processes Required When Working Together

<i>Way of Knowing</i> →	<i>Instrumental</i>	<i>Socializing</i>	<i>Self-Authoring</i>
Perspective on working together	Everybody does their job—and they do it <i>the right way</i> .	Forming a group identity with a common, shared goal that everyone is in agreement with.	A complex network of people with differing values, opinions, experiences, and perspectives joining together for a common purpose.
Decision-making skills	Decisions have right or wrong aspects with no in-between or gray areas. There is a right way and a wrong way to do things.	Decisions need group consensus or agreement. It is essential that everyone arrive at a group decision.	Decisions have many possible paths. Making decisions is an exploration of many options. There is not necessarily one “best” decision, but many possible decisions, each one with pros and cons.
Interpersonal skills	Cooperates by arguing or persuading others to agree to the right thing to do and the right way to do it. The right way is dictated by the rules.	Cooperates by trying to build agreement. It is essential to minimize conflict, disagreement, and differences.	Cooperates by ensuring that everyone’s voice is heard, regardless of their opinions. Celebrates differences and makes room for all perspectives. The goal is to work toward fair and reasonable compromise.
Conflict resolution and negotiation	Focus is on concrete identification and definition of the conflict, usually on who is right and who is wrong. Watches for who is following the rules and who is not, whether or not one’s own concrete needs and goals are being met. Emphasizes meeting one’s own concrete needs in a kind of tit-for-tat fairness.	Focus is on acknowledging the existence of and identifying the nature of the conflict and attending to others’ feelings about it. Watches for commonalities and places of agreement that can be built on to decrease sense of differences and hurt feelings. Emphasizes loyalty and inclusion of everyone and	Focus is on articulating nature and vicissitudes of the conflict and the surrounding issues. Watches for clear expression and acknowledgment of whole spectrum of issues and disagreement within the conflict. Emphasizes potentially useful nature of conflict and the ways that conflict can clarify an issue and lead to better communication and relationship. Also

<i>Way of Knowing</i> →	<i>Instrumental</i>	<i>Socializing</i>	<i>Self-Authoring</i>
	Challenge is to be able to understand and recognize a more abstract definition and reality of conflict, that there are many ways to resolve it that go beyond rules to taking others' feelings and needs into account as something important in and of themselves.	coming to a mutual understanding and resolution that everyone feels good about. Challenge is to be able to tolerate and accept conflict within a relationship without feeling that it threatens the relationship; to see conflict as a necessary and helpful aspect of relationships and not necessarily something to avoid and get rid of.	emphasizes a resolution that takes into account the diversity of opinions and perspectives and feelings of everyone involved and that will also move the interests of the group forward. Challenge is to see the process itself as the main thing and let go of one's investment in one's own particular standards for how the process should work.
Communication skills	Communicates by stating rules, opinions, concrete goals, and facts. Not concerned with theories, philosophies, or other people's feelings except as they have an impact on getting the job done.	Communicates feelings and has concern and sense of responsibility for others' feelings and experience. Makes sure everyone understands and agrees with each other.	Communicates feelings, ideas, and philosophies in attempt to express own view within larger group, to explain and understand differences, similarities, and complexities of everyone's perspective.

SOURCE: Adapted from Popp, N. (1998). *Developmental Perspectives on Working Together*. The Developmental Skills Matrix. National Institute for Literacy Equipped for the Future Field Development Institute, Louisville, KY.

believe that there are many paths in decision making. To them, arriving at a decision is an examination of many options—there is no one right decision, and every decision has a set of pros and cons associated with it. Recall that adults with this way of knowing look to their own internally generated set of values when engaging in decision making. Self-authoring knowers are able to hold and coordinate multiple perspectives and to balance them.

While not the focus of this chapter, it is important to emphasize that developmental theory has important implications for understanding the ways in which school leaders' ways of knowing influence how they conceive and enact their roles in support of teacher learning. As Tables 2.1 and 2.2 illuminate, a person's way of knowing dictates how professional development opportunities and lessons will be understood with regard to teacher growth. Simply put, teachers with different preferences, needs, and developmental orientations need different forms of support and challenge in order to participate effectively in teacher learning practices. Next, I discuss the importance of considering the school as a holding environment for supporting teachers' transformational learning.

### **About Holding Environments**

There is never just a you; and at this very moment your own buoyancy or lack of it, your own sense of wholeness or lack of it, is in large part a function of how your own current embeddedness culture is holding you. (Kegan, 1982, p. 116)

A critical dimension of a constructive-developmental approach is that the exercise and transformation of our ways of knowing always go on in some context, or "holding environment," in Kegan's terms, "the context in which, and out of which, the person grows." In his work with infants, D.W. Winnicott (1965) used the term *holding environment* to describe the unique relationships needed in the psychosocial environment to support infants' healthy development (Drago-Severson, in press). According to Winnicott (1965), these environments needed to both support and challenge an infant's process of growth and development, so that he or she could thrive, in order to be effective. Kegan (1982) extended this usage to a human being's development across the entire lifespan. Both support *and* challenge are necessary for growth.

Attention to schools as holding environments has important implications for leadership practices supportive of adult learning and for the design and implementation of professional development programs. We know that all adults have different needs, preferences, and career phases and that it is crucial to honor these when considering how to best support them in their work and learning. At the same time, since it is likely that in any school context, adults will be making meaning of their experiences



with different ways of knowing, it is also important to attend to this type of developmental diversity when considering how to support teacher learning.

*Two Key Principles for Shaping Holding Environments:* In shaping a holding environment that will best support the learning of teachers with different ways of knowing, there are two principles to consider.

The first principle, similar to what applies when creating a strong learning environment, is that the holding environment needs to offer a healthy mixture of both support and challenge. *Support* can be defined in terms of recognizing and acknowledging and affirming who the person is and how the person is making sense (thinking and feeling) of his or her experiences. *Challenge* can take the form of supportively posing questions to a person in order to gently push the edges of a person's thinking and/or feeling so as to expose the individual to new ways of thinking. These needed combinations of challenge and support bring into being what Kegan (1982) calls the "holding environment."

For example, Table 2.2 depicts helpful challenges to adults resolving conflicts with different ways of knowing. For instrumental knowers, challenging them toward supporting their growth would take the form of asking questions or providing alternative views to help them see ways to move toward a resolution by taking colleagues' perspectives into consideration. At the same time, supports for an instrumental knower would provide a step-wise process for the discussion.

The second principle of shaping a holding environment is the importance of considering the *goodness of fit*, or match, between the holding environment—and its expectations—and an adult's way of knowing. As noted, some types of experiences may place implicit and explicit demands on teachers—demands that exceed their developmental capacities.

For example, if the expectation for participating in shared decision making is that all teachers will be able to *take stands for their beliefs, exercise authority, act upon their values, and take responsibility for themselves*, a socializing knower will need to be gently supported and challenged in order to develop these capacities. Since socializing knowers look to an external authority for solutions, gently challenging these teachers to begin to examine what they think and helping them to value conflict would support their growth.

Put more simply, it is important to attend to the implicit and explicit demands of the context as well as the practices employed to support teacher learning within schools. How do these match up with teachers' ways of knowing? What forms of support and challenge might be woven into the design to support and challenge teachers with different ways of knowing?

For instance, as discussed above, if the expectations of learning activities exceed teachers' developmental capacities and if adequate supports are lacking, we run the risk of overwhelming and intimidating them. In

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contrast, if the program's expectations are too low or do not adequately acknowledge teachers' ways of knowing, this can lead some teachers to disconnect from the experience.

These examples highlight the importance of implementing professional development opportunities that are good fits for teachers with different ways of knowing. These kinds of practices can be robust enough to meet teachers where they are *and* also provide teachers with developmentally appropriate challenges to support their growth—transformational learning.

*The Three Functions of Holding Environments:* In the classes I teach about leadership for transformational learning, my students (principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders, staff development professionals, and aspiring principals) often ask, "Can a holding environment be a person, a group, or a context?" The answer is yes, yes, and yes—and it can also be a mix of these provided that they offer high support *and* challenge.

A "holding environment" serves three functions (Kegan, 1982, 1994). First, it needs to "hold well." It accomplishes this by meeting people where they are and by honoring how they are making sense of their experiences. Second, when a person is ready, a good holding environment needs to "let go" by challenging learners and permitting them to grow beyond their current meaning system to a new way of knowing. Third, it "sticks around," in order to provide continuity and a context of stability. It needs to remain available to the person as he or she grows, so that relationships and the person can be constructed in a new way. The "sticking around" function may be difficult to provide in some cases for a variety of reasons, one of them including shorter-term professional development programs (Drago-Severson, Helsing, Kegan, Broderick, Portnow, & Popp, 2001; Drago-Severson, in press; Kegan et al., 2001b). However, the practices presented in this book that support transformational learning can be adapted to school contexts, which can then serve as robust holding environments that provide all three functions discussed here.

### **Constructive-Development Theory: A New Foundation for Teacher Learning**

Thinking about development and growth as a movement through periods of stability and change helps in understanding how individuals in schools experience leadership practice aimed at supporting adult learning and other professional development initiatives. Kegan's theory stresses the importance of providing psychological support to the ways in which teachers make sense of their experiences. There is a structural quality to these supports; "they know and hold persons before, during, and after their transitions; they acknowledge and grieve the losses, acknowledge and celebrate the gains, and help the person to acknowledge them himself"

(Kegan, 1982, p. 261). Constructive-developmental theory offers a hopeful and new foundation for considering practices supportive of teachers' transformational learning and development. It highlights the notion that adulthood is not simply an end stage reached in a person's 20s; adults continue to develop as they progress through qualitatively different ways of knowing. The growth processes that schools and teachers try to support in children can continue through adulthood.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter opened with a discussion of why I selected this particular framework as a lens through which to best understand how the four pillar practices support adult growth and development. I also provided an overview of the key principles informing Kegan's (1982, 1994, 2000) constructive-developmental theory. In particular, I discussed the concept of transformational as opposed to informational learning, and key ideas of constructivism and developmentalism and how they connect to Kegan's framework. I also described the three main ways of knowing that are common in adulthood and presented examples to illuminate why and how ways of knowing matter when considering how to best support teacher learning. In so doing, the examples illuminate the problem that the developmental demands placed upon adults who are participating in some professional development initiatives may be beyond their capacities. Therefore, I introduced key features of creating a holding environment for growth and learning.

In attending to and celebrating ongoing growth and change, we can better support teachers in meeting the complex demands of teaching in 21st-century schools. The practices in this learning-oriented model will enhance principals' capacities to support teachers with a diversity of ways of knowing and will improve the odds that more teachers will feel well held and valued for the meanings they bring to their teaching and learning experiences. Creating these types of supportive learning opportunities may also lead to greater teacher retention, improved teaching, and, I hope, even greater student achievement.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Please take a moment to think about these questions. They are intended to help you consider ideas discussed in this chapter and can be used for internal reflection or to open up a group discussion.

1. In what ways do any of the practices you named in Chapter 1 serve as a "holding environment" for your own or other people's growth and/or learning?



2. What kind of things, if they were to happen, would better support your learning? What small steps could you take to build these into your practice?

## **NOTES**

1. Some ideas discussed in this section also appear in different form in Drago-Severson (in press).
2. Some ideas in this section appear in different form in Drago-Severson (in press).