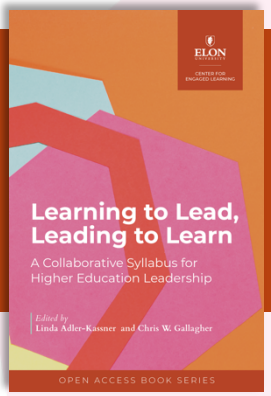

The Playbook

We've urged you to keep your focus on a few things as you've engaged with mentors in *Learning to Lead*: on *how* these contributors learned to lead and on their *principles*; on their *theories of leadership* and *theories of change*. We've suggested that you use their examples as you consider your own leadership principles and identity, how you can adapt what you know about leadership to new situations, and what your own learning aims are for this engagement.

As much as we've urged, though, we're cognizant of something we repeat often: *People learn; we can't learn for them*. The contributors here have learned through experience and reflection—what they've *done* and how they *think* about what they've done. The latter has involved attention to dynamic interactions among principles, identities, and experiences.

Reflection that facilitates learning isn't accidental. Instead, it's a skill, something that takes practice. It's a habit. We referred to John Dewey often throughout the course, and we'll turn to him again here because we find his thinking about habits to be generative. For Dewey, habits aren't unthinking, repeated

actions; they are “demands for certain kinds of activity; and they constitute the self” (1922, 25). Habits are cultivated through the interactions of the individual with the environments and cultures they inhabit. They become productive—in the sense of helping us become who we are and act purposefully in the world—when “they are cooperating with external means and energies…when they enter into organization with things which independently accomplish defined results” (1922, 26). Productive habits, far from being individual behavioral tics, are actions directed toward aims in contexts of practice.

This Playbook is intended to help you cultivate your own productive habits, starting with reflection, through which you can *facilitate your own learning*. Using the Playbook in conjunction with the mentors whose voices you’ve read and heard in *Learning to Lead* will, we hope, create a context, an “organization” of others that we’ve tried to help you experience.

The reflective habit that we are focusing on here is especially important (and especially hard to get at) because it is an essential component of what we think of as “infrastructural” leadership activity. Here, we rely on the idea of “infrastructure” developed by Susan Leigh Star (1999). By “infrastructure,” Star isn’t referring to physical structures and facilities (or not only those). She sees infrastructures as the dynamic interplay of actions, tools, relationships, and structures. Infrastructures “reach beyond a single event or a one-site practice;” are “learned as part of membership;” are developed through interaction; are embedded in the expectations of the sites where they are developed and used and are modified to accommodate those expectations, and typically only “become[] visible upon breakdown” (1999, 381–382). They aren’t static objects. Instead, they are *“relational:* part of human organization” that are part of the “truly backstage elements of … practice” (380). We are arguing, then, that the *habit* of reflective leadership is infrastructural in the sense that it runs underneath everything else that you might do as a leader—beneath your aims, actions, identities;

Title of Resource, Leadership Statements

Description of video… Elaine Maimon, Elizabeth Wardle, Stacy Perriman-Clark, Chris Blankenship, and Sheila Carter-Tod all discuss their foundational principles and how they have acted on those principles as leaders in challenging situations.

Watch the video at https://www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org/books/learning-to-lead

Notes:

beneath the decisions that you make or will be asked to make.

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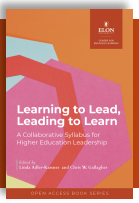
As reflective teachers and leaders ourselves, we know how difficult it can be to turn our attention to the kind of infrastructural activities we're asking you to think through—we've been there. In the midst of busy lives, when there are many (many, many) people asking for our attention, it's hard to take time to turn inward, even for a moment. As we become more expert leaders, too, we forget that building our abilities through leadership has, in fact, come through reflection. What we know becomes "commonsense," things we think we've always known, ways we've always functioned. That's why infrastructures typically become visible only when they fail.

Another challenge learning researchers have pointed out is that experts often have trouble identifying the constituent elements of their expertise, especially when it comes to teaching others (Bransford et al. 2000; Ambrose et al. 2010). One helpful reflective habit—it's one we asked the contributors to try as they crafted their contributions—is to try to put yourself in the shoes of someone who is just learning what has become "obvious" to you. The "learner's mindset" we discussed in the introduction to this book isn't just for beginners!

So, then, developing a reflective practice is not easy, and it does take time and practice. But as our contributors show, it's possible. We also want to emphasize that what we're describing is reflection *in* practice, not reflection *versus* practice. To be sure, it's nice to get outside of our everyday routines to think deeply about what we're doing and why we're doing it. But we can also braid reflection into our practice, as the concepts of habits and infrastructures imply. While this playbook is intended to give you time and space to think through your leadership aims, theories, and identities, our ultimate goal is to help you embed the habit of reflection into your leadership practice.



We've designed this playbook as a series of engagements to help you write a leadership statement. This is a document of no more than 2–3 pages that, extending from your identity as a leader, outlines:

- the personal and professional principles that form the foundation of your approach to leadership;
- your theory(ies) of leadership and theory(ies) of institutional change; and
- your strategies for transferring knowledge as a leader.

A leadership statement can be helpful for personnel reviews, applications for leadership positions, or other "official" purposes. But *writing* a leadership statement *will be* helpful, whether or not you use this statement in those ways. That's because writing is more than a way to represent your ideas; it's a mode of formulating and thinking through them.

Notes:

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