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ENTERING THE
SCHOOL LEADER'S

Think

TANK

HOW TO PREVAIL WHEN OTHERS
WANT TO SEE YOU DROWN

Rebecca Coda & Rick Jetter

Entering the School Leader's Think Tank

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This companion reflection guide to *Escaping the School Leader's Dunk Tank* is available for free download at LeadershipDunkTank.com

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The Dunk Tank is a dark reality facing leaders in school districts within the United States. We probably could conclude that such politics and adversarial conditions exist elsewhere overseas, too. The struggle for funding and resources has increased competition and, consequently, elevated stress and anxiety levels. School districts are filled with emotionally driven human beings that, at times, succumb to the unstated pressures inherent to the transparent and public occupation of education. Additionally, educators are subjected to a higher level of accountability and community service than is typical of a corporate environment. These combined factors work to create the kind of conditions that can make—or *break*—a person.

We are indeed grateful for all of the school leaders who shared their dunk tank experiences with us for the greater good of education. Their personal experiences made our book, *Escaping the School Leader's Dunk Tank*, possible. Each and every person we interviewed took the time to self-reflect, and as a result, they identified points in time where they could have made a better decision to combat the tactics used against them by their adversaries. Through collective trends and scenarios, we were able to identify the emotional driving forces of adversaries, the types of adversarial tactics that they use, and strategies that will help any leader to prevail in their career.

PREFACE



Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.

—SOREN KIERKEGAARD

One of the hallmarks of education is the virtue of reflection. From the beginning of your career as school teacher—during grade-level meetings, data chats, professional learning communities, and evaluations—and with every step up the career ladder, it is a best practice to look back so you can find the best path forward. Reflection is a part of an educator’s professional DNA.

In addition to practicing self-reflection, educators are accustomed to receiving feedback from others. It is always tough to accept a professional refinement as a result of a formal evaluation, but when that feedback is backed with concrete data, and is specific, the more easily it can be received and swallowed by us. When we know what we need to adjust and why, we feel more receptive and willing to implement a new strategy or change a behavior. Unfortunately, too many times, educators and administrators receive subjective feedback that is not backed by empirical data. Such comments can feel contrived or like personal attacks—personal dunking maneuvers.

Escaping the School Leader’s Dunk Tank takes the best practice of reflection to the next level by making it personal, emotional, and relevant. When you, as a leader, offer feedback that isn’t subjective but personalized and specific, it helps you to lead with a better, more positive intention.

This reflection guide for *Escaping the School Leader’s Dunk Tank* is intended to systematically take you through scenarios and situations that deal with the prevalent, unspoken practices that characterize dunk tank circumstances—the negative behaviors and attitudes that school leaders face. The early chapters establish a common language to use when discussing adversarial conditions. Later in the book, we will equip you with knowledge and strategies that will help you to prevail in your career, no matter how grave the dunk tank may seem.

THINK TANK GOALS



The list below includes a few of the things that *Escaping the School Leader's Dunk Tank* and this reflection guide will help you understand so you can prevail in your career:

- What “proactive paranoia” is and why it’s good for you
- Which emotional forces may be driving your adversaries’ behaviors
- How to respond to the ten types of adversarial tactics
- What “Aligned Relatedness” is and how you can use it to your advantage
- Why educators submit to fifteen-hour work days (or more)
- What dependent behavior really costs you and your team
- How to gather allies
- How to recognize the symptoms that signal that it may be time to retreat (not quit)
- Which key strategies will help you to really prevail in your leadership career
- How to set new career goals and write your personal purpose statement

Before we begin with a journey through each chapter of *Escaping the School Leader's Dunk Tank*, we want to ask you a question: Have you ever felt as if no one would believe some of the things that have happened to you during your career as a leader in education? You know what we’re talking about—those unbelievable stories of the politics you’ve been forced to navigate and the adversarial conditions you’ve endured. Well, we want you to share those stories. We promise, we’ll believe you. And we can’t wait until you hear ours. Let’s get started!

Your mind is working at its best when you're being paranoid. You explore every avenue and possibility of your situation at high speed with total clarity.

—BANKSY, BRITISH STREET ARTIST

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPT OF “PROACTIVE PARANOIA”



TYPES OF PARANOIA

1. **Paranoid Personality Disorder:** Odd or eccentric ways of thinking often include an irrational mistrust or suspicion of others even when there is no reason to be suspicious.
2. **Delusional Paranoid Disorder:** Includes one or more delusions of thinking, such as being poisoned, having a disease, or being followed.
3. **Paranoid Schizophrenia:** Delusions accompanied by hallucinations, often auditory or perceptual. This may also be episodic or chronic.
4. **Proactive Paranoia:** The anticipation of problems, negative reactions or responses of others, or a constructive, thorough process by which one plans and implements safeguards for ensuring security, peacefulness, or contextual integrity.

CHAPTER 1: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. If you think you've figured out what makes your adversaries tick, what do you do with that information?
2. Have you ever felt crippled by the mere presence of an adversary? Intimidated? Scared? Consider the concept of "proactive paranoia." How can the "sensible you" benefit from the fear or apprehension you feel? How might these feelings help you navigate harsh leadership waters?
3. Do you ever feel as if you are being watched over regarding your job responsibilities or scrutinized in your expertise or talents? How can you turn unhealthy paranoia into a healthy, proactive paranoia? What does it look like? Map it out.
4. Have you ever encountered someone whose perception of you seemed impossible to change? Was that person incapable of seeing who you are and what you do? Think about a person either inside or outside of your organization who seems resistant to you or so stuck in their mindset that they are unable to move forward in their own practices or actions. Write down a list of attributes that the person possesses. How do these attributes conflict with your attributes?
5. Have you ever encountered an adversary or a nemesis? Make a list of his or her adversarial actions. What have they done that caused you to categorize them as an "adversary"? Next to each action, write down whether it was overt or covert and passive or aggressive. How will you counteract each one, professionally and thoughtfully?

6. Describe the mindset of an educator who possesses “proactive paranoia.” How can you respond to potential dunk tank situations?
7. Of the “Ten Crucial Tenets” described at the end of the chapter, which one do you believe in the most? Why?
8. How will having a strong understanding of healthy “proactive paranoia” and a belief in the “Ten Crucial Tenets” help you in future situations?

DISCUSSION NOTES

The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, and even from a spider's web.

—PABLO PICASSO

REALIZING THE EMOTIONAL DRIVING FORCES OF YOUR ADVERSARIES



Read Matthew's story and identify the possible emotional driving forces that could be at play:

I had just started a new job in a new district as a Math Specialist. I was very well respected in the education community and had done this job well in a previous district. Because of my prior experience, I was well-networked and had a very positive reputation of excellence as a person who could make a positive difference.

When I met a new colleague, named Tinley, who would be my partner as the ELA district specialist, the first words out of her mouth were, "So you are the great Matthew that I keep hearing about. I guess I will be working with greatness." I downplayed the comment and turned the conversation to getting to know her. At a later time, we talked about our commute and the part of town that we lived in, and I was again taken back by a comment Tinley made inferring that I lived in a prestigious snooty part of town. She said to me, "Oh of course that's where you live," stated in a very derogatory tone of voice. Again, I downplayed where I lived. A couple weeks later after we were in a meeting, she pulled me aside and said, "When we were in the meeting, you kept cutting me off. That's going to have to stop if we are going to work together; I love you and everything, so I'm saying this out of love, but don't do it again." I was mortified and felt like I just had my hand slapped by my mother. I didn't sleep for days. I knew I needed to reflect first and then address the situation later.

—MATTHEW SOLOMON, MATH SPECIALIST

CHAPTER 2: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Which emotional driving force(s) is Tinley using against Matthew? What brought you to that conclusion?
2. What prior life experiences, work experiences, or schema could be driving Tinley to act like this toward a newly hired person? Is there anything that could justify her actions?
3. Why do you think Matthew instinctively down-played his reputation and the fact that he lives in a nice part of town?
4. Think back to your life experiences while interacting with people. Identify one person who has been adversarial toward you in some way. Write down your adversary's actions and list the emotional driving force(s) behind them. If you can't figure out their emotional driving forces, try to speculate a bit.
5. Was your adversary justified in his/her behavior? Did you contribute (purposely or even inadvertently) in any way that might have made you a target for those respective adversarial responses?

COMMON EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS

Jealousy

Revenge

CONNECTIVITY OR ASSOCIATION

SKEPTICISM AND VALIDITY

DISCRIMINATION, RACISM, AND NEPOTISM

BEING HELD ACCOUNTABLE

ENTITLEMENT

EGO AND POWER

FEAR

WHAT EMOTIONS COULD BE DRIVING *YOUR* OWN BEHAVIOR?

DISCUSSION NOTES

Weakness is what brings ignorance, cheapness, racism, desperation, cruelty, and brutality, all these things that will keep a society chained to the ground, one foot nailed to the floor.

—HENRY ROLLINS

RECOGNIZING THE TEN TYPES OF ADVERSARIAL TACTICS



Read the following scenario:

Prior to beginning the planning meeting for our high school English department, we established norms for mapping out our expected meeting conduct. We agreed on respecting others, talking one at a time, assuming positive intent, acknowledging that what goes on in the room stays in the room, and many other tenets of positive meetings, etc. The meeting was going exceptionally well. The discussion was rich, we were moving forward with solving some tough issues, and making some great decisions to move forward.

Our new ELA instructional coach, who was sitting in the meeting observing us for the first time, suddenly blurted out, “I have been sitting here making tally marks and you guys have interrupted each other sixteen times (and that’s just what I’ve counted so far), so if you are going to establish norms and meeting expectations, then you really need to follow them. That’s all I have to say; just think about it.”

The room went from a positive culture to one that was filled with anxiety. I thought the meeting was going great. In the past, we hadn’t been very connected and communicative as a team, but we worked really hard to get there.

Yes, she was correct; we had compromised one norm. But, we were having a positive, healthy conversation that was both passionate and collaborative. I don’t understand why she had to call us out like children, when there really wasn’t a problem. I left feeling like the work we had just done didn’t matter because we had all just been scolded.

—JOSEPH LETTI, HIGH SCHOOL ELA TEACHER

TEN TYPES OF ADVERSARIAL TACTICS

1. Creating Rumors
2. Slowing Down the Organization
3. Using [and Bending] the Power of Information
4. Creating Unhealthy Community Paranoia
5. Creating Silos
6. Intentional Omission
7. Working from the Inside
8. Extending [and Bending] Professional Courtesy
9. Nepotism
10. Deflection

CHAPTER 3: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Identify the adversarial tactic(s) that the ELA instructional coach used against the members of the English department. Why did you list those particular tactic(s)?

2. How do you think that this interaction, with such an adversary, might impact future department meetings?

3. Think about your adversary whom you reflected on in the previous chapter. What tactic did they use against you? If the tactic wasn't listed, identify it now and explain your thinking.

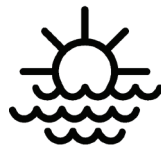
4. Do you believe that a person could trigger one of these adversarial tactics with positive intentions? Why or why not?

5. Which adversarial tactic have you encountered the most frequently in your career? Rank the tactics from (1-10) in order from (1) most frequently to (10) least frequently. Discuss your ranking with the group.

DISCUSSION NOTES

*Geography has made us neighbors. History has made us friends.
Economics has made us partners, and necessity has made us allies.*
—JOHN F. KENNEDY

UNDERSTANDING THE LAW OF ALIGNED RELATEDNESS



TYPES OF ALIGNED RELATEDNESS

1. **Positive Aligned Relatedness:** A group of like-minded people who come together for a central commonality, interest, hobby, friendship, or belief can produce something beneficial to the greater community or people within the community.
2. **Negative Aligned Relatedness:** A group of like-minded people who come together for a central commonality, interest, hobby, friendship, or belief can also produce something detrimental to the community or members within that community.
3. **Neutral Aligned Relatedness:** A group of like-minded people who come together for a central commonality, interest, hobby, friendship, or belief may meet without causing any specific positive or negative outcome. That said, this neutral relatedness often opens the door to future connections and outcomes.

CHAPTER 4: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Think about the people in your organization. How do they interact? Which people go to lunch together or hang out after work hours together? What do they have in common? What do your confidants have in common?
2. How can there be positive like-minded people and negative like-minded people in education? Don't we all have a common ground of wanting to help students?
3. Do you notice any behavioral patterns of like-minded people within your organization?
4. Is there a benefit to getting to know and intentionally connecting with those in your organization who have the greatest differences? Why or why not?
5. What can you do to intentionally connect with people in your organization who are different than you?
6. Are there people in your organization that are neutral to you (they do not strengthen or hinder you)? How should you interact with these people?

DISCUSSION NOTES

*I was an overachiever and I worked very hard,
played a hell of a fiddle.*

—MIKE WALLACE

RECONSIDERING FIFTEEN-HOUR WORK DAYS



Various motives push people to work fifteen-hour days. Many of us are dedicated to students and have to deal with inordinately high expectations. Some educators feel like work slaves because of pressures put on them by adversarial conditions. And still others create their own difficult circumstances. But one thing all midnight-oil-burners have in common is a deteriorated quality of life. While it may be possible to endure the work load for a time without losing your sanity or health, most of us cannot maintain the imbalance long term. The vicious cycle of long days can lead to malnutrition, the use of stimulants, or the need for medical intervention because of high anxiety, stress, or overexertion. No advancement or extreme level of dedication is worth compromising your health and well-being.

CHAPTER 5: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Think about someone you know or have known who works inordinately long hours. What do you think is the motivation or circumstances behind their long hours? Are the long hours within their control or out of their control?
2. Think about a time when you were overworked and overtired. Was it temporary, or is working long hours a way of life for you?
3. Is there anything wrong with working hard, setting high goals, and having the ambition to advance? Can there be anything unhealthy? Have you ever engaged in unhealthy ambition?
4. At what point does the desire to advance become a dunk tank situation?
5. Think about a typical work day. Write down some activities in which you normally engage in each day. Next, prioritize the list of responsibilities from most important to least important. Then, write down some things you do which are “time wasters.” Can you eliminate them? What would help you better focus on completing your top three projects or tasks each day—and still leave the office by 5:00 p.m.?
6. Did your adversaries ever get “the best of you”? How did you let them or not let them? How did you disengage from their dunk tank attempts?

7. How do you keep yourself in check?
8. Do you have levels of anxiety within your job? What provides you with high anxiety? What do you do to decrease your anxiety?

DISCUSSION NOTES

Our dependency makes slaves out of us.

—FRITZ PERLS

FACING ALCOHOL, PILLS, AND DEPENDENCY



Recovery First¹ estimates that 4 percent of educators in the United States use illegal drugs, and 8.8 percent admit to heavy alcohol use. Although those numbers may sound inconsequential, they equate to an estimated 288,000 educators abusing an illegal substance and 633,000 full-time educators drinking five or more drinks at a time on more than five occasions per month. Addicts use drugs or alcohol as an attempt to fill a real or perceived need. Educators, like addicts, in any career, may also abuse substances to:

- Relieve pain (through the use of prescription pain medications)
- Reduce stress or lift mood (with any number of mind numbing or euphoric drugs like alcohol or ecstasy)
- Increase productivity (with prescription stimulant ADHD medications)

¹ <http://www.recoveryfirst.org/>

CHAPTER 6: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do you or someone you know in education drink or use medication or illegal drugs to cope with the stress of work? (This is for personal reflection, only. Participation in a group discussion is voluntary.)
2. Do you or someone you know have any social media postings where alcohol, partying, or drug use is condoned or featured (e.g. red solo cups in hand or pictures of margaritas on a vacation trip)?
3. Do you feel stress in your position? How much? What factors cause stress?
4. How do you reduce stress?
5. Do you notice comments from colleagues about drinking or using prescription medications? How do you respond if you come into contact with such discussions?
6. Do you notice any unhealthy patterns in your life that you might need to address?
7. How might you broach such a sensitive topic with a colleague who needs help?

DISCUSSION NOTES

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

—MAYA ANGELOU

GATHERING ALLIES



USE THESE ALLIANCE-BUILDING ACTIONS



SEEK OUT EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT PEOPLE

BUILD TRUST

DISPLAY DISCERNMENT

USE NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION

ACCEPT THAT NEPOTISM AND FAVORS EXIST

PLANT TREES AND GROW FRUIT

TO GROW AND IMPROVE

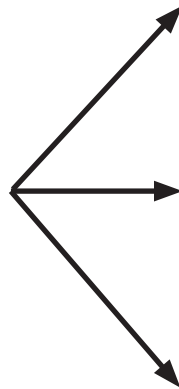
Vertical Relationships

Horizontal Relationships

Community Connections

External Professional
Relationships

Personal Relationships



CHAPTER 7: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Think of the groups of people that you like to spend time with the most. What attracts you to the group? How do the people in the group make you feel?
2. Think of a current nexus group either inside or outside of your organization that you do not enjoy spending time with. What attributes do the people in that group possess? List the reasons that meeting with this group of people is not fulfilling.
3. How do the outcomes look and sound differently when comparing nexus groups that you enjoy versus nexus groups that you do not enjoy?
4. What are the biggest benefits to searching for new allies among various nexus groups?
5. Identify one of the nexus groups that you feel you need to focus on the most. What entry-point actions will support your development of new relationships?
6. Are there any colleagues or professionals in your field that you always wanted to reach out to?
7. Put together an action plan that will help you to follow through with making a new, powerful ally-connection.

DISCUSSION NOTES

Part of the happiness of life consists not in fighting battles, but in avoiding them. A masterly retreat is in itself a victory.

—NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

KNOWING WHEN TO RETREAT



Shift Your Attitude

Look for Alternatives and Opportunities

Develop Existing and New Skills

Seek Support from Allies

Recognize What You've Gained

Learn by Looking Back

CHAPTER 8: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. When you hear the word “retreat,” what comes to mind? List several activities or scenarios that help you to relax and re-energize.
2. How do you decide when it is time to retreat? Do you schedule downtime routinely as prevention, or do you have to reach a boiling point before taking a break? Are you self-aware of your own stress levels or life altering events that push you to reflect more?
3. Write a list of five to ten options for planning an escape from your career if things go awry, (whether that means taking a little time off or steering your career in a new direction). Where might you go next? What might you do? What are your talents? What have you always wanted to do, but never had the chance to do?
4. List three things that you must do to navigate your way towards one or more of the destinations that you wrote down for the previous question.
5. Write a list of five to ten jobs or skills you possess that could assist you in funding your escape plan (e.g. you are a good writer and always wanted to do freelance work).
6. Create a list of people (allies) who might be able to help you to get to where you need to go next.

7. Put together an action plan (and time line) that will prepare you to retreat at a time that is appropriate for you.
8. Write a list of things that hold you back from retreating.
9. How might your happiness be compromised?
10. What is your mindset like when you think of what you do, why you do it, and what you “put up with” in order to stay status quo in your career OR write down all of the things that you actively carry out to create a world where you are happy in both your personal and professional life?

DISCUSSION NOTES

*It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles.
Then the victory is yours. It cannot be taken from you, not by angels
or by demons, heaven or hell.*

—BUDDHA

HOW TO PREVAIL IN YOUR LEADERSHIP CAREER



THE TEN IDEOLOGICAL PRACTICES OF DUNK TANK SURVIVORS

1. Stop the floodgate of external situations polluting your internal state.
2. Use mindfulness to protect and preserve.
3. Attach emotional driving forces to depersonalize attacks.
4. Use your voice to dissuade confrontation.
5. Counteract your negative digital footprint to revitalize your new image.
6. Equalize your calendar to create balance.
7. Establish a confidant for accountability.
8. Schedule routine dunk tank check-ups to prevent entropy.
9. Never waver from what's right.
10. Forgive yourself and your adversaries.

CHAPTER 9: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Underline the three ideological practices that will be the easiest for you to implement. Why do you think that these top three ideological practices might be the easiest for you to accomplish?
2. Circle the three ideological practices that are the most challenging for you to carry out? What obstacles are in the way or are slowing you down in implementing these practices right now?
3. Why do you think it is highly probably that an aftermath event will follow your situation of prevailing? Why do you think that someone may try to grab you by the heels long after you have escaped the dunk tank or not?
4. Check your digital footprint like you would check your personnel file. Do you see anything that needs to be counteracted?
5. Do you feel any kind of hatred, resentment, jealousy, fear, or any other negative emotion linked to your adversarial conditions or path to a dunk-free lifestyle? Is there anyone you may need to forgive in order to heal?
6. What types of activities can you carry out in order to begin a process of forgiveness or healing?

DISCUSSION NOTES

*I just feel rejuvenated in such a big way
because of these race cars I get to drive.*

—JEFF GORDON

SETTING NEW GOALS AND REDEFINING YOUR PURPOSE



EIGHT TASKS TO OPTIMIZE TRIUMPH OVER TRAGEDY

1. List your *gratitudes*
2. Recognize your talents
3. Create and use continued affirmations
4. Allow yourself to be vulnerable again
5. Strategize your game plan
6. Redefine yourself
7. Develop yourself into a behind-the-scenes expert
8. Empower others: cultivate a think-tank for your colleagues

CHAPTER 10: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

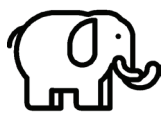
1. What are you thankful for in life? List your *gratitudes*.
2. Reflect on your talents and contributions. Rather than focusing on your accomplishments, make note of the things you have done in your career that made you feel most fulfilled or allowed you to know that you made a difference.
3. Write an affirmation statement that you are willing to put on a sticky note in every room, in your car, on your laptop, or on a mirror/bulletin board. This is a statement of your belief in the power of specific positivity.
4. It is time to look forward to your educational bucket list. What do you still want to learn, do, teach, and participate in?
5. What *one* thing do you want to start focusing on in your spare time to further develop your expertise?

DISCUSSION NOTES

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.

—DOROTHY DAY

NEXUS GROUP COLLABORATION



The next few pages offer a series of nexus group reflections relative to *Escaping the School Leader's Dunk Tank*. We believe our book is not only for school leaders; it is also for higher-education faculty, school board members, teacher-leaders, teachers (and other educators), and even parents. You see, to minimize and stop politics and adversarial conditions in education, we have to point out the elephants. We must spread awareness of the damage that dunk-tank conditions can cause. We must get anyone (and everyone) on board so we can stomp out the nonsense.

FOR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEMBERS WHO TRAIN SCHOOL LEADERS

1. What types of instruction do you offer your students for addressing the topic of adversity and workplace bullying? How much time do you devote to such training and learning during your coursework or cohort? What specifically do you cover as topics related to politics in education and facing adversarial conditions?

2. What resources do you currently use to cover the topic of politics in education and adversarial conditions? Do you notice any gaps in these resources or need supplements to cover topics relative to politics and adversarial conditions?

3. How might you collaborate with or assist your regional school districts with alleviating or preventing adversarial conditions in education?

FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

1. How can you support your leaders when they face inevitable, political conditions that come with the tough job of leading others?
2. How can you facilitate learning for your leadership team so adversarial conditions are minimized or stopped?
3. In what ways can you help your leadership team resolve issues before they become big problems?
4. How might you discern the differences between a leader who is being treated unfairly and one who is incompetent? What can you do to assist the superintendent to remediate incompetent school leaders? How can you assist in remediating an incompetent superintendent with fairness if you encounter a leader such as this?
5. What can you do if your leadership team is faced with conflict between two or more members?
6. What can you do collectively to identify adversarial conditions and to evaluate the board's involvement in such circumstances?
7. How would you define workplace bullying in the schools? What can you do to enforce a zero-tolerance policy for workplace bullying?

FOR SUPERINTENDENTS

1. In what ways can you set up a reflective system that is open, supportive, and encouraging for everyone within your organization so that adversarial conditions are minimized or stopped?
2. What self-evaluation tools could you use to measure adversity in your organization?
3. In what ways can you foster open and honest discussions with your school board about the types of adversity you will inevitably face as a superintendent and the process they can follow to support you?
4. What are some steps you can take or strategies you can use to deal with an adversarial building leader, school board member, union official, or parent?

FOR DISTRICT LEVEL LEADERS OR CABINET MEMBERS (I.E. DIRECTORS, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS, SUPERVISORS, DEPUTIES)

1. What might you do if you are faced with unfair adversity from your superintendent?
2. What does the “chain of command” mean to you, and when should it apply (or not apply) when dealing with an adversarial supervisor?
3. If your superintendent is facing adversarial school board members, how might you support your superintendent? What role should you play?
4. What can you do as an independent thinker and problem solver to assist or support your building-level leaders?

FOR BUILDING-LEVEL SCHOOL LEADERS

(I.E. PRINCIPALS, ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS, DEANS)

1. When is it appropriate to become involved in or attempt to mediate adversarial conditions that might not directly affect you?
2. How might you handle adversarial conditions that exist within building-level teams of leaders?
3. What is your communication process for keeping your supervisor aware of any adversarial conditions? How do you handle such communications when you don't want to appear to be "dramatic" or incompetent?
4. How do you handle workplace bullying among adults within your school?
5. Is there a self-reflective process that you might carry out for measuring your own inadvertent adversarial behaviors if others deem you to be adversarial?

FOR TEACHER-LEADERS OR OTHER LEADERS-IN-TRAINING

1. How does your unique view as a leader in education affect your willingness to speak up about adversarial conditions? If you are a leader-in-training, how can you point out such conditions without appearing to be insubordinate or “out of line”?
2. What can you do to learn more right now about facing adversaries so you are a well-prepared leader?
3. What are the topical areas concerning school politics and adversarial conditions that you would like to strengthen?

FOR TEACHERS

1. How do you handle the presence of adversarial tension between your colleagues?
2. What are some types of adversarial conditions that involve school leaders, parents, school board members, or other school staff as it pertains to your teaching, profession, or safety within the school workplace?
3. How can teachers alleviate or stop adversarial conditions within their own schools, departments, or grade levels? How might adversarial conditions distract you and/or affect your teaching or professional responsibilities?

FOR PARENTS

1. How does understanding the types of politics in education or adversarial conditions in schools help you be a better parent (or not)?
2. How might you assist with minimizing or stopping school politics or adversarial conditions in education in order to help your child have a better education? Do adversarial conditions affect your child if he or she is not directly involved?
3. What role can you play as a parent-leader in assisting with minimizing or ending workplace bullying or adversarial conditions?
4. How might the requirement for confidentiality “keep you in the dark” about the state of affairs within your child’s school or school system?

APPENDIX 1

WE BELIEVE...

Broken things cannot always be fixed.

School leaders deserve good health and well-being, survival, and sanity.

School leaders can learn how to recognize the human emotions that drive their adversaries' platforms and actions.

There are specific tactics used by adversaries against school leaders.

Fresh starts and mobility are essential to be freed from "leadership imprisonment."

Many people do not know about the inner political world that exists in the field of education.

The field of education can be extremely stressful.

School leaders' stories need to be written, read, heard, and shared.

Story telling is one of the greatest professional development activities known to humans.

Failure is a learning tool for gaining greater leadership wisdom.

School leadership training programs often ignore the existence of adversarial conditions.

Some clichés, such as "everything happens for a reason," are true.

There is power in numbers, power in gathering allies, and power in creating a balanced life.

Not all adversaries can be turned into allies.

"Quitting" and "retreating" are appropriate solutions for escaping the dunk tank when all else has failed.

Adversaries should not be called "enemies" because that does not support the important notion of "forgiveness."

All "drowned" school leaders will, someday, be "resuscitated," if they learn and grow from their failures, battles, or flaws.

Children and their achievements are stifled in the presence of adult conflict.

Our work will help the entire educational system to grow in new and amazing ways.

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF *GRATITUDES*

I am thankful for _____ because without _____ I would be _____.

I am grateful to _____ for _____ because I am now _____ instead of _____.

I feel indebted to _____ because my life is now _____ because of _____.

I am appreciative that I have _____ because it makes me think about _____.

I am relieved that I understand _____ because _____.

I feel reassured about _____ because in life _____.

I am happy because _____

_____.

APPENDIX 3

GATHERING ALLIES

In the table below, list (by name or using tally marks) the number of allies and adversaries in each group.

Allies	Nexus Groups	Adversaries
	Vertical Relationships	
	Horizontal Relationships	
	Community Relationships	
	External Professional Relationships	
	Personal Relationships	

How do the number of your allies compare to the number of adversaries?

Are any of your adversaries impacting your overall performance, health or psyche? To what degree?

What situations are within your control?

What situations are out of your control?

APPENDIX 4

YOUR “CURRENT STATE OF MIND” REFLECTION FORM

Rate yourself on the following questions assigning a number on a scale from 1–10

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

Score	Scenario
	I find myself thinking about the negative situations at work.
	I feel that outcomes are out of my control at work.
	I find myself waking up in the middle of the night or unable to sleep.
	I talk behind peoples’ backs just to survive the drama.
	I arrive home and drink alcohol or self-medicate in some way.
	I have negative thoughts about coming to work each day.
	I feel misunderstood at work.
	I am unnoticed at work and undervalued.
/80	TOTAL SCORE = _____

Check Your Score

- 60–80** You are in a place of despair and desperation and you must retreat.
- 50–59** You have encountered adversarial conditions that are pulling you down.
You must implement dunk tank strategies immediately.
- 40–49** You are somewhat struggling with your work environment and may feel as though you do not have a strong hold over your emotions and work is more work than passion.
- 0–39** You are comfortable at work and able to manage your environment, emotions and have a positive and productive outlook.

***Note:** At any of these levels, dunk tank scenarios can enter in to even the best, most fulfilling job. Implementing the tenets of this book will prepare you for what might happen in the future or repair your current reality.*

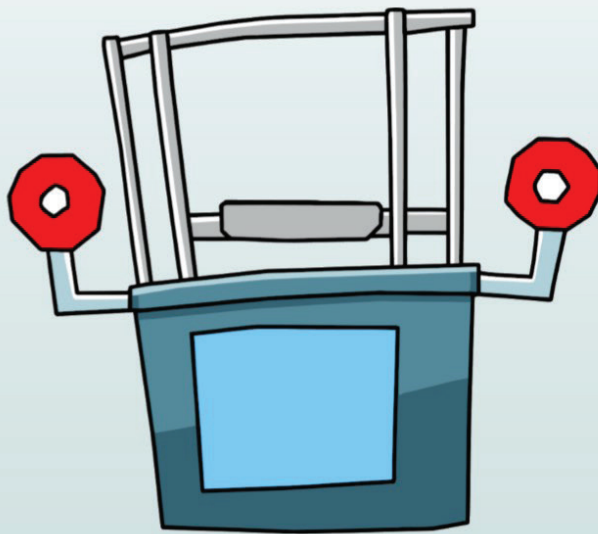
APPENDIX 5

IDENTIFYING YOUR AREA OF EXPERTISE

1. Reflect on the past five years. What have you been involved with that has made an impact on students and your community?
2. When you imagine a “picture perfect” day at work, what does that look like? List the things that give you the most joy.
3. When you are online or on social media, what do you find yourself wanting to know and learn?
4. Think about the things you are good at, the things that bring you joy, and the things you want to know more about. Brainstorm a few topics in education in which you can become an expert.

Your participation
Demonstrates that you are

Dunk Tank Certified



You are officially equipped to outplay
your adversaries and continue to
thrive in life and serve with integrity.

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