

## Roles Leaders Play in Schools

Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson use eight metaphors to define and describe leadership roles that must be played as schools engage in culture building work. These roles are described in detail in their book, Shaping School Culture, published by Jossey-Bass.

Following are additional thoughts on how we might think about these eight leadership roles.

1. **Historian** – Historians are faculty members who know the history of the school. They experienced it, for often historians have been around for awhile. If they weren't there, they listened carefully to the stories and realized (not necessarily consciously) the importance these stories play in explaining "who we are as a school." If the historians aren't "keepers of the scrapbook," they have ready access and always have suggestions for adding to the scrapbook.
2. **Anthropological Sleuth** – While the historian collects stories, the anthropological sleuth analyzes these stories as a way of seeking and uncovering meanings to explain not the what, but the why and the how. These people are analytical: while they may be part of the story, they are able to remove themselves and observe from a distance so they can dissect events and words to unearth meanings missed by the casual observer. The anthropological sleuth is interested in the past and the present, in people, events, structures, what is said, how it is said, even what is not said. These people are always analyzing, always asking why.
3. **Visionary** – Visionaries aren't dreamers – dreams may or may not come true. Visionaries see the possibilities, they see what can be, and just as importantly, they have a road map in their minds of how to accomplish what can be. Another way of describing visionaries is that they are able to see not only the end product, but also the action steps that will help the school arrive at its destination. Often, visionaries are viewed as trouble makers because the status quo, the here and now has left their line of sight; they are filled with ideas about how to change this and that and... They are not known for their sense of pacing, and often are impatient because others don't see the possibilities they do. "Follow me. I really do see the end of the rainbow. It's just over the hill, I know it is!"
4. **Symbol** – People who play the symbol role create by their actions visible symbols of the vision or at least, progress towards the vision. Administrators and faculty members who believe that all students can learn and achieve at high levels will create "steps" to high standards so that students can see incremental successes which will lead them to work harder to achieve more success. The single end-of-the-year honor assembly becomes a series of honor assemblies throughout the year so more students and a broader range of students can be recognized. People who are symbols strive to make sure every action points toward the school's

vision; they make sure they are constantly in touch with and carrying out the school's mission.

5. **Potter** – Potters know the shapeless, formless clay they work with can be crafted into something beautiful - into the vision the potter has of a beautiful object of art. The potter is a visionary, but possesses the skills to shape the vision into reality. Potters can see potential in the people around them, and work with those people, helping them grow and change into the finished piece of art originally envisioned. Potters are able to see potential in people even before those people realize their own potential. For example, the potter makes note of the young teacher who "gets it," who sees "the big picture," who is a thinker, an organizer, and begins to foster growth in this teacher who one day will become a very effective school leader. The young teacher is given assignments that allow the opportunity to practice leadership skills under the tutelage of the potter.
6. **Poet** – Poets are those who can say the words that make the vision "come alive" for others. Poets know the slogans that motivate, the words that encourage, the language of empowerment that helps parents understand their roles. Poets are mission statement writers, speech makers, pep rally leaders whose words motivate and inspire.
7. **Actor** – Actors understand timing, stage presence, drama and comedy. They know that at the right moment, drama can be used for emphasis. Actors carefully craft actions and words to achieve the desired purposes. Actors, for example, build stages: the new six-week honor assembly is a very special stage designed to reward effort as well as achievement and to build enthusiasm and confidence, so the news media is invited; attractive certificates are designed and purchased; photo ops are created; parents receive written invitations; and a well known, successful former graduate is present to speak at the honor assembly.
8. **Healer** – The hard work of culture building often creates casualties. Professional disagreements, moments of uncertainty, times of feeling unappreciated – all create bumps along the road of continuously working on the school's culture. Healers are those who anticipate the bumps and who are ready to jump in with the band aids, words of encouragement and pats on the back. They are able to get people together (sometimes back together) when the going is bumpy.