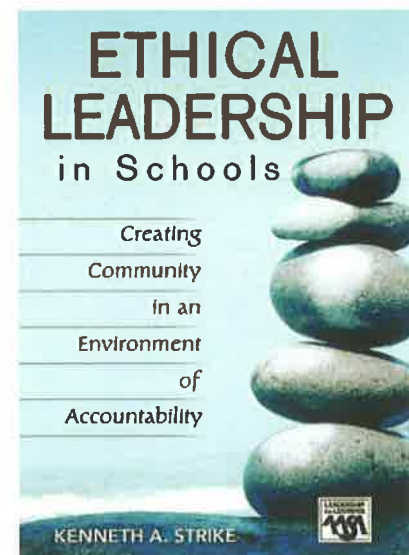Strike, Kenneth A. (2007) *Ethical Leadership in Schools:
Creating Community in an Environment of Accountability.*
Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

Pp. ix + 155   ISBN 1-4129-1351-9

Reviewed by Denver J. Fowler
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Strike's text is one book in a series of books
dedicated to enhancing the capacity of school
leaders to improve the quality of teaching so that all
students learn at high levels. This is in part of a
series of books supported by the Leadership for
Learning initiative of the American Association of
School Administrators (AASA)
(http://www.aasa.org/). The AASA is the largest
association in the world representing school system
leaders and, in particular, school district
superintendents. The Leadership for Learning books
address a broad range of knowledge and skills that
school superintendents, exceptional principals, and
researchers believe are essential to ensure effective

leadership at the school level.

"Kenneth Strike has written an important book that will surely become a prized text in every school leader's bookcase. His book, *Ethical Leadership in Schools: Creating Community in an Environment of Accountability*, will be read initially with interest by administrators struggling with the ambiguities of their leadership role" (E. Joseph Schneider, Ethical Leadership in Schools, 2007, p. ix). Perhaps one of the most significant themes throughout this book is that it is written in such a way that it could serve as a general reminder to school leaders everywhere about the importance of remaining true to the premise that their job is really all about the children. This is important for current and aspiring school administrators because of the increasing demands placed on individuals in these positions. Those demands and expectations can make it is easy for school leaders to forget what their job is really all about, the children   Although the book does not provide a simple guideline on what defines ethical leadership, it does address the everyday life of a school leader and the ethical dilemmas in which they face. The author expresses an openness to the fact that many of the dilemmas school leaders face are seldom met with easy answers. Strike's book aims to answer a fundamental question, How shall we live well together? The text contends that schools should be good educational communities of students, parents, families, and supporters.

Kenneth A. Strike is a professor of cultural foundations of education and of philosophy at Syracuse University. He is also professor emeritus at Cornell University, where he taught from 1971 to 2000, and is former chair of the Department of Education Policy Studies at the University of Maryland. He earned his BA from Wheaton College and his MA and PhD from Northwestern University. He is a past president of the Philosophy of Education Society and was elected to the National Academy of Education in 1993. His principal interests are professional ethics and political philosophy as they apply to matters of educational practice and policy.

In this book, Strike argues that ethics are all about creating and sustaining that very reality. The book is an easy read and does an excellent job at exploring real dilemmas that face school leaders everywhere. Within the text, Strike openly recognizes that many school leaders are going to face constant challenges in their efforts to maximize their limited resources to provide maximum benefit to all students while also needing to decide what will produce the greatest good for the greatest number of students. These are challenges that

all school leaders, regardless of demographics, can relate to.

Ethical Leadership in Schools: Creating Community in an Environment of Accountability, offers several ethical dilemmas typical of what school administrators will likely face, and offers ethical ways of coming to grips with such dilemmas. These ethical dilemmas are offered in the form of scenarios in each chapter. This is particularly helpful since school leaders are often required to make judgments about what is desirable and at the same time possible for all their students, regardless of their different needs. Strike contends that this is called leading from the principle of equal respect, that is, the duty to respect all people is not dependent on their particular capacities and their potential. In usual fashion, Strike argues that our communities are stronger and better when all are cared for. This is a recurring theme within the book as well. Strike offers several ideas and recommendations for how to sell this belief to all stakeholders involved including students, parents, families, and supporters. This is very beneficial as it offers a rationale for school leaders to do the right thing as well as methods for convincing others to act accordingly. It is probable that school leaders will revisit Strike's text when preparing ways to convince stakeholders to help in pursuing actions that support a commitment to justice, fairness, and respect.

Perhaps one of the most beneficial items in the text is Strike's intention to help principals understand that the idea of democratic leadership. Strike contends that democratic leaders make decision democratically. These democratic leaders make decisions based on two criteria. Democratic decisions are those where "the interests of all citizens of the polity[1] are fairly considered" (p. 95) and "decisions are made democratically when all citizens of the polity have a fair chance to influence decisions via voice and/or authority" (p. 95). No only does this give

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[1] Strike's definition of polity is defined as a certain type of community in which decisions are made in a way that respects the political equality of all citizens. Strike defines political equality to consist of two things: One, people have equal interest and no one is inherently entitled to better treatment than anyone else. Second, people are entitled to a fair say in decision-making.

members of the school community a voice but while doing so he maintains that it does not confer upon them authority, contending instead that authority resides with the school leader. Strike believes that this means the principal needs to understand what it means to be mindful conduit of legislative authority as well as what it takes to educate all stakeholders in regards to the legitimacy of his role.

In chapter 1, titled *Moral Principles and Moral Principals?* Strike offers a scenario in which he uses it to introduce some issues surrounding the ethics of leadership. Strike contends that ethics has often been understood to involve two basic questions: What is good? and furthermore, What is right? The questions on how to live well together focuses the discussion of these two questions on the nature of good communities. "What is good?" concerns the fundamental aims of communities, while "What is right?" concerns the principles and shared understandings that enable social cooperation. Strike encourages the reader to view ethical leadership as the art of creating good school communities. He does an excellent job of offering many possibilities on how your stakeholders may feel in regards to the scenario given. In chapter 1, the focus is to introduce many issues surrounding ethical leadership while offering information on ethics and leadership, ethics and morality, ethics and pluralism, lying, trust and community, and three historical approaches. Since the book is about the ethics of leadership, I feel that chapter 1 gives all readers, regardless of experience in school leadership, a good foundation in the ethics of leadership and how it relates to morality. It accomplishes this while encouraging the reader to view ethical leadership as the art of creating good school communities. Strike insists that the role of the educational leader is to create good educational communities and that these such communities should have worthy aims and a fair basis of cooperation, thus his aim is to help school leaders gather a good understanding of what a good educational community really is.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to discussing the goals of education. Strike argues that there should be four broad goals: students should become economically competent, students should become good citizens and moral people, students should be capable of examining their life, as well

as discovering ideas, activities, and relationships that
enrich their lives. Strike states, "these goals are big-tented
and can serve as the goals of public schools" (p. 19). The
scenario offered in this chapter is an extension of the
scenario offered in chapter 1. Arguably, Strike does this
intentionally so that the reader can continue to get a feel
for such issues.

Also in this chapter Strike introduces what he believes are
the four central goals of education: human capital
development, the capacity for an examined life,
citizenship, and the development of those capacities that
enhance experience. He addresses questions directly
related to these four central goals such as "What kind of
curriculum does this require?" and "What kind of teaching
does this require?" This is followed by three conclusions
that can be drawn from this discussion. The first is that
education should emphasize cognitive development.
Strike states that "Our children should grow in their
capacity to reason, assess evidence, deliberate with others
about common goals, appreciate what is genuinely
worthwhile, and understand and appreciate the views and
cultures of others" (p. 40). Strike contends that cognitive
development is a kind of intersection where all these goals
meet.

The second conclusion focuses directly on the education
that we offer our young people and how it should be
consistent with pluralism and individual variability. It is a
fact that people come from different cultures and have
different capacities. What Strike is suggesting here is that
in education there is no such thing as one-size-fits-all and
that this approach would not provide variability that would
need to be required in order to enable people to discern the
life that is best for them. Strike states, "a good education
provides the opportunity to explore a range of human
practices: art, music, sport, and craft need to be there
along with academic subjects" (p. 41). This statement
coincides with Strikes idea that basic knowledge and skills
are developed as students start to form an understanding of
the direction they want to go in life and he feels there
should be an opportunity for them to take these different
paths after they develop this direction.

The third and last conclusion in this chapter lends itself to
the thought that cultural opportunities, in which public

schools offer, need to be big-tented enough to
accommodate the diversity reflective of our diverse
society. Strike uses Music as an example. He contends
that students need to be able to learn to appreciate the
music of their own cultures and that of others. Strike
offers three basic guidelines using the example of Music.
The first is that while the music that is taught may reflect
who is in a given school, students in any particular school
should not experience the music curriculum as an act of
cultural or religious domination. Secondly, the goal
should be to learn and appreciate what is best in a variety
of musical traditions being explored, not simply focused
on just reinforcing the preferences that students already
bring with them to school.

Lastly, he suggests that students should learn to come to
appreciate the traditions of others as well as their own
traditions. Strike concludes the chapter by making several
comments on the implications of these ideas while
respecting the two major themes of this book as well as
community and accountability, and suggests three items
we should be careful to avoid as we continue to strive to
make schools accountable. These three items are:
  • Seek a way to make schools accountable for
  cognitive development
  • Seek a way to make schools accountable for
  implementing a broad and flexible education for all
  • Seek a way to make schools accountable for
  avoiding cultural dominance while remaining big-
  tented

Strike contends that if your school is to be a good school,
you must view the test results as a measure but not as the
meaning of education. What this means for educators is
that our school and our school community must interpret
the meaning of test results, and to do that effectively, we
need a defensible conception of the kind of education we
wish to provide. The four goals Strike discusses in this
chapter are a perfect example of what type of framework is
needed for such a conception.

Chapter 3, *Constitutional Essentials* Part I, focuses on the
discussion of two essential freedoms: intellectual and
religious liberty. In this chapter Strike discusses both
intellectual and religious liberty and their role in creating
good educational communities. He argues that the goals

of education that are described within the chapter require that we create intellectual communities in our schools and contends that free and open debate should be both cherished and protected. Strike also supports the idea that "we must give provisional authority to certain ideas because they are essential tools of thought" (p. 19). In this chapter there is a deliberate emphasis on the current debate about creationism and intelligent design. He discusses the freedoms of conscience and religious liberty and shows why religious ideas cannot be given provisional authority in the public school sector. He begins the chapter by developing what he calls *constitutional essentials*, in which he also calls 'the core convictions of any political community'. What Strike is implying here is that these essentials are the political community's most basic answers to the reoccurring question, 'How shall we live together? The main task of chapter 3 (and the next two chapters) is to help create a way of understanding these constitutional essentials in which Strike states, "are appropriate for an educational community and that serve the broad educational goals discussed in Chapter 2" (p. 44). He believes that in order to develop your school into a strong and healthy educational community, a thorough understanding of these constitutional essentials is the crucial element.

Finally, Chapter 3 argues two main central ideas. The first is that inquiry, discussion, and debate should be characterized within the classroom and how many educators in recent years have argued that American schools are (or should be) characterized by what is called *academic press*. This stems from the idea that we should recognize that academic achievement is the central purpose of schooling and furthermore that all schools should be setting high expectations for student achievement. This should be implemented along with the thought in mind that no conception of academic press that does not include a central place for the debate of important ideas is worthy of American democracy. After all, it is the ideas that are vigorously tested and contested that are fundamental to the goals of an excellent education. Strike adds, "However, the classroom must also recognize the authority of those ideas that function as the tools of thought and inquiry in various domains and that are essential if free and open debate is to be a means for the pursuit of truth rather than a babble of self-assertion" (p.

that educators and school leaders must make a commitment to realizing the larger conception of the education and the role it plays in the lives of their students. This larger conception should consider such elements as citizenship, the examined life, and the acquisition of capacities that help enable students to appreciate experience, all have weight. Strike observes, "It is this conception of education that must be equalized. We may not reduce the education made available to minority or disadvantaged students so as to focus more exclusively on raising test scores" (p. 90).

Thirdly, school leaders must understand that community is important. Creating the sense within the community that 'we are all in this together', will make many educational goals become more attainable as well as promoting equal opportunity and multiculturalism. When relationships among students and their families are shaped by values such as loyalty and belonging, it is much easier to create and achieve an environment in which students learn from one another and adequate resources are made readily available to meet the needs of the community's most vulnerable members.

Chapter 5 examines the connections between the concepts of democracy, community, and accountability. Strike gives special attention to the conflict between different norms of legitimate authority and also how these generate role conflicts for leaders with regards to accountability. He argues, "accountability is not merely a matter of raising test scores. Leaders are accountable to professional standards and ideas and to members of the local community as well" (p. 19). Throughout chapter 5 Strike argues that democracy is not only a way of effectively making decisions; it is also a way of legitimating them. He reasons, "Members of democratic societies would be unlikely to accept the decisions of a monarch even if those decisions were routinely wise and produced good outcomes" (p. 92). He argues that even if the decisions made legitimately, the community would view them as illegitimate because they were not properly made, in other words they were made without the consent and participation of the community, and therefore such decisions would be considered undemocratic regardless if they were wise decisions. Since school leaders often have the challenge of creating democratic communities while

also acting as democratic leaders, they must also obey the decisions, of democratically elected legislatures, school boards, and state legislatures. Strike uses the scenario presented in Chapter 1, but now adding two letters for the reader to consider: one is from teachers, and the other is from a group of parents. In the letters, it is apparent that both the parents and teachers are unhappy with how you as a school leader have handled the task of aligning the curriculum in your school with the state standards. Again, Strike does an excellent job of giving real life scenarios that school leaders commonly face and the text helps the reader understand the norms found in the two letters, while also keeping a reasonable view of community and accountability. Throughout the chapter Strike examines many different provisional definitions of democracy and how democratic decisions are made. He offers that democratic decisions are made in the following two criteria's.

- Decisions are made democratically when the interests of all citizens of the polity are fairly considered
- Decisions are made democratically when all citizens of the polity have a fair chance to influence decisions via voice and/or authority

It is here (p. 95) that Strike examines several adequate ways of defining democracy from Abraham Lincoln's definition, to America's definition, and to his own. This ultimately helps shape a broader term of democracy in which many views are applied. Strike also discusses the weaknesses of representative democracy and how they meet the requirements of democracy imperfectly. He argues that in capitalist society, there is always risk that the government will be become plutocracy. Many times in larger political communities, influence and voice are proportionately reduced and when voice depends on monies, the rich may dominate or wield disproportionate influence. All of these are vices of representative democracy.

The arguments made in chapter 5 are generated around two broad ideas in that there are multiple norms of legitimate authority in our society and that schools as well as school leaders should be informed by a vision of accountability in which it takes into account all of these such multiple norms. School leaders must respect the sovereignty of the

legislature, as must individual results. Strike notes that expertise must be respected as well as stating, "The voices of those most immediately affected by our institutions and practices must be heard and considered" (p. 110). School leaders must be community builders and serve as the intermediaries of the school. Strike gives great definitions of each, which will benefit the reader, especially if they currently are, or have aspirations to become a school leader. He concludes the chapter with what he believes to be the best definition of democratic leadership in that "it consists of the will and ability to do these things" (p. 110), he writes this with regards to a school leader having the ability to build community as well as being an intermediary.

Chapter 6 focuses on the ethics of decision-making. Chapter 5 also touched on this in some aspects in that legitimate decision-making was the main focus as well as who had authority over decisions. Chapter 6 is more devoted to the other aspects of decision-making. Strike argues that importance should be placed on the distinction between data-driven and evidence-driven decision making. Throughout a good part of chapter 6, Strike argues for evidence-driven decision making. He also promotes "that a core idea for good educational organizations is that they need to institutionalize evidence-driven decision making in a way that makes it an ongoing collective responsibility" (p. 19).

Also in the chapter, Strike connects the idea of due process to the idea of evidence-based decision making. Since leaders are generally urged to employ data-driven decision making, Strike argues that school leaders should not think of decisions as data-driven and rather they should think of them as evidence-driven. His contention is that we need to recognize a much broader range of what counts as evidence-driven decision making while encouraging professional community. Since due process concerns the proper use of evidence, Strike argues we should think of the rules of due process as a kind of institutionalized rationality. He connects this evidence-driven decision making to due process by using two connected scenarios. Strike uses the scenario from the first chapter but asks the reader to pretend that the school is now a high school, and you are its principal. Perhaps one of the highlights of chapter 6 is Strikes section titled 'The Anatomy of Ethical

Decision Making' in which he contends that 'a good decision is one that has four characteristics" (p. 113). They are as follows:

- The decision is supported by evidence. This evidence supports the claim that acting on this decision is more likely to achieve desired ends at an appropriate cost than other courses of action that might be taken.
- The ends aimed at by the decision are the ends that ought to be aimed at.
- The decision can be implemented morally.
- The decision has been legitimately achieved.

In this section Strike refers to these four characteristics as 'Parts 1, 2, and 3'. Strike argues that Part 1 and 2 suggest that at its core, the decision making process does involve 'ends-means reasoning'. Part 1 suggests the ends desired along with the most efficient or most cost-effective means of pursuing these ends. Part 2 of Strikes definition suggests that we must justify the ends we aim at as well as the by what means we choose to achieve them. Thus the ends we aim at are the ones in which we ought to aim at, while they most definitely need to be worthy and legitimate ends. Part 3 requires us to consider the means we choose not just in regards to efficiency, but also with regard to moral. In other words, we need to justify the means in which we choose by showing they do in fact have worthy ends. Although Strike does not specifically discuss the legal requirements of due process, he does however suggest several ideas about what due process requires as it relates to ethical decision making in a more broad sense while illustrating most of such cases in another scenario. Here Strike adds:

> Ethical decisions must be made for relevant reasons. A relevant reason is one that serves the legitimate goals of the organization. Schools exist for the benefit of students, particularly to educate them. Hence, making decisions for relevant reasons, in educational contexts, means that decisions are justified primarily in terms of their beneficial effects for students. (p. 124)

Chapter 6 reminds the school leader that it is their job to institutionalize the rule of reason in your school. As a school leader it is your job to make good ethical decisions in regards to several items including educational programs,

personnel decisions, and discipline. These decisions
should be made fairly and this means there must be
procedures in place for gathering and weighing evidence,
which in a sense, is the essence of due process.
Chapter 7 is entitled "Professional Community and the
Ethics of Accountability." The chapter focuses primarily
on the ethics of accountability. Strike argues that
accountability has the potential to do both good and to do
harm. His contention is that accountability, in a school
that can be collectively reflective about what it means to
have a good education as well as how to provide it, will be
able to not only succeed, but also effectively employ those
accountability measures needed to improve. Schools that
are not able to be collectively reflective are likely to suffer
from the certain potential evils of accountability such as
gaming, goal erosion, and motivational displacement.
Strike contends that educators should be accountable
because accountability programs in some ways provide
educators with incentives to perform in a public system
where there is almost no existence (or few incentives) for
job performance. With a successful incentive system in
place, we as educators can devise valid and reliable
measures of everything we wish to accomplish as well as a
way to devise incentives that adequately motivate
educators to succeed on such measures. Educators also
need not to provide incentives for undesirable measures.
Although Strike, admittedly is doubtful that in the world
of education, either of these things can be implemented
adequately. Here he states, "If we fail, then we open up
public education to three vices of accountability. I will
call these *goal displacement, motivational displacement,*
and *gaming.* Given that accountability is a fact of life, we
need an antidote for these ills. The antidote is professional
community" (p. 131). Strike argues that the cure for these
vices is professional community in which he defines that
as the basic idea that educators are to be accountable and
what they need to be accountable for is providing their
students with an excellent education.

Strike lends a great bulk of literature within chapter 7 to
those three vices and how they relate to No Child Left
Behind, Standards, (AYP) Benchmarks, and Test Scores.
In an age when school leaders are accountable to
legislature for raising test scores, standards based
accountability, and reaching benchmarks, Strike does an
excellent job exploring the limitations to such

accountability as well as the limitations of excessive reliance on those benchmarks and incentives. He reminds us, "this conception of standards is essential to any adequate conception of good education" (p. 141). Strike is not saying that we should reject standards-based education or benchmarks, he is implying that the cooption of the term *standards* by the standards as benchmarks meaning, will cause us to miss something educationally important. He also makes several points about standards as criteria of excellence. They are:

- Standards are employed to judge the excellence of performances
- Standards are things to be internalized
- Standards can be recognized only by those with sufficient expertise
- Standards connect learning to belonging
- Standards of this sort are transformative
- The mastery of standards enhances the quality of experience

Strike argues that school leaders must find a way to balance all the different forms of accountability and different norms of legitimate authority. "The school leader must be able to respect the sovereignty of the legislature and its need to monitor and motivate achievement through test-based accountability while also creating and maintaining strong professional cultures" (p. 146). Although he admits this is a difficult role that comes along with conflicting norms and expectations, Strike is confident that capable and dedicated leaders are up to the challenge. The author ends chapter 7 with several helpful sections titled *Good School Communities, Good Leaders of Good Communities,* and *Good Leaders and Accountability*. Here he reiterates the importance of community as it relates to the success of the school and how good school leaders create a school community in which people live well together. School leaders "must also find ways to honor these mandates and benchmarks while serving a praiseworthy conception of education and creating a professional, democratic, and deliberative culture in your school" (p. 148). Strike reminds us that as school leaders and educators, we must serve the legislature and resist the spirit of the age. We must find ways to meet benchmarks but also honor a higher standard of a good education. Ethical school leaders effectively create community in a world that Strike contends wants hierarchy. The author

notes that these are by no means easy tasks, but they are in fact the tasks you must accept in order to become and ethical leader.

Educators everywhere, aspiring school leaders, and active school leaders such as assistant principals, principals, and superintendents, should read this book. This book would be an excellent read for graduate students, masters students, and doctoral students, in the area of educational leadership. This text would also be beneficial to the general public in that it offers a look into the challenge that school leaders face in their attempt to create a sense of community in an environment of accountability. The scenarios offered in each chapter that deal with many different aspects of ethical dilemmas, would benefit school leaders everywhere as they face similar situations in their daily jobs. This book would also be useful in coursework preparing aspiring school leaders such as within an Educational Administrative program, Principal Licensure program, or in general, an Educational Leadership program. The author does an excellent job using scenarios throughout the text to enhance the capacity of school leaders. Since school leaders face many ethical dilemmas for which there are seldom-easy answers, these scenarios help present possible dilemmas a school leader might face, while offering possible solutions to such dilemmas. It is no wonder that this book is considered to be a major addition to the series as part of the Leadership for Learning initiative of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (http://www.aasa.org/).

About the Reviewer

Denver J. Fowler is a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Ohio University. Denver also serves as a part-time adjunct professor and lecturer at The Ohio State University within the College of Education and Human Ecology and is employed full-time by Licking Heights Local School District where he teaches sixth grade. Mr. Fowler holds a Masters of Arts in Education degree from Mount Vernon Nazarene University and a Bachelor of Science in Education degree from The Ohio State University. His research interests include: (1) Educational Leadership; (2) Ethics in Educational Leadership; (3) Educational Administration; (4) Ethics in Educational Administration, and (5) Urban

Education.