

*Step In, Step Up: A Woman's School Leadership Journey*—  
Learning Forward, December 2019 || Jane Kise, Ed.D. jane@janekise.com

## Your 12-Week Journey to Stepping In and/or Up

*These exercises are designed for individual reflection and group discussion. While the book will certainly add depth, these are designed as stand-alone questions. We recommend using a journal to record your thoughts and partnering with at least one other person for this journey.*

- Week 1: Research shows that women tend to associate positional power with abuse of power rather than with having a platform from which they can influence change. Yet we need women in leadership—to rebalance values in education, to draw from the widest talent pool possible, to redraw what leadership looks like, and to model leadership for the next generation. Use the following prompts to consider what might keep you motivated on the leadership journey. What would you like to have “Power To” and Power With” to accomplish?
  - As an educator, I dream of...
  - My leader role model is \_\_\_\_\_ because...
  - I can talk to \_\_\_\_\_ about my dreams because...
  - The most impressive thing I've seen a school leader is...
  - My “why” for stepping into leadership—what I hope to influence—is...
- Week 2: Which of the following gender barriers unearthed by research (and there are more) are problematic in your workplace? What conversations need to happen and how can you make them happen?
  - Unconscious biases in hiring practices
  - Differing expectations teachers have of male and female leaders
  - Lack of intentional career planning by women as compared to men
  - Women's judgments of other women
  - The confidence gap—women assuming they need all of the skills before they can apply
  - Women seeing the “real” work of education as direct contact with students
  - Women receiving more intense scrutiny than men
- Week 3: Take the Brain Energy and Bandwidth Quiz at <https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/4653500/Brain-Energy-and-Bandwidth-Survey-III> Use your answers to identify where you might set a goal that would free up time for the reflection that leads to developing as a leader. What, specifically, will you do? How will you hold yourself accountable?
- Week 4: One way to build confidence for the leadership journey is to identify the strengths you have and how you will put them to use. Consider taking the Virtues in Action survey at [www.viacharacter.org/www/character](http://www.viacharacter.org/www/character) or email [jane@janekise.com](mailto:jane@janekise.com) for a one-time complimentary code for the TypeCoach personality verifier available to leaders. Use this information to journal about your best self as a leader.



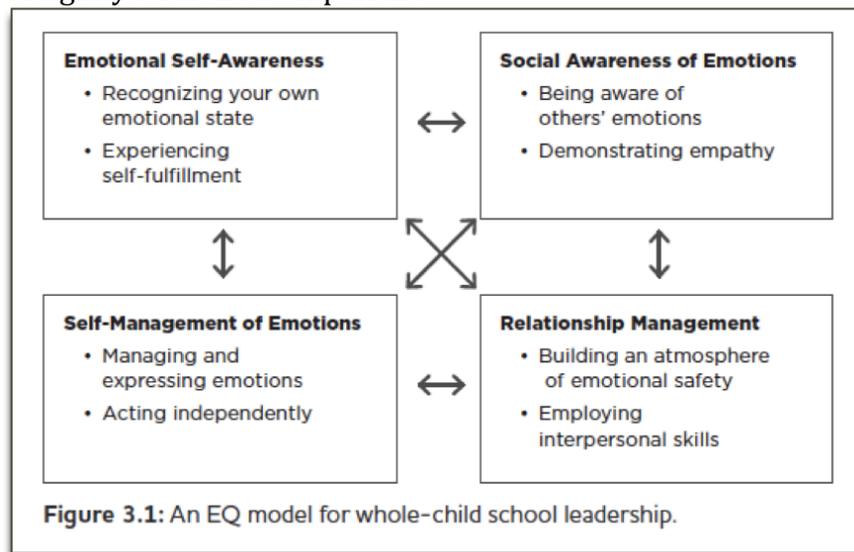
- Week 5: In leadership coaching, an important consideration is adult development. While this is a complex theory, journaling on the following questions can help you think about the dispositions you have and where you might need to work to move to the next level of adult development. Both of these questions deal with moving from the “socialized” level—which is the highest level a majority of adults reach—to “self-authored, which is the level reached by skillful leaders most admired by their teams.
  - Making decisions that bring harmony and align with community values is important, but sometimes leaders have to help their community step into uncharted territory. How comfortable are you with taking a carefully constructed stand? What do you do when you know people will be unhappy? How do you balance acting independently with collaborative leadership?
  - How well can you see both sides of issues? In many education issues where we see pendulum swings in initiatives or policies, both sides hold part of the truth and are in fact incomplete without the other. Working with these paradoxes skillfully is called “polarity thinking”, a required skill for leading complex systems such as schools. Take a stab at polarity thinking by listing what is valuable, and what might go wrong if you over-focus on, “power to” and “power with.” What are the potential upsides and downsides of both?
  
- Week 6: Thinking and Feeling, the decision-making styles described by Carl Jung’s framework of personality type, can be used to discuss the stereotypes surrounding how men and women are expected to behave. While people of all genders can and do hold either preference, socially constructed ideas of gender penalize those who don’t align with the expected pattern.
  - Use the chart below to reflect on your natural tendency. Good leadership decisions require agility with both Thinking and Feeling, but our initial thoughts default to one side or the other.
  - Then, consider a) what is honored in your learning community and b) how men who prefer Feeling and women who prefer Thinking are viewed.

**Table 6.3: Descriptors for Thinking and Feeling Preferences**

Descriptors of the Thinking Preference	Descriptors of the Feeling Preference
Logic	Values
Consistent rules	Rules that account for individual circumstances
Results	Harmony
Objective, impersonal criteria	Criteria formed from motives and values of those involved
Employment of skepticism	Employment of trust
Causes and effects and pros and cons	Common ground



- Week 7: “Imposter syndrome” is defined as feeling out of your depth, vulnerable, underqualified, or inexperienced—and women experience this more than men even when they are demonstrably overqualified for what they are doing. Does this sound familiar when you ponder stepping into a higher level of leadership? How might you use your knowledge of your strengths to lessen this? One resource can be found at [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com) Search for “The Confidence Gap” and you’ll find an essay and video link to Kay and Shipman’s inspiring work on this topic. Identify a next step in building your confidence.
  
- Week 8: Leadership development involves making the most of your strengths, but also knowing how overuse of strengths can be problematic—and how just about every strength comes with a built-in blind spot. A place to begin is with emotional intelligence (EQ). The diagram below shows the eight components of EQ discussed in the book. Consider what each encompasses, how it might affect what you wish to accomplish as a leader, and your agility with that component.



- Week 9: Which of these communication traps common to women do you fall into? What action step might you take to improve your communication?
  - Apologizing, such as, “I could be wrong but...” or “This is probably just my own opinion...”
  - Avoiding conflict
  - Allowing male dominance to continue with patterns such as men interrupting women during meetings
  - Abandoning other women when they are interrupted, dismissed, or belittled



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- Week 10: Think about past conflicts, bias incidents, or other issues that where you avoided conversations. Were there consequences? If so, what happened? Consider reflecting on your values, your goals or hopes for education, and your strengths. What new guidelines might you set for yourself on when you truly need to speak up and have those difficult conversations? Often, this is the first step in finding the motivation to master the skills needed for those conversations.
- Week 11: From where will your support come on the leadership journey? Are there women and men in your community interested in ensuring gender equity becomes reality? Who might be an accountability partner for taking time for your own development? How are you going to make this a priority?
- Week 12: Reconsider your “why” for stepping into leadership. Revise it if your thoughts have changed since Week 1. Then, write a fictional letter to yourself from a student or teacher who benefitted from your leadership toward this purpose. What will they say about how you influenced their school or professional lives?