

# PROLOGUE

## My Story

My perception of myself as a teacher shifted during the summer of 1997 when my husband and I were on vacation in Oregon. It was August and we had another couple of weeks before I had to be home to start getting my classroom ready for the new school year. We were on the coast, only about six miles north of the California border, when my husband got a call from his assistant's wife. Jeff had been taken to the hospital, and my husband had to fly home immediately. I took him to the airport and prepared to start the long drive home alone.

Even though the circumstances were unfortunate, I didn't mind. I have always loved long trips alone in the car because it gives me a chance to listen to books that I never get a chance to read when I'm working. As I headed inland to catch Interstate 5, I stopped at a bookstore in Ashland, Oregon. Two audio books immediately caught my eye – for two different reasons. The first one was Daniel Goleman's ***Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than I.Q.*** It had recently become a best-seller, and everyone was talking about it. But my busy schedule as a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, wife, and mother left little time for reading.

Then I picked up Joseph Jaworski's ***Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership.*** I didn't even read the whole title before deciding to buy it – I just saw the word "synchronicity." I had never been particularly interested in the topic of leadership, but I had recently become fascinated with those timely coincidences, or synchronicities, that seem to happen when we're least expecting them. This seemed to be one of them – so I bought the tape.

I finished listening to the two tapes somewhere below Sacramento and was absentmindedly thinking about returning to teach 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I began wondering when the 10-year-olds I would be teaching that year would become leaders in the world. It seemed to me that, in general, in our 20's we are usually in the process of learning about ourselves and are still finding our own direction in life. It's in the third decade of life that true leaders emerge. In fact, you only have to be 35 to run for President of the United States.

So then I did a little mental math. When would my kids turn 30? I suddenly realized that sometime around the year 2020 the 5<sup>th</sup> graders I was returning home to teach would be making the decisions that could affect the future of the world.

An awesome and frightening thought!

In that instant the phrase “**Leadership 2020**” flashed across my mind and my imagination began running wild.

During the rest of the trip home my mind was active planning a program that would begin to prepare my elementary school children to be the leaders we will all depend upon in the future. I would call it **Leadership 2020**. When I got home, I typed up an 11-page pilot program that I would ask my principal about implementing in our school. It wasn’t a “leadership training” program – but rather a way to structure situations within which kids could practice true leadership skills – or as Goleman suggested, experiences where their “EQ” would serve them better than their “IQ.”

There’s more to that story, but, as synchronicity would have it, my husband’s work situation shifted that year, a job opened up for him in that same little town on the coast, and by May I had decided to retire early and move to Oregon. I was still committed to the ideas I had that day driving home, but I felt that leaving the classroom would give me the opportunity to pursue my dream by starting a consulting business. I would call it: **Leadership 2020: Learning Environments for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**. I’ve had some marginal success with that over the years, but I’ve come to believe that lasting positive change must start small – one person, one classroom at a time. It must come “from the inside out.”

That was just over 20 years ago – and as it turned out this year, 2020, has turned out to be transformative in many ways. A tiny virus began moving across the globe near the end of 2019, and now that coronavirus, or as it is called COVID-19, is causing the entire world to rethink just about everything. Schools are closing and parents are, by necessity, having to make lifestyle adjustments because their children are staying at home. “Distance Learning” has become a way of life – and stress is on the rise among parents and educators.

This book is about the sort of change that takes place slowly – but intentionally. In many ways it involves just a subtle change of perception or attitude. It’s like a seed that, once planted doesn’t seem to make a lot of difference. But as it is nurtured in an environment conducive to growth, the results can be transformative. Somewhere in this book I hope you can find some seeds worth planting – and perhaps some tools that you can use.