



# Radical Rules for Schools: Adaptive Action for Complex Change

*Leslie Patterson Ph.D.*

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School reform in the United States continues to disappoint, as evidenced by persistent gaps in performance, particularly among students who come to school from marginalized groups and communities in our society. The challenges are overwhelming: huge and highly diverse systems, uncertainty at every turn, and myriad perspectives and approaches to doing the "right" thing. In such systems it will never be enough to focus only on the most urgent challenges. Rampant uncertainty demands that we address dysfunctional dynamics of human interaction deep within the system. *Radical Rules for Schools* provides a path for seeing, understanding, and influencing the dynamics to shape patterns of generative teaching and learning. Using the principles of Human Systems Dynamics (HSD), this practical book is designed to help build adaptive capacity to help individuals and groups in education adapt to the challenges and changes they face. We recommend a short list of simple--yet radical--rules to guide decision making and action to set conditions for generative teaching and learning. We argue that, if educators consistently follow these radically simple rules, the underlying dynamics of teaching and learning will shift, and the system will become ever more sensitive, responsive, and robust. We realize that this may sound simplistic, almost like magical thinking. What we also know is that the potential of self-organization in complex systems is powerful. In as much as we can see, understand and influence the dynamics of interaction and decision making, we are able to shape the patterns required to ensure high levels of learning for each individual. We offer this book as one response to the failed school reforms of the last three decades, suggesting these simple rules as the framework for bringing about significant change. We believe the ideas we present in this book, building on the foundations of HSD, offer a path to solutions based in inquiry and adaptive action.

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