



## **As Jazz**

Those who have used music metaphors in describing leadership, particularly jazz metaphors, are on a quantum track. Improvisation is the saving skill. As leaders, we play a crucial role in selecting the melody, setting the tempo, establishing the key, and inviting the players. But that is all we can do. The music comes from something we cannot direct, from a unified whole created among the players...a rational holism that transcends separateness. In the end, when it works, we sit back, amazed and grateful.

**Margaret Wheatley**  
*Leadership and the New Science*

## **As Sculpture**



**Sculptors work bit by bit until they release the form inherent within their mind's eye—a process of unfolding that fits our sense of the process of creating learning organizations. Sculpting requires careful planning, yet it also requires that the artist respect and work with the unique properties of the raw materials. Sculpting demands that sculptors see reality from fresh angles and perspectives, a transformation of thinking that is also at the core of the learning organization. Sculptors use many different kinds of materials and generally prefer to work in a medium that evokes the unique message they want to voice.**

**Karen Watkins and Victoria Marsick  
*Sculpting the Learning Organization***

## **As Clouds**



**I find pleasure in letting these new concepts swirl about me. Like clouds, they appear, transform and move on. Clouds themselves are self-organizing, changing into thunderstorms, hurricanes or rain fronts with the influx of atmospheric energy or foreign particles. We are capable of similar transformations when we trust that new thoughts and ideas can self-organize in the environment of our minds and organizations. And we would do well to take clouds more seriously. They are spectacular examples of strange and unpredictable systems; structured in ways we never imagined possible. After all, how do you hold a hundred tons of water in the air with no visible means of support? You build a cloud.**

**Margaret Wheatley**  
***Leadership and the New Science***

## As A Child

One day when as a child, I stood beneath a swing frame that towered above me. Another child, older than me, told me of a time a girl swung and swung until, finally she looped over the top. I listened in silent awe. She had done what we only dreamed of doing, swung so uncontrollably high that finally not even gravity could hold her. I sit now in a small playground, watching my youngest son run from one activity to another. He has climbed, swung and jumped, whirled around on a spinning platform, and wobbles along a rolling log, until laughing he loses his balance. Everywhere I look, I see bodies in motion, energies in search of adventure.

It seems the very experiences these children seek out are ones we avoid: disequilibrium, novelty, loss of control, surprise. These made for a good playground, but for a dangerous life. We avoid these things so much that if an organization were to take the form of a teeter-totter, we'd brace it up at both ends, turning it into a straight plank.

**Margaret Wheatley**  
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## As a Community



**Community is the tie that binds us together in special ways to something more significant than ourselves: shared values and ideals. It lifts us to higher levels of self-understanding, commitment, and performance; beyond the reaches of the shortcomings and difficulties we face in our everyday lives. Community can help us be transformed from a collection of “I’s” to a collective “we,” thus providing us with a unique and enduring sense of identity, belonging, and place. Relationships in communities are characterized by the kinds of emotions—personalization, authenticity, caring, and unconditional acceptance—found in families, extended families, neighborhoods, and other social organizations.**

**Thomas Sergiovanni**  
***Building Community in Schools***

## As a Stream

What is it that streams can teach me about organizations? I am attracted to the diversity I see, to these swirling combinations of mud, silt, grass, water, rocks. This stream has an impressive ability to adapt, to shift the configurations, to let the power balance move, to create new structures. But driving this adaptability, making it all happen, I think, is the water's need to flow. Water answers to gravity, to downhill, to the call of the ocean. The forms change, but the mission remains clear. Structures emerge, but only as temporary solutions that facilitate rather than interfere. There is none of the rigid reliance on single forms, on true answers, on past practices that I have learned in business. Streams have more than one response to rocks; otherwise, there'd be no Grand Canyon. Or else Grand Canyons everywhere.



**Margaret Wheatley**  
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