

Leadership Essay
ED 730
May 2, 2011

Define Leadership - especially in the context of an educational setting.

"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it. — Dwight D. Eisenhower

Eisenhower's definition of leadership is veraciously on the mark, particularly in the context of an educational setting. As educators, we work diligently to engage and motivate students so they want to: learn, read, think critically, create, collaborate, and ultimately become life-long learners and leaders. This is no easy feat. Yet when a child begs for more reading time, dives enthusiastically into a research project, or makes a cross-curriculum connection that genuinely excites them, I guarantee a teacher is smiling! Similarly, effective educational administrators purposefully and deliberately seek to create a climate and culture that promotes and perpetuates ongoing learning and growth of students and teachers alike. According to James McGregor Burns' concept of *Transformational Leadership*: "The transformational leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower." (p 208) I agree wholeheartedly that educational leadership involves motivation, empowerment, and genuine concern and commitment to the growth of the whole person, whether student or staff.

To create a transformational environment within an educational setting, effective leaders establish and maintain several vital components. First and foremost, leadership is evident in a school that shares a moral purpose and vision. This vision and purpose must drive the mission. Therefore, it is not enough for a leader to have a moral purpose; she must express it, clarify it, and ask others to commit to it. Secondly, effective teachers and administrators continually work to develop and maintain positive relationships with students by establishing mutual respect, trust, and a safe environment for learning. The importance of relationships extends beyond the classroom. Therefore, establishing productive working-

relationships with colleagues is critical to the success of instructional teams, buildings, district committees, and a plethora of school-parent-community organizations. In the words of Michael Fullan, “If moral purpose is job one, relationships are job two, as you can’t get anywhere without them.” (p. 51). Thirdly, effective educational leaders lead by example. They model and exhibit the very characteristics they wish to instill in their students and observe in their colleagues. Successful leaders motivate others by communicating and modeling enthusiasm, commitment, integrity, flexibility, and innovation.



Leadership defined: (noun that behaves like a verb)

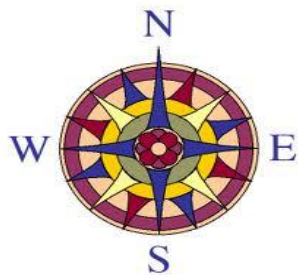
In a nut shell, I believe leadership is about forging relationships and perpetuating communication centered on and around a common vision, goals, and values.

Craft a personal "vision statement"

My life is purposeful. Every encounter has opportunity potential and meaning whether with family, friends, colleagues, or strangers. My "calling" in life is to utilize my talents and strengths in the field of education—Nancy Kochmann 2011

An educational leader, particularly an elementary school principal needs a strong guiding force—call it a vision or moral purpose, but it must be the compass that determines the path of every aspect of her leadership whether it be instructional or managerial in nature. As a teacher, my moral purpose has been creating lifelong learners. Upon earning my Master's degree in reading with an emphasis on critical literacy, my purpose evolved to reflect the importance of lifelong reading and critical thinking skills. Similarly, after attending the North Dakota Curriculum Initiative (NDCI) this year and reviewing the Common Core standards, I appreciate the importance of 21st century skills that will be required of our students and selves: creative, critical thinking/problem solving and collaboration. And lastly, insights I've gained throughout my life and particularly as I pursue my administrative credential, have led me to value the importance of encouraging and empowering leadership in others. Therefore, my moral purpose as a teacher leader has expanded to facilitating the development of lifelong readers, thinkers, creators, collaborators, learners, and leaders. As a principal, my moral purpose remains the same, but my student-centered canvas has expanded to include all students and staff.

To create and perpetuate
an environment that
facilitates the
development of life-long
readers, thinkers,
creators, collaborators,
learners, and leaders.



Using the results of the self-assessment inventories you completed during this course (MBTI, Colors, Leadership and Management Style) how would you describe yourself as a leader? What are the particular leadership skills and capabilities you tend to rely on? What do you perceive as particular strengths and possible weaknesses?

Optimist: someone who isn't sure whether life is a tragedy or a comedy but is tickled silly just to be in the play—Robert Brault

My leadership style is personal and relational. My father was a basketball coach and I grew up in a family of seven. Teamwork was not an option, it was a necessity! I believe my greatest leadership asset is that I am socially resourceful. I can communicate effectively and am comfortable one-on-one or with a large group. I truly believe that learning from the experiences of others is an incredibly valuable resource. Learning about others is also a valuable tool. Exhibiting sincere interest in people empowers a leader with knowledge, perspective, and insights they may not have considered. In addition, others are likely to increase their receptiveness to anything you have to say or hope to accomplish when they sense your genuine interest in their point of view.

Not surprisingly, my Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator, (MBTI), labeled me as an ENFJ—Teacher. According to the notes from class, this personality type is: “Externally focused, with real concern for how others think and feel.” ENFJs are also described as, “Very effective at managing people issues, and leading group discussions.” I believe this description is an accurate analysis of my personality. Likewise, upon completion of Lewin’s Leadership Style Inventory, I scored as a Participative Leader. The importance of developing relationships, utilizing input from others when decision-making, and considering multiple perspectives have always guided my effectiveness as a leader.

In addition to my people skills, I am competitive with myself. I constantly strive to learn more, accomplish more, and set new goals. I am positive, out-going, and hard working. In a team capacity, I am always compelled to ensure that my contribution is authentic and meaningful to the team's goal(s). In addition, I try to exalt those around me by acknowledging and valuing their accomplishments. I believe the most effective teams view success as a shared experience. I expect from others no more than what I expect from myself.

However, one of my weaknesses is that I often take too much on at one time. This has the potential for stressing out those around me because I unwittingly set unrealistic expectations of others and I may not get things done myself until the eleventh hour. Michael Fullen called this a Pacesetter Leadership Style and suggested that, "Pacesetters must learn the difference between competing in a change marathon and developing the capacity and commitment to solve complex problems" (p.37). Another weakness I possess is that I am not as decisive as I would like to be. I live in the gray area and like to make very informed decisions with input from everyone. While this can provide effective consensus building, I appreciate the fact that it slows the decision making process.



Describe the research and theories (e.g. authors & their work) that have contributed to your development as an educational leader (proper APA citation will be important here).

All three texts used for this course profoundly contributed to my development as an educational leader. Owens and Valesky offered tremendous historical insights by tracing the shifting paradigms among a number of disciplines. I found it poignant that when relating organizational theories to education, Owens and Valesky evaluated education as an immature science, with “no overarching paradigm” (p.7). Owens and Valesky loaded *Organizational Behavior in Education: Leadership and School Reform* with detailed, in-depth information and theories combined with contemporary understandings of group and leadership dynamics.

An easier read, yet equally thought-provoking work was Michael Fullan’s *Leading in a Culture of Change*. Straight forward and concise, Fullen describes leadership necessities into five main themes: moral purpose, understanding change, developing relationships, knowledge building, and coherence making. Clearly, Fullen’s concept of leadership is a compilation of numerous theories, philosophies, and research-based studies. What I appreciated about this book the most was how it brought everything from class—other readings, PowerPoint presentations, discussions, etc.—together into a cohesive, manageable model. It also gave me considerable pause to reflect and internalize the importance of each theme.

Last, but not least, *Reframing Organizations* by Bolman and Deal revolutionized my thinking and understanding of educational leadership. It provided me with a completely new schema in the way I understand my school, my district, and education as a whole. I now find myself approaching complex issues from multiple frames that actually give me greater understanding and insight. For me, all three texts have real life applicability, but the Bolman and Deal book was extraordinary in using real life tangible situations to drive home abstract frames

that I had never fully considered. Yet, when a frame was defined as, “a coherent set of ideas forming a prism or lens that enables you to see and understand more clearly what goes on from day to day,” (p.43), I thought of my superintendent’s symbolic use of a kaleidoscope as a metaphor to illustrate our district as a system:

“Combined, the elements of a Kaleidoscope are a system: The system creates a magnificent vision, a transformation of the ordinary into the extraordinary. Pieces of brokenness are transformed into a pattern with unity as well as diversity. Precious gems as well as broken shards of glass or fractured beads are transformed and integrated in the same vision,” (Flowers, 2010).

Beyond the texts as a whole, many theorists have left a strong mark on my thinking and behavior. One of my personal favorite classical theorists is Mary Parker Follett. Thinking in terms of a woman coming off the roaring twenties and into the still predominately male controlled “paternal” structure of organizations, Mary Parker Follett was beyond progressive. She was way ahead of her time in so many ways. Not only was she an innovative woman in uncharted territory, but she made remarkable human relations and social-psychology connections before either discipline fully existed. She promoted democratic conflict resolution and humanistic respect between workers and administration. In Follett’s words, “The best leaders get their orders obeyed because they too are obeying. Sincerity more than aggressiveness, is a quality of leadership.” (The Pioneers, p.56) Her work on reciprocal relationships, shared power, and negotiation within organizations earn her the title of true pioneer. Her entire philosophy impacts my development as a leader as does her intelligence, humanistic demeanor, innovativeness, and drive to challenge the status quo.

In a similar vein, three other human relations theorists have helped reinforce my leadership style and development: Elton Mayo, Douglas McGregor, and William Ouchi. Elton

Mayo appreciated the importance of considering “human variability [as] an important determinant of productivity” (Owens, p.75). In fact, Mayo felt so strongly that the human factor be considered by organizations, he exclaimed, “So long as commerce specializes in business methods which take no account of human nature and social motives, so long may we expect strikes and sabotage to be the ordinary accompaniment of industry” (Anteby, 2010).

The human relations movement gained momentum as organizations increasingly considered what Douglas McGregor described as “the human side of enterprise” (Owens, p.132) McGregor, a social psychologist, based much of his work on Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. McGregor proposed two contrasting viewpoints of management which he called Theory X and Theory Y. The former perpetuates a classical approach to management and an insufficient view of workers as innately passive employees in need of motivation and tight management. Theory Y, on the other hand, demonstrates McGregor’s belief that effective management maintains an understanding of and confidence in human aptitudes. Under Theory Y, effective managers understand the value of seeking to develop leadership capacity in all workers as opposed to preserving hierarchical power.

William Ouchi, a Japanese American professor at UCLA, suggested a third alternative to McGregor’s theories based largely on many Japanese management practices. Ouchi’s “Theory Z” highlights the importance of human resources development within organizations based on the premise that work consumes a significant portion of employees’ lives and therefore has paramount implications for their overall well-being. In turn, according to Theory Z, high employee contentedness and self-esteem will directly result in productivity gains.

Describe how you have used your leadership abilities to promote a positive culture in your school or organization.

I consciously strive to promote a positive culture in my school and district. For me, participation and engagement are the starting line. I am involved in numerous school and district committees and teams. When completing the OCDQ Culture and Climate Survey, I was disheartened that my school scored in the *average* range for disengaged behaviors. I believe a positive culture stems from engagement. One of the ways I have tried to encourage participation in our Title I Schoolwide Planning Year is by individually asking staff to participate in visits to other schools. I have facilitated eight such visits with participation of over 90% of our teachers and specialists. I have also included district administrators and our building principal. By engaging people in the process, ideas and perspectives have flourished; communication and relationships have improved; and ownership of reform strategies has begun to blossom.

Another way I have tried to promote a positive culture in my school is through my commitment to communication. As the Title I Schoolwide Coordinator, I understand that the only way to be successful in promoting a positive environment is by keeping all stakeholders in the loop. Each week I collaborate with each grade level team to assess program improvement. I have presented at numerous staff meetings on the Schoolwide process, AdvancEd goals, on behalf of the District Response to Intervention team, and on a number of other initiatives. In addition, I have presented to the PTA a number of times, the school board, and parents during Title I events.

Describe a time in your life when you had an opportunity to show your leadership ability in developing others within your school or organization. In what ways did you apply your leadership skills and abilities in this situation?

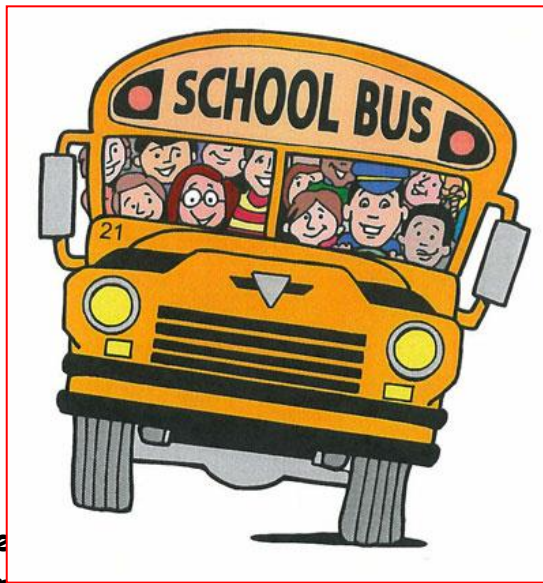
I have never had such an incredible opportunity to apply my leadership skills and abilities within my school as I have this year as the Title I Schoolwide Coordinator. It began in August when my building principal asked me to attend a Schoolwide Planning Meeting in Bismarck with five other teachers and specialists from my building. By the end of that two day trip, the course for my school and my own career path changed. Humbling and flattering was the group's unanimous agreement that I should lead the Schoolwide charge. I became the group leader of the CORE Leadership Team, a Schoolwide program improvement group committed to making it through our year-long challenge of meeting the Planning Year requirements of becoming a Schoolwide, as opposed to targeted-assistance Title I school.

As the Schoolwide Coordinator, I have led the school on a journey of completing a comprehensive needs assessment with full participation from staff. Together we have assessed 99 key indicators to determine our level of implementation. In addition we have planned for an additional 33 indicators as part of our school improvement plan. I have organized and facilitated visits to other Schoolwide schools around the state. Traveling in teams of 10-12 staff members, we have visited numerous schools in Mandan, Minot, and Fargo.

I have corresponded with the Department of Public Instruction and have developed on-going relationships with key staff members to make sure we are on track with our planning. Working with the CORE Leadership team and grade-level teams, I have developed and implemented parent and staff surveys to insure that we take into consideration perception data within our plan. I have worked with our data team and building principal to analyze desegregated student data, demographic information, and assessment trends within our school.

I have worked diligently to communicate with all stakeholders throughout this year. As mentioned, I have made on-going presentations to the staff, the PTA, the school board, and to DPI. On May 18th, I have the pleasure of presenting to Dr. Flowers. I will work through the end of June this year to complete all the administrative paper work associated with “going Schoolwide.” I am proud of the staff, the leadership team, and myself for our unwavering commitment to this initiative. It is my belief that our hard work will pay off next year and in the years to come as we implement our Schoolwide plan to help ALL students learn.

Going Schoolwide



Describe a time in your life how your leadership ability in developing others outside of your school or organization. In what ways did you apply your leadership skills and abilities in this situation?

I have learned over life’s rollercoaster ride, that true leadership and integrity are most evident or lacking in times of crisis. When my daughter Lindsay, who was 16 at the time, came to me and told me she was pregnant, I was externally calm and reassuring, yet internally understood the phrase “crisis pregnancy.” Understandably, Lindsay was scared, confused, and

overwhelmed with this pregnancy as were all of us. But something inside me kicked in—call it moral purpose, mom-mode, divine intervention, or insanity. But something propelled me through a phase of my life that at the time was a blur, but now is crystal clear.

I didn't think Lindsay would follow through on an abortion, but as she verbalized the fears, uncertainties, and choices racing through her mind, I remember telling her that the most important choice she would make was choosing life. Everything else would work out if she just focused on making that one, important decision. In all honesty, I didn't know how anything would turn out, but my words and actions seemed to be operating as if on auto-pilot. I knew I was out of my element, but as a parent I did what parents do: I became resourceful. I remember thinking that if Lindsay could see something on an ultrasound, her baby would be real to her. So I asked her if she would come to First Choice Clinic before making any decision.

To make a long story short, for purposes of this paper, Lindsay agreed. The services and referrals of this non-profit organization provided counseling, nurturing, and support for all of us throughout Lindsay's decision-making process. My daughter made a life-altering choice for her daughter and herself: she chose an open adoption. Just this week our family and my granddaughter's adoptive family celebrated Abi's 4th birthday. Without that first call to First Choice I'm convinced my story would be very different.

This experience propelled me to give back to an organization that helped my daughter and family navigate a crisis. As a result I have been a keynote speaker at their annual banquet, I have been involved in fundraising opportunities, and most importantly, I have met with moms and daughters experiencing crisis pregnancies. This past month, I have spent numerous hours on the phone with two mothers whose teen daughters are pregnant. They have an open invitation to

call me or to meet with me or my daughter. Lindsay has become an advocate and powerful resource to girls going through what she experienced. As my daughter graduates from college this year, and as my granddaughter continues to blossom with her wonderful adoptive family, I now see what I once perceived as a crisis to have been a blessing in disguise.

Describe how you show “moral purpose” in leadership. Share how ethics, fairness, and integrity are an integral part of who you are as an educational leader.

"Leadership is not so much about technique and methods, as it is about opening the heart. Leadership is about inspiration—of oneself and of others. Great leadership is about human experiences, not processes. Leadership is not a formula or a program, it is a human activity that comes from the heart and considers the hearts of others. It is an attitude, not a routine." —Lance Secretan, *Industry Week*, October 12, 1998

Whether in education or in life, it is important to know yourself and what you believe. As the country song suggests, “You’ve got to stand for something, or you’ll fall for anything.” Moral purpose is doing the right things for the right reasons, especially during difficult times. Moral purpose is about staying the course, staying calm, and clinging to integrity especially when times become turbulent.

The earliest lesson I remember about integrity was when I was 11 years old. Title IX passed giving girls the right to play sports with boys if no equivalent girls’ team was available. As a full-fledged Tom-Boy, I was accustomed to being the only girl playing daily pick-up games at our neighborhood baseball field. I was accepted and respected by the other players for my athletic ability and my love of the game. But when I entered the Duluth, Minnesota Boys Little League as the first and only girl in the league, my motivation, ability, and even character were challenged not only by my peers, but also by angry, vocal adults.

The cat calls and personal taunts rang out as soon as I approached the field and continued relentlessly throughout each game. “Little girl go home!”; “We don’t want you here!”; “Go home to Mommy”. Thinking back, I have so much respect for how my parents dealt with it. They not only supported my decision to play, but encouraged me to do my best and hold my head high because I was paving the way for other girls. Halfway through the season, the pressure culminated when a pitcher from an opposing team threatened to nail me with a pitch during the game. He proceeded to do so my first time at bat. Upon being hit, I hurled my bat at him, and rushed the mound. Next thing I knew, both dugouts were emptied onto the field, parents were standing, and the umpire threw both the pitcher and me out of the game.

On the way home, my father asked me if I wanted my claim to fame to be that I was the first girl in and the first girl thrown out of Boy’s Little League, or if I wanted to be respected for completing a well-played season and demonstrating *integrity*. He told me there would always be people wanting to bring me down, but it was up to me whether I let them. I completed the season without further incident. By the end of the season, two additional girls joined the league. The following year a girls’ baseball league was formed: I joined.

The deplorable treatment I received that season taught me several important lessons about leadership and moral purpose. First and foremost, value the insights and support of the people who know you best. Secondly, listen, learn, and then make a conscious choice to emotionally detach from unwarranted criticism. Next, keep your integrity. Never lower your standards (or behavior) to meet the status quo of anything short of integrity. Lastly, understand that perseverance, good sportsmanship, self-confidence, and moral purpose are the saving graces of true leadership.

Resources

Bolman, L.G., & Deal, T.E. (2008). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (4th Ed). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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