



Leadership Development

Anywhere, Anytime

Practical Tips for School Leaders – #42

September 2, 2020

The Will and Skill to Lead

Various speakers have said recently that no one gets up each day with the desire to be mediocre. As a teacher, AP or Principal I wonder if I ever assumed an employee, or a student wanted to just get by? Was I open minded when it came to the differences in my staff and their ideas? In looking back, I hope I developed relationships and invested in the people in my charge whether student, teacher or staff member to help build their capacity. Leaders in various roles model their will in every interaction throughout the day. How do your connections effect the culture? Does your passion as an educator and leader precede you?

Jimmy Casas, *Live Your Excellence*, spoke to a few of us on Friday, August 28, 2020 via Zoom. Casas served as a principal for eleven years prior to his work as an author and consultant. He asked us to reflect on skills effective leaders use to create and maintain healthy school cultures. He specifically reminded us of the power of the following four leadership skills:

- **Define and live your core values.** Model them each day, reference your values when you speak to people.
- **Know that every teacher needs a champion.** Invest in others by taking the time to develop meaningful relationships. Teachers are the champion for students. Leaders need to model with teachers what this looks like.
- **A leader must create meaningful experiences for others.** A leader must be fair, caring, empathetic and patient.
- **Keep in mind that leaders are not fixers but rather coaches,** problem solvers and have the skill to assist others by encouraging them to reflect on their own practices.

He provided this example: A teacher on staff is not as productive as they once were and may be exhibiting apathy leading to a toxic culture. Instead of saying, 'that teacher should retire' he suggested using skills to engage the teacher in a series of reflective questions. First, ask them if they have always felt this way? Second, what happened to make you feel this way? Third, do you think I care about you as a teacher? Fourth, what can I do to help? Is the problem the teacher is experiencing one of will or skill? Each require different influencers and coaching practices. School leaders must treat the adults like we want them to treat students. Casas prompts leaders to 'invest personal time in the story of each staff member'.

On Thursday I attended a Simon Sinek webinar where he stated 'leaders must have the will and skill necessary to create meaningful, trusting relationships with all staff members. This takes time though is worth the investment. As a response to COVID the skills and processes used to develop relationships may be different. Since we can't assemble in groups, Sinek reminds us that we must find new ways to connect to people: on-line chats, virtual celebrations, checking in with people regularly, develop new skills necessary to foster on-line relationships with colleagues.

We are fortunate that teachers, staff, and students are back in the buildings. There are certain restrictions in place to protect the health and safety of everyone. Opportunities have been provided to reflect on new processes in schools and classrooms. We recognize there are students who need academic interventions, social emotional empathy and a chance to reconnect to their peers. Even though practices of physical distancing are in place, the need for human connection exists and must be addressed.

Skill is "What a leader learns after you've learned it all counts most of all."

Coach John Wooden

Are you learning new skills? How do new skills connect with your professional will?