



Leadership Development

Anywhere, Anytime

Practical Tips for School Leaders – #35

July 31, 2020

“Leadership During Crisis”

Leadership during a time of crisis requires an awareness of the emotional status of co-workers, employees and other leaders. There are a few processes which can be used to keep an eye on the pulse of the adults in the building or department.

- **Knowing how your employees, co-workers and other leaders are feeling** by making yourself available to them can strengthen relationships and build trust. How are the adults handling the current reality? Is it more difficult for them to make decisions or get started? Is there a designated time for you to listen to their concerns?
- **People are the most valuable asset** in the organization. Everyone needs time to talk and process the moods they are experiencing. Reopening schools in August isn't business as usual. Invite the adults to share their feelings with you while you listen intently to the words and the feelings behind them. Sometimes teams of co-workers can be given time to talk, share their feelings and build a network of support for each other. Working during a crisis requires patience and resilience especially when the situation changes frequently.
- **Recognize people who may be reluctant** to speak in a group and invite them for a one on one conversation. Let them express their feelings without risk of judgment or retaliation. Their feelings are real for them. If they don't express them, they may not be able to perform the work at the level expected.
- **Talk about your emotions with coworkers, employees and others.** Show your own vulnerability. Frequently leaders are thought to be invincible, by sharing your feelings with others you model a supportive culture. Authentic leaders inspire trust and loyalty. When you share your anxiety about what you are thinking and feeling, others see you more holistically. When you can begin meetings with an opportunity for sharing nuggets of what is going on outside of the work environment, you might consider beginning the discussion.
- **Exceptional leaders understand the power of empathy.** They also know their own stressors and can define their emotional health. They are compassionate with others and give themselves the opportunity to make mistakes and not be perfect. Change due to circumstances beyond one's control requires sensitivity to new expectations and processes; it does not require perfection.
- **Adults who feel good about the work environment** are more productive. They have the attitude necessary to help their students answer questions, process concerns and create a positive classroom atmosphere.

Leadership is first a matter of the heart.

Blanchard and Hodges, 2003