



Leadership Development

Anywhere, Anytime

Practical Tips for School Leaders – #39

August 14, 2020

The Law of the Picture *John Maxwell*

“Uncertainty is a time for effective leadership. Leadership demands that there always be an element of uncertainty. Increased responsibility means dealing with more and more intangibles and therefore more complex uncertainty. During times of uncertainty the leader must communicate clearly and confidently.” Andy Stanley

Leaders understand and act according to the Law of the Picture, John Maxwell (2007). What is the Law of the Picture? In a nutshell it is the power of modeling; people do what they see. When you show the way with the right actions the people who rely on you will follow your lead and the school will flourish.

Maxwell reminds us that great leaders seem to embody two disparate qualities. They are highly visionary and decidedly practical. Their vision allows them to see into the future, yet they know the action steps that need to be taken to accomplish the vision. If you have ever taken the Gregorc Style Delineator he defines this as abstract sequential (AS); ability to see outside the box with a realistic plan to make it work. Another way to think about this is as a three-legged stool of mission, vision and processes working together to achieve the goal. Mr. Forson begins many discussions with the SJCSD mission statement. This reminder centers us and provides a foundation for the purpose or the ‘why?’ of our work. The mission of each school embodies the SJCSD mission statement yet may go beyond that. How do you articulate the purpose of your school? Do the words you use describe the unique culture of your school?

The vision answers the question of the ‘what?’ of the work. The vision assists in developing school culture. What is your ‘vision’ of the school? How do you communicate the vision to all stakeholders? When you model the vision, the picture comes alive for everyone and they are able to follow your lead. You are the steward of the vision.

The process is the plan for how the vision and the mission will be accomplished. What steps make up the plan you communicate to teachers, staff, students and others? In times of uncertainty the leader must provide a clear picture as that has the power to energize, motivate and inspire others.

An understanding of 'The Law of the Picture' supports growth as an effective leader. As instructional leaders you know the power of the teacher modeling the expectations for their students. The same can be said for effective leaders, people will follow what they see you do. Do your actions reflect your vision? Are there processes you might use to ramp up 'The Picture' you want to achieve?

'No printed word, nor spoken plea can teach young minds what they should be. Not all the books on all the shelves—but what the teachers are themselves.' Rudyard Kipling

Maxwell, John C. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. 2007.