

Leadership Materials

taken from

Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement

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for Sessions with Carol Trimble

interested in applying for the principalship. As honored as she was apprehensive, Jennifer listened as the superintendent asked her three questions:

- What have you learned about leadership?
- What have you learned about leadership capacity?
- Can you help sustain Belvedere's high leadership capacity?

What Is Leadership?

What *had* Jennifer learned about leadership?

"Leadership," she told the superintendent, "is about learning together toward a shared purpose or aim."

Learning and leading are deeply intertwined, and we need to regard each other as worthy of

attention, caring, and involvement if we are to learn together. Indeed, leadership can be understood as reciprocal, purposeful learning in a community. Reciprocity helps us build relationships of mutual regard, thereby enabling us to become colearners. And as colearners we are also coteachers, engaging each other through our teaching and learning approaches. Adults as well as children learn through the processes of inquiry, participation, meaning and knowledge construction, and reflection (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

Figure 1.1 suggests ways of applying constructivist principles for teaching to the realm of leadership. As leaders, we must bear in mind the learners' views, challenge their beliefs, engage them in assessments that take into account the complexities of the broader context (e.g., leading beyond the classroom), and construct meaning and knowledge through

FIGURE 1.1

A Comparison of Constructivist Teaching and Leading

Constructivist teachers	Constructivist leaders
Seek and value students' points of view	Seek and value teachers' points of view
Structure lessons to challenge students' suppositions	Structure the concept of leadership to challenge teachers' belief systems
Recognize that students must attach relevance (meaning) to the curriculum	Construct meaning through reflection and dialogue
Structure lessons around big ideas, not small pieces of information	Structure the life of the school around the Big Picture, not a singular event or small piece of information
Assess student learning in the context of daily classroom investigations, not performances or isolated events	Assess teacher learning in the context of the complexity of the learning organization, not outcomes of isolated events

Note: Adapted from a paper by Janice O'Neil at the University of Calgary.

FIGURE 1.2
Parallels Between Teaching Habits of Mind and Leading

Activity	Teaching	Leading
Modeling	Modeling of what we want students to do. If we want students to be thoughtful, we need to demonstrate what thoughtfulness looks like.	Modeling of leadership behaviors. If we want others to be leaders, we need to demonstrate what leadership looks like.
Coaching	Helping students to think through what they are trying to do. The teacher raises questions rather than telling students what to do.	Helping others to think through what they are trying to do. Teachers raise questions with each other rather than telling others what to do.
Scaffolding	Providing the content bridges necessary for the task, raising the necessary questions, and giving students the opportunities to explore and perform the task.	Providing the content bridges necessary for the task, raising the necessary questions, and giving others, particularly new teachers, the opportunities to explore and perform the task.
Articulation	Explaining what the teacher is thinking about so that thinking is visible to the student.	Explaining what the teacher is thinking about so that thinking is visible to colleagues and parents.
Reflection	Being reflective and thoughtful about the work. Raising evaluation questions: What went well today? Why? If I did this again, how would I do it differently?	Being reflective and thoughtful about the work. Raising evaluation questions: What went well today? Why? If I did this again, how would I do it differently?
Exploration	Modeling risk taking so students understand that uncertainty is involved in all new learning.	Modeling risk taking so others understand that uncertainty is involved in all new learning.

Note: Adapted from Costa and Kallick (2000) and Lambert et al. (2002).

reflection and dialogue. Figure 1.2 draws parallels between teaching “habits of mind” (Costa & Kallick, 2000) and leading. These parallels suggest that leadership is the cumulative process of learning through which we achieve the purposes of the school.

As principals and teachers, we must attend not only to our students’ learning but also to our own and to that of the adults around us. When we do this, we are on the road to achieving collective responsibility for the school and becoming a community of learners.

members decided to lengthen the school year in order to reserve 20 percent of their week for professional time. This decision, along with the many others that resulted in a professional culture and shared leadership, led to outstanding student achievement (Lambert et al., 2002).

Sherman Oaks Community Charter School in Campbell, California, provides 90 minutes of professional time per day. The time is composed of lunch, an activity, and a reading period, all supervised by both instructional aides and parents. Staff members have resisted the temptation to use some of this time for business, which is handled either personally or by e-mail; instead, the time is used to examine student work and other data, leading to improved teaching practice.

Technology is particularly helpful when we're looking to find new time: online projects (which can be done at any time during the week), e-mail communication, and videotaped class presentations or coaching lessons allow our schedules greater flexibility. Once you start thinking more creatively about time, new arrangements will present themselves.

Lessons I've Learned About Time

In the many years I have spent as an educator and working with thousands of principals, teachers, students, and parents, I've learned the following lessons about time:

- **Time belongs to us.** It is a precious resource that we give as a gift to the endeavors and people we believe in.
- **Free time can be created from squandered time.** Since we all have the same *amount* of time, we must reexamine our assumptions about priorities in order to find time for important things. This process is a continuous archaeological dig.

- **When we spend time with others, we create synergy.** When we work well with others, time flies—and the flight is soothing.
- **It is essential to reserve time for ourselves.** Without personal time we lose focus and can overlook what's important in our rush to take care of what's "urgent."
- **Time is content-free.** The passage of time alone does not create change; what we *do with the time* does.
- **Time away from school results in a shift in perspective.** I often find that after the winter holidays—18 months into the process of building leadership capacity—responsibilities and relationships seem to realign themselves.
- **Time is essential to achieve anything of importance.**

Conclusion

The development of leadership capacity—or indeed any worthwhile endeavor—cannot be achieved without time. A few years ago I heard a wandering actor observe that in his experience, people consistently yearn for two things: to be in authentic relationships with others and to slow down. I've made the same observation, regardless of what line of work people are in. We must slow down in order to form relationships and achieve what matters most in the lives of children and adults.

Questions and Activities

1. Hold a dialogue (but not a discussion) about time at a staff meeting. Seek to understand how others feel about this issue and how they have come to terms with it in their lives. At the next meeting, list all the ways in which you can find time, and the items you can safely remove from your plate. Choose one new approach to finding time and implement it.