

Alternative WebX Assignment: Leadership and Communication

Between walking pneumonia and military training commitments this past two weeks, I managed to miss both offerings of our WebX AND deer season. But as you mentioned in the WebX our family and our health are our greatest assets. And it appears I've been neglecting both lately. But on to the topic at hand.

The Webx began with a series of statements upon which we were asked to reflect and then worked its way through questions that highlighted the units we have covered thus far in this class. When reflecting upon those seven statements I found that all could be applied to my status as first year principal. What resonated most with me, however, was that "people value servant leadership over authoritarian command. I have worked diligently to drape myself in the humble trappings of service to my teachers and learning community. I have a poster in my office that reads, "If service is below you then leadership is beyond you." But I have found that, for all the times some teachers complain about authoritarian commands and unilateral decisions, they are often the ones who want to be told what to do.

Empowering my faculty to problem solve, and collaborate, and make decisions, and ask for help has been good for the climate of our school for sure. But I find there are teachers, not unlike some students who crave structure, who would rather just be told to do something. Those are the ones I've spent the most time encouraging. They seem to look at me sometimes like, "I hear you say you want us to take charge of this situation but in the end, you'll step in and just tell us what you want, right?"

Two of the questions that resonated most with me as I listened to the WebX discussion were as follows:

- Why are we talking about leadership when we all know that *teachers* have the most impact on student success?

I'll answer that with a question (even though I always hated when my middle school science teacher would do that to me). What has the greatest impact on teacher success in a learning community. I would argue that the support, mentorship, and encouragement of a strong instructional leader is key. Along with the obvious value that leader places on collaboration and innovation.

- What's the appropriate amount of communication to ensure teachers are satisfied?

Ha. Teachers, satisfied? Total teacher satisfaction is an unobtainable goal. In fact, a certain degree of dissatisfaction can be a driving force in an organization. But seriously, I err on the side of too much communication. I'd rather they delete emails or messages, recycle newsletters and agendas, than not have the information they need at hand.

I have been extremely lucky in this regard. My staff has been VERY supportive and accommodating as I learn the ropes. If I forget to send out important info, someone usually reminds me. If my email is unclear someone ALWAYS corrects me. I understand that the heart of the question revolved around what to share with teachers, community members, etc. And in those cases, you must look at possible long term ramifications of that communication. But satisfied? Never.