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National Agenda: Establishing Authority as an Educational Leader

Abstract:

Educational leaders must continually refine their skills to successfully utilize the following leadership components: reward, coercive, expert, and legitimate and referent power to help schools achieve and sustain their vision. The intent of this article is to examine how educational leaders can positively and successfully establish authority to benefit all stakeholders.

Article:

The purpose of this article is to explore how educational leaders can establish authority in an education setting that positively impacts all stakeholders within the organization. School leaders must have the knowledge and expertise to utilize reward, coercive, expert, and legitimate and referent power to help schools achieve and sustain their vision (Hermond 2006.)

Stephanie was so excited to be asked by the superintendent to serve on the District's Instructional Development Council Committee. She had waited for what seemed to be an eternity to get to this point in her career. When the meeting began, she

felt so sure of herself when the superintendent asked everyone to introduce himself. She felt so pleased when she could state her title as the new principle of the elementary school that received an accountability rating of Exemplary last year. She was on top of the world. After the break, she noticed that a former colleague was quite congenial with the superintendent. She then remembered that her former colleague had been the superintendent's son's basketball coach. Stephanie mistakenly assumed that her title of principal would allow her to carry a specify measure of credibility on this committee and with the superintendent. Her former colleague, Coach Jackson, would certainly have just as much, if not more, of an impact on this committee as she would.

What is power? Merriam-Webster's dictionary explains that power is “. . . possession of control, authority, or influence over others . . .” (<http://www/m-w.com/>) Clearly, in the situation referenced in the former paragraph, power does not emit from a position. Numerous factors and abilities affect the ability to acquire and yield power.

In the article, *How to build leadership capacity*, the author emphasizes the need for the leader to share power and collaborate with all stakeholders. The article explains that in order for reform to be on-going and sustained over time, “. . . we need to address the capacity of schools to lead themselves. We need to rethink both leadership and capacity building . . . (Lambert 1998.)

According to Lambert, “(w)hen we think about leadership, we are accustomed to picturing people in roles with formal authority, such as principals, vice-principals, directors, or superintendents.” On the contrary, “(w)e can view leadership as a verb, rather than a noun, by considering the processes, activities, and relationships in which people engage, rather than as the individual in a specific role.” Lambert also develops the

concept, “. . . that it does not require extraordinary charismatic qualities and uses of authority. . .” to be a leader (Lambert 1998.)

Long gone are the days of ruling with “fear and intimidation.” Troutwine, the author of the article, ***Ruling by Fear and Intimidation***, gives a blueprint of how this leadership style translates into real life organizations:

“If you want to rule by fear and intimidation, here is how to do it right: 1. Use an inconsistent interpersonal style. 2. Constantly shift priorities and initiatives. 3. Schedule meetings without announcing the agenda. 4. Set rules to deal with exceptions. 5. Reprimand people the right way. 6. Realize that it is okay to recognize a job well done. 7. Wave the big stick frequently. 8. Keep some of the weak ones around. 9. Gang up on individuals. 10. Play favorites. 11. Work the grapevine. 12. De-emphasize family and life outside of work (Troutwine 2006.)

Simpson, the author of ***Keeping It Alive: Elements of School Culture That Sustain Innovation***, highlights the need for there to be a sense a connectedness at a school campus, especially in the face of increased accountability and criticism from the media. The article details how the principal, Cheryl Snell, has incorporated numerous innovative measures to allow her faculty and staff to have a voice and make a real impact on their campus.

In conclusion, educational leaders must continually refine their skills to successfully utilize the following leadership components: reward, coercive, expert, and legitimate and referent power to help schools achieve and sustain their vision.

Bibliography:

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