



# Leading the Journey

## An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

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### In this issue:

- Conflict Resolution
- Trust Building
- Preparing for Board Meetings
- Leading a DI School
- Join the Journey



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## Conflict Resolution

*Don Dudley*

Disagreements, clashes, or quarrels, occur in schools. Principals are directly or indirectly involved because of what they observe or what someone shares with them. My success as a leader depended to a large extent on how effectively I handled conflict resolution.

Understanding the need to be intentional about conflict resolution has been a blessing in my administration. Much of what I try to practice comes from the principle of trying to solve problems at the lowest level possible, based on Matthew 18:15. The following are nine points that have been helpful to me.

1. Approach the situation prayerfully. Seeking divine intervention, asking the Holy Spirit for wisdom, insight and a clear mind is essential.
2. Don't let issues build so that there are multiple layers of concern.
3. As much as possible, keep the conversation limited to those who are directly connected. Keep the level of awareness to as small a circle as possible.
4. If at all possible, seek out a face to face meeting. Seeing body language can be extremely helpful in knowing if the conversation is moving in the right direction.
5. Timing is important. Sometimes it is best to wait awhile, especially if the situation is emotionally charged. Waiting too long can be problematic if the issue impacts others or the climate on your campus.
6. Choose your words carefully, yet be honest and candid so that the issue of concern is clearly identified.
7. Stick to the facts. Don't make assumptions or judgment statements about others' feelings, thoughts, or motives.
8. Be willing to forgive and move forward.

Continued on page 2

## Trust Building

*Ed Boyatt*

Leadership may have once been conferred by position. But no more. It may have once been something characterized by "command-and-control," "top-down," "do-as-I-say" type styles. Those days are long gone. Today, leadership is an aspiration. It is something I have to earn every day; because people choose on a daily basis whether or not they are going to follow me. As Posner states, "It's something you keep striving to achieve and never assume you've fully attained."

Your contract gives you a position of manager. But leadership is earned by the trust of your teachers, parents, and school board members. So where does this trust come from? James Robbins believes the three sources of trust are character, competence, and caring. Character is considered by most as the single most important factor in building trust. Character is what my teachers and constituency sees when they look at me. It is my values, my work ethic, and my perceived honesty. When I lead with integrity and consistency of example, it creates a relationship that teachers can rely on.

Teachers live in a world of joy and stress. They want a leader who knows them and who they can count on to listen and give advice. A teacher's world can be full of doubt as to questioning their effectiveness or their ability to make a difference. Teachers want to be able to count on their principal; their leader needs to be a stress reliever, not a source of stress. Teachers want to trust their boss.

Competence, like character, is a source of trust. I am a competent educator. I know how to teach. I know how to write a letter. I know how to organize an event. I can chair an effective meeting. Indeed, competence as an administrator builds trust in my leadership.

Caring is often the neglected ingredient in trust building. Research continues to demonstrate that it is the number-one driver of employee engagement. That engagement occurs "when my boss takes a

Continued on page 2

## Trust Building

Continued from page 1

genuine interest in me as an individual.” Teachers want to feel cared about by their principal. Teachers want their principals to look out for their best interest. They want principals to have their backs. Teachers want to be known as a person. It is called the power of being personally interested. Principals know the spouse and children of each teacher. They know many of the personal challenges in each family. Principals genuinely care.

These “soft skills” of a leader are usually caught and not taught, but my credibility as a leader rests in my character, my competence, and my ability to truly care for my teachers. Where there is trust, there is leadership. ☩

## Conflict Resolution

Continued from page 1

9. Affirm those who were involved in the resolution and tell them you believe the issue to be settled and the conflict behind you.

Successful principals are specialist in resolving conflict. Adventist leaders facilitate peace and understanding with effective communication. ☩

*“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.”*

Henry Thoreau

## Leading a DI School

Teri Boyatt

Adventist education is deeply rooted in meeting the needs of all students. This is accomplished by using multiple instructional strategies. That is why many Adventist teachers practiced the principles of Differentiated Instruction before this term became popular in today’s educational literature.

But Adventist teachers need principals to keep them on track by reminding them of the principles of DI. The following questions will keep DI a priority for our teachers, principals and superintendents.

1. Are we willing to teach in whatever way is necessary for students to learn best?
2. Do we have the courage to do what works, not just what’s easiest?
3. Do we actively seek to understand our students’ knowledge, skills, and talents so we can provide an appropriate match for their learning needs?
4. Do we continually build a large and diverse repertoire of instructional strategies so we have more than one way to teach?
5. Do we organize our classrooms to students’ learning or for our teaching?
6. Do we ceaselessly search for ways to improve?
7. Do we regularly close the gap between knowing what to do and actually doing it?

I thank Rick Wormeli in his book *Fair Isn’t Always Equal* for providing these questions.

Adventist principals are the change agents that keep student learning central to all we do. ☩

## Preparing for Board Meetings

Vern Biloff

During my years as superintendent, I was confounded by the lack of control principals exerted over board meetings. Many meetings were long and tedious, often deviating from the agenda and the issues needing action.

At times, chairpersons dominated the discussion as pastors, power brokers, and school benefactors added their often-repeated concerns following well-worn paths of the past. Philosophical positions were aired and world views explored. I was obliged on some occasions to restore order, reminding the members of Christ’s teachings, which bind us together.

Principals can change the culture just described. I suggest the following procedures to principals who want to lead.

1. Take control of the agenda. There is power in the agenda. You and the board chair must agree on these items. Do not allow special interest groups or ‘well meaning’ individuals to place items on the agenda without your approval.
2. Once you and chair agree on the agenda items, do your homework in preparing for each issue. Bring written proposals to the board meeting. Remember, putting

time into writing a proposal will clarify your thoughts on the matter. Board members want to see the principal professionally prepared.

3. Principals have little political capital to squander. It is crucial to your effectiveness to have your agenda items passed by the board. This is another reason to be thorough in your preparation.
4. Even though this next step will seem distasteful to some, the political realities associated with doing the Lord’s work must not be overlooked. There are board members who need to be convinced of the appropriateness and wisdom of your proposals. This is best done over a friendly meal at a nice restaurant at your expense. It will be money well spent.

Remember, the principal answers to all the constituents and stakeholders of their school. You cannot afford the luxury of playing to one special interest group or another. Your focus must be children, teachers, parents, and the future well-being of the school. Your compelling vision for the school will be reflected in the wisdom of the written policy agenda items presented and approved by your governing school board. ☩

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