



Leading the Journey

An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3 • A PUBLICATION OF THE PACIFIC UNION CONFERENCE • October 2013



Berit von Pohle
Director of Education
Pacific Union Conference



Ed Boyatt
Retired educator with 32
years in administration

Walt Lancaster
Principal
La Sierra Academy

Vern Biloff
Retired educator with 38
years of administration
experience

**JOIN the
JOURNEY**

Sign up to receive the
newsletter:
send an email to
[leadingthejourney@puco
nline.org](mailto:leadingthejourney@puco
nline.org)
OR visit
[http://
paucedu.adventistfaith.or
g/leading-the-journey](http://
paucedu.adventistfaith.or
g/leading-the-journey).

Qualities of Effective Leaders

Leadership, NAD Principals' Handbook (excerpt)

Principals have a profound effect on what is valued in the school. The principal must embrace and act upon a set of internal, consistent beliefs and principles which will help him/her to:

- Demonstrate support of and loyalty to the philosophy, goals, and ideals of Adventist Christian education
- Recognize that the school exists for the purpose of serving the needs of students
- Promote a lifestyle that incorporates principles advocated by the Adventist Church
- Ensure a high level of professional competence through planned and systematic instructional leadership and supervision
- Maintain high standards of integrity, fairness, loyalty, and confidentiality when dealing with local conference personnel, other school administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and students
- Recognize that we are all children of God with the right of equality of opportunities of all according to their abilities, without discrimination based on race, gender, or ethnic origin
- Be proactive in assessing the need for, and initiating effective change
- Adhere to the adopted education policies of the local conference and union, to accepted professional practice, and to applicable state/provincial laws and statutes ☸

How Am I Doing

Ed Boyatt

“My principal doesn’t listen. He thinks he knows everything.” Since perceptions are reality, wouldn’t you want to know if you are perceived this way?

Good leaders are good learners. That is why principals regularly ask their teachers, parents, board members, and superintendents how they are doing. Since “one of us is not as smart as all of us,” we seek the perceptions of others in analyzing how we could be a better principal.

A formal assessment of the principal’s job performance is generally administered during the last year of a current contract prior to renewal. I believe that this is not enough feedback. I believe that self-confident leaders seek feedback annually. I suggest that you ask your teachers and board to formally respond each year to questions like “how am I doing,” “how can I do better,” “what would help me be a better principal.”

Learners need feedback. We need an objective

view. We need colleagues who are not afraid to tell us the truth. Principals know this kind of feedback is important, but some are reluctant to make themselves vulnerable. I believe this is the reason why the principals who need this feedback the most, are the most reluctant to seek feedback from those who know them best. Insecure leaders do not want to face the reality of their weaknesses.

When you seek feedback, remember to intentionally give others permission to share freely. Understandably, some colleagues are reluctant to share anything that could be perceived as negative about you since you are in a position of authority over them. You need to give clear permission to provide honest feedback. “How can I grow without honest perceptions?”

I also suggest that you have a third party collect and tally the feedback. That way the targeted audience knows that their responses will be anonymous.

If you prefer an assessment questionnaire document

Continued on page 2

How Am I Doing

Continued from page 1

to help you determine your strengths and weaknesses, your superintendent will have several to choose from. I prefer to ask just two simple questions: 1) what do you appreciate about my leadership as principal? and 2) what suggestions do you have that would help me be a better principal? The questions are simple, but they give the responders the freedom to respond in a personal and explicit manner. I have found that the appreciations always outnumber the suggestions for improvement. And that is good, for we know how seldom a principal receives written appreciations for their ministry.

The act of asking for feedback makes a statement to teachers and board members. It says “I value your opinion, I respect your perceptions. I appreciate you in my journey of professional development. I want to know how my leadership is perceived by those who know me best.”

The best leaders are the best learners (Kouzes 2010). It takes time to develop as a leader. It takes continuous personal investment. It takes deliberate practice. It requires setting improvement goals, having the support of others, and staying open to feedback. Don't wait until your superintendent administers a formal survey. Ask those who know you best how you can be a better principal. ☸

His School...For the Students

Vern Biloff

About twenty years ago I ran into a principal by the name of Frank Boyden. Not on the street, mind you, but through the printed page of John McPhee's book, “The Headmaster.” Boyden had not planned to become a principal when he graduated from college, but he was out of money and needed a job before he could go on to law school. The rest is history. Bowden served as principal (headmaster) of Deerfield Academy for the next sixty-six years. His legacy is legendary, and his style is worth reviewing for aspiring, beginning, or seasoned principals.

Boyden was a short man with an innate passion for work and his school. I say "his school" since he made it his own. He began his day with dictation. He answered every piece of mail, which crossed his desk. In this way, he widened his knowledge of the community and broadened his sphere of influence.

Once the students arrived at school, he spent his time in the classrooms

and halls. He involved himself with students for the rest of the day since he considered the school corridors and sports fields his office.

Boyden was known to ride through the country recruiting students whom he saw working in the fields. He joined every organization in town, which he thought might help impact his school positively, and he became known by everyone. Deerfield Academy grew quite quickly under his firm but caring hand. From humble beginnings of only fourteen students, the school consistently progressed and remains one of the outstanding secondary schools on the East Coast, with a loyal support base of parents and graduates.

Frank Boyden may have been one of a kind, however, his methods span the annals of time. Hard work, zest, vision, humor, and a sense of the possible motivated him. His life and work continue to inspire those of us who make administration our vocation. ☸

Communication That Works

Walt Lancaster

A new associate administrator once asked his subordinates what he should address first in his new position. The response was a resounding, “Communication!” It did not take long for this person to come up with a publication to address this need. This new publication (yes, it was a publication) carried a heading that was the butt of many comments, most of which were less than flattering.

Although the title, “Slippin’ Through the Cracks”, was meant to address the needs as originally expressed, it did not hit the target. With an eight-point font, it read like an excerpt from a doctoral thesis, and often included highlighted quotes from the administrator himself.

During administrative meetings, references by the administrator were made to the publication, but those in attendance usually remained silent. Relief finally came one day when a blunt associate was asked directly if he had read the publication. His response was just about as direct as was possible without overstepping his bounds with the administration. He said, “Considering the title of your communication, I think it belongs in the water closet.” With stunned silence, the attendees waited for the shoe to drop. The dumbfounded administrator informed everyone it was their “responsibility to read the publication!” since it was they who had requested said communication. It was not too long thereafter that the communication mercifully *slipped* into oblivion.

When you are made aware of a need to communicate better, take that opportunity to ask those making the request *exactly* what they are seeking. *Listen* to their responses, and *create* (or at least attempt to create) what you think will meet their needs. Have others review, critique, and add their two-cents-worth to your communication. Use your eyes and ears on a regular basis; use your vocal word processor less often. ☸