

Philosophy of Leadership

Every year when my classes begin, I ask my new students to tell me why they are here. Eventually, we agree upon some collective understanding of learning and personal growth. I then explain that agreed upon purpose will be our mission that will guide my actions as a teacher. They will have much say in how the journey proceeds, but ultimately, they must place trust in me. Of course, no one trusts me yet. And that is how our journey begins.

My beliefs on leading a school are no different. While leadership theorists and management gurus are churning out a myriad of different methods for leading, it is, at length, the ability of a leader to cultivate trust that will determine if a school's collective mission is achieved. Leaders must be trustworthy for others to allow their careers, well-being, and children's well-being to be affected by a leader. Trust is rarely inherent and always fragile. It is a construct that takes dedicated time to build and only exists by a leader acting with repeated integrity and consistency.

Trust is where my leadership begins, but it does not survive on that alone. I believe successful school leadership relies on my ability to create organizational structures in the school and community that support a culture that is continually learning, reflecting, transforming and improving. It is my duty to navigate the unyielding currents of environmental, political, and societal change affecting a school while keeping true to this culture of learning in staff and students. We should make no mistake, to continually learn and improve as people is why schools exist, and as a school leader, I am the conduit for that mission.

Like the classrooms I have been fortunate to lead, I believe my role as leader is part teacher, coach, and evaluator. I have a duty to act as a teacher, one who builds capacity for learning, models effective practices, and listens with empathy to all the voices involved in a school, no matter how small they may be. I see my role as a coach in the call to inspire a team of staff to a greater mission of education for all, to goals larger than any individual ambition. As an evaluator, I am also the assessor, the person who directs improvement and assesses our effectiveness.

These beliefs can easily appear idealistic; existing under model conditions with immense support. I agree, but in a befitting cycle, the trust needed to give rise to this culture of continual learning is the same trust I fall back on to overcome the unseen obstacles, changes, and challenges. Like the classrooms which I come from, it is not in that beginning absence of trust that defines our success, but in journey that is yet to come.