

Growing Teacher Leaders

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Teacher as Leader

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The “Teachers as Leaders” program as stated by Searby and Shaddix, (2008) was implemented to assist with developing potential principals as the district was facing a great amount of current administration reaching potential retirement. Seeing a void that would be occurring, steps were put in place to assure new administration would be ready to step forward and take on the role of principal. A program was developed to make sure there was a pool of successful candidates ready to fill these vacant positions. Current principals were asked to nominate teachers they felt had leadership potential. Searby and Shaddix (2008), stated, research found the following three criteria to be important in considering potential candidates; they are aware of and can implement the schools purpose, they have the ability to enhance instruction, and they have good relationships skills. With all three of these factors combined it gives others a sense of trust in their abilities to lead.

A group of fifteen teachers were selected, states Searby and Shaddix (2008), of varying ages and at differing stages in their careers. Two of the candidates were certified teachers, two others have specialist certification and the remaining eleven candidates held Masters Degrees. The Teacher as Leader program had developed a protocol that teachers would meet six times throughout the year for a full day. In their time together they would get a deeper understanding of themselves and their abilities to become leaders, as well as look at the current role of leadership. Participants did much self-reflection and looking at their own styles and skill. Important concepts such as “effective teamwork, negotiation, compromise, time management, delegation, handling crisis, and dealing with multiple perspectives, were explored and discussed.” (Searby and Shaddix, 2008 p.4). The philosophy of the program is that leaders can be made and are not necessarily born. With the appropriate skill development and the willingness

to learn and grow many have the potential for leadership. Future principals need to be coached and developed to make them effective leaders for tomorrow and prepared for the evolution in teaching practices and implementation of the Professional Learning Communities.

The success of this program can be attributed to the time taken to do the research on effective leadership, as well as the education received by the participants to enable them to have the skills and confidence to enter the role of Principal and lead a school.

In order to be an efficient Principal I feel that it is very important that you have the necessary skills and training to effectively take on the position. The current leadership skills I possess are continually growing and improving, in my current position I am the unofficial vice principal in the school. I have developed strong and positive relationships with each of my coworkers, valuing each of them for the knowledge and experience they bring to our building. I have been critically examining what my greatest strengths and weakness' are. A strength is my ability to reflect and assess situations, a weakness is that I forget that just like our students, adults also learn and process differently. I need to work on not always having a blanket approach with all staff but to learn their needs and learning styles. This is an ongoing and evolving journey and I find myself learning throughout this course. My current principal is serving as a mentor and role model.

It is important for me to continue expanding my knowledge base. With our division moving in the direction of having each school being a Professional Learning Community, research and instilling the expertise to lead in this manner is an area I have to become more educated with. In order for me to improve my leadership skills I need to be aware of my style, reflect on experiences, revisit situations and ask if there would be a better or more effective way of dealing with it.

The atmosphere in our school is very powerful; we are all there for the benefit of all the students. Our job is to work together to provide the best instruction and environment to optimize learning for every child. Our school has already gone through the shift of teachers working alone in their classrooms for their students to each teacher in the building being responsible for all student learning. We have made the transition from “isolation to collaboration,” as stated by Searby and Shaddix (2008). Our school has begun the process of moving towards becoming a true Professional Learning Community.

In my role as “acting” principal when our administrator is out of the building, it is important that I follow the lead that she has implemented within our school. I feel the most important step I can take to improve the leadership climate at my school is to instill the values of a Professional Learning Community, and follow the direction of the current Principal. I will continue to collaborate with fellow teachers and keep lines of communication flowing. It is important to listen to the needs of the staff and to assist and direct them in the right way without telling them what to do. It is important to instill the value with the staff that each one is as important, as vital and valuable as the other, we just have different roles to fulfill in the building. Our school has started to move in the direction of being a Professional Learning Community but still require growth and fine tuning of skills to be a completely successful PLC.

References

Searby, L., Shaddix, L. (2008). Growing Teacher Leaders In a Culture of Excellence. *The Professional Educator*, 32(1).