

Leadership Essay
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RUNNING HEAD: LEADERSHIP

My leadership philosophy is based in discipline and empathy. As an administrator one of my goals will be to instill the importance of discipline in my staff and in my students. I have benefitted immensely from my disciplined approach to my career and life in general. I believe it important to clarify that when I say discipline, I do not mean punishment. By discipline, I am referring to consistently setting realistic and short-term goals, taking the time to plan a path to achieve said goals, and following through on the execution of that plan with the utmost determination. To facilitate this plan, and speaking to another aspect of my leadership philosophy, a school leader must be able to first clarify the goals and then simplify steps along the abovementioned path toward executing the goal. These beliefs are in line with Mike Schmoker's leadership pillars— research, reduction, clarification, repeated practice, and monitoring. In *Leading with a Focus: Elevating the Essentials for School and District Improvement* (Schmoker, 2016) Schmoker says these pillars can be tended to when leaders rely on simple, precise, and repetitive efforts to improve learning at their school. Successful schools employ leaders that have an ability to simplify the process of education.

Too often, I've experienced administrators that set goals but fall short of providing a distinct path to achieve those goals. I've also experienced administrators that fall short of holding their colleagues accountable for goals that have been set. These leadership failures do not go unnoticed by staff members and it creates a toxic work atmosphere that directly affects staff interactions with students, which is completely unacceptable. As an administrator, I will simplify and streamline the process through which my team sets and

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accomplishes goals. I will also get my hands dirty along side them, as we see each and every one of these goals through to the end.

This will not be easy, and that is why it will be paramount for me to apply a rationale understanding of the education as it really is in an empathetic approach to leading educators. I believe relationships are key when it comes to successful leadership. When the bonds between administrator and staff are strong, I believe the team as a whole can accomplish any realistic goal. In chapter one of the book, *If You Don't Feed the Teachers, They Eat The Students!* (Connors, 2014), there is a quote: "The best administrator is the one who never forgets what it is like to be a teacher". Ultimately, Connors is giving advice about empathy and the relationship between school leaders and teachers, and she is spot on. In order to have a strong bond between an administrator and his or her teachers, he or she must be capable of empathizing with them and their situation. In order to emphasize, an administrator must have similar experiences to those being led. There is no way around this truth. My goal is to lead the staff at the alternative learning center of which I have taught for 8 years. If accomplish my goal, I will have first gone through the same experiences as the teachers I will lead. As promoted by Connors, I will never forget where I came from. This will help me form extremely valuable bonds with my teachers, and I will leverage these bonds to help my team execute the goals we set to give our students the best education possible.

When referring above to the goals of my future team, you'll notice I used the phrase "goals we set". This is intentional. When team members feel a sense of agency in the work they do, success often follows. That is why I believe it is critical for a leader to

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give agency to those being led by allowing them to contribute to the creation of goals, while guiding them along the way in order to execute the goals.

In conclusion, my leadership philosophy may not be considered revolutionary, as the approach I champion has likely been done before (likely by both Schmoker and Connors!). I *am* confident my leadership philosophy is powerful and that is most vital to my success and the successes of my team of teachers. My philosophy's power shown in the consistent execution of best practices in education. Its power is felt through empathy and respect. Its power is seen by students unlocking the incredible mysteries of the universe in the classroom each day. But first, my philosophy's power must be wielded by a leader who follows through and delivers on this philosophy every day. That is my goal. That is why I want to lead.

References:

Schmoker, M. (2016). *Leading With Focus: elevating the essentials for school and district improvement*. Cheltenham, Australia: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Connors, N. A. (2014). *If you dont feed the teachers, they eat the students!/: guide to success for administrators and teachers*. Chicago: Incentive Publications by World Book.