

Blundering Leadership

Missteps by School Administrators

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Chapter Two

“I Am the Boss and You Are Not”

PRECHAPTER QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- Is it important to you to have other people actively recognize your positional authority? Why? Why not?
- Do you believe that staff will disrespect your authority and take advantage of you if you allow them to do so?
- Do you believe that you can gain power by giving it away?

SCENARIO A: “REMEMBER YOUR PLACE”

Debra Walberg: Superintendent

Sharon Coulter: Middle-School Principal

Morning Prairie, a school district of 1,000 students with a staff of over ninety, recently hired Debra Walberg to lead the district. The previous superintendent, who held the position for over fifteen years, retired unexpectedly due to health-related concerns. Walberg, a teacher in the district with her administrative license, was promoted from within the system, at the former superintendent’s recommendation, just before the beginning of the school year.

One of Superintendent Walberg’s first responsibilities was to hire an interim principal at Roosevelt Middle School, due to a late-summer resignation. Sharon Coulter, Walberg’s selection, was bright and articulate and had three years of experience as a middle-school principal. *I’m pleased with my selection*, Walberg reflected, *and I trust that Sharon will get the job done.*

A week later, after completing an extensive district orientation with Coulter, Walberg assured the new principal, "I will be working closely with you. Please consider me your mentor. I'm sure you are aware that I was a teacher at Roosevelt for many years. I know the building, the staff, the parents, and the curriculum. I'll help you get acclimated, so you can understand the building and school-district culture. My leadership style is collaborative," the superintendent explained. "I want all administrators in this district to work together as a team in support of each other. We are all a part of this district and its failures and successes."

With a noticeable sigh of relief, Coulter replied, "That's wonderful. I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed, what with the move to a new community and with the school year about to begin. I really appreciate knowing that I can come to you when I need something."

"Yes. Yes. I have an open-door policy. I am here for you when you need me," Walberg assured her while showing her to the door.

Three weeks later, the school year had begun, teachers were busy in their classrooms, and students were getting comfortable with their schedules. After the initial whirl of getting the school year started and the accompanying administrative activities, Coulter began feeling a little lost. The new principal felt isolated because teachers were whispering together in small groups. Coulter would enter the teachers' lounge or a department meeting; discussion would stop, and a new topic would be started. In a science-department meeting, teachers had alluded to the fact that there was "history," problems and concerns that teachers had had with district administration and the school board.

Coulter wanted to understand the culture and to identify district controversies, both past and present. She wanted to be instrumental in the process of making the school district successful—to know more about district players, their goals, and their aspirations, both over the short and the long term. Remembering the superintendent's offer to be her mentor, the following week, Coulter drove to the district office building and asked the secretary if she could see Superintendent Walberg. After waiting for a half hour, while the superintendent spoke in subdued but somewhat angry tones on the telephone, Coulter joined Walberg in her office.

The superintendent looked tired. Her face was drawn and her skin was sallow. She had circles under her eyes, and her eyes darted around the room as though she was preoccupied with her just-completed telephone conversation and the numerous tasks she had to do. Attempting to suppress her preoccupation, Walberg asked, "What did you want to see me about?" Leaning forward in her seat and looking directly into the superintendent's eyes, Coulter enthusiastically began. "Will you tell me about the history, you know, the issues I keep hearing about through faculty members at Roosevelt? I'm noticing some

strange behaviors from the teachers, and I'd like to know what all the murmuring is about. It would help me to learn more about the challenges we face as a district. I'd like to learn how you plan to address these ongoing concerns and the role I might play."

Walberg took a deep breath, thinking, *I'm too busy for this. I have my own, much more serious district-level problems to deal with, and I am certainly not going to invest my limited time in an interim principal who might not even be here next year.* The next words out of the superintendent's mouth were spontaneous and stunned even her. To Coulter, the words were both hurtful and shocking.

The novice superintendent sat up straight in her chair, paused briefly, set her shoulders a little higher, and in an authoritarian tone informed Coulter, "I told you what I want you to accomplish at Roosevelt. You need to focus on that, not on what I'm doing. You are the interim middle-school principal. I am the Superintendent," she said, holding one hand high in the air, seemingly to make her point. "I don't have time to give you a district history lesson," the superintendent concluded, as she picked up the telephone and began to dial, ostensibly dismissing Sharon from her office. ("I Am the Boss and You Are Not")

SCENARIO B: "THIS IS NOT A DEMOCRACY"

Sally: Secretary to the High-School Principal

Dr. Harper: High-School Principal

Mr. Thompson and Mr. Smith: Mathematics Teachers

Sally, the high-school principal's secretary, informed Principal Harper in a whispering tone, "I just overheard Mr. Thompson and Mr. Smith scheming to swap next year's teaching assignments. They intend to present this alternative schedule to you today at the mathematics-department meeting," she confided. Harper, the second-year principal of a small, rural high school of 425 students, grabbed his head in frustration and rolled his eyes. He was irritated to hear about this attempt to undermine his authority. Although he'd been told by the previous principal that she would ask the teachers at Hillside Oaks High School for their assignment preferences before setting the schedule, he did not feel any obligation to follow his predecessor's example.

Harper looked at Sally and muttered, "I'm the principal and I set the schedule. The staff just needs to get use to it." *After all*, he pondered, *I attended six years of graduate school in education administration.*

"It's my responsibility to make these decisions," the principal explained to the nervous office manager. "But thanks for sharing what you heard with me," he called as she hurried back to her work area.

Harper walked briskly to his office, deep in thought. Last year a couple of parents had complained that their children had first-year mathematics teachers two years in a row. They blamed their children's lack of success on poor teaching. In the principal's year-end performance review, the superintendent had made it clear that he was tired of the high-school faculty's tendency to "dump on" the newly hired teachers, giving them the less-than-desirable classes to teach, along with multiple preparations. The superintendent had also met with the first-year teachers last spring, and the concern regarding multiple preparations was their number one complaint. A first-year mathematics teacher had actually left the school district, complaining of being given only remedial classes to teach and multiple preparations. "Fix it," the impatient superintendent had barked at Principal Harper.

Even more daunting was the fact that mathematics teachers were in scarce supply. Harper had spent a month of his summer reviewing files, checking references, and interviewing mathematics teachers. Harper paced in his office and fumed. *If the mathematics faculty have altered my planned class schedule and lightened their load at the expense of the new teacher, I am going to have to set them straight. Don't they understand that I'm held responsible for the school's success?* Harper was aware that his faculty members were unhappy; grumbling was noted when he'd passed out the assignments at the faculty meeting last week. *But too bad—if they want to be in charge, let them get their administrator licenses and their own schools to run,* the principal reasoned. *My reputation for leadership is on the line. I'm not about to ruin it all by trying to win a popularity contest. I don't need more complaining parents calling the superintendent and making me look incompetent. It could cost me my job.*

Harper picked up his leather notebook and the meeting agenda and started toward the door for the mathematics department meeting, pondering what exactly he should say to Mr. Thompson, Mr. Smith, and the others. *Maybe they were only planning on swapping classes, and it wouldn't impact the new teacher,* he thought. *But if I give them an inch, they will take a mile. They need to learn who is in charge here. Yes,* he concluded, *I'll tell them, "Although you might live in a democracy, we don't vote on the schedule in this school!" ("I Am the Boss and You Are Not")*

A LEADER UTILIZES POWER

The type of power displayed by a leader, along with the manner of its manifestation, can result in either positive or negative outcomes. The amount of influence that he or she actually has is determined by both how and when a particular approach is employed. The type of power selected, whether con-

sciously or unconsciously, and the manner in which it is executed make a difference in the morale of subordinates and the culture of the organization. For example, a direct approach might include asking pleasantly, "Why did you make that choice?" or pointing with a stern finger while shouting, "You made a bad choice, now fix it." An indirect approach allows employees enough information that they can determine the reasons why a leader made a particular decision, and it might influence their support for the decision. In a faculty meeting, for example, this might involve saying, "Let's discuss this situation and the limitations we need to work within to solve it." Harper could also use an indirect approach, telling the mathematics department, "We're having a problem retaining new mathematics teachers because of the difficult teaching schedule they've been given. Parents have been complaining to the superintendent. I've tried to address this issue with next year's schedule." Likewise, Superintendent Walberg could have better utilized her power by directly telling the new middle-school principal, "This is not a good time to discuss your concerns. I'm in the middle of a small crisis and need to make some phone calls. Please schedule an appointment with my secretary, and I'll address your questions without any interruptions." Neither Harper nor Walberg, in these instances, has given up authority; but the flexibility of leaders who use a situational or adaptive leadership approach (see appendix A) in these situations will likely result in better relationships and more support for their leadership.

LEADERSHIP TIP 1: *Communicate in a manner that encourages input.*

LEADERSHIP TIP 2: *Share the logic and reasoning behind an unpopular position with other stakeholders.*

The outcome of a situation may also be influenced, in part, by staff members' perception of the leader's motivation in giving the directive or instruction. Leaders, like Superintendent Walberg, who convey indirectly by expression or deed that "your involvement is not wanted or needed" are likely to experience more difficulties and reduced acceptance from faculty and staff members. Additionally, staff members' intensity of responsiveness toward the administrator and his or her requests is influenced by the level of skill the administrator has in utilizing his or her positional authority. It is essential to consider not only the position one holds but also one's own personal/professional dispositions, those personality traits, intuitions, and ways of being that shape how we choose to lead.

LEADERSHIP TIP 3: *Be aware of how your verbal and nonverbal messages might be received by others.*

LEADERSHIP TIP 4: *Communicate with staff respectfully, regardless of your emotional state. If necessary, take time to refocus on your primary goal.*

THE LEADER IS THE ONE IN CHARGE

The authoritarian leader as portrayed in cartoons, like Mr. Dithers, Dagwood Bumstead's boss in the "Blondie" comic strip, is probably the most common picture that comes to mind when we consider the boss role. This is the chosen one, the one who has permission *to rule*, without question, as he or she sees fit. Glasser (2000) ties the word *authoritarian* with the term *manager*, which has a different connotation from that of the term *leader*. A *boss-manager* is a transactional, rule-enforcing entity, one whose main job is to maintain the status quo. He or she will keep the wheels turning and get the job done, but not set a direction. According to Glasser, authoritarian boss-managers

- set the task and standards;
- do not compromise;
- tell, rather than show;
- inspect;
- use coercion. (pp. 28–29)

Glasser derived his premise from French and Raven's (1959) *social power theory*. More recent suppositions regarding power, as expressed by Kezar, Carducci, and Contreras-McGavin (2006), have developed Glasser's theory further. All contend that influence and control can be and are exhibited in a number of ways. Autocrats use coercive power against those perceived as dissenters and will utilize reward power to positively reinforce employees who are obedient and do not question. This theory holds that it is the position held and/or job title given that legitimizes bosses and their behavior. Both leaders and followers buy into this hierarchical framework. Many autocratic leaders hope to earn promotions and feel a thrill when considering the power and accompanying financial rewards they will receive once elevated. Within educational venues, however, it is just not possible for this type of leader, the autocratic boss-manager, to be successful. In fact, in addition to being ineffective, a boss-management approach will damage the reputation of fine institutions and rather quickly derail reform efforts.

LEADERSHIP TIP 5: *It is unrealistic to expect others to support your directives simply because of your position.*

Teachers are individuals who take great pride in their knowledge about their fields of study, the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and child development. Through their professional experiences, they know quite well their community and the children they teach daily. They have dedicated their lives to teaching—accepting lower salaries, helicopter parents, and unruly children as part of the bargain, just to fulfill their wish to improve the lives of others through education. As you can imagine, when authoritarian, bosslike leadership approaches are utilized, teachers tend to react in various ways. We will consider three groups: (1) those who comply, (2) those who stir discontent, and (3) those who walk out.

The first group, the compliers, will quietly follow directives, either with enthusiasm or without, but they do not question the authority or knowledge of the administrator. These individuals understand their role to be one of unquestionable support. The second group, much more dangerous to a leader, aggressively work toward derailing the administrator's efforts and will hold close their resentment, while laboring diligently to achieve their goal—to subvert the reform effort and maintain the status quo.

The success of this second group should not be underestimated, as they often achieve their objective. As demonstrated in the article "When Reforms Travel: The Sequel" (Mehan, Hubbard, and Stein, 2005), a crisis took place in a public school in San Diego; and the leadership approach utilized resulted in little else but angry foot-dragging and a nonstop clamoring against the directives.

In this example, the San Diego district leaders advocated the formation of learning communities, and set out to do so as fast as possible. Surprisingly enough, the leadership *purposefully* chose an authoritarian approach. "Leadership was aware that their actions would arouse passions and produce negative reactions. They believed conflict was necessary to move the system forward—one administrator even made the statement, *You have to break a few eggs to make an omelet*" (Mehan et al., 2005, p. 344).

Administrators in San Diego advanced reform directives and designated who, what, where, and how. Discussions with faculty and staff members regarding why these decisions were made or on what empirical basis the changes were founded, or even the best way to integrate and implement the changes in the schools, did not occur. If they did, participants did not find the exercises meaningful. Faculty and staff believed (and rightly so) that school-reform decisions had already been made.

The most important people to recognize in a schoolwide decision-making and implementation process are the teachers, and they were intentionally ignored in the San Diego example. The leaders, in this particular situation, chose to dismiss what they knew in their hearts: teachers should be active

designers and participants in their learning community, and involvement of this important group of stakeholders is crucial at every step. Because the administration blatantly disregarded faculty members' knowledge, talents, opinions, and expertise, not once, but twice (first while preparing the reform strategy, and, second, when they put it in play), the reform effort failed. The arrogance of the leadership was to blame (Mehan et al., 2005, pp. 352–53).

LEADERSHIP TIP 6: Provide time to hear comments, concerns, and feedback from subordinates on schoolwide issues.

The third faction of teachers who experience the authoritarian approach just choose to leave the profession in disgust. Freedman (2007) discusses just such a teacher in his article “A Teacher Grows Disillusioned After a ‘Fail’ Becomes a ‘Pass.’” In this article, Freedman introduces a talented mathematics teacher, one who, even when following an extremely liberal grading scale, was unable to fabricate the passing grade needed by a student to graduate. Although the student attended class only once, the principal of this inner-city school district decided to overturn the failing grade. The student graduated, the teacher quit. Ostensibly, the principal's decision was made because of the overwhelming concern regarding low graduation rates; but at what cost?

LEADERSHIP TIP 7: Allow others to fulfill their responsibilities as assigned without micromanaging.

The warnings about excessive manifestations of authority should not lead to the conclusion that power or authority is always negative. Leaders seek and use legitimate power; this is natural, normal (French and Raven, 1959). Using one's power and authority does not indicate any level of malevolence on the part of the leader. Persons holding leadership positions must, however, be conscious of the harm that might result if the power they hold is wielded carelessly. Inappropriate leadership approaches may encourage employees to act out and to develop secret subcultures or alliances, whose only goal is to make the life of the leader miserable and to obstruct his or her efforts. Do not underestimate your staff. People can be very creative about retaliation. Teachers at Discovery High School formed an alliance to harass their principal, a new to the community boss-manager who was making unpopular changes in the school. This informal group of teachers set up a schedule and took turns watching the principal's home and following his wife's vehicle to intimidate her as she ran errands, in hopes that the principal and his wife would leave the community. It is also important to remember that persons who will thwart the efforts of the boss might not necessarily be blatant and/or open in their attempts. For example, a

disenfranchised elementary school teacher anonymously had the principal's car towed from the staff parking lot on the one day that the principal forgot to display his parking permit. Faculty and staff can and do respond in a variety of subtle ways. Many passive-aggressive options for sedition are readily available: forgetting to follow the new procedures; performing to the minimum standard (*work to rule*); airing the dirty laundry about the district or institution in the community at large; complaining to students and parents alike about the unreasonable demands of the administration; and dishonestly calling in sick are strategies used by faculty to express their discontent.

LEADERSHIP TIP 8: *Use your authority with care. Use positional power to make directives during only the most crucial situations.*

Autocratic leadership, while ineffective, does the most damage to a school or district when those holding the executive positions exclusively utilize this approach. Faculty and staff simply do not flourish in an environment of "I have you under my thumb." Coulter, the new interim principal in scenario A, will not flourish after her recent visit to the superintendent's office and being put in her place. In the future, Coulter will likely not volunteer her participation or provide wholehearted assistance in district initiatives. No doubt, Coulter will stick close to her own building, maintain the status quo, and perhaps even seek different future employment opportunities.

LACK OF RESPECT TOWARD FACULTY MEMBERS

According to recent research, a perception that there is an intrinsic lack of respect from administrators towards faculty members is one of the major contributors to the national teacher shortage. According to the U.S. Department of Education's report *Eliminating the Barriers to Improving Teaching* (2000), "the high number of teachers who leave the profession (22% within their first 3 years on the job) explains the statistic that between 66% and 75% of annual teacher openings are due to exodus of unhappy educators" (p. 21). This lack of respect for teachers as professionals can take many different forms, including the following:

- disregard for teachers' expertise; forcing teachers to teach out of field
- failure to consult teachers on issues that impact the classroom: little respect for professional judgment
- micromanagement of teachers and their time
- inappropriate administrative and clerical assignments for teachers (p. 24)

Another by-product of lack of respect from administration is low teacher morale. This is important to note because a depressed state increases the likelihood that staff and faculty performance will also sink. It just becomes too emotionally taxing to keep giving without reward of any kind. Kouzes and Posner (2003) report that “employees who are ‘actively disengaged’ miss *more than three times* the number of work days than those who feel valued and respected” (p. 283). Because teachers are the most important element of the educational system, when teachers are absent for any reason their absence, over time, negatively shapes students’ educational experiences (academic, emotional, and social).

Antagonistic environments also create additional situations that diminish school effectiveness. For example, faculty and staff may present themselves physically, but not emotionally or in spirit (where creativity rests). Going through the motions of one’s work may be acceptable in an industrial factory or in an office; however, in the field of education it is critical that staff are actively engaged in their work—the well-being of children, communities, society, and our future depends on it.

The lack of relational leadership skills (see appendix A) and the “I’m the boss” attitude often adopted by the newly promoted damage individuals and the building climate and reduce institutional effectiveness. In fact, research by Learning and Development Roundtable® Meeting Services (2007) found “60% of newly promoted managers underperform in all areas dealing with people management and high employee turnover” (p. 3); this type of underperformance in working with others destroys relationships and dissolves trust. As this occurs, opportunities for productive interactions between faculty, staff members, and administration are also diminished. Lack of trust also contributes to impressions that a work environment is hostile. Mr. Thompson and Mr. Smith, the teachers reprimanded for considering swapping classes, were being challenged because of the previous loss of a new teacher; they aren’t likely to trust Principal Harper in the future. It is also doubtful that they will now want to go that extra mile to assist the new mathematics teacher this year. The authoritarian boss should expect that his or her behavior and communication (verbal and nonverbal) will create predicaments where none originally existed. Remember, subordinates can and will derail plans made by an authoritarian leader.

LEADERSHIP TIP 9: Be open-minded to ideas other than your own. Behave in a way that builds trust and loyalty by listening to subordinates’ reasoning and giving them the benefit of the doubt.

GIVING AWAY AUTHORITY WHILE GAINING STRENGTH

Noticeably absent in cartoons and satirical humor are caricatures of the skillful leader. This individual is highly respected and treated with admiration by others. Take a moment to consider the best boss you have ever had—what personality characteristics, behaviors, and/or dispositions earned your appreciation? A skillful leader is transformational by nature (Kirkbride, 2006). This person has a vision and works collaboratively to achieve goals. The main job of the transformational leader is to create change and set a direction that promotes development and growth of the members of the team. According to Glasser (2000), a skillful leader will

- engage workers in discussion;
- model;
- make an effort to fit the job to worker talents and interests;
- encourage self-evaluation to promote and ensure quality;
- provide a noncoercive, supportive atmosphere. (p. 3)

Harper could have better achieved the superintendent's directive regarding the retention of mathematics teachers by being a situational/adaptive leader (see appendix A) and engaging the mathematics department members in a discussion and problem-solving session on the issue. Rather than be coercive, Harper could acknowledge that some mathematics teachers are better skilled in specific classes like calculus, and others are more interested in working with high-risk students in remedial classes. He could explain that all mathematics teachers, especially new professionals, need to have class schedules that ensure their success and students' achievement. Harper could have acknowledged that he was under a directive from the superintendent and pressure from parents, and he could have admitted that he was not a mathematics expert and did not know the mathematics teachers well enough to know who was best suited to teach specific courses. He could have encouraged the department to problem solve and create a mathematics schedule that would best ensure the retention of skilled teachers and a high-quality program for students. Through giving away some of his authority to set the schedule, Harper could have gained the support of the mathematics team and still addressed the concerns of parents and the superintendent.

LEADERSHIP TIP 10: *Model the behaviors and dispositions you desire in your subordinates.*

LEADERSHIP TIP 11: *Give sincere consideration to suggestions made by subordinates.*

COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

An authoritarian approach to leadership hails from philosophies of the past and is simply not effective in today's more complex environments. Contemporary theories of leadership support a participative or team-leadership approach. Kezar and colleagues (2006) write, "The teams-as-culture concept assumes that differences exist among people; this approach attempts to actively tap into and affirm differences. The purpose of this approach is to enlarge each member's understandings of other individuals' views" (p. 63). Kouzes and Posner (2003) support fostering collaboration. They share results of their research on teaming:

In the thousands of cases we've studied, we've yet to encounter a single example of extraordinary achievement that's occurred without the active involvement and support of many people. We've yet to find a single instance in which one talented person leader or individual contributor accounted for most, let alone 100 percent, of the success. (p. 241)

Kevin Anderson, an assistant principal for twenty-five years at Lincoln Senior High School, experienced in his career both the boss-manager and the skilled leader described by Kouzes and Posner. Anderson graduated from Lincoln High School; worked as a hall monitor at Lincoln throughout his college career; and was hired as a social-studies teacher and coach at Lincoln after completing his college degree. After five years as a faculty member, Anderson was promoted to the position of assistant principal. He was popular with faculty and staff and was viewed as very competent in his role. Principal Bower was Anderson's supervisor for many years; and, according to Anderson, Bower demonstrated many boss-manager characteristics. Bower, who had been an assistant principal when Anderson was a high-school student, tried to maintain the administrative/student authoritarian relationship with Anderson. Bower did not appreciate his assistant principal questioning his decisions and would repeatedly put Anderson in his place by just repeating one statement: "I remember when you were a snotty-nosed brat, running around these halls chasing girls," he would sneer, dismissing Anderson abruptly.

During another chapter of his career, Anderson worked with Principal Jones, who was a reflective and skillful leader; Anderson, however, recalls that their relationship was a little shaky in the beginning. Traditionally, in large high schools, assistant principals see students who break rules and determine the disciplinary consequences, while principals work with curriculum and personnel issues. This had been the case at Lincoln High School since its founding, and Anderson took great pride in "running a tight

ship." Lincoln had a phenomenal reputation throughout the state—it was a "first-class act," a place where students were well behaved and the school was orderly.

Early in the fall of Jones's first year as principal at Lincoln, Anderson returned from lunch early and saw two students sitting with their coats on outside his office. "What are they sitting there for?" Anderson asked the secretary.

"They're going home. Principal Jones suspended them for smoking," the secretary replied. Anderson's eyes grew large as he stared at the secretary in disbelief. Walking briskly across the hall into Jones's office, Anderson demanded, without preamble, "Mr. Jones. Am I in charge of discipline or do you want to do it?"

Principal Jones took one look at Anderson's red face and puffed up chest and realized he had made a mistake. "You are in charge of discipline," he assured Anderson. "I over-stepped my boundaries." Over the next seven years, Jones and Anderson worked collaboratively on many tasks, and Jones always gave Anderson dignity, respect, trust, and the authority to do his job. Jones never took on Anderson's role again without consulting him.

Principal Jones became a skilled leader who actively tapped into the talents and skills of his assistant principal and his faculty. He heard Assistant Principal Anderson's concerns and acted accordingly. Jones's willingness to act in a cooperative fashion demonstrates the importance of developing a collaborative culture, which is essential to effective leadership. A leader who accepts his or her role as team member and colleague, in truth, is essential to the success of any venture (Kezar et al., 2006).

LEADERSHIP TIP 12: *Recognize and encourage the potential of others by providing opportunities for leadership.*

Notice we used the phrase "in truth" above. In this circumstance, appearances reflect reality, as opposed to the practice of having things *look* right, rather than *be* right. A common, but ineffective, practice some new leaders try is to operate on a belief that if they merely include people in a discussion, this is sufficient collaboration. But it is not, especially if the faculty and staff do not believe they were heard or that their opinions and efforts have been or will be taken seriously by the supervisor. If participants in a process believe that they are there for show or so that the administrator can feel better about being democratic in his or her leadership style, the process is deemed inauthentic. This situation will be easily identified upon hearing the following comment uttered in hushed tones: "Why did they bother asking us our opinion, if the decision has already been made? Why do they

waste our time with these meetings?” Once this occurs, you will become aware that faculty and staff, previously enthusiastic, will decline to participate; they will begin to disassociate themselves from such “participative” processes in the future.

A prime example of this inauthentic leadership approach was experienced by the staff at Webster Elementary as they began the process of hiring a new building principal. This large, urban school district, with 10,000 students and an administrative staff of thirty-five, was led by Superintendent Willow, who instituted the practice of having multiple, large interviewing committees for administrative vacancies. He would set up an interview committee by choosing parents, students, and staff from the building that had the principal opening. Additionally, an administrative team would be established to interview the candidates, and, of course, he and his associate superintendent would also interview the prospective administrators. The committees developed a profile of the ideal principal, screened credentials, and wrote interview questions. At first blush, this looks like a very participatory process; however, the superintendent repeatedly ignored the recommendations of the interview teams and hired a candidate who was not their first choice—and sometimes not even their second choice. Needless to say, within a couple of years Willow was having difficulty finding volunteers for his administrative interviewing teams. In this scenario, everyone lost. Superintendent Willow missed an opportunity to demonstrate servant leadership (see appendix A) and allow others in the organization to share the power to make decisions. When faculty participation ceases, the autocratic and/or authoritarian leader is free to do whatever he or she pleases and point at the lack of interest from subordinates as additional justification for independent decision making; however, the veil of participatory management is quickly stripped away and processes disintegrate.

LEADERSHIP TIP 13: *Be willing to accept the team's recommendation even if it is not your preference.*

RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The team-leadership model and/or relational-leadership approach (see appendix A) discussed by Kezar et al. (2006) are derived from studies focusing on how female gender roles influence power-style choices and utilization. These studies found that women leaders tend to interact in ways that are based in strong relationship/network-building approaches, in which a culture of teaming is developed. Relational leadership

- is inclusive;
- encourages diverse positions;
- empowers participants;
- is focused;
- is ethical;
- is process/system orientated. (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 64)

Leaders who encourage and allow for honest discourse and decision making at the lowest possible levels, along with true collaboration, gain strength in innumerable ways. These leaders

- build and enhance relationships;
- open dialogue to improve processes and strategies;
- create an environment in which respect and trust are experienced;
- allow for risk taking and creativity;
- generate a bond of loyalty with and for the team;
- fashion a system that supports quality, shared oversight, and responsibility.

Because employees will unite against any effort to change the status quo, if they are treated disrespectfully, exemplary leaders will *not* attempt to influence process through strong-arm tactics.

FINDING A BALANCE

Sharing authority can be risky if the leader does not understand his or her role. Caution! It is important to recognize that sharing authority and decision-making rights does not mean becoming hands-off—the leader still holds the responsibility and is accountable to all of the stakeholders of his or her educational system. School administrators have obligations that must not be forgotten. Dr. Harper is responsible for the high school's schedule and is being held accountable for the retention of new mathematics teachers; but by sharing with the mathematics department the challenges and demands involved with assigning classes to teachers, he could gain valuable support and cooperation. Approaching the situation as part of a team, he might find that the mathematics teachers have insight that he is not aware of and solutions that he has not considered.

LEADERSHIP TIP 14: *Be forthright and open about problems, especially during times of stress and dissension; it will lessen the frustration and anger that you will encounter.*

TIME, TRAINING, AND THOROUGHNESS

Another obligation that is often forgotten, due to the “putting out fires” atmosphere found in many schools, is that of providing faculty and staff members with the three *T*s: time, training, and thoroughness. A leadership style that allows and encourages strong stakeholder participation requires strong leadership and support. As Rallis and Goldring (2000) suggest, administrators cannot assume that “getting a group of professionals together will result in well-conceived decisions. Training in communication, team building, and conflict resolution prove essential” (p. 43). If this important responsibility of preparing committees is ignored by administrators, then it is likely that the faculty will view this approach as the “whatever” leadership style, otherwise known as the *laissez-faire* leadership model (Raven, 1992).

Allowing for others to make decisions does not mean that the leader abdicates responsibility. The leader remains accountable for the vision, the oversight of strategies and processes, and the facilitation and mediation of people and best practices. Leaders are a sounding board; they provide feedback, ask questions, and make suggestions to assure that decisions made or plans suggested by faculty and staff members are feasible. If valuable suggestions are not feasible, leaders determine how to go about creating a situation in which the ideas can come to fruition. If Superintendent Walberg wants to have a collaborative leadership style where her administrators function as a team, as she told her new middle-school principal, she will need to make time for team building and use a collaborative approach. The timing may not have been perfect when the new principal asked for information about the district’s culture and asked to be involved with setting district goals; but Walberg could be a relational leader (see appendix A) and seize on the opportunity to make these issues the focus of her next administrative team meeting. Working together to identify the communication issues in the middle school and address districtwide needs could be a vital team-building exercise for the administrative team, and also could assist the new superintendent in achieving her goals. If she taps the talents and skills of each member of the team, the job may not be as overwhelming as it seemed on the day the new principal visited the superintendent’s office.

LEADERSHIP TIP 15: *Do not allow your emotional state to affect how you communicate with staff. The educational leader needs to be a medium who facilitates processes and buoys up faculty and staff members, creating an effective environment for teaching and learning.*

CONCLUSION

The goal of this chapter is that the reader will realize that the "I am the Boss" attitude of Superintendent Walberg, Principal Harper, and others discussed throughout the chapter reaps nothing but destruction. The emotional energy expended by those who work in a climate that is discouraging is energy wasted. The use of emotional capacity in this manner is harmful, and negatively affects employees' ability to function effectively. Consequences of pessimistic emotions have been researched for years. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) share with readers that "prolonged stress (as caused by hostile environments) [is] bad for your immune system, your mental health, your capacity to care for yourself and others, and can even be fatal" (p. 55). After significant time working in a hostile and unwelcoming environment, people lose the ability to bounce back from disappointment quickly. Therefore, difficult matters become even more burdensome to rise above. This is observed in veteran teachers who "pooh-pooh" every suggestion for change made. They have been disempowered and no longer exhibit interest in extending themselves in any way, shape, or form. In this type of disrespectful climate, the quality of the work produced by teachers falls rapidly, creativity is stifled, and students bear the brunt of the frame of mind and despondent outlook communicated by the teaching staff.

Whitaker (2003) writes, "If you *always* respond appropriately and professionally, everyone else will be on your team. But the first time you do not, you may lose some of your supporters—and you may never get them back. This makes maintaining a high level of dignity, especially under pressure, a critical skill. Effective principals have this skill; others do not" (p. 22).

ACTIVITY: "I AM THE BOSS AND YOU ARE NOT"

In your role as a leader you must empower others to experience success. Reflect on your answers to the prechapter questions.

In your leadership journal, write down the dispositions and behaviors you recognize in yourself that will positively or negatively influence your ability to lead in your new role. Self-assess how with your current outlook or approach, you will change or adapt to become more effective.

Use the rubric in table 2.1 to appraise your current leadership style. Complete this exercise quarterly.

Table 2.1. Leadership Dispositions and Behaviors, “I Am the Boss and You Are Not”

	Almost Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
Communicate in a manner that encourages input				
Share the logic and reasoning behind your unpopular position with other stakeholders				
Have awareness of how your verbal and nonverbal messages might be received by others				
Allow emotional state to influence how you communicate with staff				
Expect others to demonstrate respect for your position by supporting your directives				
Provide time to hear comments, concerns, and feedback from subordinates on schoolwide issues				
Allow others to fulfill their responsibilities as assigned without micromanaging				
Use positional power to make directives during only the most crucial situations				
Are open-minded to ideas other than your own				
Model the behaviors and dispositions you desire in your subordinates				
Give sincere consideration to a suggestion made by a subordinate				
Recognize and encourage the potential of others by providing opportunities for leadership				
Are willing to accept a team’s recommendation other than your preference				
Are forthright and open during times of stress and dissension				