

Indicators of Effective Leadership

Surveyed educators described the following indicators of an effective leader:

Effective Leaders have a low teacher absentee rate. When people are satisfied in their work environment, they do not like to be absent. Great leaders create a climate where people want to be.

Effective Leaders encourage teachers to do what is best for their profession, school and students. When leaders make teachers feel good about their profession, they are more willing to do whatever it takes to be successful. They are not driven by a contract but by their heart.

Effective Leaders are included in conversations with teachers. Effective schools are places where everyone shares. A leader who includes teachers in conversations will be included in teachers' conversations. Trust must be developed through open, concise, and direct discussions.

Effective Leaders influence teachers to volunteer for additional activities. Teachers who recognize the need to feed administrators also know how stressful administration can be. Therefore, they lend a hand to assist progress whenever they can. Finding people to volunteer is not difficult.

Effective Leaders take time to plan, organize, and accomplish "to do's" without burning out. It is important to organize each day and determine the importance of tasks. Effective organization leads to effective implementation. Consequently, great leaders avoid procrastination and attempt to accomplish at least 1 - 5 tasks from their daily To Do List.

Effective Leaders visit classrooms. Teachers continually share that effective leaders take the time to visit as many classrooms as possible. The best teachers truly enjoy the administrators coming into their classroom and observing daily activities. A closed door would never prevent a caring leader from entering a lab of learning.

Effective Leaders are visible and accessible. The best leaders are seen throughout the building. They are accessible - spending as little time as possible in their office with a closed door. They have a management style of cruising classrooms and hallways.

Effective Leaders discuss controversial issues with faculty members. Good debates and discussions clarify issues. An administrator who is self-assured and confident will want to hear the opinions of faculty members on new initiatives, trends and mandates. A "FED" (see below) faculty can deal with controversy in a mature and professional manner.



Effective Leaders see teacher evaluations as extremely important. The best leaders recognize the need for evaluations and make a plan to schedule them throughout the year avoiding the last minute syndrome. They also, however, realize that evaluations need to be a positive and growing experience with time for reflection and self-assessment.

Effective Leaders share their beliefs and expectations with all. Teachers continually remark how refreshing it is to work with an individual who shares, cares and dares. People want to know what the leader believes and what he/she expects. The best leaders don't have hidden agendas and readily communicate to all involved.

Effective Leaders continuously ask for input from staff members. Leaders know that to be effective, you must involve others. Teachers are the best resources an administrator has. When others are asked for their ideas, philosophies, and thinking, it makes one reprocess his or her own beliefs. Input from all is essential in building a staff.

Effective Leaders ask staff members to evaluate them. The most secure leaders want to provide opportunities for staff members to evaluate their effectiveness. Regular "How am I Doing?" sessions or forms are imperative.

Effective Leaders schedule times to work with students. The best leaders will say that the finest stress reliever is to get away from the office and plan an activity with students. Teachers admire administrators that take time to interact personally with students. Students love it, too!

Effective Leaders take a personal interest in the well-being of people on the staff. Wellness is essential for anyone to work in the field of education today. Leaders who care about the whole person take time to ask about personal life, provide discussions for wellness, and monitor morale continually.

Effective Leaders plan regular social activities for the staff. Feeding (literally and figuratively) is important. Teachers need opportunities to get together and just enjoy each other's company. Many times an impromptu social is more valuable than one that was extensively planned.

Effective Leaders take time to show appreciation. A quick note of thanks, a small coupon for a burger, or even an apple to say, "You're great" can make such a difference in a teacher's day. Everyone blossoms through appreciative acts.

Effective Leaders inform all of upcoming meetings and agendas. The best leaders realize that teachers have a life, family, and responsibilities outside of education. Therefore, in scheduling meetings, the best leaders give everyone involved enough advance notice to make the necessary arrangements. An agenda is also imperative so professionals will come prepared. Most importantly, meetings are relevant, timely, and productive.



Effective Leaders are treated with respect during meetings and workshops. An environment that models respect creates respect. Teachers who admire the leadership make sure all of their actions demonstrate a mature and professional attitude. They listen, participate, and don't engage in other activities during meetings or other professional engagements.

Effective Leaders ask teachers for information only once. Teaching requires endless paperwork. Thus, teachers complain when asked to complete forms asking the same information more than once. The best leaders are sensitive to the amount of information they request from teachers and the amount of time given to obtain the data.

Effective Leaders distribute monthly and weekly planning sheets to keep everyone up-dated. So many things happen in a given day, week and month that it is very difficult to be informed unless someone organizes all activities. Administrators know the importance of keeping everyone up to date.

Effective Leaders connect with as many adults as possible each day. Leaders who truly care about the people in the building take the time to let them know. A simple "Good Morning!" or "How are you doing?" can make a big difference and start someone's day off on a positive note.

Effective Leaders connect with teachers on break. The best leaders feel comfortable dropping in on the teachers during break whether it is in the lounge or elsewhere. There is no "off limits" in a school where everyone feels welcomed and important.



Effective Leaders dine with teachers when possible. Some of the best conversations held are during a dining experience. When an administrator takes the time to eat and chat with teachers, they make the teachers feel special.

Effective Leaders base decisions on the input requested. One of the biggest frustrations to people is being asked for input when the final decisions have already been made. It is an insult to professionalism. Thus, true leaders ensure that when input is solicited it will be considered.

Effective Leaders are supportive. Teachers need support and the best leaders recognize this need. The best leaders do whatever it takes to provide the resources for the staff.

Effective Leaders can effectively articulate curricular activities occurring school-wide. The difference between a good leader and a great leader is that a good leader can explain what is happening throughout the school with little hesitation. A GREAT leader not only explains ongoing activities but also does so with a passion and enthusiasm that is flattering and contagious.

Effective Leaders present useful information and practices to others. Great leaders have so much to share that others can learn from. The best administrators are commonly found presenting to community organizations, other administrators, school boards, and conferences. Great administrators are also great teachers.



Effective Leaders recognize the importance of teachers attending conferences and workshops. Authentic leaders believe that teachers need to attend conferences, workshops, and be involved in any experience which benefits students. Teachers need opportunities to rejuvenate, revalidate and recommit to their position.

Effective Leaders connect with parents. The best leaders know that the partnership with parents is imperative in the success of a school. They make an ongoing commitment to involve, inform and indulge parents.

Effective Leaders connect with the community. Successful schools have a strong community backing. This backing comes from the efforts of a strong administrator to inform and involve the community through service projects, positive media, and any other means of including the parents and community.

Effective Leaders learn students' names and backgrounds. In student-oriented schools, you see administrators conversing, caring and connecting with students throughout the day. The affective component is a major characteristic of a school for students.

Effective Leaders are available to students. When students are asked to describe great administrators, they say the ones who "are nice and talk to you." Students need as many stable adults in their lives as possible. A great leader can provide this strength.

Effective Leaders are aware of the ongoing student activities available. Great schools have a curriculum that is ongoing in the hallways, lunchrooms and other places outside of classrooms. The best leaders can articulate and participate in the many different ways teachers connect positively with students.

Effective Leaders are involved in discussing curriculum and discipline with parents. A terrific administrator feels comfortable being involved in curriculum and discipline discussions between parents and teachers. They are recognized as leaders of instruction and behavior in the school.

Effective Leaders make "fun" an important component of every day. The best leaders know that people having fun are more likely to be creative, take risks, and enjoy their job. Upon entering a building for the first time, one can instantly recognize the "fun factor" being applied.

Effective Leaders look forward to going to work. What more can you say? If you are happy in your job and fulfilled, you will be happy in your life. Life is too short to spend it in a miserable work situation.

Effective Leaders are solution finders. It is easy to sit around and "quack" about the problems of a profession. It is hard to find solutions. However, the best leaders focus on doable, people-oriented solutions.



Effective Leaders are proud to tell other people about the great things their staff does. Leaders who acknowledge and applaud their staff outwardly are rewarded inwardly. The best administrators are constantly singing the praises of others.

Effective Leaders encourage student work to be displayed in as many places as possible. People are more important than paint and the best administrators want the students to own the walls. Students enjoy seeing their work displayed and great leaders want others to take pride in everyone's success.

Effective Leaders involve students in decision making. Schools were built for students and the best administrators never forget this. They take the time to talk to students about what is working, what is not, and how the school can be improved.

Effective Leaders discourage school-wide punishments. Everyone makes mistakes, and yes, decisions to deal with problems must be made. The best leaders, however, never punish the entire school for the faults of a few. They deal with the specific problems and individuals as they occur.

Effective Leaders appreciate and applaud teachers' individual methods and practices. The best leaders do not confine teachers with rules and regulations that make them teach one certain way. They appreciate and respect that the best teachers do what they have to do to ensure success for all.

Effective Leaders deal effectively and efficiently with ineffective teachers. The best leaders admonish only the staff members in the wrong rather than implementing a new policy that punishes everyone. They are fair and do not tolerate incompetence or status quo.

Effective Leaders never embarrass or put down a staff member in front of others. The best leaders deal with conflicts directly and individually. They never treat anyone with disrespect or disregard for their feelings.

Effective Leaders deal immediately and individually with teachers' needs and frustrations. Caring leaders take the time to help teachers. They recognize the importance of creating a worthy environment for all.

Effective Leaders involve the staff insofar as possible in budget, calendar and agenda items. Input, input, input. It is essential in running effective schools. Teachers continuously have opportunities to have a say about the budget, scheduled activities, and meetings (format, agenda, etc.)

Effective Leaders have a life outside of education. The best leaders know that they have to plan time for themselves and their families before their profession. The most stressed-out leaders are ones who consistently put their personal life last.



In conclusion, administrators must first recognize the strengths of their staff. They must realize that together they can make a difference, although it takes considerable reflection, commitment and work.

"It takes all of us . . .
For the woods would be very silent
If no birds sang except the best."
- - Henry Van Dyke

Courtesy of: If You Don't Feed the Teacher They Eat the Students!: A Guide to Success for Administrators and Teachers

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