

Cultural Leadership – An Essential Skill of a Successful Superintendent

Now, more than ever, superintendents must establish and maintain their own personal integrity, honesty, and trust while understanding the importance of the social, cultural, political, and leadership factors in creating and sustaining a positive school climate and culture. Trust is the number one thing that will make or break any organization and will cause the rise or fall of the superintendent (Covey, 2006). How does a leader establish trust? A superintendent does this by demonstrating honesty on a daily basis through words and actions (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Maintaining trust allows ongoing relationship building between the leader and constituents thereby improving school climate and culture, as well as providing the foundation of trust necessary to permit the inevitable changes that will occur in schools.

As we move forward with new teacher and principal effectiveness systems and eventually a superintendent effectiveness system in Kentucky, effective school leaders must demonstrate honesty and credibility. A leader's actions speak louder than his/ her words. How a leader behaves will provide the evidence of the connection between the values and ethics of leaders and actual practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Leaders must *walk the talk* modeling what they believe, their core values.

In addition to establishing a climate of trust, the superintendent must establish the importance of high expectations and respect for all students, while partnering with staff, parents, and community members for school and district success. There must be active involvement of all stakeholders. Creating a school climate and culture of trust and high expectations needs consistent attention and nurturing. Once this culture is established, collaborative leadership and the building of internal capacity can begin effectively. Central office administrators, principals, and teachers must take ownership of the work that impacts the progress of students, of the school, and of the district.

Resources

Covey, S.M.R. (2006). *The speed of trust*. Salt Lake City, UT: Franklin Covey.

Kouzes, M., and Posner (2002). *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tschannen-Moran, M. (2004). *Trust matters: Leadership for successful schools*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.