



5 Minute Activity

Autonomy with Responsibility

Choose one of the following excerpts to read or videos to watch. Then, discuss one of the discussion prompts below.

“Do Your Homework and Listen,” Leadership Philosophies of the Clovis Unified School District (p.68)

Thunk!

The sound of reams of paper and stacks of books hitting the Clovis Unified Governing Boardroom dais brought a hush to the crowded meeting. Critics of the recently adopted State Standards and the District’s work to develop new curriculum had been in attendance at meetings of the Governing Board for months. Passionately challenging the need for new standards, the group had alleged ill-intent toward students and had delivered mountains of reading material to the Governing Board and Superintendent to prove their opinions. The moment had come for the Superintendent to decisively end the debate.

With calm authority, she spoke of the hundreds of hours of research invested in the District’s decision, and the extent to which she and her team had listened to their concerns, investigated information sources on both sides of the issue, and considered their opinions. Speaking for an entire team of principals and curriculum developers, she planted a flag asserting that the Clovis Unified educational team be trusted for its expertise, that she had heard the speakers’ concerns and perceptions, and that after exhaustive research could confidently say that the District leadership’s decision was what was best for kids.

There will always be people who disagree with decisions leaders make. Sometimes, that disagreement stems from differing values and opinions, and sometimes it’s based on misinformation and distrust. A leader must take the time to listen carefully, understand the source of disagreement, do the necessary homework, and be open to hearing differing opinions. If, after that, the decision remains a good one, stand firm and speak up for your team, having demonstrated an open mind and care for the voices of others.

“The Role of a Leader is to Act,” *Leadership Philosophies of the Clovis Unified School District* (p.23)

Leadership Calls for Action

Large organizations must remain small at heart to thrive. Clovis Unified school area concept and site-based management philosophy places great responsibility in the hands of area, site and department leaders to make decisions that meet the unique needs of their students, staff and families. Leaders close to their communities know what will work well and what won't, and they are charged with decision-making based on that knowledge.

Doc would advise, when you don't know what to do, do something – at least you'll know what to do or what not to do next time! You never gain experience by just sitting there. No one is ever in danger when making forward progress; part of living is failing a little and succeeding a little.

You can't stay at zero; you have to go plus or minus. Zero is only the fulcrum of the lever, and you can either be on the end, moving the weight, or you are the weight.

Watch the video clip of former Superintendent Dr. Terry Bradley telling the story of a pivotal decision that led to the Board majority shifting away from support for Doc Buchanan. Following the decision described in Terry's story, the new Governing Board majority voted to *not* renew Doc Buchanan's contract, ending his 31-year career as the Clovis Unified Superintendent.

<https://vimeo.com/880680936/74b8aac479?share=copy>. The video is about 2 ½ minutes long.

Watch the video clip of Mr. Denver Stairs describing an experience of bringing a community together in the midst of racial tension on campus. The video is about 6 minutes long.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IWpMS5oYsSz4upF98u6xbmb8UcO-8R_1?ths=true

Discussion Prompts

Emerging Leaders (101): Reflect on your career to this point and pick one of the following to answer: 1) Has there been a time that you made a decision that you knew was the right one, but also one that would bring challenging times to you or your team? 2) Has there been a time in your career where you witnessed a leader NOT confront an issue/disagreement? For either response, how did you navigate the outcome?

Established Leaders (201): As a leader, what is the value of proactively confronting challenging issues? Think of one of your mentors, in addition to courage, what are other leadership qualities you have seen individuals use to navigate challenging conversations?

Tenured Leaders (301): Reflecting on the story you read or video you watched. Are there other times in the district's history where you have witnessed leaders demonstrating courage to confront issues or disagreements? What factors must we intentionally develop in our district to encourage courageous leadership?