



Clovis Unified School District

Doc Buchanan
Leadership Academy

5 Minute Activity

Courage to Confront Disagreement and Issues

Confront the Issue with Open Honest and Healthy Conversations

Read the excerpt below from *Leadership Philosophies of the Clovis Unified School District* (p.70) and the excerpt from the *Historical Overview of Clovis Unified School District*. Complete one or more of the following discussion prompts.

Leaders are intentionally chosen for their role and have knowledge and opinions to contribute to solutions. If a leader is not willing to speak up, share thoughts, agree, or disagree, and provide possible solutions, then that leader should vacate the seat because there is someone else who is willing to contribute. Be a contributor.

There have been times when the Governing Board and district administration have been at odds with each other. There have also been times when Governing Board members were at odds with each other. The excerpt below discusses one of these times.

Historical Overview

The four-to-three vote was a mainstay for deciding district issues until October 21, 1960, when William White submitted his letter of resignation. With a vote of 4-3 the Board appointed Phillip V. Sanchez to fill the vacated seat.

Two weeks after he was appointed, Sanchez presented his letter of resignation to the board. He described the dissension among the board members and cited their factionalism as the basis for his withdrawal stating,

I have become aware of the existence of two distinct factions [a pro-Buchanan and an anti-Buchanan faction] within the membership of the board, and a decided rift between the two... On this board there exists a minority group opinion which seeks to maintain its status as such, regardless of the consequences. This... is unfortunate... these [two factions] could more logically, intelligently, and profitably be merged into one faction: a pro-Clovis Unified School District faction.

The trustees refused to accept Sanchez's resignation, "It was moved by Mr. Oliver and seconded by Mr. Parks and carried unanimously that the governing board give Sanchez a unanimous vote of confidence."

Discussion Prompts

We have named our newest intermediate school after Phillip Sanchez. One of the many reasons was his willingness to speak up by clearly articulating the dissension among Governing Board members, although it was not accepted well by all Board members. Sanchez's courage to speak up forced Board members to reflect on their public behavior and discourse became healthy, at least for a while.

Emerging Leaders (101): Reflect on your career to this point and share a time when you have had a difficult conversation with a community member, employee, or student. Describe the situation and why you decided to have the conversation. How did you handle the conversation? Describe the outcome and what you learned through the process.

Established Leaders (201): As leaders, we often take a risk to support the district and what is right for our students. Think of a time when you, as the leader, had to take a stand that may not have been popular with employees or the community. Explain the situation and the risk you took. Describe the conversations you had in explaining your position and why you took the stand. Discuss the outcome.

Tenured Leaders (301): Janet Young used to tell us that she needed our best thinking, whether we agreed or disagreed with what was being said. The following quote reminds me of something she would say, “if a leader is not willing to speak up, share thoughts, agree, or disagree, and provide possible solutions, then that leader should vacate the seat because there is someone else who is willing to contribute”. She meant this in the most respectful way possible. Sometimes, it’s not easy to be the only person in the room dissenting but you were chosen for your position because of your knowledge and skill set.

With a partner, discuss the opportunities you must provide your opinion to District leadership. What are the conditions needed to make you feel safe enough to add to the conversation whether you agree or disagree?