



Clovis Unified School District

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Leadership Academy

5 Minute Activity

Student Success is at the Center of Every Decision

Read the excerpt from Leadership Philosophies of the Clovis Unified School District (p. 11). Then, discuss one of the prompts below.

Putting Students First Can Come at a Cost

In the thick of the Great Recession, school district leaders were faced with tough decisions about how to make ends meet. As California's budget continued to plummet, some school districts turned to drastic measures like closing adult education and summer schools, cutting performing arts and elementary athletic programs, and blanketing their employees in layoff notices. In March of 2009 alone, California's State Superintendent announced that 26,000 teachers in California had been handed layoff notices, and by the next school year, 60% of those teachers had lost their jobs.

If asked about their thought process, it's likely those educational leaders would have thrown up their hands and declared, "It is the only way!" as they pulled resources and people away from students.

Not so in Clovis Unified. Putting students at the center of every budget decision made during hard years, decision-makers in Clovis Unified drew a bright line in the sand. "Cuts can't directly hit students and we can't lay anyone off," was the mantra of district and employee leaders who were charged with near impossible work to find over \$50 million in cuts. Coming up short, late in the effort, employee leaders voted to take voluntary pay cuts and unpaid furlough days rather than see colleagues laid off or students lose out on important learning opportunities. While ultimately, the pay cuts and furlough days were reversed as the economy improved, the value of keeping kids at the center of decision-making provided a rock-solid foundation no matter how turbulent the times (p. 11).

Discussion Prompts

Emerging Leaders (101): Former Superintendent Terry Bradley would tell us that recessions are cyclical. The question is not whether there will be another recession but when. As a leader, recommend 3 reductions that could be made at your site/department, 3 that can be made by area/division, and 3 that can be made across the district. Explain your reasoning

Established Leaders (201): Did you know that during the Great Recession each department and division was tasked with making recommendations to cut their own budgets significantly. If you were asked to do the same today, and keeping in mind our values of avoiding layoffs and minimizing the impact to students, what would your recommendation be and why?

Tenured Leaders (301): One of our core values is that "Cuts can't directly hit students and we can't lay anyone off". This is as true today as it has ever been. Create a 30 second elevator speech you would use to defend this value while holding true to "A fair break for every kid".