



Clovis Unified School District

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Leadership Academy

*Students are at the Center of Every Decision*

Read the following excerpt from the book *Leadership Philosophies of the Clovis Unified School District*, p.11.

Putting students first sometimes comes 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 leaders turned to drastic measures like closing adult education and summer schools, cutting performing arts and elementary athletic programs, and blanketing their employees in lay-off notices. In March of 2009 alone, California's State Superintendent announced that 26,000 teachers in California had been handed lay-off 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 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 cut and furlough days were reversed as the economy improved, the value of keeping kids at the center of decision-making was proven a rock-solid foundation no matter how turbulent the times.

*Discuss the following prompt based on the applicable level of experience of your group:*

*Emerging Leaders (101): What are some of the interests that could compete with our students for the center of our attention? What are some processes you can put into place to help keep your decision-making centered on students?*

*Established Leaders (201): Employee lay-offs have not been a budget-cutting mechanism used in Clovis Unified in the past. How does that decision relate to student-centered decision-making?*

*Tenured Leaders (301): Is maintaining a budget-cutting approach that stays away from employee lay-offs practical in today's financial environment? How does or does not such an approach serve the best interest of our students?*