

The Maintenance of Dignity

Bridgette Fincher
EAD 715
August 1, 2009

Abstract

The ability of a person to find a sense of dignity and worth within a school setting is determined by the quality of an individual's interactions with the people within a school and the environment of the school itself. Self-efficacy shapes a teacher's ability to function as does working with a principal of a problem-solving and collaborative mindset. There are two types of coaching which a principal can engage in, the first being collegial coaching. Supportive and invested principals of peer coaching develop a better relationship with their staff while the teachers experience better peer-to-peer interactions which gives depth to their school experience. Cognitive Coaching, a form of structured mentoring by Art Costa and Bob Garmston, is a particularly powerful methodology for people to analyze and change their behaviors towards a more successful end. Yet, there are times when a principal needs to take a direct approach, called technical coaching, when dealing with a teacher in a problematic situation. Several strategies, for the principal, are presented to help the pair come to an appropriate resolution. The objective is to do it in such a way as to retain the teacher's sense of dignity while still having the expectations of the school met .

:

Dignity generally refers to an individual's perception of his or her standing, based on interactions within their environment. (Scott, 2007)

- perception of being worthy, successful and recognized in the social context of schools
- grows in schools that affirm and give credit for an individual's successes
- is achieved without overt strictures, embarrassment or pain
- is encouraged and relevant to what is going on
- positive feedback promotes the self-confidence to maintain successful behavior

The independent nature of personal dignity does not occur in a vacuum but may be defined as a balance between the necessary administrative structures of the environment (i.e., people, rules, routines, and values) and the individual.

Personal dignity is a **dynamic** concept involving **reciprocal interactions** between the **individual** and **the environment**. (Scott, 2007)

A Positive School **Environment** Is Characterized By:

- constant attempts to improve
- utilizing a power base shared by administrators and teachers
- engaging in group vision building
- utilizing problem solving to provide an array of solutions and then implement the best

- providing ongoing teacher in-service and development

- by collegiality

- being lead by sensitive administrators who constantly proved a positive role model

- and the establishment of a safe supportive environment which encourages risk taking

(Shatz,1993)

A **Teacher** Component: Self- Efficacy

Is the self- perception that one can act in response to a certain situation in such a way as to end up with an successful outcome. The quality of the action depends a great deal on the person's belief in their own competence. (Ross, 2005)

Four factors which shape this perception:

based on Bandura's Self-Efficacy Model

- **prior successful performance**
- **observed success by others in a similar situation**
- **dialogue with others that offer encouragement**
- **emotional strengthening of the positive connections towards the situation and reducing the negative**

A Principal Component

Leadership style based on the ideas that:

- teaching is about problem-solving and finding best fit of teaching strategies to match the needs of the current educational surrounding
- examines existing teacher practice and seeks to find better methodologies
- is there to help guide, be an active member and keep the focus on communal problems
- uses problem solving, negotiating, clarifying, listening and reflecting are an integral behaviors
- is an advocate for not only own positions but those of others
- helps move the group towards a decision
- knows interpersonal relations are important and is an effective role model for conflict resolution strategies

(Shatz,1993)

The **Principal's** Role in Peer Coaching

two models

1. collegial coaching, in which the major premise is that teachers will acquire career-long habits of self initiated reflection and self improvement, provided opportunity in doing so

(Garmston 1989)

Peer Coaching As One Method to Enhance Self-Efficacy and Dignity

Successful performance, the most important of Bandura's four, can be derived in teaching by "peer coaching- pairs of teachers of equal experience and competence observe each other teach, negotiate improvement goals, devise strategies to implement the goals, observe the improved teaching and provide each other with feedback."

(McLymont & da Costa, 1998)



Principal Types-Neglectors

- not invested in the process of peer coaching
- doing it because it is an expectation of someone else
- are technicians carrying out important directives but with limited knowledge and interest

Outcome:

The teachers are someone dismissive of their principal and do not view him in an educational leadership capacity even though they themselves might be growing professionally despite him.

Principal Types-Resisters

peer coaching a threat to their own power and authority

subvert the process by putting up road blocks in time, allocation of resources, and by negative attitudes.

Outcome: The teachers find ways to subvert the principal and to isolate themselves. The principal loses both power and teacher respect.

Principal Types-Supporters

main focus was to locate problems, seek solutions and take actions
knowledgeable about the process

supported by their use of time, resources and emotional investment

Outcome: Greater sense of staff cohesiveness, more positive personal regard between the principal and faculty. “Teachers in general feel an ever deepening professional relationship with the principal, a relationship in which lines of influence are blurred and authority and accountability are shared.”

Negative Situations

Individual teachers, whose behavior or choices negatively and significantly impact others or who is deficient in meeting the explicit the goals and expectations of school, can require interactions beyond the confines of peer coaching but can be done in a way to preserve dignity .

The goal is to reduce, alter or eliminate the undesirable behaviors but also maintain as much of the self-esteem, capacity to contribute, and sense of humanity as possible.

The **Principal's** Role in Peer Coaching

two models

2. technical coaching, in which the major premise is that teachers will improve their teaching performance provided objective data, is given in a nonthreatening and supportive climate.

(Garmston 1989)

Start the Dialogue At the Right Time

- start early enough so the teacher can participate in solving the problem
- treat the *current* performance level
- have the discussion in congruence to the action

Keep the Emotional Level Appropriate to the Situation

- keep the emotional level low key, even if the other party is not able to do so
- be honest
- be constructive
- empathize, not sympathize
- listen more, talk less

Assume Goodwill

- resist negative judgments on the character of the person
- see situation from their perspective if possible
- stay open to new possibilities resulting from increased perspective
- focus on the results of actions where observable, concrete data is available

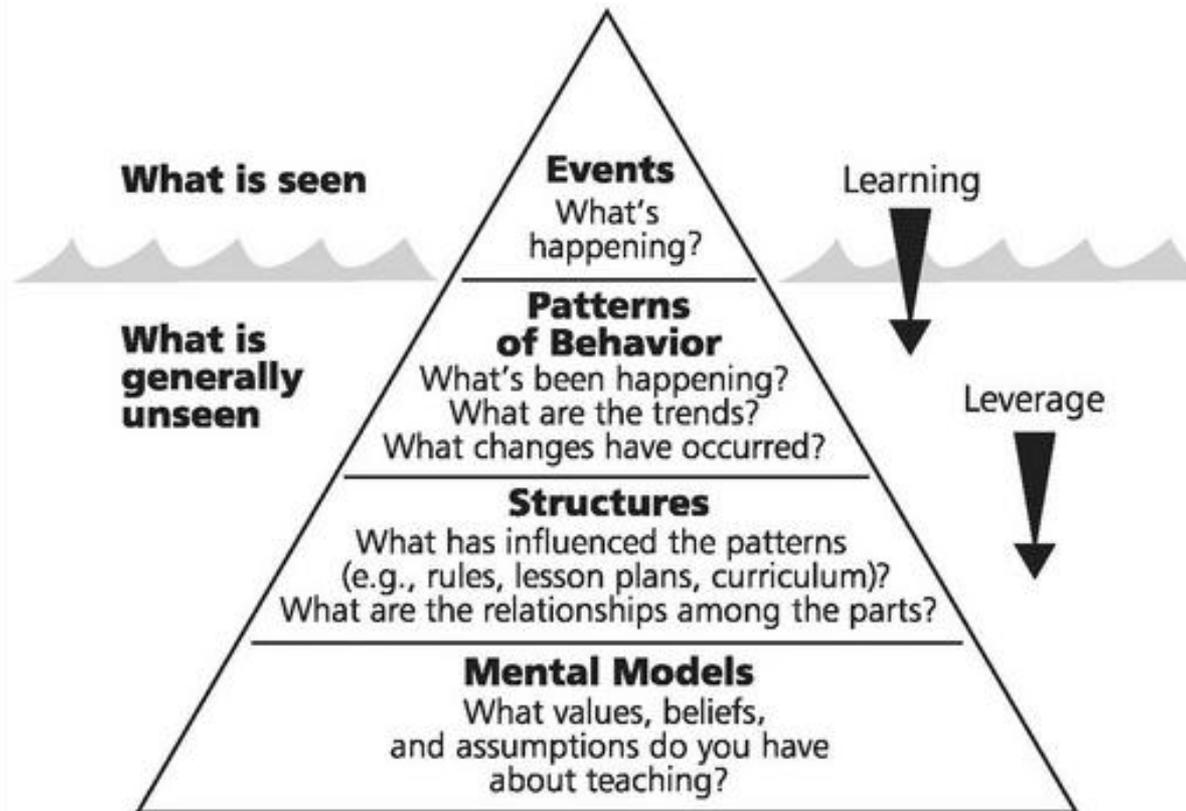
Do Your Homework

- have specific data and examples
- be prepared to make tough decisions if need be

Ask Questions To Clarify

- free up pre-conceptions or judgments before asking questions
- seek to understand the underlying perceptions, thoughts, and feelings
- give full attention
- clarify any gaps or confusion points
- notice body language

The Iceberg is a systems thinking tool designed to help an individual or group discover the patterns of behavior, supporting structures, and mental models that underlie a particular event.



Source: Adapted from *The Iceberg Model* by M. Goodman, 2002. Hopkinton, MA: Innovation Associates Organizational Learning.

Solving the Problem

- focus on the performance, not the person
- discuss the specific discrepancy between the actual and expected performance and clarify the importance of why they need to be met
- both sides agree on the desired outcome based on stated expectations
- emphasize areas of agreement
- discuss areas of disagreements
- negotiate to solve the differences

Keep It Private

- praise in public, problem solve in private
- do not talk about other employees about other employees

Monitor and Provide Feedback Afterwards

Freedom, morality, and the human dignity of the individual consists precisely in this; that he does good not because he is forced to do so, but because he freely conceives it, wants it, and loves it.

Mikhail Bakunin

Citations

Bandura, A. (1993) Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(2), 117-148

Garmston, Robert. J (1989) Is peer coaching changing supervisory relationships? (Report No. EA 021 551) California State University, Sacramento. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 315854). Retrieved July 15, 2009, from EBSCOHost ERIC database.

Hersey, Paul & Blanchard, Kenneth. Management of Organizational Behavior Leading Human Resources. Prentice Hall. 2001

Kohm, Barbara, and Beverly Nance. Principals Who Learn: Asking the Right Questions, Seeking the Best Solutions. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007. Questia. 1 Aug. 2009 <<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=113852432>>.

McLymont, E.F., & da Costa, J.L. (1998, April) Cognitive coaching the vehicle for professional development and teacher collaboration. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego.

Peddy, Shirley. The Art of Mentoring- Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way. Bullion Books. Houston, Texas, 2001.

Ross, John & Bruce, Cathy. (2005, April) Teacher self-assessment: a mechanism for facilitating Professional growth. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal.

Scott, Terrance M. "Issues of Personal Dignity and Social Validity in Schoolwide Systems of Positive Behavior Support." Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions 9.2 (2007): 102+. Questia. 1 Aug. 2009

Shantz, D. (1993) Collaborative leadership and female administrators: A perfect partnership for the future. *The Canadian School Executive*. 12(2) 3-5.

Shultz, Doreen. (1995) Woman supervisors have greater understanding of what takes place in the classrooms than men. *Education*. 116(2), 210-216