



Learning-Oriented Leadership for Transformational Learning

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Session materials posted on cmstep.com/montessorileadership

■ Informational vs. Transformational Learning

- ▶ **Informational Learning** - increases knowledge, adds skills, extends established capacities without changing our own self in light of new information, situations, experiences, insights.
- ▶ **Transformational Learning** - increases in our cognitive, affective (emotional), interpersonal and intrapersonal capacities; enables us to manage the complex demands of teaching, learning, leadership and life.
- ▶ **The Vessel - filling it up vs. changing the shape.**

■ Ways of Knowing

- ▶ **Instrumental (rule-based)** - “What is right/wrong here?” “Will I be punished/rewarded?”
Growth Edge: Be open to possibility of new “right” solutions; take on tasks that demand abstract thinking.
- ▶ **Socializing (other-focused)** - “Will you like/value me?” “Will you think I am a good person?”
Growth Edge: Generate own values and standards; accept conflicting viewpoints without seeing them as a threat to relationships.
- ▶ **Self-authoring (self-reflective)** - “Am I staying true to my own personal integrity, standards, and values?”
Growth Edge: Open up to diverse and opposing views; accept and learn from diverse problem-solving approaches.
- ▶ **Self-transforming (interconnected)** - “How can other people’s thinking help me to develop and grow?”
Growth Edge: Accept that some differences cannot be resolved; avoid insisting on absolutely flat, nonhierarchical approaches.



Turn & Talk - 4 Vignettes

- What lens is this person using in this situation?
- What might be a good growth edge for this person?

■ Pillar Practices

▷ Teaming

- ▷ manage conflict, exchange of perspectives, safe environment for risk-taking

▷ Leadership Roles

- ▷ carefully assigned, support & challenge, sharing strengths & growth edge

▷ Collegial Inquiry

- ▷ Collaborative reflective practice, invited to share thinking and uncover hidden assumptions

▷ Mentoring

- ▷ Broaden perspective, sharing expertise, a more private way to support adult learning

Turn & Talk

Think about ONE Pillar Practice you've experienced in your own work.

- What was your lens?
- What were the lenses of others?
- What felt supportive about this experience?
- Looking back, what might have been helpful?

In pairs, share your reflections with each other.



Vignettes: Mel and Cam

Mel

Whether it's on goals that we discuss or my teaching, our principal helps me the most. Her comments make me feel like I'm doing a good job. And when she offers suggestions for improving, I know that she is offering them because she really cares about me— not just as a teacher, but as a person. That makes a huge difference. It makes me want to do more for her and to be an even better teacher. Sometimes, when I answer a question during a faculty meeting, she tells me that I didn't get the whole thing correct, but she always has something good to say about what I said. She makes me feel like I got part of it, like I am contributing— even if I didn't get it all. She makes me feel like at least I'm learning more about our Montessori curriculum. She is very patient with me. When she encourages me during an observation or after a faculty meeting, it makes me feel like I really belong here. If she didn't do that, I think I'd feel like, "What am I doing here? Maybe I should just quit." She works really hard at helping us to have a sense of our school as a real community— a place where we are making a difference. Sometimes she'll ask "Mel, what do you think about this or that?" It's really not helpful to me when she does this after I've asked her a question about something that I don't understand. I'm not sure how I'm supposed to learn new practices if she doesn't tell me where my weaknesses lie. I ask her a question because I don't know.

Cam

What I think is most helpful about my principal is that she strives to create a school culture that aims to empower all of us [teachers and students] to make our own choices. That's how she exercises her leadership. When I say choices, I mean that she really wants us to create our own goals and to experiment by trying on different roles in the school and in our leadership and different ways of teaching. I like that I'm able to experiment in my own classroom while encouraging a learning process I believe in. She's supportive of that, and I'm grateful to serve in a school like this. She's also incredibly loyal to folks here and tremendously dedicated to our school's survival, even in the complex situation with our AYP [annual yearly progress]. Even though our scores for the past two years have been very low, I truly believe that we will be okay and not need to close, despite the predicament we're currently in. While she feels a deep responsibility to continue running our school in the way she sees fit— and I understand that— she seems unwilling to consider other possible paths to achieving more success in terms of students' improved achievement. From my view, this limits our school and our students' possibilities and potential. I think that if she could become more open to the questions about practice and the possibilities for improvement that are embedded in the evaluators' criticisms, it would better serve our school and students. While I know that it's difficult to move from the way things are now and to shift our direction, if we joined together in exploring possibilities for change, we could further develop our school's potential and programs. "What kind of long-term impact might shifting our direction now have on the school in the future?" I asked her. "How might viewing the last evaluators' suggestions for improvement as a way to examine our Montessori mission, practices, and culture and open new possibilities to help us build for the future?" Rather than protect our school from criticism in order to preserve what we have here, I want to engage with the criticism and the questions. It's this kind of inquiry into evaluators' criticism and possibilities for change that would make our school an even richer learning environment in the future.



Vignettes: Fran and Daye

Fran

My principal is very helpful to me; she always clear about what I need to do. In our school there are specific guidelines so that none of us can say that we don't understand what the expectations are. I like that. She gives us clear directions and explains everything. Every policy is written down for us. That's good. When we meet after an observation, she tells me what I did right and what I need to do to improve my teaching. It's not just that: when I ask her how I should implement the improvement, she helps me by showing me other models for doing it and explains the steps. It's very helpful. The one thing that I'm sometimes confused about is that she makes us do these freewrites at the start of some faculty meetings. She tells us, "Just write what you're thinking." And sometimes she asks us how we're feeling about school or our work. She asks us to write what we think about a question that she puts on the whiteboard. I already know what I'm thinking, so why do I need to write it down? Plus, she doesn't even collect it. She says, "It's just for you!" I wish that she would just focus on what I need to do next, and to prepare for my annual evaluation. That's what would really help me.

Daye

My principal is most helpful because she encourages me, and everyone at school, to think for ourselves. We learn a lot from each other. I've had other principals who don't do this; they just wanted me to follow their rules and do what they want. That works okay when you have to follow a new policy, where there are clearly right and wrong ways. But not in all situations. I really appreciate that my head makes room for us to discuss things— she allows us to do our own thinking. That's what really helps me feel satisfied at work. I know that she trusts me as a professional. She respects my decisions— she doesn't need or want me to check in with her about every choice or change I make in my classroom or with my team. I also appreciate that she looks out for my own growth as a teacher-leader. She suggested I be appointed to our school's parent-school council— and that's been a terrific experience in many ways. It's been a help to me personally and professionally. She even took the time to introduce me to parents on the school's board who she thinks would be good for me to know. The part that is hardest for me is that sometimes she gets frustrated and annoyed when I critique her practices or ideas for improvement or give her feedback on things. Like the time when so many teachers in a recent faculty meeting had no clue about what she was talking about or why she wanted to implement the initiative when the old one was working so well. We just didn't understand her reasoning. And I told her about that and how I thought she could help us. At school, and in my life, I've started to question things more. I'm not going to take something as truth just because she says so.

*Vignettes adapted from: Drago-Severson, E. (2009). *Leading adult learning: supporting adult development in our schools*. Sage Publications. [Kindle version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com.*