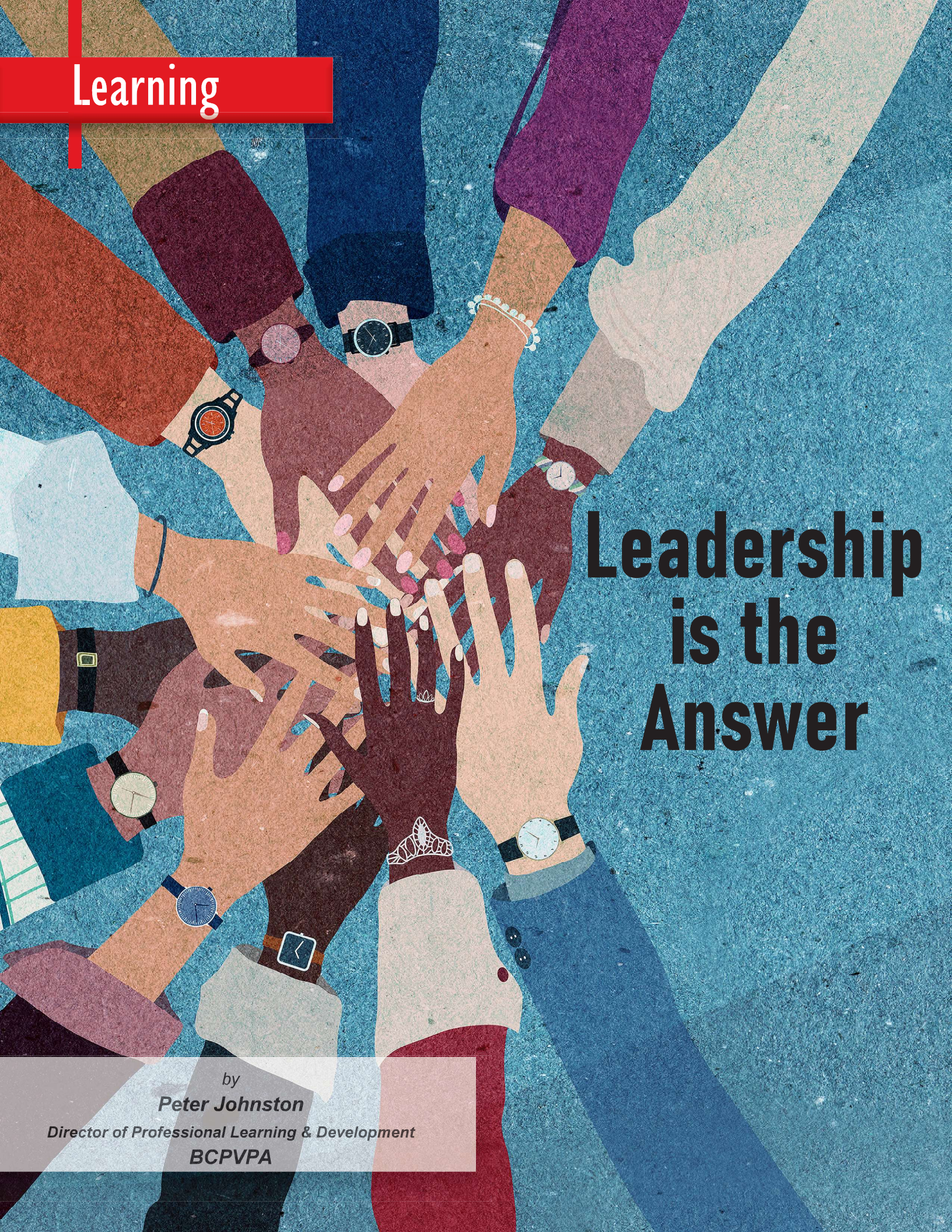




Learning

Leadership is the Answer

by

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I have had the great pleasure of travelling around the province this past year, facilitating learning sessions that require self-reflection and action plans.

Dedicated school leaders are developing their leadership capacity and learning best practices for establishing trust in their schools. In each learning session, we agreed that if you have developed your leadership capacity, you will have the capacity to establish trust within our schools. In doing so, you will be working in a learning culture that is less stressful and generates wellness for yourself and staff members.

In these learning sessions, I emphasize how leadership, organizational trust, and wellness are interdependent and can significantly impact a school's learning culture.

Leadership plays the most critical role in establishing trust within an organization. School leaders who are transparent, honest, and consistent in their actions and decisions help to build trust in the school community.

When staff, students and parents trust their school leaders, they are more likely to be engaged, committed, and productive. On the other hand, school leaders who are perceived as untrustworthy can create a culture of fear, uncertainty, and low morale.

Trust is also crucial for personal and staff wellness. When staff feel trusted, they are more likely to feel a sense of autonomy, control, and support in their school environment. This can reduce stress, improve mental health, and increase job satisfaction. Conversely, a lack of trust can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and burnout.

Leadership also plays a critical role in promoting employee wellness. School leaders prioritizing staff and student well-being by providing resources, support, and a positive learning culture can improve overall health outcomes, reduce absenteeism, and increase well-being. On the other hand, leaders who

do not prioritize well-being can create a culture of overwork, stress, and burnout.

Strong leadership is essential for building trust within a school and promoting staff and student wellness. Leadership, organizational trust, and wellness are interdependent and should be prioritized to create a healthy school learning culture.

I am constantly weaving in examples of how leadership, trust, and wellness are woven together using the leadership principles espoused by Jocko Willink and Dr. Stephen Covey. The BCPVPA has an exclusive agreement with FranklinCovey to use their world-class leadership content, and Jocko Willink's Echelon Front offers outstanding practical, timeless leadership principles. Both sets of leadership principles give the school leader the strategies and tools to create a healthy school learning culture.

The principles expressed in Extreme Ownership™ and the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People® emphasize how great school leaders prioritize excellent personal health and wellness.

Developing trust in schools is essential to creating a positive and productive learning environment. When teachers, school leaders, and staff members demonstrate trust and respect toward one another, students feel safe and supported and are more likely to thrive academically and emotionally.

One of the critical principles of Jocko Willink's leadership philosophy is Extreme Ownership™. This principle is about taking responsibility for one's actions and decisions, no matter the circumstances. In our schools, extreme ownership means school leaders and teachers should take ownership of their students' successes and failures. When school leaders and teachers take responsibility for their students' learning, they create an environment of trust and accountability. extreme ownership for student learning sets a positive example for students as they start taking ownership of their own learning, and it helps school leaders and teachers to build better relationships with their students.



"Developing trust in schools is essential to creating a positive and productive learning environment. When teachers, school leaders, and staff members demonstrate trust and respect toward one another, students feel safe and supported and are more likely to thrive academically and emotionally."

Another principle that can be applied to developing trust in our schools is Dr. Stephen Covey's 7th Habit. This principle emphasizes the importance of caring for oneself physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Wellness is crucial for school leaders, who often work long hours and face many daily challenges. When school leaders prioritize their own personal health and wellness, they're better equipped to handle the demands of their job and create a positive learning environment for their staff and students.

So: how do school leaders put these leadership principles into action to develop trust in their schools?

Creating a Learning Culture of Extreme Ownership

One must start with school leadership to create an Extreme Ownership™ learning culture. Principals, Vice-Principals, and other school leaders must model extreme ownership in their actions and decision-making, setting the tone for the rest of the school community. An extreme ownership learning culture means taking responsibility for everything that happens in the school, even if it's not directly related to one's own area of responsibility. School leaders must also be transparent about their goals and expectations, and ensure all staff members

understand their own impact on the learning culture being created.

For example, if a student is not succeeding in a particular class, it's easy to blame the student or their parents for not doing enough. However, a leader practicing Extreme Ownership™ would look at the situation and identify what they could have done differently to support that student. Did the school leader provide enough resources and support for the student? Did the school leader identify the student's unique needs and challenges? Did the school leader communicate effectively with other staff, students, and their parents?

In turn, other school leaders and teachers must also take ownership of their students' learning. This means instructing and assessing in a way that helps students develop the skills and mindsets needed to succeed in school and the modern world. It also means being transparent about goals and expectations, and creating a safe and supportive learning culture where students feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes. When school leaders take ownership of their students' learning, they create a sense of accountability and trust between themselves, the teaching staff, and their students. This trust is essential for creating a positive and productive learning environment.

Prioritizing Personal Health and Wellness

School leadership can be exhausting if not supported by a wellness plan. The 7th Habit – Sharpen the Saw – emphasizes the importance of caring for oneself physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. These four dimensions of wellness are essential for Principals and Vice-Principals, who often work long hours and face many daily challenges. When school leaders prioritize their personal health and wellness, they are better equipped to handle the demands of their day and continue creating a positive learning environment for their students.

Ask Yourself:

"Ever been too busy to fill your car with gas or plug in for a charge?"

"Why do Airlines ask you to put your mask on first, then your child's mask?"

You must be there for your staff and students as a school leader. If you do not have enough gas or air, how can you help them?

What does it look like to prioritize personal health and wellness as a school leader? It could mean practicing self-care by getting enough sleep, eating healthy foods, and engaging in physical activity. It could also mean seeking out professional development opportunities that equip you with the tools and give you the reflective time to take ownership of your school's learning culture and your wellness.

Strong leaders seem to find strategies to improve their leadership skills, thereby enhancing their wellness. BCPVPA members can check out the PLD Tile in My BCPVPA (bcvpva.org) to request professional learning that meets the needs of you and your colleagues. Leadership is the answer: own your learning and wellness.



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