

Learning

Developing Your Leadership Fitness



Leadership is a choice not a position

Leadership is a skill that can be learned

Leadership requires making change and progress

Leadership is about influence - achieving results through others

The 4 Essential Roles of Leadership - FranklinCovey

by

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I listened recently to two of our Principal colleagues as they discussed their passion. One colleague mentioned how it took years to prepare for the Penticton Ironman: 16+ hours of swimming, cycling, and a marathon to finish. Another colleague spoke about the amount of practice it took to become an acclaimed pianist and organist. Their passion for strategic and intentional 'preparation and practice' translated to accomplishing their goals.

The BCPVPA Professional Learning and Development (PLD) team believes that leadership is a *skill* that can be developed and maintained with consistent, ongoing learning.

No one is born with the ability to play a sport such as football, soccer, or basketball. Playing a sport requires skills that must be learned and enhanced through training. Similarly, no one can pick up a musical instrument such as the guitar, or sit down at a piano, and play those instruments well without years of training and preparation.

Some people are born with physical attributes that might give them an advantage in a particular sport, such as size, strength, or speed. Others have innate mental and physical qualities that facilitate an aptitude for a specific musical instrument. Nonetheless, playing a sport or a musical instrument is a skill.

Leadership Must be Taught

No one is born with great leadership ability. Leadership is a skill that must be taught, learned, and developed over time through training, practice, and repetition. Some people are born with attributes that enable them to grow faster and to outperform others as they develop their leadership *abilities*. But without learning the necessary leadership *skills*, these people will not ultimately succeed. The pathway to becoming a good leader lies in learning and developing leadership skills through training, education, and continuous, dedicated effort.

Leadership is Not an Inoculation

You can't complete a single workout at the gym and expect to be in the best shape of your life. You can't attend a weekend seminar or read a book about health and nutrition and automatically perform at the highest levels of strength and cardiovascular endurance. To develop your physical athletic abilities to their peak requires a disciplined training schedule, multiple times a week, for weeks, months, and years.

The same goes for developing your leadership skills. You can't read a book, sit through a keynote speech, seminar, or workshop, or take a single online course and expect to be at peak leadership performance. Like physical training, leadership is something you must work to develop continuously, multiple times a week, for months and years on end. There is always something new to learn, some areas to improve, and some new leadership challenge to be faced.

No one is born with
great leadership ability

Leadership Development Requires a Disciplined Training Continuum

In the same way that leadership is not something some people are just born with, it is also not something you can stumble upon through experience. When you recognize that leadership is a skill, you can put together a disciplined plan to train and educate yourself with frequency, and focus on your continuous leadership development. You can then prioritize the effort to develop the leadership skills of the people on your staff to ensure they are constantly learning, growing, and improving to become more effective leaders. That disciplined effort over time is the pathway to effective school leadership, enabling you and your school community to develop a sustainable learning culture.

On Your Staff

"I'm really good at the technical stuff," said the Tech Education Department Head. "But I find leading other people to be really hard. It just isn't my thing."

"Leading people is the most challenging of human endeavours," I said. "But the good news is, it isn't something that any of us are born with. Leadership is a skill that must be learned."

"Do you think leadership is actually something that can be taught?" asked the Department Head doubtfully.

"It absolutely can be taught," I said. "When I ran leadership training for educators across North America, I saw many school leaders struggle at first. Some were introverts and super nervous about speaking at a staff meeting. Some were easily overwhelmed under pressure, and couldn't detach and make decisions. Some were too aggressive in decision-making without properly considering ways to mitigate risk. They had to be taught how to lead. With specific growth plan goals, they grew to become good leaders."

"Interesting," the department head responded. "Were there any school leaders you encountered who couldn't be taught?"

"Yes," I replied. "But the only school leaders that couldn't be taught were the ones who weren't humble enough to realize they needed to improve. If they couldn't check their ego, they wouldn't listen to any guidance or constructive feedback, and they would never improve. Many new Principals that initially struggled showed marked improvement through the course as long as they were willing to listen, learn, and apply the leadership skills they were taught, and most went on to have successful careers."

Take Action

This week, focus on how well you are prioritizing leadership training for you and your school leadership team. Examine how often you are making time for continuous leadership growth and development. How much time are you prioritizing in your schedule to develop the leadership skills of the people on your school team to ensure they are constantly learning, growing, and improving their leadership skills to become more effective leaders? That disciplined effort over time is the pathway to becoming an even better leader than you are now, and for your school to develop a deep learning culture.

Professional Learning & Development: *My BCPVPA*

Most of you have school districts that provide professional learning opportunities. Much of your school district's professional learning offerings focus on the appropriate management of your school, specific to the policies and regulations of your school district.

Leadership development should be done in a safe place where you get to share your frustrations, challenges, and reflections.

Regardless of where you are in your school leadership career, or where you live in British Columbia, you can access a BCPVPA leadership program that will be engaging and thought-provoking. Log in to My BCPVPA at bcpvpa.org and check out our PLD tile. There you will find our leadership development offerings and, if you are looking for more, then we invite you to request a custom leadership development program for you and your colleagues in your district.



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INSPIRE OTHERS**

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