

Philosophy Summary – Jon P. Zurfluh

I have learned that there is a very simple litmus test of whether or not a school measures up. Simply stated, it must be a school to which I would be comfortable sending my own children. This simple quality drives a very personal sense of what constitutes excellence and is not easily quantified nor described. Within that frame of reference, I offer the following insight into my leadership style and practices.

Servant Leadership

First, as my references will confirm, my actions over time are closely aligned with a style of servant leadership. A majority of my decisions are couched in a focus on removing obstacles from the path of teachers and staff members to enable better task accomplishment to the benefit of the children we serve. During my tenure in Moscow, especially in regards to a willingness to work hard and commitment to helping others achieve their goals, I have demonstrated an orientation that is a good balance between a directive, supportive, participative, and achievement focused. The result is staff members that identify me as both holding high expectations while providing the support to meet those expectations.

Collaboration

Schools have always been founded on collaboration. It is our core expectation for students and we all agree without too much debate that it is required in most school settings – from the classroom to the sport's field. This aspect of my leadership style is one of my greatest strengths. I bring a strong sense of connection to my team and they would identify me as both open minded and stimulating in my discourse on any given topic. I believe strongly in the strength of the team being superior to the strength of the individual. By attending to the needs of each member of the group, I attend to the overall health of the cohort and its ability to accomplish great things. I understand the dynamics of building a team through the teams I have created and I know that the complexity of team dynamics can never be underestimated.

Empowerment

Empowerment is about establishing an Organizational Culture that cares about giving each stakeholder the tools and authority needed to accomplish great things within the context of organizational mission and vision. Much of what is accomplished in organizations has more to do with permission than it does with available skills or resources. The challenge is how to move people to greater creativity and accomplishment. In essence, I give them permission to be or become great.

Transformational Concepts

For a leader to move from a more transactional approach to one that is considered more transformational, commitment to clarifying personal and professional values is needed. As an educator, I demonstrate an essential commitment to lifelong learning and the core belief that everyone has untapped, accessible potential. My experience confirms that this belief in potential is essential -- and the best way to empower inspiration and renewed vision. My leadership style demands constant growth and development of the profession.

Impacts and Strategic Work

Schools move through strategic work whether they do strategic planning or not. They look forward with an eye to a plausible future and they make decisions about what they need to do to prepare their children for the future in which they will live. It's an increasingly complex puzzle to foresee in the face of a daunting pace of change that swims around us. For me, the key is to determine the impacts that we want to have on kids that surrounds a competent academic curriculum. In other words, what are the non-curricular skills that kids will need to thrive in a career environment where adaptability and grit weigh in as more important than discrete knowledge – where EQ is more important than IQ.

The educational philosophy of the 21st century suggests that we need to teach kids on how to exist in a constant state of becoming – flexibly moving from one level of accomplishment to the next.