AASA
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
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Practical Approaches to Day to Day School Leadership That Superintendents (and Boards) Should Know

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Presenter
Let’s begin by seeing who is in the audience

- Superintendents?
- Board members?
- Other central office administration?
- Building principals or assistant principals?
- Other?
Before we begin

Some background information
And why I am here with you today.....
Let’s divide the presentation into a few categories

1. **Try it 😊**: Things that work

2. **Don’t try it 😞**: Things you should avoid

3. **Your questions and scenarios that we can work on together**

4. **An activity**

5. **Final closing thoughts**
Try it!

- Be Honest
- The Short Executive Summary
- The Early Warning
- Change the Furniture
- Go Last
- Praise Often
- Regularity
- The Personal You
- Trust the Team
Try it! 😊

Be Honest

- You need to have the ability to “tell it like it is”
- Remember that information is coming at you at 100 miles an hour. You need to keep it straight and tell it straight
- Ask yourself this question “Why did that person tell you that”
  (why do they want you to know that – what’s in it for them)
- Remember – once it leaves our lips – we own it
- Example: if you create a committee to hire someone and you don’t follow it...why don’t you simply say “I am going to pick a candidate regardless of a committee”
Try it! 😊

The Short Executive Summary

- When writing a report to the Board make it a “crisp” one page summary preferably with a visual/graph and of course cost information
  - What is it you want?
  - Why do you want it?
  - What is the benefit?
  - What is the cost?
  - Time line
  - Close
- That’s it – short and sweet
  - Background information is in the form of attachments
- This is what business minded people want – to help them make decisions
Try it! 😊

Change the Furniture

When you first get into your new office as a superintendent change the furniture, or at least change the location of your furniture. Put your signature on the workplace.

This signifies a change in leadership and that change in the future is likely to occur.

This is not an earth shattering revelation – but it is a way to help establish yourself.

And it’s fun!
Try it! 😊

Go Last

Allow your cabinet members to speak freely. Don’t always lead with your opinion. Listen, be patient, speak last, not first.

Promote your team’s view (when appropriate)

Be more reflective – get rid of that ego!
Try it! 😊

The Early Warning

- You do not want the Board to hear critical information at the supermarket

- Bad news early and often – Good news anytime!

- Keep the Board (Board President) posted on all critical issues all the time – anytime – every time
Try it! 😊

Praise often!

People need to feel affirmation

Praise is free!

- The key here is to be genuine and specific

- **Specific praise tells the person receiving it that you have taken the time to really know what is going on and how much you truly appreciate the efforts connected to the outcome**

- **General praise sometimes comes off as insincere, as it communicates a lack of knowledge (and effort) on the part of the giver**

Moving forward – praise often, but be sure to link it to specifics to ensure it’s sincerity
Try it!

- **Regularity**
  - The understanding of the routine (like your favorite spot to get your morning coffee) can build a sense of safety that is often missing in our lives.
  - Have your principals share what is happening regularly to you from their end. You should share what is happening with the Board from your end.
  - Keep the Board “in the know” on a regular and routine basis. That will be a sure-fire way for them to build trust in you.
  - How to do it? Conference call, more detailed report like a grocery list. This is something for you to work with the Board.
Try it! 😊

The Personal You

- The most noticeable and most damaging slip-up a new superintendent can make is phoniness.

- Let people know who you really are...what you are really like...the real genuine you.

- The more the team can rely on you as a human being, the more you will build the capacity to rally with you.

Do us all a favor and just be you.
Try it! 😊

Trust the Team

- One of the keys to adjusting to the new position is to allow your direct reports and other administrators to handle key projects.

- With this line of thinking you will not only establish more trust with the team, but you will also cover more topics.

- Additionally, those who try to “do it all” end up burning out their team and themselves.

- Knowing when and how to delegate can help determine your, and your team’s, stress level.
Don’t Try It!

- The Careless Correspondence
- Just Between Us Girls
- Lessons from Paul Revere
- Overselling
- Getting Too Close
- Hiring for Time’s Sake
- Shadowing the Sun
- Neglecting Your Health
- Hammering the Screw
Don’t Try it! 😞

The Careless Correspondence

The School Board has the uncanny ability to recall initial impression, especially when it comes to personnel. If you slip and made a comment about a teacher being ineffective, you must understand that to the Board, that teacher is now ineffective.

You might be able to attend to this mistake. Maybe you could circle back and say you made the comment in haste. How many times do you think you would be able to revise your initial statement before the Board started to think you were quick to judgement?

Be careful not to say something today that you will regret tomorrow.
Don’t try it! 😞

Just Between Us Girls

► No conversation is ever off the record – none!

► “Between us girls” is a phrase that what we are about to say is safe, alluding to a childhood tribute. Aside from its sexist overtone, both girls and boys gossip, young and old. The assurance that our thoughts will be kept sound can only be realized when they remain “our thoughts”. Once shared, the world has the opportunity to know

► Obviously, you are going to want to search for a confidant or two but be guarded. Be sure
Don’t try it! 😞

Lessons from Paul Revere

► Paul Revere was the instrument of communication and the deliverer of the message simultaneously.
► Much like Revere, Superintendents also serve in these dual roles in that they are the face (and voice) of the District and they also serve to deliver the news, both good and bad.
► However, consider this idea – what if Revere told some people the British were coming and others they were not? How do you think the people would have reacted?
► Leaders that play both sides usually end up losing by damaging their credibility and confusing their constituents.
► If you tend to “soften” information depending on your audience, it could have you riding horseback right out of town.
Don’t Try It! 😞

Overselling

► Overselling occurs when we have made a presentation (or an ask) and are awaiting a person’s decision on the matter. Sometimes our nerves hinder our ability to stay calm and allow the process to continue. Leaders sometimes panic and follow that little voice in their head that incessantly states “Keep going, keep selling, more, more”

► You need to build in wait time. Wait for objections, look for buy signs. Then and only then close the deal after everyone has had a chance to enter the conversation.
Don’t try it! 🙁

Getting too close

- Remember that sound advice your undergraduate professor gave you when studying for your teaching degree
  “Friendly, not friends”
- In serving as a superintendent your role will be to balance the interests of special groups and individuals. In doing so, a clear mind must set the standard in an unbiased decision

- Relationship building is a tricky business. At any time you may be placed in a position where you may need to discipline or terminate someone. Anyone, even your closest confidant

- Be honest, be sincere and lead with passion and compassion

- But remember, you need to keep things and relationships in balance as the leader
Don’t try it! 😞

Hiring for Times’ Sake

► It may seem ridiculous that folks would consider hiring someone who is not the best candidate, however you would be surprised how pressure and time play a role in those decisions.

► When the hiring process occurs and you are simply not satisfied, punt. Never hire just to save time.

► Follow this counsel, and chances are that over time, you will be able to rest a lot easier knowing that you have the right people in the right places.
Don’t try it! 😞

Hammering the Screw

► Leaders have tools at their disposal. Knowing when to use the right tool will make all the difference in building and securing your tenure.

► For example, when dealing with a small issue there is no need to use a large hammer upon a person.

► Simply put, we do not need to clobber someone when a simple “no” or soft correction will do the job.
Don’t try it! 😞

Shadowing the Sun

► An eclipse can be an exquisite occurrence. Being a leader has similarities to the nature of the eclipse, especially when we are dealing with praise and criticism.

► Effective leaders allow the team to shine like the sun instead of casting shadows and suspicions.

► The team is greater than the individual. Like sunburn, failure to shield yourself from the sunlight will cause serious damage to your person.
Don’t try it! 😞

Neglecting your health

- The job of the superintendent is filled with stress
- You need to take control of your time and your schedule
- You must take care of your mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional health
- Those who wear the tires too thin slip off the road at the first sign of inclement weather
- The sun does not shine in these jobs
- Best to plan for all seasons
### THE ACTIVITY

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**My Thought Is…**

It’s Important to Me Because…
Final Thoughts

- Leadership is a journey with pitfalls, quicksand, and high points
- The Board/Superintendent relationship is critical to the success of a school district
- What are you going to do different when you go back home?
Please Fee Free to Contact Me

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