

## Final Reflective Work- Mallory Opiela EAD 801 Online Course Spring 2012

### Key Learnings from the Course

What are key messages or big ideas which struck you as the most important about leadership, schooling, teacher leadership & change?  
Why were they significant ideas or messages for you?

#### *Key Messages & Big Ideas*

#### *Reasons Why*

<p><b>Change is inevitable, and there are ways to handle it and make it successful.</b></p>	<p>In schools, change is always occurring. Whether it is a new principal, a new teacher coming into your division, or a new program that is being tested out. Change is going to happen and what you have to realize is that in the early stages of implementation, it is going to be rocky, and people are going to test the waters. But as a leader you have to identify and prepare for these stages, communicate to the staff, and help guide them through the process. Fullan stated that the best way to deal with change is to foster leadership in others, making you dispensable in the long run, and create more “leaders of leaders (p. vi).” Change happens, but good leaders handle it by developing the leadership qualities of others, and focusing on their strengths to help guide them through this inevitable change.</p>
<p><b>Mission statements are a great way to establish goals and to help guide a program in its future.</b></p>	<p>A mission statement is not just a simple sentence; it entails specifics about a school’s demographics, beliefs, and goals. A correctly written mission statement can make someone truly understand what a schools purpose is and helps the school in its future. In my research on mission statements, I developed a true passion for them and I realize how important they are to a program. If a school or program has a great mission statement, it gives the reader a clear picture in their mind of what that program does and what it wants to develop in its students.</p>
<p><b>Every good leader must have a moral purpose.</b></p>	<p>A leader has to have an inner drive inside of them and follow their moral purpose. Fullan writes, “Whatever one’s style, every leader, to be effective, must have and work on improving his or her moral purpose (p.13).” This moral purpose helps drive a leader to be educated and to instill and teach leadership qualities to others. A leader has an inner</p>

	<p>passion to always better themselves because they know it will have an effect on the people around them and it will hopefully inspire others to do the same.</p>
<p><b>Group norms and beliefs must be created to hold successful meetings and create a positive learning community.</b></p>	<p>When working in a group setting, like teaching, you have to work cooperatively with others. Weekly meetings are common place, and interacting with other teachers happens on a daily basis. But to create a positive learning community, group norms and beliefs need to be created and held to by the group. These group norms and beliefs have to be created by the group themselves and mutually agreed upon. If a member of the group goes against the norm or breaks one, it has to be addressed in a cordial manner to make sure that everyone is on the same page and to value meeting and work time. Holding everyone up to a common standard and holding them accountable for their actions will help assist in a positive learning community.</p>
<p><b>Creating and planning opportunities for teachers to share their work with each other, helps foster leadership skills and build a positive learning community.</b></p>	<p>In every teacher, there is a great idea. With one it might be the great lesson they just gave in math class, for the other it might be the connection they just made with a certain student, but rarely do these stories ever get shared. Teachers are always scrambling for time and if they don't have opportunities or scheduled time to share, some will never get told. Teacher's time and planning is vital, so giving them opportunities to discuss and not re-create the wheel every time is a great way to foster collaboration and create a positive learning environment.</p>
<p><b>Parallel leadership inspires and creates future leaders.</b></p>	<p>With the concept of leadership it is not just the idea of one leading the many. In fact a true leader fosters leadership in others. Kaagan describes this idea of parallel leadership as a way to engage teacher leaders and administrative leaders to work collaboratively in action while at the same time, encouraging fulfillment of their individual strengths, aspirations, and responsibilities (p.42). As a leader, you need to develop parallel leadership between you and the staff to inspire creativity, encourage responsibility, and emphasize people's strengths.</p>

**Shifts in Thinking, Beliefs or Values**

In what ways have your thinking, beliefs, and/or values about leadership and change shifted? (a little bit or a lot)

You can use:

I used to think....., but now I think..... or

I used to believe....., but now I believe.....

I used to hold this value ....., but now I hold this value .....

***Shifts***

***Reasons Why***

<p><b>I used to believe there was a huge division between the administration and its teachers but now I believe that this division should be much smaller because of the idea of parallel leadership.</b></p>	<p>Currently at my place of work, there is a big separation between the administration and its staff. They make the decisions and we execute them. When in fact this is not the way it is supposed to be. Through the literature, and especially the two books by Fullan and Kaagan, I realized that parallel leadership should be developed between the staff and administration. This idea of parallel leadership focuses on the strengths of its staff members, recognizes them as individuals, and promotes leadership to truly make a school successful and bring the school community together.</p>
<p><b>I used to believe that leaders were born not made, but now I know with the correct guidance, leadership qualities can be instilled into everyone with the correct guidance.</b></p>	<p>I co-teach with another teacher, who has difficulty with his leadership abilities. I often feel like I am the only disciplinarian in class and that I do majority of the work. I used to get very frustrated and overwhelmed, but after taking this class it made me realize that just because it is not in my job description to help guide and lead him, it does not mean I can just ignore what is happening. Through the literature I learned about the ideas of moral purpose and parallel leadership, and that it is my duty as a teacher leader to help him improve and become a better leader. Just because it is not written in my contract, does not waive me of my true responsibilities.</p>
<p><b>I used to think that mission statements were created to just make a school or business look good, but now I know they can play a huge role in an organization.</b></p>	<p>After reading the literature in Unit 5 and doing research for my paper, I realized that mission statements are so much more than a craftily written sentence that people read once and never use again. A mission statement explains an organization's beliefs and helps them evaluate themselves for the future. This realization made a huge impact on me and made me realize there true importance.</p>
<p><b>I used to believe that some people are set in</b></p>	<p>Being a teacher you work with various types of</p>

<p><b>their old ways and can never change, but now I believe if a leader pairs them up with the right person, change can happen.</b></p>	<p>people. Some always volunteer for things, some want to stay in the background and go un-noticed, and some reject every idea that comes up. After reading the information regarding the adopter categories I realized that each person falls into a different category and a good leader pairs up the people that can have the most influence on one another to help them through the change process.</p>
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**New Questions**

As a result of this semester online course, what new questions are emerging for you? These would be questions that were not yet in your mind last January

***New Questions to Ponder or Address (one day)***

<p>How can I foster more leadership skills in my athletes?</p>
<p>How can I bring about the idea of the importance of collective planning times and time for teacher collaboration to my school?</p>
<p>How can I help create more of a positive learning community within my department and the teachers?</p>

**Summary**

A summary statement or brief paragraph about your learning in this course about leadership and organizations.

***Summary of Learning***

<p>In EAD 801, I learned the importance of what true leadership is in education and how important it is to develop a positive learning community. Leadership does not simply mean being the head of something and making all of the important decisions, it entails much more. A leader must be guided by their moral purpose. They must be life-long learners and always want to be educated to better their organization. Leaders must instill and develop group norms and beliefs, so everyone in their organization is on the same page and work time is valued. They need to be able to develop future teacher leaders and foster parallel leadership. In essence, a true leader develops, guides, and teaches others until they are not needed anymore. A true leader prepares and guides their organization through change and understands that there will be bumps in the road. When a decision has to be made, a leader understands that they are not all going to be easy, and in the end they have to make the overall best decision for the organization. A leader is all of this and much more, but from this class I have realized that there are many components to being a leader and it is my responsibility to continue to practice the skills and ideas I have learned from this class and to continue to build upon them throughout my teaching career.</p>
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