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# J.E.D. Academy: Where the Journey to Excellence begins with Determination

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Assignment #1: Organizational Handbook to Promote Critical Thinking and Decision Making

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where the Journey to Excellence begins with  
Determination.



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### **Introduction**

Critical Thinking is an essential skill required to be an effective leader. Baldoni (2010) educates that critical thinking has always been a treasured and necessary skill in the field of leadership. This essential skill of critical thinking is necessary at J.E.D. Academy because our administration, faculty, and staff work in the field of leadership, being that we are leaders for our students. In addition, every organization should aim to create a working culture where critical thinkers are the norm amongst the staff, because critical thinking assists in creating a constructive working environment filled problem-solvers, positive thinkers, and influential leaders. As the head of the faculty and administration at J.E.D Academy, it is imperative to teach the educators, faculty, and staff the importance of thinking critically, thinking positively, and making rational decisions for the best of the academy, but most importantly, for the students. It is the duty of the leader to promote critical thinking and decision making within their designated institutions.

J.E.D Academy welcomes diversity into our institution of higher learning, opening our doors to all students of different ethnicities and backgrounds. As student population grows increasingly diverse in many countries and institutions, it is our responsibility to attend to these diverse needs (Chin & Tremble, 2015). Here at our Academy students are a priority, and their voices are heard when it comes to decision making that will impact our school and their education. Administration and teachers promote and encourage students to think critically and positively while modeling proper techniques for decision making and problem-solving. Our academy believes that our students can attain any goal with the tools that are accompanied with critical thinking and effective decision making.

## Module 1--Promoting Critical Thinking, Positive Thinking, and Decision-Making within the Administration (Joshua Wimbley)



### **Introduction**

Being that the administration, faculty, and effective are the organizational leaders at J.E.D Academy, we will begin with focus on promoting critical thinking positive thinking and discussion making within the academy's educators and employees. It is important to promote critical thinking, positive thinking and decision making with the staff because the effect of this positive movement will trickle from the staff, to the students, and create a superior community of critical thinkers at J.E.D Academy.

In Module 1, we briefly discuss the usefulness of critical thinking in the workplace. We will also present the benefits of critical thinking, positive thinking, and when used in the workplace. Looking at the benefits, in this module, we will discuss some strategies that will help to promote critical thinking and decision-making in the academy, as well as, guide the administration and faculty to become critical thinkers. We will discuss the characteristics of effective critical thinkers and the characteristics of effective critical thinkers. Baldoni (2010) states critical thinking is a treasure to any organization is the field for leadership and here at J.E.D Academy, we aim to create an institution where critical thinking is fully embraced.

**Objective**

Administration, faculty, and staff will learn of the importance of critical thinking and decision making in the workplace, which will aid in promoting critical thinking and decision making in J.E.D Academy, as well as, help to enhance the critical thinking skills of the administration, faculty, and staff.

**Usefulness of Critical Thinking in the Workplace**

Critical Thinking in the workplace (J.E.D Academy) will help to:

- Solve Problems hastily and proficiently in the institution
- Improve effective communication amongst the administration, faculty, and staff
- Increase the analytical skills of the administration and faculty
- Enhance creative problem-solving skills
- Help the administration, faculty, and staff to make sound judgements and decisions
- Assist in the development of innovative ideas for the administration, faculty, and staff to share and use for the benefit of the institution
- Allow ‘open-mindedness’, which will create options in the institution
- Shape positive attitudes amongst administration, staff, and students
- Create a positive learning environment for the administration and the students

**Benefits of Critical Thinking**

Root (2017), author of What Are the Benefits of Critical Thinking in the Workplace?, lists the following as benefits of critical thinking in the workplace

1. **Brings New Ideas** - Critical thinking makes leaders develop new ideas, straying away from predictable solutions, when a problem arises in the workplace.
2. **Fosters Teamwork**- Critical Thinking allows for the entire workplace to participate in making decisions and it encourages working colleagues to trust each other, build relationships, and work together proactively. At J.E.D Academy, we want to ensure that

all of our staff has positive working relationship and all staff, at all levels, and are able to work together.

**3. Promotes Options-** Critical Thinking will allow for our institution to cultivate a multitude and diversity range of ideas and solutions; in this way, the staff will stay creative and this will trickle down to the students, keeping them engaged and innovative.

Research from a critical thinking assessment shows that people that score high on the assessment are also labeled to have good analysis and problem-solving skills, job knowledge, creativity, and potential to advance in their careers (Harris, 2015). At J.E.D Academy, we aim to have all administrative, faculty, and staff member to obtain the benefits that critical thinking provides.

### **Strategies to Promote Critical Thinking and Decision Making**

Listed below are some strategies that aid in encouraging the critical thinking and decision making in J.E.D Academy.

- **Critical Thinking Training Program:** Conduct monthly trainings for the administration and staff, which will educate the staff on different aspects of Critical Thinking and how to become better critical thinkers. Chartrand, Ishikawa, and Flander (2013) confer that if businesses, organizations, or institutions are to remain competitive and successful in today's environment, then critical thinking should be incorporated in their training programs.
- **Creative Thinking Activities:** Have the administration and faculty participate in creative thinking exercises that helps to develop critical thinking skills. Activities such as role playing and case studies.
- **Work Discussions and Healthy Debates:** Allow the administration, faculty, and staff to have open work discussions and debates because this method will allow the entire staff to get in involved, develop ideas, and share them. This will also enhance communication within the institution. Keller (2017) discusses the importance of healthy debates and discussions in the workplace and why this is crucial for success. Keep in mind that the debates must be productive and not destructive, and there must be resolve after the discussions.
- **Team Collaborative Projects:** Conduct professional work shops or create a project that requires the staff to work together. At J.E.D., we aim to create a collaborative working culture with our staff, students, and teachers. Collaboration in organization can re invigorate the organization because it allows for all employees to be involved, it improves maintenance, and it increases innovation (Kelly, 2014).



### Effective versus Ineffective Thinkers

There are two types of critical thinkers...Effective and Ineffective. At J.E.D., we aim for our entire working staff to be effective critical thinkers. Let's look at the different characteristics of the two.

#### Effective Critical Thinkers

- **Awareness:** effective critical thinkers are always aware of their surroundings and are always looking for a moment where they can use the critical thinking skills to solve a problem and resolve a situation
- **Compassion:** Watanabe (2017) states that effective critical thinkers act with their hearts as much as they act with their minds. Effective critical thinkers always has an emotional connection to whatever they are involved in or trying to accomplish
- **Decisiveness:** effective critical thinkers know how to make decisions hastily and with transparency.
- **Innovative:** innovative, creativity, and ingenuity are all characteristics that effective critical thinkers obtain.
- **Willingness to help others:** effective critical thinkers are always willing to share their skills to improve the skills of others. Also, effective critical thinkers are very flexible and always have open-minds.

#### Ineffective Critical Thinkers

- **Impulsive:** ineffective critical thinkers are very quick and do not understand that critical thinking is a process. They rush to conclusion, usually making matter worse.
- **Quitters:** when a task gets difficult, ineffective thinkers give up easily. They continue to search for resolution; but rather get rid of the situation by giving up.
- **Inflexible:** ineffective critical thinkers are never willing to compromise, even in collaborations. Inflexible thinkers are the worse to work with because nothing gets accomplished.
- **Not Innovative:** it is hard for ineffective critical thinkers to develop ideas and find creative solutions to problems or situations.

### Critical Thinking at J.E.D. Academy

Here at J.E.D. Academy, we aim to create a culture of critical thinkers in our administration, faculty, staff, volunteers, parents, and our students. Before we can promote critical thinking and decision-making skills in our classrooms, we must start with promoting critical thinking and creating effective critical thinkers amongst our Islam

(2015) advised that critical thinking is important because it gives individual the abilities to enhance their analytical skills, problem-solving skills, and it teaches a variety of skills that can be used to handle any situation. At J.E.D. Academy, we want all of our administration, faculty, and staff to have these particular set of skills, so that create an innovative, safe, diverse, open-minded, and free-thinking environment for our students.

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## Module 2--Promoting Critical Thinking, Positive Thinking, and Decision-Making with Teachers (Dominique Jackson)



### Introduction

With the recent adaption of the Common Core State Standards, there has been a push to a curriculum that involves putting an emphasis on thinking. This means that teachers have to now elevate and enhance their students' capacity beyond just memorization (Cox, 2017). It is an educator's responsibility to provide their students with strategies and skills that will help them to think crucially, in order to use the same skills in problems that may arise elsewhere. There are many different strategies that teachers can implement in their classrooms to help promote critical thinking amongst their students. Even though standards-based accountability has been implemented for years, many of the teachers today, lack the necessary skills to develop standards-based instructional strategies and make informed decisions that utilize student assessments. At J.E.D. academy we know how vital critical thinking and decision making is, which is why we strive to provide teachers with different strategies to use in the classroom to promote critical thinking and decision making among students.

### **Importance of critical thinking and decision making in the classroom**

Thinking critically is more than just thinking and being rational. It about the ability to think critically on your own. This involves thinking about something and then allowing students to formulate their own opinions and draw their own conclusions (Crockett, 217). Decision making is a complex mental activity that underlines the act of choosing from among the alternatives in attaining a goal. In order to make proper decision a person has to plan out their course of action in order to ensure that the goal can be obtained (Mahapatara (2016).

### **Why Critical Thinking and Decision Making?**

You, as the teacher at J.E.D Academy have to understand that the questions that you pose in the classroom should not be able to be answered with a yes or no. The questions that you present should encourage that the students to brainstorm (Crockett, 2017). By allowing students to brainstorm, while foster decision making when thinking of responding. Critical thinking and decision making is vital to implement into your classroom because students can apply the skills in other classes and in life outside of school. When making decisions, students need to adopt a critical way of thinking to make great choices and find the best solutions to their problems and issues (Turabik & Gun, 2016).

### **Examples of effective strategies to promote critical thinking and decision making:**

- ✚ Brainstorm: This is a great way to get your students to think critically. No matter the subject, the students will be learning and reading before they actually start the activity (Cox, 2017).

- ✚ Don't help immediately: When students come with a problem or a question, do not be so eager to answer the questions. Work with the students to brainstorm possible solution or response. This will help you assist your students with the best possible solution.
- ✚ Classify: Give students the opportunity to classify items it forces them to think critically about which set or group each item belongs in.
- ✚ Make connections: Encourage students to make connections with things in their real life to what is in the text or being discussed in the classroom (Cox, 2017).
- ✚ Problem Solving: Give students a question and leave the goal or answer to be an open-ended response. This is the essence of asking questions that do not have a simple or easy answer (Crockett, 2017).
- ✚ Role Playing: This is a strategy that allows the student to inhabit another persona and the characteristics. Becoming someone else allows your students to stretch their creative and analytical mind (Crockett, 2017).
- ✚ Gradual Release: a modeling approach to help promote critical thinking and decision making among their students. Within this model, students are able to see what critical thinking and decision-making looks like.

### **In-depth description of Gradual Release**

For example, in a high school English or reading class, the teacher may be trying to show the students how the setting in a text can impact the central idea (theme) the author is attempting to convey. As a class, the text will be read and the teacher will stop at a pre-determined spot to pose a question. The teacher will model how to think critically by explicitly modeling what critical thinking looks like. The teacher will think aloud and try to divulge an answer that will implicate

how the setting impacts the central idea. The teacher takes this time to ask multiple questions and answer them as well. The teacher should use this time to go back to the text to ensure that the response they have is correct. At time, the students should be focused on the teachers thought process. Once students have observed the teacher thinking critically, the teacher should now do the same steps, however this time, the students will be involved in the thinking process. The class will continue reading, the teacher will stop at a designated spot and repeat the first steps. The teacher will ask a question that involves how the setting impacts the theme. The teacher will help guide the students to the correct evidence to support their response. The students will respond to each other and ask clarifying questions, while the teacher checks to ensure that the students are in the correct direction to answer the prompt. If students are still having difficulty, the teacher should provide additional modeling. The students will then have the opportunity to read the text on their own and work with their classmates in their group to ask and answer clarifying questions with each other. They will clarify any confusion they have with their classmates. The final step in this gradual release model is to have the students complete the task independently. At this point in the gradual release process the student should be able to exhibit that they are able to think critically independently. The model can be implement into any type of classroom or setting. After viewing the chart, please view the links to see what gradual release looks like.

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/improving-teacher-practice>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjURdvzty4c>

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/gradual-release-of-responsibility>

**Gradual Release Model**

	Student	Teacher
<b>I DO</b> <b>Teacher alone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Takes notes</li> <li>✚ Listens actively</li> <li>✚ Asks clarifying questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Models</li> <li>✚ Thinks aloud</li> <li>✚ Establishes goals and purpose</li> <li>✚ Direct Instruction</li> </ul>
<b>WE DO</b> <b>Teacher and students together</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Works with teacher and classmates</li> <li>✚ Asks and responds to questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Checks, promotes, and clues</li> <li>✚ Interactive instruction provides additional modeling</li> <li>✚ Works with students</li> </ul>
<b>THEY DO</b> <b>Students work with their group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Work with classmates</li> <li>✚ Collaborate</li> <li>✚ Consolidates learning</li> <li>✚ Completes the takes in a small group</li> <li>✚ Looks to their peers for clarification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Moves among the groups</li> <li>✚ Provides support</li> <li>✚ Clarifies confusion</li> </ul>
<b>YOU DO</b> <b>Students work independently</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Works independently</li> <li>✚ Relies on notes and classroom learning</li> <li>✚ Takes full responsibility for the outcome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Clarifies confusion</li> <li>✚ Provides support</li> <li>✚ Moves among the groups</li> </ul>

As a J.E.D. Academy teacher you should offer your students an environment where they can think as well as provide opportunities to express their ideas without any hesitation. As a teacher, you are anticipated to encourage the way your students think. The best way to have this happen is to use the above-mentioned strategies while also adopting a classroom environment where the students feel comfortable enough to express their ideas (Turabik & Gun, 2016). When students are in these types of classrooms, they become more curious, analyze thoughts, determine goals, they seek different alternatives; all together are critical thinking (Turabik & Gun, 2016).



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**Module 3--Promoting Critical Thinking, Positive Thinking, and Decision-Making within the Student Body  
(Elicel Similien)**



High School is a critical time in all adolescents lives, and it is imperative that the environment and culture of the school help mold these young individuals, knowing that they are the future of our country. Our academy strives to break every negative stereotype associated with our young and talented youths. The impression many people have on adolescents is that they are potential problems just waiting to happen, they are going through a period when their lives are full of chaos (Zeldin, 2011). True or not, our institution does not believe in limiting our youth capabilities based on generalizations of opinions or misconceptions. Youth have a voice, just as adults have a voice and it is only fair that their voices are heard when it concerns them.

Typically, conventional policies are not all inclusive to youth, and they are not included in the crucial matters within organizations and communities (Zeldin, 2011). Striving to break barriers our school is committed to demonstrating equality and fairness amongst students, faculty, and staff.

## Fairness and A Vote

At J.E.D Academy, it is our number one responsibility to ensure that every being in the building feel that they are respected citizens in the school community. Promoting mutual respect, while honoring freedom of speech and expression is the first steps in engaging all entities at our school. Continually we aim at imparting knowledge upon our students that allows them to understand the principles and values it takes to be an honest citizen in society. Getting youth involved in decision making earlier in life may assist them in acquiring skills that will help them efficiently discuss issues, collaborate and develop a plan of actions (Blanchet-Cohen, 2014). Fairness in mind, students are taught to be open to different perspectives and ideas while being open-minded and unbiased to other's opinions. Adolescents at our academy use their ability to think critically and positively even while they are not in full agreeance with a matter to show that they are mature enough to analyze any situation. One quality that works for youth is charismatic leadership; students learn assertiveness, self-confidence and the skills to articulate their vision and ignite a fire in others (Hackman & Johnson, 2013).

### **Five Behaviors that Encourage Followers to Attribute the Charismatic Characteristics to Leaders are:**

- Possess a vision that is unique, yet attainable – A charismatic leader's vision differs markedly from the status quo. It is unique, innovative, and energizing.
- Act in an unconventional, counter normative manner- By engaging in behaviors that are outside traditional normative bounds, a charismatic demonstrates he or she is different from other leaders.
- Demonstrates personal commitment and risk taking – Trust is an important component of charisma, and followers have a greater trust for a leader who is personally committed to his or her own vision.
- Demonstrate confidence and expertise – Leaders who appear confident and knowledgeable are far more likely to be viewed as charismatic than those who seem unsure and confused. A leader's confidence can be infectious.
- Demonstrate personal power- Followers are more likely to attribute charisma to leaders who use personal authoritarian and democratic approaches.

(Hackman & Johnson, 2013)

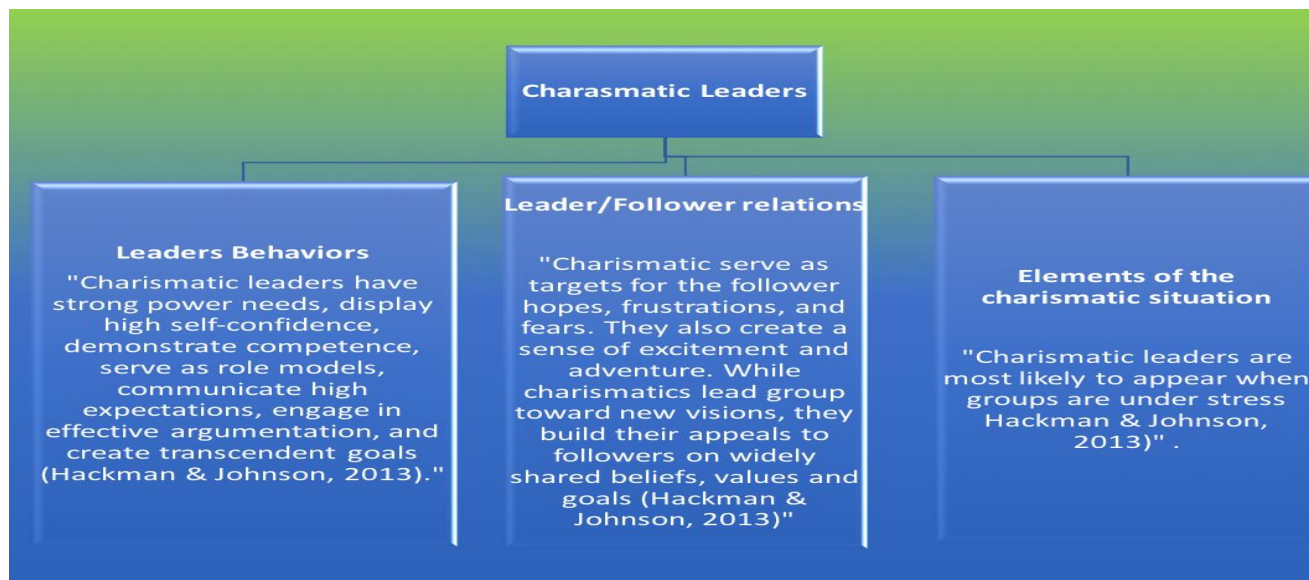
Ethical decision making should have a consensus from all stakeholders in the matter, ensuring that everyone is on the same page and fully aware of all issues of concern. Dealing with diverse demographics may be a rigorous task to learn and accept that there are the different viewpoint and perspectives out there. Effective decision making would require our students to think critically to analyze these issues (Blanchet-Cohen, 2014). Teaching students to be caring and fair to others especially in times of disagreements, allows them to take the adequate time to look at someone else's reasons and gain a deeper understanding of their view and perspective. Schools have a great variety of backgrounds and ethnicities merged into one building. Therefore, it is crucial that students learn these ideas before entering the real world. Living in a democratic society at an age where it is critical, prepares the youth for challenges and issues they will face later on in life. Learning to collaborate with peers, adults, and members of the community may serve as a complex task if students are not well versed in skills of critical thinking, decision making and maintaining a positive attitude.

**J.E.D Academy: Promotes Democratic Style of Communication for our Students and Staff**

- Involves followers in setting goals
- Engages in two-way, open communication
- Facilitates discussion with followers
- Solicits input regarding determination of policy and procedures
- Focuses interaction
- Provides suggestions and alternatives for the completion of tasks
- Provides frequent positive feedback
- Rewards good work and uses punishment only as a last resort
- Exhibits effective listening skills
- Mediates conflict for group gain
- (Hackman & Johnson, 2013)

### **Student Government = Student Leaders**

Students deserve every opportunity to apply themselves to their fullest potential, that is why J.E.D Academy promotes every student to join the Student Government Association. Actively participating in SGA gives students the first-hand prospect on how to participate in decision making that will have an impact on the school. "The young adults" not children as we view them at our school, are given the opportunity and responsibility to design a platform that would create and lead activities for themselves and their peers. Actively participating in decision making programs, assist youth with their abstract critical thinking skills (Akiva, 2014). Positive engagement in student councils demonstrates the necessary skills that should be applied to community organizations, civic and government programs. When engaged in activities such as councils, students develop a sense of responsibility and ownership that have them to use their rationale for decision making. Typically, there are many areas that are off-limits to students influence, students often realize that they do not have the freedom of expressing their opinions when it comes to teachers and administration (Akiva, 2014). At J.E.D Academy respect and fairness are upheld by all parties within the institutions. Utilizing the platforms such as student councils and governments student's voices can be heard far beyond group fundraising efforts, Students should be included in the development of rules, agreements, budgeting and significant decision making. Constant exposure to decision-making practices in and outside of school settings, assist in developing skills in problem-solving, public speaking, planning, social skills, facilitation skills, leadership skills and overall leadership skills (Akiva, 2014). Building tomorrows leaders is an important task for any institution in our country, youths should be brought up understanding democracy and fairness as a right and not a privilege. No voice is too young to be heard; no ideas are immature with the proper guidance, J.E.D Academy is providing a platform and building our youths up to take on the role of being world class citizens in their communities.



## Students are the Future

The 21st century has brought many substantial changes in society and institutions which have tested the way business is handled and functions (Chin & Tremble, 2015). Leadership now is more important than ever, our future will be different from our current reality today. It is necessary that we prepare and equip our leaders with the vital skills to become tomorrow's relevant and effective leader (Chin & Tremble, 2015). The ultimate goal for the J.E.D Academy is to prepare students for college and career readiness. It is important to have leadership distribution throughout the school, to ensure that the vision and mission are met (Malin & Hackman, 2017). Following the distributive leadership practice, would allow the interaction between all school leaders and members. Leadership takes multiple individuals, and students are the individuals that should be trained to become leader figures in their schools as well. Principals in the school hold a pivotal role in making sure the faculty, staff, and students comply and accept the direction that is set. Principals, therefore, are held to a standard that forces them to push others to influence a positive change within an organization (Malin & Hackman, 2017). There should be an equal opportunity for every unique learner to have access to highly effective

learning environments. Students are young decision makers, and although their future is in their hands, it is essential to provide them with the resources to reach their goals. Whether it may be immediately entering a career field or taking the road to post-secondary institutions, making all information accessible is essential. Unfortunately, data and statistics show that there is a skill gap with young students who have recently joined the workforce and there is also some students who have graduated without the necessary knowledge and skills for college (Malin & Hackman, 2017). Teaching the power of critical thinking and decision making is the most vital element for students during their high school years because these last four years within this institution will decide the future to hold themselves accountable for creating a safe and supportive climate, in which all ideas and views are welcomed. High school is the time to explore the critical phases of life; students should be encouraged to try new things, build their confidence, and not underestimate themselves. There will be multiple trial and errors encountered in life and all a part of the continuous learning process (Malin & Hackman, 2017).

### **Leadership Improves Performance and Satisfaction**

- **Supporting**- demonstrating consideration, concern and acceptance for the needs and feelings of others.
- **Developing** – Coaching others, Examples; helping someone learn how to do a task or learn from a mistake, explaining how to solve a problem, providing opportunities for followers to develop their skills and confidence.
- **Recognizing** – expressing praise and appreciation for excellent performance, significant contributions, and noteworthy achievements. Often combined with tangible rewards.
- **Consulting** – involving followers in important decisions.
- **Empowering** – delegating to followers and giving them autonomy and discretion.

(Hackman & Johnson ,2013)



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### **Conclusion**

J.E.D Academy aspires to be a premier institution leading the way in highly efficient education. Our academy has established an environment that is safe, welcoming and favorable for a learning environment. Faculty, staff, and students all believe in continuous improvement and making every effort to support each other. J.E.D Academy does not promote individuals being limited to the role of their titles. Administrators, staff, and students are all able to collaborate and discuss ideas that would improve the school culture. Our focus is to develop tomorrow's leaders and prepare students for future college and career aspirations. Utilizing distributive leadership to create future leaders in our students have been the substantial factor for our institution. We pride ourselves on breaking stereotypes and ignoring statistics that aims to discourage our learners. The faculty is led by a Principal that ignites the spark in every individual in the building every morning. The teachers are eager to deliver their best practices and engage students in lessons that challenge them to think critically and positively. Students are given the opportunity to think strategically and critically to advocate for themselves. Here at our academy, we aim to promote students, faculty, and staff ability to think critically and make decisions not only in the classroom but our community and local organizations. Life skills are continuously instilled, and students will exit this academy knowing that are ready to take on the new challenges in their career and post-secondary schooling. J.E.D Academy prides itself in molding individuals with stellar problem-solving skills, judgments skills, creativity, and social-emotional development. Administration, faculty, staff, and students all are open to communication and innovation for the betterment of the institution. It is with open minds and positivity that we all enter and exit our building because the world around us is filled with opportunities to learn and engage in new fulfilling experiences.