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Leadership Styles

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Leadership Styles

By William A. Owings, Ed.D.

Effective schools literature shows clearly that the leadership of the principal is key to the effectiveness of the school (Hoy and Miskell, 1982; and Arnn and Mangieri, 1988). To be effective, principals must use leadership styles appropriate to the situation.

The Ohio State Leadership Studies (Hemphill and Coons, 1950) identified a dual axis theory of leadership. The two components of this theory are task orientation, a concern for getting the job done, and relationship orientation, a concern for people in the process of getting the job done.

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Concern for People	S3 Low Task/ High Relationship M2	S2 High Task/ High Relationship M2
	S4 Low Task/ Low Relationship M4	S1 High Task/ Low Relationship M1
Concern for Getting the Job Done		

The leadership style of choice is contingent upon the maturity level of the individual or groups with whom the principal is working. The various leadership styles are labeled S1 through S4. The various maturity levels, labeled M1 through M4, are determined by the group or individual's ability and/or desire to accomplish a goal.

- S1 — High Task/Low Relationship. This style should be matched with a low maturity-level individual or group — M1. Here the focus is on the task that needs to be accomplished. Structure is provided towards that end.
- S2 — High Task/High Relationship. This style should be matched with an increasing level of ability and desire to accomplish a goal — M2. With an increased level of teacher maturity, the principal is able to continue a tight structure, yet allow for more concern for the teacher as a person.

- S3 — Low Task/High Relationship. This style should be matched with a relatively high level of maturity — M3. Less structuring of the task is needed as ability and desire to succeed in the classroom are high. It is important to continue the relationship orientation to build a positive school climate with productive teachers.
- S4 — Low Task/Low Relationship. This style should be matched with a very high level of ability and desire to accomplish a goal — M4. The teacher needs very little structure. Continuing a high level of relationship might be perceived by the teacher as counter productive to the achievement of instructional goals.

When the logic of this format is considered, it is obvious that there are many benefits for the school principal. Time is spent more wisely with those who need structure. It is, however, necessary to match the leadership style of the principal with the maturity level of the teacher or group. To use a high relationship and high task leadership style with a highly motivated teacher could decrease the effectiveness of the teacher and misuse valuable time. As the more mature teacher knows what needs to be done and how to accomplish the task, it would be a waste of time to provide the same degree of structure that the less mature teacher might need. The following are benefits of using the appropriate leadership style:

- A high level of structure with S1 is provided for those who need it the most. Too much focus on the individual when the task needs attention can cause problems.
- As maturity increases, it is possible to interject a greater concern for the individual while not detracting from the task.
- As teachers function as self-actualizing workers, it is not necessary for the principal to provide as much structure. Too much focus on the individual may be seen as detracting.

Summary

Principals must know when to use the correct leadership style with co-workers. Mismatching leadership styles with maturity levels can prove to be disastrous for the teachers, for the students, and for the school.

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