

# Transformation in Educational Leadership

TRANSFORMING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



 InitiativeOne<sup>®</sup>  
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

InitiativeOne transforms leaders and their organizations, helping them foster high impact work cultures defined by authenticity, transparency, safe environments and deep respect.

## Education Leaders Have a Strategic Opportunity.

There is a collective sense that education needs to change. Many daunting strategic questions are surfacing and these questions have widespread implications. Do current educational approaches prepare students for the future? Are educational leaders creating the best learning environments for students? What needs to change? Who needs to change? To what extent are educators prepared to adapt approaches to align with the students? These challenges provide unparalleled strategic opportunities. Listen carefully and you will hear an emerging cry for disruptive reform. There is a need for leadership transformation.

The comments of Mario Kyllonen, Helsinki's education manager echo from Finland to the United States. Kyllonen calls for a "rethinking of education and a redesigning of our system." This is not a change for the sake of change. It is born out of a desire to prepare children with skills that will enable students to thrive today and tomorrow. According to Kyllonen's perspective, "There are schools that are teaching in the old-fashioned way which was of benefit in the beginnings of the 1900s – but the needs are not the same and we need something fit for the 21st century."<sup>1</sup>

It's time for educational leaders to discover a fresh vision for the future that will create innovative learning opportunities that are aligned with the learners. Leaders cannot execute change with a mandate or edict from on high. A transient sense of urgency is insufficient.

Education leaders must invest generously in creating widespread collaboration, ownership and commitment. Teamwork among administrative leaders, faculty, staff and students is required to sustain positive momentum. InitiativeOne has engaged with education leaders. Our Leadership Transformation process propels education leaders into three intentional investments.

Education Leaders Foster Healthy Trust



Education Leaders Master Change



Education Leaders Create Strategic Alignment



## Education Leaders Foster Healthy Trust.

### *Healthy trust enables learning*

It begins with trust. Trust impacts organizational health 24/7, 365 days a year. It undergirds and affects the quality of every relationship.<sup>2</sup> Without trust, leaders forfeit opportunities to lead. It's time to evaluate culture through the lens of trust. Education leaders must recognize that what is said and what is left unsaid are key indicators of culture. The absence of open and honest debate signals a need for change. What is discussed and what is deemed undiscussable are testaments of leadership. How often do members engage in respectful disagreement and constructive conflict? These are examples of characteristics that reveal the measure of healthy trust in an institution.

In our work with Education Leaders we identify three types of trust.

1. **Unhealthy Trust** – Unhealthy trust appears naïve. It's more than naiveté. It's premature. It is a surface trust, unearned and untested. It lacks substance. Unhealthy trust is not robust enough to stand the test of time.
2. **Healthy Trust** – Healthy trust emerges over time. Healthy trust grows as team members exhibit respect, character and competence over time. Healthy trust thrives within a highly accountable culture.
3. **Unhealthy Distrust** – Unhealthy trust runs rampant when emotional intelligence is lacking. Victim thinking prevails and learning suffers. Political factions wield control and “under the table” issues limit effectiveness.

The effects of unhealthy trust and distrust ripple throughout an organization. When healthy trust is low, people suffer. The perils of leading an organization with low-trust are staggering. In contrast, high-trust organizations enjoy strategic benefits.

Compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies report 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout.<sup>3</sup>

Leaders bear responsibility for the culture of the team or organization. Healthy leaders recognize that healthy culture creation requires an intentional process. Learning cultures do not emerge without sustained investment. Learning cultures are saturated with healthy trust.

“Trust enables recognition of our humanness and the fact that we all have weaknesses, make mistakes, and know much less than we think we know. Real learning, in most cases, requires us to change what we believe, and humble inquiry helps us do that.”<sup>4</sup>

A lack of trust signals the need for transformation. The symptoms are predictable. The following description is a composite sketch drawn from institutional assessments.

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*Conversations behind closed doors are different than what is shared in the open. Behind closed doors, leaders express serious concerns about issues of trust. Past behaviors are projected into future situations. They reveal suspicion that some leaders will react to challenges with retaliatory behaviors. Emotional wounds from disrespectful confrontations are fresh. A lack of trust produces fear. Energy is low and enthusiasm is fading.*

*Only a few members believe that transformation is possible. There is little hope that leaders will be open, honest and willing to change. Most do not believe key leaders to be authentic and fully engaged in creating a better organization. Skepticism stems from a widespread sentiment that leaders will resist self-examination and personal responsibility for their own behaviors. The perception that a few people hold power, whether due to position or forceful personality is prevalent.*

*Surprisingly the most distressing concerns seem to focus on a relatively small number of leaders. In a political environment, a few leaders can hold significant sway over the culture. Their actions undermine teamwork, innovation and engagement. Political alliances trump positive accountability. Whispers of favoritism spread through the grapevine. Because certain leaders are deemed exempt from critique or criticism, there is a prevailing belief that the culture is shaped by a few power brokers.*

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The hope for transformation hinges on whether leaders will look in the mirror and consider a new way of leading. They will need to transition from a leadership style characterized by personal power, personal agendas and reactionary leadership to one of openness and respect.

Leadership Transformation will not begin until leaders acknowledge the issues that remain hidden “under the table” and find the courage to deal with them in a constructive manner. The space “under the table” is where tough issues hide. Sadly, it is the domain that is often neglected in most approaches to leadership education and development. Until leaders explore this domain, trust cannot be restored. It will never be sustained.

There is a growing consensus that leaders must look beneath the surface and that leadership development approaches that neglect this prerequisite fail to deliver results. Why do so many neglect this part of the process? There is a simple answer to the question. It’s just too uncomfortable. It takes time. The demands of leadership and the pace of life work against the process.

Leaders learn to become comfortable with being uncomfortable. It’s not enough to know that leaders are constantly faced with both conflict and change on a daily basis – it’s also necessary to have some practical tools to deal with conflict and change. The InitiativeOne process really equips one with actionable tools that you can put into practice on Day One.

Damian LaCroix, Howard-Suamico School District  
2017 Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year

Investing time in an uncomfortable process of self-examination is difficult for leaders who measure success in terms of immediate return on investment. So, most development efforts aim above the surface.

## Education Leaders Master Change Leadership.

*Real Change demands an increased level of authentic leadership and personal accountability*

Trust is prerequisite for leading change. As education leaders gaze into the future, they grapple with the need to cultivate valuable connections, trusting relationships. Most leaders are increasingly aware that the need for change is well beyond the capacity of a single leader or an administrative team of leaders. Yet, the investment of time and energy required to enlarge the scope of engagement is significant. Thus, leaders wrestle with the ensuing tension. Education leaders serious about leading change choose to dive into the tension rather than flee.

“Leadership is accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty. Leaders accept responsibility not only for their individual ‘part’ of the work, but also for the collective ‘whole.’”<sup>3</sup>

Self-leadership is non-negotiable. Transformational leaders embody change before they attempt to lead it. Authenticity and personal accountability is necessary to build a team that breaks free from the status quo. Transformational leaders unselfishly exult when members are pulling together in the same direction. Momentum builds through a web of healthy relationships with administrators, staff and faculty, peers, community members, diverse family structures and learners. Deeper levels of engagement produce increased dimensions of ownership. When a team is unified, the time and distance between problem solver and problem solutions is reduced.

“If we are not committed to learning how to assume the strategic role of purpose finder and vision setter, we will remain in the tactical role of problem solver and information giver.”<sup>4</sup>

When the culture is infused with healthy trust, leaders become more open. Openness breathes creativity into learning. Learning increases with self-leadership. The opportunity is to empower people with the responsibility both to execute and to plan their work. Leaders are catalysts.

“Remember, this is not something you are going to do **to** them, or **for** them, but **with** them. It’s a journey you will be on together, hopefully for a very long time.”<sup>5</sup>

The idea is to “allow people to be fully responsible for learning.”<sup>6</sup> Thereby, learning increases and accountability becomes a winning proposition rather than a punitive exercise. When accountability becomes positive rather than punitive, change accelerates.

## Education Leaders Create Strategic Alignment

*Align resources to maximize the best outcomes for the learners.*

The invitation to transform education leadership is an invitation to participate in a formidable journey. The journey of change unleashes external and internal challenges. Budget battles are rampant. Resources are tight. New initiatives are met with resistance and leadership capacity is already extended to the breaking point. “Educational leadership is stretching leaders in ways that are unprecedented.”<sup>7</sup> All leaders have a limited amount of time and resources. Education leaders must move from a mindset that is encumbered by scarcity to a mindset that energized by hope and possibility.

Finding focus is paramount. Strategic alignment provides a practical framework that helps leaders find focus. It enables education leaders to maximize resources for the best outcomes for learners.

“When an educational approach is well aligned with one’s stronger intelligences or aptitudes, understanding can come more easily and with greater enthusiasm. Put differently, the learning can be intrinsically motivating.”<sup>8</sup>

Strategic alignment gives life to strategic relationships. Strategic alignment moves leaders toward a compelling vision. It is a dynamic process filled with twists and turns, yet it is unified by a common purpose and core values. It helps education leaders to rediscover a deeper sense of calling. A story unfolds.

Nothing breathes life into strategy like story. Stories are life giving. Strategic momentum is infused with a compelling narrative. The story pulls leaders forward like a magnet and reinforces what is important. Metrics and scorecards are important, but story translates words and numbers into human connections. Individually and corporately, the story gives voice to who you are and how your actions contribute to who you are becoming.

Through our Leadership Transformation Process, we have developed powerful norms for district groups/teams and openly shared personal stories that revealed our humanity as leaders. This has resulted in a remarkable transformation of our teams' effectiveness because healthy trust has been created. Through the development of healthy trust we are now able to have more meaningful dialogue which produces improved problem solving and decision making. As a result, we are able to reach new levels of excellence for the children and adults that we serve.

Glenn Schlender, District Administrator  
Mike Snowberry, Director of Learning Services  
Luxemburg - Casco School District

## InitiativeOne Transformation in Educational Leadership

Transformation in Educational Leadership is the definitive deep-dive immersion into the best possible version of yourself. Whether your focus is aimed toward innovative approaches in student-centric technologies or a shift toward inspiring overall improvement in learning, educational leadership begins with self-leadership and extends to the development of high performing teams. InitiativeOne Transformation for Educational Leaders provides a practical framework that will enable you to overcome obstacles that prevent effective collaborative engagement. You will learn how to increase relational authenticity with administration, faculty, parents and students and generate greater impact.

### **You will:**

- Recognize and address the barriers that hold you back.
- Internalize timeless constructive leadership principles.
- Develop and operationalize a practical framework to sustain positive change.

### **Target Audience**

Transformation in Educational Leaders is for leaders who accept the challenge to benefit student learning through improved critical thinking, collaboration and healthy communication. This process is for leaders who recognize the necessity of accepting responsibility for personal leadership transformation. Educational Leaders who embrace the journey necessary to excel, innovate and change to achieve greater results for themselves and inspire those around them will thrive in this process.

### **One Year Leadership Transformation Schedule includes:**

- **Nine Weekly 3-Hour Sessions**
- **Followed by Quarterly 3-Hour Sessions**

The Leadership Transformation Process requires nine weekly 3-hour sessions plus weekly preparation time. The nine sessions typically occur over an eleven-week period to accommodate scheduling constraints. All participants will receive the InitiativeOne Leadership Transformation Handbook, 16.8 CE credits and Executive Coaching Access for one year.

### **As a result of Transformation for Educational Leaders, you can expect the following benefits:**

- Improve perspective and decision-making
- Improve accountability to self and others
- Discover higher levels of confidence and performance
- Increase capacity to relate and communicate
- Heighten creativity and innovation
- Reduce anxiety, stress and conflict

## References

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- <sup>2</sup> Covey, Stephen. (2006). *The Speed of Trust*. New York. Free Press.
- <sup>3</sup> Ganz, Marshall, (2010). "*Leading Change: Leadership, Organizations, and Social Movements*" in *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice*. Edited by Nitin Hohria Rakesh Khurana. Boston, MA. Harvard Business Press.
- <sup>4</sup> Quinn, R. (2015). *The Positive Organization*, Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- <sup>5</sup> Bonchek, Mark, "Purpose is Good. Shared Purpose is Better." March 14, 2013 <https://hbr.org/2013/03/purpose-is-good-shared-purpose>
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- <sup>7</sup> Marx, Gary. (2014). *Twenty-One Trends for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Out of the Trenches and into the Future*. Bethesda, Maryland: Education Week Press.
- <sup>8</sup> Christensen, C., Horn, M. & Johnson, C., (2008). *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation will Change the Way the World Learns*. New York: McGraw Hill.