

# CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

## The Objectives

By the end of this Saturday session, parents and school staff/administrators will:

- understand how to create a culture where all parties are valued and team members can give constructive feedback without defensive reaction;
- be prepared to work together to “promote shared responsibility for decision making, student academic performance and school improvement” at their sites;
- have established a working relationship and action steps for supporting one or two of the most important parent engagement goals outlined in the Single Plan for Student Achievement.

## Recap & Reflections from 2011

We seek to build on topics and skills we addressed last year. Here is a short recap:

- Leaders cannot be effective if they approach cross-cultural encounters from a place of fear. Instead strive to operate with **awareness, skill, and confidence**.
- Key skills that are essential for cultural competence include: being **self-aware**, being **perceptive**, using **courageous questioning**, having **a broad range of communication skills**, applying **swift recovery steps**, developing **strong coping strategies** and **being a constant learner**.
- A healthy level of **trust** is necessary if relationships are to develop to that of true partners and collaborators. Not everyone starts the process with the same level of trust. Assessing and growing trust levels goes a long way in bridging differences across all aspects of diversity.
- Regular use of **clarifying questions, recovery steps and coping strategies** increase the effectiveness of leaders in infinite ways.

## Progress Report

Check the box that best describes your skill level as a leader today – compared to one year ago.

- More skillful today
- About the same skill level as last year
- Feel even less skillful than I thought last year

## Clarifying Questions

A clarifying question is based on four simple principles:

- it comes from genuine curiosity,
- it seeks information and understanding,
- it reserves judgment
- it allows for informed decisions/conclusions

## Recovery Steps

Can you think of a time when a awkward moment occurred because of a mistaken comment or action on your part? Here are some steps important to recovery, for yourself and others involved.

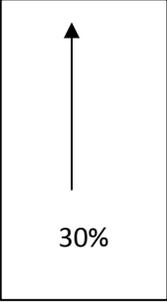
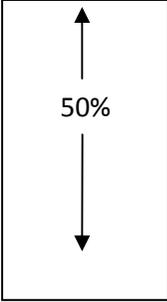
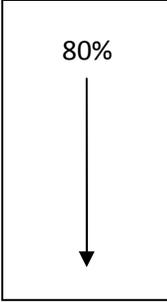
- Acknowledge there is a misunderstanding and/or problem
- Be pro-active; don't be defensive about mistakes
- Engage in dialogue about the issue
- Use an intermediary - if necessary

## Coping Strategies

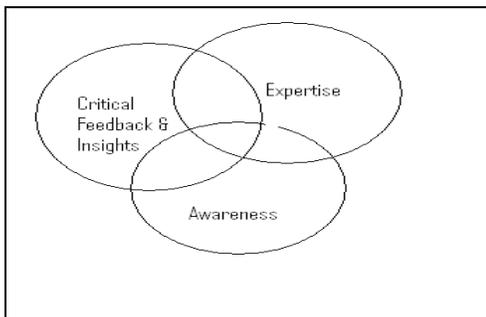
- Consider the degree of influence you have with the person(s). In other words, choose your battles wisely.
- If your level of influence is great, strategically determine what's most critical to discuss now and what can wait for later.
- If your level of influence is low, say/do what allows you to be true to your principles and/or beliefs without regret.

### Trust Models:

The following models demonstrate, individuals operate with different paradigms about trust. Awareness of these differences can often help bridge “stalled” trust building processes among group members.

		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starts with low level of trust</li> <li>• Trust builds with most people</li> <li>• Not emotionally distraught over breaches of trust</li> <li>• Skepticism</li> <li>• Outside – looking in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engages in continuous evaluation of trust</li> <li>• Trust often increases</li> <li>• Not surprised by breaches in trust</li> <li>• High willingness to rebuild trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starts with low high of trust</li> <li>• Often rattled by breaches of trust</li> <li>• Very difficult and unclear how to rebuild trust</li> <li>• Not very willing to rebuild trust</li> </ul>

### Collaborative Leadership Model



The Collaborative Leadership Model operates on three pillars:

- **EXPERTISE.** Each leader brings particular skills and expertise that are valuable to the group. Communicating/Demonstrating your abilities is not boasting, but rather good information that can help your group make good use of your time and efforts.
- **AWARENESS.** Having a high level of awareness about the talents that others bring to the group is also essential. Understanding not only their

abilities, but also the value of their roles allow you to help increase the level of trust, comfort and credibility others are willing to extend to that leader. The ability to offer this endorsement is one of the most valuable tools in conflict resolution and building higher levels of cooperation.

- **CRITICAL FEEDBACK & INSIGHTS.** Finally, leaders and group members are strengthened by a culture wherein critical feedback and insights can be offered (or sought out) without creating adversarial relationships. Human beings have the capacity to receive and/or accept even very critical feedback; provided it comes from someone who has their best interest at heart.

### Notes:

As an exercise, we paired off and each person articulated what s/he is good at, and what s/he enjoys bringing to the table. Then the other person had to “endorse” her partner to the rest of the table group. Individuals shared their experiences with being valued (or not); the issue of sometimes having to re-direct a volunteer to a more suitable task; of cultivating new talent, etc.

## Perspectives

Sometimes we need to engage in “crucial conversations” that are not entirely comfortable – but we feel are necessary or important. How I am treated in that conversation may have more influence on the outcome than the content itself. When you enter this type of conversation, what keeps you engaged?

**Please rank what is most important to you when talking with people whose perspectives may differ from your own: (1=most important to 9=least important)**

- Asking me a question to get more information if you didn’t understand what I was trying to say.
- Not being criticized, judged or attacked for my opinions, feelings or observations.
- Having others agree with what I say.\*
- Knowing that the other person has a clear understanding of what I said.
- Being able to complete my thoughts and fully express them without interruption.
- Knowing that what I say will not leave the room without my permission.
- Being given an equal opportunity to express my opinion.
- Knowing my input was/will be taken into consideration.
- Being able to get a variety of perspectives on the subject.

## Notes:

After each individual had ranked these criteria, we grouped ourselves physically around the room next to the criterion we had rated #1. People shared why that criterion was important to them, and how they respond when it isn’t met. Facilitator identified values corresponding to the various criteria: logic & order; integrity; authenticity; respect; justice; synergy. The one criterion no one chose (and this is consistent with the way most people respond to this exercise) was, “having others agree with what I say.” Take-away point: disagreement over substance of a discussion is not what creates conflict or undermines collaboration. Rather, it is *the way we treat each other* when we interact. Facilitator then had us re-group next to our #2 criterion. People found themselves with some of the same people, but also with different people. Take-away point: leaders need to be aware of what diverse participants *need* in order to remain engaged, and must exercise skill in balancing different participants’ priorities.

Facilitator demonstrated and gave examples – e.g., how to manage a situation where others in the room are becoming impatient with someone who needs to be able to “complete her thoughts and fully express them without interruption.” (Briefly acknowledge the signals others are sending you; then focus full attention on speaker, and when she is finished, confirm your understanding of what she has said with a yes/no question to which she can answer “yes.”)