LEADING IN A DIVERSE WORLD

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Abstract

If students are to have effective educational outcomes, and ultimately healthy adult lives, education leaders must work collaboratively with teachers, parents and other community stakeholders. This study addresses the broad question of how to lead effectively in a diverse world through a Case Study on a diversity conference in Long Island, New York. Data were gathered using participant observation and interviews of individuals attending the conference. Information was coded based on themes, patterns and discrepancies. The findings show that administrators who care, nurture, build trusting relationships and ultimately empower people within and outside of the organization help students achieve educationally.

KEY WORDS: Leadership, Sociology of Education, Socioeconomic Status, Culture, Diversity, Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Multiculturalism

INTRODUCTION

Understanding diversity is a key to exploring leadership. Leaders, or administrators, facilitate the process of establishing a collegial relationship between all members of an organization, as well as with other stakeholders. An administrator ultimately has the responsibility to make the universally shared vision a reality. In the education area, shared vision includes educating students in a manner that will assist them in having healthy adult lives. Leadership encompasses both technical and interpersonal skills. A leader’s technical skills include a knowledge base from formal training and prior experience. These skills encompass quality control, planning, articulating clear goals, measuring objectives, decision-making, evaluating outcomes, allocating rewards, and changing systems. Interpersonal skills relate to the administrator knowing his or her strengths and tapping into the strengths of teachers and other employees within a school. Interpersonal skills may be identified using Gardner’s seven levels of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, intrapersonal and interpersonal [Owens, 2004]. Using these intelligences enhances the environment by furthering the growth and development of both educators and students.

An effective leader is concerned with two critical questions: What do effective environments look like? How do they improve over time? These questions focus on the culture of the environment. The culture of the organization clearly states what the organization stands for: its values, beliefs and goals. The leader shapes the culture of the institution by his or her style and approach. Bolman and Deal [1997] have outlined four frames, or styles, that leaders have: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. In the structural frame, the transmission of facts and information keeps the organization headed in the right direction. The human resource frame stresses the relationship between people and organizations. The political frame describes organizations as arenas for internal politics and political agents with their own agendas, resources and strategies. Lastly, the symbolic frame interprets symbols and shares values.
Within each frame, leaders may use one or all of the following approaches to achieve the desired goal: nondirective, collaborative, directive informational, and the directive control. In the nondirective approach, the teacher is an autodidactic learner and requires a minimal amount of supervision. The collaborative approach allows the administrator and teacher to work together to achieve the desired goal. The directive informational approach consists of the administrator acting as an information source for a teacher to improve his or her instruction. Lastly, in the directive control approach the administrator ensures that the teacher complies with the administrator's directive to achieve the desired goal [Glickman, Gordon, Ross-Gordon, 2001]. Leaders, then, must combine their style and approach to develop a vision toward which everyone will work. In addition, they must know the deeper culture and climate of their schools and communities so that they can empower teachers to be agents of change.

Transformational change is typically approached hierarchically or top down. This classical notion of administration is embedded in Taylor’s scientific management and Weber’s bureaucratic model [Owens, 2004]. That is, in order for change to occur, the leader must be efficient and take a directive approach; otherwise, a substantial amount of time will be wasted. A directive approach would include “a firm control of authority and close supervision of those in the lower ranks…maintain adequate vertical communication …develop clear written rules and procedures to set standards and guide actions…promulgate clear plans and schedules for participants to follow…add supervisory and administrative positions to the hierarchy of the organization as necessary to meet problems that arise from changing conditions confronted by the organization” [Owens, 2004, p 108]. This view is evident in the 1980’s reform movement, particularly the Nation at Risk Report, and the recently enacted No Child Left Behind legislation. These examples demonstrate that decisions were made in the legislature or state education departments and handed down to teachers for compliance in their classrooms.

While the bureaucratic model is the most commonly used paradigm for transformational change, another method is the human resource model. This collegial model addresses reform from a collaborative perspective. That is, “the teacher [is] foremost in creating instructional change and, therefore, questions the wisdom of any change strategy that seeks to force change upon the teachers arbitrarily and without his or her participation in the processes of deciding what should be done” [Owens, 2004, p 112]. In other words, administrators work in conjunction with teachers to achieve the necessary change.

The bureaucratic or collegial model has virtually the same desired outcome: to improve the instruction of teachers and increase the educational achievement for all students. This goal requires the administrator to be aware of the differences that are brought to the learning community such as various learning modalities, languages, religion, sexual orientation, race, gender, ethnicity and other cultural norms. Teachers need to be sensitive to these differences so that they may use differentiated teaching methods and effectively communicate with all students. Effectively communicating is what Irvine [1997] terms cultural synchronization. Cultural synchronization ensures that the teacher and student are in harmony with one another. Being in harmony negates the “silenced dialogue” that is typically prevalent in most educational environments. According to Delpit [1998], the “silent dialogue” refers to individuals who are in decision-making positions, or positions of power, and who enact policies not always in the best interest of everyone involved. Those in power do not want feedback; that is, the ideas and cultures of different groups are not represented or respected.

Disenfranchised groups typically are not a part of the conversation when decisions are made on their behalf and in many instances are unaware that decisions affecting their conditions are taking place. This approach is analogous to a game being played and only one person is aware of the rules, the other player has to figure the rules out as he or she goes along. Weber [1946] referred to this latter phenomenon as a structure of dominance. This structure of dominance indicates that people in positions of greater power and privilege do not retain these positions by accident; rather, they use their superior resources to maintain themselves and stratification. “The privileged must dominate those subordinate to them in order to maintain their super ordinate position…Those with more actively work to maintain or increase their relative advantages; hence the term ‘structure of dominance’” [Persell, 1977, pp. 6, 21].

Cultural synchronization, the “silenced dialogue” and the structure of dominance refers to the interaction between administrators, teachers, students, parents and members of organizations outside of school. Unless administrators are cognizant of these issues and address them, more students will continue to fail in school.
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study examines what leaders can do to facilitate reforming the educational environment to represent, as much as possible, all of an environment's culture and theoretical paradigms. That is, how to lead in a diverse world? There are three sub-questions to this main question. First, what stops candid speaking in sensitive situations? Secondly, how have the assumptions of the last century affected systems with regard to diversity? Lastly, what leadership responses are necessary to bridge the gap for all community stakeholders? A Case Study based on a diversity conference held in Long Island, New York, was used to answer these research questions. Participants selected were from the educational, social and business communities; they were observed and interviewed to gather data relating to the research questions.

This study will be used to facilitate a dialogue, expected to take place in the school year 2005-06, between educators, families, members in social organizations and businesspersons, in Long Island, New York, to further their cooperation in acting on the best interest of all students. Stakeholders need to identify and eliminate barriers contributing to students' unsuccessful academic and emotional achievement. Past studies have shown that increased educational attainment happens when stakeholders work collaboratively and teach students how to accept and respect differences in their peers and educators. In order for this to occur, the adults in the situation must first learn how to respect and accept their own differences. It is the leader's responsibility to ensure that the environment welcomes and accepts these differences and creates diverse learning communities.

Acknowledging and understanding individuals with different backgrounds is the first step in embracing a diverse world. Traditionally, the United States has been referred to as the “melting pot society,” which assumes that there are no differences and that everyone is homogenous, like a gallon of milk. The reality is that this society is diverse in many areas and it resembles more a salad bowl, whereby "individuals from different cultural backgrounds should be encouraged to retain [their] uniqueness while adding special flavors to enhance the whole" [Coleman, 1981, abstract]. Enhancing the whole, or celebrating differences, is ultimately the responsibility of the leader within that setting. Leaders need to consciously include those traditionally ostracized because of their race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, etc. Discrimination is usually prevalent in environments where there is a "silent dialogue" and a structure of dominance. To eliminate these discriminatory practices, leaders must be willing to take a stand; they must be willing to change the culture and climate of the environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The literature suggests that culture is transmitted from the adult world to the young through skills, facts, values and attitudes. Schools have become the avenue by which this transmission occurs. Schools are institutions that mold and shape students’ perspectives of a particular culture. Schools indicate what kinds of values and goals are worth striving for; therefore, administrators and teachers arrange and structure the experience of young people in order to achieve these goals [Hurn, 1993]. According to Schein [1992], "... the only thing of real importance that leaders do, is create and manage culture and the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture" [p. 5]. It is, therefore, the administrators' or leader's "responsibility to embrace diversity within the organization to serve the long-term interests of their constituents" [Gardner, 1990, p. 29].

Duderstadt [2000] and Musil, Garcia, Hudgins, Nettles, Sedlacek and Smith [1999] developed five principles relative to diversity: (1) quality of education, (2) moral responsibility, (3) civic engagement, (4) demographic changes and (5) human capital. The first principle postulates that the quality of education is hampered when diverse perspectives are not included in the curriculum; students who have been exposed to various perspectives from other cohort members become more adept at critical thinking and are better prepared for greater interaction with diverse populations [Hurtado, Millem, Clayton-Pedersen and Allen, 1999]. The second principle argues for the sustained integration of diversity in curricula that upholds the commitment to democracy, equity and access. The third principle serves society through the advancement of knowledge. It is the goal of education to teach, disseminate information, and prepare students to become responsible members of a global community. The fourth principle advances the reality that diverse populations are on the rise and must be addressed systemically; leaders’ failure to do so, may result in the perpetuation of the structure of dominance. Lastly, the fifth principle states that in
order for the United States to be competitive in the global market, leaders must acknowledge and address changing demographics, so as to incorporate the talents of diverse individuals. Excluding diverse talents within the institution stagnates the growth and development of students.

Educators concerned about students’ educational attainment need to make schools safe by building community. A community of learners fosters an appreciation for everyone in the group by arranging elements “so that they function as a whole, by orienting them all to a common awareness of each other, their purpose and their current reality” [Senge, 2001, p. 74]. That is, for an organization to meet goal, it must create a shared vision fostering a common commitment. This collegiality results when stakeholders connect to each other as a result of interdependencies and mutual obligations [Sergiovanni, 1994]. It is important to note that while collegiality embraces a shared vision, it does not denote single mindedness; rather, it promotes everyone contributing to the conversation to create a shared vision. In other words, diversity of thought is sought and encouraged by the leader of the group. Komives, Lucas and McMahon [1998], advise an effective leader to develop a self understanding, “to know how you are seen by others and to modify your behaviors and attitudes to encourage a spirit of openness and connection with others and (2) engage in life long learning of understanding of others in order to develop a sense of awareness for a true community of workers with a common vision or purpose” [p. 39].

Bennis [1989] defined four competencies that effective leaders utilize: management of attention, management of meaning, management of trust, and management of self. In management of attention, leaders draw others to them. In management of meaning, they will make their dreams apparent to others and create a shared vision. In management of trust, they are reliable and remain constant. Lastly, in management of self, leaders know their skills and they deploy them effectively. Ultimately, these competencies empower employees because they feel that what they do has meaning and significance to the organization. When administrators empower teachers, teachers approach their craft from a nondirective manner and students benefit in that their educational achievement increases.

RESEARCH LITERATURE ON EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In the mid 1990s the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction studied eleven high poverty schools that demonstrated success in moving students up the state’s Achievement (4) Levels on the End of Grade (EOG) tests. The schools were selected because at least one cohort had demonstrated exemplary growth in both reading and mathematics over one year, or exemplary growth in one subject over a two-year span. The chosen schools were visited by two-person observation teams who interviewed the principals and teachers who contributed to the academic growth of students. The Department’s 1997 report on page one cited the following characteristics present in several of the schools studied: 1) high expectations are universal; 2) care and respect are clearly evident; 3) the environment is orderly and safe; 4) reform is teacher driven; 5) the principal leads and supports teamwork; 6) assessment is important and is used; 7) the school focuses on the state’s Standard Course of Study; 8) instruction is both didactic and hands-on; 9) extra help and early intervention are provided; 10) schools and educators are willing to experiment. The greatest amount of growth in these schools was in the elementary grades (3-5) with Grade 4 having the overall highest growth for all cohorts (black, white, Native American), followed by Grade 5. These gains were not as true for the state as a whole, although Grades 4 and 5 have higher gains than cohort gains in mathematics.

In a three-year study of 24 schools involving classroom observation and interviews with teachers and principals, Hayes, Martin, and Lingard [2004] focused on achievement of students whose schools had different sets of leadership practices. Academic and social student outcomes were positively related to a “culture of care” and healthy and supportive relationships between the principal, teachers, and students.

Gibson and Bejnez [2002] studied Mexican-descent migrant students in an ethnically diverse California high school. Despite their high risk for school failure, the migrant students persevered in significantly higher numbers than non-migrant Mexican classmates. The Federally-funded Migrant Education Program which supplied staff support and institutional activities was found to help create a sense of caring, belonging and community which helped students to persist to graduation despite many obstacles.

Suarez-Orocoz, Suarez-Orocoz, and Doucet wrote in 2004 of their study of 2,169 Mexican American high school students which sought to identify factors contributing directly to academic resilience and achievement. They found that “students’ sense of belonging to the school was the only significant
predictor of academic achievement” (p. 159.) Nieto [2004] also cited other studies in her book Affirming Diversity (p. 270): “Angela Valenzuela, in a three-year investigation of academic achievement among Mexican American students in a Texas high school, provides compelling examples of care among a small number of educators…(Educators) showed they cared through close and affirming relationships, high expectations for students’ capabilities, and respect for student families….Another example comes from Susan Roberta Katz…she found that both caring and high expectations were essential in fostering positive learning outcomes….the climate of the educational program was found to influence students’ engagement with learning.”

**METHODOLOGY**

In examining the question of what leaders can do to embrace diversity within their organizations, three sub-questions were addressed: (1) what stops candid speaking in sensitive situations? (2) How have the assumptions of the last century affected systems with regard to diversity? And (3) what leadership responses are necessary to bridge the gap for all community stakeholders? A Case Study was set in a diversity conference in Long Island, N.Y., attended by about 65 sixty-five people from various educational, business and social organizations. The researchers participated, observed and interviewed six participants who attended workshops on generational and situational poverty, safety issues for gay and lesbian youth, team-learning to create a shared vision, and the experience of a Jewish Holocaust survivor. The interview protocol consisted of a 15-item question path based on the literature pertaining to diversity, leadership, educational philosophy, and typically disenfranchised individuals. Interviewees were both presenters and audience participants whose occupations ranged from superintendent of a school district, classroom teachers, businessman and social activists; a total of three men and three women from various cultural backgrounds were interviewed. These individuals volunteered to participate in the study because of their interest in the study’s purposes.

The themes, patterns and discrepancies used to code individual opinions of topics were: care, nurturance, respect, empowerment, trust, support, diversity, formal training and experience. These themes, patterns and discrepancies were observed in the activities that were a part of the conference, as well as the interviews that were conducted with the participants. While each respondent provided well thought out and crucial information on the topic, only a portion of their responses have been quoted; most have been paraphrased and summarized.

**FINDINGS**

**Care and Nurturance**

The respondents stated that every child can succeed academically and ultimately in life if the adults in their lives make a concerted effort to care about their well-being. Every adult in a child’s life must recognize the potential in each child and work to develop and nurture that potential so that the child can be successful across life domains. In an educational setting it is the responsibility of parents and leaders to see that this happens. In order for an adult to nurture a child’s development, the adult must care. According to one activist, “leaders must have a belief in people, a strong belief in learning and the obligation to learn. The environment should be conducive to learning and . . . there should be a clear focus for what is right for the system . . . caring should be a fundamental part of that process.” According to one teacher, when leaders care, they understand that “differences are all right and that no two people are alike.” She further stated that each person has a talent to contribute to improve the organization. Conversely, adults, parents, teachers and administrators, can bring out children’s’ talents so that the children can have healthy adult lives. When administrators bring out the talents in teachers, their instruction improves which ultimately increases the educational achievement of students.

This teacher indicated that her “ethic of care” for her students encourages them to engage in the learning process more which has increased their achievement. “In other words, my students believe they can achieve and they do. Their performances on class assignments and assessments have improved tremendously and I expect that they will continue because they know that they are cared about…My colleagues and I often discuss nurturing students potential. We see the difference in their performance as soon as they know that we care about them…Our building principal and district superintendent also encourages a culture of care. The climate is such that no matter what your differences are (gender,
language, race, class, etc.) you can still help a child be academically successful by simply showing him or her that you genuinely care about his or her overall well-being."

Respect and Empowerment

Effective leadership also means that individuals respect each other’s opinion. One teacher stated: “the structure of the environment must be one that embraces mutual respect if students are to succeed.” Educators and other adults must recognize that the ideas, values and space of students are important to their development. One administrator reported that leaders “have the ability to see themselves as being successful which allows them to lead others to that success. Leaders need to hear, understand and validate the opinions of others. Followers must be able to trust the leader’s agenda and not be counterproductive to the overall goal.” There must be a trusting relationship between the students, educators, family members and other stakeholders.

One activist felt that respecting the rights of individuals is crucial to the growth and development of the organization. For example, he stated that “everyone has an inalienable right to coexist and no one has the right or authority to take that away from the individual… One’s right is limited to whatever position he or she sits in and that’s reciprocal. In a multicultural society, all cultures have value;” one’s actions should not have an adverse affect on others. Being respectful of other groups, then, lends itself to systemic change in that diverse groups can develop partnerships and work collaboratively to achieve their desired goal. This activist also notes that

“students remember the persons that have an effect on them and leave a lasting impression. Leaders can transfer experiences [by] walking students through the journey of life. In doing so, a relationship is established and students are taught to be empowered. I mean that there is nothing more rewarding than feeling empowered, than knowing that your voice matters. I know that when students feel that they have a voice, that they have access and ownership to their education because they are respected, they rise to the occasion. What do I mean by that? Well, students become more engaged in the learning process; they’re more intrinsically motivated to learn.”

This investment plays an integral part in students realizing their abilities and talents to work toward effective educational outcomes.

Support and Trust

While it is important to recognize diverse cultural norms within an institution, one must also realize that cultures have limits and leaders are many times limited in what can be included within the organization. According to one activist, “…this, too, is one responsibility of a leader in a multicultural environment [understanding the limitations of groups]. When interacting with the group, you [can] lose your identity and become a part of the group. Be careful of this, however, because you can pigeon-hole individuals when you group them as a monolith. [What we must remember is that we can] learn from everyone because every culture has certain aspects that contribute to improving our society.”

Improving our environment is an integral part of transformational change. This change occurs when leaders present themselves in an honest, empathetic and respectful manner, according to the respondents. One administrator stated that “getting the energy to move the system in the right direction is... important [because] it’s a combination of environmental and innateness; having a linear focus to move away to see pieces and parts, to see what needs to be done. [In order to achieve this, one must be a] good listener, have tough skin, have a good family networking system, know who to trust, have a sense of calmness and be human. [These] are all attributes of an effective leader. If one does not have these attributes, then it’s not really leadership; it will become bullying.” These characteristics allow leaders to work on behalf of everyone in the organization. It is then imperative for leaders to understand what kind of leader they are so that they can bring out the strengths in others; interpersonal skills are critical in effective leadership. Structural, political, human resource and symbolic are various styles that one can incorporate into his or her administrative duties. Administrators who combine these styles, tend to be the most effective in their leadership role, because they empower teachers to think beyond what is generally expected. These teachers raise their expectations and ultimately the expectations of their students when they know that they have the support of the administration; all of which ultimately leads to empowerment.

According to one leader, “Instructional improvement is necessary if students’ achievement is to increase. That is, teachers need to understand what methods they can use to tap into the strengths of all of the students. In many instances that requires teachers to have differentiated instructional techniques. I
feel that it is up to the leaders to provide professional development opportunities that will help teachers stay current on various instructional techniques...They [teachers] learn of these opportunities through their evaluations. Because evaluations can be sensitive, leaders have to make sure they build trusting relationships with everyone in the organization; otherwise you have the potential for teachers not seizing these opportunities because of their concerns that the leaders have hidden agendas.

Diversity

Leadership encompasses life experiences that give individuals the courage and ability to work, live and socialize with similar and dissimilar groups of people. According to one teacher, “Long Island is more diverse in the workplace, but not in other categories. What [people] have heard is what they know [about other groups] instead of what they experienced. There’s no place of reference on how to deal with diverse populations and that makes them feel awkward. You end up walking a fine line. When one is the only person representing a member of a disenfranchised group, that person has to feel comfortable with being the only minority in the group. Sometimes that person gets tired of trying to dispel others’ notions [and] she becomes the spokesperson by default...and that person has to feel comfortable with being the only minority in the group.”

This teacher, and the other participants, conveyed that there is no monolith within groups. There are differences within and between groups that should be acknowledged so that group members can be completely recognized as individuals outside of their groups. Group membership, then, should not denote that there is one group thought. Doing so creates a type of prejudice for members of the group who hold minority group viewpoints. Interactions among and between group members embody various mental models and leaders of the group must recognize and encourage these varying thought processes.

One activist said regarding interacting with diverse groups: “Prejudice is a top down process and people are taught prejudice; they are not born with it. Myths based on lies are created and that leads to discrimination. Myths are designed to demonize and dehumanize people for political and economic reasons.” It ultimately becomes the responsibility of the leader to convey that people should make an attempt to understand persons that are different from them as opposed to discriminating against them. These discriminatory practices have a tendency to be perpetuated and are ultimately transmitted as the “truth” about particular groups. In order to dispel these myths, leaders must provide everyone in the organization with accurate information about relevant internal and external groups. All of the respondents felt that at least one, if not all, of the following demographic and physical attributes can skew people’s perspective: race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and class. These areas cut across cultural lines and promote common understandings.

According to a teacher, it is important to understand and embrace diversity because “your classroom will constantly change across racial and ethnic lines. Long gone are the days when one or maybe two ethnic groups are represented in your classroom. There are children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds who are depending on you to teach them. Their little eyes are wide open with curiosity and, for many, their view of the world is shaped by what you tell them. ...It’s partly your job as a teacher to teach all (students) to respect each other. The goal, then, is to improve student performance and I think being open to diverse groups is one way to achieve that goal.”

Formal Training and Experience

A taste for leadership may be enhanced and developed through writing and formal training. One activist said of his organization’s leader: “He is incredibly intelligent and is highly perceptive. Perhaps... it is due to a Masters in Social Welfare and he’s working on a Ph.D. in social welfare.” One administrator stated that her “taste for leadership was enhanced through her writing ... [she] was persuaded to spread true thinking” by engaging in the learning process. She felt enriched and enhanced by the dialogue. She was thirsty for more knowledge on leadership so she could be a more effective leader for the students within the district.

All of the respondents felt that having an educational philosophy is important because it frames beliefs of how students learn and what information teachers and other educators can impart to them. The respondents’ educational philosophy included standing up and making a difference when no one else would. They felt that they should take risks regardless of what other people said. According to one activist who represented the thoughts of the other respondents, leaders must “provide a safe learning environment that meets the need of students ... because they need to focus on the business of education
and not other issues that will distract them from the learning process.” An administrator noted that “when you let people know that you are authentic and you are willing to take risks to learn from everyone both inside and outside of the organization, they will be more inclined to work with you to achieve the goals and objectives that have been articulated.” While a philosophy may include this latter phenomenon, formal training and experience improves this idea of making and achieving goals.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION**

This study sought to address what administrators can do to lead more effectively in a diverse world. Based on the literature on cultural diversity and on educational attainment, plus the dialogue of the Case Study respondents, leaders must first understand how individuals add a unique perspective to the organization. Leaders should embrace diversity within the organization, which will foster a stronger appreciation for differences. This appreciation can assist everyone in the organization to work collaboratively. Collaboration, then, can help students have more effective educational outcomes, and ultimately healthy adult lives. Students’ chances of school failure are also decreased when the adults in their lives work together to identify and meet students’ needs. Students themselves need to participate in this task. For this phenomenon to occur, leaders must make a concerted effort to provide an atmosphere that welcomes various ideas and differences, helping all to sustain cohesion around a shared goal.

Leaders must also be aware of the structure of dominance and the “silent dialogue” so that they can represent everyone in the decision making process. When leaders exhibit a knowledge base, experience, support, and respect for others, they place themselves in a position to help people speak sensitively in certain situations. What ultimately stops candid speaking in sensitive situations is fear. Fear of the unknown, perhaps a different cultural group, motivates individuals to speak indirectly, and thus they may be misunderstood. What people think about other groups is what they hold true. Leaders, then, have a responsibility to work toward bridging the gap between all stakeholders so that interactions can be more productive and diverse perspectives are, at the very least, appreciated.

As outlined by Glickman (2001) administrators can empower teachers by sharing leadership, sharing in the decision making, building trusting relationships, caring, collegiality and administrative support. The cited studies, plus the Case Study, show that teachers, in turn, need to provide caring, nurturing, trusting, and respectful environments for their students in order to encourage academic and social achievement. Empowerment is very important if students are to have healthy adult lives.

The philosophies and facts outlined in this paper will be presented by the Long Island school district as talking points at “town hall meetings” during the upcoming school year. The District Superintendent will facilitate the dialogue with stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents, community activists, business owners). The viewpoints of everyone will be respected as each point is discussed. They need to address sensitive issues such as the disproportionate number of African American and other students of color bused into the District, placed in Special Education, etc. They want to see how their conventional wisdom has impacted their interactions with one another. Lastly they want to understand what leaders in a variety of organizations (education, business, etc.) can do to bridge tensions between groups. The Superintendent ultimately wants to eliminate barriers causing some students not to advance at the rate they should. This dialogue may also result in future studies about achieving the District’s goals as well as ongoing research for organizational self-renewal.

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