



Ontario Institute for Education Leadership L'Institut de leadership en éducation de l'Ontario

*Ontario Leaders Collaborating for Student Achievement, Equity and Well-being
La collaboration des leaders en Ontario assure la réussite, l'équité et le bien-être des élèves.*

Case Study 3: An Accident Involving a Student

Background

Evelyne is a school principal with three years of administrative experience. She is currently principal of De La Prairie High School, an urban school of 750 students. Evelyne is known for her instructional leadership as she has worked as an educational consultant in various environments for fifteen years. She has a clearly focussed approach to education and has started leading her team in this direction. She has committed to seeing her staff succeed and grow professionally and has introduced professional learning communities (PLC's). Her staff has started showing interest and openness to this approach to professional conversations. A climate of trust between and among staff and Evelyne has emerged. She has an understanding that change is slow and incremental and provides strong support to her staff. She demonstrates high EQ with students, parents and staff alike and is very much present within the school environment. Evelyne is also involved within the community as a member of the Optimist Club and is a model of community leadership.

Evelyne finds it difficult to strike a proper work-life balance. Since her own children are in university, she has a lot of free time, which she invests in the school. Evelyne spends long hours at school during the week as well as on weekends. She prefers working on her own and has avoids distributing leadership. She has high expectations of herself. Nonetheless, she is able to recognize the accomplishments of each of her staff. She has previously worked with some of them when she was an instructional consultant, and there is a perception that some have privileges and are favoured over others. Evelyne is always available for students, parents and for some, but not all, staff members. One of her objectives is to increase the school's graduation rate by being especially present and supportive of at-risk students.

Current situation

A co-op teacher meets with Evelyne to voice his concerns regarding students safety as they travel to and from co-op placements. Evelyne senses that the co-op teacher may only wants the best students to get placements and does not want to help students who are experiencing difficulties. His concerns include reports of student drug use, students having trouble getting to placement locations, and student absenteeism, which make it seem as though his intent is to exclude problem students from placement opportunities. Evelyne feels this is the real reason he has shared his concerns and doesn't investigate any further. An employer meets with her to ask that more students be admitted to the program. His experience has shown that these placements encourage students to stay

in school and graduate. Since they are both Optimist Club members, this discussion takes place during a club meeting. Some parents have contacted her to say how proud they are of their children's improved performance.

Evelyne has analyzed the absenteeism rate of co-op students and has noted an alarming rate for some of them. She decides to meet with them to remind them of the importance of being on time and present at their placements.

The following week, during one of Evelyne's rare absences, her secretary, Pauline, calls to tell her that one of the co-op students was involved in an accident on his way to a placement, but at this time there is no further information. The police have come to the school and are trying to reach the parents.

A group of students have gathered in the guidance office and it is rumoured that the student has died.

Evelyne must return to school to deal with this situation. She experiences much stress on her return to school, but must nonetheless trust in her abilities and keep her emotions in check. How will she deal with everyone and maintain a safe and secure learning environment?

Personal Leadership Resources (specific to the case study)

- Optimism
 - taking positive risk
- Self-efficacy
 - persistence in the face of initial failure
- Resilience
 - recover from misfortune
- Proactivity
 - show initiative and perseverance in bringing about change
- Problem-Solving

Leadership Practices as the School Level

- Demonstrate respect for staff, students and parents by listening to their ideas, being open to those ideas, and genuinely considering their value
- Distribute resources in ways that are closely aligned with the school's improvement priorities.
- Regularly encourage staff to evaluate their progress toward achieving the school's goals.
- Distribute leadership roles on selected tasks.
- Demonstrate respect, care and personal regard for students, staff and parents.
- Model responsibility, integrity and thoroughness in carrying out tasks.
- Exemplify, through their actions, the school's core values and its desired practices.

Reflective Questions

1. What next (or first) steps should Evelyne be considering in order to address the impact of the student accident on students, staff and parents?

2. What are possible solutions to the problem Evelyne faces with the co-op teacher?

3. In these circumstances, how could you redirect resources to be better aligned with school priorities?

4. How would you go about developing appropriate transportation policies/procedures for students and ensure that these are put in place on a daily basis?

5. As Evelyne's SO, what system problems do you foresee this situation creating? How would you resolve them?

Personal Leadership Resources (PLR) Questions

1. What personal leadership resources (cognitive, social, and psychological) does Evelyne think she demonstrates strength in? Do you agree? Explain?

2. With reference to the PLRs, describe Evelyne's demonstrated cognitive resources (problem solving, knowledge and system thinking)?

3. Using Evelyne as an example, comment upon the dissonance that can be created as a result of an imbalance between the cognitive, social and psychological personal leadership resources?

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