

Time for Change! The Four Essential Skills of a Transformational School and District

Leader by Dr. Anthony Muhammad: August 22, 2020 Symposium Reflection Paper

Christina S. Espinoza

Concordia University

EDU 563: Supporting Teacher Growth

Sean Curtin

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When sitting in a virtual room waiting for any seminar or webinar to begin, there is always an uneasy feeling about whether this will be worth one's time or not. Will I get something out of it is always the most important factor for me anytime I participate in any seminar platform. To my surprise I was engaged from the moment it started. Dr. Anthony Muhammad said, "Leadership is not about authority, it's a responsibility". What a powerful statement to begin with. It allowed me to focus on that statement as a reference point on the Four Critical Behaviors he focused on throughout the symposium.

Listening to Dr. Muhammad and knowing his educational background gave me the incentive I needed to take away as much from him as possible. He wasn't a presenter who had no educational experience speaking to an audience of educators about what you can or cannot do in our profession. It is coming from a person who has been in our shoes, who has taught for a certain amount of years, and who has been in administration. For myself that made this symposium even more interesting.

The two points that impacted me the most from his Time for Change- The Four Essential Skills of a Transformational Leader seminar were building trust and support/capacity building. I have never thought about what it would be like as an administrator. I have often looked at the administrators that I have worked for and reflected on the type of principal they were. After listening to Dr. Muhammad, it just gave me more to think about regarding what I would need to focus on when I enter the role of a principal or vice principal. Dr. Muhammad posed a great question, "Which of the Four Critical Behaviors do you believe is your strong suite?". I am a quiet and shy person by nature so communication has never been my strong point, but building

trust and support/capacity building is something that I have been able to be successful in as a teacher and as a coach for English Language Learners for my district. That made me begin to reflect on “who and how” I would lead in that capacity as an administrator. What makes change grow is trust and support. When it comes to change, trust and credibility rank high as two of the most important factors in building trust. Dr. Muhammad made a good point when he said that “When a new administrator comes on board, its emotional”. This statement is so true because as a staff we do not know what we are getting as an administrator, but the administrator also does not know what the school staff has gone through prior to them coming on board. It is a matter of building relationships, bonds, credibility, and trust. If people trust you, people will follow you any where regardless if they like you or not. For me that was an eye opener. I always thought to trust someone one meant you liked them, but that is not always the case.

As an administrator, building trust with school staff you have to show empathy. Staff needs to know that you care for them and their experiences. It must be genuine. One must listen without rebuttal and collaborate to move forward. Credibility is a crucial part of establishing trust. Dr. Muhammad points out three important factors. One is establishing and demonstrating moral commitment. Two is pursuing and demonstrating deep knowledge of the task. Three is having predictable and reliable implementation by being consistent. These three things really stuck out to me because as an educator if your administrator cannot be depended or relied on in these areas you will have staff who is reluctant to grow, change, and support your vision for the school. That can be a scary scenario.

Support and capacity building come right after building trust for a reason. Dr. Muhammad stated that, “95% of teachers who are reluctant to change is due to lack of support”, and I couldn’t agree more. When looking at my own school and the reluctancy that we have

there, it makes total sense why we cannot move forward in a positive direction. There is no trust. We had to reflect on our current system of support for teacher learning. My district offers a variety of things to support our teachers, PLC's, professional development, and workshops, but when looking at our school administration we do not. Listening to Dr. Muhammad allowed me to understand and get a sense of what I would need to think about when I am an administrator and supporting my staff. Choosing goals for the school, creating possible learning centers for staff meetings that would provide opportunities to find solutions to problems at the school. Provide a vision for your school and how that will be implemented and supported for staff. So many angles and things to look at when thinking about how best to support staff as an administrator.

As a future administrator, another concern of mine is being successful within that position. As a teacher I love what I do, and I can say that I am good at what I do because I love my job. So, when Dr. Muhammad began to talk about The Four Critical Behaviors in which to be an effective leader, I was all ears. How can one become successful and ensure long term success? Show them that you care and demonstrate enthusiasm. Absolutely! If an administrator comes into a school believing to know it all and begins to change everything without getting to know the dynamics of the school, they are starting off on the wrong foot. As I have personally experienced that with a new administrator, I can account firsthand how that brings the moral of the school down. Dr. Muhammad suggests ensuring long term success one needs to improve their communication (why), build trust (who), support/capacity building (how), and have accountability (Do). Develop your leadership team. People who will help support your mission or vision for the school. That can make such a difference when running a school. Know the most important clients, be a great manager, and a great communicator. I agree 100% that transparency is key.

As the symposium came to an end, I couldn't help but feel a sense of confidence, that I too can be a successful administrator one day. Do what the greats do! Build a culture of collaboration, empower others, make the most of my time, give away the credit, listen, and show you care. Such simple concepts and suggestions, yet for me a huge eye opener. Not only did he leave me feeling that applying for an administrative position is within my reach, but he gave me the necessary tools to help me prepare for the position I want.

References:

Muhammad, D. (2020, August 22). Time for Change: Four Essential Skills for ... Retrieved August 22, 2020, from <https://www.cui.edu/en-us>