Leadership During Periods of Uncertainty:  
*What Knowledge and Skills Are Necessary?*

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Why do you want to be a leader? What’s motivating you? What is your north star?

The North Star, also known as Polaris, is unlike all the other stars in the sky, it is in the same location every night from dusk to dawn, neither rising nor setting.
During this period of polarization and uncertainty, what should we expect from our leaders?

Disturbance is required for change and there is no doubt that disturbance is happening. The question is: *are we willing to use this opportunity to create the kind of institutions we need and want?* We have learned that if we are going to change a system, we first have to *see* what the system is producing, then we have to ENGAGE with others to design something different, and finally we have to ACT. – *Hugh Vasquez, NEP*
Reflection: What’s your vision?

• A leader’s vision must be rooted in an understanding of the organization and its mission.

• Where do you see the need for change?

• Who do you need to engage with to design something new?
  • What assumptions about the need for change will you base your planning efforts upon?

• How will you build a sense of shared commitment to common goals throughout your organization?
  • What barriers are likely to impede your progress?
Dear Teachers:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no person should witness. Gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.

So I am suspicious of education. My request is: help your students become more human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, or educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.

Haim G. Ginott
Equality, Equity, Reality and the Goal

**EQUALITY:** giving everyone the same, regardless of whether it is what they need or not.

**EQUITY:** giving everyone exactly what they need, when they need it.

**THE GOAL:** should be to eliminate barriers to learning for ALL students!
Common Barriers to Equity

• **COMPLACENCY** – mindsets that perpetuate the status quo
• Bias – race, gender, sexuality, age, physical abilities, beliefs, etc.
• Failure to see the connection between actions and consequences, and to accept responsibility
• Failure to distinguish factors we can influence and affect from those we can not
• Failure to recognize and address unequal access to support
• Ignoring the need to compensate for the effects of inequality
• **Equity requires an investment in people so that their value and worth is recognized and acknowledged.**
What is Equity?

- Equity creates the platform that allows us to draw talent from all communities
- Equity is about expanding access and opportunity
- Equity is about a commitment to fairness and justice
- Equity is about an investment in every student or staff member
- Equity is about outcomes: we know we’ve achieved equity when the backgrounds of people cease to predict the outcomes
- Equity is about cultivating talent, creativity and capacity in all
Leaders Must Find the Balance between Technical and Adaptive Work

1. Stay focused on the dynamic and complex nature of the work, its substance, meaning and purpose.
2. Build teamwork guided by a long-term vision, with medium- and short-term goals.
3. Acknowledge that we are trying to achieve our goals in a constantly changing environment with limited resources.

Technical work
1. Managing the operations of the system.
2. Ensuring that procedures are working.
3. Monitoring employees and serving clients in accordance with policy.
4. Using data to make informed decisions.
Who are your students and what do you need to know to serve them well?
How do the social identities of your students shape how we perceive their needs, strengths and potential?

How do we understand the challenges they face?
To be an agent of change you must be committed to change in yourself.

- Moral leadership is required during periods of adversity and uncertainty
  - Leading by example
  - Leading with compassion
  - Leading with values
  - Leading with wisdom: discretion, discernment, social and emotional intelligence
Reflection

**Important Questions**

- What barriers are preventing your district from making more progress?
- What conditions are essential to make your district more equitable and effective?
- How do you avoid tendency to equate equity with mediocrity?
- How will you build the capacity of the people you work with to fulfill your district’s mission?