Servant Leadership: Ancient Virtues to Inform 21st Century Educational Leadership

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- Beatrice Shivers
- Lydia Harold
- Jamie Lynn
- Nikki Hurless
The Need for New Approaches to Educational Leadership

23 percent of principals and 16 percent of teachers do not return from one school year to the next at a cost of nearly $3 billion per year.

7 out of 10 school teachers said they feel emotionally disconnected and/or dissatisfied with their workplace environments.

The most often cited reason for teacher dissatisfaction was lack of administrator support (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005).

Teachers report a desire to have principals more actively engaged but found a lack of support for their development and growth as professionals (Ingersoll, 1999, 2003).
K-12 Education is by no means alone in having leadership and workforce engagement problems.

Can we look to research in other sectors for new approaches and effective solutions?
Growth of Servant Leadership in Popular Business Literature
Servant Leadership
An Ancient Concept

600 B.C. Lao Tzu:
The greatest leader forgets himself and attends to the development of others.

375 B.C. Chanakya’s:
The [leader] shall consider as good, not what pleases himself but what pleases his subjects.

First Century A.D., Jesus of Nazareth:
But the greatest among you shall be your servant
(Matthew 23:11)

1970’s Robert K. Greenleaf:
The servant-leader is servant first… It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first.
In The Servant as Leader (1970), Greenleaf said:
The servant-leader is servant first …

... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. ...

Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.
“The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived.”
In the Institution as Servant, Greenleaf articulated what is often called the "credo." There he said:

“This is my thesis: caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built.

If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them.”
Servant Leadership (SL) Philosophy

Promotes valuing and developing of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, leadership for the good of those led, the sharing of power and status for the common good—each individual, the total organization, those served by the organization, the good of society (Laub, 1999).

Secular, Holistic, Socio-ecological, Moral, Relational
# Research-based Models of Servant Leadership

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowering and developing people</td>
<td>Develops People</td>
<td>Serving and developing others, Consulting and involving others</td>
<td>Empowerment, Trust</td>
<td>Empowering, Helping Subordinates grow and succeed</td>
<td>Transferring influence</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Interpersonal Support</td>
<td>Interpersonal Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Shares Leadership</td>
<td>Humility and selflessness</td>
<td>Altruistic calling</td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Putting subordinates first</td>
<td>Voluntary subordination</td>
<td>Humility, Standing back</td>
<td>Egalitarianism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Displays authenticity</td>
<td>Modeling integrity and authenticity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal acceptance</td>
<td>Values People</td>
<td>Emotional healing</td>
<td>Agape love</td>
<td>Emotional healing</td>
<td>Covenantal relationship</td>
<td>Interpersonal Acceptance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing direction</td>
<td>Providing leadership</td>
<td>Inspiring and influencing others</td>
<td>Persuasive mapping</td>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Conceptual skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>Builds community</td>
<td>Organizational stewardship, Wisdom</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Creating value for the community, Behaving ethically</td>
<td>Responsible morality</td>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>Building Community, Altruism</td>
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Servant Leadership Model

Leadership Purpose: To Serve

Virtuous Attitudes Cultivated: Humility, Gratitude, Courage, Forgiveness

Leader Practice: Authenticity, Empowerment, Stewardship, Foresight/Future-minded

Follower/Collaborator Outcomes: Wellbeing, Productivity, Service oriented, Positive Family Spillover Effects

Organization Outcomes: Productive, Stable, Innovative, Positive Climate

Servant Leadership Model: Adapted from van Dierendonck & Patterson (2015)
Planning Grant Questions

1) Can the cultivation of the servant leadership virtues be aligned with the current Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL)?

2) Does SL, with its explicit virtue focus, fit into existing pre-service school leader preparation and in-service school leader renewal programming?

3) Do school leadership development program faculty/facilitators, find the philosophy of Servant Leadership, appropriate, engaging and feasible within the context of their existing leadership programming?
Virtues Aligned to PSEL (2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VIRTUE</th>
<th>PSELSTANDARD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WORK PURPOSE</td>
<td>STANDARD : Mission, Vision, and Core Values (1c)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Curriculum,Instruction, and Assessment (4k:a)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Community of Care and Support for Students (1b,d)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Professional Capacity of School Personnel (8k)</td>
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<td>STANDARD : Professional Community for Teachers and Staff (7e)</td>
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<td>STANDARD : Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community (5b)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HUMILITY</td>
<td>STANDARD : Mission, Vision, and Core Values (1c)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Equity and Culture-Responsiveness (5g)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Community of Care and Support for Students (1f)</td>
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<td>STANDARD : Professional Capacity of School Personnel (8d)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community (5c,f)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Operations and Management (9g)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FORGIVENESS</td>
<td>STANDARD : Ethics and Professional Norms (2d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Equity and Culture-Responsiveness (5d)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Operations and Management (9d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRATITUDE</td>
<td>STANDARD : Professional Capacity of School Personnel (8g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Professional Community for Teachers and Staff (7g,h)</td>
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<tr>
<td>COURAGE</td>
<td>STANDARD : Ethics and Professional Norms (2f)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Equity and Culture-Responsiveness (5e)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community (5b,e)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : School Improvement (1d)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMPOWERMENT</td>
<td>STANDARD : Mission, Vision, and Core Values (1f)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Equity and Culture-Responsiveness (5b)</td>
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<td>STANDARD : School Improvement (1d,e)</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEWARDSHIP</td>
<td>STANDARD : Mission, Vision, and Core Values (1d)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Equity and Culture-Responsiveness (5a)</td>
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<td>STANDARD : Operations and Management (9d)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUTURE-MINDEDNESS</td>
<td>STANDARD : Mission, Vision, and Core Values (1a)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : Operations and Management (9c)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STANDARD : School Improvement (1d,c)</td>
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Question 1: YES
Question 2 & 3: Pilots

• Relevance and Acceptability Pilots
  – Informal Educational Org Leaders Workshops
    • Partnership with EdCollabitat
    • Three 2-hour “virtue” workshops (Purpose, Foresight, Courage)
  – Boys and Girls Club
    • State-wide District and Club Manager Training
    • Two 2-hour Servant Leadership Workshops
  – Leadership for Equity Course
    • Eight 4-hour in-person sessions (n=16)
Pilot Three: Ed Admin 6071
Leadership for Equity

Course Description: First course in the Ed Admin Masters program. Exploration of the concepts of educational leadership. Identifying those leadership qualities that students have and those they need to develop.

Texts:

Christopher Emdin (2016) For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood and the Rest of Y'all Too
Pilot Three: Ed Admin 6071
Leadership for Equity: Cultivating Servant Leader Virtues

- **Students:**
  - 16 Full Time Educators: 10 Teachers, 5 Instructional Coaches, 1 Dean of Students;
  - 5 Charter, 1 Parochial, 10 Traditional Public; K-12
  - 15 Female Students; 6 African American; 2 Hispanic; 6 White
  - 1 African American Male Student;
In Class (5:00-8:45) Activities:
- Community Building (15 minutes)
- Speaker (45 to 60 minutes)
  - Q&A; reflection time (15 minutes)
- Virtue Discussion (45 minutes)
- Dilemmas/Scenarios (45 minutes)
- Discussion of Readings (15 minutes)
- Group Thank You Card to the Speaker
Pilot Three: Ed Admin 6071 Leadership for Equity (cont.)

- **Out-of-Class Activities (Canvas or email):**
  - CoTeaching Teams of 2 Curate a Virtue Playlist (Co-gen)
  - 250 word reactions to all classmates’ Playlists
  - 2 Ed Leadership related blog post responses (Diane Ravitch blog or other equity focused blog)
  - 750 word Ed Leadership Philosophy
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 The syllabus clearly expressed the goals, expectations, and the nature of the course.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q2 Information was available so I could track my academic performance during the semester.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q3 This course expanded my analytical thinking, my technical skills, my creativity, my knowledge, and/or my competence.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<td>Q4 Organization and sequencing of course.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<td>Q5 Achievement of stated educational objectives.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q6 Interest and enthusiasm in the subject.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q7 Ability to create a desire to learn.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q8 Ability to stimulate critical thinking.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9 The instructor of this course has given me adequate ways to contact him or her, via e-mail, phone, discussion board, office hours, or appointment time</td>
<td>4.00</td>
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Twitter.com/ccc_umsl
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bierm@umsl.edu
Who was your best leader? Why?

Supportive
Kind
Honest
Collaborative
Listened
Correlational Relationships

- A systematic Review by Parris and Peachey (2013) found 22 high quality published studies.
  - Servant Leaders scored higher on measures of trust, empathy, integrity, competence and agreeableness.
  - The followers of Servant Leaders had higher commitment to their leader, higher self-efficacy, higher customer orientations, higher in and out of role behaviors, higher job satisfaction, more organizational citizenship behaviors, higher creative behaviors, less job stress, less turnover intention, and less burnout.
  - Strong relationships between Servant Leadership and higher organizational commitment, organizational trust, performance expectations, team interdependence, team psychological safety, and perceptions of procedural justice.
  - Tang, Kwan, Zhang & Zhu (2015) found servant leader employees experienced less emotional exhaustion and work-to-family conflict (WFC) and higher levels of personal learning and work-to-family positive spillover (WFPS).
  - Hayden (2011) and Lemoine (2015) have both found support for the central claim of servant leadership – that servant leadership reproduces itself in followers.
Project Background

- Youth Empowerment in Action (YEA!)
- Leadership Academy in Character Ed. (LACE)
- Cultivating Virtue: Servant Leadership for Educators (funded by the John Templeton Foundation)
  - SL Pilots
Forgiveness Reflection

• The value of forgiveness hit home for me this week. In the district I work in, staffing changes can and do occur during the 5th week of school. I was relocated from 8th grade English Language Arts to 7th grade Social Studies. The students I have inherited have been without a steady teacher for 5 weeks.

• In many of the educational environments which we serve, there is pain. This pain is present in staff, students, and families. It comes from disappointment, unmet expectations, trauma, and failures both personal and professional. Often this pain is generational and has been woven into the identity of the institution. Forgiveness as defined throughout these resources would allow families and staff to name, validate, and move away from that pain. In his video, Fred Luskin talks about forgiveness as “acceptance without prejudice” and being “willing to give the next moment a chance”. This is an incredibly difficult mindset to hold, but I can see how the attitude would transform relationships within a school building, particularly parent-administrator relationships and student-facing disciplinary policies. If we messaged to students and families that every day was fresh, that they were welcomed and accepted and that they belonged no matter what, we could begin to repair the damage done to families and communities by punitive and judgmental policies and procedures of the past. In the Circle Processes summary, the author speaks about the ability for circles to remind participants of their interconnectedness and interdependency.
Forgiveness Reflection

Upon learning about the characteristics of a servant leader, I knew forgiveness would be the most difficult for me. I value and expect integrity of those around me and never forget when an incident occurs that lacks integrity on an individual’s behalf. I find it easier to forgive students, as at this point they are by-products of their circumstances, where they have little to no influence over. My difficulty comes with respect to adults. I find it, truly, a difficult process to forgive adults for their behaviors. While reading the given definition of forgiveness, I expanded upon my definition of forgiveness to include “you do not gloss over or deny the seriousness of the offense”, but rather allow yourself the remove the burden of the offense, so that you can “release the feeling of resentment”¹.

 .......... Sister Circles take place for various reasons, which are but not limited to: address a fight in the classroom, an event such as the Verdict from the Stockley Trial, to address classroom environment issues, repair teacher-student relations, repair student to students’ relationships, parent-school relationships and teacher-staff relationships. These Sister Circles are often facilitated by the classroom teacher unless the circle was called to address teacher-student relations. Then an objective third party from the administration team can be called on to facilitate².

I have also had very strong emotions shared during a Sister Circle after a fight has occurred in a class. With the perpetrators listening, students are able to voice fear, concern and anger in regards to the incident that occurred during class time. The perpetrators start to understand that their actions affect everyone in the class and the consequences go far beyond ISS or OSS. Sister Circles allow participants to share feelings that allow for forgiveness, so that the learning environment can continue to function as it should
As a teacher, I have had plenty of moments when I have asked for my student’s forgiveness because I jumped to conclusions without listening first or because I became impatient with a student when they forgot their homework one day.

The list of quotes reminded me that I forgive not for the sake of the other person, but so I can move past the issue that we had and prioritize what matters: student well-being and achievement. In a school, teachers work with a wide variety of adults (such as other teachers, administrators, parents, and community partners) on a consistent basis and are expected to collaborate on lesson plans or school projects. Since our motivation of consistently improving varies from teacher to teacher, collaborating with another teacher that has broken your trust is nearly impossible unless one person forgives the action. For the sake of my students I know that I need to forgive my colleagues when our philosophy of education clashes in order to build relationships not out of fear but out of empathy and understanding.
While forgiveness is an incredibly powerful word that can be defined, how it is acted out looks incredibly different, yet surprisingly the same, in different arenas of life. Just this morning, I listened to a sermon at my church on forgiveness. Williams states “Forgiveness is rarely discussed or formally woven into a company’s culture.” I very much agree with this statement as I’ve never heard of the trait of forgiveness being a sought after trait as a leader in a school. But, in thinking about a leader (or principal) that I would like to become, or one I would admire now, I fully appreciate the quality of forgiveness. Williams also states, “We believe one of the reasons our people stay at our company is that they know that when they make mistakes, we will help them overcome and learn new skills to avoid making the same mistake.” (Williams, 2015) A strong leader (principal) should create this type of environment that allows freedom to learn from mistakes without the fear of long standing negative feelings. I also cannot forget that we are in the business of kids. Katy Hutchison, in her TEDx talk, “Restorative Practices to Resolve Conflict/Build Relationships”, states “...forgiveness teaches kids to maintain relationships.” (Hutchison, 2013) We must never forget that we are role models for each and every kid we see every day. If we fail to forgive, what are we teaching the future generation? “Forgiveness carries with it compassion, humility, and gratitude, which are good things for creating positive outcomes.” (Williams, 2015) What better qualities do we want for our students to have? As leaders we must be what we want our future to be.