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**“Emerging Models of Leadership Development:
How Can Women Leverage Their Experiences
for Professional and Personal Growth?”**

Women in Education Leadership

March 4, 2018

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Good morning. What a beautiful Sunday morning! This is the third year in a row that I have had the pleasure of being part of this Women in Education Leadership institute, and I am delighted to be here once again to talk about developing leadership skills.

First of all I want to thank Deborah Jewell-Sherman for inviting me to join the faculty for this program. and I am delighted to be included in this illustrious group of noted professionals and experts.

Secondly, I want to congratulate all of you for being accepted to participate in this prestigious program.

Harvard University is our nation’s oldest institution of higher learning—many would say it is our finest—and it has been preparing America’s leaders for almost 400 years. The Graduate School of Education, which celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2020, created the first doctoral program in Education in our country, and remains one of the premier graduate schools in education in the world. You are indeed fortunate to be able to have the opportunity to learn and grow within these walls.

We are also fortunate to have such a diverse, representative group of women leaders in education with us. There are K-12 and higher education representatives from Washington State, from Tennessee and Los Angeles, from New Mexico, Ohio and Connecticut. There are even women here from Australia, Canada, and Brazil. The rich diversity of knowledge and experience represented in the room today is going to serve us well over the next few days—moments like these are a gift to us all!

Last year, I spent my time speaking on the “Five Levels of Leadership” as defined by leadership and management expert John Maxwell. Dr. Maxwell’s book focused on the perspective of individual leaders and how they benefit from self-examination as they progress through their careers. It was an interesting topic for me to research, and the feedback I received indicated that last year’s participants found the topic to be of value. However, I want to take a very different tack today.

Changes in society—in this country and abroad—are dramatically changing our workplaces. As a result, how we conduct our work and the leadership skills needed to be successful are changing. We still need to manage our organizations. We still must meet goals and expectations. However, as more work is performed in teams and the workplace becomes more collaborative, leadership is being seen not as a symbol of position, power and authority, but as a skill set that we need to nurture in all members of our organizations.

That means your roles as leaders needs to change, even as you still possess and practice the personal qualities of leadership.

I had each of you conduct a personal leadership skills inventory before the conference. The form you were given asked you to rate your own mastery of competencies that included

Empathetic Listening, Values-Based Behavior, Self-Reflection, Managing Change/Conflict, Emotional Leadership, Promoting Team Effectiveness, and using Data to Drive Decisions.

In the readings you were given, in Chapter Two of the Handbook of Leadership Development, McCauley, Rudeman and Velsor talked about using real-time experiences at your place of work to refine these skills. The authors called the first level of leadership maturity “Mastery,” and each of you has mastered these skills to varying degrees.

In Chapter 7, the authors also talked about how to lead in times of conflict and change, pointing to the need for leaders to adapt their leadership skills to the challenges at hand. They called that level of leadership “Versatility.”

Today’s team-based workplace requires that you exercise the third level of leadership as defined in your readings — “Transfer.” How can you take your own leadership skills and amplify them throughout your team structures and entire organization?

To set the stage for exercising your leadership in this new collaborative, team-based workplace model, let me step back and quickly describe the shift in leadership development programs.

In the traditional model of developing leaders, the presumption was that leaders are people with a predisposition to lead. They have character, courage, integrity, vision.

If we give them the support and leadership training they need, they will hone their collaborative skills, communication skills, and organizational skills, growing as professionals and advancing their organizations.

Growing such leaders has traditionally been the function of fairly structured programs. One classic example of this “leader development” model are the leadership programs sponsored by chambers of commerce across our nation. In this model, emerging leaders from various organizations—private sector businesses, government agencies, nonprofits, and educational institutions—come together in a central location for a full day of instruction once a month, using case studies to gain mastery of leadership concepts and styles. They then return to their home organizations with an enhanced skills set and the potential for transferring their new knowledge.

How many of you have participated in such a program? Raise your hands.

Another example of leader development are shorter-term workshops, seminars and institutes such as this Women in Education Leadership institute at Harvard. They bring together professionals of like minds, people with similar backgrounds and occupations—leaders who share professional interests, areas of expertise and common problems. Focused topics are explored, insights gained, and skills are enhanced. In addition to this institute, **how many of you have participated in other similar short-term leadership seminars, conferences, and institutes? Raise your hands.**

A third method for developing leadership skills is to bring self-contained leadership programs into your organization, including online courses and certifications, programs such as Stephen Covey’s “Principle-Centered Leadership” program, and other professional development opportunities. **How many of you have participated in such a program? Raise your hands.**

All of these structured interventions have value. They have been responsible for enhancing the skills and competence of thousands of men and women over the years. **It’s time to amplify that learning, and transfer your knowledge to a broader, team-based approach** — where leadership becomes a common skill set promoted across your organization.

Let’s step back for a moment to appreciate **why** our work lives are increasingly made up of task forces, cross-functional teams and project-based committees.

For one thing, technology has reduced the constraints of time and distance to the point where groups are finding it easier to work together — even remotely. Collaboration is also critical in today’s workplace as the systems we manage become increasingly complex.

The wave of globalization and democratic social and political systems referenced in Chapter 8 of your readings also has its implications for the workplace, where hierarchical systems in business and government are being replaced by more participatory models.

Within this context, today’s new leadership development theory is based on the understanding that leadership must be developed within an organization, not outside of it. Everyone in today’s modern organization needs to possess and practice leadership.

Don’t we want our organizations—across the board—to have employees and members who possess integrity and values? Courage? Inquisitiveness? Organizational skills? A willingness to be accountable. People who work well with each other, possess strong communication skills, and are goal-oriented and committed to each other and the organization. People who can manage change and use data to drive group decisions.

How can you as leaders grow leadership skills across your organizations? How can you grow the leadership capacity of individuals, of work teams, of cross-functional teams, of everyone on your campus, in your school, or across your organization? I would also ask, since we are in the business of teaching upcoming generations of professionals and citizen leaders, how can we teach leadership skills to students?

What I want to focus on are some very specific strategies you can use to **amplify** a shared leadership model across your organization in real time and in the context of the teams who work with you and for you.

In the current literature on team-based leadership development, I have found three ideas I want to share with you. These three concepts parallel one of the major mnemonics found in your readings; perhaps you recall the “DAC,” or Direction, Alignment and Commitment model.

Each of the three parameters I want to share with you — Social Capital, Shared Mental Models, and Group Decision-Making—has implications for you as a leader and as a coach, sponsor or team member in the emerging team-based workplace.

Social Capital.

Your readings discussed the importance of individual leaders being **Committed** to their organization’s mission and people. Within a team structure, social capital is all about building trust. Trust between two members of a team. Trust across the team. Trust between the team and the broader organization.

Trust is the foundation of all relationships. You cannot move forward without it. You cannot plan a common future, you cannot implement change, and you cannot manage conflict or make decisions of any import without trust.

Think of what happens without an atmosphere of trust within a team. So often — and this is true in our classrooms as well — we get a mixture of people who speak up and end up dominating the conversation, and others who never say a word. The first group has no capacity to listen, and the latter group doesn’t trust that they will be heard.

Or worse, no one says anything — a total lack of discussion. Perhaps the worst case is when trust goes backwards, where attempts to critique ideas are seen as personal criticisms, and the group essentially shuts down.

Let's switch the conversation to the positive. When we take time to develop trust and build social capital within a team, people have faith that ideas are advanced for the good of the team and organization, not just for the good of the individual advancing the idea.

Team members have confidence that a critique of ideas is just that—asking questions so that we can arrive at a better answer, a better solution. In such a team environment, no one takes it personally.

How can you promote social capital among your team and across your organization? It begins with demonstrating your own vulnerability and emotional engagement. Being part of the team — a fellow human being — goes a long way towards breaking down barriers. As a coach and sponsor of teams within your organization, you can actively work to promote two-way communications, 360 feedback, and other means of connecting people and growing relationships. You can actively promote a culture of inclusion and empowerment. And most importantly, we need to ensure the psychological safety of the members of our teams. No one should fear to speak up.

Shared Mental Models.

In the readings, the authors stressed the importance of having a sense of **Direction** and an **Alignment** with organizational goals. Before you can build shared mental models and organizational alignment, you need to create social capital and a culture of trust. Once you do that, you can begin to develop goals and systems.

“Mental models” can be shared goals, a shared vision, or a set of shared ideas on how to tackle a problem. In your own organization, what “mental models” are shared within your work team? Across the organization? Do you have a mission or purpose statement that is a living document, as opposed to words in a book on a shelf somewhere? Do you have a set of core values that you articulate and attempt to emulate each day? Do you have a strategic plan that serves as the blueprint for your core enterprise? Do you refer back to the plan frequently and develop metrics and assessment measures to hold you and your team accountable?

Do you develop systematic, data-driven approaches to solving problems and then test and modify your processes as they are implemented against the light of day? Do you have a common, unifying focus on your core enterprise?

As a leader, you have a special role to play in creating mental models in your organization. You can facilitate group processes to come to consensus on a shared vision and goals. You can help create a values-based culture that helps to unify your organization around a singular focus. You can make sure that your planning documents are living entities, where you use frequent assessments as a constant check on your processes. And you can coach and sponsor teams by defining their mandates and helping them navigate organizational boundaries.

Group Decision-Making.

How often have you been a member of a team — not the leader or facilitator — and watched with horror as one person makes an uninformed decision that you and the rest of the team must live with. You weren't consulted, your years of hard-earned experience weren't leveraged, your expertise wasn't part of the calculation. Or perhaps a few people — not just one — make all the decisions. It's not a very empowering portrait.

Let's flip that picture to the positive. Think of a situation where you were the leader, or you were a member of a team that had an empowering leader, where everyone was consulted, all

ideas pursued, and a group decision was reached that reflected the best thoughts among the group. Those are decisions that we can feel part of, and directions we can truly buy into.

Think of your own organizations and examples where you were able to solve real problems by gathering data, considering the options, and working together on making an informed decision that everyone is responsible for and carries out as a team.

As a leader, there are a number strategies you can implement to support group decision-making. First of all, you need to define the boundaries for a group's decision-making authority. Some areas of your enterprise — human resources and budgets come to mind — must still be management's domain. At the same time, you need to encourage and protect group decisions. Do you reward group success? As a team sponsor and facilitator, you also need to think about and develop strategies to ensure that all team members participate in the decisions of the group.

Chapter 7 of your readings spent some time talking about how to lead in times of change. How can working within the three parameters of team-based leadership that I have just described help you in managing change and conflict?

Enhancing Social Capital, buy in, and commitment will result in a more cohesive, more resilient organization and help individuals in your organization overcome fear and distrust. Think of it as “rowing together.” Building Shared Mental Models — common goals and action plans — will help you to “row in the same direction.” And growing the ability of teams to make Group Decisions will help your organization reduce the risk of making difficult choices in times of uncertainty.

Let me stop there. It's time for me to turn the room over to you. We have two exercises for you to do in small groups, and I think you are going to enjoy both of them.

Hopefully they will spawn some ideas on how to build commitment among your people by growing the social capital of your teams; how to achieve direction and alignment through developing shared mental models; and how to use group decision-making to manage crisis and change.

First of all, we have a set of photographs of women leaders. I would ask each of you to look them over and select a photograph one that resonates with you. In your groups, you have 15 minutes to share why you picked that person and the emotion the photo evoked in you.

When the time for this exercise is up, I will describe exercise #2.

Exercise #2: Your readings talked about growing leadership skills within real-life settings, and how to use your leadership skills to manage change and conflict.

Here is your opportunity to mimic your own work settings by working together to come up with team leadership strategies. Keeping in mind my discussion of a new leadership paradigm, where leadership is a set of attributes that can be refined and nurtured in each member of your organization, I want each group to select a current or anticipated challenge, conflict or change that one of your organizations is experiencing, and then develop—as a team!—a set of strategies you could use to (1) Build Social Capital through trust-building and improved communications, (2) Develop Shared Mental Models to support collective direction and alignment, or (3) Take advantage of opportunities to engage in Group Decision-Making. You have 30 minutes to complete this exercise. **(Depending on the number of small groups, we will split them up and have each group take of the three discussion points.)**

(BACK TO ELSA)

Earlier I posed the question of how we can use our positions as educators to teach leadership skills to our students.

All of us are watching as the newest generation of tomorrow's leaders has taken center stage. I am referring to the student leaders of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, where the most recent school shootings took place, and the national #NeverAgain movement that they have launched. I don't want to engage in the politics of the gun control debate today, but what is happening is a powerful case study of team leadership unfolding on an unprecedented scale.

In less than three weeks, millions of teenagers are going to rally across our nation as part of "March For our Lives" on March 24. Everything about this movement is amazing to witness — from the articulate, passionate yet controlled leadership of the student leaders in Parkland, to the ability they have to mobilize their entire generation. They have sufficient social capital—sight unseen—to intuitively trust each other, even as they lack trust in the adults who are supposed to protect them. They have a simple shared mental model—they want their schools to be safe — and they are making decisions together that defy the traditional order. They have no organization, no direct mailing campaign, no telephone banks, no public opinion polls—all the trappings of conventional political movements.

Yet they have taken over the media conversation, they are leading a successful effort to boycott the NRA, they are organizing a national event, and they are already targeting politicians who don't support them.

We shouldn't be surprised. **This is the generation we are teaching to work and study together**, using FaceTime, Skype, Google Docs and other means. They juggle five different digital devices at a time and are wired together in cyberspace.

They play computer games with strangers across the globe. It's a village without streets, a nation without borders. And they are totally comfortable living in it.

Even as we watch this current set of events, I want to remind you that today's youth still need our guidance. Despite this current focus on an urgent social issue, the data is clear that most teenagers are focused on their economic future. We have told them they won't have the same standard of living as their parents, and they are not willing to accept that. Getting a job after college is their number one goal. We need to help them balance their economic interests with quality of life issues. We need to help them learn how to channel their passion so that they can be citizen leaders throughout their lives, including times when the media isn't watching. And we need to help them pass through the door into adulthood. Despite how articulate these kids sound sometimes, they are still . . . kids.

I want to end with a short video—with peaceful, uplifting music in the background—to leave you with some inspirational thoughts. This video reminds me that leaders—at the helm of an organization or out in the field—are known for their courage, their vision, their humor and humility, their willingness to learn and to teach, and their willingness to trust their people. I look forward to hearing how all of you use this weekend's conversations to advance your own leadership skills and the leadership culture in your organizations. Let's watch the video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLXDknPhU1c>