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Leadership Essay

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*“A leader sees things through the eyes of his followers. He puts himself in their shoes and makes their dreams come true…He does not walk behind with a whip; he is out in front with a banner.”*

*~Wilferd Peterson*

I have found myself coming back to this is quote time and again over the past three years. This statement depicts the kind of leader that I aim to become. As a girl that grew up in a small farming community, I was given many opportunities to lead and learn how to be a successful leader. Through my experiences, I have come to understand that I am an introverted individual, but after this class I have come to believe even more strongly that being introverted does not discredit my leading abilities. The quizzes that I have taken in the past month have also made me evaluate more closely my assets and style as a leader. There are many facets through which leadership can be viewed and this is introversion is only one of the many. Introversion has helped me become a stronger leader and there are other benefits of having those experiences in many situations that leaders are expected to act in.

When evaluating an inverted individual, it is usually true that this person spends time evaluating their situation and the people around them. This allows the leader to create an action plan that is best suited to the situation and personnel. Personally, this is similar to my style of leading. I prefer to evaluate the situation and gather information before leading others, but sometimes this is not possible. In some situations, there is not time to evaluate before going ahead and this skill of reacting quickly to change is something that I wish to improve in myself. As I said before, there are many facets through which leadership styles can be viewed and a leader who “…sees things through the eyes of his followers…”(Peterson) has a greater chance of connecting with their followers and inspiring them to be engaged at work. The book *Strengths Based Leadership*, used survey results to state that workers in organizations that focused on their strengths were more likely to be engaged in their work. Leaders who take the time to learn and understand their followers have greater chance to succeed and focus on their group’s strengths.

My tactics of analyzing a situation and taking great care in making decisions are why *Strengths Based Leadership* and its associated quiz concluded that I am a learner and that I lead with deliberation. Individuals that lead with deliberation “…inspire trust because [they] are cautious and considerate…”(Rath & Conchie 151) when they are handling difficult situations. The relationships between a leader and those that they lead is very important and it is one skill that I want to strengthen during my time here at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

In order to obtain that goal, I want to get involved early on campus. In the spring semester I plan to sign up to be an ELEI tutor to gain cultural experience in an educational setting. At this point in time, I am looking at volunteering as a tutor in Ecuador to accomplish the same goal of gaining experience in making connections across a language or cultural barrier. I want to be able to make meaningful connections with anyone that I help, teach, volunteer with, or lead. With my style of leadership, I want people to follow me because of the things that I make happen. I want to be followed because I can bring others up to their potential and inspire them to go beyond it.

Inspire has been my motto for the past 3 years as an upperclassman in high school and now as a college freshman because that is what I want to be: an inspiration. In my future career as a teacher, I want to inspire my students to strive for success, whether it be in math or another subject that they find interesting. The relationships that I form with them have to be strong enough for them to want that for themselves. Our relationship is the critical piece that determines if they believe me when I give them praise or suggestions for improvement, and all of these dreams are what is pushing me to become involved now and make the most of this opportunity I have earned.

Being a strong leader can sometimes be a challenge. Some may see being introverted and a leader at the same time also as a challenge, but I believe that this is what makes me valuable in my roles. The ability for a leader to see “…things through the eyes of his followers…”(Peterson) is crucial to the relationships that make any team successful. This ability is also what can cross barriers constructed through cultural differences. As a future teacher, I aim to inspire those that follow me and be the one “…out in front with a banner”(Peterson).

Works Cited

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