

who's next?

“Good management begins with good people”

by Dennis Vicars

Every owner, CEO, President, District Manager, Center Director, Assistant Director, Lead Teacher (have I missed anyone?) is going to leave someday. In fact, every present job within your organization, including yours, will some day be replaced with a new person. With that being said, what are you doing to ensure that your organization, whether one school or a multi-unit organization has a pipeline with well



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trained leaders prepared for their next opportunity? There is nothing more important to an organization than who its leaders are now and in the future. In fact, show me who the leader is, whether for-profit or non-profit, public or private and I, like you, can very quickly ascertain whether the operation is well run with a successful program for young children.

The first step in moving forward is the recognition that a succession plan is necessary from top to bottom. Turning recognition into action has been a major stumbling block to many companies and will hinder a one school operation, as well as a multiple-site organization. There is a lesson why many major companies like 3M, Kodak, Boeing, and Starbucks have stalled while year after year, GE, Pepsi, and Intel have continued to produce great products and positive growth. Your school is no different. Good leaders must be recognized, trained, rewarded, and prepared for their next position.

The action part of a leadership succession plan begins with recognition of the future organizational needs and prospective participants. What I propose is a “Leadership in Training” (LIT) program which assures a constant

flow of leadership candidates within your organization. Assuming you already have the appropriate leaders in place, it's now time to choose your future champions.

The LIT program should be an annual program consisting of nine monthly trainings, adjusting for summer and holidays, which consists of 2-3 hours of actual training. These trainings are usually in the evening with the understanding that the site supervisor must allow the LIT candidate practice time and mentoring during the actual school/center day. Candidates to the program are nominated by their supervisor based on observed leadership abilities. Once recognized, candidates must apply for LIT training which includes a written expose as to: 1) why they would make a quality LIT trainee, 2) what they would contribute to the classes, and 3) what they would hope to achieve from the trainings. Selection is then based on ‘non-political’ objectives by a panel of owner, directors, or some present leadership group within your organization. Chosen candidates understand clearly the following mandates:

- * There is no guarantee of a future leadership position.

- * Attendance is expected and active participation a must.
- * A participant can be asked to leave the program at any time based on their observable lack of commitment.

The actual trainings are done by you and your present leadership staff. What a great opportunity for you and your leadership staff to display the reasons why you are in the leadership position you are presently occupying. These LIT sessions also assist in bonding your staff and gaining an appreciation for the role of leadership.

The following represents a sample LIT 9-month program. A different agenda might work better for your unique needs. The key is to systematically initiate a well thought out plan of leadership training so that your organization is always and forever capable of producing superior results in

a seamless superior fashion regardless of who is in a leadership role.

Unit 1: *Leadership Style and Methodology* — What is your personal make-up pros/cons?

Unit 2: *Situational Leadership Training* — Team goal attainment and success.

Unit 3: *Marketing and Outreach* — Demographics/research for “our school/center.”

Unit 4: *Marketing/PR* — The “how to do it.”

Unit 5: *Education Programmatic Philosophy and Curriculum* — What are we and why?

Unit 6: *Educational Program Implementation, Training, and Guidance* — Classroom level execution.

Unit 7: *Finance* — Overview, budgeting, and planning.

Unit 8: *Human Relations* — A to Z (laws, hiring, firing, paperwork, and protocols).

Unit 9: *Vision and Strategy* — Open discussion from team projects.

All units have a required out of classroom assignment and projects with other trainees. Using one to three leadership/management books for reading throughout the year is an interesting way to begin each session. The key is to get something moving which constantly gives you a procession of leader candidates.

As a former boss once told me, “If you want to be promoted, you’d better start training your successor.” Good advice!