

THE 5 COMMITMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERS

FRANK SICCONA

1. Commit to being responsible. As Winston Churchill said, “The price of greatness is responsibility.” Don’t just accept responsibility but embrace it, and challenge others to do the same. I know of no other way to achieve greatness.

2. Commit to acting with integrity. You cannot lead if you are not trusted. For others to trust you, they need to know they can count on you. Deliver on your promises. Keep your agreements. Demonstrate that your word is good. Hold others accountable for doing what they said they would do. I know of no better way to reduce the drama and dysfunction in organizations, and to create a safe and sane learning environment.

3. Commit to doing what it takes to achieve your goals. Being a school leader is hard. So is being a teacher. So is being a student. There are many good reasons why goals set don’t get met. Obstacles abound. Remember, you can have what you want in life, or you can have the excuses why you don’t. If adults can’t overcome adversity to achieve the success they envision, what hope do students have?

4. Commit to inspiring and instituting improvement in teaching and learning. Every teacher is in a position to have a positive impact on the life and learning of many students. Whether they have the capacity to do so is—to a great deal—up to you. How much of your day is spent monitoring the quality of teaching and learning? What else are you doing instead that is of greater importance?

5. Commit to balancing your idealism with a daily dose of reality. The French writer, René Daumal wrote: “Keep your eye fixed on the path to the top, but don’t forget to look right in front of you. The last step depends on the first. Don’t think you’re there just because you see the summit. Watch your footing, be sure of the next step, but don’t let that distract you from the highest goal. The first step depends on the last.” Being an effective leader requires both a vision of a better future, as well as a plan for achieving it.

If you want to know how great a leader you are, turn around and see who’s following. If you are not impressed, then honor the above commitments, and check again in a few months.