

# The Importance of Confronting Behavior That Violates Purpose and Priorities

“Day after day in schools across America, change initiatives, instructional improvement, and better results for children are blocked, sabotaged, or killed through silence and inaction . . . this lack of follow-through results from the avoidance or inability to face conflict openly.” (Saphier, 2005, p. 37)

The need to confront resistance is “one of the toughest truths of change in school” (Evans, 2001, p. 276) because “confrontation forms a matching bookend with clarity and focus” (p. 288).

“Leaders must care enough to confront. Many people avoid confrontation. Others are afraid confrontation will make things worse by creating anger and resentment in the person they confront. When a person’s behavior is inappropriate, avoiding confrontation always worsens the situation.” (Maxwell, 1995, p. 125)

“Leaders who don’t have the courage to force team members to step up to the requirements of teamwork . . . would be wiser to avoid the concept altogether.” (Lencioni, 2003, p. 39)

“If you are unwilling to go to the mat when people violate a core value (such as giving their best effort), that value loses its moral force in the organization. On the other hand, you send a powerful message about your values when you hold people accountable.” (Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan, & Switzler, 2008, p. 216)

“A principal’s seeming willingness to tolerate both incompetence and a lack of commitment within the faculty undermines his relational trust with parents, community leaders, and his own teachers.” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 53)

“At the beginning of the change process, adults at featured schools were obliged to cooperate for change even before they believed that success would be the result. Nonetheless, core groups of leaders used their positional authority and their personal influence to engage colleagues in professional learning activities. There were confrontations, and there were courageous conversations. The biggest breakthroughs in reduced resistance came with ‘seeing-is-believing’ experiences. . . . Ultimately, trust and success win hearts and minds. But it is the sense of responsibility among a small group of leaders, their hard work and their determination not to be put off by resistance that builds the trust and wins the initial successes.” (Ferguson, Hackman, Hanna, & Ballantine, 2009, p. 32)

“Persuasion, consensus building, and all the other arts of influence don’t always do the job. Sometimes it simply comes down to using the power or one’s position to get people to act. A common failing of leaders from supervisors to top executives is the failure to be emphatically assertive when necessary.” (Goleman, 1998, p. 190)