

The Eagle Institute Links Leadership, Negotiation, and History



In 1787, some of the greatest minds in history met in Philadelphia to shape a new country. These leaders came from varied backgrounds and held vastly different outlooks. Imagine the wide variety of perspectives that these men brought to the table, including

lawyer Alexander Hamilton from New York; New Jersey mercantilist Oliver Ellsworth; planter John Rutledge from South Carolina; Hugh Williamson, a land speculator from North Carolina; Judge John Blair of Virginia; and ship builder John Langdon from New Hampshire.

Yet together, they crafted one of the most powerful documents ever written: The U. S. Constitution.

In July 2012, great minds once again descended on Philadelphia—leaders in their own right who are committed to shaping our future by helping provide a quality education to our nation’s young people. They traveled from across North America for the 2012 ASBO Eagle Institute, a powerful professional development opportunity focused on developing leadership skills among school business officials.

The theme of this annual event, which is sponsored by AXA Equitable, was The Leader as Negotiator. The four-day program wove leadership, law, history, education, and management topics into a broad look at new and innovative negotiation strategies for education leaders.

Leadership and Negotiations

The participants gained a deeper understanding of their many leadership roles at a session lead by Jeff McCausland, Ph.D., a retired colonel with the U.S. Army and founder/CEO of Diamond6 Leadership and Strategy. McCausland explained that all leaders lead in four directions. They lead their bosses, employers, peers, and themselves.

It’s important that leaders understand leadership styles and other factors such as culture change, generational gaps, different reporting relationships, wellness, and effective communication principles that shape how they interact with others, McCausland explained. By recognizing the important elements of each

of these roles and the leadership skills required for success, school business officials can lead more confidently and be more valuable assets to their districts.

Negotiation Concepts and Skills for Leaders was next on the agenda. Nancy Welsh, J.D., professor of law at Dickenson School of Law, Pennsylvania State University, guided participants through the different approaches to negotiation, the importance of preparation, and the significance of negotiation styles. Participants also discussed the role of mediators in the negotiation process.

Back in Time

Philadelphia is the ideal city in which to examine negotiations. It was there that the Founding Fathers collaborated in 1776 to sign the Declaration of Independence and in 1787 to ratify the Constitution.

With that in mind, it was time to travel back to 1787, when the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met at Independence Hall. Richard R. Beeman, Ph.D., John Welsh Centennial Professor of History Emeritus in the University of Pennsylvania Department of History, guided participants through an examination of the 18th Century context in which the Founding Fathers carried out their deliberation and the individual and collective leadership styles represented among them.

The history lesson continued as participants toured Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell Center. Then, after a day of education and discussion, everyone met to reflect on what they learned and how they could apply it to their own leadership, negotiation, and communication challenges. Jeff McCausland facilitated the discussion, which encouraged participants to discuss the most significant insights they gained from their first day of activities.

Organizational Culture and Change

The second day of the Eagle Institute began with an in-depth discussion of organizational culture and change. Jeff McCausland lead the session, which explored how organizations function and how school leaders can align the school district's culture with its mission and vision. Participants learned how they can work effectively within their organization's culture, create and implement a strategic plan to support the mission, manage change successfully, and create a leadership structure that ensures the district will continue to function when the leader is not present.

Participants also discussed strategies to communicate change in ways that promote support and buy-in from members of the organization.

Chris Maxwell, Ph.D., associate director and adjunct professor of management in the Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania, continued the theme of organizational leadership as he led the participants in a

discussion about Building and Leading Effective Organizations Through Positive Psychology. He emphasized that effective leadership is a function of defining a vision and then convincing others to follow the direction you have set.

The participants learned about the critical importance of ethics and character as fundamental aspects of being a “leader of character” and how they can communicate this essential leadership quality to those whom they lead.

Effective Management

How does this all pertain to education and school business officials? The participants explored that question with Michael Johaneck, Ed.D., Senior Fellow at the Graduate School of Education and director of the Mid-Career Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at the University of Pennsylvania. Johaneck, who is also co-director of the Inter-American Educational Leadership Network, shared that education faces a complex and shifting environment in terms of short-term policy changes and social/market pressures, as well as underlying structural shifts—all issues that have potential implications for school business officials.

On Friday, the focus turned to the importance of integrity. Art Athens, director at the Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership at the U. S. Naval Academy encouraged participants to consider the importance of integrity in effective leadership. He discussed strategies for creating integrity within the organization and maintaining personal integrity, especially in challenging circumstances.

On September 11, 2001, heroes and leaders were born from the crisis that might have crippled a weaker society. One hero was Lily Woo, principal at PS 130 Hernando De Soto Elementary School in New York City. Located less than a mile from Ground Zero, PS 130 was greatly affected by the events of that fateful day. Woo shared her experiences of that day, including the importance of relationships, negotiation, and leadership, which helped Woo and her school rebound from the crisis stronger than ever.

In the end, the Eagle Institute offered a unique leadership development opportunity for school business managers—four days of learning, networking, and making connections.

Mark your calendar for the 2013 Eagle Institute, July 16–19, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The theme: The Leader as a Strategist. Visit www.asbointl.org/EagleInstitute in the coming months for additional information.