

Leading the Semi-willing through  
Enlightened Self-interest:  
Strategic Motivation in School  
Settings

New Jersey Association of School Librarians Annual Meeting  
December 1, 2012

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Ward Mitchell Cates

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Disclaimer: Part 1



An expert is someone who...

- \* Within a very narrow field, has made *all* possible mistakes.
- \* Knows a lot about the *past*, but almost nothing about the *present*.
- \* Has more *data* than *judgment*.
- \* Is just knowledgeable enough about what is going on to be frightened.
- \* Learns more and more, about less and less, until he finally knows everything about nothing.

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Disclaimer: Part 2

“Who’s to say who’s an expert?” (Paul Newman)

An Operational Distinction (per W.C. Fields)  
“I am an expert of electricity. My father occupied the chair of applied electricity at the state prison.”

Confirming My Expert Status (per Edwin Meese III)  
“An expert is somebody who is more than 50 miles from home, has no responsibility for implementing the advice he gives, and shows slides.”

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### Who the Heck Am I?



- \* Former special education classroom teacher
  - \* Learning disabled/Emotional-behaviorially Disordered
- \* Former high school English classroom teacher
- \* Former elementary language arts teacher
- \* Former university media specialist
- \* Husband of a former university librarian
  - \* Now an elementary school secretary

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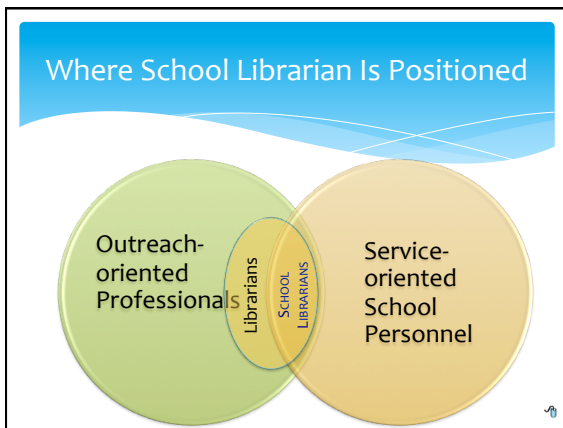
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### My Multiple Roles: How This Presentation Works

-  \* As *designated driver*, I've organized our conversation and will take us from talking point to talking point.
-  \* As "*expert*," at each talking point I will display my ignorance, often through several bullet points.
-  \* As *conductor*, I will then ask you to make suggestions, and correct my most blatant errors.
-  \* As *timekeeper*, I will do my best to keep us moving along so that you are released *promptly* at noon.

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**Guiding Principle**

Having a thoughtful conversation about the ideas is more important than getting to the last slide.

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**GETTING UP TO SPEED / 1**  
**Librarian Skills**

- \* Ability to analyze problems & break them down into manageable tasks
- \* Strong research skills
- \* Effective use of search tools to identify & obtain relevant materials
- \* Acquaintance with wide range of resources appropriate to multiple tasks & needs
- \* Professional training in best practices in librarianship (and often in teaching & learning)
- \* Ability to communicate with wide range of clients, using language appropriate to their level & expertise
- \* Skill in translating what clients say they need into approaches and actual resources
- \* An outreach mindset that looks for ways to extend benefits of library
- \* Cleverness in obtaining resources for library (& school)
- \* **YOUR SUGGESTED ADDITIONS?**

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**GETTING UP TO SPEED / 2**  
**Why the “Semi-willing”?**

1. All of us feel pressures in our jobs. 
2. There are only so many hours in the day. 
3. It is easy to get worn down. 
4. There’s a reason why a single additional straw can break a camel’s back. 
5. The best of intentions can become overwhelmed by the burdens of the day. 

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GETTING UP TO SPEED/ 3  
Assumptions that Can Betray Us

1. School professionals chose their careers out of a dedication to students and that's *all* that really matters to them.
  - \* RELATED: All school personnel are equally dedicated.
  - \* RELATED: School personnel are paid fairly, have job security ... and get summers off!
  - \* RELATED: Management and administration issues are less important to non-administrators.



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GETTING UP TO SPEED / 4  
Assumptions that Can Betray Us

2. School personnel understand & embrace teamwork.
  - \* RELATED: They have experience with effective teams.
  - \* RELATED: They know each others' jobs & responsibilities.
  - \* RELATED: They all pull their own weight when needed.
  - \* DISSONANT DATA:  
"The infighting in education is so vicious because... the stakes are so low."
3. In action, people choose the path of least resistance.
  - \* RELATED: People understand what is easiest.
  - \* RELATED: People behave rationally.
4. YOUR SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL ASSUMPTIONS?



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Disclaimer: Part 3

The idea is not to work you to death or to have you do everyone else's work.



The goal is to explore how your efforts might make others around you more effective, while you do your job.



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### Enlightened Self-Interest Defined

“**Enlightened self-interest** is a philosophy in ethics which states that persons who act to further the interests of others (or the interests of the group or groups to which they belong), ultimately serve their own self-interest.”

- \* Individuals may sacrifice *short-term* interests in order to maximize *long-term* interests (deferred gratification).
- \* They likely do so to achieve or maintain a positive relationship with a group of individuals to whom they relate.

(Wikipedia, 2010)

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### Self-interested Motivation

What **might** school personnel see as *self-interested* benefits?

1. Greater job security/higher pay
2. Reduced workload (particularly if allows them to focus on what they value)
3. Enhanced performance by their students.
4. More effective relationships with parents (particularly “helicopters”)
5. Better protection from “administrative pressure”
6. Greater sense of peer support/team membership
7. Professional/personal growth
8. Greater happiness

Based on: Smith (2011)

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### Leading through Self-interested Motivation: TALKING POINT 1

Greater job security/higher pay

1. Learn how other professional staff are evaluated/rewarded.
2. Help teachers use library-use data to document:
  - \* Increased student performance  
For example, *New Jersey School Library Survey* (2012), *How PA School Libraries Pay Off* (2012), *School Libraries Work!* (2008), and the like
  - \* Best practices in instruction/education  
For example: *LEARN* and the *Construction of Knowledge in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Neuman, 2011) and the like.
3. Consider how to support teachers in garnering new federal merit increase dollars.
4. Check with building administrators to see what kinds of data, in what form, they need to support school performance.
5. **YOUR ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED STRATEGIES?**

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Leading through Self-interested Motivation:  
**TALKING POINT 2**

Reduced workload (increased focus on what they value)

1. Identify what resources teachers need/search for and then facilitate their acquisition of such resources (for instance, how-to guides, resource listings, purchase requests, etc.).
2. Over time, find out what each teacher values most and consider how library services might help teachers focus more on those valued things.
3. Do an informal needs assessment: Where is teacher time being pressured that you could make a difference (without killing yourself)?
4. Identify any redundancy/duplication between what teachers must do and you must do. Consider how might help eliminate overlap.
5. **YOUR ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED STRATEGIES?**




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Leading through Self-interested Motivation:  
**TALKING POINT 3**

Enhanced performance by their students

1. Ask teachers where their students are falling short and why.
2. Find out what content teachers are covering and explore on what basis students will be graded.
3. Determine content areas in which students are expected to prepare reports or presentations.
4. Be proactive in providing/proposing resources, particularly online resources students might use.
5. **YOUR ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED STRATEGIES?**




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Leading through Self-interested Motivation:  
**TALKING POINT 4**

More effective relationships with parents (particularly "helicopters")

1. Explore idea of locating, repurposing or creating "Parent Reports" that talk about what students are learning and how to support their learning.
  - \* Strong focus on libraries and learning resources
2. Consider preparing reading list of helpful readings & resources for teachers in dealing with parents, particularly difficult ones.
  - \* Better yet, consider creating a brief summary of this material, organized around practical tips & strategies for teachers.
3. **ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED STRATEGIES?**



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Leading through Self-interested Motivation:  
**TALKING POINT 5**

Better protection from “administrative pressure”

1. Investigate where teachers and professional staff in your building come under pressure from building administrators and why.
  - \* Identify any ways in which you might support them (strategize, particularly in terms of advance planning).
2. Investigate where building administrators come under pressure from the central office and why.
  - \* Identify any ways in which you might support them (again, strategize)
3. **ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED STRATEGIES?**




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Leading through Self-interested Motivation:  
**TALKING POINT 6**

Greater sense of peer support/team membership

**YOUR TURN!**

1. **WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST?**




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Leading through Self-interested Motivation:  
**TALKING POINT 7**

Professional/personal growth

1. Keep your ears open for your colleagues’ complaints and aspirations. Allow these to help you see where colleagues *might* wish to improve.
  - \* CAUTION: A complaint is not always a cry for self-improvement.
2. Based on what you hear & your own sense of needs, use your research skills to identify helpful professional or personal development resources that might interest your colleagues.
  - \* Consider both improvement and growth, but be careful not to imply deficiency (*pull* versus *push*).
3. **YOUR SUGGESTIONS?**




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Leading through Self-interested Motivation:  
**TALKING POINT 8a**

Being happier

What Makes People Happier:

1. **Appreciation**
2. **Choice**
3. **Sense of control** (self-efficacy)
4. **Focus on strengths**, not weaknesses
5. **Connectedness** with others.
6. **Positive utterances**
7. **Work-life balance** (equal effort in all)
8. **Sense of meaning or purpose** in life.

Based on: Chandra (2011) and Pekelhc (n.d.)

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Leading through Self-interested Motivation:  
**TALKING POINT 8b**

Ways to make people happier through *your* leadership:

1. Provide both structure and freedom.
2. Be open & transparent (listen well; answer Qs; model and explain).
3. Start with the *individual*, not the *task*. (Pay attention to people; care about them individually and let them know you care.)
4. Respect others (politeness, timeliness, responsiveness).
5. Be thankful and share the glory. Praise *publicly* (Criticize *privately*.)
6. Celebrate mistakes (*teachable moment*) but don't dwell on them.
7. Create mutual benefit.
8. **YOUR SUGGESTIONS?**

Based on: Stewart (2010)

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**END/BEGINNING OF CONVERSATION**  
My Contact Information



Ward Cates, Associate Dean and Professor  
College of Education, Lehigh University  
111 Research Drive, Bethlehem, PA 18015



[ward.cates@lehigh.edu](mailto:ward.cates@lehigh.edu)  
Lehigh telephone: 610-758-3249  
PPT note pages: [http://www.lehigh.edu/~wmco/NJASL2012\\_NotePages.pdf](http://www.lehigh.edu/~wmco/NJASL2012_NotePages.pdf)

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