

Ten School Leadership Lessons Inspired by The Godfather

by Christopher Wooleyhand, Ph.D.

The Godfather is arguably one of the best books and movies ever produced. While the violence associated with the film should never be glorified, there are many messages in the movie that can be used to inspire thoughtful leadership in education. My wife, Debbie, and I collaborated to bring you the following ten lessons inspired by the Godfather:

1. "Leave the gun. Take the cannoli."

Leave the hostility. When working with families and staff you will get farther with patience and tact. Give yourself a buffer of time if you feel emotion creeping into your decision-making process.

2. "Someday, and that day may never come, I will call upon you to do a service for me."

This reflects the importance of building a strong community. We should rely on each other- teachers, parents, and the community. Teaching is still a service industry and when we treat it that way our customers truly benefit.

3. "Never tell anybody outside the family what you're thinking again."

A staff should have common goals, a philosophy that drives decision-making. When we speak to parents, we need to speak with one voice. Differences should be handled behind closed doors, when we exit, we should present a united front.

4. "I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse."

School should be a welcome place for all. This includes school staff, children, parents, and families. Strong community schools are the heart of education. We want our schools to be so engaging they can't refuse to come.

5. "Mr. Corleone is a man who insists on hearing bad news immediately."

Ignoring the "bad news" in education keeps us from proactively making changes. Responding in an efficient manner to potential negatives gives us time to react, time to let it sink in, time to strategize, and most importantly, time to respond.

6. "A man who doesn't spend time with his family can never be a real man."

To keep your saw sharpened, you need to be connected to people and passions outside of work. Spending time with family and friends helps keep things in perspective. It makes you a better person and a more able leader. Establishing family-centered values provides reassurance to your staff which will make them better at what they do.

7. "What's the matter with you? I think your brain is going soft."

Though sometimes uncomfortable, leaders need to hold people accountable. Ignoring employees who are unable to work up to the accepted standards only adds to the burden of those around them. Establish consistent expectations for everyone and speak up when it's important.

8. "It would be a shame if a few rotten apples spoiled the whole barrel."

There are great things happening in classrooms every day. Don't let media coverage, or poorly informed public opinion, distract you from the amazing job teachers do every day for kids. School leaders should shine the light on all of the great things going on in their buildings.

9. "Never get angry," the Don had instructed. "Never make a threat. Reason with people."

We need to remember that when it comes to children, parents are protective. We all want to believe our children are bright and capable and when someone tells us differently we can get angry. In the schoolhouse, it is especially important that we keep our emotions under control.

10. "Great men (and women) are not born great, they grow great . . ."

Every day we are fortunate to be part of the growth of children and witness the evolution of the greatness that is within every student in our school. Despite the challenges that our students face, we CAN make a difference. If we maintain that belief, our students will reach the highest heights!

Source; <http://www.schoolleadership20.com/profiles/blogs/ten-school-leadership-lessons-inspired-by-the-godfather-by-chris>