

Journal 3- Interview With a Leader

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Marcy Lenord is the Chief Operating Officer for Public Service for the Howard County Library System. She had been in this position for a little over 1 year. Previously, she was the principal for a few different local high schools and then went on to work in the county superintendent's office. In her current role she works directly and oversees with 11 staff members who then have up to 200 staff members who report to them collectively. She works with the public outreach program for the library and works to create different programs. I choose to interview Mrs. Lenord because she was my principal while in high school. She was always someone that the student body could look up to and could trust. She built a strong relationship with many of the students and was respected very highly. This paper will go over the interview that I had with Marcy Lenord and will explore her thoughts on leadership and how she approaches leadership.

We started off the interview by talking about how she came into her current position. When she retired from the school system, she said that they reached out to different people in leadership that she had in her network, and she said that it started by just offering to buy people coffee and chat. She told me that at that point she was just looking to network and not at the job stage yet. She had reached out to a former mentor of hers who had worked in the library, and after chatting they were able to move forward with a job, but the whole process took a few months, and she said it just started out with coffee. I had also asked her if there was a large adjustment process with her leadership style into the new role. She said that she felt like her leadership at that point was established. She did say that you need to be flexible and meet the needs of where you are and adapt, but she said that her style has remained. She says that her biggest style is to listen first and to

learn. She does not come in with her own agenda rather she looks how she can best support others in the space. This would be more of a coaching style of leadership. She says that sometimes leaders come into the space and with their own agenda and try and just be the leader. Most the time this fails because they do not take the time to see what the organization needs. This is important in the coaching leadership because she takes the time to really work with each individual and see what the individual needs.

The next few topics that we talked about was about her team and how she works with them. She works with a team of 11 and then 200 other reports. I asked her if that was difficult to work with that many people. She told me that it probably would be for someone from a smaller background, but coming from her education background this is pretty small. She used to work with 200 staff members and up to 1500 kids, so this number is very manageable for her. She told me that the best way to motivate her staff is to just listen and respect them. She did say that they do some celebrations and things but that is more of a short-term solution. She feels like the staff have the power to make their own decisions and they have the power to get their work done efficiently, and a sense of their work aligning to their own values then they will be much happier than just having a pizza party or some celebration. I also asked her about any ethical responsibilities she feels that leaders have. She told me that the biggest thing is to act with integrity. She also told me that you need to figure out what the values of the company are and try and align them with your own values. She told me a story of how her former boss and her had very different values and eventually it caused her to leave the system all together. She said that is was a difficult decision, but eventually you need to do what you feel is right and if your values and a

companies and bosses do not match then in order to work with integrity you may need to part ways.

I asked her about some of her daily struggles as a leader and she said one of the biggest struggles is just getting over everyone wanting to like you. She says that sometimes you just need to be very clear about boundaries and that does not always make people happy. She told me that sometimes a very clear no can be a gift for someone. It can help people understand what the boundaries are and can help them understand to move on and figure out what we can say yes to. I also asked about any gender biases that she has faced. She did tell me that she has been very fortunate and has not really come across any clear gender biases. She does think that this is because both the education and the library field are very women dominated fields that she has not come across it as much. She did express though that other fields may have more struggles then the two she has been in.

We closed the interview with her advice for student of leadership. She told me that the best advice that she can give is to just go into leadership listening. She said that when listening, listen to understand and not to speak. She said that a lot of times when leaders, or anyone, is listening to someone a lot of times they are thinking about what they can say next and how they can answer, they lose the second half of what the person is saying. She also says that if you always try and fix things for everyone then you are only fixing the short-term problem. If you teach them how to fix it themselves, it will solve the rest of the problems in the future.

I really enjoyed getting to sit down and talk with Mrs. Lenord. I think that she had a lot of great things to say, and she really has a great perspective on a lot of things. Her biggest thing is just to listen to people and although that sounds easy it can be very difficult at times. I also think that listening to how she came into her job was very inspiring. She took the time to really network and reach out to people instead of waiting for others to reach out to her. I think that is super important to get yourself out there and really shows to people your passion and drive that you had. She also spoke about the importance of having a mentor, which is something that we have discussed in this class. It is important to have a mentorship with someone who can vouch for you and help you to succeed. I also think that her advice on not always trying to fix things is very important and something that I struggle with at times. Teaching someone how to fix a problem and not just jumping in and doing it yourself will help them much more in the long run. Overall, I thought that I learned a lot from speaking with Marcy Lenord and I feel like she could be a good mentor to have in the future.