



HERE WE GO Tracy Crow

In a learning system, there's still room for 'the boss'

Whenever we explore particular aspects of leadership, as we do in this issue of *The Learning Professional*, our intent is to help educators build their capacity to lead effectively, offer insights to district leaders responsible for developing leadership in others, and help all educators understand the critical role that leadership at all levels plays in creating and sustaining professional learning systems that lead to improved outcomes for students. This issue is no different. Throughout its pages, you'll find examples of practices to adapt and models that inspire.

We focus on learning systems in this issue to highlight particular aspects of leading that contribute to cultures where learning systems thrive. In Learning Forward's learning ecosystem, learning schools, teams, and systems are all grounded in the Standards for Professional Learning, where a vision for continuous improvement drives how educators do their jobs each day. In the Leadership standard, leaders prioritize learning for others and for themselves. They distribute leadership and create leadership pathways for others.

Yet, as knowledgeable as we become about the value of sharing leadership and establishing collective responsibility for what happens in schools, there are always circumstances that require a boss to take charge.

The word "boss" is old school. When we picture a learning environment where leaders share



responsibility with others, we don't envision that the person in the head office is called the boss. When we say boss, we see workplaces where leadership is held in the tight grip of one person. Those who are called bossy aren't typically recognized for their collaboration or listening skills.

However, other aspects of being a boss are exactly what schools and systems need, and in no way in conflict with a learning system. Bosses know what is right and what is wrong. Bosses have principles and are vocal about them. They have expectations that the people they work with will also be guided by those principles. Bosses know what their responsibilities are, and they know the responsibilities of those who work for them.

In a learning system, the boss doesn't brook adults who won't grow when their students require it. A learning boss isn't afraid to show that

she also makes mistakes and makes time for improvement. A learning boss says no to initiatives that draw team members away from their highest priorities. Such a boss advocates for the resources needed to support effective learning.

She can make a compelling case to her boss, and she'll be heard because she's established herself as a credible, solid force.

Leaders can be both bossy and collaborative when they help other educators operate with clarity around a vision and rigorous standards for students. Bosses share leadership when their demands prioritize growth for all in a school building, and they outline leadership roles they expect others to fill. Bosses show who's in charge when they stand up for the students who aren't yet learning to their full potential and insist on a change of course to address that challenge.

We hope this issue, and every issue of *The Learning Professional*, builds your boss capacity.

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