



EDUCATION INDUSTRY

1000+

EMPLOYEES



Pitt County Schools

a Situational Leadership® Success Story



At a Glance

Challenge

- Developing “people skills” in school leaders
- Developing leadership agility
- Ensuring senior leadership endorsement and support
- Infusing the organization with a common language and approach to leading and influencing
- Finding a leadership development program that is easy to learn, practice and implement
- Finding a program that is credible and research-based
- Finding content that is consistent and adaptable

Solution

- Superintendent’s leadership team held a leadership retreat and participated in *Situational Leadership®: Building the Organization* on Day 1 and *Leveraging Your Power to Influence* and *Situational Coaching®* on Day 2
- Principals and assistant principals participated in *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders* as part of their training and preparation for the new school year
- Senior system leaders and school leaders took the LEAD Self and LEAD Other assessments
- Leadership and professional development staff were certified in delivery of *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders*
- Key teacher leaders participated in *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders*

Results

- Superintendent’s office plans to focus on development and support of school leaders developed and implemented through tools and processes in *Situational Leadership®: Building the Organization*
- Core concepts of task identification, coaching and leadership style based on Performance Readiness® are infused into regular monthly school leader meetings and school leaders are expected to use them in coaching teachers
- Core concepts of leadership style use and coaching are included in assessment and development planning for school leaders
- Focus has shifted to adapting leadership and coaching styles to specific task performance and individual needs for that task, reflected in formal and informal coaching among teachers and school administrators
- Teachers are interested in using the concepts and process of Situational Leadership® in the classroom with students

Products

- *Situational Leadership®: Building the Organization*
- *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders*
- *Leveraging Your Power to Influence*
- *Situational Coaching®*

Interested in learning more? info@situational.com | 919.335.8763 | www.situational.com

The Challenge

Pitt County Schools (PCS) is a school system in eastern North Carolina that serves over 24,000 students in 37 schools. With diverse student and community populations in a state of constant growth and change, the mission of the school system, “to ensure that all students are provided a rigorous and personalized education that prepares them for the ever-changing challenges of the 21st century,” requires leaders, staff, faculty, students and parents to have tremendous agility and adaptability. Because the nature of education is positive influence focused on students, parents and communities, it requires educational leaders to be adaptable and skilled in working with people. Leaders here, as everywhere, need support in developing people, influencing people and helping people work with each other.

To answer the challenge, PCS tasked their Division of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership (D.E.E.L.) with finding and implementing leadership training that was true to the core values and focus of the division to support the system’s R3 Initiative to “Recruit, Retain and Reward effective educators to ensure the success of every child every day through professional learning, leadership development and career advancement.” Leadership training had to support development and growth; that was a given. It also had to provide consistency as well as adaptability, be more than just a “one and done” single-day event and present concepts that aren’t overwhelming to learn, practice and implement. They found a solution with *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders*.

The initial focus was to identify a program for developing assistant principals, who, as leaders in the middle of a school’s administrative leadership hierarchy, are positioned to influence in every direction: up, across, down and with parents, students and community members. D.E.E.L. discovered that *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders* could be the foundation of a leadership development process that was much more far-reaching than its initial target audience. *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders* offered them what they needed in developing people skills, providing consistent and adaptable content and focusing on development and growth – for leading at all levels in the system. The superintendent’s office enthusiastically endorsed *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders* as part of D.E.E.L.’s leadership development programming which has been scheduled to continue into the 2018-2019 school year and beyond.

24,000
Students

37
Schools



Interested in learning more? info@situational.com | 919.335.8763 | www.situational.com

The Solution

Before school administrators took the course, the entire senior leadership team from the superintendent's office participated in the executive leadership program *Situational Leadership®: Building the Organization*, as well as *Leveraging Your Power to Influence* and *Situational Coaching®* as a two-day strategy planning retreat. *Situational Leadership®: Building the Organization* includes an overview of Situational Leadership® with an executive leadership perspective, and it uses the Situational Leadership® Model to identify a major organizational change, assess organizational readiness to address the change and develop a leadership strategy that meets the organization's needs. The key organizational change they identified was to increase the targeted support of school leaders through leadership development. They saw the adaptability of the Situational Leadership® Model as a coaching tool and recognized that, for their organization, both formal and informal sources of power were important for teachers and school administrators. If they could help leaders to focus their coaching on development and growth, specific tasks and adapting their leadership styles, they would be better able to meet the challenges of leading schools in times of rapid change. If their leaders could improve interpersonal influence skills with peers, students, parents and those they lead, it would directly impact the system's mission to ensure "all students are provided a rigorous and personalized education that prepares them for the ever-changing challenges of the 21st century."



With the superintendent's leadership team using the language of Situational Leadership® and experiencing the consistency and adaptability of the model, they enthusiastically supported the program as part of a comprehensive development and support process. They kicked off the session in early August 2017 in which almost 100 principals and assistant principals participated in *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders*. The superintendent's team spoke of their own learning process with the program, recognizing where they had underled school administrators in the past and setting out their plan to change how they would provide leadership and support for them based on what they learned. For the audience of school leaders, that set the stage for a transformative session. Their day was "content-rich, highly interactive and rewarding," they reported. They left enthusiastic, ready to get back to school and practice what they learned.

One of the most salient concepts in Situational Leadership® for leaders in PCS was that of leadership as task focused. Performance Readiness® is defined by whether the person is currently performing at a sustained, acceptable level. The most effective leadership style is that which provides the right blend of direction and support based on the individual performer's ability to perform a specific task. For many PCS leaders, they provided leadership based on "capability," or what they believed the person to be capable of doing, rather than what the person was currently doing. This has been the most transformative concept for leaders in PCS. They had been apt to apply an assumption of capability to evaluating performance. If the individual could be capable of performing a task, the assumption was they should be and would be led accordingly, often with less direction than was needed. As a group, we found the senior leaders and school administrators had the tendency to underlead: that is, provide ample support but not enough direction. They didn't want to seem confrontational or to discount potential by giving too much direction. Occasionally, that also translated into assuming that if someone isn't performing now, that individual couldn't perform at all which led to not knowing where to start with providing direction.

Interested in learning more? info@situational.com | 919.335.8763 | www.situational.com



The Results

What both system-wide and school leaders realized as a result of participating in the *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders* program was that, by providing less direction than was needed for tasks, those performing the tasks likely felt abandoned and confused – and they floundered. Teacher and principal engagement suffered and enthusiasm flagged. Once they realized this tendency, leaders began to change the way they thought about leadership and about ensuring they provide enough direction for tasks. They began to shift their focus to actual performance related to specific tasks rather than make assumptions based on potential and assumed capability. They began to change the conversation. They began to say, “If someone is unable, it’s my responsibility to help them,” and, “What is the specific task and what kind of support do they need?” rather than, “If they seem capable, they should be doing it,” or, “If they are unable now, they can’t do it at all.” That has made all the difference for PCS in how leaders have begun to lead and how they approach leader and teacher development.

Sustainment of learning is a challenge, as any teacher at the beginning of the school year will acknowledge, thinking of how to translate learning in to real behavior change and knowledge transfer for exams and end-of-grade tests. This is a similar challenge for adult learners in the work place. The key is practice. As stated by one of the leaders of D.E.E.L., “It comes down to skill practice and skill rehearsal. You don’t learn how to play the piano overnight, and you can’t learn to play without practicing.”

D.E.E.L.’s program included integrated practice and skill rehearsal. After the *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders* program, monthly meetings included content refreshers and application of the influence and coaching processes learned in the session. The superintendent’s office has infused the language of Situational Leadership® into assessments and development plans. They included it in strategic planning and communication. Principals and assistant principals began to use the language with each other and with those they lead. At monthly meetings, they identify teachers they would like to develop and the specific tasks on which they will be coached. They discuss how they will approach the coaching based on Performance Readiness® and determine the balance of support and direction needed – for the identified task. They practice the conversations with each other. Teachers in departmental leadership roles are being introduced to the concepts and have begun using the concepts of task definition and Performance Readiness® for that task with their colleagues. Master teachers use the concepts with teachers they coach and in their support of new teachers. They have recognized the applicability of the concepts of Situational Leadership® to use with students in the classroom to enhance educational outcomes and classroom management.

D.E.E.L will be implementing *Situational Coaching®* in the next phase of leader development as leaders strengthen their application of the model and integrate it in their coaching and development processes.

Interested in learning more? info@situational.com | 919.335.8763 | www.situational.com