AN EXAMPLE OF LEADERSHIP TRANSFER OF LEARNING THROUGH THE NCWWI TOOLKIT: LEARNING AND LIVING LEADERSHIP

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Abstract
Training leadership can be challenging, even tricky, as it is such an ambiguous concept. To address this, the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) developed a Leadership Model and Competency Framework to provide guidance to agencies on preparing leaders at all levels. In addition to classroom and online training, the NCWWI created Learning & Living Leadership: A Tool Kit in 2013, to provide a series of activities to cultivate the leadership competencies from the model to accomplish transfer of learning. The concept of transfer of learning is explained along with an example of activities from the toolkit.

Introduction
Staff development professionals face challenges when it comes to developing the rather vague concept of leadership, both due to a lack of common understanding about the concept and a dearth of evidenced-based programs to prepare and train future leaders. Unlike training for such topics as interviewing, documentation, or assessment, where there is a right or wrong way, the concept of leadership is more ambiguous, making it more difficult to capture in a model and a professional development program. Yet, effective leadership possesses the power to address today’s realities and tomorrow’s challenges.

To address the lack of leadership models and leadership programs specific to child welfare, the NCWWI created the NCWWI Leadership Model and Competency Framework (hereafter called the “NCWWI Leadership Model”) and used it as the foundation for the NCWWI Leadership Academy, a blended learning experience employing both classroom training and online learning modules. Extensive evaluation shows the efficacy of the approach (Leake, Reed, Ebersten, Rienks, & de Guzman, 2014). The NCWWI Leadership Model recommends a framework to inform leadership development at multiple agency levels through the lens of four domains, further articulated in 30 competencies, and on the foundation of five leadership pillars. To promote leadership development beyond the classroom or online learning environment, the NCWWI developed a toolkit based on this model. This document, Learning & Living Leadership: A Tool Kit, offers a series of activities to cultivate the leadership competencies from the model to accomplish transfer of learning. An example of activities from the toolkit is provided later in this article, but first some background on adult learning and transfer of learning.

Adult Learning
An effective leadership development program attends to adult learning principles to achieve transfer of learning. Professionals can teach leadership skills in the classroom, but the classroom rarely, if ever, provides sufficient
opportunity for people to become leaders. Instead, adults must experience and live the leadership competencies to become increasingly proficient in them.

Principles of adult learning have been well articulated and researched (Knowles, 1980; Tiberius & Tipping, 1990; Caffarella, & Merriam, 1999). Adults need to know how learning will benefit them before they will be motivated to learn. They also need to take responsibility for their own learning and participate in assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating that learning.

Adults accumulate a vast array of experiences that they can draw upon to understand and apply to new concepts. Further, adults need to make connections from their previous experiences to new content in order to learn and grow (Gleeson, 1992). Adult learning also happens in multiple settings: formal, such as at schools and universities; informal, through everyday experiences; and non-formal, within opportunities outside the formal system such as on-the-job training (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974).

A greater understanding of adult learning offers significant implications for adult education (Knowles, 1980). Adult learners’ experiences especially inform experiential techniques, such as case studies, simulations, practice exercises, and action projects. Learning opportunities also should promote the practical application of new knowledge and information relevant to the adult’s experience. Research shows that experience leads to a person’s ability to create, retain, and transfer new knowledge (Argote, McEvily, & Reagans, 2003).

Transfer of Learning
Transfer of learning is generally defined as the application of skills and knowledge acquired during classroom training to performance on the job (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004). Effective transfer of learning encompasses activities occurring on a timeline starting before training and happening well after training concludes (Curry, McCarragher, & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2005).

Many see formal classroom training as the most efficient way to prepare child welfare staff for their jobs. However, classroom training alone is not sufficient. Several studies cite an estimate by Baldwin and Ford (1988) that only 10 to 20 percent of what is taught in training actually transfers to the job.

Yet adults must apply their new knowledge and skills for transfer to occur (Broad & Newstrom, 1992). Thus, post-classroom activities ensure that learners sufficiently retain and realize classroom training and its goals. Transfer of knowledge occurs gradually over time as learners practice, reinforce, and strengthen new behaviors in the job setting.

Learning & Living Leadership: A Tool Kit
The NCWWI toolkit, Learning & Living Leadership, supports the transfer of learning of competencies central to the NCWWI Leadership Model. Research on adult learning needs and transfer of learning activities makes clear the importance of this toolkit to encourage the application of the NCWWI Leadership Model to the real world of child welfare leadership and practice. Users of the toolkit will develop new learning using the principles of adult learning, as well as transfer learning from the classroom to the field through real-world experiences of learning and living leadership. While specific to the NCWWI model, activities may apply to any...
leadership development program because they often promote similar competencies such as vision, strategic thinking, and conflict management.

The toolkit suggests three activities to grow leadership for each of 30 competencies and it includes worksheets and potential resources. It also contains detailed guidance on how to implement the toolkit at the agency level. Toolkit users are encouraged to create a personalized leadership plan to develop the competencies most important and relevant to them.

The full kit presents transfer activities to develop each competency within the NCWWI Leadership Model and can be accessed from the NCWWI website at: https://www.ncwwi.org/files/LeadershipToolkitFinal_September2013.pdf. (See Appendix for a sample of the Learning & Living Leadership: A Tool Kit transfer activities for one competency, Planning and Organizing within the Leading for Results domain of the NCWWI Leadership Model.)

**References**


Tiberius, R., & Tipping, J. (1990). *Twelve principles of effective teaching and learning for which there is substantial empirical support.* Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto.