



## The Burden of Leadership

It is a popular saying at The Program during Judgment Day events, as a leader, “you get more credit than you deserve and you get more blame than you deserve as well.” That’s *‘the burden of leadership.’* That’s leadership when working with high ranking officials in a corporation. That’s leadership when working as a coach at the NCAA level. That is also leadership when working with high school student-athletes. Leadership is leadership. As a society, we place different standards on people in leadership roles depending on who they are leading. How we view President Trump is different than how we view Nick Saban. They are both leaders and they both have a “mission” to accomplish and are expected to “take care of their people.” Admittedly,



although a proud teammate at The Program for several years, I too placed different standards on leaders, depending on the position they served. I realize now that regardless of who you are leading, a leader is held to two standards: mission accomplishment and taking care of their people. **In that order.**

As a public high school teacher and a coach, I am a leader to hundreds of students and student-athletes every year. It is no different for me as it would be for a collegiate head coach or a CEO of a corporation. I, too, am expected to accomplish a mission (teach content and develop young men and women) and take care of my people (treat them fairly and make sure each is getting what they need) As a result when the mission is not accomplished, I am held accountable by parents, administrators, and the school system, i.e. *The Burden of Leadership*.

During my 21 years in public education, getting more credit than I deserved and more blame than I deserved has been remarkably true. As a wrestling coach, I have been awarded the 'Coach of the Year' five different times. In the classroom, I have been labeled an "highly effective" teacher. I have been chosen to be on curriculum writing and assessment teams for our school system, based on my performance in the classroom. Furthermore, I have mentored numerous student-teachers and have presented at multiple professional development workshops for my peers. Currently, all my classes have a waiting list for enrollment, due to its popularity among the student body. I have not been shorted on "getting more credit" than I deserve.



On the other hand, *I have been blamed* by parents for giving their children a grade they feel they didn't deserve. *I have been blamed* that I am "too hard" on my students. *I have been blamed* for holding my students accountable. *I have been blamed* when a student plays poorly in a game outside of school due to me "pushing them too hard on game days." *I have been blamed* when an athlete does not reach their potential in the eyes of a parent. *I have been blamed* when a student is sore from a tough workout. *I have been blamed* when they have been injured in my class even though I teach sound and safe lifting technique. *I have been blamed* when I set standards too high for my students. I have been blasted on social media. I have been told, "you (me) have ruined my child's life." ***The Burden of Leadership.***

From an outsider, I am sure many do not view what a teacher does each day as a leader. Many view teachers as "glorified babysitters" or even more disparaging the common adage "those who can't, teach." What most non-teachers do not understand is that in a classroom of thirty students, it is a microcosm of society. You have some "smart" kids, some "dumb" kids, some kids who are wealthy, some kids who are poor, some kids whose parents are on drugs, some kids who are on drugs, a few of these kids have learning disabilities, and some of these kids struggle with mental illness. At the grassroots level of leadership, what is done each day in a high school classroom or gym is "Leadership" at its core. Certainly, we have a mission to accomplish: educate our children, prepare them for life's demands, and provide them a structure that will make them successful as an adult. Furthermore, our job is to instill a sense of discipline and accountability



by setting standards, rules, and timelines for assignments. We are also required to “take care of our people.” A teacher interacts with each student or athlete differently. Each one is different, and we are expected to treat them differently. We vary instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. Gone are the days that a teacher put notes on the board and the students copy them verbatim. We use SMART boards, Google classrooms, we give “ReDo’s” for failing assignments, and we write and dictate for students. We “take care of our people” while always keeping in the forefront our mission.

When it is 70 degrees and sunny and everyone is happy and successful, you are showered with praise that you are making a huge difference. But, when “it” hits the fan. You are picked apart for every decision (or lack of decision) you make. *The Burden of Leadership*. You get more credit than you deserve, and you get more blame than you deserve.

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