from [**Module 6: Discussion - Level Five Leadership - Discussion Group 11**](https://nwmissouri.instructure.com/groups/31318/discussion_topics/250679?headless=1&student_id=34121)

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**61622-88: Visionary School Leadership**

**Module 6 Discussion:** ***Finding “Level 5” Leadership***

Watching John Maxwell's video on "The Five Levels of Leadership", followed by my late discovery of this module's lecture notes, has me thinking in new ways what it takes to be a leader.

***What is a “Level 5” leader?***

I found it most interesting Maxwell's views on the levels of leadership, and the concept that effective leadership is a moving journey upward. Level 5 in Maxwell's leadership paradigm is the "Pinnacle". A leader who has made it to the Pinnacle has persevered over a long period of time. During that course of time, this leader has taken what was initially a supervisory position overseeing staff, to a position in which positive working relationships with those same people moved the business of the company forward, establishing a sense of forward momentum and higher productivity. That forward momentum and higher productivity that this leader has overseen leads to further growth, requiring the need to recruit, "growing the company by growing the people" (Maxwell, 2013) as a human investment working at one’s side.

The Pinnacle leader is a rare breed of leader who truly values who the stakeholders are in the company, along with what they do, regardless of the positions they hold. In return, those stakeholders value that person's leadership with a genuine sense of respect. The stakeholders work with this leader not because they *have* to, but because they ***want***to.

***Where have I seen examples of this type of leader?***

In all honesty, I do not believe I've seen a leader in my 32 years of teaching who has reached "The Pinnacle".  I have seen plenty of Level 1 leaders with a leadership title that is worn as their own badge of honor. Those types of leaders who have managed to gain my respect have done so only because I feel that I needed to to continue working.  I have seen some leaders, including my current principal, who struggle with Level 2 and 3.  In the case of that principal, bless her heart, she tries establish a sense of rapport and working relationship with the staff and students in the building, but in her personal admission as a "rule follower" she seems to get so browbeaten by the need for the positive growth of various data points, that she can negate any relationship she has built into a Level 1 regress into working relationship driven by compliance. As I interviewed her for the Module 2 assignment four weeks ago, I learned that she was aspiring to Level 4 leadership, as she was explaining her desire to grow people into becoming stronger teachers and educational leaders. While that sounds laudable, I'm noticing that there's a small group of people she's "growing", and that group appears to be a bit cliquey, with all of them falling into a similar demographic.

***Here's a pinnacle story... making an impact....***

The person who has come closest to The Pinnacle in my life experience was Robert Walker.  Fifty years ago, I was a Kentucky native, leaving a segregated small town to move to a city up north (Davenport, Iowa) that was big enough to have its own McDonald's. When I started in his class in August of 1970, I followed his directions because he was my second-grade teacher. (He also had a southern accent, as he was a Louisiana native. I needed that as everyone in Iowa "talked funny".)  As the year went on, I learned that he cared about all of his students. When doing a lesson on leadership, we elected a class president, but he wanted everyone to be recognized, and created "leadership positions" for which everyone could get elected.  The last student to get elected to a job was Jack, who was elected, "Class Dentist".  While that lesson plan may not have been Pinterest-worthy, it showed me that he believed in his students, and it came back to him, as he had a class with few major behavior concerns, and a fan club of people who still cherish his memory to this very day. Those were results of his caring style of teaching, and leadership. This is a confirmation that Mr. Walker rocked at "Level 2" relationship building. One day in the spring of '71, I was leading a line, and I told him that someday, I wanted to be a teacher, just like him. He became a mentor for me over the years, until we lost touch when he retired in my college days. He was most genuinely interested in Level 4 People Development... at least with this person!

Looking outside of Maxwell's 5 Levels of Leadership, Mr. Walker stood out as someone whose life ascribed to many aspects of the "BLAST" of dealing with people.... He **B**elieved in his students, **L**istened to them and their parents, wasn't too proud to **A**pologize for any mistakes made, which led to **S**atisfied, **T**hankful people in the Jefferson Elementary School community.

He reached my pinnacle when his daughter introduced herself to me on Facebook in the fall of 2015, saying that her dad moved back to Davenport from the Florida Keys, asking if I could meet him.  He was a proud WWII veteran, and he as about to go on an "Honor Flight" to D.C.  I took a personal day from work to surprise him as on his return flight. When he deboarded and I saw him, as I waved an American flag, I yelled out, "There's my favorite teacher!" Even though I hadn't seen Mr. Walker for 30 years, he recognized me immediately! I took over the wheelchair from his daughter, and I spent hours catching up with him. I was amazed at how well he remembered my parents. Best of all, I got to tell him what I had been itching to tell him for years - that 45 years later, I am a second-grade teacher, just like he was!  The pinnacle of his being a leader in my life does not get any higher and more impactful than that!

***Leadership "Epilogue"***

Even though Mr. Walker and I had the best of reunions, he passed away six months later at the age of 91. (His daughter, who reunited us, just passed away two months ago.) His "leadership" in the classroom had a formative effect on my life. I hope to continue to “pay it forward” as a teacher leader.

**REFERENCE**

Maxwell, J. [John Maxwell]. (2013, November 22).  *John Maxwell: The five levels of leadership* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KqL\_1G8JD8