

Betrayal: Its Consequences and Its Absolution

Betrayal comes at the system and the personal level.

1. System Betrayal – when policies are not consistently enforced it leads to damaged trust in a school's structure.
2. Personal Betrayal – when someone is humiliated publicly, criticized, blamed, or insulted.

The Consequences of Betrayal

1. Hampered Communication: The goal of communication becomes self-protection, so people are less honest and open. That means that a principal may not hear about a minor issue until it becomes major -- and very difficult to address.
2. Decreased Shared Decision-Making: If a principal distrusts teachers, he may limit their participation in decision-making. Alternatively, if teachers feel shared decision-making structures are only "for show," they will limit their own participation.
3. Decline in Teachers' Commitment: After several disappointments with a school's structures, teachers may conclude the school is not set up to support their success. Or, in the case of a more personal betrayal, they may feel unsafe in approaching their principal.

The 4 A's of Absolution

1. Admit It: It is important that the person who violated the trust acknowledges that not only did a violation occur, but also that harm was done.
2. Apologize
3. Ask for Forgiveness: Although forgiveness might be implied, be explicit about asking for it.
4. Amend Your Ways: Because it restores power to the victims of a breach in trust, offer to make amends, then follow with a request for suggestions.