5Rs of Early Learning Leadership: Building a Foundation of Responsive Relationships

Beza Semu: Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for joining today's webinar to learn about the five high-leverage practices of effective early learning leadership that DTL calls the five R's. My name is Beza Semu, and I'm your host and co-presenter for today's webinar. So, welcome, and thank you again for joining our webinar today on the "Five R's of Early Learning Leadership: Building a Foundation of Responsive Relationships." Joining me today to present this topic is Gail Joseph. Gail's a leader in the field of early learning. She's the founding director of Cultivate Learning, a co-principal investigator at the National Center of Early Childhood Development and Learning, as well as a faculty and professor of early childhood education at the University of Washington. She's a former Head Start fellow and a former Head Start teacher. Hi, Gail. Welcome and thank you for being here with us.

Gail Joseph: Thank you so much, Beza, for having me, and welcome to all of our participants today. We're so glad you're here.

Beza: Thanks, Gail. So, we have two main learning objectives for today. We're very excited to introduce the five early learning leadership practices that we've termed the five R's of early learning leadership. First, we'll talk about the work that we did over the past year to understand the practices of highly effective learning leaders. We will then explore the first of the five R's, which is building responsive relationships with staff. And finally, we'll talk about how you can apply the responsive relationship practices to support and improve program quality and equitable child outcomes for children and families. By the end of our time together, we hope that you'll walk away with key early learning leadership practices that create a culture of trust, belonging, and equity, and some strategies that you can implement in your programs to support your staff both within an in-person and virtual context. So, Gail, I'm going to turn it over to you to walk us through the work that we did over the past year to come up with the five R's.

Gail: Thank you, Beza. I'm really excited to talk about this project or study that we've engaged in to really try and understand what are the practices, the day-to-day practices of effective learning leaders in early childhood programs? So, I'm going to tell you just a little bit about what we have done.

We started out by wanting to ask some really simple questions, such as why do leaders matter in early learning, and what do effective teachers and leaders do versus less effective leaders do? And so, we all know intuitively – but we also have research to back us up – that effective leadership is related to positive child outcomes, to higher-quality programs. But we really wanted to understand, what are those unique ways that effective early learning leaders lead their programs? How do they interact with others? What do they know? What do they believe about learning and about leadership? And how do they view their role in really supporting the program improvement? And specifically, thinking about adult/child interactions in educational

programing. Now, I'm going to say that some people refer to this as instructional leadership. And I think that's really what a lot of people hear from the field. That's a term that really is born out of some K-12 literature, maybe some higher-education literature, is that idea of instructional leadership. But we're really focused on those leadership behaviors that encourage staff to deepen children's learning, as well as deepening their own learning. And, also, one of the things that we learned is that the best leaders are the best learners. And so, instead of calling it instructional leadership, we've started calling this learning leadership, because we're leading the learning of our programs and we're also always learning ourselves. So, who are these early learning leaders for us? What do we think about? Well, we think about this including, but not being limited to, education managers that are out there, program directors, site directors, coaches, regional technical assistance training, early childhood specialists and managers. So, we really think about … It's who is there that's trying to influence and improve the learning that's happening in organizations?

And so, we hoped that by answering these questions that we had about, what are these behaviors, what do leaders know, what do they believe, that we could really understand and describe the daily routines, values, behaviors that are common to effective early learning leaders, and that we could really outline effective practices that everyday leaders can implement into their programs. And so, really, our quest was unique because we wanted to understand leadership in the context of Early Head Start, Head Start, and other early learning programs. So, that was unique. Instead of thinking about kind of a broad view of leadership. And given that there's a lot of credible work and research on how to develop leaders and major functions of effective leadership, both in the corporate world and nonprofit management and other organizational settings, we really wanted to position our work to be research specifically geared towards early learning.

And so, to that end, we had five study questions that we were asking. So, how do effective learning leaders transfer their leadership concepts into actions? What are the most effective behaviors of learning leaders? How do we know when we're seeing effective leadership? What does it look like? What does it sound like? What does it feel like to educators? And then, we wanted to know what directors, managers, people in more leadership positions think are the best ways to improve children's learning. And we also wanted to understand, what do educators feel is the most effective way to encourage higher-quality training? And that's really something that's unique to this, too, is that we didn't just look to researchers or leaders, but we really wanted to know from teachers what that looked like.

Beza: So, Gail, I know we reviewed literature and related framework, both specific to early learning instructional leadership, but as well as broader leadership frameworks. We discussed with experts, and we interviewed 12 learning leaders and 24 educational staff. Can you tell us a little bit about who we actually ended up interviewing and what kind of questions we asked?

Gail: Sure. Well, we first started with … We had this opportunity where we had a lot of the leading scientists and experts and researchers in the field gathered together, and so we started by asking them – They had done applied research work in the field. They had interacted with a

lot of Head Start education managers, Head Start teachers. So, we actually started by asking them, what do they think are the most effective behaviors, skills, or knowledge that effective learning leaders convey in their programs? And we actually had them write down every single behavior on an individual Post-it Note. And so, we had these stacks of Post-it Notes. And then we started to sort those Post-it Notes to see how they kind of clustered together, if you will, and came up with … That was our first work at getting some of these skills and behaviors.

And then, we actually interviewed leaders in the field. And these were leaders that were leaders of Head Start programs that had shown a lot of program improvement and some other programs in the field. And we asked them questions about how they were implementing change in programs to ensure high-quality instruction. How do they lead their programs through change, and how did they lead with equity? So, how did they think about leading towards those equitable child outcomes and family engagement? So, some of the questions we started with was, "Tell us your personal best," which is a common question asked of leaders. "What's a personal best time that you had where you were really effective in implementing positive change in your program?" And from that, we really distilled down some of the specific behaviors. Then we turn to teachers, home visitors, other staff – really educators. And we asked about … Because we know that effective leadership is really about facilitating a person's or a group's growth and development, our questions to educators were really starting with, what was the most useful professional development experience they ever had, and what was the least useful, and what were the leadership skills and behaviors, or what types of leaders and leadership styles really helped them to grow and learn? And so, their answers were all recorded and transcribed, and then we went sentence by sentence and coded these for these kind of skills and behaviors that we saw. And what we saw, which was delightful, is that from the research literature, to the frameworks, to the experts, to the leaders themselves, and the teachers and other staff, they really seem to hang together into these five R's.

Beza: So, before we share our findings of the five R's, we want to hear from you. What do you believe are the most important and effective behaviors, values, practices of learning leaders? We'll give you about a minute to enter your response into the Q&A box. Feel free to enter as many thoughts that come into mind about some of these values and skills that you believe are unique or instrumental to learning leaders. And while you're entering, I'll share a few that come to mind. The ones I'm thinking about – and this has come in the research – is importance in honesty. Leaders needing to have clarity in their values and vision and being transparent. Having the ability to foster collaboration. Anything to add, Gail?

Gail: That is such a good list, and we're seeing some similar things coming in, and I would add to that … What comes to my mind is wholeness. Our leaders that see the whole teacher or see the whole home visitor, or the whole staff member. So, I think about that kind of ability to really think about the wholeness of a person, and then I always think about what we call DWYSYWD, which is "do what you say you will do," as one of these effective behaviors.

Beza: Thanks, Gail. And thank you, everyone, for your responses. We are going to go ahead and transition.

Gail: All right, well, these are the five R's that we came up with, and we know that there's no one best way to lead. The best leaders are really adaptive and responsive to the developmental needs of their staff and their programs. But these five things really seem to capture a lot of what we heard from our multiple sources. So, the first R is that idea of responsive, and I'm going to say, resilient relationships. The next one is that idea of inspiring action by providing compelling reasons for why we're doing things. The next is providing resources. Engaging in reflective dialogues frequently. And the recognition of staff efforts. And so, for the next few slides, we'll give an overview of each of these five R's. Beza, you want to start with the first one?

Beza: Sure. So, the first one is responsive relationships. And we found that learning leaders build a relationship-based foundation through responsive relationships that support and develop a thriving culture of learning and connectedness. They work to create trust, demonstrate caring for and about education staff, and they encourage belonging. They demonstrate reliability and foster resilience in themselves and others and lead intentionally through their values and vision and by living out their values and by having an ever-present lens on equity and anti-racism. And I'm going to switch over to the next one, which is reason.

Gail: I'll take this one. So, the reason is the seeking to motivate others to want to improve their practice because of an inspiring reason. And really the most compelling reason is that they're a part of meaningful work and effort. They raise issues of educational justice and address the role of safety and health and social-emotional learning, trauma-informed care and learning. Those are all very, very, very compelling reasons to want to do our work and to want to do our work better. So, I just say that they make sure that those reasons engage both the head – like they talk about the data and the child-development science – and the heart. And this is where we say that it's not just the what and the how that you're going to do or that you're asking staff to do, but it really is the why.

Beza: I'll take this one. We also discovered that learning leaders use human and financial resources intentionally to support education staffs' instructional growth in service of positive child outcomes. And the resources that leaders provide include materials, as well as opportunities for training, professional development, including peer learning groups. And leaders themselves are a resource to the educational staff that they support.

Gail: And reflective dialogue. So, effective early learning leaders embed what we call reflective dialogue in a variety of formal and informal interactions throughout the workday. They really engage in regular and frequent conversations about how teachers are doing, how home visitors are doing, family childcare providers are doing, and how children are doing. And they really focus a lot on both kind of informal anecdotal data to more quantitative data. And these questions can be things like asking a teacher about the new room arrangement and if children are more engaged. Asking a teacher about if children are more engaged when they started using props for their remote learning. But they also take a look at bigger data sets, and they say, "These are how all of our children are doing in math and who's benefiting and who's not." So, really prioritizing planning and discussion times that support education staff and center

conversations around equity. Who is furthest from opportunity here, and how can we improve that? And child data. And they always look at child data and invite multiple perspectives. Never just their own interpretation.

Beza: And last but not least, we had recognition. We noticed that learning leaders realized the importance of recognition of the efforts and growth of individual staff and teams. They make a concerted effort to acknowledge both small and big wins in informal and formal ways. They provide their acknowledgment of efforts on behalf of children and families through ongoing, deliberate, and intentional display of gratitude to staff. And some of these recognitions we heard of happen in public. They're displayed in staff meetings and events. And sometimes these recognitions are through personal, meaningful notes that leaders make sure to provide towards a staff that they are seeing is doing great work or putting the effort towards that. And through these practices, leaders make sure that staff are feeling seen, heard, and understood and respected.

So, that was a very high-level overview of the five R's. If you have any questions, be sure to enter them in the Q&A box, and we'll address them during our Q&A time.

So, before we dive in, in a moment, you'll see a poll on the screen. Please select your responses to the poll question. The question is, which of the five early learning leadership practices, or the five R's, are you surprised to see on the list? Your poll options are responsive relationship, reason, resources, reflective dialogue, and recognition. You may have to scroll down a little in the poll box to see and submit the options, and you're able to select more than one option. So, we'll give it just a few seconds.

Gail: Interesting.

Beza: Wonderful. Thank you so much for responding. We will share the results at the end.

So, for the remainder of the session, we will delve into responsive relationships. So, in terms of responsive relationships, five examples and daily strategies emerged that early learning leaders use as a foundation for everything that they do to motivate and mobilize their team. One theme that emerged is that learning leaders build relationships with staff and families and use their relationships to promote a deeply unified culture of trust, collaboration, and belonging. Gail, can you share some specific examples of how learning leaders do this in their work?

Gail: Yeah, I'd be delighted to. This could be as simple as starting a staff or family meeting with a check-in question, where everyone responds. Just that can start building that unified culture where everyone feels seen, noticed, heard, valued, and respected. Another example that was shared by a program is that they identified five core values that are all related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. And before each meeting … They have those on table tents all around the room. And before each meeting, people introduce themselves and say which of the values they're really going to be intentional about for the meeting. So, for example, they might say, "For this meeting, I really want to listen deeply." Or another one might be, "This one, I'm really going to concentrate on speaking my truth." So, that was one example.

Beza: Thanks, Gail. So, the second theme that we grouped under responsive relationship is that effective learning leaders care about the education staff, families, and children in their program. And they know the strengths, aspiration, and interests of the staff that they work with, and they honor and respect individual needs. And they show that they care about these things through their daily engagement with staff and families. And Gail, I think, has a few examples for us around how staff demonstrate honor and respect to educational staff.

Gail: Well, I would say that the leading way that we saw that appear through our interviews is, this is a lot about listening. It is a leader that uses multiple ways to listen to their educational staff to ask, "How can I help?" and to truly listen and implement those ideas. They have multiple ways that staff can communicate easily with the leader about what's working well and what they need. They give a lot of choices so that staff feel honored and can make some decisions on their own. And they're always thinking about, "In what ways is perhaps the least privileged of my staff member benefiting from our professional development or our staff meetings?" and then making adjustments in that way. And it reminds me of … There's a local leader here where I live, and she has talked about – she's in K-12 – and she talks about wanting to make sure that every student is known by name, strength, and need. And I think about that that's what these effective learning leaders do to honor and respect education staff's needs, is that they know all of their staff by their name, their strengths, and ways in which they can provide support.

Beza: That is so powerful. Thanks, Gail. Another theme that came is that learning leaders serve as a trusted resource by providing support and ideas for different aspects of planning and implementation of educational services. They also communicate confidence in education staff's decisions in classrooms, on home visits, and in their family childcare settings. And, Gail, can you give us an example of how serving as a trusted resource looks in practice?

Gail: Well, I would say that what we heard, again from multiple sources and in particular from educators, is they talked about needing to trust the leaders' knowledge of child development and of evidence-based or effective pedagogy. So, they wanted to … That was just one example, is that they could use that leader as a trusted resource on knowing what might be the best way to approach a child's learning to really keep them moving forward. And that means that the best leaders, as we know, are always learning themselves, always staying on top of the latest child-development and pedagogical science.

Beza: Thanks, Gail. And we also discovered that learning leaders act with authenticity, consistency, and transparency, which means that they walk the talk. They model their values by being consistent and transparent. They admit when they make mistakes and when more information is needed. They're very authentic and transparent in their work. And I know Gail has some example of how this looks in practice, as well.

Gail: Yeah, this could be even just a simple thing that helps build trust in that responsive relationship. So, in one of the interviews, a teacher talked about how important it was that the leader visited their classroom on the same day at roughly the same time. That building that kind of consistent presence really helped them build a trusting relationship. So, the teacher just

came to know that she could count on that. Other ways in which this shows up is really saying why a decision was made, and that is being very transparent and saying who was involved in the decision-making, why was that decision made that way. So, making that very visible. And then, in terms of that authenticity piece, it's really making sure that there are words that have aligned action to them, I would say, is the best way that that came out, that what you said you would do, you did – what you said you cared about, you demonstrated with your action.

Beza: And last but not least, and perhaps I think more foundational, is that learning leaders are clear about their own values and they actively promote a common vision for the educational services team that they lead. And they make sure that their vision is lived out every day in their daily interactions. So, Gail, what are some examples that you came up with from your interview with leaders?

Gail: I think this one really closely … These all relate to each other, so they're not distinct things always, but this really relates to No. 4. And one of the ways that this is shown is by really describing and being vocal about how certain decisions were made in accordance to the shared values that the organization has and really making sure that every day there's an occasion to share those values. And we'll talk more about that in a little bit.

Beza: Thanks, Gail. So, that was a very high-level overview, and we will, like Gail mentioned, delve into some of these examples and practices in the next few slides.

So, the first practice that we wanted to pull out and talk about is that learning leaders promote a deeply unified culture. And I'm going to give you a second to read that quote on the screen from an early learning teacher that we interviewed. So, she says, "I feel like now I have two leaders that have embraced everything that we're trying to do and just supported things we wanted to accomplish, like bringing in more culture." So, as we mentioned earlier, creating a deeply unified culture amongst educational services staff is one essential, key skill effective early learning leaders have. And at its core, this is ensuring that everyone feels like they belong and that they are part of a unified goal and purpose that also supports the larger overall program and agency goals and mission. And one of the ways in which learning leaders create a deeply unified culture is by promoting belonging, by demonstrating trust through consistency, and allowing staff to provide input without judgment, allowing educational staff to take risks, make mistakes, and trusting them and providing opportunities for them to ultimately learn and grow in their instructional practices.

Another way is by creating multiple opportunities for educational staff to feel connected to one another within an educational services team. So, when we know one another and when we are able to build a trusting relationship with one another, we are more willing to collaborate, more willing to learn from one another. Get-to-know-you opportunities create understanding, compassion, empathy. And leaders create lots of opportunities for staff to get to know one another on a deeply personal and meaningful way. We also discovered from our interview that when learning leaders set clear expectations for educational practices and processes, it allows them to create a unified culture and a common language around quality and expectations. And when educational staff know what these expectations are, everyone feel supported, everyone

is able to grow and have a benchmark to kind of make sure and check that they are in line with all the expectations of the program, and they feel ownership of the work and the purpose and the meaning of the work that they're engaged in.

So, one way that leaders create a unified culture is that they demonstrate trust by asking simple questions, listening, and validating. As you develop your skills in responsive relationships, you may notice that you often already do these things to support and promote a unified culture. Or you may find that you do these things, but not consistently or not often enough. And so, the best part about some of these strategies is that you can shift your mind-set or behavior or the frequency with which you already engage and display in this behavior. So, the first few strategies have to do with being mindful of the language you use. Language is very powerful and can really help to mobilize and support staff and bring unity into your program. So, for instance, when staff approach you for support or with a question or a problem, do you feel pressure or a responsibility to solve it or provide the perfect answer, which oftentimes is the case? We feel like we're in a position and we are responsible to problem solve.

And one simple way to shift that behavior is to allow staff to come up with their own solutions by asking them what they think. Help them process their problem that they've identified and really listen and give them the opportunity to think through and come up with their own solutions. Ask them what they think they should do so that they're able to really process the questions and the concerns they have. And this process – not only is it validating, but it also helps them grow agency and confidence and allows them to feel heard and also trusted as experts in their work and trusted to come up with their own answers and have agency in their work. And this may seem like more work at times, but at the end, it creates a stronger and wider team of thinkers that ultimately share a load, and it will also nurture and cultivate leadership skills in others.

Another way that leaders use language in a powerful way is by saying, "I trust you," often. So, this, again, goes along with, as staff are coming with problems or as staff are coming to you, you can say, "I trust you. I know you can do this," and following through with action by stepping back and allowing them to really be the agents in their work. Another one around language is using "we" as often as possible. This demonstrates unity, and it drive the message home that every single person is important and that they play a key role in the work in supporting children and families.

So, our second set of strategies are around getting-to-know-you activities, and these can be an online collaboration space for staff, or it could be doing staff meetings. An example for an online collaboration space is, you can have a place where staff can enter information that is "all about me." So, this could be information about their birthdays, their favorite books, movies, activities, aspirations in the workplace, interests, talents. And this information can be shared broadly with all staff so that they're able to pull from this information and really bring it in when it's necessary and bring it in during meetings and really show that they know one another, but also that they can follow up and follow through when the time allows. And some of these times are during staff meetings, right? So, these are the spaces in which you can

demonstrate, make time to get to know one another, but also demonstrate and share what you know about one another. So, your first 5 to 10 minutes can be dedicated to learning something interesting about one another. Simply checking in and providing a space for people to share, like how they're doing, how their week is going, one thing they want to accomplish that week. And these opportunities not only help you know information about staff, but also gives you an opportunity to, again, follow up and check in to see, "How are you doing? How did you end up solving that thing that you wanted to – that goal that you wanted to accomplish this week?"

One story from the field that demonstrates this really well that was shared with me recently was in a home-based program where the supervisor had everyone share their favorite meal or their favorite comfort food. And one of the staff shared that she was having a hard day. And so, the staff the next day got together and made her favorite meal and had it on her desk when she came back. And so, that is one way to both make the effort to get to know staff, know what they're interested in, and also demonstrate caring when those opportunities call by showing up and by giving back in those times. So, with that, I'm going to kick it over to Gail to go over the next practice.

Gail: I love those ideas. I love that online sharing space. And people might list their favorite books and movies and things to watch and music. And I know that in one program they have a staff playlist, and before every staff meeting, they like are playing from the playlist, and people can identify their favorite song and things. I love that. And just before I talk about this practice, I want to highlight something that you said, Beza, which I thought was so great and encouraging to hear was that these are things you can just do more of, right? So, it's not like you're born doing them or not. But these are just practices you can always reflect on. "Can I do more of this? Can I do more of this with different people?" Et cetera.

So, with that, I'm going to talk about practice two, which is vision and values and making them known and visible in the work. And you can read what an early learning coach said in one of our interviews. but it's probably no surprise that a large part of being credible as a leader is really clarifying your own core values and then creating with your staff shared core values. So, you might have shared values that are things like educational justice, empathy, belonging, sharing power, collaboration, quality, excellence for all, growth mindset. Those might be things that are shared values. And what leaders do is, they take every moment they can to make those shared values visible. And that does not mean they put them on a poster, laminate them, put them on the wall, and don't ever look at them again. It's really, the way to make them visible is from the daily actions that happen. But values are so helpful as a leader. And if you haven't taken time to think about your values for a little bit, let me give you some reasons why they're so important. They help guide decisions. So, when you have a clear set of core values and shared values, decisions become faster, easier. And if they're not always easy, at least you have greater confidence in the decision you made when you made it in alignment with your values, the shared values. It really strengthens your ability to influence, because when you speak from your core values, you're more passionate. When you're more passionate, people are more likely to listen to you. So, it really helps you. There's a great quote that says, "If you don't believe the messenger, you won't believe the message." And that's really about leading with core values.

They help create clarity, and they can reduce stress in programs when your staff can count on you to always be working in alignment with shared values.

Now, let's talk about a few strategies for doing this. Like I said, if you haven't thought about or reflected on your core values, if you can't rattle them off, then maybe it's time to just take a moment and make a list of the most important values to you. And I think it's always helpful to have five or fewer. If you have more than five, they start to conflict with each other, and it makes it harder to make decisions. So, what are the five things that you feel most passionate about, that you value the most? And if you get stuck, I always like to think about, "How do I want to feel?" So, "How do I want to feel after this meeting? How do I want to feel after I interact with my teachers? How do I want to feel after I talk with my children?" And maybe I want to feel after I'm done talking with teachers that they feel a part of something, that they've felt a part of the decision. Well, if that's how I want them to feel and how I want to feel, then maybe a core values collaboration. So, think about how you want to feel, and that can help guide you to think about those core values. And then you can also think about, "What are the shared values?" and lead your program through an activity. The next thing that you can do after you think about what are your core values is to think about how closely are you living and acting in alignment with those core values? So, even just thinking about a bull's eye, like drawing a bull's eye and your values around it, and then thinking, "In this past week, how close was my action to those shared values?" And that can be really helpful. And you can also set aside time to reflect on your daily behavior, similar to doing that bull's eye, and try and think about opportunities when and where you can really live out and demonstrate and breathe life into those core and shared values. Maybe it's during a staff meeting where you can have everybody highlight something in alignment with values. Maybe it's during individual staff check-ins, but if you're living your daily work life without opportunities to reflect on how you're doing, my guess is you're feeling just busy, you're like suffering and burnt out. So, make sure you build in time to reflect on that. And there's a great resource for you. It's NCECDTL planner, and you can find that in that green resource widget.

And I'll just quickly tell you just a couple other strategies to help make those values visible. One is calendaring, so similar to what we talked about with a bull's eye is this idea that you could preview your week and say, "How will I have opportunities during this week to really demonstrate our shared values? And what will that look like? If I really want to be committed to the shared value of collaboration, what is it going to look like when I engage in a meeting or a debrief with a teacher? What will it look like if we're collaborating or sharing decision making?" Maybe it's about the meetings that you have. If respect is a value that is a shared value, which I hope that is, then how do you greet people in the meeting? How do you make sure everyone feels respected and seen and heard? If joy is a shared value, or humor, what do the meetings look like then? Probably a lot of fun. Or creativity. The other way that you can make your values visible is through critical events. And, my goodness, if it's 2020 wasn't a year of critical events, I don't know when there was one. But every time there's a critical event, you have an opportunity really to demonstrate how you're going to make decisions and go forward in accordance with those shared values, making sure that those are described, that people see your actions in alignment with those. And that's a great way to reinforce those shared values.

So, Debra Sullivan, who writes a great book about leadership, says, "We often think about when we were teachers the teachable moment. But let's think about the leadable moment." And those happen during those critical events in how we make decisions.

The next practice that I want to talk about is the practice that learning leaders act with authenticity, consistency, and transparency. So much of this is about those core values and making sure that those core values are demonstrated, but it's also about being open and vulnerable, being authentic about your joy, your enthusiasm. You can see that quote from the early learning teacher that it wasn't … She talks about getting these modules, and it wasn't just like, "Here's a module, here's a module." But there was real, authentic joy from the leader in what they could learn from these modules, in what they could do with these modules, as just an example. So, being authentic is really about being open, being vulnerable, being radically human, and admitting that. And it's making sure that words and actions match.

This is a quote from Brené Brown, who of course is a very powerful professor known for her work around courage and vulnerability and shame, empathy, and public speaker. A lot of great books, podcasts, etc. But we really liked this quote about authenticity, that it's not something you have or don't have – just like Beza was talking about – the practices that you can engage in in a regular basis. So, authenticity is a collection of choices. It's about the choice to show up and be real. And imagine what it would be like if we could lead where everyone felt like they could just show up how they are and that they would be accepted and embraced and encouraged and inspired to take risks and grow. I just think that that would be wonderful, and that's really what that authenticity, consistency, and transparency is about.

We talked a little bit about consistency. This came up a lot from educators, and wanting to make sure that teachers, that their leaders were consistent in their actions, that they would show up when they said that they would show up, that they would show up in a timely way. And we heard a lot during everything that was going on with COVID and still is about really the importance of having consistent messages from leaders. Even if the leader said, "I'm going to update you every Tuesday on the situation around COVID," and maybe there's a Tuesday where there's no new updates – nothing had changed – but just the staff being able to count on that message coming in their in-box and getting that information allowed them to relax a little bit, de-stress a little bit. And then, of course, transparency, which is being very transparent [Laughter] about the ways that you're showing up. So, in some of the meetings I hold, we just start by saying, "How are you showing up today? What's in your head? What's on your heart?" And being vulnerable and honest, but transparency is also being explicit about how you're making decisions. Over to you, Beza.

Beza: Thanks, Gail. So, we welcome you to share in the Q&A box which practices and strategies that you've tried and what you're eager to try next. I know Gail shared a lot of really wonderful examples from the field and from her own personal work that I'm pretty sure will work for all of us as we engage in our work with staff. So, feel free to enter those in the Q&A box. As you do, I'll just talk over some of our next steps for our upcoming webinars and how we can continue this conversation.

So, we are almost transitioning to our Q&A session. I just want to go over that before we do that, on Tuesday, February 23rd, we'll have another webinar on the next R, which is providing the reason for practices and policies. And we'll also look forward to continuing this conversation on MyPeers. If you don't have a MyPeers account, please use the resource and the link and the resource widget, and you'll be able to get instructions on how to download and set up your account.

So, we hope that you'll join us in the next conversation and our Q&A. Please click that "after the webinar talk" widget either on your screen or from the widget list in the Q&A. And you'll have access to the evaluation following our next 15 minutes of Q&A. Thank you.