Leadership Style

Rationale:

The leadership style of the director of an early childhood program is perhaps the most critical factor influencing organizational effectiveness. The director must create an environment based on mutual respect in which individuals work together to accomplish collective goals. The success of this endeavor depends in large part on the director's ability to balance organizational needs with individual needs. Research in this area suggests that leaders who head the most effective organizations tend to be those who apply an integrated leadership style—the ability to adjust their style to the demands of each situation so that both organizational needs and individual needs are met.

Part I of this assessment was adapted from the work of Blake and Mouton (1994); Giammatteo (1975); Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson (2001); and Yukl (2002). It assesses three different leadership styles: the task-oriented style emphasizing organizational needs; the people-oriented style focusing on people and their individual needs; and the integrated style stressing an appropriate emphasis on both the center's needs and the individual worker's needs, depending on the situation. Part II of Assessment Tool #4 provides staff with an opportunity to assess the degree to which you the director exhibit 25 different leadership traits. It was adapted from the work of Neugebauer (1990).

Directions:

Distribute the "My Director..." feedback form and a blank envelope to all employees who work at your center more than 10 hours per week. (If you are a male, the gender of pronouns in some of the questions will first need to be changed.) You may also choose to give the form to other individuals (e.g., board members, supervisors, center owner) whom you feel have an important perspective on your performance. Be sure to complete the assessment yourself so you can compare your responses with the collective perceptions of others.

Place a box labeled Questionnaire Return Box in your center's office or staff room, and ask respondents to put the envelopes holding their completed, unsigned surveys in this box. Reassure individuals about the confidentiality of their responses.

Scoring:

The composite results of Part I summarize your staff's perceptions of your dominant leadership style. The following scoring sheet includes a brief description of the three leadership styles assessed by this questionnaire. To score Part I, tally the responses by noting with a mark each time a staff member checked a particular response:
1. ________  9. ________  17. ________  
2. ________  10. ________  18. ________  
3. ________  11. ________  19. ________  
4. ________  12. ________  20. ________  
5. ________  13. ________  21. ________  
6. ________  14. ________  22. ________  
7. ________  15. ________  23. ________  
8. ________  16. ________  24. ________  

Now total the marks for the following groups of responses. These totals will indicate how your leadership style is perceived.

**Task-oriented:** 1, 6, 8, 10, 14, 17, 19, 22  
Total ________

Achieving center goals is most important in a task-oriented leadership style. The director exhibits a strong concern for high performance and accomplishing tasks. Emphasis is on planning, directing, following procedures, and applying uniform standards and expectations for all. This director may be viewed as too structured, bureaucratic, and inflexible.

**People-oriented:** 2, 4, 7, 11, 15, 18, 20, 24  
Total ________

Achieving harmonious group relations is foremost in a people-oriented leadership style. The director places a strong emphasis on maintaining comfortable, friendly, and satisfying working conditions and allowing staff to exercise control and be self-directed with minimal intrusion of centerwide policies. Staff working in centers with this style of leadership may complain about the lack of order and coordination.

**Integrated:** 3, 5, 9, 12, 13, 16, 21, 23  
Total ________

Achieving both center goals and maintaining high morale is important in an integrated leadership style. This director is flexible and fair, recognizing that different situations may require a different emphasis on centerwide needs or individual needs.
To score Part II, use the Summary Form to record your own scores and those of each rater.

- Enter your own score for each of the 25 items in the column headed “Self-rating.”
- In the columns A to J under the heading “Other raters,” enter the scores for each individual who completed Part II of the “My Director…” feedback form.
- For each trait, generate an average score by totaling the respondents’ ratings and then dividing the total by the number of respondents. Record the result under the “Average” heading in the far right column. Do this for each of the 25 traits.
- Generate an average rating by each respondent by adding the scores going down each column. (The totals will range from 25–125.) Then divide each total (near the bottom of the form) by 25 (the number of traits).
- Generate an average overall rating for the “Other raters” by adding the individual average ratings (at the bottom) and dividing by the total by the number of respondents.

Interpreting the ratings: As you compare your own ratings with the average ratings of your colleagues, look for four themes:

- Agreed-upon strengths—traits that both you and your staff rated high.
- Unrealized strengths—traits that you rated low, but your staff rated high.
- Areas for growth—traits that both you and your staff rated low.
- Blind spots—traits that you rated high, but your staff rated low.

For a fuller discussion about how to interpret your leadership style, see Leadership in Action: How Effective Directors Get Things Done (Bloom, 2003).
“My Director…”

Dear Staff:

One of the hallmarks of an effective early childhood professional is the ability to reflect on his or her performance. Your feedback about my leadership style is important in helping me grow professionally. Please take a few minutes to complete this leadership style evaluation form. When you have finished, insert it in the attached envelope and put it in the Questionnaire Return Box in the office. There is no need for you to put your name on the form.

Thank you.

(Your signature)

Part I: Place a check (√) in front of the statement that most nearly reflects your director’s leadership style in different situations. (Check only one response in each group).

With respect to planning, my director...

1. _____ does most of the planning herself by setting goals, objectives, and work schedules for staff to follow. She then works out procedures and responsibilities for staff to follow.

2. _____ does very little planning, either by herself or with the staff. She tells the staff she has confidence in them to carry out their jobs in a responsible way.

3. _____ gets staff members together to assess center wide problems and discuss ideas and strategies for improvement. Together they set up goals and objectives and establish individual responsibilities.

With respect to work assignments and the day-to-day operation of the center, my director...

4. _____ checks with staff regularly to see if they are content and if they have the things they need. She does not see the necessity of precise job descriptions, preferring instead to let the staff determine the scope and nature of their jobs.

5. _____ is flexible in adapting job descriptions and changing work assignments as needed. Updates center polices and procedures depending on the needs of the staff, parents, children, and board.

6. _____ tends to go by the book. Expects staff to adhere to written job descriptions. Follows policies and procedures precisely.
With respect to leadership philosophy, my director...

7. _____ tends to emphasize people’s well-being, believing that happy workers will be productive workers.

8. _____ tends to emphasize hard work and a job well done. We are a results-oriented program.

9. _____ tends to emphasize both what we do and what we need as people.

During meetings, my director...

10. _____ keeps focused on the agenda and the topics that need to be covered.

11. _____ focuses on each individual's feelings and helps people express their emotional reactions to an issue.

12. _____ focuses on differing positions people take and how they deal with each other.

The primary goal of my director is...

13. _____ to meet the needs of parents and children while providing a healthy work climate for staff.

14. _____ to keep the center running efficiently.

15. _____ to help staff find fulfillment.

In evaluating the staff’s performance, my director...

16. _____ attempts to assess how each individual's performance has contributed to center wide achievement of goals.

17. _____ makes an assessment of each person’s performance and effectiveness according to predetermined established criteria applied equally to all staff.

18. _____ allows people to set their own goals and determine performance standards.
My director believes the best way to motivate someone who is not performing up to his/her ability is to...

19. _____ point out to the individual the importance of the job to be done.

20. _____ try to get to know the individual better in an attempt to understand why the person is not realizing his/her potential.

21. _____ work with the individual to redefine job responsibilities to more effectively contribute to center wide goals.

My director believes it is her role to...

22. _____ make sure that staff members have a solid foundation of knowledge and skill that will help them accomplish center goals.

23. _____ help people learn to work effectively in groups to accomplish group goals.

24. _____ help individuals become responsible for their own education and effectiveness, and take the first step toward realizing their potential.

What three words or phrases most accurately describe the leadership style of your director:

________________________   _________________________   ________________________