Everything I know about leadership, I learned from the movies!

presented by Martie Adler
Goals/Objectives

• Refine your own definition of leadership through discussion
• Highlight leadership lessons found in movies
• Provide a low risk learning environment
• Motivate you to continue learning!

What are your goals and objectives for this session?
Ten Movies

- Apollo 13
- The Bridge on the River Kwai
- Dead Poets Society
- Elizabeth
- Glengarry Glen Ross
- It's a Wonderful Life
- Norma Rae
- One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest
- Twelve Angry Men
- Twelve O'Clock High
- Vision Development
  Norma Rae
- Conflict Management/Collaboration
  Stand and Deliver
- Decision Making & Problem Solving
  Erin Brockovich
- Consensus Building/Teambuilding
  Legally Blonde 2
- Creativity & Innovation
  Stand and Deliver
- Effective Communication
  Erin Brockovich
- Mentor/Protégé Relationship
  Norma Rae
Vision Development

“A vision is a guiding image of what success looks like. It answers the question what do you wish to become...” (www.thepracticeofleadership.net)

Norma Rae is a southern textile worker employed in a factory with intolerable working conditions. This concern about the situation gives her the gumption to be the key associate to a visiting labor union organizer. Together, they undertake the difficult, and possibly dangerous, struggle to unionize her factory. (www.imdb.com)

In the opening scene of the movie, the viewer is immediately introduced to what it might really be like working all day in a textile factory. The operation of the machinery is deafening. At the end of the scene, we discover that is exactly the case as Norma Rae realizes her own mother cannot hear.

Norma Rae’s mother can’t hear. What vision for a workplace begins to take shape in Norma Rae?

Norma Rae wants to help but can’t. What’s holding her back?

How does passion ignite leadership in individuals?

Why else might we be motivated to take a leadership role?
Conflict Management/Collaboration

“Collaboration: the process by which people/organizations work together to accomplish a common mission.” (www.ttac.org)

Based on a true story, Jaime A. Escalante is a new teacher at James A. Garfield High School determined to change the system and challenge the students to a higher level of excellence. Leaving a steady job for a lowly position as a math teacher in a school where rebellion runs high and teachers are more focused on discipline than academics, Escalante is at first not well liked by students, receiving numerous taunts and threats. As the year progresses, he is able to win over the attention of the students by implementing innovative teaching techniques, using props and humor to illustrate abstract concepts of math and convey the necessity of math in everyday lives. He is able to transform even the most troublesome teens to dedicated students, ready to learn. (www.imdb.com)

In this scene, after learning they have been suspected of cheating and must retake the AP Calculus exam the students confront yet another obstacle to success; they only have one day to prepare for the retest.

How does the class manage this conflict? What is Kimo’s attitude? What role does this play in conflict management?

Kimo makes a commitment as the teacher, what is the commitment that the students make? How does this help with this conflict?

Are conflict and challenges negative/positive?
Decision Making & Problem Solving

“The ability to get answers to questions through a conscious, organized process.” (www.epa.gov)

Erin Brockovich is an unemployed single mother, desperate to find a job, but is having no luck. This losing streak even extends to a failed lawsuit against a doctor in a car accident she was in. With no alternative, she successfully browbeats her lawyer to give her a job in compensation for the loss. While no one takes her seriously, with her trashy clothes and earthy manners, that soon changes when she begins to investigate a suspicious real estate case involving the Pacific Gas & Electric Company. What she discovers is that the company is trying quietly to buy land that was contaminated by hexavalent chromium, a deadly toxic waste that the company is improperly and illegally dumping and, in turn, poisoning the residents in the area. As she digs deeper, Erin finds herself leading point in a series of events that would involve her law firm in one of the biggest class action lawsuits in American history against a multi-billion dollar corporation. (www.imdb.com)

In this scene, PG&E has sent a lawyer to negotiate a settlement deal.

The lawyer for PG&E is not really there to negotiate. How do Ed and Erin decide to handle this?

What does Ed’s reaction to the size of the company he is dealing with say to the lawyer?

How do they decide to solve the problem? Does anger have a positive/negative influence in this situation?
Consensus Building/Team Building

“Team building is developing working relationships. Team building is improving the performance of the team. Team building is about improving motivation, communication, support and trust within a team.” (www.team-wise.co.uk)

Elle Woods played by Reese Witherspoon is a Harvard lawyer who goes to Washington D.C. to change the law on animal testing. She runs into the political system, the U.S. Congress. Lucky for her, she meets a doorman, Sidney played by Bob Newhart, who shows her how the system works to get a bill passed. She writes `The Bruiser Bill' and puts it in the hopper of Congress. Elle needs 218 signatures to get her bill to be voted on. She gets some unlikely support from several members of Congress she befriends. To get more support, Elle has a Million Dog March on Washington. (www.imdb.com)

In this scene, Elle is building alliances within her own team.

What is happening at the start of the scene? Do you deal with morale busters?

How does Elle decide to deal with this?

What does she do to build consensus?

How do the others react to this?
Creativity & Innovation

“The goal of innovation is positive change, to make someone or something better. Innovation leading to increased productivity is the fundamental source of increasing wealth in an economy.” (www.wikipedia.org)

Based on a true story, Jaime A. Escalante is a new teacher at James A. Garfield High School determined to change the system and challenge the students to a higher level of excellence. Leaving a steady job for a lowly position as a math teacher in a school where rebellion runs high and teachers are more focused on discipline than academics, Escalante is at first not well liked by students, receiving numerous taunts and threats. As the year progresses, he is able to win over the attention of the students by implementing innovative teaching techniques, using props and humor to illustrate abstract concepts of math and convey the necessity of math in everyday lives. We all use math every day, a value that Escalante successfully instills. He is able to transform even the most troublesome teens to dedicated students, ready to learn. (www.imdb.com)

In this scene, Jaime tells the other teachers of his plan to teach calculus the following year.

How does he react to being told it can’t be done?

What expectations do the other teachers have for their students? What does Kimo think? Who is right?

What is innovative in this scene? Creative?

What do you think about Kimo’s ultimatum?
Effective Communication

“Communication is the process of attempting to convey information from a sender to a receiver with the use of a medium. Communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process requires a vast repertoire of skills in intrapersonal and interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating.” (www.wikipedia.org)

Erin Brockovich is an unemployed single mother, desperate to find a job, but is having no luck. This losing streak even extends to a failed lawsuit against a doctor in a car accident she was in. With no alternative, she successfully browbeats her lawyer to give her a job in compensation for the loss. While no one takes her seriously, with her trashy clothes and earthy manners, that soon changes when she begins to investigate a suspicious real estate case involving the Pacific Gas & Electric Company. What she discovers is that the company is trying quietly to buy land that was contaminated by hexavalent chromium, a deadly toxic waste that the company is improperly and illegally dumping and, in turn, poisoning the residents in the area. As she digs deeper, Erin finds herself leading point in a series of events that would involve her law firm in one of the biggest class action lawsuits in American history against a multi-billion dollar corporation. (www.imdb.com)

In this scene, we witness Erin’s communication skills.

What does Erin do that the others have not done? How does this help her communicate?

What kind of choices do we have when we are communicating?

What can we expect from good communication?

What is empathy? How is it displayed here? What is the result?
Mentor/Protégé Relationship

“A wise and trusted counselor or teacher.” (www.dictionary.com)

Norma Rae is a southern textile worker employed in a factory with intolerable working conditions. This concern about the situation gives her the gumption to be the key associate to a visiting labor union organizer. Together, they undertake the difficult, and possibly dangerous, struggle to unionize her factory. (www.imdb.com)

In this scene, we see Reuben mentoring Norma Rae.

Why do you think she is asking about how smart his wife is? What message is Reuben sending in his response?

How does a mentor help Norma Rae realize her vision? Could Norma Rae succeed on her own?

Can a mentor gain from this relationship?
Leadership Lessons from the Movies

Learning Cycle

Conscious Incompetence

Conscious Competence

Unconscious Incompetence

Unconscious Competence

Notes:
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Visit us online at www.amsa.com

Martie Adler is a Professional Services Consultant with American Student Assistance (ASA). Martie has a diverse background in the higher education industry that spans over thirty years, and has held a variety of senior level leadership positions in financial aid, financial services, and student loan operations. Martie has been actively involved in NASFAA, MASFAA, and COHEAO providing collaborative leadership at multiple levels.

Martie has provided consultative services in financial aid, default management, regulatory compliance, leadership, change management, and organizational development to organizations for over twenty years. Martie received her B.S. and M.S. degrees from Purdue University in the areas of organizational development and training.
Resources

www.fireleadership.gov.

Teaching Leadership: Innovative Approaches for the 21st Century by Rajnandini Pillai, Susan Stites-Doe.