ASHS Leadership Academy Update
Heather Kirk-Ballard

The inaugural ASHS Leadership Academy held its second Seminar entitled “Bias, Culture and Conflict in Communication” on October 8, 2021. The seminar built on the previous training that focused on “Leadership and Self-Deception - Getting Out of the Box” and we covered important topics such as unacknowledged bias, conflict resolution, intercultural competence development, and an introduction to crucial conversations.

We have learned so much in just the first two months of training. The training team has really put a great deal of thought and time into the development of effective leadership programming.

I asked the academy members what was most impactful about the second training and got their feedback. Here is what they all had to say:

Ryan Contreras first connected the dots on the previous training and pointed out the importance of recognizing the differences in “Being right and assertive when you’re ‘in the box’ vs. ‘out of the box’” and he went on to say “It’s comforting/reassuring to read we all can be malleable on how to handle conflict”.

Other members said: “The goal of the Intercultural Competence Development (IDI) is to develop an understanding of cultural commonalities and to recognize and celebrate cultural differences…” “also...working to improve developmental orientation adaptation in a personal and professional context.” - Mae Culumber

“The most impactful part of the second Leadership training came from the TKI (Thomas-Kilmann Instrument Conflict) training. I think knowing my conflict modes is very helpful— especially because they were different from what I thought. It is great to know the weakness of my conflict modes and how I should try my best to improve my skills and strategies to better handle conflict” - Wusheng Liu

“The second seminar was very enlightening, informative, and provided ample opportunity for self-reflection. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was particularly insightful, as it provided insight into our perceived versus actual cultural mindsets and where we fall on the IDI theoretical continuum. As we recognize or understand our current mindset on the continuum, we can better understand how we can personally grow and increase our mindset on that continuum”. -Chad Miller

“I think the most useful part of the seminar was learning about how different conflict modes can be useful in various situations. Conflict is hard for a lot of people to handle and if we can learn to use the various modes to our advantage and preemptively avoid insurmountable conflict, we can become more effective leaders”. -Julie Campbell

As for me, one of the most important take-home messages was that conflict is not necessarily a bad thing in itself, but the way that we handle the conflict that can make or break or ability to be effective leaders. I enjoyed learning about the five conflict modes—competing, collaborative, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. Through the TKI assessment, I learned what my strengths are and where there is room for improvement. At the end of the day, it is all about improving communication, increasing engagement, and improving team efficiency.

This journey is just beginning, and we’ve already come so far. I look forward to continued personal growth in addition to forging a stronger connection with fellow members of the academy in the coming months from our one-of-a-kind training team.
ASHS Leadership Academy Class I from left to right: Julie Campbell, Heather Kirk-Ballard, Ryan Contreras, Chad Miller, Mae Culumber, and Wusheng Liu.