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# Inside the Black Box

## Developing Student-Leaders by Modeling Questioning

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Past is the past. We're not going to change that. We learned a lot of things in the past and now we've got to think about the present and future. Still a lot of games and we need wins. Play together, know each other more and create more chemistry. That's what we need to do.

*Washington Wizards center [Nenê](#), after a 114-101 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves, Friday, January 25, 2013*

The work of groups is, at its heart, **applied learning**. Learning to work together. Understanding the goal, and what it takes to get there. Learning about the challenges and opportunities in your competitive environment. Learning your competitors' strengths and weaknesses. Making friends who can help you. Learning to trust your teammates. Learning to trust yourself. Learning to accept criticism. Learning how to be true to you at your best.

So if the work of the group is applied learning, **what is the work of leadership?**

### **Leaders spark and support learning within their group.**

Leaders ask questions and help group members arrive at shared, action-oriented answers. The first two questions are the biggies. They are the vision and the plan, the mountain and the journey:

*Where are we going?*

*How will we get there?*

But these big questions are not enough. To help ensure that the answers to them fit your group, you need to ask and find real answers to three 'reality-check' questions:

*Who are we?*

*Where are we?*

*How are we doing?*

And to ensure that all this Q&A becomes part of the shared culture and DNA of the group, leaders needs to **think empathetically** about two 'connection' questions that are always on the minds of every single group member:

*Why should I care?*

*Do I understand?*

Asking questions is hard. Finding real answers is even harder. It takes patience, humility, and courage. Arriving at answers that your team cares about, and is committed to, is the true work of leadership.