

# Leadership Under Fire: Presidential Lessons

## Overview:

Since 1789, the President of the United States has been a key player on both the national and international stages. Those who have held the highest office in the land have led the nation through good times and bad, through war and in peace, through periods of growth and development, and through times of stress and conflict. The basic outline for the presidency is found in Article II of the *United States Constitution*. Several constitutional amendments have brought changes to the original design of the executive branch. Those changes have helped to maintain the relevancy of the presidency since its creation in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Few, if any, leadership roles offer the massive challenges and enormous opportunities faced daily by the President of the United States. Through 47 administrations, 45 individual presidents have brought their own unique style to what many consider the most powerful and influential office ever created by man. Although some have affected the office far more than others, each of our presidents have contributed to the enduring legacy of the office. The lessons on leadership provided by the presidents are a central element of their legacy. A rich sampling of those lessons forms the base upon which this seminar and keynote are built.

## Logistics:

This seminar is offered on the National Mall in Washington, DC as either a half-day (2.5 hours) or a full-day (5 hours) experience for participants. For the full-day experience, half of the seminar is offered at a host facility arranged by the group. The other half is offered on the Mall. Groups provide their own transportation when traveling to and from the Mall. Restroom and refreshment facilities are available along the seminar route. This walking seminar covers approximately 1.5 miles.

Leadership Under Fire: Presidential Lessons can also be offered at any site of your choosing that can support a Mac PowerPoint enhancement. With the aid of historic and contemporary photographs and illustrations, this seminar can be brought to life for your group as a keynote, a breakout session, or an extended seminar.

## Summary of Topics

### ARC Leadership

Seminars and keynote presentations in the *Leadership Under Fire* series, each offer their own distinctive leadership lessons and insights. Those lessons and insights are based on specific historical events, occurrences, and trends. They are discussed and unified as they relate to three critical attributes common among great leaders — Accessibility, Reliability, and Commitment. When brought together, those attributes are the basis of an ARC leadership model.

### Presidential Lessons & Insights

This presidential leadership experience taps into the personal, professional, and political characters and dispositions of the 45 individuals who have served as our nation's chief executive. Historically focused attention is given to the unique leadership styles individual presidents have brought to the office. Notable presidential

decisions and actions are thoughtfully examined. They are then used to illustrate and demonstrate how those who have served have turned strategic thinking into tactical action. The lessons offered are poignantly applicable to 21st century leaders in virtually any field of endeavor. Examples of these formidable and historically-based lessons include:

1. Enduring leaders put organizational principles, protocols, and the greater good above self-interest.
2. Committed leaders respect the rule of law.
3. Optimistically confident leaders dare to think big.
4. Accessible leaders understand and appreciate free will, and they strive to work from a position of common ground.
5. Reliable leaders demonstrate the ability and desire to be empathetically influential.
6. Empowering leaders know how to bring order out of chaos.

## Participant Feedback:

Our administrative team at Annville-Cleona School District had the extraordinary opportunity to delve into the profound leadership lessons drawn from the Gettysburg battlefield commanders, Washington DC presidents, and the heroes of Flight 93 through Dr. Mike McGough's engaging seminars. The experiences have been nothing short of transformative.

Dr. McGough masterfully wove together historical insights with contemporary leadership strategies, providing us with practical tools to enhance our roles as educational leaders.

One of the most impactful takeaways was the ARC model—being Accessible, Reliable, and Committed. Dr. McGough's passion for these timeless qualities challenged us to reflect on how we can embody them daily in service to our students, staff, and community.

The seminars not only inspired but empowered us to integrate these historical leadership principles into the fabric of our district's mission to Engage, Inspire, and Empower. We are deeply grateful for Dr. Mike's expertise and the opportunity to apply these powerful lessons to create a lasting impact within our schools.

Dr. Krista M. Antonis, Superintendent  
Annville-Cleona School District  
Annville, Pennsylvania

Dr. McGough's seminars are engaging, thought provoking, and continue to provide meaningful connections for our leadership team and the challenges we face today. Mike's ability to bring history to life and directly translate the lessons learned from historic leaders to modern day applicability is simply amazing. Dr. McGough's seminar is certain to be the highlight of any leadership retreat!

Dr. Kevin Peart, Superintendent  
Lampeter-Strasburg School District  
Lampeter, Pennsylvania

Dr. Mike McGough has been an invaluable partner to our Virginia Commonwealth University Humphrey Fellowship Program, consistently delivering transformative workshops and seminars on leadership for our mid-career international scholars. Dr. Mike's dynamic storytelling and encyclopedic knowledge of history transport participants into the past, illuminating timeless leadership lessons. Whether guiding Fellows through the intricacies of presidential decision-making or illustrating leadership under fire at historical battlefields, he inspires reflection and personal growth. His engaging, interactive approach makes history relevant to contemporary global leadership challenges, leaving a lasting impact on all who learn from him.

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