

Leading for Learning: The Leadership Role of the Teachers in the Classroom

Comment [R1]: Center the title

Classrooms provide a unique model for leadership strategies. Unlike leadership situations in business, members of a classroom often do not choose one another. In this respect, leadership from a teacher may more closely resemble military leadership than democracy. Evertson and Poole (2008) noted that the influence of prescribed content and assessments on the group alters usual leadership dynamics. Teachers mediate between the expectations of the school, parents, and student learning – all within the space of a classroom and a class period. In this delicate situation, the teacher must provide effective leadership so that learning can occur. The overall classroom experience is influenced by inherent classroom dynamics, variables that are shaped by these dynamics and the teacher, and the teacher’s leadership strategies. By interacting with and improving these influences, teachers can promote an environment of learning.

Comment [R2]: Notice how this is in the past. MLA asks you to keep it present tense, but in APA use past.

Classrooms can possess a variety of dynamics which work together to form the overall atmosphere of the room. Adelman and Taylor (2007) defined classroom dynamics in terms of climate. The climate or general “feel” of a classroom is a combination of social, developmental, and physical aspects. Adelman and Taylor also asserted the crucial role of a positive classroom climate for learning to occur (2007). Esquith (2007) pointed out that classrooms are automatically situations in which dependence occurs because students rely on the teacher’s leadership to promote a safe environment. First, Esquith denounced the current prominence of fear as the basis for classroom climate; instead, positive learning environments must be based on trust (2007). Because the students’ reliance on teachers as models, teachers can model the social practice of trust for students to emulate (Esquith 2007). Brody (2007) also emphasized the value of trust and the teacher’s role in creating a trusting environment. Although the teacher establishes classroom norms, students perpetuate the norms as new students enter the group (Evertson and

Comment [R3]: Thesis statement. The writer introduced the idea that classrooms need strategies and strong leadership. This sentence shows us that the paper will discuss ways teachers can promote an environment of learning.

Poole 2008). The teacher is responsible to lead students into an environment of social maturity through trust and respect in order to promote a positive climate for learning.

Two primary variables contribute to the classroom environment: clarity and security. Without clarity, students struggle to understand the objectives that they must meet. Pankake (2007) pointed out that both the teacher and the students must understand the expectations of the class time. According to McEwan (2003), having high standards is not enough. In order to be effective, instructional leaders must communicate these standards in a meaningful way. In addition to clarity of lessons and assignments, clearly articulated codes of behavior and community also provide stability in the classroom (Pankake 2007). Although behavioral codes and learning outcomes should exemplify clarity, consistent adherence to these standards produces security. Both Evertson and Poole (2008) and Esquith (2007) emphasized the need for both clarity and consistency about discipline. When students both understand expectations and recognize consistent consequences, they experience security in their actions.

There are a variety of leadership strategies that can positively or negatively affect a classroom's environment and effectiveness. Herbst-Damm and Kulik (2005) emphasized that classroom management begins long before school starts, during the planning stages when teachers articulate their desired learning outcomes and behavior codes. Bartlett (2004) recounted how some college professors developed "contracts" for the beginning of each semester. These teachers sought to remediate chaotic classrooms by clearly articulating behavioral expectations and asking students to intentionally agree to them (Bartlett 2004). Most professors found that students appreciated this intentional action and that student behavior improved as a result (Bartlett 2004). Intentional design and purpose on the part of the teacher are the foundation on which the rest of the positive leadership strategies must be built.

Comment [R4]: Topic sentence. We know what the rest of the paragraph will discuss.

Comment [R5]: Transition word

Comment [R6]: Dates go with their corresponding authors.

Once school begins, individual attention and positive language significantly contribute to effectiveness. Gupton (2010) pointed out that while there are many ways to teach, the best styles take student needs into account. Personalized attention to students comes from objective knowledge of learning styles coupled with empathy for individual learners (Gupton 2010). Closely monitoring student achievement and needs and adapting lessons help to prevent conflict and promote a positive environment (Evertson and Poole 2008). **In addition** to personalized attention, the use of language contributes to a positive classroom. Wood and Freeman-Loftis (2012) examined the qualities of positive speech in a classroom, concluding that specific praise, professional tone, and directness have the greatest impact on students. Language tone and word choice not only convey the speaker's impression of the hearer but also reinforces and shapes the way the hearer perceives herself (Wood and Freeman-Loftis 2012). **Thus**, a teacher can communicate respect to students and teach them to respect themselves at the same time. Although personal attention and specific language are taxing, the rewards in terms of student growth and classroom environment prove the value of cultivating these practices.

Both inside and outside the classroom, learning depends heavily on teacher's ability to lead students into a positive climate structured with clarity and bound by security. Many leadership styles can work toward this goal, although key activities include thorough preparation, personalized attention, and positive language. Evertson and Poole articulated a well-known truth among teachers: that a classroom environment is the sum of a thousand small decisions made on a daily basis (2008). Together, these practices promote a prime learning environment for both teachers and students. Adelman (2007) demonstrated the value of learning environments for students by pointing out studies showing that classroom climate may have a greater effect on marginalized students (2007). Teachers who seek to aid marginalized students, therefore, would

Comment [R7]: Transition words

Comment [R8]: Transition word

Comment [R9]: Conclusion. Opening sentence already gives the reader the idea that the paper will now be looking at the big picture. Remember the hour glass rule. Begin generally, give specifics in the body, and end with big picture ideas.

emphasize positive climate even more for the sake of these students. Considering the importance of education for students' success later in life, teachers bear a great responsibility to provide effective leadership in the classroom in order to promote learning. While classroom leadership takes place on a daily basis, the results of effective classroom leadership extend far beyond a class's place and time.

Comment [R10]: Ends positively.

References

Adelman, H. S., and Taylor, L. (2007). Classroom climate. In Lee, S. W. (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of school psychology* (pp. 147-183). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Comment [R11]: This is an article in an encyclopedia. Only write the author's full last name. Use initials for his first and middle name if provided.

Bartlett, T. (2004). Taking control of the classroom. *Chronicle of Higher Education: The Faculty*, 51(4), A8.

Comment [R12]: This is a periodical. Notice that while the encyclopedia title's major words are not capitalized with the exception of the first word, the important words of this title are. Italicize the volume number but not the issue number in parentheses.

Brody, J. E. (2007, December 28). The trustworthy teacher. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>

Comment [R13]: This is a website. If there is no author, continue with the next available information. If there is no date, write (n.d.).

Esquith, R. (2007). *Teach like your hair's on fire: the methods and madness inside room 56*. New York: Viking.

Evertson, C., & Poole, I. (2008). Proactive classroom management. In T. Good (Ed.), *21st century education: A reference handbook* (pp. I-131-I-140). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Comment [R14]: Whenever there is an editor, write the word In. before his first and middle (if provided) initials and full last name. This source is a handbook that is in print.

Guton, S. L. (2010). *The instructional leadership toolbox* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Comment [R15]: This source is a typical print book by one author.

Herbst-Damm, K. L., & Kulik, J. A. (2005). What is your student hearing? *Educational Psychology*, 24, 224-229. Doi:10.1039/0235-8299.24.2.225

Comment [R16]: This source is an online article, such as an article from a database. If the Doi is not available, write Retrieved from www.xxx.com (the URL) in its place.

McEwan, E. K. (2003). *7 steps to effective instructional leadership* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Pankake, A. (2007). Classroom management. In F. W. English (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of educational leadership and administration*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Comment [R17]: Article in an encyclopedia

Wood, C., and Freeman-Loftis, B. (2012). Want positive behavior? Use positive language. *Education Digest*, 78(2), 31-35.

Comment [R18]: Journal that is in print