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Teachers as Leaders

The only safe ship in a storm is leadership.

—Faye Wattleton

In early America, when teachers ran their own one-room schools, structured all their own curricula, and recognized their ability to impact the learning of every student, teacher leadership was an imperative, not an option. As one-room schoolhouses became multiroom buildings and then multibuilding school systems, however, the status of the teacher moved from expert to employee. The increasing size of schools and their complexities also led to administrative hierarchies and power structures that placed teachers at the lower end of the order and physically removed them from the administration of the organization, which was moved to a “central office.” Schuman (2004) explains, “as managing school systems has become more complex and jobs more specialized, it is no surprise that these organizations have become increasingly bureaucratic” (p. 250).

Unfortunately, educational reform initiatives in the nineteenth century, which were designed to increase professionalism within teaching, only succeeded in increasing school systems’ bureaucracy by standardizing hiring practices, implementing uniform curriculum programs, and applying rigid social policies. As growing educational systems became more centralized and the administrative “step removed” became a “step up,” even the professional development of teachers was removed from their control. Currently, when the emphasis on achievement and accountability is used as a prescription, it can be interpreted as a mandate that threatens teachers and their students. With such a background, it should not be

surprising that some teachers do not think of themselves as leaders or may be hesitant to embrace a role they believe may remove them from their classrooms or separate them from their peers.

■ WHO ARE TEACHER-LEADERS?

Despite extensive research in the general area of educational leadership, the definition of teacher leadership remains varied because teachers engage in such a wide range of activities and roles that may involve leadership. For example, Sherrill (1999) submits that teacher-leaders are “clinical faculty, clinical educators, teachers-in-residence, master teachers, lead teachers, and clinical supervisors” (p. 57), while Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) see teacher-leaders as those “aspiring to lead school reform” (p. 5). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) define teacher-leaders as those teachers who lead within and beyond the classroom . . . identify with and contribute to a community of teacher-learners and leaders . . . and influence others towards improved educational practice” (pp. 5–8). In addition, teacher-leader definitions are informed by important studies that identify leadership characteristics, emphasize strategic planning, and address moral issues in educational settings, but the connection between these theories and the traditional classroom teacher’s mission—student learning—is not clear. Moreover, the application of leadership theory in the professional development of teachers has not incorporated all teachers, their classroom practice, and their continued learning. In contrast, the REACH teacher leadership model presented in this book approaches the concept of teacher leadership inclusively. Because it is designed for professionals, the REACH model is based in theory and supported by research, but it specifies action. Leadership is not something bestowed upon a teacher to rise above one’s role, but should be considered a necessary step in fulfilling that role in the classroom as a model learner, effective teacher, and participant in continuous school improvement.

As early as 1986, a report funded by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recommended that school systems identify lead teachers who would exhibit outstanding expertise and teaching skills that could then be emulated by other teachers in the school. The notion of influence over peers and with administrators is echoed by Leithwood and Riehl (2003): “At the core of most definitions of leadership are two functions: providing direction and exercising influence” (p. 2). Such an interpretation of leadership would recognize a teacher-leader as someone different from most teachers, someone in a special category. Yet Forster (1997) asserts that teacher leadership is both a right and responsibility of all teaching professionals. “All teachers must be educational leaders in order to optimize the teaching and learning experience for themselves and their students; and, as professionals, they are expected to do whatever it takes to make that happen” (p. 83). The School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative Report (2001) is in accord with the inclusive approach of the REACH model for teacher leadership and advances the claim that leadership from teachers is crucial to educational reform:

Mischaracterized though they often are as incompetent know-nothings, teachers are, paradoxically, also widely viewed as

education's "franchise players," its indispensable but unappreciated leaders in the truest meaning of the word. It is unarguable that they instill, mold, and ultimately control much of the learning and intellectual development of the young people in their charge. It would be difficult to find a more authentic but unacknowledged example of leadership in modern life. (p. 1)

Teacher-leaders place their students' learning as their primary goal and work within their own classrooms to improve student achievement. This is and should be one of the most important practices of teacher leadership. Additionally, teacher-leaders collaborate with other educators to extend their own learning, advance successful school improvement efforts through professional development, and support shared vision and values. These four roles of teacher-leaders—improving student achievement, extending their own learning, collaborating for school improvement, and supporting shared vision and values—evolve from knowledge, dedication, and experience. But teacher leadership need not be restricted to "years in service"; it can be developed and nurtured in all teachers. This chapter first discusses those actions that characterize a teacher-leader through the REACH model for teacher-leaders, then provides strategies for strengthening initial leadership steps for any teacher willing to REACH his or her capabilities (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 REACH Model: Behaviors That Together Define a Teacher-Leader

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| <p>Risk-Taking—Teachers who seek challenges and create new processes</p> <p>Effectiveness—Teachers who model best practice, professional growth, and heart</p> <p>Autonomy—Teachers who display initiative, independent thought, and responsibility</p> <p>Collegiality—Teachers who promote community and interactive communication skills</p> <p>Honor—Teachers who demonstrate integrity, honesty, and professional ethics</p> |
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SOURCE: Merideth, 2000.

REACH MODEL FOR TEACHER-LEADERS ■

When taken together, the sum of the behaviors named in the REACH model equals the type of performance ideal teacher-leaders exemplify in their classrooms, their schools, and their professional learning communities. The sections that follow discuss each element of these behaviors individually for clarity and understanding.

RISK-TAKING AND TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Effectiveness

Autonomy

Collegiality

Honor

Early adapters who are willing to try new things, teacher-leaders are risk-takers who relish challenges and pursue professional growth for their own satisfaction and to increase student achievement. These teachers identify with and help solidify the mission statement of a school even as they contribute to the adoption of new approaches to teaching and school improvement processes. Risk-takers have often been called “movers and shakers” because of their responsiveness to problems and their willingness to participate in decision making, to “shake up” the system, and to tackle the status quo. Of course, classroom teachers solve problems and make decisions every day, but the characteristic that enables teachers to become leaders is a take-charge attitude—an internal locus of control—and the confidence and work ethic to set and accomplish goals.

Internal locus of control is the perception of control over outcomes and the belief that one has the competency to perform the behaviors upon which the outcome depends. This is closely related to personal efficacy—an individual’s evaluation of her or his performance capabilities. For example, teachers with a strong internal locus of control are confident of their ability to make accurate, proactive decisions. A teacher’s perception of efficacy involves a judgment about her or his ability to succeed at a task, such as increasing student achievement in mathematics. The important aspect of both internal locus of control and personal efficacy as each relates to leadership is that they are internal; that is, teacher-leaders believe that outcomes are associated with their actions rather than with luck, fate, or external factors.

These internal aspects of control are significant to leadership development because they result in enhanced self-esteem and confidence, positive motivators of goal and task attainment. Teachers with a strong internal locus of control are also more inclined to suspend gratification, are more persistent during difficult tasks, and look to the future with more hope. Moreover, Goodard, Wayne, and Hoy (2004) report about teacher efficacy that

teachers’ sense of efficacy is a significant predictor of productive teaching practices. . . . The higher the teacher’s sense of efficacy, the more likely they are to tenaciously overcome obstacles and persist in the face of failure. Such resiliency, in turn, tends to foster innovative teaching and student learning. (p. 4)

This resiliency is a necessity for risk-takers at all levels.

Why would a teacher-leader take risks? What are the benefits of risk-taking? Wheatley (2005) maintains, “The capacity to create and adapt is universal. Scientists keep discovering more species; they don’t know if there are ten million or fifty million species. Yet each one is an embodiment of innovations that worked” (p. 75). Taking a managed risk by introducing new teaching/learning strategies that have a research base or participating in new systems within an educational organization supports change and the possibility of new paradigms or adaptations for individuals as well as the whole. As teacher-leaders step up and take risks, however, there are bound to be some mistakes. But mistakes can also be learning experiences, and support given by administration and other teachers to make adjustments and try again can also serve as marks of leadership recognition.

Students also benefit when they see their teachers taking risks, extending boundaries, and stretching their capabilities. A teacher who tries new teaching models or uses new technology in her or his classroom takes risks very publicly. However, teachers who are not complacent, but who are excited about learning and expanding their skills through managed risk-taking, provide role models for students venturing into new areas. Wilson (1993) supports the notion that teacher-leaders are risk-takers who challenge processes and seize opportunities: "Teacher-leaders . . . go out of their way to find innovative, exciting programs, both for the benefit of their students as well as themselves" (p. 24). These are the teachers who motivate students by creating meaningful learning experiences wherein students learn from both the process and the outcomes expected. These are also the teachers who are actually energized by teaching; who find themselves tired but satisfied after delivering a well-planned, activity-oriented day.

Education is a loan to be repaid with the gift of self.

—Lady Bird Johnson

The positive impact of risk-taking for teacher-leaders must be balanced by the reality that everyone does not value innovation or want to see the status quo upset. The School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative Report asserts, "With some exceptions, the very nature of today's schools militates against innovation, much less relatively free expression or professional 'leadership' by anyone other than statutory supervisors" (p. 7). Teachers in this type of circumstance may face resentment from other teachers who feel that teacher-leaders are breaking ranks with those who would be satisfied with maintenance of current conditions. They may also find it difficult to identify models or mentors who exercise teacher leadership outside of an administrative position. Obviously, teacher leadership is an opportunity for schools to engage in shared leadership and relate closely to students, but schools must also support this leadership by professional development and a network of colleagues who encourage risk-taking.

Risk-Taking

EFFECTIVENESS AND TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Autonomy

Collegiality

Honor

Teacher-leaders are also effective teachers who exhibit best practice, professional growth, and "heart" (the affective actions of caring, mentoring, and living one's values). Obviously, teacher-leaders must have expertise in their subject areas in order to establish credibility, but they also need to be able to effectively carry out the following activities:

- Establish connections among disciplines
- Know a variety of teaching methodologies in order to deliver the subject to all students

- Develop curriculum consistent with subject discipline and developmental level
- Make informed choices about textbooks and materials
- Embrace technology that enhances learning
- Establish relevance to students' lives

Teacher-leaders are indeed professional educators as well as intellectual and critical learners in the teaching process. The depth of their disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge empowers teachers as professionals by providing authority and credibility with students and other educational stakeholders. These teachers know that their learning did not end as they began their teaching career, but rather that teaching demands a continued commitment to the interrelationship of subject knowledge and educational practice. The current emphases on teacher expertise and effectiveness in classrooms are strongly linked to the "standards" movement in education. Standards for student achievement may be developed locally, by professional associations, states, or the federal government, but their purpose is to make classroom learning tasks clear and to hold both teachers and students accountable for that learning.

To be effective, then, a teacher-leader must understand how to meet standards assigned to or adopted by his or her school district and be evaluated positively. Continuing to learn, refine, and implement content and pedagogical knowledge, as well as knowledge about learners and learning, moves a novice teacher into the effective category. This is a vital step when, research confirms, "teachers make a profound impact on student learning" (Marzano, 2003). In fact, "there are strong empirical grounds for believing that teachers can and *do* make a difference and that consistent high-quality teaching, supported by strategic professional development, *can* and *does* deliver dramatic improvements in student learning" (Rowe, 2003, p. 27). When classroom teachers model best practice and develop professional expertise, they become effective teacher-leaders because they see leadership as their duty and their due.

In a world where the most powerful resource is information, continuing to grow intellectually is the only way to sustain professional expertise. To this end, effective teacher-leaders practice the following intellectual behaviors:

- They value their continuing education.
- They assess their teaching in terms of their students' achievement.
- They read and analyze educational research.
- They conduct action research.
- They deepen their subject discipline knowledge.
- They update their technology skills.
- They develop curricular materials appropriate to their classes' developmental levels.
- They scaffold tasks to allow for student success.
- They create authentic activities that promote connections to the work world.
- They help students assume a progressive transference to their own responsibility for learning.

Leadership, however, is not just a function of the mind. Just as learning does not exist only as a cognitive task, leadership also demands heart. This aspect of leadership provides self-knowledge and the courage to act on that knowledge. The element of “heart” is more than beliefs and values—it is the passion that helps define a person and his or her reality. Teacher-leaders who are influenced by heart not only care for their students, but they also seek what is best for them and empathize with their concerns.

“The power for authentic leadership,” according to Palmer (2000), “is found not in external arrangements but in the human heart. Authentic leaders in every setting—from families to nation-states—aim at liberating the heart, their own and others’, so that its powers can liberate the world” (p. 76). While this may seem like a tall order, it can begin simply by self-reflection and the courage to make choices that enhance others’ welfare. Teacher-leaders exemplify leadership with heart by being approachable and sharing their ideas, time, and support. They listen closely to what others say and listen as well to nonverbal signals that indicate distress, anxiety, or fear. They also empathize with others and provide some flexibility and accommodations when appropriate. The willingness of teacher-leaders to sincerely care about others enables them to form strong, positive relationships and to model the values they espouse. Sergioivanni (2005) argues that schools have a “heartbeat,” and, “when leaders strengthen the heartbeat, their schools become stronger and more resilient. . . . Change begins with us—with our heart, head, and hands that drive our leadership practice” (p. 11).

You have to have something to eat and a little love in your life before you can hold still for anybody’s sermon on how to behave.

—Billie Holiday

Risk-Taking

Effectiveness

AUTONOMY AND TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Collegiality

Honor

Autonomous teacher-leaders are not islands unto themselves, but rather those who display initiative, independent thought, and responsibility. School improvement movements have encouraged teachers to reflect on their own classroom practice. However, teachers have not generally been encouraged to develop and voice individual opinions about curricular and policy matters that affect their students or school as a whole. In the interest of their “service” profession, too many teachers have been made to feel like servants, taking orders from distant administrators, politicians, and special interest groups who have no knowledge of their classrooms or the needs of their students. For example, *The MetLife Survey: Educational Leadership* (MetLife, 2003) is a recent report in which parents, teachers, and principals were surveyed about the exercise of leadership in their schools.

Although parents and teachers have different relationships with the principal, the evaluation of the exercise of leadership by the principal was consistent between these two groups, but markedly different from the principal's self-evaluation, as reported in the figures below:

- Twice as many principals as teachers or parents rate themselves (the principal at their school) as excellent at respecting the people in the school (principals: 78%, teachers: 36%, parents: 34%).
- One-third of teachers (35%) and parents (34%) say their principal is excellent at encouraging students to achieve, yet six in ten principals (59%) give themselves the highest rating in this area.
- More than half of principals (53%) describe themselves as excelling in being a good listener, compared to only three in ten teachers (30%) and parents (27%) who feel this way.
- Four in ten teachers (38%) and parents (42%) say their principal is excellent at being a visible presence in the school, compared to two-thirds of principals (67%) who rate themselves as excellent in this area. (p. 5)

These statistics are unsettling because they reveal that teachers and parents feel their voices are not heard or valued by a principal who feels that she or he is doing fine. *The MetLife Survey: Educational Leadership* (MetLife, 2003) statistics also communicate a real disconnect between how teachers perceive they are being treated by their principals and principals' perceptions of how they are relating to staff. The principal's perceived lack of respect, for example, may affect a teacher's sense of confidence as well as general staff morale. This lack of self-confidence is antithetical to teacher leadership because it stifles teachers' responsiveness to problems necessary for risk-taking, it reveals doubts about expertise necessary for effective functioning, and it negates autonomy by discouraging independent thought.

Should all teachers simply act as they see fit? Autonomy is not anarchy, and a teacher is still part of a system. Teacher-leaders who show initiative practice independent thought, see school district curriculum outlines as guides and standards as goals. How they choose to design curriculum or meet national or state goals need not be in conflict with the standards movement for school improvement. National and state standards should and do provide goals for student outcomes, but decisions about how to address and assess those standards should lie with professional educators within schools. Lederhouse (2001) stresses the importance of decision making in the next paragraph:

It is this decision-making ability, I believe, that defines any profession. . . . We need a teaching position with more imaginative space, more ownership, more room to make a difference. This comes only from having the autonomy to make one's own educational decisions. (p. 38)

When teacher-leaders are given these types of opportunities, they are by extension endowed with the autonomy necessary to effectively carry out initiatives focusing on student achievement.

What about teacher accountability? The flip side of autonomy is responsibility. When teachers assume decision-making roles, they assume responsibility for decisions involving collaborative management and their professional work lives. Consequently, teacher-leaders must accept the responsibility of helping with school improvement plans and addressing students' continuing cognitive and social growth. In addition, they must accept responsibility for reflection, inquiry, and improvement of their own practice. When teacher-leaders are responsible for themselves, they are truly empowered, finding their power in knowledge. Teachers who challenge themselves to undertake action research, for example, enjoy a greater confidence by finding the answers they are looking for in classroom questions. Inquiry into educational issues and learning new instructional methods also promotes this type of self-trust in classroom curriculum decisions, just as sharing results and teaching strategies with teachers builds community. Responsibility, however, does not mean accepting more work indiscriminately or doing others' work; rather, it means organizing and performing one's own work as a self-manager and leader.

Risk-Taking

Effectiveness

Autonomy

COLLEGIALITY AND TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Honor

Teacher-leaders who promote community and practice interactive communication skills provide the cement needed to secure the foundation of a school culture. The community of a school is closely related to its culture because the success of the community is dependent on organizational factors and the quality of its members. Many teachers feel the isolation of their classrooms acutely and wish this could be changed, yet they are reluctant to give up the privacy of that isolation or to violate the privacy of another teacher. Teacher privacy is the uninformed equalizer of a school, the "don't-ask, don't-tell" unwritten policy within schools. It is a way to believe that all classrooms are the same and all teachers are the same without any data to back up this belief. This is a myth, and teachers know it, but it is a safe myth and one that absolves teachers of the responsibility of assessing themselves and other members of their profession.

To ensure quality practice in schools, teachers need to have a community that respects them as contributing professionals. Teachers will, however, have to accept their responsibility within this community to ensure quality and give up the sentimental metaphor that calls a school culture a "family." While the notion of family generally carries a warm connotation, it is an inappropriate metaphor for a community of learners because it reinforces a hierarchical system with the head of the family (the principal) in charge of supervising and directing the actions of the other members. In

this scenario, teachers are not imagined as the coparents; they are too often considered the kids. This metaphor also fosters dependence on the principal, negating teachers' own autonomy and putting undue pressure on an administrator to take care of all the problems.

When teachers elect to consider themselves a democratic community of learners and act in a collegial manner, an interdependent atmosphere and attitude replace a dependent atmosphere and attitude. Members of such communities find that support and sharing break down barriers and move conversations from problems to possibilities. To be a teacher-leader within such a community requires problem-solving and conflict management skills, the ability to establish trust among members, and an orientation toward the good of the entire organization. While an administrator can encourage the organization of a learning community and even participate in it, its success will depend on the school's teachers showing leadership by seeking and maintaining collegial relationships.

As defined by Sergiovanni (1992), collegiality is reciprocal because it involves both support and cooperation—give and take between professionals. "What makes two people colleagues is common membership in a community, commitment to a common cause, shared professional values, and a shared professional heritage. Without this common base, there can be no meaningful collegiality" (p. 91). Collegiality is different from both a social bond among persons who know one another well and enjoy one another's company, and the superficial politeness among persons who are simply tolerating one another. True collegiality involves work goals and organizational identity that are shared, so that working together for the common good follows naturally. Clearly, collegial leadership necessitates building professional respect for individual effectiveness and strong, interactive communication. Teachers must be able to trust the competencies and intentions of other members of a collegial learning community. When all teachers see themselves as leaders, however, these competencies and intentions are already part of their professional identities, so they are more easily accessed and shared.

As described above, collegiality not only achieves organization goals, but it produces *social capital* as well. First described by James Coleman (1990), social capital is one of three forms of capital: financial, human, and social. Financial capital is based on money and other assets, while human capital is the sum of a human's knowledge and skill. Generally, educational institutions focus on human capital. However, Gary Wehlage, as interviewed by Lockwood (1996), explains that social capital is fundamental to finding true colleagues and imperative for creating relationships with all educational stakeholders:

Social capital cannot be possessed like financial and human capital can. Social capital adheres in the set of relationships among people—and those relationships are productive to the extent that they are based on a common set of expectations, a set of shared values, and a sense of trust among people. Where social capital is weak, there are conflicting values and a significant lack of trust. (§ 5)

In schools, leadership teams that seek social capital can break through barriers of superficiality and bias to create trust in relationships. Then

a teacher-leader can be confident that his or her colleagues are reliable, fundamental values are shared, and collegiality has been established.

Risk-Taking

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HONOR AND TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Teacher-leaders demonstrate integrity, honesty, and professional ethics because they understand that teaching and leadership are both linked to intent. Teacher-leaders are not just good teachers; they are good people. Teachers are often uncomfortable when educational conversations turn to values, but the purpose of any academic standard is ethical, centering on the greatest good for students. Moreover, the question so many teachers ask themselves—“Why am I doing this?”—has its base in professional and personal integrity, as they try to offer the best teaching in order to facilitate the best learning. The late Ernest Boyer (1995) pointed out that as schools combat ignorance, they are in the business of teaching values: “Working hard, getting to school on time, completing assignments, and respecting teachers are all values that go to the very heart of education” (p. 179).

These same values go to the purpose of teacher leadership. A flashy personality can sometimes masquerade as leadership, but ultimately, people want their leaders to have strong personal character and to treat others with respect and dignity. This perspective refutes control management systems in favor of a relationship-oriented approach. A relationship-oriented approach means moving beyond convivial relationships with peers, students, and administrators to personal ones. Waldron, Collie, and Davies (1999) write about teaching and school as a moral activity, noting that power and authority when used to simply control must be replaced by leadership that “must invite, inspire, and accompany young people in their learning, in their process of becoming” (p. 141). Fullan (2003) echoes these sentiments:

Moral purpose of the highest order is having a system where all students learn, the gap between high and low performance becomes greatly reduced, and what people learn enables them to be successful citizens and workers in a morally based knowledge society. (p. 29)

While this moral purpose is the business of all educational stakeholders, teacher-leaders who are in direct contact with students and the curriculum with which they are educated are best situated to relate to and lead students in this direction.

Discussions about the ethics of teaching professionals are not meant to place one person’s set of personal values above another’s. The ethics of

teaching are currently based in what is termed a “public ethic”: those values and beliefs appropriate in a liberal democracy such as fairness, integrity, justice, liberty, and so on. However, the application of these ethical considerations also extends to presenting the best scholarly and ethical standards of a teacher’s discipline and educating students’ moral sensibilities. Nel Noddings (2003) finds that moral life is completely relational; “from this perspective, even the self is relational. . . . A relational view weakens and blurs the distinction between egoism and altruism, because much of what we do for others strengthens the relations of which we are part and, thus, our selves” (p. 158). Teacher-leaders who have taken care to establish relationships with their students can teach ethical values and develop their own ethical character at the same time. For example, if a teacher does not download, share, or pirate computer software or music files illegally, he or she teaches about honesty without saying a thing.

Preamble to the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession

The educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurture of democratic principles. Essential to these goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal educational opportunity for all. The educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards.

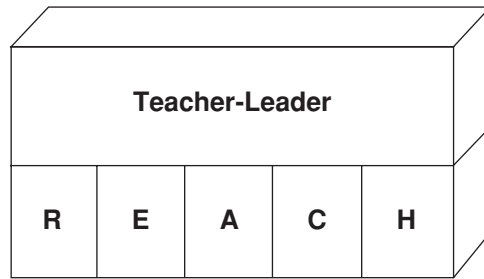
The educator recognizes the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process. The desire for the respect and confidence of one’s colleagues, of students, of parents, and of the members of the community provides the incentive to attain and maintain the highest possible degree of ethical conduct.

SOURCE: Code of Ethics, 1975. Used with permission of the National Education Association.

In an ideal world, all schools would be fully equipped and provide exciting and safe learning environments where everyone could learn. Moreover, this magical environment would be managed effortlessly so that everyone’s needs were met and all community members were happy and fulfilled. In the real world of education, however, the challenges often exceed the magic, and it is a real effort for all members of a school to work toward the shared goals of school improvement and student achievement. By recognizing and developing their potential as leaders, however, teachers can become authentic contributors in a collaborative learning environment and change an arduous effort toward school improvement to synergistic energy used for growth.

As teacher-leader behaviors are realized through leadership roles and action, the REACH model in Figure 1.2 begins to take form. In this

Figure 1.2 REACH Model for Teacher-Leaders



configuration, the model illustrates how the individual elements of the REACH model for teacher-leaders are both connected and serve as a base or foundation for performance that defines a teacher-leader.

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING TEACHER LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

True learning is always accompanied by disequilibrium: the discomfort that is experienced by temporarily inducing an imbalance in the cognitive procedures of perceiving, processing, sorting, and categorizing new information. Equilibrium is restored as new information is acquired and balance is reestablished between what is known and what one needs to know. While this proactive view can be admired, it assumes a tolerance of uncertainty that is easier to write about than wade through. Accordingly, the strategies that follow are designed to balance teacher-leader theory that supports the REACH model of teacher leadership presented in the first part of the chapter with information about how teacher-leaders might deal with the realities of goal setting and peer conflict as they begin to apply that theory.

Why are you going along with those people?

I have to, I'm their leader.

—Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin

Setting Goals

As teachers consider new learning, new behaviors, or new roles, they consciously or nonconsciously induce disequilibrium. As this disequilibrium is balanced through practice, there are consequences that can occur at tension points or moments of transition. Caine and Caine (1997) predict in such a disequilibrium process that possible transition points are places that induce uncertainty about the process and the behaviors. At these points, “disequilibrium might lead to reverting to traditional practice, disintegration, or evolution” (p. 245). In order to move purposefully toward the change that evolution entails and avoid disintegration or reversion to past practice, you must identify your current comfort levels and envision goals that are achievable, believable, and credible—the ABC’s of goal setting.

A goal is *achievable* if it is possible in terms of task difficulty, skill, and resources. This can be assessed through the following questions:

- How difficult is the goal you wish to reach?
- Does the goal need to be broken down into smaller tasks?

- What skills do you have to meet the goal and accomplish the tasks?
- What skills do you need to develop to meet the goal and accomplish the tasks?
- What types of resources will the goal and/or the skills to meet it require?
- How will you obtain and maintain those resources?

If these questions can be answered in a positive manner, the goal is possible—it is achievable.

A goal is *believable* if it is feasible in terms of knowledge, time, and values. Reflecting about the feasibility of a goal through the questions below clarifies if one will be able to address the goal with enough skill to be successful. It also helps establish whether one will be willing to reorder personal and professional concerns to work on the goal.

- Do you have expertise about the goal you wish to achieve? Remember, knowledge informs practice.
- Do you have enough time to plan, implement, and assess the goal?
- Does the goal fit within school, community, professional, and personal values?

If these questions are answered negatively, you will need to educate yourself and/or others about potential benefits of the goal before proceeding. If the questions are answered positively, the success of the venture may not be assured, but it is at least feasible—it is believable.

A goal is *credible* if it is both desirable and perceived as important. This area of goal setting can be explored with the following focus questions:

- Will the goal enhance your teaching and the learning of your students?
- Will the goal enrich your life and/or the lives of your students?
- Will the goal contribute to the school improvement plan?
- Is the goal essential for students to continue to grow academically, socially, emotionally, or morally?
- If it is an educational goal, is it grounded in research and educationally sound?
- How generalizable are the research results to your classroom?

Teachers may be faced with mandated goals that they know are inappropriate for the developmental needs of their students. They may be asked to strive toward some goals they consider a misdirection of energy because their attainment cannot be linked to student achievement. However, when the answers to the foregoing questions indicate that the goal is important and desirable, it is time to take a risk and to pursue it vigorously—it is credible.

The strategies that follow employ the key questions central to the ABC's of Goal Setting within the framework of education-related goals common to teacher-leaders.



The ABC's of Goal Setting

What is the goal or outcome that you seek?

With that goal in mind, answer the following questions.



The Goal Is Achievable

- How difficult is the goal you wish to reach?
- Does the goal need to be broken down into smaller tasks?
- What skills do you have to meet the goal and accomplish the tasks?
- What skills do you need to develop to meet the goal and accomplish the tasks?
- What type of resources will the goal and/or the skills to meet it require?
- How will you obtain and maintain those resources?



The Goal Is Believable

- Do you have expertise about the goal you wish to achieve?
- Do you have enough time to plan, implement, and assess the goal?
- Does the goal fit within school, community, professional, and personal values?



The Goal Is Credible

- Will the goal enhance your teaching and the learning of your students?
- Will the goal enrich your life and/or the lives of your students?
- Will the goal contribute to the school improvement plan?
- Is the goal essential for students to continue to grow academically, socially, emotionally, or morally?
- Is the goal grounded in research and educationally sound?
- How generalizable are the research results to your classroom?

Critical Goal Review

After answering the questions in the ABC's of Goal Setting exercise, use the Critical Goal Review chart to (1) identify goals, (2) analyze the goals using the ABC's of Goal Setting on a scale of 1–5, and (3) predict the amount of risk that achieving your goals would involve on a scale of 1–5. While there are not scores that ensure successful goal setting, the ranking applied within each category can help visualize and balance the elements of setting goals with the risk they require.

| <i>Your Goals</i> | <i>Achievable</i> | <i>Believable</i> | <i>Credible</i> | <i>Risk Involved</i> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Student Learning: | | | | |
| Personal Learning and Growth: | | | | |
| Curriculum Development: | | | | |
| Professional Learning Communities: | | | | |

Managing Conflict

The ideals of collegiality (support and cooperation among colleagues) can be threatened when conflict among colleagues emerges. Conflict occurs when an idea or behavior actively or passively blocks or prevents the effectiveness of another idea or behavior. Conflicts are inevitable because individuals, their ideas, and their interests are different. In fact, the absence of conflict is apathy and indifference—a negative state that does not encourage change and development. Because conflict arises from individual differences, it can be difficult and seem very personal. On the other hand, it can be converted into a constructive experience when both parties seek a win-win situation. For example, when a conflict has been discussed and settled to the satisfaction of all the parties involved, the ability to work cooperatively and manage future conflict is improved.

How does constructive conflict happen? Clearly, establishing an atmosphere of trust creates the base for constructive conflict, but Johnson and Johnson (1991) streamline the process with their rules outlining how to be constructive while being critical in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3 Rules for Constructive Criticism

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am critical of ideas, not people. I challenge and refute the ideas of the opposition, but I do not indicate that I personally reject them. 2. Remember, we are all in this together. I focus on coming to the best decision possible, not on winning. 3. I encourage everyone to participate and to master all the relevant information. 4. I listen to everyone's ideas, even if I don't agree. 5. I restate what someone has said if it is not clear. 6. I first bring out all ideas and facts supporting both sides, and then I try to put them together in a way that makes sense. 7. I try to understand both sides of the issue. 8. I change my mind when the evidence clearly indicates that I should do so. |
|---|

SOURCE: Johnson & Johnson, 1991, p. 7.

If teacher-leaders are to move beyond the status quo, they will have to be critical. Being critical, however, does not need to be destructive. The foregoing Rules for Constructive Criticism establish a way to disagree about ideas without attacking persons who have those ideas. They also stress personal understanding through documented information and analysis of data and experience so that collegial relationships can actually foster risk-taking, improve higher-order thinking, and nurture autonomy—all part of the REACH paradigm.

Making Conflict Constructive

Consider the case study that follows and discuss your reactions with a fellow teacher and an administrator.

Case in Point: Conflict Over Change. Steve Greeley is a fifth-year teacher at Edmonds Senior High School and has been elected to the new faculty/administration management committee to implement shared decision making. He has always been considered a teacher-leader with a pleasant personality and has attended a leadership training conference at the request of the administration. After this training, Steve was eager to begin work on the school's goal of shared decision making. But at the very first meeting of his assigned group, differences about the scope and timing of the change that shared decision making would entail divided the group. Discussion deteriorated into personal accusations and put-downs. Even Steve did not escape this criticism. Some group members felt he had been favored because he had been sent to the leadership conference.

Steve tried to help by telling the other members what they needed to be doing to succeed with shared decision making. They were not impressed even though he knew the directions were right (he wrote them down at the training session). Frank even shouted, "We have shared decision making right now. They make the decisions and share them with us." The rest of the group snickered. The meeting was adjourned with little action but lots of hostility. Steve has brought this problem to you, his friend and colleague.

- What advice can you give him about handling the conflict he experienced?
- Which Rules for Constructive Criticism did the group use?
- Which Rules for Constructive Criticism did the group break?
- Does Steve exemplify the REACH model of teacher leadership?
- What would you do in this situation?

Take time to process this case study by using the strategies/theories of teacher leadership you have studied thus far. What did you discover? Perhaps you recognized that, in taking the assignment, Steve was willing to be a risk-taker and interested in adopting a teacher-leader role within the school. However, in his enthusiasm for the task, he forgot to extend professional courtesy and roles to his colleagues. He did not see them as effective and autonomous with ideas of their own, but began giving them orders about what needed to be done. He has also ignored the Rules for Constructive Criticism by not encouraging an active exchange of opinions and information. At this point, he might use e-mail to mend fences, gather information, and share the Rules for Constructive Criticism so that the next meeting might be more productive.

LOOKING BACK/REACHING FORWARD ■

Chapter 1 has introduced the REACH model as a means of considering behaviors that together characterize teacher leadership. Many teachers practice some of these leadership behaviors either consciously or nonconsciously. Use this page as a tool to reflect on your own practice during the past sixty days. In what ways have you evidenced the following conduct related to teacher leadership? What about the teacher you would identify as a teacher-leader in your school?

| <i>Elements of the REACH Model</i> | <i>Your Leadership Behaviors</i> |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Risk-Taking —Teachers who seek challenges and create new processes | |
| Effectiveness —Teachers who model best practice, professional growth, and heart | |
| Autonomy —Teachers who display initiative, independent thought, and responsibility | |
| Collegiality —Teachers who promote community and interactive communication skills | |
| Honor —Teachers who demonstrate integrity, honesty, and professional ethics | |

What are some ways you can improve or enhance your teacher leadership behaviors?