

Leadership with a T: Integrating Teacher Leadership into Leadership Preparation Programs

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Our Agenda

- What is teacher leadership?
- Conditions that support teacher leadership
- What school leadership candidates need to know and be able to do to support teacher leadership
- Alignment: Pulling together and avoiding overload through teamwork
- What should teacher leaders know and be able to do?
- Closure, take-aways, and give-away

What is teacher leadership?

“**Action that transforms teaching and learning** in a school, that ties school and community together on behalf of learning, and that **advances social sustainability and quality of life** for a community” (Crowther, Kaagen, Ferguson, and Hann, 2002).

“The term teacher leadership refers to that set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but also have **an influence that extends beyond their own classrooms to others within their own school and elsewhere**” (Danielson, 2006).

“Teacher leadership is the **process** by which teachers, individually or collectively, **influence** their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school communities **to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement**” (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005).

“I view it [teacher leadership] as a teacher **taking the profession and being the driver of it**. In the school setting, **teachers would not wait for an administrator to make choices and decisions**, but they would be the driving force to make the changes that would affect their students” (Teacher W, cited in Cosenza, 2015).

What is teacher leadership?

Conceptions of teacher leadership are trending away from formal titles and positions to embrace a more informal, integrated approach. In an analysis of 54 empirical studies of teacher leadership conducted between 2004 and 2013, Wenner and Campbell (2016) defined teacher leaders as “teachers who maintain K-12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom” (p. 7)....One reason teacher leadership remains elusive may be related to growing agreement among scholars that **teacher leadership is a stance, or way of thinking and being, rather than a set of behaviors....In this way, teacher leadership stance is comprised of dispositions, or beliefs, attitudes, and values about teaching, learning, and leadership** [emphasis added].

(Hunzicker, 2017)



Talin Darkjian
Los Angeles, CA

Influences

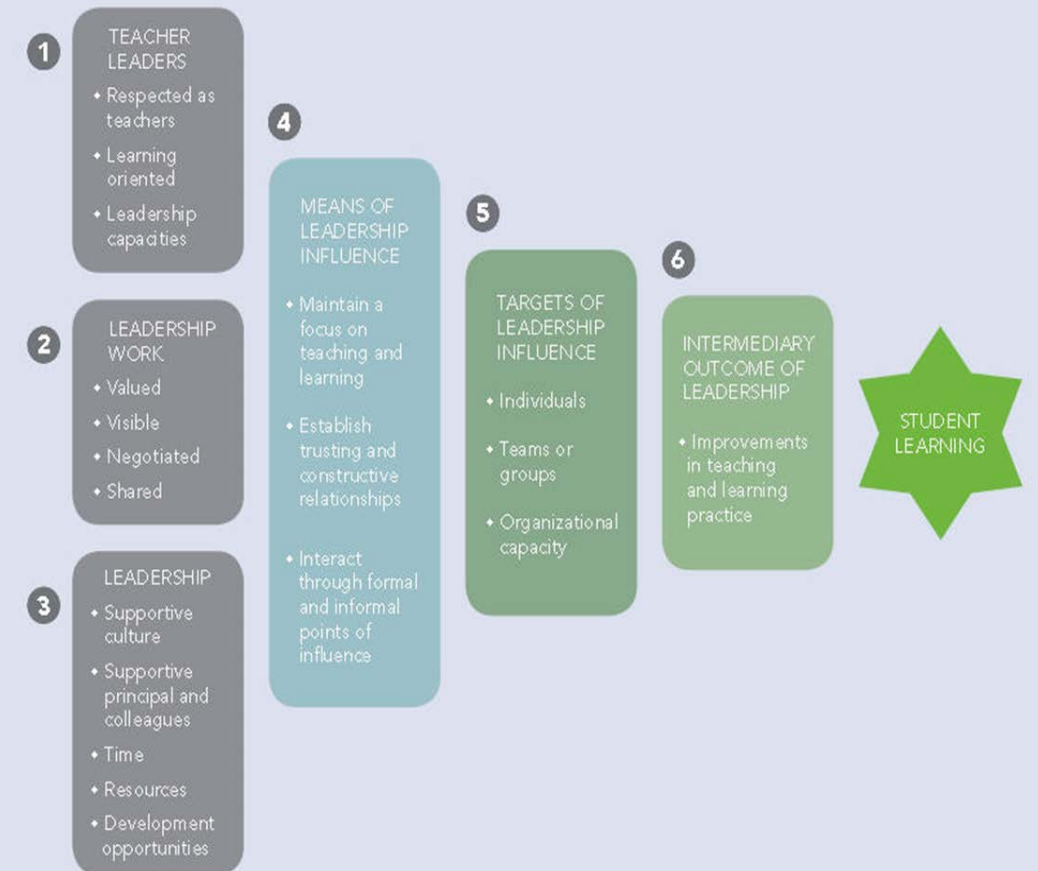
- Accountability pressures
 - Need to improve student achievement levels
 - Reaction to imposed standards and prescriptions for school reform
- Professional standards
 - Instructional leadership
 - NBPTS
 - Professional growth as a career-long process, job-embedded, not a series of “one offs”
- Shared decision-making
- Appreciation of complexity of teaching, learning, and content
- Improve teacher retention
- Models from other countries

Teacher Leadership Frameworks



Source: St. Cloud University

Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework for Teacher Leadership



Source: Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement

Conditions required for successful teacher leadership

- Supportive administration
- Supportive culture
- Building capacity — Enabling work structures and resources
- Collaboration, influence, and alignment

Teacher leadership in schools: An allegory



Or not!

Facilitating Teacher Leadership: What School Leaders Should Be Able to Do

Element	What It Looks Like	Obstacles to Achieving It	Skills/Understandings Needed by Leadership Candidates
Supportive administration			

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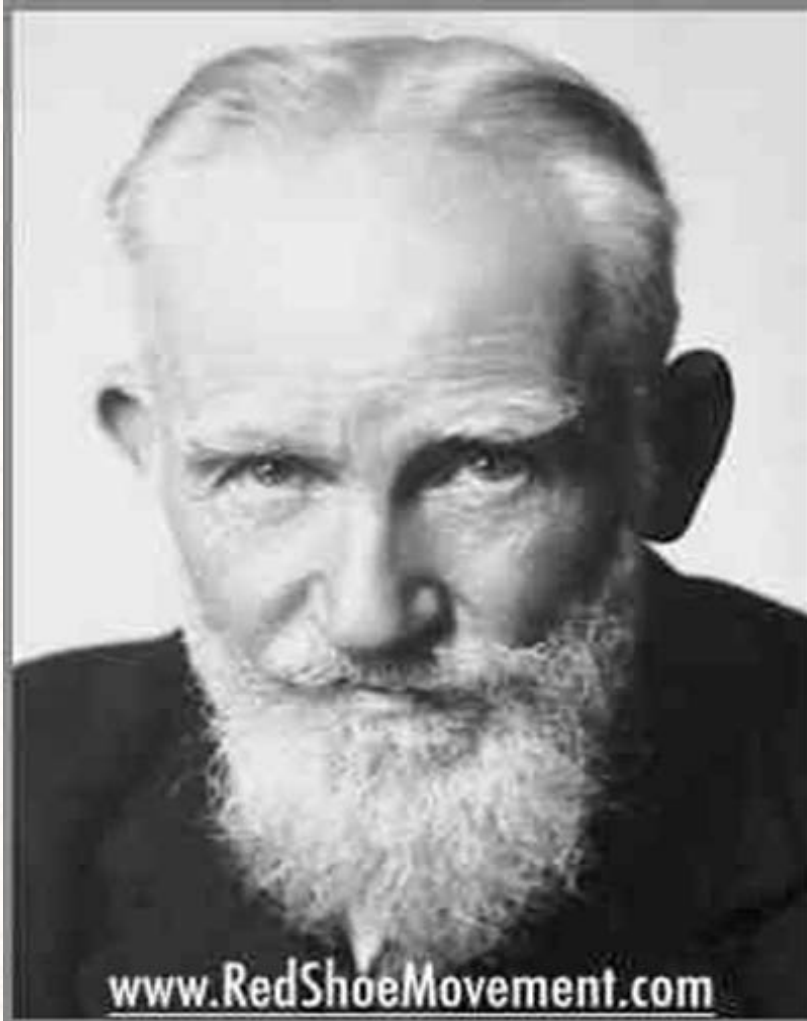
Facilitating Teacher Leadership: What School Leadership Candidates Should Know and Be Able to Do

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Promoting Alignment: Working as a Team



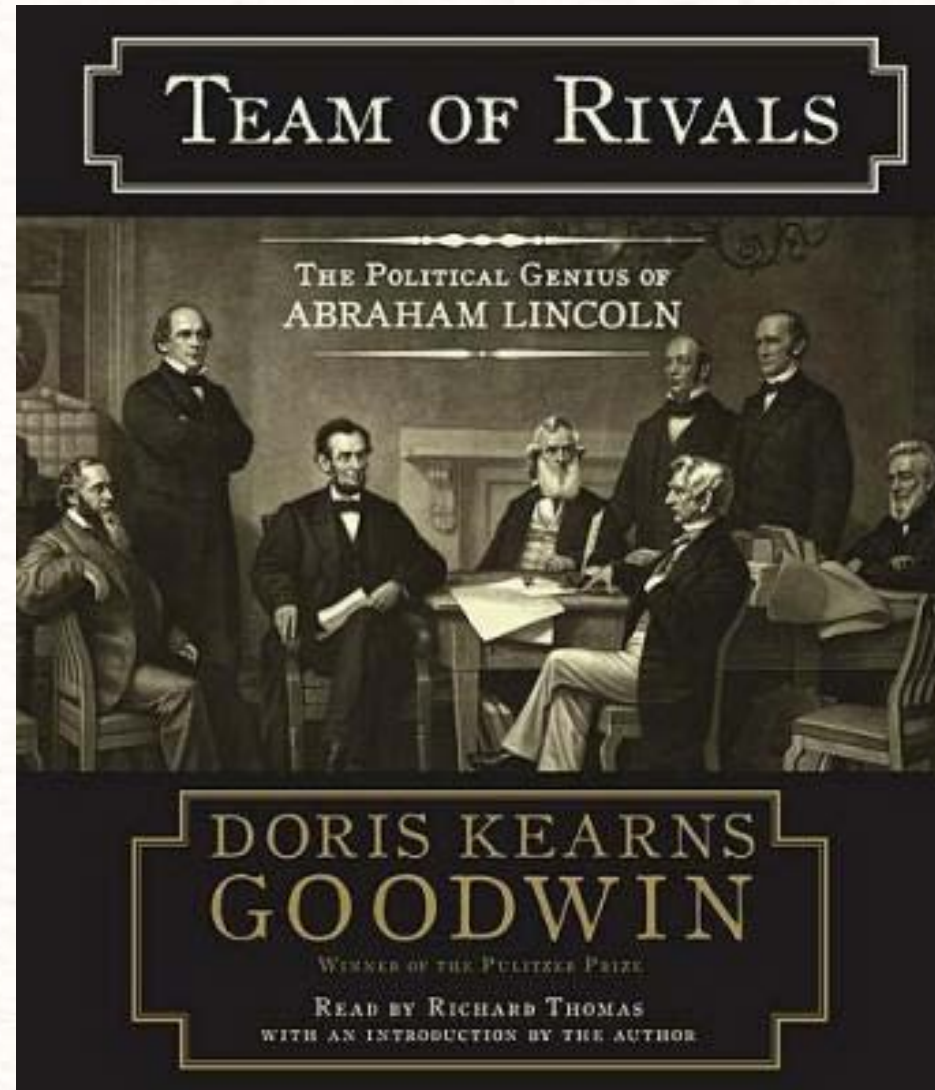
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“The single
biggest
problem with
communication
is the illusion
that it has
taken place.”

George Bernard Shaw



High Powered Teams



Low Powered Teams



Promoting Alignment: Working as a Team

- Does the culture support autonomy, mastery, and purpose to motivate team members? (Pink, 2009)
- The effectiveness of teamwork is related to the nature of formal and informal authority in the school and the allocation of resources (Montgomery, 2006)
 - How much self-management is *really* allowed?
 - To what extent are there shared basic beliefs, values, and understandings of “the way we do things around here”?
 - How is communication accomplished (in its broadest sense)?
 - How is conflict addressed?
- Trust can be promoted by:
 - Demonstrating that positive relationships are important and by showing care and concern for the needs of others
 - Relying less on formal controls on behavior and more on commitment to goals, shared values, personal responsibility, mutual understanding
 - By inducting newcomers in a way that *explicitly* promotes understanding of core values and principles and “the way we do things around here” (Six, 2007)

Organizational Context: Team Effectiveness Influenced by Culture

- The Google study: Project Aristotle
 - What matters most is group norms
 - Conversational turn-taking
 - Empathy among team members
 - These norms create a sense of psychological safety
 - The norms bond people together

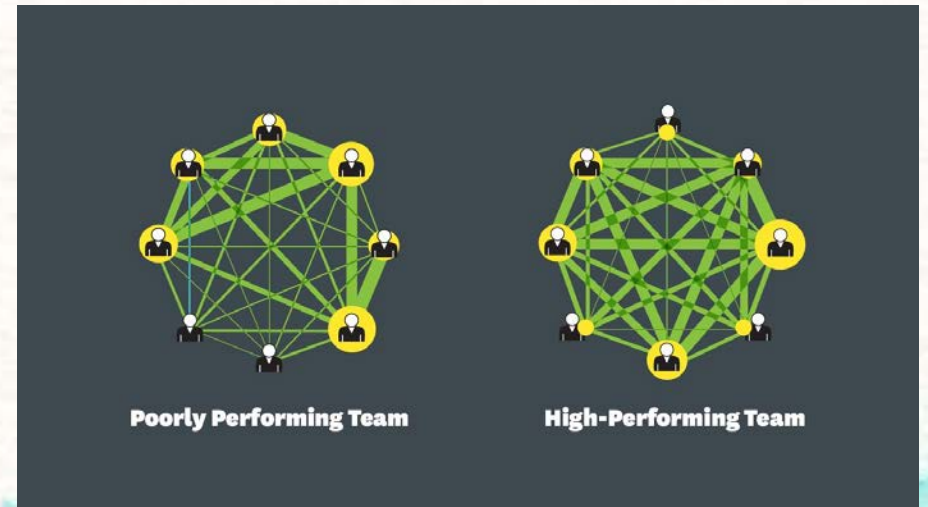


“What Project Aristotle has taught people within Google is that no one wants to put on a “work face” when they get to the office. No one wants to leave part of their personality and inner life at home. But to be fully present at work, to feel ‘psychologically safe,’ we must know that we can be free enough, sometimes, to share the things that scare us without fear of recriminations. We must be able to talk about what is messy or sad, to have hard conversations with colleagues who are driving us crazy. We can’t be focused just on efficiency. “

(Duhigg, 2016)

Communication and Key Communicators

- Individual reasoning and talent contribute far less to team success paying attention than facilitating communication in a manner that follows successful models
- Find “charismatic connectors”
 - People who “get around” and engage colleagues in short, high-energy conversations
 - “Energized and focused” listeners
 - They spread ideas



What do teacher leaders need to know and be able to do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Connections and Questions

- 1. Something that struck a chord with me:

- _____

- 2. Something for additional discussion:

- _____

- 3. A question I have:

- _____

Continue the conversation: Robert Feirsen, Ed.D. rfeirsen@nyit.edu