EDUC 450B S19 School Community and Leadership Thomas Howell

In high school there was an outside of the timetable class called “Leadership” that students labored away at each year in the promise of letters of recommendation for university. I attended one meeting and quite less then five minutes later when I found out all the work and projects that had to be completed. The schools intentions were good, a requirement was 30 hours of volunteering each month, hoping to fill out the over used necessity of volunteer hours that university recruiters say when they come to the high school. But the group spent most of its time just meeting for lunches and talking about their future, nothing about helping the school itself. Leadership to me is not about looking at your own goals, but instead to look at the community around you and ask “what can I do to make it better?”

I have been placed for my practicum in the Vancouver Eastside at Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School. In two short weeks I experienced something profound that made me stop and ponder the attitudes of the students and faculty. Students and Faculty are held accountable by a school code of conduct called ROARS. The program talks about Respect and Ownership as a big part of what makes the program so powerful. In it the teachers are given complete control of their students to hold them accountable to the code, and the same goes for the students to the teachers. What happens is that a school that had a bad reputation in the past now is one of the most inviting and safe schools I have ever seen. These codes of conducts are repeated at every school but this one in particular seems to work the best. I want to conduct my inquiry project to understanding the role of student leadership, and Teacher participation in building a school community. What I hope to find is a way to replicate this practice in other schools and truly create a Safe Learning Environment.

Other than Academic sources information about teacher and student involvement in Leadership roles can be explored in other ways. Perhaps the most interesting way would be to gather ideas and information form other teachers while on the practicum. Given the wide range of the topic it would be volunteered information or incite into why they participate in extra curricular activities such as sports and drama. As well to talk to the students to get to understand their own personal expectations for teachers based on their own experiences. This could be simply taking the time to learn their names and asking or could be part of a larger discussion board where they can post their own responses to without their names. Tupper has a very interesting program where older students sit in on Teacher Candidate classes and provide feedback about what activities they liked and about how the teacher conducted themselves towards the other students.

As well it may be beneficial to look at the Tupper policy on the school conduct and keep an entry of interesting ways the criteria is being met, or how teachers and students could work to meet the high expectations.

Maybe even best is simply to talk to candidates and professor in the programs about what made their teachers fall into the Great or Terrible category, and how they hope to achieve their own teacher identity.

After looking over all the research gathered I can now make three claims. The first is that Leadership must come from administrators in and outside of the school. It is not enough for a Super Intendant to just order a principle to fix their school without first acquiring resources to run and maintain programs that promote leadership. The second is that that leadership must also be extended from the principle to the teacher in a community based project, not top down orders. The principles and their teachers must work and believe in the program in order for it to work properly. This leads to my third idea that leadership and building community must be important to the student or else it will fail. The students must feel that they are making a difference and be shown that the community policy is followed not just by themselves but by the teachers and staff as well. I found that leadership is needed in a school because it can far to often feel like every person is alone. Students who feel isolated need to know that people are looking out for them, and teachers need to know that if they are feeling over whelmed there is a strong support from the school to draw strength from.

One question still troubles me, given that all this research has proven a need for a strong community in the school, why do so many school not adopt such a policy?

Perhaps it is because of economic issues and over crowding of high schools that put pressure onto the education system. But it makes better sense to build a program where everyone carries the load instead of a select few. I did find many of the researchers suggest that this could be because of attitude from teachers who feel they have done everything right and social issues in the school are product of the parents. As well many school have a code of ethics for their students but it is often so broad that no one ever pays attention to it.

I think now I understand what the leadership program at my old high school was created for. It was with the intent to make the students part of a larger community that could help keep the social issues that many teen face daily out of the classroom and hallways. However, I believe that without teacher participation and some sort of indoctrination of the students when they first get to the school, these programs fail to meet the expectations created for them. For Sir Charles Tupper Secondary I look forward to participating in the social structure that has strong leadership from all three levels. Hopefully I can gain more incite into how to build such a program in the other schools I will work at and have it be just as successful.

Part II: A Code of Ethics with Prizes?

As I talked to my peers about incentive cards for students and teachers being part of the system two ideas came to my mind. The first is about rewarding students for doing good deeds. We have been talking in out classroom environment course about the issues of creating in class currency and handing out “cash for good deeds.” This got me to look into the theory behind supporting random acts of kindness. In Jerome Bruner’s book “Acts of Meaning,” he illustrates the importance of “not praising actions that normal civilized members of society should do, but the actions that are not expected”(Pg. 123). What I feel he is talking about in regards to teachers giving praise to students for helping another student up when they fall, taking the new students on a tour of the school after you ask them, but instead looking for actions that have more meaning. I thought about this in my own classrooms and wondered what it would be something that is a true acts of kindness.

The second point I had to consider was if programs like these work in none capitalist countries? The issue I found was that there was virtually no research to find about such programs in other countries. Instead most seemed to suggest they had instead strong disciplinary actions against students who did not conform to the classroom policies. In the book “Violence at school: Global Issues and Interventions” edited by Toshio Ohsako, talks about the issue of violence in schools around the world. In it he argues, “Despite the push from external factors, such as teachers, students continue to show hostility to each other as the competition for social and economical status develops”(Pg. 13). In the other stories in the book, teachers looked for ways to stop the violence between students by using harder punishments and promoting community in their classrooms. In most cases this only left the violence to grow outside of the classroom environment, often in attacks on the streets and in public spaces.

This then makes me wonder to my original question I had when I started this inquiry “How can a school promote a better social code for students to follow outside of the classroom?”

Given that schools have become an important place of refuge and training for its students, I still feel that the best action is to promote good actions and reward those actions. Perhaps not by handing out currency for not littering, but instead for showing leadership and guidance that is created by the students can a safer school environment be created. This leaves the teacher to act in according to the student created code of ethics in the hope that their practices transfer to their students and can lead to not only better interaction between students, but also Students and teachers.

Part III “Moral Currency” and My Own Teaching Practices

I now find myself wondering how I might integrate this inquiry into my own practicum and more broadly, my future as a teacher in general?

As great as it is to think about promoting good actions from my students instead of celebrating little victories such as handing in all their homework, showing up on time and that they didn’t spit on me, I feel that eventually a lack of energy might reduce my enthusiasm for promoting strong ties to community. But I feel that we as teachers have a moral responsibility to push our students for something greater than we have experienced ourselves. Ethical issues such as school mandated images of what should be seen as participation in the school moral code can arise as teachers look at your class and wonder why you didn’t praise a students actions. It could be for the practical issue that you feel they did not merit praise.

As well as mentioned before the issue of simply handing out “moral currency” does not sit well in my personal teaching philosophy. I belive it should not be the role of the teacher to highlight a students achievement for simply following the rules set forth by the school, but instead that they should act as citizens of the classroom free to use their own autonomy to choose what is right and wrong. However, the benefit of conforming to such a moral code is that you the teacher are now part of a larger “management’’ structure instead of fighting on your own. Lets consider you have two students who during a math class almost come to fists, then in your classroom something restarts that conflict ending with a fight on your watch. Since there is the moral code from the school the blame for mismanagement of your classroom does not fall directly on your shoulders. Instead you can call upon you colleague to help you not only handle the situation but also provide valuable information you did not have before. Students do not just sit in a high school social studies class all day; they are constantly weaved in and out of diverse teaching environments and a multiplicity of social interactions. This often can leave you unprepared and unable to use restorative justice or help the students.

Another benefit of the moral currency is that for some students it does help motivate them. I would focus on the students who do not always make it into the category of over achiever or troublemaker. This might play a perfect chance for me to give feedback to a student I do not always get a chance to interact with. Far to often you have to look after the two extremes that the students in the middle almost fade away. Given that one of my own personal goals for the up coming practicum is interacting with my students better, this does give me a fantastic opportunity to bond with them and hopefully develop a good teacher student report.

As much as it might feel like a task to hand out the cards I do feel there is some merit to them and hopefully the ideas the cards and moral code transfer to how the students not only see their school, but also how they live in the community around them. If we have to ask, “would you live by that student” then I think both students and teacher have a good criteria to strive for, and hopefully make Vancouver less of a lonely city into a more tolerable experience.

Part IV Concluding Thoughts on Teacher Involvement

In Student Code of Conduct

As I poured through the thousands of pages of literature on Teacher involvement in school, I found a requiring theme from the various authors. It was not about teaching students content, but about make citizens and responsible people out of the hundreds of students they encounter daily. In many of the articles a clear idea of the teacher being a role modle that has a great opertunity to improve not only the way the students act within the classroom but also with the community around it is very popular. This can be done they suggest by finding projects that promote ways to improve the students lives, see the article on urban children, creating a clear definition of what is expected of the students and finally not just yelling at students to be nicer to each other, but showing it instead. If we look at the idea of teachers being part of the moral code, above having their cellphone taken away by the students in class, it sets the professional conduct of the teachers to a higher standard as well. Many of the researchers argue that teachers must work together and treat each other the same way they want their students to behave. I think this is a good point for new teachers to understand, don’t be part of the complaining disgruntled teachers there to pick up a pay check at the end of the month. Be there to form a community that helps to relieve stress and promote a better working environment. I would challenge those who read this paper to look at how they interact with their students, fellow teachers, administrators, support staff and school volunteers. If the school community were more united perhaps it would lead to less drop out of new teachers, and even an improvement of standards for all teachers. I know this idea does not seem all the new or ground breaking, nor does it seem that teacher are united given issues of employment and union troubles. But I think we should be looking above the trenches of the public school system today and struggle to improve it not only for teachers but parents and students as well. If we don’t try to improve things, than we only make them that much worse, a personal philosophy I hope that all teachers have.

As for this inquiry project I think it is important for new teachers to start thinking of themselves as researchers given that we are the closest to the students and future neighbours of Canada. Perhaps the University of British Columbia could expand the project and allow for us to preform some informal research and gain a new insight into what people think of moral codes, or the numerous other topics investigated by my fellow teacher candidates. Perhaps then it will make the inquiry less regurgitation of articles and more about tarring down old ideas and replacing them with more modern possibilities instead.

Part V Bibliography:

1. Dempster, N., & Alf, L. (2007). Student leadership: necessary research. *Australian Journal Of Education (ACER Press)*, *51*(3), 276-285.
   1. Dempster and Lizzio suggest that there needs to be more research conducted on student leadership and look into what literature is available on this topic to be able to further understand student leadership. This article will aid in helping me gain some background knowledge regarding my inquiry topic.  The authors pose that there is a strong and renewed interest in student leadership because there appears to be a decline in civic participation and a decrease in people willing to assume leadership roles as adults.  In addition, this article offers some insight into some recent studies on student leadership, and some suggestions for research in the future.
2. Martel, Y. M. (1992). Evaluating leadership training programs for high school students: A notion whose time has come. The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, 7(2), 77. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/1011427165?accountid=14656>
   1. Martel's article is about a study evaluating the effectiveness extra-curricular leadership training programs for high school students, in both a formative and summative ways.  Moreover, this articles outlines the benefits in providing leadership training for students, because it can promote the development of future leaders and promote research into leadership training.  Results in the study demonstrated that weekend training marathon format using an experiential approach was most effective for teaching leadership as well as raising self-esteem in students.  Overall, the program benefited the school and the students' leadership potential and academic achievements.  I am interested in seeing what kinds of leadership training works and can be offered in schools

3) Book: School District Leadership Matters <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/ubc/docDetail.action?docID=10284766>

This book illustrates a clear understanding form the perspective of a teacher that collaborative leadership could be used in schools to improve student performance, but often is subject to the environment of the school. Collaborative leadership as the authors describes is based on the theory “that if professionals are given access to more research it will show a need to work together as one organization” (122). The book concludes that many of the research schools found a great amount of “push-back from teachers who found the idea a waste of time.” This is a great piece of information as when it is applied to the ROARS Community at Sir Charles Tupper, someone has already worked hard to push upon the teachers and staff the importance of working together instead of individual identities in their classrooms.

4) Student Activity vs. Teacher Activity, Esther J. Crooks.  The Modern Language Journal , Vol. 14, No. 2 (Nov., 1929), pp. 103-106  Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/315251>

The article talks about the importance of Teachers giving more autonomy to their students in the classroom. Crooks argue, “A maximum amount of student activity is desirable in first and second year work, with an apparent effacement of the teacher,” highlighting student leadership to help push the students to work together. If a teacher just stand at the front and delivers a long lecture many students will lose interest and no longer gain the needed skills to be academically successful. As teachers creating activities that push more active participation not only allow students to have a better experience with the material, but can lead to interesting classroom discussions that Teachers enjoy the most.

5) Gordon, J. (2012). Critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership initiative in a small urban high school setting. (Order No. 3530675, California State University, Long Beach). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, , 203. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/1112878075?accountid=14656. (1112878075).

This article discusses the impact of having a more critical pedagogy in schools that allows students to look at issues that affect them directly. Gordon makes the argument that “critical pedagogy utilized through the research seminar has created opportunities for students to positively resist forms of oppression in their lives (173).” It goes on further to talk about promoting more senior projects for students that allows them to engage further with the community and school as an alternative to tests. This “active learning” could be a possible application for student leadership in not only the class but also for extracurricular activities.

6) Boyd, K. A. (2011). High school principals' perceptions of teacher leadership. (Order No. 3483942, California State University, Long Beach). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, , 44. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/903700325?accountid=14656. (903700325).

The article takes a look at how Principles affect teacher leadership in schools is often under investigated. Boyd argues that schools that have a more active principle often leads to better teacher leadership and communication. Later he talks about how when there is more leadership being practiced by the Principle and modeling the teachers become more willing to extend that positive energy towards their students. For Tupper this was how ROARS began, from the Principle looking to make a positive change in the school and the current principle committed to keeping that leadership going.

7) Northup, J. D. (2011). Teacher and student relationships and student outcomes. (Order No. 3456052, University of Colorado at Denver). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, , 181. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/870811694?accountid=14656. (870811694)

The article talks about the importance of relationship satisfaction, Instrumental Help and Lack of Conflict leading to better academic success for students. Relationship satisfaction was between the teacher and student where both had a clear understanding of how they were to work together instead of against each other. Instrumental Help was not using broad application of knowledge to assists in the students understanding, but more relatable terms and usage. These lead to a lack of Conflict meaning that both sides are actively participating in behavior norms that reduces miscommunication. This is a perfect example of both sides being part of one conduct to better the school community.

8) Bottoms, Gene. (2010). The Three Essentials: Improving Schools requires district Vision, District and State support, and Principle Leadership. (Wallace Foundation, New York City).

This research was created to look at how Schools could improve through Principle leadership. The findings revealed “three essential elements must be in place for struggling high schools to improve in substantive ways: State capacity-building, District vision, and Principal leadership (4).” But most of these elements are not realistic because of administrative issues such as zero autonomy of principles, or just giving all problems to the principle with little assistance or guidance on how to fix the situation. Later on the researchers talk about when they visited schools they found that the best way to improve the school was a clear understanding from the district then allowed greater access to resources to help improve the schools that needed it the most.

9) Kosutic, I. (2010). Constructing youth leadership. (Order No. 3464339, University of Connecticut). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, , 416. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/883128369?accountid=14656. (883128369).

* 1. This source is over 400 pages long and it discusses a two part study that observes the meaning of leadership in relation to young people, ranging from elementary school to high school, as depicted in scholarly literature and conversations in the United States.  The study also uses focus groups with young people from a variety of social backgrounds.  This article is useful because it contains conversations with youth and provides accounts and opinions from them for insight as to what they consider is leadership.  As well, it contains a chapter that defines and differentiates between adult leadership and youth leadership.

10) Kamish, D. A. (2010). Initiating distributed leadership: A comparative case study of a district's journey toward shared leadership.(Order No. 3535450, Indiana University). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, , 196. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/1282653489?accountid=14656. (1282653489).

* 1. This is a comparative case study on a school district and it's changes in leadership that stems out of a concern for and responsibility to student learning.  The article outlines that within two years of instilling changes academic achievement improved.  The article touches on how teacher empowerment and the professional community.  Chapter two includes literature review on four components that provide the framework for the study, transformational leadership, constructivist leadership, professional learning communities and the leadership practice model by Spillane et al.  It will be interesting to look at how different types of leadership work within leadership development in schools.

11) Truitt, J. L. (2002). Effective principal leadership practices as perceived by teachers in schools demonstrating continuous student academic improvement. (Order No. 3050327, The University of Arizona). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, , 138-138 p. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/304807338?accountid=14656. (304807338).

* 1. This is a dissertation of study to investigate effective leadership behaviors by principals as perceived by teachers in schools that are connected to student academic improvement.  Some of the leadership behaviors the article focuses on are: models of appropriate behavior, how to foster commitment goals, providing individualized support, providing intellectual stimulation and holding high expectations.  This article will be used to research into how big of role principals play in schools in terms of affecting leadership in schools.

Bruner, Jerome S. (Jerome Seymour). “Acts of Meaning.” Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Ohsako, Toshio. “Violence at School: Global issues and Interventions.” Paris: Unesco, International Bureau of Education, c1997.