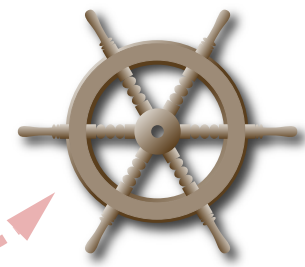


Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



High Impact Teachers are Inspiring Leaders

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Teachers do not enter the profession to be shaped by data collection in the service of an outcomes based system — a technocratic box checker who is busy covering curriculum outcomes to an otherwise dutiful yet disengaged and distracted audience. Students who experience the data collection version of a teacher do not aspire to our noble profession. Assuming no teacher wants to be that person either, it is timely to be reminded of the qualities that make us the high impact leaders that can inspire a bright future for their students, their communities, and the teaching profession.

Teachers as Leaders

Educators are leaders who cultivate a drive in students to produce their finest work. They promote student agency and pride by affirming their sense of the world while working them to commune with the perspective and contributions of others. Teachers that bring out the best in students, as we will see, share four foundations of inspiring leaders. The *Human Equation*, as this article will discuss, reminds us that teachers are leaders, not pushers of outcomes when they fashion their practice among *Cultivating*, *Contemplating*, *Conducting*, and *Transforming*.

As this is a human profession, it would make sense to examine its structure through a lens like the *Human Equation*. Here, Wayne Constantineau and Eric McLuhan offer a lens to examine human fields based on the four fundamental human postures: we first *assume a posture* by standing or lying down, from here we can also *bend*, then *isometrically contract*, and consequently *displace space* or walk. As *figure 1* models, teachers who are leaders provide a learning environment and supports that *cultivates* wellbeing and development.

Time spent *contemplating* indicates their openness to bend or articulate their methods in order to better serve their students. When teachers recognize that it is within their power to filter policies, draw on resources, and interpret curriculum to make learning increasingly relevant for each student, they are owning their role as a composer and conductor of their students' learning experiences. The impact of a teacher who leads is a class of positively *transformed* students.



Figure 1

Cultivating

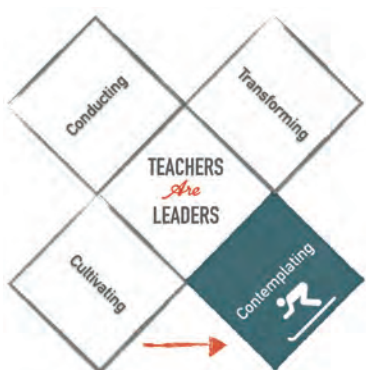


High impact teachers cultivate compassion for others and themselves. They model dignity and respect for themselves, students, colleagues, and their administrators — regardless of personalities, ideologies, and actions. To this end, teachers look to remove obstacles to a safe, secure, and supportive environment. Diversity of thought and personalities are validated and given space to exist within the priorities of the course/class. Secure feelings nurture engagement and trust. Cultivating a creative pedagogy offers methods that support a compassionate and

productive learning environment. Learning through creativity promotes collaborative problem solving, multi-sensory exploration, divergent thinking and the embracing of human nature and developmental need to make mistakes. Through compassion and creative processes, teachers will also lay seeds for student agency and a sense of community.

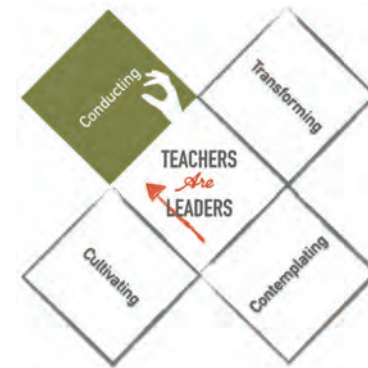
Contemplating

To contemplate priorities and practices, teachers need to examine and respond to the capacities and voices of their student audience. The contemplating teacher adapts to the ever-changing dynamics of their classroom community. They learn to improvise in the face differences and obstacles, knowing that to flow with and steer these dynamics is more effective than struggling to make them yield to otherwise rigid structures. Inspiring teachers reach out to their students to develop a shared vision and goals to move



towards. They work through strategies that encourage student autonomy, mastery and purpose. They build their community by seeking ways for their students to share their diverse perspectives and skill sets. Furthermore, they help students struggle with worthwhile challenges by distinguishing them from negativity.

Conducting

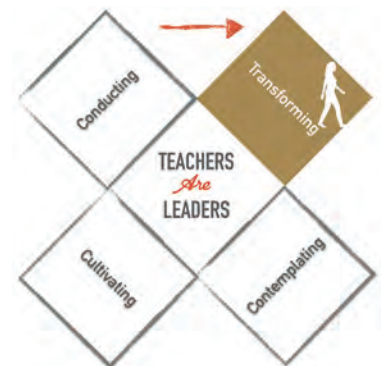


Conducting lessons through compassion, improvisation, and student agency means that the teacher needs to own their whole role as an empowered educator. Students are not inspired by lessons designed to cover outcomes or collect data — they are engaged by lessons that connect to their lives. Considering the breadth of outcomes, that for many courses were conceived in the rear-view mirror nearly two decades ago, it is within the power of each teacher to determine the learning priorities of each lesson. The teacher

who owns their role as a conductor of learning employs methods and resources that engage those to whom they are first and foremost accountable — the students. In this effective relationship, where the teacher is positively responsive their student population, lies the potential for student and community transformation.

Transforming

To arrive at being a transformative teacher means that you have formed positive, trusting, and collaborative relationships with your students. Through you and with you, students have learned to seek constructive conflicts as a path to perpetual growth. They have learned that frustrations are essential hurdles to learning and that in a safe, secure, and supportive environment these struggles can be overcome. These students learn to own their development, to look back with gratitude and look forward with optimism, seeking new ambitions that extend from their heightened capacities. As the teacher modelled for them, it is hopeful that when students leave the environment they too know that leadership is a limitless resource to be built cultivated in everyone.



Paul Syme recently completed a secondment with the NSTU as an executive Staff Officer in Professional Development.