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Shifting From Manager to Leader

We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world.

—Buddha



Shifting From Manager to Leader: Essential Questions

These are the essential questions that you will be able to answer after completing this chapter:

- Why does shifting from being the classroom manager to being the classroom leader set the stage for more cooperation?
- How do my beliefs and values match the research?

RETHINKING OUR ROLE AS TEACHERS



Essential Question

- How does my thinking influence and affect my interactions with students, parents, and colleagues and my success as a teacher leader?



Classroom Connection

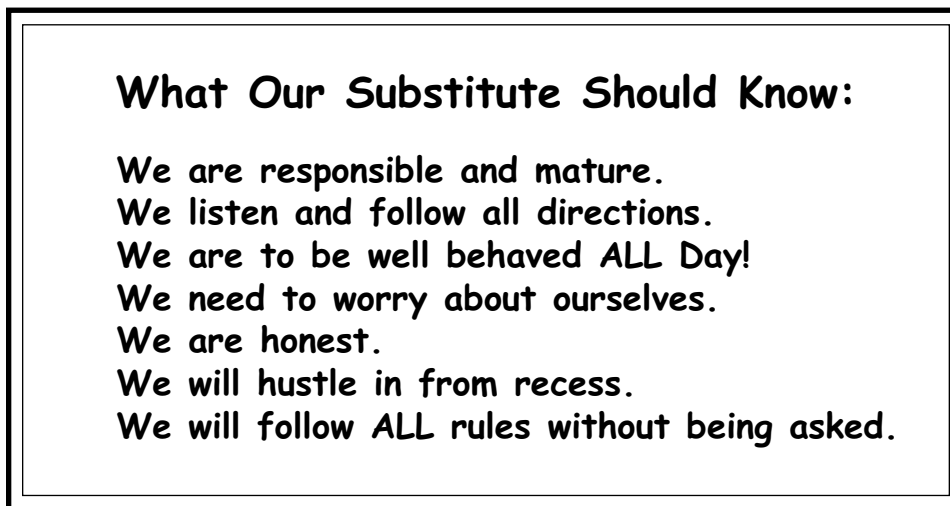
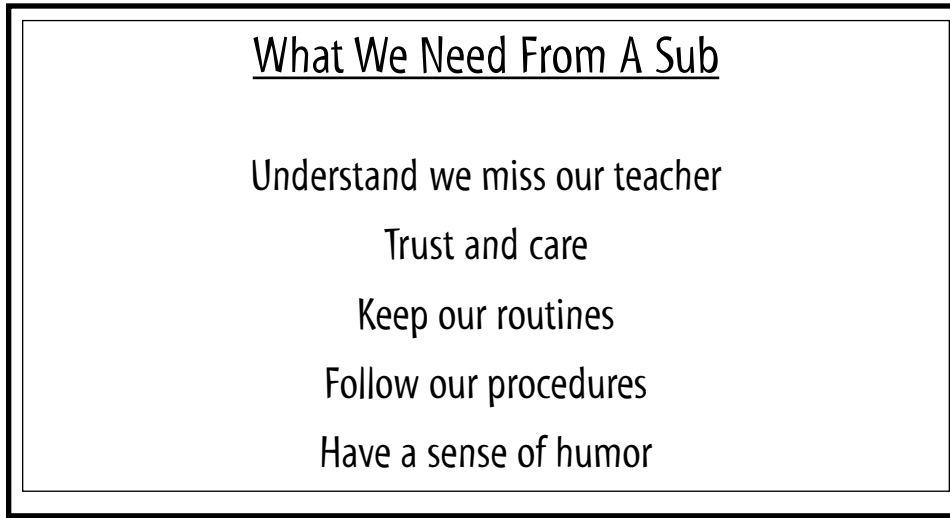
Jamal Patel was a fairly new teacher who seemed to work magic in getting his students to produce high academic work and engage in appropriate social behavior. His classroom was orderly and ran smoothly. He had strong personal connections with his students and received excellent evaluations and commendations from his principal and his peers after his first year of teaching. He believed in intrinsic motivation and wanted his students to be motivated from within. He rewarded his students for their good behavior with points, which were redeemable at the end of the week for such things as a free homework pass or a new design pencil or a sticker or whatever else was in the "goody box." However, when Mr. Patel was absent, he received numerous phone calls from his principal or his fellow teachers, saying that his students were impolite, unruly, and unproductive with the substitute teacher.

On one occasion, when Mr. Patel was out for over a week, the sub left negative notes about the class's behavior, specifically about how they had tried to reverse the point system and see how many points they could lose. Mr. Patel was puzzled. This did not match his experience of these students or the philosophy of internal motivation he had tried to instill. During a class meeting about their behavior with subs, the students revealed that they behaved and performed well when he was there because they really liked him but that they didn't like the substitutes. They said that the incentive system was fun and they liked it but that they really didn't care about the "goody box items."

Jamal Patel shared this information with his mentor and began to rethink and research the issue of intrinsic motivation. Clearly, the students were motivated by their relationship with him, but their motivation had not transferred to the higher level of doing the right thing because it was the right thing (intrinsic motivation). They were still pleasing their teacher and getting "goodies" or losing points (extrinsic motivation). Mr. Patel began to reassess his role as the "keeper of the norms" and the manager of the classroom. He began to strategize about how to become more of a leader who could guide the students to take more internal ownership of their behavior. He began by sharing his beliefs and thinking about intrinsic motivation with them at a class meeting and asking for their input. He recorded their ideas about how they thought that they could "manage themselves" when a substitute was in the classroom. They created two charts: "What We Need From a Sub" and "What Our Substitute Should Know" (Figure 1.1).

Many thinkers and teachers, both ancient and modern, have asserted that our thoughts create our reality. We know that how we think about a problem strongly influences our ability to solve the problem. Mr. Patel thinks of himself as a capable teacher who can turn any upset upside down and as a creative force in the classroom who "works magic" with challenging students. He thinks of himself as having influence in his classroom, even though he realizes he may have little influence over what happens outside his classroom, in students' homes and private lives. Thus, he had no fears about calling a meeting to involve his students in creating a solution, rather than creating one by himself. His thinking was influenced strongly by his beliefs in intrinsic motivation, and when he experienced a conflict between his students' behavior and his understanding of them, he re-evaluated his current practices.

On the other hand, if that same teacher, with that same group of students, started questioning his ability to "dance out of power struggles"

Figure 1.1 Charts Created by Mr. Patel's Class

and began to think of himself as unable to “manage these kinds of kids” because, for example, they came to him with too many home problems outside of his influence, he would lose his effectiveness. He would begin to notice all of the times when he was “out of control” and his students were uncooperative, and then he would see the cup as being half empty instead of half full.

Our thinking does indeed affect our actions. According to Stephen Covey (1989), when we focus on things outside of our sphere of influence (e.g., changing our students’ parents), we will be frustrated, worry more, and wield less influence, but when we put our attention on the things over which we have some control, our influence and sense of power will

increase. We will be empowered to turn any upset upside down, just like Mr. Patel. This principle is paramount in the story of The Little Engine That Could, who, while saying, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can,” gradually climbed the impossible hill. *Rethinking Classroom Management* invites you to shift from the narrow focus of the teacher as manager in the classroom to the bigger picture of the teacher as leader in the classroom.

Take a few moments to respond to the question below and make your own personal connection to Mr. Patel’s story and how your thinking affects your actions.



Personal Connection

What are some areas in your school setting that are within your sphere of influence, that is, you have control over them?

What are some areas over which you have no control?

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to rethink, clarify, and write down your beliefs about your role as a leader in the classroom. This process will help you rethink your role in your classroom and discover creative, proactive solutions to problems and issues that concern you. You already know how negative thinking affects your students who come into your classrooms with the “I can’t” attitude. This chapter will help you take a look at your own thinking about your role in the classroom. Let’s first look at the many roles teachers play in the classroom, then connect to Mr. Patel’s classroom and identify the behaviors that distinguish a classroom leader from a classroom manager.

As teachers, we are asked to play many different roles: curriculum designer, instructional guru, parent, counselor, nurse, advisor, custodian, child development expert, organizational planner, classroom manager, spiritual advisor, friend. We come into teaching with great inspiration and aspirations, yet after a few weeks, many of us feel that we are perspiring more than inspiring. We are exhausted because we feel as though we have been trying to hold 20 or 30 ping-pong balls under water all day long in a struggle for control. Our enthusiasm for teaching becomes diminished when we think about our students as objects to be managed and ourselves as “classroom managers.”

This is the dilemma and challenge in classrooms today. Students are coming to us with poorly developed social skills. The social and technological

changes of this century allow for fewer natural opportunities for children to learn the basic prerequisite social skills of caring, sharing, deciding, acting, and following through. For many students, school is the one stable environment left for learning traditional and basic values of relationship, respect, resourcefulness, and responsibility. How do we regain our sense of power and invite our students to be cooperative, responsible members of our classroom, without turning into “robocops” or drill instructors? How do we inspire and lead students to appreciate these social values intrinsically?

Meeting current challenges in the classroom requires more than traditional classroom management; it calls for teachers to be leaders. Stephen Covey, in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989), makes a very clear distinction between management, which is focused on “doing things right,” and leadership, which is focused on “doing the right things.” Management is about efficiency in climbing the ladder (getting our work done), whereas leadership guides students to put the ladder against the right wall (p. 101). Classroom management has traditionally been about methods; classroom leadership is focused on the direction the course of study will take and the vision of how the semester or year will look and feel. Classroom management often is about incentive-based motivation; classroom leadership is about motivation through relationships, inspiration, mutual respect, and common goals.

Teacher-leaders like Jamal Patel get students to set sail with them on a voyage of learning. Teacher-leaders invite students to be citizens in their classroom, rather than “tourists” who “simply pass through without involvement, commitment or belonging” (Freiburg, 1996, p. 32). Teacher-leaders invite students to become citizens in the classroom by asking them questions about what they are looking forward to learning this year, how they want to be treated by their teacher and their classmates, and how they are going to work with subs. They create a vision of an exciting year and motivate excitement and interest in their group through personal stories and connections, as well as by asking the students to participate in creating the classroom environment. It becomes “our” classroom rather than “my” classroom. Once under sail, with everyone on board the ship, teacher-leaders can use some management strategies to teach students the life skills of self-discipline, self-management, and self-reliance, as Mr. Patel did.

On the other hand, if students are not involved in and committed to the journey of the class, many will jump ship and try to swim back to shore, and the teachers will feel impelled to throw them life vests and jump in to save them. Teachers will then spend their time coaxing, bribing, or threatening them to stay on board. As they patrol the waters and the deck to keep the recalcitrant “tourists” on the ship, the teachers will become exhausted and frustrated, and no number of management strategies will keep them from drowning in a sea of despair and discouragement.

If the classroom leader creates the vision of the classroom voyage with the class, then he or she can concentrate on ensuring that the ship is sailing in the right direction. The leader keeps learning on track with the compass aligned to the goal.



Examples of Classroom Leadership

- Create a vision of an exciting year by involving the students in planning what they want to learn. Students go through the text or course outline and identify what they are most interested in learning and what is of least interest. In small groups of two or three, the students put their individual lists together to create group lists, which they will share with the class. The teacher will give the students criteria for how to use consensus about what to keep and what to eliminate from their lists. Finally, the teacher will use the group lists to compile a class list.
- Help students see connections to what they already know by asking them what they already know about the subject, whether it is eighth-grade math or third-grade social studies. List their responses so that everyone in the class can see them.
- Facilitate class meetings as a forum for students to plan learning activities, projects, field trips, and so on and to resolve classroom issues with a solution-focused, “no-blame” format.
- Ask questions out of a genuine interest in helping students resolve their own problems. Teach them to brainstorm solutions and options, then select one that they can both live with.

This book offers a contemporary alternative to traditional, incentive-based classroom management strategies and an answer to a problem that has arisen with their use. From school site to school site, the words vary, but the problem is the same: instead of self-directed, internally motivated youngsters, we are seeing more and more students dependent on external motivation to control their behavior. We seem to be educating a nation of students who continually ask us what they should do and what we will give them if they conform—and, conversely, they ask us what we will do to them if they don't obey. If we keep treating our students as incapable of having intrinsic values, bribing them with carrots or punishing them with sticks, we will create a society of citizens who will be always watching to see what they can get away with and who are dependent on someone to monitor their every move.

Traditional classroom management strategies aimed at controlling behavior are becoming less and less effective. Stickers, stars, awards, and rewards often become frustrating attempts to hold our classrooms together in some sort of orderly fashion. Alfie Kohn has been leading the way for educators to get off this treadmill by documenting and publishing research to substantiate that “the carrot and stick” systems (rewards and punishments) that rely on quick-fix techniques to get kids “shaped up” actually undermine the prosocial values that we are trying to teach (see Kohn, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2005; see also Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001).

The role of the teacher in today's society is changing. Over the past 20 years, important social skills that used to be taught at home have become more and more the responsibility of the classroom teacher. Many children spend more of their waking hours with their teachers than with their parents. Thus, teaching is a powerful leadership position that has the potential to shape our society in a variety of ways.

In educating young people today, we are preparing them to enter a complex, rapidly changing world. This demands that we have the vision and heart to assume our role as classroom leader and invite our students to appreciate and acquire the following leadership skills for themselves:

- An abiding respect for themselves and others
- The ability to choose responses on the basis of values rather than immediate feelings
- A clear sense of their capacity for influence and responsible behavior
- The ability to initiate appropriate action and follow through academically and socially



Key Criteria for a Classroom Leader

- Demonstrates an abiding respect for self and others
- Chooses responses based on values and beliefs rather than feelings
- Creates a vision for the students to connect to the academic and social curriculum
- Commits to ask more questions and give fewer answers to students
- Facilitates the learning process through student self-reflection and assessment
- When confronted with problems, shifts thinking to focus on solutions instead of blaming
- Believes that “efficient management without effective leadership is like straightening deck chairs on the Titanic” (Covey, 1989, p. 102)
- Uses strategies to support intrinsic motivation



Checking My Understanding of Leadership

Answer true or false:

- _____ 1. Leadership is about doing things right.
- _____ 2. Management is about methods.
- _____ 3. Leadership is about efficiency.
- _____ 4. Leadership is more about direction and goals.
- _____ 5. Creating a vision for students is the role of the leader.

Answers: 1F, 2T, 3F, 4T, 5T



Now can you answer this essential question?

- How does my thinking influence and affect my interactions with students, parents, and colleagues and my success as a teacher-leader?



Personal Commitment

What issues or concerns do you want to rethink about your role as the leader in your classroom? (Think about your experiences with powerful teachers/leaders.)

■ OUR BELIEFS AND VALUES

Proactive leaders make decisions based on their values and beliefs, rather than their feelings.

—Adapted from Stephen Covey, 1989, p. 80



Classroom Connection

Elementary School Scenario

Mrs. Esparza's kindergarten class had just come in from a rainy-day recess. The children had played in the rain, and some had explored in the mud. As Manuel and Rhea walked into the classroom, they made mud prints on the rug and were fascinated with their imprints. Mrs. Esparza saw the mud and exclaimed, "What are you doing, deliberately making mud tracks on our new carpet? You are going to miss recess at lunch for making this mess."

The children sat down bewildered. A few minutes later, as her anger was subsiding, Mrs. Esparza realized that they weren't making a mess deliberately; they were just young children exploring their natural curiosity by experimenting. In her heart, she knew and believed that children this age often acted before they thought and that she had just done the same thing. She felt bad, so she went over to the table where Manuel and Rhea were sitting and said, "I'm sorry, children, I know that you didn't mean to make a mess. You were just fascinated with the mud. How can we clean the mud off of our new rug and remember to make mud prints outside?"

The children brightened and said, "We can get sponges and buckets and wash it up." "Good idea. Let's get Mrs. Jenks to help you."

Though we can enjoy the humor of this story and feel for Mrs. Esparza's plight, we can also recognize that Mrs. Esparza's first response to the situation was an example of making a decision on feelings, not on values and beliefs. Many times, even as adult role models, we are unable to control our feelings of frustration, anger, outrage, and disbelief when students' behavior does not match our expectations. Teachers are human too. Much like our students, we can stop thinking when we are seriously upset. The first step to making certain that our actions match our beliefs, and that what happened to Mrs. Esparza doesn't happen to us, is to articulate our beliefs and values clearly.

Middle School Scenario

Aaron was an eighth-grade student in Mr. Ryan's English class who often made noises and interrupted when other students were talking or the teacher was teaching. He occasionally got up and wandered around the classroom as though he were looking for something. Mr. Ryan would always call his name and ask him to stop. When Mr. Ryan shared his thinking with his coach, he felt that Aaron was trying to "get his goat." On some occasions, Aaron would take his seat looking perplexed. Mr. Ryan knew that Aaron had been struggling to adjust at his new school and that students with unmet needs often act without thinking. When he remembered this, he was calmer and more patient with Aaron's behavior, but when he started thinking that Aaron was trying to "test him," he reacted with anger and irritation.



Personal Connection

From your own experience as a student, what do you recall teachers doing that you would not choose to include in your teaching repertoire?

From your own experience as a student, what do you recall teachers doing that you want to include in your own classroom?

As teachers, we are intimately involved in the change process and need to become experts at how we can change behavior, both our own and our students'. So let's begin to challenge our thinking by looking at how our beliefs and values influence how we view ourselves as classroom leaders and, thus, our role in violence prevention and anger management for our students. You already know that the leaders you admire most are those who match their actions to their values and beliefs, and you know how dissonant it feels to work for or with people who say one thing and do another. Thus, congruence between our beliefs and behaviors as teacher-leaders is essential to inculcating those same beliefs and behaviors in our students. By the end of this section, you will be able to write down your beliefs and values about teaching and use them as a guide for decisions in your own classroom. Having such a guide will reduce your stress and provide a frame of reference for your decision making.

We are more than role models for our students; we are leaders and teachers of both an academic curriculum and a social curriculum. As part of our classroom curriculum, we are trying to teach our students how to channel aggression and violence in constructive ways—in other words, to think before they act. We teach this both by modeling prosocial behavior and by talking to them about our actions. For example, Mrs. Esparza could have said, "I am really angry, too angry to think. Sit down here in these chairs while I cool down." Then, after her cerebral cortex had resumed functioning and she was thinking clearly, she could return and speak to the children about how they could make amends for their behavior. This is really the key to violence prevention: clarifying our values and beliefs and acting on our thinking rather than our emotions. We model for our students that we can and do make our decisions from our values and beliefs, not our feelings.

As teachers, we have been to many workshops. Yet educational researchers have documented that fewer than 10 percent of us go back to

our classrooms and implement what we learned without coaching (Joyce & Showers, as cited in Specks & Knipe, 1982, p. 89). We know firsthand that changing a behavior is difficult work. In fact, according to *Human Brain and Human Learning* by Leslie Hart (1983) one of the first authors to write about the brain from the perspective of education, our behavior is organically stored in our brain as a program. Once a program is built, we don't lose it unless we suffer from dementia. Our brain uses the program that is stored, whether it is helpful or unhelpful. If it is unhelpful, the only way we can keep it from being enacted is to build a longer and stronger program of more appropriate behavior so that the brain will use this new program instead. In behavioral terms, we used to refer to stored programs of behavior as "habits," not knowing that they are really organically stored in our brain, much as a software program is stored on a computer chip, and that the brain automatically accesses them. How many times have you experienced the automatic response of habit or an old stored program? Have you ever moved into a new place and found yourself continuing to reach for the light switch where it was in your old place? Or remodeled your home and continued to try to put food in the oven where it used to be?

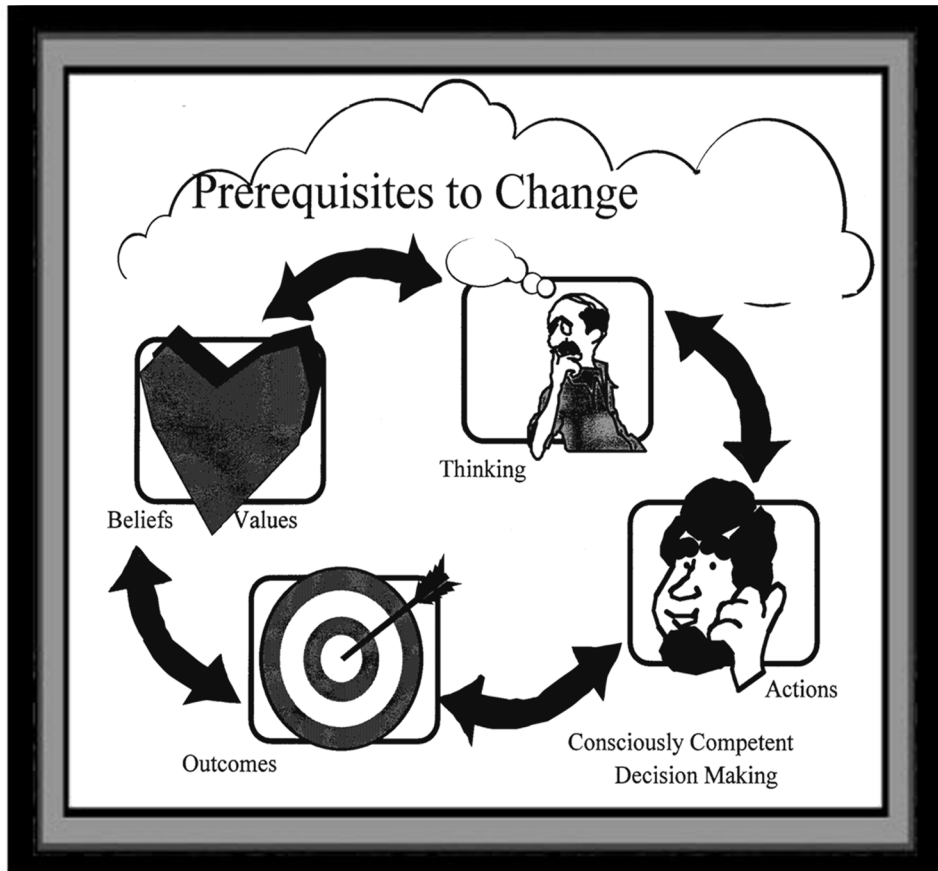
Over 15 years ago, some human resource researchers from IBM, Sears, and PG&E joined forces to determine why employees who went to workshops rarely applied their new learning in the workplace. What they found was that when the teaching or workshop focused only on actions (such as skills and behaviors), there was little hope that employees would integrate the skill into real life or commit to maintaining it. But when the teaching focused on connecting what was learned to personal and cultural values and beliefs, and on aligning one's thinking to support those values and beliefs, employees became committed to the change and were more able to alter their actions and behaviors (Hall & Hord, 2006).

Figure 1.2 shows how changes in behavior happen and why our values and beliefs are so critical to rethinking our classroom management strategies. When we are adults, our beliefs and values shape our thinking, which in turn shapes our decision making and, consequently, our actions and their outcomes. Notice that the arrows in the figure point in both directions because the process is cyclical.



Examples of How Beliefs and Values Shape Our Thinking

- *Positive example:* Suppose that I, as a teacher, have a value about what respect looks like and sounds like. The thinking that follows might be "I think of myself as a respectful person; I treat students with respect." Then my actions flow from this thinking about myself. The outcome is respectful treatment of students.
- *Negative example:* Suppose that I think of myself as someone who has no self-control and who just can't drive by a McDonald's without stopping for French fries. Then, even though I know cognitively that I am trying to reduce the number of fat grams that I'm consuming, my behavior will follow from my thinking: I will find that, indeed, I can't resist the French fries.

Figure 1.2 Prerequisites to Change

So our thinking really does influence our behavior and our students' behavior. "As a man thinketh, so is he." How many students have you heard say, "Well, I just can't do it," or, "I've always been chatty." The exciting implication is that we as teachers can help our students think anew. We can help them see themselves differently now that we understand how the change process works.

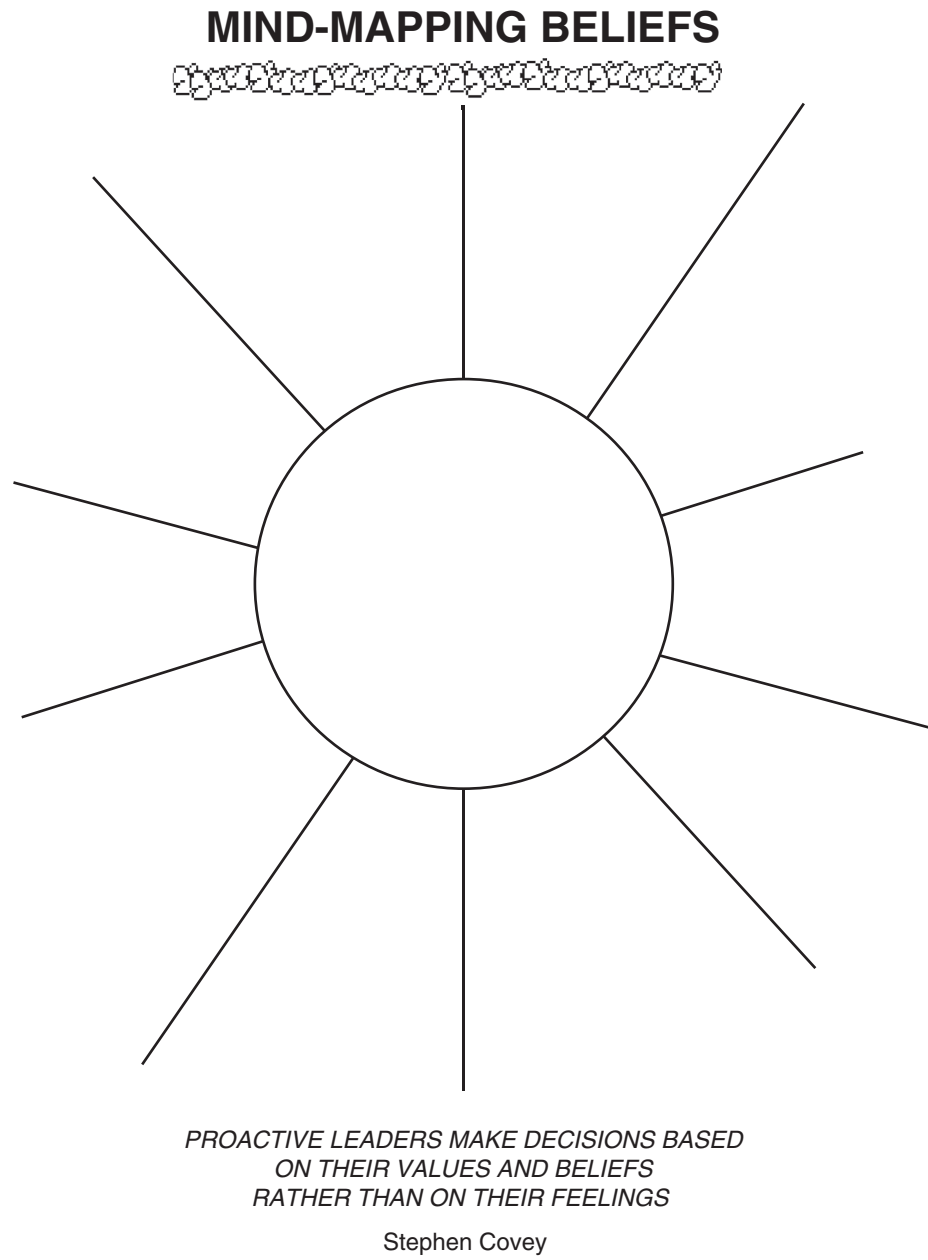


Personal Commitment

Write down your values and beliefs about students and learning. If it suits your learning style, use the "mind maps" (Figures 1.3 and 1.4 on pages 14 and 15) to brainstorm and record visually, on the rays flowing out from the center, your own beliefs about students' needs in the classroom learning environment. Other options are to craft your beliefs from your favorite quotes or poems or to make a list or outline of your beliefs.

Many teachers have found this exercise so helpful that they have posted what they have written in their classroom. Others say that they keep a written copy near their desk. Having written values and beliefs serves as a guide for decision making during times of upset in the classroom.

Figure 1.3 Mind-Mapping Beliefs



Once you have clarified your values and beliefs, you may want to write a pledge to your students that is based on them and post that in your classroom. (See the pledge that one teacher made to her students in Figure 1.5 on page 16.)

Figures 1.6 and 1.7 on pages 16 and 17 show visually the classroom leadership philosophy and the four beliefs in character, commitment, perseverance, and relationships.

Figure 1.4 Sample of Mind Map With Quotes

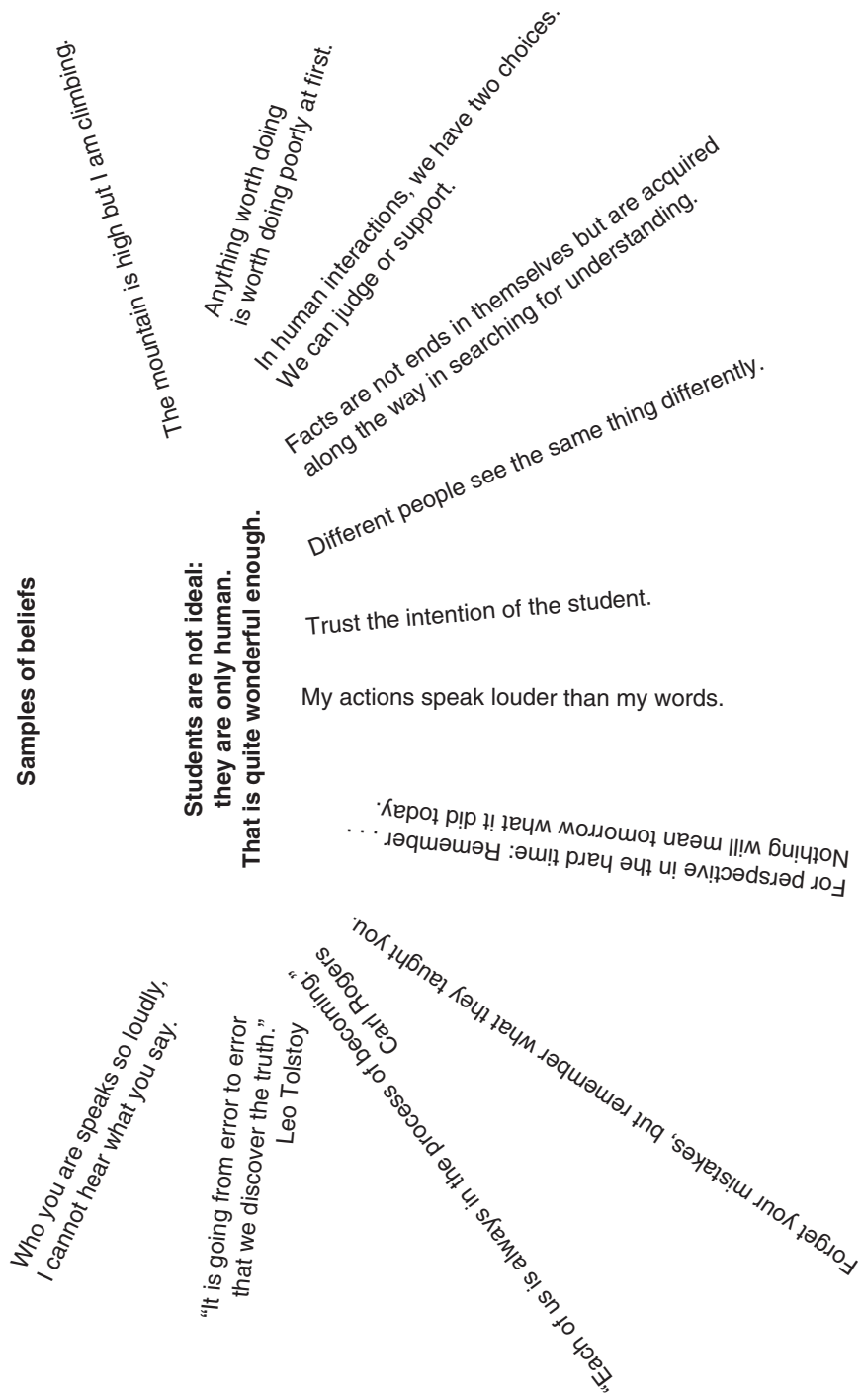
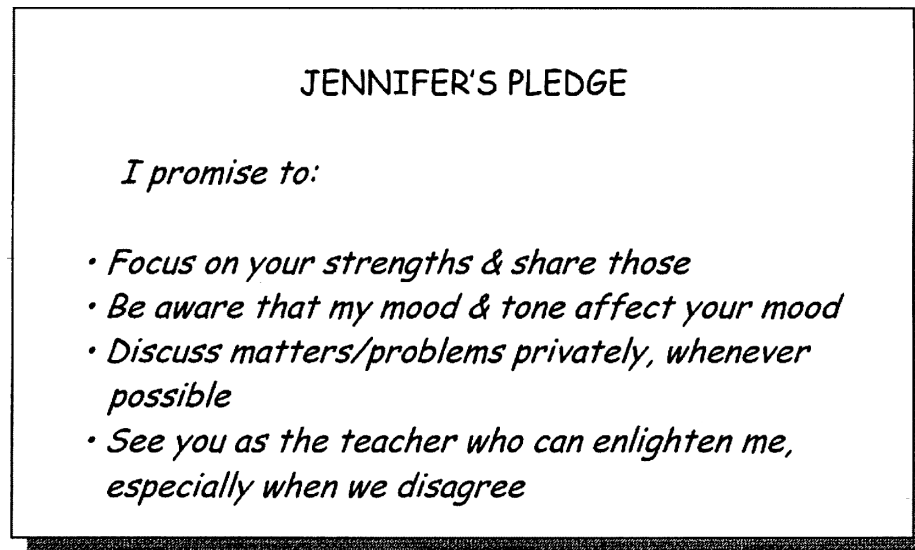
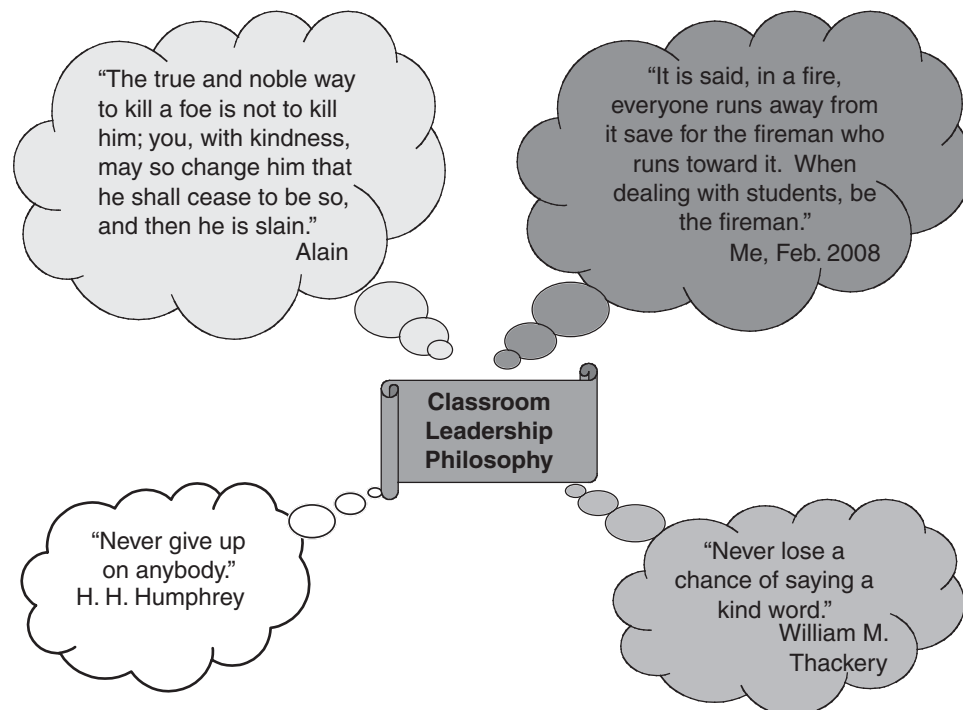
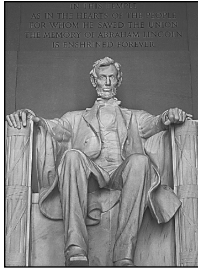


Figure 1.5 A Teacher's Pledge to Her Students

SOURCE: Jennifer Jenkins, Washington Open, Santa Clara Unified School District

Figure 1.6 Classroom Leadership Philosophy

SOURCE: Used with permission of Len Esparza.

Figure 1.7 Four Beliefs**Beliefs****Character**

- Consistent
- Fair
- Honest

Commitment

- Prepared
- Knowledgeable
- Available

Perseverance

- Flexible
- Freedom to Fail
- Creative

Relational

- Caring
- Empathetic
- Involved



Shifting From Manager to Leader: Now can you answer these essential questions?

- Why does shifting from being the classroom manager to being the classroom leader set the stage for more cooperation?
- How do my beliefs and values match the research?



SUMMARY OF RETHINKING OUR ROLE AS TEACHERS

As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

—Proverbs 23:7

- How I think about myself as a teacher affects how I lead in the classroom.
- Leaders put relationships with students first and get them to set sail on an exciting voyage of learning.
- Leaders are proactive rather than reactive: Their actions are based on beliefs and values rather than on feelings.
- Leaders write down or leaders post their beliefs in a visible place to serve as a guide for their classrooms. They let students know how they support and celebrate differences in culture, style, and learning.