

Learning to Lead, Second Edition: Effective Leadership Skills for Teachers of Young Children

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November 26, 2021

Introduction

Executive Book Summary

EADM 829

Lorianne Hastings Smith

“Learning to Lead combines theory and practice with important topics such as human development, diversity, anti-bias, and social change. There is information on *leadership connections* in school-age care and nurturing leadership in children. Each chapter is designed to promote *self-evaluation* and *personal leadership development* (Sullivan, 2009).

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There are three functions of leadership • **Transformational leadership**, which transforms both the leader and the follower into better people and better leaders • **Situational leadership**, which changes with the situation and/or needs change • **Servant leadership**, which allows leaders to serve others (Sullivan, 2009).



“Leadership is a group phenomenon. At least two people must be involved, a leader must be leading someone. Leadership usually involves intentional influence, At least one of the people involved must want to make something happen.

Effective leadership creates interdependence: we find ways to work together and draw on each other’s unique gifts and strengths so we can accomplish common goals and achieve great things” (Sullivan, 2009, p.16)

Leadership in Early Childhood Education

Like human development, leadership development takes time and is never finished (Sullivan, 2009).

“Leadership development is the process by which we increase our ability to create and influence change, growth, and achievement” (Sullivan, D, 2009, p. 29).



There are many leadership situations that lend themselves to leadership growth and development. Some such situations include family involvement, curriculum quality mentoring, and creative problem solving. These situations allow for a variety of leadership-growth opportunities.

“A perfect leader combines all the leadership functions and styles” (Sullivan, 2009, p. 34).

Be the kind
of leader
that you
would
follow.



“What is parenting? Simply put, parenting is the way we prepare children to meet the expectations and challenges of their communities and to understand their society and culture” (Sullivan, 2009, p. 46).

It is clear that the many duties and tasks performed by parents parallel those performed by leaders in other areas. Some of these areas include cultivating children’s intellects, interests, and talents • setting expectations • influencing children’s self-esteem • providing basic necessities • ensuring adequate health care, quality child care, a good education, and a safe environment.

PARENTS AS LEADERS • Planning activities • Creating team-building activities • Negotiating with children and other family members • Scheduling the day to accommodate children’s school and recreational activities • Modeling appropriate behavior • Arbitrating disagreements between siblings • Setting goals to afford a family vacation • Supervising children in their work, play, and interactions with others • Setting performance expectations for children’s chores and behavior • Motivating children and other family members to accomplish tasks • Understanding group dynamics to effectively influence how family members respond to each other • Using problem-solving strategies to help children figure out what went wrong with a project • Making decisions based on current information or past results • Strategizing ways to get through tough times • Using multitasking skills

The Cultural Context of Leadership

“Culture influences leadership. Communication styles, processes for interacting with others and working with conflict, and competition/cooperation and learning/knowing preferences are just a few of the areas strongly influenced by culture” (Sullivan, 2009, p. 64).

“All people need to be able to lead and serve effectively in multicultural environments” (Sullivan, 2009, p. 64).

“Leadership is about solutions that take other people’s perspectives into account” (Sullivan, 2009, p. 65).

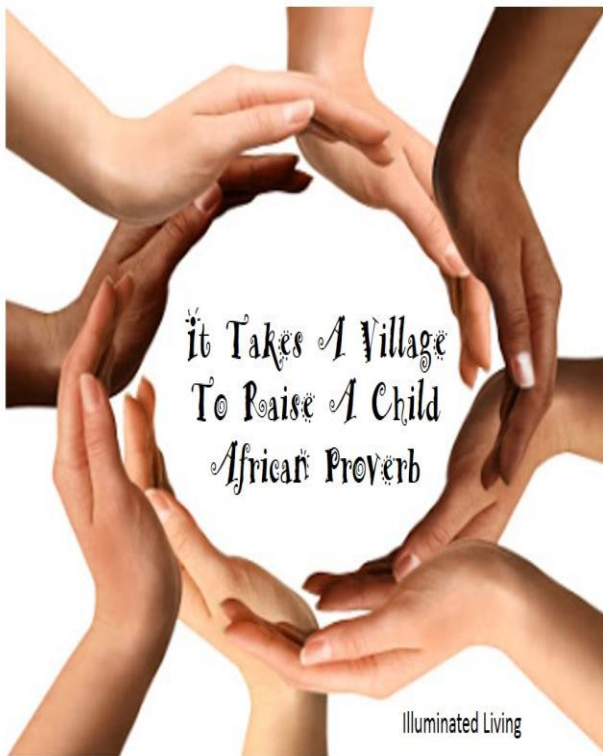
To increase your leadership abilities and effectiveness while working with a diverse population, you could form a multicultural work team.



ASK YOURSELF: Think of all the ways you are different from your coworkers. What are the strengths and skills you bring to a leadership situation as a result of those differences? In what ways are your coworkers different from you? What are the strengths and skills they bring to a leadership situation? (Sullivan, 2009).

It takes a Village

Working with families also will strengthen your leadership ability. Working with families is different from working with colleagues. They play a different role in the lives of their children than staff do, and they have different concerns about children's well-being.



“The strongest form of collaboration with families is, of course, making sure they have equal voice and equal say in the decision-making process” (Sullivan, 2009, p. 86).

“Team building gathers all the people who work in your program—the cook, the driver, the receptionist, and the custodian as well as teachers, assistants, and aides—so everyone has an opportunity to see their roles in working toward the common goal or vision” (Sullivan, 2009, p. 86).

ASK YOURSELF: Make a list of every adult on your team. What is each team members' strength? What would the team and/or children be missing if that person was not there to bring forth their strength? What is your relationship with each of the team members? Do you have regular conversations about what each child and family needs? If not, ask what each person wants most for the children and their families. What is each adult's relationship with the children? How children interact with the team members will help determine what the children think of the team members. Ask each adult if she feels like she's a part of the team. If yes, ask why. If no, ask why not. Are there support staff in your program? Are they invited to regular program meetings and do they participate? If they are not part of program meetings, you can suggest that they be invited (Sullivan, 2009).



Initiatives

Consider undertaking some of these initiatives to develop and enrich relationships between your school-age program and its community:

- Hold a community forum on programs for young school children.
- Facilitate conversations between the community, a school, and an early childhood program serving school-age children.
 - Find ways to make use of community spaces.

High-quality programs can maximize these needs through the use of various community facilities (Sullivan, 2009).

Communities today are very diverse. Who in the community is represented by the children in your program? Who is most likely to join in an activity or action that builds community relationships?

WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER



“Supported empowerment occurs when you and all of your colleagues work together intentionally to make sure that all of you have an opportunity to state what you want to happen. It occurs when you work together to make sure others value, hear, and respond to everyone else’s perspectives” (Sullivan, 2009, p. 118).

EMPOWERMENT LOOKS LIKE:

People freely share their opinions and perspectives. • People willingly participate in decision making because they know their opinions and perspectives matter to the rest of the group (Sullivan, 2009).

ASK YOURSELF: Describe the ways your work environment empowers you. Are there ways your work environment seems to take power away? In what ways do you share resources, information, and authority? In what ways does this empower you or others? Why does it empower you or others? (Sullivan, 2009).



These **ten** topics will help you transfer what you have learned about leadership to supporting children's leadership development.

Transference of Ability

Self-sufficiency and Interdependence

Reflection

Values

Vision

Advocacy

Communication, Social and Interpersonal Skills

Team Building

Empowerment

Followerhip

ASK YOURSELF: Think about each child in your program, or classroom. Which leadership skills and abilities do you see blossoming? How can you help a child build on or enhance each skill or ability? What about each child's leadership challenges? How can you help each child address or supplement her leadership challenges? We all know that children are more likely to imitate adults than to do what adults tell them, so always remember that the children in your presence are watching and imitating you. What do children learn about leadership from you when they watch you interacting with other children and other adults? As you grow more intentional in your own leadership development, you can begin to focus on how to model appropriate leadership behavior for children. What are the three most important things you look for in a leader? How do you model those for children? (Sullivan, 2009).

Sullivan, D. (2009). *Learning to lead, second edition: effective leadership skills for teachers of young children.*

Redleaf Press.