

# *Empowered Leaders Empower Others: Committing to Vulnerable, Thoughtful, and Inclusive Leadership*

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## **Types of Leadership** (Phillips)

What does it mean to model good leadership?

What qualities of leadership align with our fundamental values?

Leader/follower paradigm - modes are based on two characteristics:

1. The amount of control or discipline exercised by the authority
2. Whether the focus of the environment is on the leader or the follower

**AUTHORITARIAN** – high level of structure / self-serving or self-oriented (conductor oriented)

Sarcasm, insults, shame

Little regard for individual's feelings

Lack of self-reflection

Little flexibility in rules or regulations “my way or the highway”

Feared by followers, lacks open communication with students

Personal/professional needs are more important than the needs of the group

Doesn't empower students to lead, think, participate, etc.

**NEGLECTFUL** – low level of structure / conductor oriented

Doesn't seem to care, seems burned out, tired, or lacks motivation

Same lesson plans/techniques/repertoire

Inconsistent discipline, expectations unclear

Student disruptions go unaddressed

Avoids tough decisions/conversations

**PERMISSIVE** – low level of structure / in service of the group (singer oriented)

Enjoys teaching but lacks classroom management skills

Fails to understand the necessity for structure, discipline, order

Well-liked by students but may prioritize “being liked” at the expense of other things – tries to be friends with students/singers

Rarely demanding – productivity low

Chaotic work environment (noisy, disruptive, etc.)

Inconsistent with rules/discipline, unclear about expectations, lacks follow-through

Allows too much freedom in an effort to be nice – usually backfires

**(Goal) AUTHORITATIVE – high level of structure / singer-student oriented**

**Assertive, confident, but not domineering**

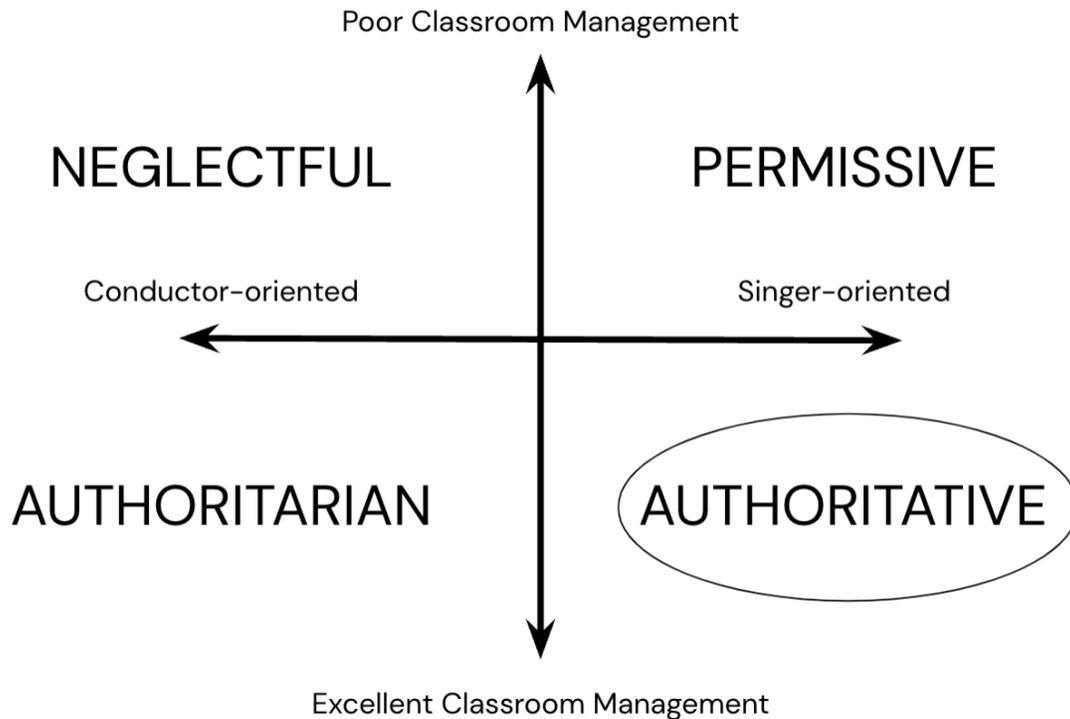
**Patient, conscientious, honest, consistent, kind**

**Enjoys a collaborative work environment**

**Understands that discipline is necessary for productivity and harmony, but not abused**

**Expectations are clear, anticipates discipline issues and follows through with consequences consistently**

**Discipline issues don't disrupt productivity**



Adapted from Kenneth Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

## **Vulnerability**

Two areas of focus:

a. **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

- i. We must model vulnerability if we expect others to be vulnerable as well.
- ii. DAILY check-ins: Meditation, journaling, self-reflection
- iii. Can be brief or long!
- iv. *Did my actions/leadership align with my values? Did I accomplish my goals? Were there areas where I could have led more productively? More compassionately? How does this information impact my actions tomorrow, next rehearsal, etc.?*
- v. The commitment to vulnerable leadership should be of high priority
- vi. This means feedback from yourself, your colleagues, your students, etc...

- vii. It's all about the growth process – we give our students feedback in order to help them grow, we must do the same.
  - viii. Honoring and *talking about* the fact that this can be scary. It is risky and it is uncertain – two things that the human brain doesn't like.
- b. GUILT vs. SHAME (Brown)
- i. Guilt: *I/you did something bad* (reflection of action/progress)
  - ii. People need to know when their actions don't align with expectations, rules, values, etc. but that they are still respected.
  - iii. We only know what we know.
  - iv. Shame: *I am/you are bad* (personal reflection/punishment)
  - v. Shame is a frequently used leadership strategy...it's just not a very effective one
  - vi. Shame is frequently used publicly to one person, guilt more in 1:1 conversations or to larger group (but absolutely can be in 1:1, too).
  - vii. “zap”

## Leaning into Hard Conversations

### STEP 1: Equipping ourselves with the skills

- a. Many were not taught how to have a hard conversation, it's a skill to be learned.
- b. Requires self-reflection, understanding of everyone's role, what might be missing, etc.

### STEP 2: Is it time for a hard conversation?

- a. Does this *actually* require a hard conversation or am I just **reacting**?
- b. If it does, does it need to happen *right now* (it might), or can it wait (after class, tomorrow, via email, etc.)
- c. Is this for the collective or a single individual?
- d. Do any other parties need to be involved? (Particularly in primary/sec. Ed)
  - i. What's my role: adjusting behavior in someone else, or owning my own behavior?
  - ii. How much time do I need before I can approach this conversation calmly and thoughtfully?
  - iii. What information do I need to approach this conversation the best I can?

### STEP 3: Approaching Hard Conversations

- a. Humility must be the #1 priority. Don't forget on the other side of the conversation is a human with feelings, opinions, beliefs, etc.
- b. Be clear and kind. Unclear is unkind.
- c. Feedback vs. Criticism – ***be cautious of this!***
  - i. Feedback – Correction for the benefit of the group “No problem, now you know.” Emotion is removed.
  - ii. Criticism – can be passive aggressive, cruelty hidden behind niceties
  - iii. Feedback ≠ mean.
- d. *Reminder*: we are not responsible for the other person's reaction, we have to allow them to react however they do and acknowledge their feelings.
  - i. When teenagers (or anyone) react, don't dismiss *their* perception of how monumental it may or may not be: “I know that's how that feels to you right now...”

- e. Trauma informed practices

#### STEP 4: Conclusion/Follow Up/Next Steps

- a. How do we move forward together in a way that is helpful to me, you, the group, etc.?
- b. The conclusion may not be right then
  - i. Allow time for processing - circle back to something at a later time (tomorrow, next week, etc.)
- c. Also, if you see them at a later date doing better, tell them! Reward POSITIVE change/behavior
- d. What is the plan for if the behavior doesn't change?
- e. Document conversation – make notes, email admin., etc. This can really be vital in certain settings.

### **Other Helpful phrases for you (and to teach your students!)**

“Say more”

- If we feel like we're not understanding, or if they are getting tangled in emotions.

“Can we circle back to this in \_\_\_\_\_?”

- When we need more time to process what's being said, if we are not emotionally ready to have the conversation, if it isn't the right time for the conversation.

[or] “I'd like to circle back to what you said about....”

- If we need further clarification, if the conversation is veering off track, etc.

“So I can be clear, what I think you're saying is....”

- **This one is so important!** Be sure that everyone knows *exactly* what the other one is saying, not assuming. Assumptions can lead to misunderstandings, mistrust, repeated behavior.

### **Student Empowerment**

- ◆ THE GOAL: Students are empowered when they know and feel that they are seen, heard, and cared for.
- ◆ Avoid Top-down authority (authoritarian) by including others in the leadership role and giving them ownership over the classroom environment (within reason).

How can we facilitate an environment where students to feel *seen and heard*?

- a. Be aware of disproportionate engagement (who dominates the conversations, is first to raise their hand, blurts out, etc.)
  - i. “Step back” vs. “Step up” – group conversation personalities (Arao and Clemens)
    - i. Empowering more timid students to “step up,” more bold students to “step back,” and allow space for more voices to be heard.
  - ii. Equitytools.org – resources available
- b. Allow time to process
  - i. Following a question/prompt, wait **10 seconds**. This will feel like forever at first but will feel natural eventually. Allowing time for students to think and formulate a thought before calling

on a student will engage more than the “quick thinkers.” Jumping to the first hand up conditions students into knowing they don’t have to think of the answer, someone else will do it.

- ii. Many teachers wait max. 5 secs, most 1-2 sec. (Paul)
- iii. Consider offering opportunities to respond to questions in written form as well as verbally in class.

How can we facilitate an environment where students are *seen and cared for*?

a. Belonging vs. Fitting In

- i. Belonging: “being somewhere you want to be, *and they want you...I get to be me.*”
- ii. Fitting In: “being somewhere you want to be, and they don’t care one way or the other...I have to be like you.”
  1. Belonging is the goal. It is active. Fitting in is passive
  2. We are biologically hardwired to need to belong. 10,000 years ago, if we didn’t belong in the group, we were outcast and likely eaten by predators.
  3. Conditioning language often uses “fitting in” to encourage participation, so we must combat that by cultivating classrooms where people are actively engaged and know that “we’ve got you and we want you here.”

### **So now what...?**

(These are only *some* ideas for how we may continue to cultivate an environment where are students are seen, heard, and cared for!)

- Community Building Activities
  - Not just during retreats - Build them into your daily/weekly lesson plans.
  - Allow students time to talk and get to know each other.
  - Do they know things about *you*?
  - Building a social contract
- Leadership and Empowerment
  - How are the “leaders” chosen?
  - Exec. Board, choir manager, assistant conductor, section leaders, planning of activities, social media, etc.
- Repertoire Choices
  - Do they reflect the beautiful and unique makeup of your classroom?
  - Music from the cultures of your singers
  - Do singers ever have choice in the repertoire selections?
- Classroom Accessibility
  - Steps/Risers - how do these accommodate students with mobility restrictions?
  - Formal Attire – how do these accommodate students with gender fluidity or general personal preferences?
  - Posters on the wall/projections - do they accommodate students with vision impairment?
  - Sheet music – you might need to accommodate with larger print, braille, etc.
  - UDL – resources for accessibility
    - <https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl>

- Mindfulness
  - These can feel very vulnerable, because they are full of risk and uncertainty. Students may have never experienced a mindfulness exercise. What might come up for them during the activity?
  - Meditation, journaling, breathing exercises, stretching, etc.
  - <https://feldenkrais.com> - Awareness through movement

QR Code for slides:



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