

Shared Leadership in Schools
On-line, Fall 2008
Michigan State University

Professor Susan Printy
East Lansing, MI 48823
Phone: 517.355.4508
Fax: 517.353.6393 (Be sure to use my name)
Email: sprinty@msu.edu

Target Students: This course is designed primarily for students in the MAEAD, MACT, or On-line MA programs, though it might be equally attractive to practicing teachers and practicing administrators seeking additional coursework for professional development or updating credentials. Course offerings in EAD focus on leadership generally or on formal leaders, specifically principals in K-12 offerings. However, many of our students express their desire to remain in a teaching role. This course specifically looks at how teacher leadership is a necessary complement to principal leadership. Of note is the relevance of this class to other contexts besides classrooms and schools. Students in earlier sessions have been successful in adapting the material to non profit organizations, social clubs, businesses such as banks and day care centers, and churches.

Rationale: Research has consistently demonstrated the “primacy” of the principal, for creating school climate and conditions necessary for teacher professionalism and for leading school innovation and improvement. However, schools are generally not successful when principals are the only source of leadership. In fact, most research on the matter points to the indirect effects of principal leadership on student outcomes, including student achievement and engagement. A range of teacher-related concepts, such as teacher leadership, instructional quality, collective efficacy, trust, satisfaction, and commitment, mediate the relationship between the principal and students. These findings all point to the need for teachers to share in developing school vision and ideas for improvement, participating on site-based leadership teams, and making decisions about matters close to their work in classrooms. Shared leadership refers to all parties who come together in leadership teams, governing bodies, or committees to jointly make decisions required to manage the school and improve the learning environment. Indeed, shared leadership can extend to support staff, community members, and students, though the concerted effort of principals and teachers is the focus of this course.

Topics Addressed: How shared leadership develops remains poorly understood. What do actual efforts toward shared leadership look like in practice? How do principals and teachers socially construct shared leadership? How do they identify and differentiate their decision-making roles and relationships? How do principals and teachers decide what decisions and leadership activities are shared and by whom? What are some of the consequences for teachers, principals, and students in adopting efforts toward shared leadership? In what ways do the differing belief systems of administrators and teachers constrain shared leadership? How do district, state, and national policies influence the sharing of leadership inside a school? These are the kinds of questions students will grapple with in the course.

One text is required:

Donaldson, G. A. (2006). *Cultivating leadership in schools: Connecting people, purpose, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press. Easy to read yet rich with theoretical perspectives, this book describes teacher and administrative “cultures” and serves as a launchpad for discussion. Note that I am requesting that you purchase the most recent edition, which has some nice summary tables. It’s now \$21 on Amazon. If you find a used book for a low price, it’s possibly the earlier edition.

McLaughlin, M. & Talbert, J. (2006). *Building school-based teacher learning communities: Professional strategies to improve student achievement*. New York: Teachers College Press. \$18.76 at Amazon. Great insight into why teacher learning communities work or don’t and leadership advice for how to enhance the likelihood that they do.

Other readings will be from websites, through MSU library e-resources, or posted on Angel.

Organizing Paradigms:

Community: Students will work with a small group of students also enrolled in the course to form a learning community around course material. This learning community will shift over time to a consultation community as students direct their efforts to strengthening a leadership community in their own schools.

Identity as a leader: Students will reflect on their leadership involvement in their own school community, identify their own leadership challenges, and actively work to improve shared leadership in their schools or some other setting.

Using technology for collaborative work: To the extent possible, we will use web-based technologies to collaborate with each other as the semester progresses. We’ll use wikis to do collaborative work, hold a conference call using voice-over-internet. We’ll set the schedule for these things once I get to know you – and your schedules – better. You will need to secure a headset or earphones and microphone to participate. You will also want to download Skype programming (free!) onto your computer if you do not already have it. Please advise me of any anticipated problems for using these technologies.

Instructional Practices:

Reading and discussion: All students will read Donaldson text and respond to questions via discussion boards.

Small group work: Groups will engage in initial discussion before interacting with the larger group through discussion boards, conference calls, virtual meetings, etc. Groups will also complete several collaborative projects: 1) a visual representation of shared leadership and 2) a detailed, year long plan for the induction of teachers using the ASSIST website as a primary reference. Collaborative technologies will be emphasized.

Reflective Practitioner: Students will be given focal questions or queries to prompt self-reflection on their own leadership situation. They will apply feedback strategies to their work. They will be required to identify a leadership challenge that constrains shared leadership in their school setting and decide on a course of action that will help enhance their particular leadership involvement or will improve the leadership capacity of their work group or school.

Organization of Course:

- Part 1 – Developing community, exploring the literature
- Part 2 – Collaborative projects, video case
- Part 3 – Addressing a leadership challenge, using feedback

Schedule for Classes

Note: this schedule is subject to change, as I better understand your interests, skills, and needs.

Week/Dates	Topic	Activities
Week 1 / Aug 25 – Aug 31	Getting to Know Each Other	Short bio Meyers –Briggs type test Class norms
Week 2 / Sept 1-Sept 7	Getting Started Assignment to groups	Welcome others Meyers-Briggs discussion Class norms discussion What is leadership? What do you think about shared leadership? (short paper) Reading Donaldson, pp. 1-55 Printy & Marks TIP.pdf
Week 3 / Sept 8 – Sept 14	What is Shared Leadership?	Reading Group discussion Threaded discussion by discussion leaders
Week 4 / Sept 15 – Sept 21	How has Shared Leadership been conceptualized and investigated? How can I represent my understanding of shared leadership?	Reading Group and class discussion Individual representation of shared leadership
Week 5 / Sept 22 – Sept 28	Coming to consensus: Group representations of shared Leadership	Group discussion and group visual representation of shared leadership (using wikis)
Week 6 / Sept 29 – Oct 5	Related Leadership theory: expanding understanding	Reading Distributed Leadership paper
Week 7 / Oct 6 – Oct 12	Related Leadership theory: expanding understanding	Conference call via Skype ?

Week 8 / Oct 13 – Oct 19	Planning for Shared Leadership ASSIST website	Conference call via Skype ?
Week 9 / Oct 20 – Oct 26	Planning for Shared Leadership ASSIST website	
Week 10 / Oct 27 – Nov 2	Planning for Shared Leadership ASSIST website	Group paper due on year long plan for induction
Week 11 / Nov 3 – Nov 9	Video case – SBI Feedback	Plan for using feedback
Week 12 / Nov 10 – Nov 16	Meeting a Leadership Challenge	Analysis of situation and plan for action
Week 13 / Nov 17 – Nov 23	Meeting a Leadership Challenge	Work on Leadership Challenge
Week 14 / Nov 24 – Nov 30	Thanksgiving Week	Assessment of class participation and Course evaluation
Week 15 / Dec 1 – Dec 5	Meeting a Leadership Challenge	Final paper due

Requirements:

Class participation is essential. Shared leadership is predicated on relationship, interaction, and collaboration, so I expect that all class members will be considerate and participatory throughout the semester. We will be establishing more concrete norms as a group early in the semester. Please see the statements regarding academic integrity, accommodations, and the writing center. Also, notice information about using Angel for the first time. Various discussions will have specific requirements as to the level of engagement expected.

If you find that you are having difficulty meeting your responsibilities as a member of this class, please contact me, sooner rather than later. Life happens – even with the best intentions, things can get away from you quickly. If I don't understand your situation, I can not help you to the best of my ability.

This is a graduate level class. Part of our discussion on class norms addresses the expectations I have for your work. Please make sure that all work posted for review by classmates or turned in to me as representative of your best work is thoughtfully prepared with attention to the ideas expressed and to the conventions of writing. Collaborative work brings a special set of demands so that the work reflects all members' best effort. I will make every effort to fully explain specific requirements for each assignment, but you also carry the responsibility of asking for clarification if needed.

Here are the class assignments and percentage of the total grade:

Participation in all modes of engagement	10 %
Group representation of shared leadership	10 %
Group ASSIST induction project	20 %
Book review	10 %
Using collaborative technologies	10%

Using feedback strategies		10%
Leadership challenge		30 %
(analysis and plan	10%)	
(final paper	20%)	