Literacy Leadership and the Administrator: Relationship as Moral Agency From Within

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Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker

Introduction and Context

When I began my doctoral research in 1998, I was a literacy consultant of a very large district school board in Southern Ontario. I was interested in finding a way to articulate the tensions teachers and administrators lived between the theory and practice of literacy teaching and learning and of their own personal narratives in and out of their classrooms and schools. New curriculum expectations, coupled with new literacy board initiatives, left countless educators wondering how they could ever meet current standards of practice which were being fed down a pipeline of curriculum theory. This left me wondering how I could contribute significantly to teachers' professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Craig, 1995) of literacy learning and teaching and to leadership in communities of practice that trusted, respected, and demonstrated integrity and care about teachers' voices and input during new implementation processes of change and renewal. I reflected inward and my aim as a researcher moved forward to "engage in self-study [t]o better understand, facilitate, and articulate the teaching-learning process" (Kubler LaBoskey, 2004, p.857) with a focus on educators' relationship with others and on the moral dimensions involved in authentic learning communities. I embarked on a five year study which incorporated working with a staff and administrator of Mosaic Park School1 (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2004).

A century ago, literacy simply meant knowing how to read and a write. Today, "literacy is about more than reading and writing-it is about how we communicate in society. It is about knowledge, language and culture" (UNESCO as cited in Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). In my dissertation I use literacy to mean "a way to come to learn about the world as a means to participate more fully in society" (Tompkins, 1997, p.6). Literacy is seen as a reflection on how teachers and administrators see themselves in their world as they teach their students.

To this end, my dissertation detailed my personal and professional knowledge relationship with co-participants, including teachers and the administrator, of Mosaic Park School in order to examine literacy teaching and learning as a product of caring, collaborative relationships in a diverse communal school landscape. I used various qualitative methods such as taped conversations, structured and open-ended interviews, research and field texts, course papers, journals and diaries in what I conclusively termed literacy narratives. I invested over four years at Mosaic Park School where I researched, worked, and volunteered. I drew on various research methods, especially letters, to convey and to reflect on the importance of caring collaborative relationships in settings of practice which focuses, as Kubler LaBoskey (2004) has contended, on "teacher educators in relation to others."

When I became a school administrator in 2004, I suddenly was immersed in a new way of thinking and practicing in a leadership role. I embraced the findings from my PhD study and was committed to putting my theory into practice by "becoming" an administrator whose literacy leadership incorporated the central and critical notion of relationship as moral agency from within. A year and half later, in the Spring of 2006 and in a new role as an assistant professor in a pre-service faculty of education, I was invited to recount my literacy leadership experiences to administrators in a large scale speaking engagement.

This paper is a personal narrative of my lived experiences and exploration of the importance of relationship as moral agency from within. I first report on research findings arising from my longitudinal PhD dissertation entitled *Literacy narratives: Writing and relating letters and stories of teacher knowledge, identity and development* (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2004). Next, I explore how I applied my findings to literacy leadership in an inner city school, St. Geoffrey, while I was an administrator there. Then, I cross examine my experiences as literacy leader and administrator to the new *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession of Ontario* (2006) with information taken from my speaking engagement to current administrators in the field. I show this personal narrative as an authentic "case" of moral leadership which is grounded in relationship. Following are the results of my work.

Research Results from Mosaic Park School

My dissertation work at Mosaic Park School was positioned in the work of Dewey's (1938) experience as education, in Connelly and Clandinin's (1988, 1994, 1999, 2000) research on teachers as curriculum makers, teacher identity, and personal practical knowledge, and in Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, and Minarik's (1993) extensive work on relational knowing and literacy through experience and story in qualitative research. The terms narrative and story can be both understood from Dewey's (1938) concept of experience, education, and life as being all intertwined. To this end, education can be studied by studying life or experiences of teachers and of their literacy teaching and learning. Stories, suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (1994), are "the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience" (p. 415). By distinction, narrative can be defined as the inquiry which tells of, describes and explains such stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). I described my participants' lives as I "collect[ed] and [told] stories of them, and [wrote] narratives of experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 416) of literacy teaching and learning. Thus, I termed these written out narrative expressions literacy narratives. I closely examined the application of *literacy narratives* in relationship to others' stories of personal and professional practice and used our "related stories" as a tool for collaborative teacher development and literacy education reform.

My inquiry extrapolated various principles as: commitment, patience, trust, respect, compromise, community, affirmation, and relationship. These principles all fell under broader ethical terms: trust, respect, integrity, care. Furthermore, collaborative communal relationship, in unison with the ethical principles aforementioned, was evidenced as the key foundation for success in literacy leadership at Mosaic Park School amongst all teachers and the administrator. Personal connections contributed significantly to understanding others' diverse perspectives on curriculum reform. Hall and Grant (1991) have suggested that establishing a collaborative relationship occurs when affect precedes expertise. Teachers were seen to renew their teaching practice when a caring community and personal relationships guided and supported each member's voice in the knowledge community. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) described successful collaborative communities and admitted that "collaboration should mean creating vision together...The articulation of different voices may create initial conflict, but...it is a part of the collaborative process" (p. 93). Fullan (2001) further contended that, in a culture of change, it is relationship which matters critically next to moral purpose; he further cited Goleman's (1995) work on emotional intelligence as a high predictor of successful and sustainable improvement in schools.

During the final year of my study and as I applied *literacy narratives* for staff development and literacy reform, I also was alerted to the essential beliefs which emerged. I transformed my notion, as a researcher, to a new story of how teacher development and literacy can be defined, noting the teacher as "the fountainhead of the curricular decision" (Fox, 1985, p. 77). Collaborative and communal relationships were evidenced as a prime indicator to successful professional learning communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) when the community was supported through the authentic care of its administrator. I believe "teachers are the guardians, the counterpoints of the changing society" (Hargreaves, 2001), but what matters most is that they are supported, alongside their students, in a caring, tolerant, open, honest, accepting, and dignified community which is rooted in the integrity and ethical virtues of presence, responsibility, and authenticity (Starratt, 2004) of its administrative leader.

My Role as Administrator at St. Geoffrey School

When I was placed in the position of Vice Principal at St. Geoffrey School in the fall of 2004, I had just defended my PhD and had completed over 10 years experience as a Literacy Consultant to elementary teachers in over 50 schools in my district school board. St. Geoffrey was an inner city school with a diverse student population. Prevalent was the multi-cultural tapestry of students from various ethnic backgrounds (i.e. Portuguese, Italian, Jamaican, Mexican, African-American). Also prevalent was the politics of teacher unions, government pressure to "standardize" children, and new curriculum policies in virtually every subject area. Teachers at the school seemed to tread lightly around me, while hurriedly putting their bulletin word walls up, displaying their guided reading books and photocopying the next best writing lesson from the school board document which I had co-authored! With some trepidation (because I suppose I felt uncomfortable being in a leadership role with former teacher colleagues and also feeling like I was intimidating other teachers who knew me only by my former title as "literacy expert" consultant), I moved into my office, and became familiar with a place I would soon call my professional home.

The Principal suggested that I take a school leadership role in the area of literacy due to my abundant experience as a former consultant to teachers in the subject area. I welcomed the challenge, even felt passionate about starting a literacy project on the heels of my research on literacy teaching and learning. But the Principal also warned me that the teachers would likely not be co-operative, would likely not be committed to any top-down policy agenda, and cited several occasions where teachers protected their planning time and lunch hours over the years with union policy. How could I bring over thirty classroom and specialist teachers together for the purpose of literacy programming and teacher development of literacy? How could everyone feel that they belonged to such a cause? Following, I describe belonging as a key indicator for success of any kind and, in particular, relationships of care in school learning

communities. I pay close attention to how belonging affected all school-related issues and it became a key factor for me as St. Geoffrey's new administrator and literacy advocate.

Belonging

Citizenship Canada (2000) has detailed a statement about belonging:

> Belonging is about being connected to others. It is being loved unconditionally; being welcomed and accepted in a safe environment....Ask this same question to any newcomer in your midst. You will probably receive the same answer. Being "left out" or "unwelcomed" at any age inhibits our growth and well-being.

Although mutual respect, caring and compassion are important Canadian attributes, sometimes we need to be reminded that we all have a right to belong.

Belonging is indisputably a natural and key indicator for success in our human condition. I was reminded of how the staff at Mosaic Park School "belonged" in community and I intrinsically framed a way of thinking about my literacy leadership as a new Vice-Principal at St. Geoffrey School. Influences from Nel Noddings' (1984, 1992, 2002) extensive work on the ethic of care led me to adapt her notion of how a caring encounter should be. She has reasoned that there needs to be a relationship, or receptivity involved between what she describes as the "care-giver" (in this case, me as the literacy leader) and the "cared-for" (the teachers I wanted to be involved with in the literacy school project). Noddings argued that, when there is true receptivity, a true "ethical caring" is evidenced through the give-and-take of an authentic relationship between the cared-for and caring person evidenced in components of: modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation (as cited in Smith, 2004).

Taking from these four key components of how to "enact" an ethic of care, I adapted Noddings' components with a resembling literacy teaching strategy we taught teachers in literacy workshops. We called this the demonstration lesson and guided process from modeling to application in student literacy skills. This method came out of recent work in our school board and ministry documents as well as from other literacy practitioners (Atwell, 1998; Tompkins, 1997).

Noddings - Four Key Elements

For many years as a Literacy Consultant I had been instructing teachers, "You mustn't just tell your students how to read and write, you must show them by demonstrating it yourself and letting them go through the process alongside you." We called this "the modeling lesson" and teachers began engaging in various literacy demonstration lessons on both reading and writing throughout my many years as a consultant.

I fundamentally knew that I cared for this community I once called my own. But I also knew I had to show, not tell, this message to this same community. How does one go about modeling an ethic of care? I reviewed my findings from my work at Mosaic Park School and immediately the principles of commitment, patience, and community reminded me that I had to embrace and understand fully what the teachers' interest and concerns were. I had to "be in their space," "see with their eyes;" or, as Noddings' might have suggested, I had to let go of being empathetic to the situation, but instead sympathetic to teachers' needs in order to create the conditions where I could care and they could be cared-for. I did this through my immediate and daily interaction with each teacher, demonstrating that I had an interest in and was committed to finding a way to collaborate for the sake of each community member's concern-whether it was the lack of books, the mess in the hallways, the parents that over-burdened some teachers, or the time that was needed to do all the work that was demanded in their role as classroom teachers. I showed teachers that I understood their concerns by acting and giving presence on as many issues as I could support, and doing it quickly! Thus, for example: I ordered an entire new series of guided reading books for Primary teachers and ensured that they were part of the decision process; I ordered specialist books and series for our Special Education teachers whose supplies were out-dated; we collaboratively created more space for work rooms and created more time (with some creative scheduling) for planning and divisional meetings; I ensured that parents were welcome at our school but that all rules and policies for safety (including loitering in the halls) be considered seriously-suddenly appointments to see the teachers were being made instead of the "barging" that may have previously taken place beforehand during lessons.

In reality, this "act of doing" was evidenced as a key factor to creating a bond between me and the people I was attempting to be in relationship with. I was committed to the community and authentically cared for the persons in it.

Soon, I felt that belonging to St. Geoffrey School really meant that I understood it better, that I modeled an ethic of care by participating and being present in its social significance.

Dialogue (or guided application model)

While I felt that I was beginning to belong to the community of St. Geoffrey School, I also knew that my leadership in literacy programming and the desire to begin a literacy school project was imminent. Pressures to submit a school curriculum plan to the school board, along with my own pressures to do well in my first year of administration left me needing to reflect further on how to move forward with an "agenda" that might not have interested the needs of all community members. I did what I knew worked best from Mosaic Park School: we began to dialogue about our plan of action, in a forum of deliberation. The meetings initially were scheduled twice a month per division to get a head start on our year's plan. Following our first two meetings, I created (with the help of district board personnel) more time and space for teachers to meet and was able to secure teacher release time for our literacy project teacher development sessions and meetings. Dialogue, as Bohm, Factor, and Garrett (1991) suggested, is an opportunity for a group of people to participate in a process by communicating successes and failures. Listening becomes a key factor in the process of dialogue. What dialogue is not, argued Bohm et al (1991), is discussion or debate-both of which point toward a "right answer" or the solving of a particular problem. Rather, dialogue, in its true form, allows for thought to "play freely" for deeper meaning and communication, where there is no hierarchy at play, and no place for control of a particular right solution. This "collective phenomenon" was described by one teacher as "respectful teacher development;" teachers even considered writing an article about it in their union newsletter.

The underlying success was that the dialogue of all members of the group was respected. I learned this first-hand from my study on literacy narratives at Mosaic Park but was now delighted that I could apply it at another school site. We encouraged openness on topics of literacy. I told my stories of teaching that had failed-and spoke of others' gifts of teaching that helped me in my literacy programming in my earlier teaching days. Others, especially new teachers, began to feel less intimidated because of the humility that many teachers exhibited, and welcomed the feedback from veteran teachers on a teaching method or organizational literacy strategy. Mentoring relationships began and, soon enough, we were at an early stage to decide the topic, in each division, of our literacy focus for the year.

With all my prior experience in literacy programming and consultant work with teachers, I found that I had to strive to hold back my own notions of what I thought a good focus should be for literacy programming in each division. Instead, I listened to what each division said about teaching students literacy at St. Geoffrey School. I began to trust their own expertise with their own students. And I was open to what they suggested while also being part of the deliberation process with them. Listening, trust, and openness to the dialogue process were what essentially kept me an honest member of the team throughout. Because I showed teachers that I trusted their expertise and welcomed their insights and suggestions, this leant to the project being as authentic and as bottom-up as it possibly could be. Each member was able to have and be a part of the decision-making process. Each contributed in their own way by sharing specific narratives of classroom practice in literacy and then consolidating their shared findings with one another to what should constitute more work and reflection in their literacy program as a team. In the end, the primary division chose the focus area of non-fiction writing; the junior division chose the focus area of retelling in guided reading; and the intermediate division chose the area of content literacy. Teachers began to feel that they were in control of their own programming, with a genuine security that their service was valued. The dialogue process was a main factor in this, as well as the trust we formed in each group and ultimately which respected each divisional team's input. The best was yet to come.

Practice and Affirmation (or, gradual release of responsibility model)

My motto for a sustainable implementation is affirmation before transformation. To explain, by early fall of 2004, each divisional team had a plan of action for our literacy project and teachers were practicing literacy strategies and methods in their respective classes which were directly related to the focus literacy topic they chose as a team at large. The purpose and motive was to later discuss, assimilate, and reflect about their practices and personal literacy narratives in their monthly meetings. I creatively scheduled teacher release time once per month for the purposes of the meetings. Our school board also supported our initiative and supplied further release time through the usage of supply teachers. Each meeting was structured so that there was a rotating chair, discussant, time keeper, even treat person. The meetings would run from one to two hours. Here is what a typical schedule looked like:

Schedule of Primary Sessions Literacy Project 2004/2005: Non-fiction Writing

Date	Chair & Teacher Reflection	Recorder of Minutes	Timer of Meeting (max. 45 minutes)	Sharing our Literacy Narrative	Treats
November	Adele	Tish	Sara	Adele	Roxanne
December	Tish	Sara	Roxanne	Tish	John
January	Sara	Roxanne	John	Sara	Ira
February	Roxanne	John	Ira	Roxanne	Francis
March	John	Ira	Francis	John	Adele
April	Ira	Francis	Adele	Ira	Tish
May	Francis	Adele	Tish	Francis	Sara

Adapted From: *Literacy narratives: Writing and relating letters and stories of teacher knowledge, identity and development. (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2004)*

Key factors to the practice and affirmation component was that:

* Each teacher was affirmed, genuinely and authentically, by other members of his/her team for the teaching efforts and new literacy strategies applied.
* Each teacher was assigned and responsible for participation in the deliberative process at least once during the year
* Each teacher gradually felt this responsibility as a natural and intrinsic service to their teaching profession.

The motto "affirmation before transformation" was applied in a practical sense. That is, teachers were affirmed first for teaching practices that were already in place and then, when these same practices were shared in a our more formal learning community environment, possibilities for transforming new and improved practices were more feasible since teachers themselves placed accountability on their own professional development-likely as a result of empowerment in their learning community.

As time passed and continuous modeling of practice was shared, so too were anxiety and "pressure to perform" lessened. What was critically important was that each teacher felt open and free to discuss what strategies did not work, how a method could have improved and what others could offer. In this manner, the shared narratives were not only a reflective action on practice but also a cyclical renewal of practice which was continually affirmed by peers and then carried out again in classrooms.

Confirmation of Relationship as Moral Action (or, independent practice model)

The greatest lesson I learned as an administrator was that patience was truly a virtue when it came to my own notion and realization of how to build relationship and community as a literacy leader. I soon came to understand that

forming relationships was indeed moral agency from within. Noddings (as cited in Smith, 2004) referred to the confirmation component of caring and set it apart from other approaches to moral education because of one's open and independent practice to be able to affirm and see the gifts of others in a way that does not judge or is judgmental. This process, again, may take a long time to arrive at. I liken Noddings' notion to Starratt's (2004) virtues of presence and authenticity in that there is a goodness that arises from within which confirms our own morality of education.

In my work at St. Geoffrey's, I was able to model an ethic of care in the best manner I knew at the time. I could not have hoped for a better ending, even though in the midst I admitted more than a few occasions that I did not know what I was doing or where the project was leading. I relied on my intrinsic belief that education was about relationship. I reasoned that if I could form authentic professional relationships and model the same in others, I could perhaps move forward to a more formal and rigorous literacy project at St. Geoffrey.
By virtue of the relationships formed on our teams, the literacy project ran successfully. Superintendents came to see our project in action, teachers felt respected for the work in process and students were certainly reaping the benefits of fresher literacy teaching approaches.

Teachers were, by their own right, leaders in their own field of expertise. The ability to include all members of the community was critical to the success of our project. Leadership was inclusive and I contend with Ryan (2006) who saw, "inclusive leadership not in terms of positions or individuals who perform certain tasks but as a collective process in which everyone is included and fairly represented" (p.16). Our project was recognized by our district school board Curriculum Superintendent and I was asked to present "our model" to administrators as a guest speaker at a workshop in the following year.

The TRIC Method

When I left administration to pursue an academic career in the fall of 2005, I was asked to deliver a speaking engagement to administrators the following spring 2006. My original idea was to share my experiences with my former administrator colleagues on the success of the literacy project at St. Geoffrey's and use some applied empirical results from my dissertation. Administrator colleagues kept asking me throughout my term, "Darlene, what's your trick? How have you managed to get the teachers on board with literacy programming and working together?" The trick, it turned out, was made strikingly evident to me when I first read a draft document of the new Ontario College of Teachers Foundations of Professional Practice (2006). I immediately noted the similarities between my principle findings of my dissertation to the key standards the College cited for the formation of The Ethical Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession (2006): trust, respect, care, integrity. It was not long before I made direct connections from my work at St. Geoffrey's to the ethical standards which, serendipitously, illuminate the explanation for the teachers' input and commitment to the literacy project. The "trick," which administrators were seeking from me, manifested itself into an acronym I discovered in order to guide my speaking engagement with approximately fifty Vice Principals and fundamentally to reason that trust, respect, integrity, and care (TRIC) were, for me, the essential determinants for leadership as moral agency from within. Following, I offer some personal examples, applications and workshop strategies to the TRIC Method which I used in my speaking engagement.

Trust

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession of the Ontario College of Teachers (2006) states:

> The ethical standard of Trust embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.

As I guided administrators through my own experiences of literacy leadership, I relayed my story of how I needed to trust the teachers, as Fox (1985) stated, as the "fountainheads of the curricular decisions" despite my own expertise in literacy teaching and learning. Never would I have imagined that a Primary Division focus on non-fiction writing would have been a successful and correct choice for Grades K-3 teachers to take on. Yet, they reasoned that, with proof from students' writing, children in younger grades were caught up in "imaginary and creative writing" which seemed to spur on several other issues and problems in their writing process. Kindergarten teachers began focusing more on environmental print. Grade 1 teachers began using recipes as writing; and, Grade 2 and 3 teachers focused on expository writing and writing directions. Purposeful writing was happening through students' lived experiences. Teachers reaped the benefit of the selected literacy focus. I reaped the benefit of the teachers' commitment to literacy teacher development and was able myself to further trust their expertise through being open in the process. It might not have gone this way. Many administrators like to take full control of the school initiatives themselves and "tell" the

teachers what they will be doing. Indeed, this kind of leadership is common in schools. I too, at the beginning of these divisional meetings, felt that I was relinquishing much of my "power" as the school's administrator to the literacy project. It could all have gone astray, I thought or an exercise in futility had the teachers not taken some ownership. These tensions remained with me in the early stages of the project, to be sure.

I used my experiences with these tensions and, in my presentation session, I asked the administrators, "What might have happened if I had controlled the leadership process and suggested a topic based on my own professional opinion and experience in literacy primary programs at the time?" We debriefed with various discussions. The answer may have been that the teachers would have gone about their own way, having little commitment to a top-down suggestion for literacy implementation. The truth was that we were fair in the process, we were open to everyone's expertise and we were honest about what was happening in classrooms. Trust was instrumental in building the type of commitment needed for teacher development and collaboration of this kind. Had I not trusted the teachers' efforts, commitment and expertise to the project, it may have failed regardless of any leadership control from me as the school's administrator. Trusting my teaching staff was a risk to be taken and a control to be relinquished, indeed, but with the continuous faith in trusting teachers throughout, the entire school community reaped benefits and rewards in the end.

Respect

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession of the Ontario College of Teachers (2006) states:

> Intrinsic to the ethical standard of Respect is trust and fair-mindedness. Members honour human dignity, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, they model respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment.

To the administrators, I posed this question, "What do you need to know as an administrator in order to understand your teaching staff better?" The discussion generated several answers that, upon reflection, made sense in the greater context of moral leadership itself. Administrators need to have deeper understanding of countless areas of teachers' lives such as: teachers' culture and identity, health in the workplace, family, new and veteran teachers on staff, teacher "cliques" which may affect community building, teachers pursuing leadership roles, etc. Many staffs have I seen where administrators do not take into account the lives of teachers in or outside the school landscape. This causes a friction of sorts, and at worst disrupts any fair-mindedness that is needed in school reform, teacher development, or school success.

Knowing your community and how each member belongs is essential in any leadership role and a key factor in respecting others. Respecting teachers from where they come from, from where they are at, and from where they are potentially able to move forward is, in my opinion, an ultimate virtue in education leadership today. To make this point clearer, I had the Vice Principals ponder over the implication of an administrator who sees his/her staff as thirty "teachers," in comparison to another administrator who sees his/her staff as thirty "people."

I asked them whether they heard a difference and what, perhaps, happens when our viewpoint connotes implications of control or power. Do we seek control and power in our administrative positions? If so, is this detrimental to community building and forming of respectful relationships?

Integrity

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession of the Ontario College of Teachers (2006) states:

> Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of Integrity. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities.

I asked administrators this question in working groups, "What is the single most important experience you want your teaching staff to be involved in, in order for literacy to happen successfully at your school? These were some responses:

* To dialogue and come together, to share accomplishments

* To use creative ways for professional development-at least a half day per division
* To ensure that there is reading quality and literature access and that teachers come together to share these resources in order to enrich experiences in student reading
* To have teachers share personal experiences and narratives of their lives
* To notice empowering moments and be motivated and engaged in experiences-authentic learning and love of teaching by knowing your learners

Following this discussion, I shared with administrators the schedule of sessions chart (see chart above) which detailed teachers' input in the literacy project at St. Geoffrey's. I explained to administrators how critical this process was to the integrity of all teachers. I further explained the teachers' input in all activities as a reflective process and as a continuous learning strategy in community with other colleagues. The result, I explained, was successful literacy teacher development, authentic commitment to the literacy initiatives and a proud responsibility from all stakeholders in the project. In essence, the more commitment was evidenced, the more integrity each member had on the team evidenced by the moral obligation to continue on with the literacy initiatives.

Care

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession of the Ontario College of Teachers (2006) states:

> The ethical standard of Care includes compassion, acceptance, interest and insight for developing students' potential. Members express their commitment to students' well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice.

Sadly, not every day ran smoothly in our literacy project. I shared a story with the Vice Principals about one teacher who during a meeting blurted out, "These kinds of kids will never learn how to read and write anyway, what's the use?" Immediately my VP colleagues wanted to know how I handled the situation, if I had reprimanded the teacher in public, whether I talked to her in my office. But, before I gave my answer, I had them consider the larger issue of belonging in community. I reminded them of Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs, and then asked them to write their own personal story of belonging.

This activity generated much insight and discussion of how we can be sympathetic to teachers who feel they don't belong and, in turn, who may exclude their very students from belonging too. To come to this understanding we must, as Noddings (1992) reasoned, be ready to care and be in relationship with the cared-for person for confirmation to take place and for relationship to be realized as a moral action. In the follow-up activity of writing personal stories of belonging, administrators were able to reflect on the relationships had with people, on the ethic of care involved, with a view to not judging.

In the case of the teacher who argued, "what's the use," I relayed the notion in my workshop that I had to delve deep to understand and care for this person myself, to know how and in what context this statement was made and how I could help her. My belief was that this was my moral duty as a caring administrator, regardless of how "unethical" the statement at first appeared. To trust, respect, have integrity and care for people you lead can perhaps tell a new story of authentic curriculum practice and teacher development.

Conclusion

The lesson learned from my experience in a leadership role is that education is truly about relationship. At the heart of community building is a group of people who care about each other, who respect others' diversity, and show integrity by commitment to the community through mutual vulnerability and confirmation of relationship as moral action. How might practitioners and researchers in the field be informed of and move their practices forward in moral leadership and education?

Practitioners

New administrators in the field are responsible for taking on leadership roles in schools. How they go about leading is another matter. What supports are there to guide new leaders in schools? Who are their mentors? What leadership is valued-top down hierarchy or distributed leadership? This paper aims to provide an alternative way of leading, a moral obligation to include all in the collective decisions of schooling. This may not be new news in the field. However, it does suggest that moral leadership from within advances everyone's continuous growth and professional

development, rather than a select few. Further research in the area of moral leadership, dialogue, and the ethical standards could lead to a new approach to training future leaders in the field.

Researchers

As a practitioner-turned-researcher, I have been made aware of the fine line between knowing what you want to happen to seeing and letting curriculum happen. As a practitioner, I relinquished control of the literacy initiative and, by so doing, the dialogue of student improvement in literacy, teacher collaboration, and improvement of teaching practice happened through my trust and support of working through teachers' dialogue of successes and weaknesses rather than by my control of the curriculum project. Through reflective practice and observation of my leadership role, I was able to make connections to past lessons learned and to link a moral and ethical contingent to my role as administrator. I would suggest further research to explore existing field practice and connection of moral leadership in the field in order to incite a new way and meaning of leadership that could exist in educational settings. Teacher educators partnering with practitioners who would partake in this kind of "action research" of their leadership role could inform better practices and strategies to school leadership today.

My own principles and research findings that fall under the broader ethical standards of the Ontario College of Teachers (2004) have been practiced through an awareness of belonging and through adapting the process of Noddings' four components of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. I have been influenced by the Ethical Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession and have translated my past experience and work as a literacy leader and current experience as an assistant professor to encompass and describe fully relationship as moral agency through the standards of: trust, respect, integrity, and care.

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1 Names of persons and places throughout paper, other than author, are pseudonyms.

About the Author

Dr. Ciuffetelli Parker is an Assistant Professor at Brock University, Ontario, Canada. She uses narrative inquiry methods to explore and research topics such as: literacy teacher development; teacher education and stories of teachers; school and communities affected by challenging circumstances. She is currently reporting on a longitudinal study of pre-service students' narratives of practice throughout their educational program and induction into the teaching profession. Dr. Ciuffetelli Parker is also conducting an Ontario Poverty research project, funded by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario/Ministry of Education.

Contact:

Dr. Ciuffetelli Parker
Assistant Professor
Brock University
Faculty of Education
Email: darlene.ciuffetelli-parker@brocku.ca
Phone: (905) 547-3555 ext. 3605
Fax: (905) 547-9500