

Many people oftentimes have different perceptions of what it means to be a leader. The images of Dr. Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, Eva Peron, Che Guevara, and Benito Mussolini may come to mind—all of them leaders, all of them effective in different ways, whether for better or for worse. The image of a leader may also bring to mind a CEO from a Fortune 500 company, or a member of the Senate. Yet these images, while accurate, also severely limit the scope of what it means to be a leader. Does it simply mean to lead others?

Part of being a leader in the Masters in Teaching program does not necessarily have to do with leading students in a classroom environment. It does not even denote a hierarchical system, as some people think of leaders in the corporate or political world. Rather, becoming a leader involves working with others so as to build community and foster learning among peers and within oneself. It means honestly assessing one's strengths and weaknesses, being honest but also using these aspects to further the development of the learning community as a whole. Becoming a learning community member thus calls for community collaboration, using one's own skills, talents, and ideas unabashedly while being open-minded to the ideas and criticism of others.

I have included the Dispositions Survey I took at the start of the quarter, and the Dispositions Rubric I completed towards the end of the quarter. Looking back on these two documents, I have found that I have gained a great deal of experience and evidence for developing dispositions and habits of mind that will help me be an active member of the learning community. Completing assignments and assessing myself honestly according to the disposition rubric ^{have} ~~has~~ enabled me to take concrete pieces of evidence and analyze the ways in which my experiences associated with them ^{have} ~~has~~ changed my work and leadership behaviors. For instance, I find that at the end of the quarter I have grown more accustomed to working with others in a group. I note in my disposition rubric that traditionally I have been exposed to heavily competitive environments, in which I had to prove "my worth" against other students. Now I find that true advancement of a learning community involves helping one another and collaborating on tasks so that everyone from the community can benefit from the learning. ~~In other words,~~ leadership in this case

does not mean being "better" or "more competent" than others, as the business world frequently labels ^{such} leaders who move up the cut-throat ladder; competency can instead be better put to use in helping others.

The time sheet from my practicum work illustrates the instances I have come into the classroom environment, and how long I have remained observing the classroom and discussing everything with my mentor teacher. I find that I have a positive attendance record for the quarter; I usually come in 45 minutes earlier than called for, and I leave more than an hour after school lets out. This gives me more than enough time to talk with my mentor teacher, allows me to better communicate with students who walk in and out during those periods, and lets me reflect on the previous weeks and compare those to the current week. Becoming a learning community member and leader in this case thus does not limit me to simply observing my mentor teacher during the day; it is just as important for me to actively involve myself in the community, and learn the dynamics of what happens before and after the learning takes place.

In reflecting on my role as a community member, I have discovered that I have greatly enjoyed being a member of a living, breathing body of literate analysts and powerful minds working together to uncover the enigmas of learning theory, pedagogy, and practice. We may not always have answers for everything we learn, but by interacting with one another and sharing what we know and don't know, we work ^{towards} for the advancement of the learning community—and thus each become ^{person a one's} leaders in ~~our~~ own right.

I appreciate your clear and honest writing style! This relationship between being a community member and a leader is interesting—how do you see ~~dispositional~~ evidence/progress clarifying these goals? Maybe list specific evidence from rubric to show strengths? How do you see your role as a community member strengthening/growing/changing in the future?