

Introduction

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.

Henry Adams (1832-1918)

Henry Adam's words may cause you to pause and reflect upon your educational experience as a student and remember those teachers who had, and continue to have, an influence on you. You may recall some who were not just excellent teachers, but were also good human beings who cared about you not just as a student, but as a total individual. These individuals went the extra mile to help you maximize your educational experience and their actions planted the seeds for achieving success in life. Then, there were those teachers who put forth the minimum effort in the classroom, had poor people skills and made you question their motives for entering the teaching profession. Finally, somewhere on the continuum between these two extremes, were the remaining teachers you had throughout your educational experience. So, now, you are a teacher and the question now becomes, *what kind of influence will you have on your students?*

Being a teacher in today's society is very difficult, for the *cultures* within many of our schools are in a *norms crisis*. The school environment has changed dramatically over the years, and there are many variables that have had a negative impact upon the school's culture, which in turn affects the academic performance of your students. While many of these variables are systemic in nature and are beyond your span of control, what you do have control over is *you and what happens in your classroom*.

As a teacher, you earned your teaching degree and gained some experience as a student teacher. While your professors helped you to gain a level of proficiency in the subject area you are teaching, unfortunately, they failed to prepare you on *how to deal with student behavior*. This is mainly because, in the field of education, there is a belief that teachers are trained to teach and behavior is someone else's responsibility. However, how can you teach and how can learning take place if your students are sleeping in class, disrespecting you and/or their classmates, not completing their work, fighting with one another and doing things other than what they are supposed to be doing? Sadly, in this type of environment, you must do the best you can to teach the lessons for which you are held accountable while trying to address the constant behavioral interruptions you face on a daily basis. Many times the issue for you becomes one of safety and

survival rather than teaching and student growth.

Your students bring with them varying degrees of *social baggage* from their experiences, which has shaped their beliefs about themselves and their relationships with others. Some bring more baggage than others, but all are in need of structure, discipline and guidance as they struggle with all of the educational, social and emotional dynamics they experience individually and collectively on a daily basis, both inside and outside the school environment. This is why as a teacher, having some knowledge and skills in the area of *behavior management* can prove to be invaluable to you.

The Normative Educator is a resource to help you *work smarter and not harder*. It will provide you with the *missing link* that was absent in your formal education and it will make you more effective as a *facilitator* in creating the type of culture you want in your classroom. Once you have accomplished this, you can teach!

In *Chapter 1*, you will gain some insight into the roots of the normative culture model that I learned in graduate school and in work with my mentor at the Glen Mills Schools, a residential treatment facility for “juvenile delinquents.” His vision of applying the normative culture model in building the “best school in the country for kids” succeeded, but not without adversity from the staff — including those within the education department. Here, you will learn some of the normative strategies employed to change the organizational culture where kids were safe and educational excellence became the norm. You will also gain insight into the normative culture model’s evolution into what I call *Normative Leadership*.

Chapter 2 offers you some insight into the problem and the solution to cure the dysfunctional cultures that plague our schools. Along with this, you will learn about the philosophy of *Helpathy* — the attitude behind the Normative Leadership skills.

Chapter 3 challenges you to begin the change process by focusing on the most important variable in the process — *you!* How you use the Normative Leadership skills in your classroom will determine how successful you will be in creating the culture you want in your classroom. Therefore, reshaping you from a teacher into a Normative Educator will challenge you to take an introspective look at yourself and offer you some new paradigms that can help you to grow beyond yourself as a person and in your role as a Normative Educator.

Chapter 4 provides a foundation for understanding and working with both group and individual behavior and how peer pressure and individual beliefs affect student behaviors.

In *Chapter 5*, you will learn key Normative Leadership skills that you will use in changing and maintaining the culture within your classroom. Key skills include:

- * Normative Leadership Skill #1 - Set the Normative Boundaries
- * Normative Leadership Skill #2 - The Normative Strategies for Change

- * Normative Leadership Skill #3 - The Classroom Assessment
- * Normative Leadership Skill #4 - Challenging Opportunity Behavior
- * Normative Leadership Skill #5 - “Reading” Group Process
- * Normative Leadership Skill #6 - Facilitating a 1-1 Meeting
- * Normative Leadership Skill #7 - The Decision Planner

Chapter 6 will provide you with a “Normative Lesson Plan” for using the Normative Leadership skills with your classroom.

Chapter 7 will offer some final thoughts on the bigger picture of issues facing the field of Education and how the Normative Leadership model can be incorporated into the overall school culture and within the teacher training model to produce a more perceptive and effective Normative Educator within the classroom and beyond.

The Exhibit Section provides you with some handouts that you can use in implementing the Normative Leadership concepts that you will learn. Handouts include:

- * Leadership Behavior Inventory
- * Classroom Assessment Form
- * The Decision Planner Sheet
- * Lesson Plans:
 - 1) Understanding Normative Behavior/Peer Pressure
 - 2) The Force Field and Polsky Diamond

This book will definitely challenge you to examine the paradigm of your role as a teacher both in the classroom and beyond. As you read through the chapters, I ask that you keep an open mind and think of creative ways to apply what you are learning to the issues that you struggle with in your profession.

Our schools are in dire need of change and sadly, it is often only through crisis situations that educational leaders are forced to develop corrective action plans to fix the problems. Unfortunately, many of the change initiatives only pay lip service to change and merely treat the symptoms of the problems. The Normative Educator is a resource that can serve as a foundation through which **real change** can take place in our schools. Remember, real change takes leadership and although you may not be able to make an impact on the overall field of education, you can affect change within yourself and your students — one classroom at a time. Good luck and **“may the norms be with you.”**