Jami Fenwick

Creating Student Leaders: A Literature Review

University of Idaho

The first article I will summarize is *Qualities That Exemplify Student Leadership*, written by Donna Rice, published in *Techniques* in May of 2011. The purpose of this article is to describe the role of both teachers and administrators in creating student leaders through student organizations. Many CTSOs are mentioned in the article but a direct example is provided using JROTC, and how they are fostering leadership within their program. Further, this article discusses how the creation of a successful student group can develop student leaders.

First the author looked at how teachers specifically can aid in leadership development. The main functions Rice lists are mentorship and delegation, providing praise and recognition, project based learning, and knowing what their students know. Delegation of roles may include asking students to facilitate class or group discussions, or heading up a committee. Teachers need to know their students well to nurture and develop their leadership potential, this may be flushed out in journaling activities. Rice mentions that teachers have limited time with their students to really get to know them, and thus its challenging to understand exactly where they are. Rice views a teacher’s main job as helping students academically.

The main function of a school administrator with respect to developing student leaders is to remove barriers that might prevent students from participating in a leadership program. Examples of this might be structuring the master schedule so that leadership classes are required electives or allowing students to substitute requisite classes for graduation. Administrators must also focus on creating a cohesive environment where all teachers, counselors, and administrators are working towards what is best for each student. This includes knowing all students well and providing them with the opportunities to nurture their leadership potential.

The author then dives into the crucial elements needed in a program to grow student leaders. Dynamic student centered lessons that include instruction on leadership, and courses that not only each teach a skill but also allow students time to practice and hone skills are imperative. It is also important to have students involved in competition, conferences, given awards, and recognized for their achievements. Programs should include a way for students to be mentored and tutored. Lastly, programs should motivate students to achieve while also allowing them to fail and provide them with the opportunity to learn and grow from their mistakes.

Rice then uses JROTC as an example of a student program that helps develop leaders. A few of the attributes that are highlighted include being an organization that creates a sense of belonging, a curriculum that teaches core content and leadership skills, opportunity for leadership through immersion, and having instructors who lead by example, are experts in their field, and are dedicated to the program. According to Rice (2011), “Mistakes are considered learning tools, and failure is part of the process” (p. 31). The article is concluded by reinforcing that successful student organizations can create highly effective leaders.

The second article I reviewed is called *Student Organizations*, written by six different authors in 2019. This article highlights how a student organization is beneficial to both students and the community, why a school needs one, and how student organizations can aid in educational reform.

First, CTSOs benefit both their members and community by impacting student career paths which in turn impacts the community in which they will become part of the work force. Competitions specifically seem to positively alter a student’s decisions regarding future career choices. Students emerging from CTSOs have what the authors call employability skills. “FCCLA members reported that career preparation was among the top skills they developed through their involvement in the organization” (Colelli, 2014).

The article then discussed why a school needs a CTSO? The authors claim that CTSOs pride themselves on giving students real world contextual problems, cultivating professionalism, collaboration, and teaching leadership skills. An emerging trend has also been the development of “soft skills” also known as 21st century employability skills. “Soft skills” are all the small reasons an employer might want to hire you. Examples are: effective communication, timeliness, accountable, responsibility, work ethic, being a team player, and leading as well as following. The authors believe one of the greatest attributes of a CTSO is the ability to provide leadership opportunities to its members. Leadership may come in the form of competition, running for office within the CTSO, and heading up a committee, fundraiser or community service event.

Lastly, CTSOs are working hand in hand with educational reform the goal being to, "provide a structure that promotes hands-on contextual learning of classroom curriculum and helps students see the real-world value of their academic studies” (Colelli, 2019). Educational reform is constantly happening in our schools in many disciplines, and CTSOs helping make this happen. For example, a CTE engineering teacher might collaborate with a math teacher on a project where students are using geometry to aid in the understanding of a CAD program. CTSOs are co-curricular in nature meaning the student organization should be integrated into the classroom instruction. Bottom line, there is a positive correlation between students in CTSOs and their academic motivation, engagement, grades, self-efficacy, and college aspirations.

The two articles I chose for this assignment complement each other well. The first was more directed at specific things teachers and administrators can do to develop a CTSO, while the second article described the need for a CTSO within education and how it can benefit both students and the community in which they live. Both articles highlight the positive leadership skills that can be taught and developed within the CTSO, and how this can lead to more career preparedness and employability. Competition seems to be a main source for creating our future leaders. Students can develop, take ownership, and then compete in a variety of ways and events through CTSOs.

One item that was slightly conflicting between the two articles was the idea of CTSOs being co-curricular. The second article discusses the co-curricular nature of CTSOs "educators have found that CTSOs are a powerful instructional tool that works best when it is integrated into [a] CTE curriculum" (Colelli, 2019). The first article didn’t dispute this, but didn’t mention it either. It did however, elude to the fact classroom teachers can only do so much with the time they have inside the classroom. While this is true, I believe the role of the CTE teacher and advisor is a much larger one. CTSO advisors need to know their students well and be able to instruct them on content coupled with “soft skills” while also providing them leadership opportunities and mentoring them as they progress towards their goals.

Both articles do a good job of describing the benefits reaped from having a CTSO within the high school. Most importantly CTSOs aid in the development of our future leaders and work force, but are also positive attributes to our schools and communities. I love the idea of teaching our students “soft skills” also known as employability skills. With so much technology at our students’ finger tips it is easy for them to become immersed in screen time and lose the value of interpersonal skills, being held accountable, and being professional in the real world. If CTSOs can teach students soft skills, content knowledge, and how to reach for their goals while also being allowed to fail and learn from their mistakes we have done our job as teachers, advisors, and administrators.

Works Cited

Colelli, R., Harrison, H., Ernst, J., Clark, A., Kelly, D., & Deluca, W. (2019). Student Organizations. *Technology and Engineering Teacher,* *78*(7), 33. Retrieved from <http://www.iteaconnect.org/Publications/ttt.htm>

Rice, D. (2011). Qualities that exemplify student leadership. *Techniques,* 28-31.