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The Teacher's Authority (Chapter 13 in What Teachers Need to Know: Topics in Diversity and Inclusion)

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13

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Introduction

WHY SHOULD STUDENTS FOLLOW their teacher's lead? Why should they do what their teacher asks or tells them to do? These questions move us directly into the important and complex question of the teacher's classroom authority. The importance of understanding teachers' authority is obvious; classrooms without a leader usually sink into chaos. While almost everyone intuitively grasps the importance of teachers' authority, many miss its complexity. Even the two questions at the start of this paragraph reveal some of that complexity: *Why should students follow their teacher's lead? Why should they do what their teacher asks or tells them to do?* The two questions I began with look similar but the first more clearly asks about what most observers call *authority* while the second may connect more with what many call *power*. Even the differences between *asks* and *tells* in the second question denote different degrees of power. What do classroom teachers need: authority or power, or both?

Both beginning and veteran teachers can misunderstand classroom authority or misidentify its sources. Several such confusions come to mind. For example, some confuse or conflate the two concepts I distinguished in the above paragraph: authority and power. They think that the teacher's request or wish will become the students' command. Recognizably, to a degree, teachers can force most students to complete certain assignments and to behave in specified ways. That force connects to the ordinary sense of the word *power*, that someone or something can move objects that offer resistance, a concept to which I return in the "What Classroom Authority is Not" section of this chapter.

A second mistake, one that beginning teachers make more frequently than veteran teachers, is to try to become friends with students. Teachers who follow this path think that chumminess will lead students to like them and then willingly join them in the learning journey they have planned. In fact, this mistake has in it a seed of logic: the teacher's instructional program can only benefit if students *are on the teacher's side*, so to speak.¹ Still, I label this confusion because, as generations of teachers have learned, students want to learn in a classroom led by a professional, not by a "big friend or cheerleader."²

Some mistakenly believe that the teacher's authority relates only to classroom management and to the appropriate responses to specific misbehaviors and discrete discipline problems. On this account, classroom management becomes a stand-alone question, and, unfortunately, many teacher education programs treat it that way. This understanding is grounded in at least two errors. First, the goal of understanding our authority as teachers is not primarily to control aberrant behavior (even if we must do so periodically) but to create an ethos in which students succeed in learning. We are mistaken if we think that our authority relates only to controlling behaviors. Second, the teacher's authority has more to do with epistemology and the teaching-learning relationship than it does with classroom management. I use *epistemology* here to direct our attention to teachers' expert knowledge and to how we pursue with our students what Parker Palmer calls the big subject.³

Fourth, and finally, some mistake the three basic necessary conditions of expertise, teaching certificate, and employment contract for sufficient conditions to run a classroom program. Obviously, teachers do gain some authority from the basic three conditions; thousands of new teachers go to their first jobs every school year possessing only those three things. We also gain some room to move from traditional assumptions about classroom roles. But teachers—new teachers especially—can make the mistake of relying too heavily on traditional expectations and assumptions about the teacher's right to control the electronics in the room, or to determine seating plans, to stand or sit when and where she sees fit, and to carry out a hundred other ordinary classroom functions.

These confusions are not the only mistakes educators make related to authority, but they point to the truth that both experienced and beginning teachers need a more nuanced understanding of classroom authority. My

1. Spackman, *Teachers' Professional Responsibilities*.
2. Bantock, *Freedom and Authority*, 22.
3. Palmer, *Courage to Teach*.

thesis in this chapter is that teachers can understand their own authority in ways that will help them sustain an inviting classroom program from year to year if they can distinguish between what is and what is not classroom authority and if they can understand the varieties of soil from which genuine classroom authority grows. I organize the remainder of this chapter to reflect those categories, beginning in the next two sections (“What is Classroom Authority?” and “What Classroom Authority is Not”) with what classroom authority is and is not. In the “Nonessential Sources of Teacher Authority” section, I turn to what I call unnecessary sources, the soil from which authority may grow but does not necessarily grow. In the “Sources of the Teacher’s Authority” section, I list several kinds of soil from which genuine classroom authority does grow.

What is Classroom Authority?

The confusions I listed in the introduction already make clear the directions this chapter points. I will surprise no one by stipulating a definition of authority that has two aspects: teachers have classroom authority when they possess the formal qualifications to offer a sustained educational program and they have the consent of their students to carry out that program. I explore both formal qualifications and consent later in the chapter but will comment briefly here on the concept of consent.

Consent implies a position or relationship in which failing students willingly join us in the educational program we want to carry out in our classroom. At minimum, consent implies permission. I use the word *minimum* because teachers need much more than minimal permission to execute their educational plans and programs. So I want to suggest a degree of consent or support along the lines of what, at the time of writing, many people have granted Oprah Winfrey or Jon Stewart.⁴ When either of these two speaks, millions of people listen; people take their cues from them, read the books they recommend, and attend Rall[ies] to Restore Sanity that they organize. To my point, people do so voluntarily. No one has elected them to rule over us; they are not *in office* in the sense that a nation’s president or prime minister takes office. In short, the consent we give people such as Oprah Winfrey and Jon Stewart goes well beyond mere permission. This kind of consent is key to teachers’ authority.

4. I do not mean that teachers need to be as charismatic, famous, or popular as either of these two figures.

What Classroom Authority is Not

In contrast to the kind of authority apparent in the consent millions of people grant to trusted television personalities, think about the kind of coercion or raw power represented by a military force. Centuries ago, in *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes labeled this kind of power as *command*, where a person can expect obedience without having to supply reasons. He distinguished the power to command from what he called *counsel*, where reasons are required.⁵ To employ an earthy illustration, the bulldozer does not ask the dirt's permission before moving the dirt. Likewise, Stalin and Hitler sought no one's permission when enacting their respective evil visions. No doubt, some of the confusion surrounding teachers' authority arises when people fail to notice the distinction between power and authority, between command (or coercion) and consent. What I call consent and Hobbes called counsel is a very different property or state from what I call power and Hobbes called command. But some people use the word "authority" without distinguishing these dramatically different senses. To summarize, we need to recognize power as the first thing classroom authority is not.

For decades, social scientists and education scholars have examined power and classroom power. One sharply worded comment from decades back catches the same point Hobbes made centuries ago:

The stupidity that often inheres in the use of coercive sanctions, by established bearers of authority, in and out of the school-room, is not that their use establishes and preserves authority. It is rather that they prevent the establishment of an organic moral order adequate and congenial to the stabilization and guidance of the social process underway—an order morally accepted in some measure as rightful by all participants in the process. In other words, they are to be condemned as defeating rather than serving the development of an adequate authority.⁶

Read this quotation again if you need to because its author has gone beyond the distinction I called for in the previous paragraph. Benne is claiming that the use of power actively undermines the teacher's authority; it sabotages the *organic moral order* required for learning.⁷ The one is actually inimical to the other. These are powerful words indeed and an idea to which I will return in my treatment of consent (in the "Sources of the Teacher's Authority" section).

5. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 25.

6. Benne, *Conception of Authority*, 149.

7. Metz, *Classrooms and Corridors*.

Second, classroom authority is not classroom management. I used this distinction as my third example in the introduction to this chapter. Distinguishing classroom management from the classroom ethos will go a long way toward clearing up some of the confusion about teacher authority. At that, the phrase *classroom management* likely has both an ambient sense and an episodic sense. The teacher wants to create an atmosphere conducive to learning (the ambient sense). Even with that atmosphere generally in place, some students at some points will have bad days or bad moments; teachers will encounter episodes requiring their intervention. But the classroom management mind-set and literature generally do not go far enough.

Consider again the word *ethos*. When I ask us to distinguish classroom ethos from simple classroom management, I want to include curriculum, course, unit, and lesson planning, mastering and employing a wide repertoire of instructional methods appropriate to contents and students' ages and abilities, promoting and assessing student learning, developing record-keeping and paper-flow systems, interacting with students in a friendly yet professional way throughout each work day, and so on. In other words, classroom ethos has to do with our whole program; it goes far beyond simply maintaining order or dealing with misbehaviors and episodes.

To conclude this section, I have identified two things that classroom authority is not. It is not the power to make students do whatever we want. Granted, some learning may occur in authoritarian classrooms where students grant teachers only minimal compliance, but that learning will be characterized only rarely by either joy or flow.⁸ Second, teacher authority or classroom authority is not classroom management. In my most Kentopian picture of a classroom, the learning ethos is so positive and powerful that the teacher never needs to make a classroom management intervention. I suspect that few such classrooms exist in the real world.

Nevertheless, I have argued here that the classroom ethos encompasses something much larger and more substantial than classroom management and that in classrooms grounded on the kind of consent I describe here, students want to learn and they engage fully in their teacher's program.

Nonessential Sources of Teacher Authority

Several misconceptions embed themselves in both students' and teachers' thinking about teachers' authority, some of them induced by the images of what I call reel teachers, the teachers we and our students see on screen. We

8. I use *flow* as a technical term, based on the work of Csikszentmihalyi, especially *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*.

begin with charisma.⁹ In our reflections on teacher film clips, my preservice teachers and I discuss our tendency to compare the charismatic reel teachers we see—played by actors such as Meryl Streep, Robin Williams, and Hilary Swank—from the real teachers we know. Even periodic exposure to reel teachers can shape our collective expectation that teachers should be charismatic. In truth, millions of teachers lack charisma. Even if charisma might make classroom time pass more quickly for students or make them want to attend more carefully to their learning, charisma is not necessary. In fact, charisma has the power to distract students from their work if it leads them to focus too much on their teacher. Some have even argued that charismatic teachers, albeit unwittingly, may diminish students' freedom because their students end up wanting to imitate them and become their disciples.¹⁰

Turning to another widespread mistake and one related to charisma, many teachers and students believe that teachers must be funny. We need to distinguish two senses here. Some teachers are entertainingly funny; they can lace instruction with jokes, quips, and clever asides.

We distinguish that sense of *funny* from having a sense of humor, especially being able to laugh at oneself and at one's own mistakes. The sheer number of successful teachers who do not entertain ought to tell us all we need to know about the necessity of that kind of funny: it is simply not necessary. On the other hand, possessing a sense of humor may be typical of successful teachers and it is always helpful (although it is certainly not sufficient). If a teacher has both a sense of humor and can offer a certain level of entertainment, fine, but funny is not necessary, and can easily backfire.

Related to charisma (and perhaps to humor), some believe that to be successful, teachers must be extroverted. As it happens, many teachers are extroverted but, again, many successful teachers—even amazing teachers—tend toward introversion, forcing us to conclude that extroversion is not necessary, even if it is typical.¹¹ In fact, researchers have studied teachers' personality types (using the Myers Briggs' type indicator and other such instruments), learning styles (using such scales as those developed by David Kolb or Kenneth and Rita Dunn), and multiple intelligences (using Howard Gardner's categories). Such instruments may help teachers understand more about why they do or do not enjoy teaching and why some students respond more readily than others to different teaching styles. Such mediating instruments also have the power to lead teachers to conclude (wrongly)

9. I use *charisma* in its ordinary language sense, not in the sense that Weber used in his *Theory of Social and Economic Organization* or his *Economy and Society*.

10. Finkel and Arney, *Educating for Freedom*.

11. For example, see Eryilmaz, "Perceived Personality Traits."

that their personality or cognitive characteristics actually determine their capabilities as teachers; they thereby lock themselves into a limiting cognitive framework. Thus, not only is being extroverted not necessary but the instrumental means by which some conclude that they should possess this or that characteristic can themselves be disabling.

Some believe that teachers must be enigmatic and mysterious like the Robin Williams character, Mr. Keating, in *Dead Poets Society*.¹² This belief may illustrate that art shapes life as much as it reflects it; in fact, *Dead Poets* may be a major source of this expectation. Again, if thousands of successful teachers are not enigmatic or mysterious, then apparently these qualities are not necessary. And, in fact, thousands of teachers are quite open about their beliefs, their biographies, their children, what they learned on the internet the day before, and what they ate for breakfast. No mysteries there. Being enigmatic is not only not necessary, it may not even be typical.

As I noted in the introduction, beginning teachers often make the mistake of thinking that teachers must become friends with students. They fail to distinguish being friendly with students with being students' friends. Teachers are professionals. Students want their teachers to be professionals. A school or jurisdiction hired us because of our qualifications and those qualifications set us apart from our students. Teachers need to stay set apart, to keep their professional distance from students. Some refer to this as *boundary maintenance*, and teachers who wish to remain in the profession long-term take care to maintain their professional boundaries.¹³

Many induction teachers and veteran teachers, as well as members of the public, believe that teachers must burn themselves out for their students. Again, the movies help perpetuate what some have called the myth of the heroic teacher,¹⁴ who must fight a bean-counting vice principal, obstructionist parents, lazy and stupid colleagues, and the few good students' drug-dealing friends to implement his or her visionary program of studies. These cinematic teachers may work three jobs and sacrifice personal relationships (*Freedom Writers*) or suffer heart attacks (*Stand and Deliver*) because of their nearly pathological dedication to their students.¹⁵ Research on

12. In cinema at least, their mysteriousness may contribute to their being fired after one year, as it did in both *Dead Poets* and *Mona Lisa Smile*.

13. For many contemporary teachers, boundary maintenance implies not becoming Facebook friends with students until after graduation.

14. Ayers, "A Teacher Ain't Nothin' but a Hero"; Farber and Holm, "Brotherhood of Heroes."

15. The two films I have named here actually are based on nonfiction sources. See Gruwell, *Freedom Writers Diary*, and Matthews, *Escalante: Best Teacher in America*.

teachers' work patterns points to a typical working week of 55–60 hours.¹⁶ One is tempted, perhaps, to ask if that much work is necessary; many successful teachers do not work these long weeks. But to suggest that all teachers should be able to accomplish all that they do in, say, forty hours, would likely only increase frustration for the dedicated members of a profession who already feel besieged.

To summarize this section, I have tried to correct several misperceptions about what teachers must do or must have to be successful. I included possessing charisma and the ability to entertain. I claimed that teachers need not be extroverted, enigmatic, or mysterious. I warned against becoming friends with students and against the image that successful teachers must become heroes who burn themselves out. Obviously, one could list more misconceptions about successful teaching, but these will do. Obvious as well, many teachers who operate with great authority in their classrooms possess some of the qualities I have named (but likely do not attempt to form friendships with their students). My purpose in presenting this brief inventory is to argue that these qualities and patterns are not necessary for successful teaching, even if they sometimes or even typically characterize successful teachers.

The Sources of the Teacher's Authority

In the introduction, I lumped together expertise, a teaching certificate, and a contract as *three basic necessary conditions* for teaching. Briefly, I want to return to these three basics. I noted that some mistake these necessities for sufficient conditions, that is, thinking that a teacher not only can start teaching but can continue through the school year with these alone. No doubt, in most cases, the teacher needs these three,¹⁷ but they are not sufficient and therefore they warrant our attention. Most school authorities take the certificate issued by a teacher certification agency as evidence of expertise; they assume that those overseeing a teacher education program have seen a pattern of evidence that the preservice teacher possesses the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes desired by the jurisdiction and semi-guaranteed by the program. They

16. Search online for "Teachers' Workload Diary Survey" to see the latest available version of this annual British survey. Year-to-year comparisons reveal different numbers, of course, but on average, British teachers work 55–60 hours per week.

17. For reasons including teacher shortages, remote settings, ideology, religion, and budgets, schools hire uncertified teachers, sometimes conditionally and sometimes permanently. Furthermore, teachers in millions of informal (and formal) learning settings share their expertise without a certificate or a contract. I recognize these situations but focus here on the typical teacher formally employed in a K–12 school system that requires certification.

have forwarded this graduate's name to the teacher certification branch of the department of education in their respective jurisdiction and that agency has granted the license or certificate (usually valid for two to three years). With certificate in hand, the new teacher has applied to a school or school authority and has received an offer of employment. Thus, the contract implies certification and certification implies at least a beginning level of expertise. Most schools view the expertise and certificate as necessities before they will issue the contract. That being said, almost every certified teacher with a contract has discovered that, while necessary, these three qualifications are not sufficient to carry on a classroom program month to month and year to year.

In the introduction, I noted that traditional expectations also give teachers a kind of authority. All the places we walk into—elevators, arenas, laundromats, wedding receptions—come with sets of traditional expectations about how we may behave and about who gets to say what. Classrooms also come with traditional, common-sense expectations, and these expectations give teachers a measure of instant authority.

Having listed expertise as the first of the three basic necessities, I want to nuance it a bit further because we need to distinguish two kinds of expertise. Younger students generally extend more grace to their teachers than do older students, but all students begin forming their impression of a new teacher in the opening minutes of the opening day of the school year. On what grounds do they make their judgments? First, the certificate and contract likely do not cross most students' minds. Second, regarding expertise, students' ability to distinguish pedagogical expertise and subject-area expertise increases with age, although even those too young to articulate the distinction or their own educational desires likely want to see both. A teacher's authority rests, in part, on these two kinds of expertise.

Moving beyond this list, students have keen noses for fairness and caring. About the age that they might be able, with a bit of coaching, to pronounce *pedagogical expertise*, they will begin to recognize when their teacher is prepared and when not. In my classes with preservice teachers I regularly ask that we recollect the five qualities of good teachers that almost all researchers identify: caring, fair, prepared, subject-area expertise, and pedagogical expertise. I tell my students that a million researchers have already identified what good teaching entails and that, regardless of the length of the list of qualities those researchers produce, or what other elements appear, these five always appear. In short, they are necessary. But the three that rhyme (caring, fair, and prepared) are sources of authority more than they are forms. Expertise demonstrates authority; experts know what they are doing, so to speak. Care, fairness, and preparation build authority, and I turn now to the kind of authority they build.

Consent

In the “What is Classroom Authority?” section, I distinguished power and coercion from consent or what Hobbes called counsel. Consent occupies a central place in my conception of classroom authority. Without students’ consent, the teacher can expect only some form of minimal compliance—likely a begrudging form—from her students (although she might get more than that). In contrast, with students’ consent, the teacher can expect to move ahead day by day (at least on most days) with her curriculum plans, with her students and her all aiming at the same educational goals. With students’ consent, the teacher can create the kind of teaching and learning space—the classroom ethos—that she wishes to create.

Consent goes by other names. Some call it student goodwill, legitimacy, or moral authority.¹⁸ Retailers call it customer loyalty. Teachers build (or fail to build) this pool of goodwill in a thousand obvious and not-so-obvious moments in every teaching day. Their words (kind? sarcastic?), their response times to student requests, their body language and facial expressions, how often or rarely they exclaim that they simply love coming to class to be with their students, even their periodical appearance in class with snacks. . . . These are the ways that they demonstrate care and build the pool of goodwill or the moral authority to teach. Note how the items on this list connect to the two concepts of care and fairness; I wrote earlier that caring and fair teachers build student goodwill. The details seem quite simple (but somehow lie beyond the reach of many educators). Many others have explored moral authority and I will not say more here.¹⁹

Presence

Many treatments of classroom authority ignore teachers’ presence. By *presence*, I do not mean that teachers need to project in class what actors such as Jennifer Lawrence and Matt Damon project on screen. I do mean that as teachers we need to demonstrate that we are fully present in our classroom and that we are sure that our classroom is where we belong.²⁰

18. Arendt saw the roots of authority in communities of people who engaged in discourse and then granted individuals the power to lead them. That is, leaders lead by consent. She defined authority this way with the totalitarian regimes of Hitler and Stalin in mind; that is, they ruled by raw power (coercion) not by the consent of the people. See Arendt, *Human Condition*.

19. Sergiovanni, *Moral Leadership*; Yariv, “Students’ Attitudes.” See also Dennis’s doctoral dissertation, “A Study of how Teachers Show Love in the Classroom.”

20. A good introduction to the research on teacher presence appears in Rodgers

The first of those conditions does relate to what we see in Jennifer Lawrence or Matt Damon. They project complete involvement in what they are doing. In fact, one suspects that they can project this because, in fact, they *are* fully involved.²¹ They inhabit their roles completely. Teachers can do the same. In fact, we must. We must become fully engaged with our students and the subject at hand. I write those words knowing that teachers have issues in their personal and professional lives that can occupy their attention (and so do actors). But we must focus if we want our students to know that we are fully there with them. Simple to say. Challenging to do.

Obviously, preparation and expertise are ways of saying, “I am fully here, I am not phoning this in.” Passion about the subject projects presence. Humble confidence projects presence (and confidence without humility can offend). Even demonstrating humility by periodically admitting that we don’t know establishes presence (in part because students usually know when we don’t know). Even our physical posture reveals the degree to which we have engaged with the students in our room. Obviously, we could explore presence at much greater length, but that must wait. In the opening paragraph of this sub-section on presence, I noted that we must demonstrate our own confidence that our classroom is where we belong. That discussion is essential to presence, but it also functions importantly in what I call self-authorization, the final source of classroom authority I explore here.

Self-Authorization

The phrase *self-authorization* may be new to some readers but it is a relatively simple concept: we need to permit ourselves to teach. I will highlight two aspects of self-authorization, beginning with the vocational aspect that links back to presence. Many teachers torment themselves with vocational questions, sometimes for good reason. Some families consider the profession of teaching beneath (or above) them and consequently do not support their children’s vocational direction. Other teachers end up asking vocational questions because they struggle with the toxic combination of the sheer volume of hard work, the relatively low salaries, and the criticism they regularly face from right-wing politicians and members of the public who apparently believe that teachers should solve all society’s ills in about six hours per day. Some question whether teaching is their vocation because

and Raider-Roth’s article, “Presence in Teaching.”

21. For more on what is called *method acting*, search online for information on Konstantin Stanislavsky, the famous teacher of the method that encourages actors to fully inhabit their characters.

they seem unable to make their classroom work (a legitimate concern!). In the face of doubts and criticism, teachers need to authorize themselves, by which I mean they need to say to themselves and to their most trusted friends, "I am going to teach." Current and vernacular versions of that expression run more like, "I've got this," or "You go girl!" In my view, if some form of the Nike slogan "Just do it" gets one out of bed in the morning and to school, then that is precisely what teachers should say.

Teachers who would authorize themselves must rise above family expectations, work load, salary, and public criticism, environmental factors that ultimately form only a kind of persistent backdrop. The most obvious setting in which teachers need to authorize themselves is in the day, to work in their own classrooms with their students. They need to authorize themselves in this second, more direct way every time they start a class. In music and comedy, a *cold start* implies beginning one's song or sketch without an introduction by a host or master of ceremonies. Opera singers have to authorize themselves this way every time they sing; no one introduces them. They muster all the chutzpah or pluck they have, they stand up, they start. Apparently, the decision to start a given *Saturday Night Live* cold open always entails a lot of discussion during the week. The big question at SNL is always whether the audience will go with the performer or performers who begin the show with a cold start. To be quite blunt, teachers do a cold start at the start of their first year in their first school, at the start of their first year in every school after that, at the start of every new school day, and at the start of every class in their career. Obviously, it gets easier, but my point is that they never (or rarely) have the luxury of a principal introducing them after warming the class up with a funny monologue. In the ordinary circumstances in which teachers work every day, they must authorize themselves to teach. Doing that requires chutzpah, moxy, pluck, courage . . . call it what you will. I call it self-authorization. Teachers start; it is what they do.

Earlier, I listed Erin Gruwell (portrayed by Hilary Swank in *Freedom Writers*), as an example of a teacher who worked too hard. To its credit, this film also gives viewers a superb view of self-authorization. Gruwell's students made quite clear that they did not care one iota about her credentials, contract, or educational ideals. In their view, she came to their side of town as another white, do-gooder, hero-wannabe, and they planned to cut her no slack whatsoever. She had no choice but to authorize herself to teach them and she did that. Not to be cynical, but of course her story would never have made it to the screen had her students not ultimately authorized her as well, but my point here is that, to begin, she had to authorize herself. As the story unfolds, we learn that her students ultimately authorized her partly because she had authorized herself. Not all teachers face the antipathy she had to

overcome, but all teachers do have to authorize themselves. In the clearest possible terms, then, I say that we must consider this a necessary step or condition; no one can teach without self-authorization.

Conclusion

Teachers' authority is essential for the productive functioning of classrooms. It is complex because it overlaps conceptually with power and because it derives from such varied sources, some of them legal and formal (such as certificates and contracts), others informal and almost abstract (such as presence or showing kindness and fairness).

Several sources of the teacher's authority are simply missing from the chapter. For example, what role does age play? Some students grant more authority to the young teacher who is cool; others respect the old teacher who is wise (although these qualities are neither guaranteed in nor restricted to those respective age groups). I have not dealt with how a good reputation developed over years in a single school building increases the authority each new cohort of students grants their teacher. Nor have I talked about how accomplishments outside the classroom—in business, sports, government, or religion and philanthropy, for example—enhance the teacher's classroom authority. Much work remains if we are to understand how the teacher's authority and classroom authority (which I have used interchangeably here) connect. How does authorizing students—making them authorities—affect the teacher's authority? How will students understand teacher expertise as the internet becomes available everywhere? How will teachers frame their own expertise and work with the landscape changes brought by ubiquitous technology? These questions remain.

I have argued that the formal qualifications of certificate and contract and the expertise that they imply may be sufficient to launch a school year but will not carry a teacher through that year. Primary among the many kinds or sources of classroom authority, teachers must have their students' consent or goodwill. Without such legitimacy or moral authority, they will not be able to carry out their program with anything beyond minimal compliance. At that, one does not assemble consent like a piece of Swedish furniture. One earns one's students' consent over time.

Late in the chapter, I argued that being fully present is also necessary if a teacher wishes to carry out his or her classroom program. In explaining the grounds of their classroom cell-phone policies, some professors use the saying, "If you're going to be present, you might as well be present." This clever sentence applies to teacher presence as well, and those teachers

desiring student engagement will recognize the necessity that they be engaged themselves. I tied presence to self-authorization by noting that classroom teachers must come to peace about their own vocation as educators. Ultimately, the teacher who will cold start class after class for years on end needs to know that the classroom is, indeed, where he or she belongs. And those thousands of cold starts obviously require both deep courage as well as the pluck to stand up and start each class.

Reflection Questions

1. List some ways that teachers in film may have shaped your perceptions of how teachers gain or exercise authority.
2. Revise the “big five” list of basic teacher qualities given here—caring, fair, prepared, subject-area expertise, and pedagogical expertise—to reflect your own understanding of the essential qualities of good teachers.
3. Describe your own understanding of the relationship between power and classroom authority, especially as that relationship connects to the two matters of instruction and classroom management.
4. Many teachers have never considered self-authorization. In what situations in your own teaching context do you typically need to authorize yourself to teach?
5. If teachers do not need to burn out with hard work, or be enigmatic, extroverted, funny, or charismatic, what do they need to be to carry out their teaching program?

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