

I took a group of Year 9s for rock climbing on the indoor rock wall. My goals for the session were to teach the students how to belay, how to use climbing safety calls and some basic climbing techniques.

I decided to use the contemporary leadership style of situational leadership. Situational leadership principle comes from the opinion that there is no one best way to influence and lead people. The leadership principle depends upon the readiness level of the group the leader is influencing. It also depends not only with the person or group that is being influenced, but it also depends on the task, job or function that needs to be accomplished.

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I initially used what is referred to as "telling" style because this style is characterised by one-way communication in which the leader defines the roles of participants and tells them what, how, when, and where to do various tasks. This was because the belaying technique is non-negotiable as the safety of all involved is paramount. This also applies to the safety calls. For the technique and challenge setting tasks I used the 'selling style' where I explained task directions in a supportive and persuasive way. This is said to be a high task, high-relationship style and I felt the students learnt how to rock climb in a way that was fun. Later in the session I gave the group pointers on how to improve their rock climbing technique through the box game. The students were then given the opportunity to design their own challenges. One pair set a transverse bouldering challenge while another made up a diagonals game. This reflects the Participating Style of Situational leadership that emphasises shared ideas and participative decisions on task directions. This resulted in a low-task, high- relationship style.

I think situational leadership is the most appropriate style for outdoor education type of activities. It can be challenging though to work out the capabilities and maturity of the group. It is complicated because it is based on an interplay between the amount of direction the leaders gives, the amount of emotional support the leaders provide, and the "maturity" level that participant's exhibit on a specific task, function, or objective. Participant maturity is defined as the capacity to set high but attainable goals (achievement motivation), willingness and ability to take responsibility, and education and/or experience of and individual or group. These variables should be considered only in relation to a specific task to be performed. As an eighteen year old I still would require advice and guidance on how to use situational leadership effectively until I am more confident in my abilities.

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