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Leadership Development for Elementary Students

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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Leadership Development for Elementary Students

Leadership development among elementary aged students is an essential part of

character building and moral maturity. Based on the premise that the promotion of

authentic leadership development in young students occurs infrequently in most school

systems, this author articulates strategies to include effective leadership exploration in a

safe, elementary school environment. The researcher (a) identifies a variety of

definitions of leadership, (b) lists the characteristics of quality leadership, (c) suggests a

process for developing young student leaders, and (d) provides insight into the future

impact of early leadership training. The results include: (a) leadership standards to guide

classroom instruction, (b) a process for the selection of student leaders and development

of their skills, and (c) recommendations of appropriate elementary curricula that support

leadership development.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Students learn and develop leadership through practical application of leadership

skills. These skills should be cultivated at a young age so that students understand the

concept of stewardship and ownership of their environments. When students are

provided with this opportunity, they experience responsible citizenship and engage

positively with community members. Students can practice the common characteristics

of effective leadership regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, or political

affiliation. Those who are given the opportunity to engage in the process of leadership

development at an early age increase the capacity of involved citizens in the future.

Statement of the Problem

Students need an effective way to explore leadership skills in a safe environment.

The promotion of authentic leadership development in elementary school students occurs

infrequently in most school systems. Typically, middle school, high school, and college

students have an opportunity to intentionally participate in leadership activities or engage

in the development of these skills (Davison, 2007; Osberg Connor, & Strobel, 2007).

However, young elementary school students can begin to learn strategies to be a positive

influence among peers during these critically formative years (Bonstingl, 2005; Fisher,

1994). Educators have an essential role, perhaps an obligation, to assist in the

development of confident student leaders. When students learn to be empowered with

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leadership decision making at an early age, their ability to express the needs and desires of their community becomes a natural process. There is a need to address leadership development during the elementary school years in order to nurture future engaged citizens.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to identify ways to include elementary students in authentic leadership experiences. The presence of strong curricular design and leadership committee opportunities at the elementary level will allow students to be empowered with a positive sense of ownership in a school community. As students develop leadership skills, they will take pride in their responsibility for tasks and positively affect the community. This increased student confidence builds accountability for a particular school and, potentially, it can increase academic achievement among elementary students through future grade levels. It is the belief of this researcher that, in every school community, students should have the opportunity to develop leadership skills and practices. The results from this project can produce: (a) leadership standards to guide classroom instruction, (b) a process for the selection of student leaders and development of their skills, and (c) recommendations of appropriate elementary curricula that support leadership development.

Chapter Summary

Leadership development among elementary aged students is an essential part of character building and moral maturity. The attainment of leadership skills requires knowledge of self and knowledge of others. Effective leadership rests in the ability to combine knowledge of self and knowledge of others to advance both personal and group

goals. The need to empower young students to take on predominant roles will greatly impact the communities in which they are involved. In Chapter 2, this author: (a) identifies the many definitions of leadership and the appropriate level at which to educate students in this regard, (b) lists the characteristics of quality leadership, (c) suggests how to develop student leaders, and (d) provides insight into the future impact of early leadership training.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Neigel (2006) provided an articulate summary of the need for change in the

approach to student leadership. The author described:

> The message is clear: giving students a voice in determining the quality of their
> education is central to school reform. . . Educators must begin to invest in their
> students and empower them to be participants in a shared, collective endeavor:
> their education. Only then will educators be truly able to model participatory
> democracy in their schools and help prepare students for life as informed,
> engaged citizens. (p. 24)

Reformers who believe in the responsibility of educators to teach academics in

correspondence with character and leadership development have a large task ahead

(Good, 1992). Teachers who are encouraged by the positive impact of the development

of leadership skills in elementary students also recognize the dedication it takes to

cultivate leadership ability.

In Reese's (2008) interview with Bennis, Bennis stated, "becoming a leader is

synonymous with becoming yourself. It is precisely that simple, and it is also that

difficult" (p. 18). Students should be given the opportunity to develop self-awareness in

relation to leadership skills at a young age. The necessary aspects for the effective

process of student leadership development include: (a) appropriate guidance, (b)

empowerment opportunities, and (c) curriculum support.

Philosophy

There is a philosophical foundation for the support of early leadership development. Bonstingl (2006) discussed students' egotistical connection to themselves and affirmed that leadership skill development is appropriate at a young age. Bonstingl stated:

> The most interesting long-term project for any student is his or her own life. That is why student leadership development is so important. By teaching our students the tools and strategies to successfully lead their own lives, we give them the keys to succeed in every aspect of life. (p. 35)

Also, Bonstingl believed in the empowerment that accompanies the possibility of every child being an effective leader, if they are given the right tools and training. This is contrary to other theories that assume "leaders are born, not made" (Soderberg, 1997, p. 17). These contrasting views are taken into account in the critical analysis and authentic reflection of how to develop young student leaders. Potentially, there is a portion of truthfulness to both arguments.

Definition

The variety of ways to define leadership provides flexibility in curricular implementation for each individual, school, or organization. Generally, "leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes" (Leshnower, 2008, p. 29). This definition can be applied to contexts which involve students and/or adults. A more specific and modern way of thinking about student leadership skills was provided by McKibben (2004) in an article that described leadership in this regard.

> Leadership defined by inclusivity and collaboration clearly represents a new way of thinking. . . a linear definition of leadership is anachronistic at best and alienating at worst. The new democratic model of leading that these students are practicing is less about the power of the individual than it is about the power of the people. (p. 3)

In this sense, any number of students with a variety of leadership characteristics have the ability to share in this power of the people; granted, for some it is more natural than for others. Student leadership development enables a student to mature and explore the application of these skills in a school context.

What Makes a Leader?

There are essential qualities that a person in a leadership position must possess. Given a variety of possible definitions, most employees of schools and organizations derive a version of leadership that facilitates the principles of the school. The concept of a leader was altered in one study conducted by Osberg Conner and Strobel (2007). The authors explained:

> At the onset of this article, we bemoaned the lack of consistent definitions in the field of youth leadership. At the conclusion of this article, we seek to advance a conceptualization of youth leadership that is broad enough to encompass different styles and capacities but clear enough to distinguish the gang leader from the popular student body president and each of these from the student campaigning for social justice. (p. 294)

The number of different understandings about leadership and the role it has in the educational system results in a disparity about how to approach the subject uniformly. However, students and adults have identified some agreed upon characteristics that support quality leadership skills.

Student Identified Leadership Characteristics

In a study conducted by O'Brien and Kohlmeier (2003), 5th, 8th, and 11th grade

students were asked to specify the qualities of people who made them leaders. The

responses indicated age appropriate variations of leadership characteristics; however,

some common themes were ascertained. O'Brien and Kohlmeier explained, "(a) the

ability to make good decisions in difficult times; (b) staying true to ideals and beliefs; (c)

inspiring others to see a vision, ideal or belief; (d) showing creativity and inventiveness;

and (e) being unique in one's time and culture" (p. 164) were leadership skills mentioned

at each grade level. As students considered their individual potential, they desired to

learn and practice similar characteristics in the development of leadership skills and

styles.

According to O'Brien and Kohlmeier (2003), as 5th grade students identified

specific people who they considered leaders, often, they identified those in leadership

positions who they knew personally or "people who had made society better" (p. 163).

For these 10 and 11 year old students, the most common leadership traits cited were

"trustworthy, brave, helpful, honest, strong, adventurous, and persevering" (p. 163).

The 8th grade students named some similar characteristics; however, they were

"more likely to choose rebels or people who went against societal norms" (O'Brien &

Kohlmeier, 2003, p. 164) as they replied to the posed question of the persons whom they

perceived as leaders. The mid-teenaged students chose principled individuals, problem

solvers, and those with moral conviction and the willingness to act on that conviction.

The leadership qualities identified in these responses correlated with the developmental

stage of the students, who seek autonomy and individualism during these formative

middle school years.

Also, O'Brien and Kohlmeier (2003) interviewed 11th grade students about their

choice of honorable leadership and the characteristics they possess. The authors stated,

"students' choice of leaders was based more on a combination of the leader's

accomplishments and traits" (p. 164).   These students, nearly adults, selected people who

were: (a) revolutionary and crisis managers, (b) cultural and scientific innovators, and (c)

business builders and titans. Although the students at each of the three grade levels noted

necessary leadership skills with the use of different vocabulary and terminology, the

themes were considerably associated.

Osberg Conner and Strobel (2007) described Youth Engaged in Leadership and

Learning (YELL), a program for all grade levels that does not explicitly emphasize

leadership skills, but encourages many dimensions of youth development. Students

involved in this program recognized important leadership characteristics that included:

"(a) communication and interpersonal skills, (b) analytical and critical reflection, and (c)

positive involvement in community affairs" (p. 280). Students who are interested in the

development and maintenance of the identified skills participate in training and curricular

support to become genuine leaders.

Although student discernment of important leadership characteristics is essential

to the process of becoming a leader, also, students acknowledge the need for

collaboration with adults to secure the development of their leadership skills. Smith,

Petralia, and Hewitt (2005) spoke on behalf of students who experience this desire when

they stated, "a big part of student voice is getting the adults to listen; they don't think

we're capable of making important decisions" (p. 29). Adults who allocate time and energy to support student identified leadership characteristics share similar ideals in regard to the necessary traits of being a leader.

Adult Identified Leadership Characteristics

Many perspectives contribute to adult identified characteristics of student leadership (Leshnower, 2008; Rosler, 2008; Smith et al., 2005). Some educators believe that only academics should be taught in school, while others deliberately empower students to: (a) take ownership of their own learning, (b) develop leadership skills, and (c) provide opportunity to engage in the community. The variety of definitions makes it difficult for implementation of a standard curriculum or student leadership development plan across school districts. However, Leshnower described leadership skills as those which can create a vision and communicate effectively. The author suggested:

> Leadership focuses on getting everyone lined up in the same direction. . . influencing others to come together around a common vision to bring about a desirable change. . . so, successful leadership begins with a vision – a big picture that reflects a group's shared purpose. (p. 30)

The ideal of leadership, according to Leshnower, is not constrained to age limits or boundaries of quantity. It encompasses the possibility of vision and shared purpose that could positively impact a community. Rosler observed fifth grade students who acquired leadership roles in the classroom and indicated that "it was not the amount but the quality of their contributions that made them leaders" (p. 269). The characteristic of being able to contribute a valuable thought or vision to a particular circumstance is a notable quality of a leader. Adults distinguish students who can develop trust and utilize creative thinking as being in the process to develop leadership skills.

Smith et al. (2005) offered a perspective from some adults who held a more pessimistic approach to young student leadership development and the possibility of students' participation in educational decision making. Some educators believe, "three things can happen when you give students voice: first, they don't believe anything will change; second, they want to do extreme things; and third, certain kids will dominate and others are spectators" (p. 29). While these are valid concerns, there is a movement toward combating these issues with a strategic plan and leadership development approach. However, past experience has demonstrated that it is a challenge to overcome those obstacles.

<center>Historical Perspective</center>

Traditionally, the most respected position of hierarchical leadership among a student body was that of the student council (McFarland & Starmanns, 2009). This school governing opportunity has been available to a wide range of grade levels throughout the course of one's education. The students on the council are usually expected to plan prom, organize bake sales or car washes, and rally for school spirit days. This expectation is becoming less prominent. The candidates of the council, elected by giving a speech to classmates, often exhibited a great need for leadership development based on the current state of election.

Often, it has been recalled that a contest of popularity became a distinct focus of student council elections. Soderberg (1997) described the school culture and stated:

> First, the selection of leaders and participants does not always yield the most qualified and interested students. Surveys show that both participants and non-participants feel many officers in student organizations tend to become officers in search of popularity, of qualifying credentials for non-school positions, or of

psychological satisfaction of inner drives, not because of a desire to learn or serve. (p. 11)

In addition to student council, there are other organizations which have customarily acknowledged leadership skills, such as: (a) captain of a sporting team (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008); (b) conflict managers (Close & Lechman, 1997); or (c) concert master of the band or orchestra (Davison, 2007). In contrast to being elected to these positions, often, students who obtain these leadership roles are appointed by the adults who lead a specific group of students. Usually, students in these positions are well respected and are represented by peers who strive to attain a particular talent or skill level.

In recent years, there has been progress beyond what has been known, historically, as student council. Bonstingl (2006) reported that there is a revolutionary movement to engage students in national leadership development retreats. This transformation of student leadership provides opportunities for students to develop an understanding of civic life and community engagement. It prioritizes a skill set that acknowledges the notable characteristics of a leader. It includes more than just those who are elected by peers and extends to a variety of interests and talents.

School teachers and administrators have reformed many school related organizations and increased the effort to develop leadership skills in other realms (Neigel, 2006). Osberg Conner and Strobel (2007) concluded, "in the United States, awareness of the value of engaging youth in social change efforts has spawned national, congressional, statewide, and municipal youth leadership councils and initiatives" (p. 276). The latest belief systems in regard to the development of student leaders still

include some of the historical strategies; however, the movement has intensified and is geared toward specific skill development.

Developing Student Leaders

Student voice is a concept that allows students to feel engaged in their education and empowers young people's perspectives to be heard (Elbot & Fulton, 2005). There are several innovative ways to intentionally develop students as leaders; some include direct curricular instruction, and others can be utilized indirectly in classroom situations. The strategies include, but are not limited to: (a) revised student leadership councils (McKibben, 2004); (b) students as professional developers (Smith et al., 2005); (c) curriculum; (d) classroom committees (Fisher, 1994); (e) student forums (Smith et al.); (f) adult advocacy programs (Smith et al.); (g) student leadership projects (Bradley, 2007); and (h) controversial dialogue (Bradley). These leadership development techniques can and should be utilized at a variety of grade levels, with specific emphasis on the inclusion of elementary students.

Student Council

The duties of the members of a student council are to represent the ideals of the student body and serve as a governing board to make decisions that support those ideals. Bonstingl (2006) described that elementary students may address leadership development through issues, such as: (a) how to keep the bathrooms cleaner, (b) improvement of communication between schools and families, and (c) make the playground safer during recess time. These matters directly affect students, and the results naturally impact students' daily encounters. The topics can be discussed in the context of a student

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council, and members can collect input from peers in order to make well informed decisions.

Rosen (1999) acknowledged that "student councils must be given a certain amount of responsibility or members will quickly become bored and inattentive" (p. 2). The boredom and apathy experienced by some student leaders misuses the potential of genuine student impact.   The author suggested that members of the student council should: (a) help review school rules, (b) conduct school assemblies, (c) inspect the campus for cleanliness, (d) help with safety procedures, and (e) make presentations about school needs. Students' capability to fulfill these tasks is possible when they are given opportunities to develop leadership skills.

McKibben (2004) noticed a pivotal moment in regard to student motivation when students were provided with leadership opportunities through participation in student council. McKibben explained:

> When students can exert their leadership skills in meaningful contexts, they take the initiative, not because it will bring them more votes in the race for student council or because their parents will applaud them, but because they know that they can make a difference in their own lives and in the lives of their communities. (p. 3)

The kind of empowerment that this author described can be experienced by students who internalize the power they create when they have ownership in their communities. Similarly, Frost (2008) identified numerous forms of citizenship initiatives that give students opportunities to share perspectives and engage in peer supported activities. However, Frost extended the possibilities of students being leaders when he noted that "many schools are exploring ways of engaging students in dialogue about learning, teaching and the school environment" (p. 356). Similar to many other leadership

development strategies, this dialogue can be utilized in the specific context of student

council agendas or a more general student leadership task.

Students as Professional Development Facilitators

The ongoing dialogue between teachers and students about learning, teaching, and

the school environment, as suggested by Frost (2008), has the potential to transfer into

the practice that was recommended by Smith et al. (2005): use students as professional

development facilitators. When students were included in the teacher professional

development planning process, there was an opportunity to share perspectives and engage

in authentic discussions in regard to the educational environment. Smith et al. reported

the feedback given by teachers who participated in student led professional development.

> The frank and honest exchange of ideas was challenging, provocative, and
> surprising. Students and staff members asked to have more opportunities for open
> dialogue. In ensuing faculty meetings, discussion focused on academic issues
> (e.g., failure rates, academic rigor, and practices and policies that affect
> achievement), as well as specific things that could be done by teachers and
> students, both individually and collectively, to create a positive school culture. (p.
> 33)

These conversations included students of all grade levels. The questions were phrased

appropriately according to age level, and structured guided topics of discussion gave

credence to the positive experience. Educators noted they discovered a new found

admiration for students who typically caused trouble in class; during the meeting, they

represented a role of leadership and mutual respect. A beneficial change occurred as

students were involved in the academic conversations that directly affected their school

environment.

Other than specifically leading professional development sessions, Smith et al.

(2005) identified concrete ways that students cultivated and shared their leadership skills

in a professional manner. "Students designed surveys, wrote grants, and presented their ideas at committee meetings. The school leaders embraced their energy and passion for improving their school, and the students and the course have flourished" (Smith et al., p. 33). The tasks benefitted the school and gave students the confidence that adults trusted their opinions and abilities. One way to develop student capabilities in order to accomplish such tasks is to provide curricular support in the development of student leadership.

Curriculum

Student leadership development can be: (a) taught in direct, intentionally chosen curriculum during specific courses; (b) integrated into existing curriculum; or (c) provided in some way between these two extremes. O'Brien and Kohlmeier (2003) lamented the lack of support in training students to be leaders in combination with the expectation they will do great deeds. The authors stated, "national standards in social studies, history, civics/government, and geography stress the importance of preparing young people to become active citizens, yet pay little attention to civic leadership" (p. 162). The misalignment of these belief systems makes it difficult to effectively train students as leaders. O'Brien and Kohlmeier continued, "given that lack of emphasis on the study of leaders and leadership, how can we expect students to make reasoned decisions when choosing people for leadership positions, let alone to develop the capacity to serve as leaders?" (p. 163). In many character education curricula, there is an emphasis on leadership as an essential quality in a students' developmental process; however, many school and district personnel give this subject a secondary position to other academic courses.

The staff at Texas Education Agency (The Flippen Group, 2009) provided an approved list of published character education and leadership programs, which they encourage faculty to implement in the classroom. Kids' Hearts, Teen Leadership, and Keystone are a few of the character education programs in which attention is placed on leadership qualities. These curricula were selected because they met the requirements: (a) emphasize positive character traits, (b) use integrated teaching strategies, and (c) are age appropriate. Philosophy and mission alignment determine which curriculum is chosen for each school.

Another curriculum founded in Colorado, called Peace Jam (2009), is a rapidly developing leadership curriculum that has elicited an outstanding response among young students. The focus of the Peace Jam curriculum is on 12 Nobel Peace Laureates, their words, their work, and the issues which face young people today. In the mission statement, it is written that the intention is "to create a new generation of young leaders committed to positive change in themselves, their communities and the world through the inspiration of Nobel Peace Laureates" (Peace Jam, p. 1). The curriculum is utilized with kindergarten through college aged students. It is a standards based, ongoing leadership training program in which peacemaking, leadership, and conflict resolutions skills are incorporated. The ideals explored throughout this curriculum are founded in historical and current contexts and teach leadership characteristics in a highly applicable format for students to internalize.

Aside from the formal curricula that have been developed to ensure that leadership qualities are being taught in school, Rosen (1999) explained the various

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informal ways to identify leadership and character development in the classroom experience.

> The informal elementary school civics curriculum consists of activities during the school day that reinforce, by practice or example, lessons taught in the formal curriculum, such as the importance of voting, majority rule, minority rights, respect for property, respect and tolerance for the ideas of others, compromise, caring about the well-being of others, fairness, and determining responsibility when a wrong or an injury occurs. (p. 1)

Also, the classroom discussions and teachable moments in regard to the habits of good citizenship are noted as powerful and successful ways to increase leadership opportunities and decrease feelings of apathy among students. Some of the habits Rosen included are: (a) listen to the ideas of others, (b) determine the degree of agreement, and (c) be well informed. Educators find it simple to implement these skills into the daily routines of classroom learning. Whether it is implemented in a formal or informal way, teachers can find leadership development to be an essential portion of curriculum in the classroom.

Classroom Committees

Some educators find it difficult to develop ways to connect leadership and young elementary students. However, Shin, Recchia, Seung Yeon, Yoon Joo, and Mullarkey (2004) conducted a research study to determine the developmental appropriateness of leadership in early childhood. The authors found the young leaders (e.g., infant, toddler, and preschool) were able to exert their social power to develop relationships with peers and teachers. At the same time, they included and excluded certain peers or teachers during the interactions. A sense of ownership of school and a high awareness in the classroom was observed in the context of the school environment.

Fisher (1994) reported on a first grade classroom; the teacher successfully

implemented leadership roles among her 6 and 7 year old students. To do this, she

assigned each student to a committee. The classroom committees included: (a) reading

committee, (b) class meeting directors, (c) mathematics committee, (d) science

committee, and (e) writing committee. Each group of students was responsible for taking

a leadership role to maintain a particular space in the classroom. The jobs included: (a)

organize the bookshelves or return books to the library on the due date, (b) prepare the

lunch count, (c) arrange an estimating project for the class, (d) organize displays on the

science table, and (e) write topics for the classroom meeting. These tasks were led by

groups of students who were given specific roles to help the classroom to function.

Similarly, Fisher (1994) reported non-committee leadership roles that students

participated in such as: (a) water the plants, (b) recycle paper, and (c) lead daily sharing

time. Participation in these assignments created the need to develop responsibility and

practice leadership characteristics such as clear communication and initiative. Although

first grade students are young in their development, a student's ability to begin intentional

leadership development is essential to consider for future impact.

Student Forums

Leadership development to prepare students for future leadership positions begins

with acknowledgement of legitimate student insight and perspective. When students

believe that their voice will be heard by adults, confidence is nurtured. Smith et al.

(2005) described student forums, a successful format which fostered students' excitement

for being part of change. The authors stated, "the purpose of a student forum is to guide

students through a series of activities, discussions, and projects that illuminate issues at

their school and build their energy around getting involved in school redesign" (p. 29).

This type of forum can be utilized with any grade level of students, and it can be an

effective way to collect information for the purpose of change. Although the forum is

initiated by adults, students have the opportunity to openly share input about issues that

affect their school environment.

Adult Advocacy

An essential component of successful student leadership development is the

recruitment of adults who are willing to advocate for the cause.   Due to the difference in

opinion about when and how student leadership development is appropriate, it takes an

explicit group of adults to encourage the process. Smith et al. (2005) stated:

> As a trust-building activity, the principal asked the team to review the vision
> statement that the teachers were creating. The students made several suggestions
> that personalized the statement, and the principal recommended the student
> version as the final draft. (p. 31)

In this case, the principal provided a leadership opportunity for the students to provide

crucial contributions that affected the image and mission of the school. The results

indicated that the students felt proud and empowered because of the high regard for their

insights that the principal demonstrated. However, the teachers replied with a less

enthusiastic response. They preferred the version of the mission that was written by the

adults of the community. The conflict demonstrated the principal's ability to advocate

for the students and the lack of teacher support of young student leadership development.

Adult advocacy is a key component to the success of listening to student voices. When

philosophies contradict, it causes difficulty in effective skill development.

This contradiction can be as substantial as philosophical alignment or as trite as terminology; all discrepancies prompt intense professional conversations. Frost (2008) justified one such way in which vocabulary differences affected the direction of student leadership development. The author explained:

> Within the overriding concept of student voice common terms such as "consultation" and "participation" may be seen as synonymous for some, while for others they represent widely differing stances as to the degree of involvement and power students can expect in respect of any given activity. (p. 356)

Adults who advocate for young student leadership development and the need for a common language are vital to the advancement of leadership skills among students. To avoid the aforementioned issue, Smith et al. (2005) suggested, "first, build trust. . . provide faculty members with information about the purpose of deeper student involvement. . . Third, work together. Involve students in the change process" (p. 33). In addition to these strategies, an essential component of student leadership program success is that adults guide students to make profound and healthy choices about themselves and their communities.

Student Leadership Project

Some teachers and school administrators choose to implement a specific academic curriculum. Some chose to adopt leadership and character development curriculum; yet, others choose not to intentionally address the skills in the educational context. Bradley (2007) identified the Student Leadership Project (SLP) as a program designed to actively involve students in bully and harassment prevention. An age diverse group of students, nominated by teachers and guidance counselors, take leadership roles to diminish conflict among peers. Bradley described, "once the first session of the year has been held, we ask

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students to suggest friends who could be invited to the second SLP session" (p. 2). The

continuous recommendation of additional participants increased the number of students

trained in the program and, therefore, reduced the number of disputes. Students who

engaged in the SLP brainstormed safe ways to intervene and prevent events such as: (a)

physical altercations, (b) truancy, and (c) minor frustration between peers. Bradley

explained, "students can learn techniques to stop the escalation of violence before it

reaches a physical level" (p. 2).

There are variations to the SLP, with different names or a slightly different

process, but the general theory behind them is similar. At some schools, conflict

management programs or peer mediation are utilized to obtain comparable results (Close

& Lechman, 1997). The main focus of the success of such programs is the

implementation of regular training sessions and maintenance of quality participants who

are willing to boldly assume leadership roles.

Controversial Dialogue

As previously discussed, there are many leadership qualities that contribute to

successful task management; effective communication is one identified trait. According

to Bradley (2007), the use of the Controversial Dialogue strategy "gives students a

chance to learn more about one another and their differences" (p. 3). In this model,

students are selected for a specific topic of interest and are trained according to

appropriate strategies to resolve the issue. Such controversies may include: (a)

friendship conflicts, (b) racial tensions, (c) religious discord, or (d) communal

disagreements. When students appear polarized on a particular issue, the use of the

Controversial Dialogue strategy may provide a resolution. The students who are asked to assume leadership during these conversations facilitate a solution based discussion.

Peer leaders who manage intense dialogues with conflicting opinions require specific training and self-awareness. Bradley (2007) discussed whether the Controversial Dialogue leadership training technique is proactive or reactive. The author concluded, it is both; "consciousness is being raised" (p. 3) and therefore, leadership development is enhanced. The productive process to develop leaders by utilization of a variety of the aforementioned methods does not come without challenge. The benefits of young student leadership development are substantial, as are the adversities.

Challenges

Elbot and Fulton (2005) reported that, when leadership development was put into action, observation and evaluation indicated strong student ownership within their school community and heightened academic achievement. In contrast, the implementation of building excellence in character is a daunting, time consuming, and energy intensive effort from the adult perspective. Those who perceive the value in such a concept are willing to make the commitment to the task. Skeptical adults are less equipped to dedicate efforts towards leadership development pursuits.

The cynicism that accompanies this stigma leads to several reasons for lack of student leadership development initiatives. McKibben (2004) commented:

> One reason we may not be actively leading is that we lack the skills that enable us to express our personal initiative. Another reason is that we may never be asked – or that we do not demand the right – to share in the conversation. And still another reason might be that we are accustomed to the conventional definition of leadership, with its presumption of individuality and exclusivity. (p. 3)

The reasoning described by the author is applicable to adults and students alike. The

sense of apathy or lack of information likely discourages the motivation to seek out

leadership opportunities.

Frost (2008) noted that, although students and adults may face similar leadership

development challenges, a difficulty specific to students is the power dynamic between

adults and children. Curriculum implementation and training sessions involve parties

from diverse settings. Therefore, it is complicated to keep everyone informed and in

proper communication with one another. Frost stated, "Whether within schools or in

partnerships between schools, or through networks and collaboration with external

agencies, the nature of these complex power and relationship dynamics needs to be

acknowledged and understood" (p. 355). Additionally, students who seek leadership

skills must withstand the resistance from adults who may or may not be supportive of

their opinion.

According to Frost (2008), at times, employees from outside programs and

organizations wish to be involved in student leadership development, but there is a lack

of consensus within the school system about the appropriate implementation of such

projects. In some situations, the focus on academic work outweighs the desire to support

young student leadership development. Frost acknowledged:

> Schools may talk about the desire to develop the whole child yet intense and
> conflicting pressures from many quarters together with a hegemonic discourse of
> performativity mean they are often faced with carving out an inconsistent path in
> trying to encourage the expression of student voice. (p. 354)

Educators must ensure philosophical alignment to present the opportunity for students to

engage in both academic and character/leadership development. The difficulty of

simultaneous preparation of young student leaders and meeting national standards is heightened due to performance pressures. Conversations in regard to appropriate time delineation are necessary to overcome this challenge.

Another issue in young student leadership development is the lingering questions and hesitations that are posed. In this time of academic difficulty in the United States, the achievement gap is greatly concerning (Editorial Projects in Education, 2004). The achievement gap "refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students" (Editorial Projects in Education, p. 1). It is most prevalent in: (a) grades, (b) standardized test scores, (c) course selection, (d) dropout rates, and (e) college completion rates. Therefore, Frost (2008) presented compelling questions to consider when deciding whether to implement leadership development within the daily academic school schedule. The author asked:

> In what ways will it serve the immediate priorities of raising standards? What are the implications for teachers' time and curriculum coverage? To what extent is this simply another passing fad and how sustainable is it in the longer term? (p. 356)

These questions, among others, must be considered before the implementation of yet another expectation within the school system.

Frost (2008) noted how the shift in student academic expectations has impacted the education system; specifically, how subject matter is prioritized. As experiences and societal needs change, the effort to intentionally educate students as well to be informed citizens becomes essential. Frost stated:

> It is often noted that schools appear to have changed little in their structures since the nineteenth century. In this time it is acknowledged just how much the world has changed in this time, as has the experience of children and young people within it. (p. 354)

In our changing social culture, there is an emphasis on skills to prepare for future jobs and upcoming experiences. When young elementary students are given the opportunity to explore skills (i.e., specifically, qualities of leadership along with academic rigor), it allows them the capacity to change with the time period and experience of a generation. Acknowledging the need for a shift in mentality releases the likelihood of leadership impact in the future. Students who acquire the development of leadership skills at a young age receive a variety of benefits for personal growth and the advancement of communities.

<div align="center">Future Impact</div>

Those who can benefit from early student leadership development include: (a) communities, (b) schools, (c) peer and family relationships, and (d) the students who participate. Frost (2008) concluded:

> There does appear to be a growing consensus that student participation can enhance the quality of learning through improvements in communication and in the social conditions of learning. Other gains can be seen in terms of greater self-esteem, heightened self-confidence, interpersonal and political skills and self-efficacy when students have opportunities to exercise responsibility. (p. 356)

The development of young student leadership abilities requires time and opportunity for the appropriate skills to be fostered. Bonstingl (2006) noted the increased recognition of teachers and administrators who treat students as partners in progress. The development of this partnership guides the expansion of positive future impact.

Osberg Conner and Strobel (2007) stated, "program structures and support will effect change in youth as empowered leaders which will effect change in problems or issues in school and community" (p. 279). The outlined sequence demonstrated the

transfer of knowledge from curriculum and training, to the impact on current

environments, to the influence on future communities. It is early student leadership

development that makes the reality of this image successful.

Additionally, McKibben (2004) identified several ways that young leadership

development has the potential to influence future career paths among students.   The

author described:

> Given the opportunity, students quickly demonstrate their potential for leadership
> by undertaking advocacy in various forms – as ambassadors, action researchers,
> mentors, academic architects, volunteers, education consultants, advisors, fund-
> raisers, and translators – as well as by talking on a variety of other responsibilities
> that further the collaborative ideals of their communities. (p. 3)

These roles are possible during students' school career or in adulthood. Through

leadership development, students have the capability to explore potential job

opportunities at a young age.

Finally, O'Brien and Kohlmeier (2003) researched the empowerment of young

people to serve as leaders and described that it enables problem solving strategies and

enhances civic efficacy.   Similarly, Reese (2008) stated, "in participating in community

service, [students] get development, experience, and confidence building affirmation not

attainable through academics alone" (p. 19). Essentially, it is a delicate balance of how to

encompass academic structures in the context of developing opportunity for students to

explore other elements of their being; namely, their abilities to offer their insight, share

their wisdom, and engage their spirit through the confidence developed by the

acknowledgment of innate leadership qualities. The initiation of this process at a young

and influential age, provides opportunity for practice and experimentation with styles and

skills over an extended period of time. As with most new endeavors, practice makes a person better at a given task; the same is true of student leadership development.

<div align="center">Chapter Summary</div>

In Chapter 2, the author defined leadership and described the historical and current theories of student leadership development. A number of techniques that allow students to be empowered by the assumption of leadership roles in the school environment were examined in this chapter. Although effective strategies are being utilized in some school settings, there are challenges presented. The complexities of the problems are addressed along with the positive impact of future student leadership development. In Chapter 3, the author identifies for whom the project is designed, the methodology, and implementation of the project.

Chapter 3

METHOD

The author believes that the development of leadership skills among young

students is a key component of the educational environment. Therefore, research of this

process and design of potential implementation strategies are explained. When

leadership development is instigated at a young age, students are likely to assume roles as

engaged citizens in future endeavors. The author outlines standards and benchmarks to

guide leadership development instruction. Additionally, a model of the student council

application process and recommended curricula are described.

Target Audience

The intended audience for this young student leadership development project is

teachers, administrators, and parents. Adults involved in the development of student

academics and character development are essential in order to successfully empower

students in this area. Students will be impacted indirectly by the focus of this research;

however, the adults are the primary target group.

Organization of the Project

This project is organized into three major sections: (a) standards and benchmarks

appropriate to Grades K-5, (b) a model of student council structures and application

processes, and (c) best practices of national curricula currently established in elementary

school settings. The intention of the researcher is to provide successful methodologies

for teachers and administrators to consider when implementing leadership development. The standards and benchmarks, the student council model, and the suggested curriculum can be used separately or in conjunction with one another.

Peer Assessment Plan

The assessment of the benchmarks, student council structures, and suggested national curriculum was obtained from parents and current and former teachers and administrators. The feedback was given through editing marks and narrative comments. Each of the three peer reviewers received a copy of the documents and was asked to comment on the practicality of implementation, relevancy, and age appropriateness. Their feedback is discussed in Chapters 5.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 3, the author described the target audience, the organization of the project, and the peer assessment plan. Teachers and administrators will be most successful in advocating for early student leadership development. The student leadership development guide was be reviewed by representatives from this group as they directly interact with students and therefore can evaluate its relevancy and practicality. In Chapter 4, the researcher provides age appropriate leadership standards and benchmarks for Grades K-5. Additionally, a practical model for the development of leadership in the context of student council is outlined and recommended prescribed curriculum is summarized.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Introduction

Leadership requires knowledge of self and knowledge of others. Students who are given an opportunity to explore their strengths and weaknesses realize their potential for leadership. Knowledge of self assists students in clarifying their identity, self-image, and roles in a variety of diverse communities. Knowledge of others encourages students to consider and understand the way others view and respond to the world at large. Effective leadership rests in the ability to combine knowledge of self and knowledge of others to advance both personal and group goals.

Effective leaders use personal skills that can be acquired by all students. These essential skills include developing a vision, motivating others, taking initiative, communicating effectively, setting goals, making decisions, managing resources, and facilitating the development of additional leaders. When practiced within the context of students' primary social groups and in school wide leadership opportunities, these skills will build competence and confidence that prepare students to assume a variety of leadership roles. Students learn that respected leaders act ethically and model responsible behavior. They work to understand that active leadership may involve personal and public risks and opportunities.

The standards outlined in the Student Leadership Planning Guide address students' knowledge of self and others in addition to the development of leadership skills. The leadership committees and student council structure models a way to effectively provide students with opportunities to explore leadership skill development. The recommended curricula support the values that encompass early leadership development. These three items can be used in conjunction with one another or separately.

Student Leadership
Planning Guide

Included in this manual are standards and benchmarks, a student council structure, and recommended curricula to use with elementary age students to develop their leadership skills.

Kindergarten-Grade 2 Leadership Standards

Knowledge of Self and Others

K-2 Standard 1: The student will describe him/herself and others.

 a. Identify personal roles in the family, class, and school, such as son or daughter, line leader, citizen.
 b. Describe personal views of self, such as strengths and weaknesses.
 c. Recognize influences on self, such as family and community customs and traditions.
 d. Identify perspective of another student and underlying influences.

K-2 Standard 2: The student will describe characteristics of his or her own responsible behavior, such as respect, trustworthiness, caring, and fairness.

 a. Identify ways to assume responsibility in the family, class, and school.
 b. Identify ways to help others in the family, class and school.

K-2 Standard 3: The Student will describe how to work with others.

 a. Describe the characteristics of responsible behavior in others, such as respect, trustworthiness, caring, and fairness.
 b. Discuss and label roles and responsibility of others in the family, class, school, and community.

Defining Leadership

K-2 Standard 4: The student will identify characteristics of a leader.

 a. Identify qualities of effective leaders, such as honesty, care for others, and fairness.
 b. Recognize positive and negative leadership traits as seen in fictional characters or in historical figures.

K-2 Standard 5: The student will explore the role of the follower.

 a. Identify qualities such as respect, cooperation, and good manners, and relate them to the role of the follower.
 b. Identify the importance of being willing to listen, taking directions, following assigned chains of command, and being supportive.

K-2 Standard 6: Students will understand that different settings affect leadership roles.

 a. Identify leaders within the family, classroom, school, and community.

b. Describe how the role of follower or leader may change at different times.
c. Recognize the effects of changing situations upon leadership roles in the family, classroom, school, and community.

Leadership Skills and Practices

K-2 Standard 7: The student will communicate effectively in pairs, small groups, teams, and large groups.

a. Demonstrate active listening skills.
b. Demonstrate good public speaking skills.
c. Communicate own ideas, both verbally and in writing.
d. Identify differences of opinion.
e. Report back to a peer positive feedback.
f. Demonstrate support for other group members to achieve team spirit.

K-2 Standard 8: The student will identify and practice decision-making skills.

a. Recognize challenges in a group project.
b. Defend facts for decision making and problem solving.
c. Practice making simple decisions.
d. Manage personal, classroom, and school resources.

K-2 Standard 9: The student will recognize the importance of setting goals.

a. Define and set personal short-term goals.
b. Identify long-term goals.
c. Share personal goals.
d. Discuss the importance of setting goals.
e. Recognize ways to evaluate goals.

Grades 3-5 Leadership Standards

Knowledge of Self and Others

Grades 3-5 Standard 1: The student will examine his or her own self image.

    a. Identify factors that contribute to self image, such as success and failure or acceptance and rejection.
    b. Investigate outside factors that may influence self image, such as others' opinions in certain situations.
    c. Recognize that self image may change over time and in different situations.

Grades 3-5 Standard 2: The student will examine his or her own behaviors and how they contribute to group interaction.

    a. Discuss personal style of interacting effectively with others.
    b. Predict future leadership roles and steps necessary to achieve them.

Grades 3-5 Standard 3: The student will examine the needs and concerns of others.

    a. Determine the needs and concerns of classmates or group members, such as friendship, approval, and acceptance.
    b. Act as a member of a group to develop a plan for addressing group needs and concerns.

Defining Leadership

Grades 3-5 Standard 4: The student will examine characteristics of a leader.

    a. Identify and discuss leadership qualities, such as responsibility, courage, and reliability (in addition to honesty, care for others, and fairness).
    b. Describe leadership traits, and distinguish between positive and negative examples of these traits in the school, peer group, local community, and state.

Grades 3-5 Standard 5: The student will identify the importance of the role of the follower.
    a. Understand that followers can support and advance the cause of their leaders.
    b. Examine the importance of being an informed follower and the role of flexibility in being a follower.
    c. Explain the importance of active participation as a follower.

Grades 3-5 Standard 6: The student will experiment with the role the environment has in the process of leadership.

a. Identify the roles of leaders in the family, school, community, state, and nation.
b. Examine that as situations change, the student's role as follower or leader may change.
c. Describe the effects of changing situations upon leadership roles in the family, classroom, and school.

Leadership Skills and Practices

Grades 3-5 Standard 7: The student will communicate effectively in pairs, small groups, teams, and large groups.

a. Listen and read for purpose, meaning, and expression of feeling within a variety of situations.
b. Share own ideas and feelings both verbally and in writing.
c. Empathize with others.
d. Seek resolutions to problems.
e. Provide and respond appropriately to positive feedback.
f. Work as a team to communicate and support group projects.

Grades 3-5 Standard 8: The student will enhance and apply decision-making skills.

a. Generate alternative solutions to problems.
b. Describe the consequences of personal decisions.
c. Work toward consensus in making group decisions.
d. Participate in orderly, organized group processes.

Grades 3-5 Standard 9: The student will explore long-term goals.

a. Recognize that it is possible to have a variety of personal goals.
b. Review and set new short-term goals on a regular basis.
c. Set long-term goals.
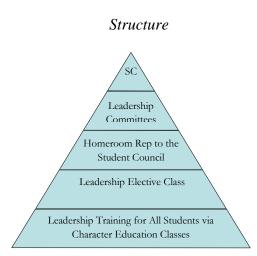d. Evaluate and modify personal goals.

Student Council

Educators and administrators at this school believe one of the greatest obstacles to student success lies with student apathy. Student apathy is created by a lack of belonging, lack of authentic opportunities for true student engagement and power, and a shortage of training that provides students with the explicit skills needed to create change and serve as leaders now—not just in the future. Staff members believe in creating and maintaining a school of excellence by providing students with access to opportunities for student empowered leadership. Once developed, students will apply their leadership skills to assisting with change initiatives in the broader community.

Theory of Change

To become engaged, proactive members of their communities, young people must be provided with authentic opportunities to:

1. Learn skills and gain knowledge related to inclusivity, leadership, and community engagement;
2. Reflect on areas of personal concern and interest as a means of connecting more deeply to their communities; and
3. Practice skills and utilize knowledge to create change in their immediate environments.

SC

Leadership
Committees

Homeroom Rep to the
Student Council

Leadership Elective Class

Leadership Training for All Students via
Character Education Classes

Teachers will train students through a series of increasingly more challenging leadership opportunities, with service on the student council representing the pinnacle of student leadership. Each section of this structure maintains a particular level of responsibility. The opportunities to make decisions for students at all age and ability levels will teach responsibility and ownership of their communities.

Student Council Application

Draft Student Council Belief Statement (to be revised by students)

Student Council will promote leadership in all students at all grade levels by effectively training and cultivating young leaders in our school. We use leadership development as a means of creating equity within our school community. The Student Council serves as the primary organizing and oversight body for all other youth leadership opportunities at this school.

Student Council Qualifications

Mission Alignment: Belief in the Student Council mission and belief that student leadership is one of the keys to creating a school where students are engaged, proactive members of their communities.

Entrepreneurial Spirit: Openness to change and willingness to problem-solve and develop new ideas.

Drive for Excellence: Hard-working, self starter who takes initiative and is committed to learning and self-improvement.

Communication: An ability to communicate clearly, patiently, and non-judgmentally to diverse audiences.

Leadership Skills: An ability to motivate people and energy towards a stated purpose.

Name of Student: _____

Grade: _____   Teacher: _____

Written Application: Due Monday, September 14, 2009

- Please answer all questions following the specified length limits noted.
- Write legibly or type.
- Answer the question fully, using complete sentences and ideas. The quality of your written communication counts.
- Your written application will be scored based upon your ability to convince the reader that you possess the qualities listed above in the qualifications section.

Group Interview: Friday, September 18 at 11:30 a.m. in the Conference Room

- All students who have submitted an application will participate in a required group interview. During the interview, students will be presented with a leadership case scenario that they will need to "solve".

The application process for this year's Student Council will not include public speeches or homeroom elections. As this student council model is implemented, students at this school will be evaluated on the application of a standards-based leadership system. Each homeroom will still have a representative that will be selected via a process run by the Student Council. Both the written application and the group interview will be scored against the following rubric:

	4	3	2	1
Mission Alignment	Demonstrates an understanding of and ability to further develop the mission of the student council	Demonstrates an understanding of and agreement with the current mission	References the mission	No demonstrated knowledge of mission
Entrepreneurial Spirit	Demonstrates consistent ability to participate in building something new (flexibility, resiliency, contribution of new ideas) and gains support of constituents	Demonstrates ability to participate in building something new (flexibility, resiliency, contribution of new ideas)	Demonstrates a limited ability to participate in building something new (flexibility, resiliency, contribution of new ideas)	No demonstrated ability to participate in building something new (flexibility, resiliency, contribution of new ideas)

Drive for Excellence	Demonstrates commitment to exceeding the status quo and is excited to be hard working and self-starting	Demonstrates a commitment to exceeding the status quo	Demonstrates limited commitment to exceeding the status quo	Seems content to put forth minimal effort to meet basic standards
Communication Skills	Models poised and confident ease of expression. Demonstrates the ability to communicate directly and concisely, with a natural give and take of ideas	Demonstrates a basic ability to articulate and exchange ideas	Demonstrates a limited ability to articulate and exchange ideas	Inability to articulate ideas. Lacks confidence in communication
Leadership Skills	Extensive leadership or facilitation experience	Some leadership or facilitation experience	Limited leadership or facilitation experience	No previous leadership or facilitation experience

Kindergarten-2nd Grade Student Council Application Questions

(NOTE: Students may be pulled one-on-one with an adult to help complete the written part of this process).

1. What do you think is the most important job of the Student Council?

2. Name something about you that will help you do the job of Student Council member well.

3. Tell a story about a time when you think you were being a good leader.

4. Identify 2 characteristics of a good leader. Then give yourself a ☺ or a ☹ telling if you have that characteristic or if you need more practice. Last tell why you are good at it or what kind of practice you might need to be better at the skill.

Good leaders are…	☺ good or ☹ need practice	Explain
Example: Good Listeners	☺	I listen to my friends when they are feeling sad and need a hug.

3rd-5th Grade Student Council Application Questions

1. Please read the draft student council mission statement, above. Re-write it to represent your vision of an ideal student council at ABC School. (3-5 sentences)

2. What about your version of the mission statement for student council most aligns with your personal values? Please cite specific examples about yourself that show alignment with the mission. (2-4 paragraphs)

3. Tell us a story about a time when you utilized your best leadership skills. What did you do and what happened as a result? (1-2 paragraphs)

4. Please create a rubric you would use to evaluate an ABC School youth leader. Please decide on a minimum of 4 characteristics you believe would be essential to being a youth leader at ABC School. Then explain in detail what that characteristic looks like in our building.

Below you will find an example of one characteristic and what it looks like.

Characteristic	What that looks like at ABC School
Motivated	Student with the initiative and motivation to work without needing help or supervision from a teacher.

5. Now rate yourself according to the rubric you just created. Please make sure to give clear examples of why you are giving yourself a particular rating.

Characteristic	Rating (4=highest score)	Evidence to Support Rating

Student Council Group Interview Process

The purpose of the group interview is to observe students interact in a problem-solving context with their peers. Student's ability to express opinions, react to others appropriately, and discuss solutions are observable in this process. Below is a script to follow to implement an effective group interview.

Anticipatory Set

On the back of this page, using only symbols (no words) give us an idea of who you are and what you value. Be prepared to share and describe your symbol.

Speeches

Each participant will have 1-2 minutes to deliver a speech to his/her peers (those who have also applied for a Student Council Leadership position) and selected ABC School adults.

Fish Bowl Discussion

(Students will be given a copy of the below situation and will have 5 minutes to reflect upon their response and how they will participate in a discussion about this topic. There will not be an adult facilitator of the discussion. Educators will simply observe the conversation conducted by students).

Preface: You will have many responsibilities as a member of the ABC School Student Council. You will serve on committees, effectively relay information to the student body about upcoming events, and serve as the representative of the students at ABC School.

Scenario: You have heard from many students that they are upset with the way our school community is handling issues of diversity. You have overheard your friends talk about how some teachers are grading unfairly and they find a direct connection between socioeconomics and the unfair grading. You are a member of the Inclusion Committee that deals with decisions pertaining to these issues. ABC School mission talks about being intentionally inclusive of diverse populations. Personally, you may agree or disagree with your peers on this issue. You are the only student representative on this committee and the adults are anxious to hear your opinion and reaction to this issue.

Reflection: What perspective do you offer to the committee meeting? What questions will you ask? How will you respond to your peers after the meeting?

Interview Exit Question
Use the bottom of this page to answer the following question: What will you do to positively impact ABC School and the community by being a leader at this school?

Leadership Committees

ABC School is thrilled to invite students to be part of a variety of faculty led committees! We understand that students have profound insights and perspectives that need to be valued, considered, and implemented. This opportunity will allow us to utilize the expertise and gifts of ABC School students. It will also give students the ability to build leadership qualities, develop character, and understand civic life; all of these are key components of the mission of ABC School. There are four student seats available on each committee. Two students will be selected from those nominated by teachers or administrators, and two students will be chosen through an application process. A list and description of the committees is found below. Those who are interested in serving on a committee are asked to complete the attached application. Thank you for your interest! We are excited to hear what you have to say!

The committees include:

Service Learning: Work with a team of parents and teachers to provide insight into events that will link ABC School to the greater community in a way that benefits both groups involved. Students will help plan service learning projects, encourage peer participation, and represent ABC School at service sites.

Hiring: Work in partnership with parents, teachers, and administrators to interview prospective teacher candidates who want to work at ABC School. Students will work with the principal to write interview questions and participate throughout the interview process. While students are not able to participate in the confidential contract negotiations discussion, they will be given an opportunity to voice their preferences for candidates. A mandatory training will be held to help prepare students for their participation.

Playground: Work with parents, teaching assistants, teachers, and administrators to continue to build on ABC School's playground design and to ensure that the student voice is represented in the creation and implementation of safety procedures for the playground.

Enrollment: Students will be trained to give presentations, provide tours, and respond to the question of perspective parents and students of ABC School. Our visitors need to hear the student perspective about ABC School. Students interested in serving on this committee should possess interpersonal and public speaking skills, as well as the desire to present ABC School in a way that draws perspective families into our community.

Inclusion: Work with teachers, administrators, and board members to plan events that help to fulfill ABC School's mission of creating an intentionally diverse and inclusive community. This committee will plan and implement a variety of events intended to celebrate ABC School's diversity and build multicultural awareness.

Curriculum: Work with parents, teachers and administrators to review curriculum and assessment decisions, monitor school-wide progress, and lead school-wide academic achievement goals.

Peer Tutoring: Work with other students to offer assistance to students who are either below grade level or wish to advance in performance level.

Aesthetics Committee: Work with teachers to create and maintain a community space that is clean and environmentally sound. Committee members may pick up trash, plant trees and flowers, maintain a garden and/or other campus beautifying projects.

Leadership Committee Application

Name: _____   Grade:_____   Teacher:_____

On which committee do you wish to serve? _____

What gifts and talents do you have that would be helpful to this committee?

What experiences or ideas do you have that would benefit this committee?

What personal goals do you have that relate to your interest in serving on this committee?

Describe how you relate to adults (teachers, parents, etc).

How will your participation on this committee make the ABC community better?

Recommended Curricula

There is a wide variety of character development and leadership training opportunities for students. However, to identify a particular curriculum that aligns with a school or to distinguish an age appropriate training to implement can be difficult. The programs summarized below are suggested curricula to examine for young elementary leadership skill development.

Peace Jam

The mission of the Peace Jam Foundation is to "create a new generation of young leaders committed to positive change in themselves, their communities and the world through the inspiration of Nobel Peace Laureates" (Peace Jam, 2009, p. 1). Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, President Oscar Arias, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Máiread Corrigan Maguire, Betty Williams, Prime Minister José Ramos Horta, Aung San Suu Kyi, Sir Joseph Rotblat (Emeritus), Jody Williams and Shirin Ebadi are the individuals of study on whom the focus is mainly directed.

The Peace Jam program was launched in February, 1996, by co-founders Dawn Engle and Ivan Suvanjieff. Suvanjieff was talking with gang members from his neighborhood in North Denver when he discovered that these gun-toting youth not only knew who Archbishop Desmond Tutu was, they appreciated his nonviolent efforts toward social change. Suvanjieff connected the dots between these disaffected youth and the notion of putting them together with Nobel Peace Laureates as new role models for positive change. In a prevailing atmosphere of disaffection, apathy, and hopelessness among young people, there was also an acute awareness of and appreciation for human greatness.

The Nobel Peace Laureates who work with Peace Jam are from different countries, have differing spiritual views, as well as differing political views. However, they all agree that it is necessary to teach peace, conflict resolution, and tolerance to youth around the world, and that Peace Jam is an excellent vehicle to deliver these lessons.

The Peace Jam Curriculum is applicable from kindergarten through college-aged students.   The curriculum designed for ages 5 to 11 introduces young students to the lives and work of Nobel Peace Laureates and the character traits they embody in an age appropriate, standards based format. As a result, students gain academic and social skills, including leadership, conflict resolution, problem solving, and character development.

Since its launch in 1996, more than 600,000 youth have participated in the Peace Jam program. Over one million service projects have been created and implemented by participating youth, and over 140 Peace Jam youth events have taken place in 10 different countries throughout the world.

The Center for Creative Leadership

The Center for Creative Leadership, one of the world's foremost authorities on leadership principles, developed the Points of Light Youth Leadership Institute's interactive, state-of-the-art curriculum (Center for Creative Leadership, 2009). It features a challenging series of lessons and exercises on community needs analysis, goal setting, team building, project planning, decision making, and other leadership dynamics. The curriculum culminates in a service project, created and implemented by the participants, and a final graduation ceremony. Through a series of 17 teaching modules and 13 experiential exercises, the curriculum takes students through an eight-phase model of problem solving and goal setting.

Teaching Modules

Participant Introductions: Establishes the essential climate and ground rules for how participants will learn together, share resources and use each other for personal growth and development.

Introduction to Community Service: Addresses the meaning of service and the importance of young people's contributions to their community through service. Focuses on the meaning of service to the individual, the community and the nation. Provides a framework for how young people will put their leadership skills into action.

Creative Leadership Process: Introduces the process that effective leaders utilize to solve problems and bring about positive change. Refutes the many myths about leadership.

Team Communications: Explores a model of effective team communication to determine how leaders can improve the success of a team's work together. Utilizes feedback on interpersonal barriers to help participants explore what messages their behavior may communicate to others and how this can impact the climate of the team.

Diversity: Discusses how individuals' different experiences influence the way they see the world. Participants examine their own identities, ways in which others may incorrectly stereotype them, and various sources of diversity, including, but not limited to, gender and ethnicity.

Community Mapping: Raises awareness of the amount and types of resources available in a community and teaches students a variety of processes to identify community needs.

Leadership 101: Emphasizes the critical importance of seeing the "big picture" of community needs and wants. Further identifies participants' areas of concern and capacity to serve in their community.

Forming a Problem Statement: Guides participants through a specific process for formulating a problem statement which will be used later for the service project design.

Fact-Finding Field Trip: Offers the opportunity for small groups to go out into the community and seek firsthand knowledge of issues and challenges the community is facing.

Creativity Skills and Tools: Utilizes innovative sensory exercises such as brainwriting, brainstorming, creative visualization and reframing to help participants think creatively in problem-solving and project design.

Community Panel Discussion: Features an interactive discussion with a panel of 3-5 community members with varying perspectives on the social needs and issues of the community.

Community Project Goal Setting: Coaches the participants to critically examine the desired goals and impact of their service project.

Individual Goal Setting: Encourages participants to reflect on their individual goals and how these relate to the service project. Reinforces the idea that the participants are working together to grow, develop and change as individuals in order to continue to be service leaders in the community long after the conclusion of the Institute.

Decision Making: Examines the role of decision making in planning and organizing an endeavor. Explains the decision making process and investigates the questions of who, how and when with regard to the involvement of others in the decision making process.

Community Project Planning: Draws upon earlier lessons to help participants plan the details of their graduation community service project.

Ensuring Community Project Success: Facilitates a discussion for setting criteria to measuring the progress, outcomes and impact of the graduation service project, and helps participants anticipate possible problems they might encounter.

Reflections: Encourages participants to examine their feelings about their experiences to heighten their sense of commitment to their community while building confidence in their newly learned leadership skills.

Capturing Kids' Hearts

Capturing Kids' Hearts (CKH) is a "three day off-site learning experience that provides tools for administrators, faculty and staff to build positive, productive, trusting relationships among themselves and with their students" (The Flippen Group, 2009, p. 1). Although this is not a curriculum prescribed for students in a classroom, the benefits of the adult training sessions are noteworthy. The processes of the learning experience can transform the classroom environment and can be a vehicle for creating high academic performance.

Outcomes: Participants will learn proven, repeatable skills that help:

- Develop safe, trusting, self-managing classrooms;
- Improve classroom attendance by building students' motivation and helping them take responsibility for their actions and performance;
- Decrease delinquent behaviors such as disruptive outbursts, violent acts, drug use and other risky behavior;
- Utilize the EXCEL Model™ and reinforce the role of emotional intelligence in teaching; and
- Develop students' empathy for diverse cultures and backgrounds

CKH is a dynamic, skill-driven, participatory experience. It is not a theoretical or motivational lecture, but the beginning of an important transformational process. Teachers, staff, and administrators learn and practice skills they will use and model in their schools. CKH is the core of a powerful process that allows every member of the school family to foster and become part of a high-performing learning community.

Additional Student Leadership Development Resources

CivicQwest. (1996). *Learning leadership: A curriculum guide for a new generation, grades K-12.* College Park, MD: Center for Political Leadership and Participation.

Fiscus, L. (1995). *Leadership Curriculum Guide: National Leadership Camp*. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Hickman, G. R., & Creighton-Zollar, A. (1996). *Teaching Leadership for a Diverse Society*. Richmond, VA: University of Richmond.

Kinlaw, D. (1998). *Handbook of Leadership Training Activities: 50 One-Hour Designs*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Chapter Summary

The development of young student leaders is a vital aspect of an academic

education. Leadership standards and benchmarks are outlined in this chapter to be

utilized in the elementary classroom environment. These criteria can be integrated into

existing classroom curriculum or used as the initial grounds for a separate subject matter.

Additionally, this author identifies a structure and process for selecting exceptional

Student Council members in an elementary school. A written application and group

interview process is described in detail to ensure ease of implementation. Finally, a

variety of leadership development curricula and resources are recommended.

Administrators and teachers who are interested in developing a school culture that

includes the development of essential leadership skills are encouraged to use the

information and prescribed curricula suggested in this chapter.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Contribution of Project

The intention of this project was to present educators with a well organized, straightforward structure to implement young student leadership skill development in the elementary school setting. The project is organized in a way that empowers teachers, according to the respective grade level, to begin meaningful discussions and practices with students in regard to leadership. It also allows students to thoughtfully consider their role in the greater community as their sense of purpose is established through leadership skill development. This purpose was achieved in the project.

Limitations

The limitations of this project affect students and educators alike. In the collection of young student leadership development curriculum, there is a small selection from which to choose. Leadership development among elementary school children is not common, and therefore, there are a limited number of quality programs. Additionally, the context of this project based on the assumption that educators are accepting of and accommodating to early leadership skill development for students. In reality, there are some educators who are resistant to the idea of implementing a structured student leadership program or curriculum. Finally, there is a limitation in regard to the target population of students. For example, exclusive private school students and inner city

school students may require a different approach to develop leadership skills. Students

who participate in leadership development training come with a vast discrepancy of

background knowledge and experiential learning. It is possible that some of these

limitations can be overcome; however, careful consideration is necessary.

<center>Peer Assessment Results</center>

Upon review of this project, teachers and administrators gave positive feedback in

regard to the format, clarity, and content. All agreed that the format and organization was

helpful, specifically in terms of the separation of Grades K-2 and 3-5 expectations. The

objectives of each activity and structure are clear and will be easy to follow during

implementation. One veteran teacher remarked that the result of this project was a good

initial overview of the topic, particularly for elementary grades, which is often an

overlooked area of character education.

<center>Recommendations for Further Development</center>

There are several possible extensions for young student leadership development.

An exploration of leadership skills in relation to civic engagement and community

service would be beneficial in uniting the common themes. Likewise, a long term study

of students who had direct leadership development training and those who did not have

structured leadership training would be helpful to consider. Further studies could

determine if there is a direct correlation between students' contributions to society and

their participation in leadership development programs such as this one. The study could

include the types of roles and/or jobs students pursue and take into consideration the

leadership responsibilities of those jobs. This could also relate to extending leadership

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development skills into the community to include professionals from various careers who could potentially assist or volunteer in classrooms to help in cultivating these skills.

Project Summary

The researcher developed a student leadership development planning guide to assist educators in the quest to begin skill development at the elementary school level. Standards and benchmarks for leadership skill development, a student council structure, and recommended curricula are identified. When appropriate, the information is divided into Grades K-2 and 3-5 to ensure developmentally appropriate tasks for each group of students. It is possible for these three sections to be utilized separately or together as one entity. The intention of this researcher was to provide teachers with resources and strategies to assist students in authentic leadership development experiences.

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