

## How to Develop A Student Leadership Program that Creates Future Knowledge Workers And Delivers a Positive ROI

Leadership is a popular topic both in the business and education worlds. The main reason for this popularity is that effective leadership is a primary factor for the success of any organization. By implementing leadership at the middle school and high school grades, the belief is that this earlier intervention will ultimately help not only the students, but the local communities, small businesses and larger corporate citizens.



What constitutes an effective middle school or high school system wide leadership program that delivers a positive return on your investment? These 10 pointers may help you better answer that question.

1. All staff must be developed at leaders to ensure consistency of behaviors through modeling. From bus drivers to superintendents, these individuals become role models for many young people. If their behavior is not consistent with any curriculum, then the likelihood of sustained success is doubtful. Using a student leadership program that evolved from a proven adult leadership process is probably a better way to proceed.
2. The desired end results for this leadership program should be clearly articulated before adoption of any curriculum. Simple benchmarks could be improved grades, improved high school retention and less discipline referrals. All benchmarks need to be measurable because as the old adage goes "if you can measure it, you can't manage it." This is the beginning to determine a positive or negative return on your investment for the leadership program or any change initiative.
3. The curriculum should focus on the affective learning domain especially interpersonal skills. Additionally, the cognitive and psychomotor domains should include: communication, conflict resolution, goal setting and goal achievement, higher order thinking skills, team building and time management.
4. Alignment between the leadership curriculum and the other academic disciplines is also necessary to the success of such a program. There needs to be numerous opportunities to apply newly learned concepts outside of the leadership classroom.
5. A goal setting and goal achievement Action Plan is probably the most critical piece to the success of this program. This Action Plan for success should allow for all students to self-evaluate themselves and provide a mechanism to prioritize and organize current and future goals.
6. A mentoring or alumni program should follow the student leadership development program. At this juncture is when the youth can fully participate in community projects as well as mentor younger students.

7. Parents need to be informed and if possible included within this leadership program. With many parents lacking the necessary skills and tools to help their children, by proactively working with parents helps both the young people and the school.
8. Local small business owners to larger corporate citizens need to be also involved. These companies can help by participating as keynote speakers as well as work to fund scholarships to help offset the cost of the leadership program and employing the graduates.
9. The curriculum should be highly interactive, highly adaptable and flexible and modeled after the best corporate training and development programs. Also, this curriculum should be researched based and should reinforce sound educational research including emotional intelligence, cognitive retention, etc.
10. Any student leadership program should also include pre and post assessments both cognitive and attitudinal. Additionally, a mechanism should be included to track these students for longitudinal data collection. These assessments show both the short-term return on investments as well as the long-term investments.

Finally, this leadership program should be for the majority of your student body and not just the high performing students. The success of our country is due to the as much if not more so to the every day efforts of the average citizen.

If constructing a viable and sustainable student world-class leadership program is in your current or future plans, then these pointers should catapult you ahead of the class because you now know that you have created self-leaders who are capable of being the knowledge workers needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

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