

MODULE 1
Introduction

At the heart of *The Student Leadership Challenge* is a core philosophy fundamental to understanding and accepting this approach to student leadership development. Some of these concepts emerged from the original research. Others were added over time as they became apparent in the ongoing Leadership Challenge studies conducted for more than thirty years. All of them together define our philosophy about developing student leadership.

FRAMING THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE CORE PHILOSOPHY FOR YOUR STUDENTS

We have found that students commonly associate the notion of leadership with a position of authority or power. As you explore the core Leadership Challenge philosophy, your opportunity is to raise students' awareness of their own assumptions and challenge them. It is important to confront this fictional view of leadership so that young people will open themselves up to the concept of leadership (rather than of leaders) and look more to the behaviors and actions that ordinary people engage in when they are leading. Anchored from these perspectives, young people can be challenged to think about a time when they made a difference and to think about what they did (actions, behaviors, attitudes) that was central to the positive outcome. Take a look at *their* data, and you'll see how closely they resemble what The Leadership Challenge research has found among people—from all age groups, fields, functions, and countries—when asked to describe a time when they were at their personal best as leaders.

We highly recommend using the personal-best leadership experience activity later in this module. Students' connection to their own experience—the data they know to be true—provides a foundation from which to explore these concepts. Referring back to their own story throughout the discussion of the core concepts can help validate and ground them.

Creating the opportunity to discuss these core concepts is key to a successful Student Leadership Challenge program of any kind. It establishes the perspective we believe allows for the liberation of the leader within each student.

The Student Leadership Challenge philosophy has eight elements.

1. Leadership Is Everyone's Business

Leadership is not the private reserve of a few charismatic young people. It is not a gene or an inheritance. The theory that only a select few can lead others to greatness is just plain wrong. Leadership is not a position or rank, but a responsibility one chooses to embrace throughout one's life.

Consider asking your students:

- Do you believe everyone has the potential to be a leader? If not, why not?
- Do you think everyone should consider themselves as potential leaders? What difference would it make if everyone believed they could be a leader?

One question that frequently comes up from students is this: “If everyone is a leader, then how can everyone be a leader at once? Shouldn’t there just be one leader?”

We believe that everyone can be a leader, but that people will make a choice about when they step up to lead based on the values they hold. Typically there is only one positional leader at a time, but this doesn’t prevent others from taking a leadership role within their area of influence. For example, a student might not be the president of his fraternity or her sorority but certainly can choose to demonstrate leadership behaviors on the committees and groups that are part of that larger organization. They may not be an officer in student government or the captain of a team, but they can take the initiative to start a campaign that will improve the quality of student life. There are also many facets of people’s lives. One’s position as head of an organization is not the only place to act as a leader. People can lead in many different ways in their homes and in their communities.

Consider asking your students:

- If you are not in a leadership position, is it possible for you to act as a leader? What opportunities can you name outside of any position of leadership you hold?
- Do you need to be the leader all the time or in every situation or setting? Why or why not?

2. Leadership Is Learned

Leadership is a process that ordinary people use when they are bringing forth the best from themselves and others. It is an identifiable set of skills and abilities that is available to everyone.

Consider asking your students:

- Who is a leader you admire? Do you think you could learn to inspire others as much as he or she inspired you?
- How would you learn to do that?
- What obstacles do you see that would keep you from learning to be a great leader?

3. Leadership Is a Relationship

At the heart of leadership is the ability to connect with others, understand their hopes and dreams, and engage them in pulling together for a shared dream of the future. Leaders understand that every relationship contributes to their ability to be successful.

Consider asking your students:

- Does a leader need to have a relationship with everyone in the group? Are some group members more important than others?
- How do you build and sustain relationships?

4. Leadership Development Is Self-Development

Engineers have computers, painters have brushes and paints, physicians have medicine. Leaders have only themselves: that is their instrument. Committing to liberating the leader within is a personal commitment, a journey that begins with an exploration of the territory within.

Consider asking your students:

- What does *self-development* mean to you?
- How do *you* learn about yourself?

5. Learning to Lead Is an Ongoing Process

Learning to lead is a journey, not a single event or destination. Students may occupy many leadership roles throughout their lives. Each will deepen his or her understanding of what it takes to engage others, what it takes to inspire others to make extraordinary things happen. The context in which they lead will change, and with each change comes deeper learning. The best leaders are the best learners.

Consider asking your students:

- Do you have something you want to be really good at? How will you do that?
- [If you had students do the personal-best leadership experience later in this module] What will it take to repeat your success and create a next personal-best leadership experience?

6. Leadership Requires Deliberate Practice

Excellence in anything—whether it's music, sports, or academics—requires deliberate practice. Leadership is no exception. Students need to devote time every day to becoming the best leader they can be.

Consider asking your students:

- How can you practice leadership if you're not the one in charge?
- Do you spend time practicing something now? What does it take to get you to do that practice? Can you apply that to being a better leader?

7. Leadership Is an Aspiration and a Choice

Leaders have countless chances to make a difference. If a person aspires to lead and is willing to do the work, he or she can lead. It is a deeply personal choice and a lifetime commitment.

Consider asking your students:

- What kind of leader do you aspire to be? Can you define it in words that don't reflect holding a particular leadership position?
- What choices do you need to make to become a better leader?

8. Leadership Makes a Difference

All leadership is based on one fundamental assumption: *a leader matters*. We know from The Leadership Challenge research that every leader can make a profound difference in the lives of their constituents. To do that, those leaders have to believe in themselves and their capacity to have a positive influence on others. And we also know that to those who are following a leader, that leader is the most important leader to them at that moment. It's not some other leader. It's that leader, at that moment.

That is the individual whom group members will most likely go to for examples of how to tackle challenging goals, respond to difficult situations, handle crises, or deal with setbacks. We say a little more about this in the final section of this guide, "Onward!"

Consider asking your students:

- Do you believe you make a difference? To whom? If yes, why do you believe you make a difference?
- How can you make a difference to the group you are part of right now?

ORIGINS OF THE MODEL

The research to discover what exemplary leaders actually do when they are at their personal best began by collecting thousands of stories from ordinary people, from students to executives in all types of organizations around the globe—the experiences they recalled when asked to think of a peak leadership experience, about what they did when they were at their personal best as a leader. The collection effort continues, and the stories continue to offer compelling examples of what leaders do when making extraordinary things happen. We encourage anyone who plans to explore The Student Leadership Challenge and The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership to participate in an exercise similar to one used in conducting the original research. It's called the personal-best leadership experience.

NOTE

Directions for conducting this activity are below. The student workbook contains forms your students can use to prepare for and complete the exercise.

A noteworthy finding from the research was that despite differences in culture, gender, or age, whether it was in a classroom, a student club or organization, or a sports team, whether it was in a community service project or a part-time job, in a religious or spiritual organization or experience, in the scouts, or on a school field trip, the personal-best stories revealed similar patterns of behavior. In fact, when leaders are at their personal best, there are five practices common to all: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. These form The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership model, and three decades later, this framework continues to prove its effectiveness as a clear, evidence-based path to making extraordinary things happen for individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.

The model turns the abstract concept of leadership into easy-to-grasp practices and behaviors that can be taught to anyone willing to step up and accept the challenge to lead. As measured and validated by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and Student Leadership Practices Inventory (Student LPI), one of the most widely used leadership assessment instruments in the world, ongoing studies consistently confirm that The Five Practices and related assessment tools are positively related to the effectiveness of leaders and the level of commitment, engagement, and satisfaction of those that follow.

ACTIVITY 1.1: PERSONAL-BEST LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

The primary basis for understanding where The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership come from is the personal-best leadership experience narrative. Completing the abbreviated version of the original personal-best leadership experience questionnaire that we present here allows students to find a standard of excellence from past experiences. The *Student Workbook* contains the forms students need to complete this exercise.

This activity parallels the original research underpinning *The Student Leadership Challenge* and in that way helps validate the model for students. It is designed to help students define their personal-best performance or behavior as a leader. Once they know and understand what they do when they're at their very best, they can then work to be at that very best in all that they do. Ask students to prepare their personal-best leadership story using the outline below in order to:

- Help them prepare to describe one of their personal-best leadership experiences to another student.
- Begin the process of learning from their own experiences.

Ask students to use the outline in the “Personal-Best Leadership Experience Instructions” section to guide their thinking. Encourage them to be open and honest. Greater self-awareness will help them grow as leaders. Let them know they will be sharing their story with peers.

They should begin by thinking about a time when they performed at their very best as a leader. A personal-best experience is an event or series of events that they believe to be their individual standard of excellence. It’s a student’s own record-setting performance, a time when he or she achieved significant success while working with others. It is something against which students can measure themselves to determine whether they are performing as a leader at levels they know they can reach. They are not limited to times they held a formal leadership position. Their personal-best experience in fact may have happened when they had no official authority but chose to play a leadership role within a group, organization, class project, or even family situation.

For this activity, ask them to focus their thinking only on experiences during which they led others toward an accomplishment of which they are very proud. We use the word *experience* to mean any kind of project or undertaking that had a definable beginning and end. It might have lasted a few days, several weeks, a few months, or even a year or more, but it was something that occurred within a specific period of time.

Here are some things to have students think about when they are selecting their personal best-leadership experience:

- It could have taken place recently or long ago. It was when they felt they performed at their very best as a leader.
- They could have been the official leader, or they could have emerged as the informal leader of a group. They might have been a volunteer or even a member of a temporary group.
- The experience could have taken place in school, with their family, or in the workplace. It could have been when they were part of a community group, a club, a professional organization, a sports team, or at school.

Ask your students to answer the questions in Activity 1.1 in Module 1 in the *Student Workbook*.

Personal-Best Leadership Experience Instructions

Step 1

Have students describe this leadership experience (focus on one unique experience) and ask them to answer these questions:

- When did it happen? How long did it last?
- What was your role? Who else was involved?

- What feelings did you have prior to and during the experience?
- Did you initiate the experience, or did someone else? How did you emerge as the leader? What were the results of the experience?

Step 2

Ask students to list actions they took as a leader that made a difference by answering the following questions:

- What actions did you take?
- How did you get others to go beyond the ordinary levels of performance?
- What did you do to demonstrate your own commitment to the project or undertaking?
- What did you do to make sure everyone understood the purpose or goal?
- What did you or others do to overcome any major challenges or setbacks?
- What did you do to engage others and get them to participate fully?
- Based on what you did or said, what other extraordinary actions did your group members take?
- Summarize what you consider to be the five to seven most important actions you took as a leader who made a difference.

Step 3

Ask your students to review their responses from steps 1 and 2 and identify three to five major lessons they learned about leadership from this experience. Discuss these as a group. Are these lessons they might share as advice to others about becoming a great leader?

Step 4

Have students answer the question:

- From the lessons you identified in step 4, what single piece of advice would you give to another individual on how to make extraordinary things happen in their organization based on your experience?

Step 5

Once they have completed writing their personal-best leadership experience, ask the students to share their stories with others in the group. Hearing other personal-best leadership experiences will deepen their perspective on the limitless opportunities for demonstrating excellence in leadership.

Facilitator Cue

Encourage the students to listen to the others' stories and look for common qualities in them—for example, excellent communication, focus, doing more than what was expected, helping people feel part of the group.

Use the Data

After students have shared their experiences and come up with a list of common themes, capture it in some way so that you can go back to it. Later, after they have learned The Five Practices model, you can ask how well their stories aligned with the framework. Ask if anything is missing; chances are good that the most essential elements were captured. This is a simple way to validate the model in their eyes and help students begin to explore leadership using The Five Practices as their compass.

A DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.

The academic literature offers hundreds of different definitions of leadership. The research that resulted in The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership led to the following definition of leadership, which incorporates what the evidence revealed:

This definition embodies all of the practices and can help students come back to a simple sentence that clarifies and reinforces them.

Consider asking your students, “What words stand out to you in this definition?”

Use the list that follows to make sure all the key words are covered. We suggest you display the definition somewhere that allows you to go back to it after you have covered The Five Practices model the first time and throughout the rest of your program.

Facilitator Cue

- **Art:** Ask: “Is leadership a science or an art? They keep talking about all this research and evidence. Isn’t that science?”

Although the model is based on scientific research, how that model is applied is the artistry that emerges. How we demonstrate each of the practices is a unique expression of who we are. Leadership is full of nuances that each leader brings and for that reason can’t be viewed as a science.

Facilitator Cue

- **Mobilizing:** Ask: “What does that word imply to you?”

Reinforce that mobilizing is about helping people to take action. Leaders make it possible for people to move forward.

Facilitator Cue

- *Struggle*: Ask: "Does it have to be a struggle?"

Remind students of their personal best. Ask: "Was it easy? Are things you really want to achieve in life the things that happen easily? Change is difficult and achieving great results requires change."

Facilitator Cue

- *To want to struggle*: Ask: "Does anyone want to struggle?"

Point out the definition if those two little words "to want" are missing. Ask: "What changes? Have you ever been associated with a leader who mobilized you to struggle even though you did not want to? What was the difference? It's about intrinsic motivation not extrinsic motivation."

Facilitator Cue

- *Shared*: Ask: "Why do aspirations have to be shared?"

Ask if they have ever felt they were working with others who were only out for themselves. Did those people inspire them to greatness?

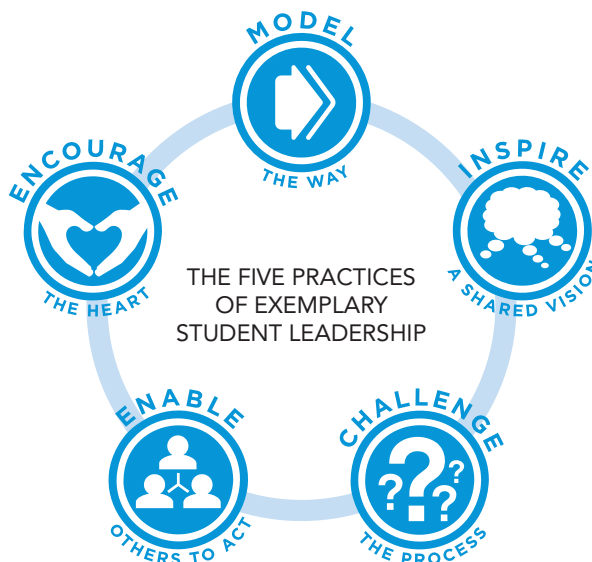
Facilitator Cue

- *Aspirations*: Ask "What is an aspiration?"

Ask if aspirations are about the present or the future. Which is more motivating: talking about problems or talking about possibilities? Aspirations refer to how things could be better in the future than they are today and pull people forward to imagining more ideal states.

THE FIVE PRACTICES OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP MODEL

Each of The Five Practices logically builds on and supports the next one. How student leaders choose to demonstrate the behaviors within each practice, however, will vary depending on their situation and the people they hope to engage. We highly recommend

Figure 1.1 The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership

that you cover all five practices, and in order, even if students plan to focus their engagement on one or two practices right now. In fact, the practices are interdependent; none exists in a vacuum.

Model the Way: Clarify Values and Set the Example

Leaders clarify values by finding their voice and affirming shared values, and they set the example by aligning actions with shared values.

The most important personal quality people look for and admire in a leader is personal credibility. Credibility is the foundation of leadership. If people don't believe in the messenger, they won't believe the message.

Leaders clarify values and establish guiding principles concerning the way people (fellow students, student groups, teachers, and advisors) should be treated and the way goals should be pursued. They create standards of excellence and then set an example for others to follow.

Titles may be granted, but leadership is earned. Leaders earn credibility by putting their values into action and living by the same standards and principles they expect of others. Leaders not only talk about the way things should be done; they show the way they should be done.

Inspire a Shared Vision: Envision the Future and Enlist Others

Leaders envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities, and they enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.

Leaders are driven by their clear image of possibility and what their organization could become. They passionately believe that they can make a difference. They envision the future, creating an ideal and unique image of what the group or organization can be. Leaders enlist others in their dreams. They breathe life into their visions and get people to see exciting possibilities for the future.

Challenge the Process: Search for Opportunities and Experiment and Take Risks

Leaders search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and looking outward for innovative ways to improve. They experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience.

Leaders are pioneers—they are willing to step out into the unknown. The work of leaders is change, and the status quo is unacceptable to them. They search for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve. In doing so, they experiment and take risks. Because leaders know that risk taking involves mistakes and failures, they accept the inevitable disappointments as learning opportunities. Leaders constantly ask, “What can we learn when things don’t go as planned?”

Enable Others to Act: Foster Collaboration and Strengthen Others

Leaders foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships. They strengthen others by enhancing self-determination and developing competence.

Leaders know they can’t do it alone. Leadership involves building relationships and is a group effort. Leaders foster collaboration and create spirited groups. They actively involve others. Leaders understand that they have a responsibility to bring others along.

Collaboration is the master skill that enables groups, partnerships, and other alliances to function effectively. The work of leaders is making people feel strong, capable, informed, and connected.

Encourage the Heart: Recognize Contributions and Celebrate the Values and Victories

Leaders recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence. They celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

Accomplishing extraordinary things in groups and organizations is hard work. The climb to the top is arduous and long; people can become exhausted, frustrated, and disenchanted. They’re often tempted to give up. Genuine acts of caring uplift the spirit and draw people forward. To keep hope and determination alive, leaders recognize the contributions

that individuals make. On every winning team, the members need to share in the rewards of their efforts, so leaders celebrate accomplishments. They make people feel like heroes.

THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY

The Student Leadership Practices Inventory (Student LPI) draws directly from The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership model. Six behavioral statements align with each of The Five Practices, creating a thirty-item assessment. The Student LPI is part of The Leadership Challenge suite of programs, products, and services proven to cultivate and liberate the leadership potential in everyone. It is a comprehensive leadership development tool created specifically to help young people measure their leadership behaviors and take action to improve their effectiveness as student leaders. The assessment is made up of the Student LPI Self Assessment (completed by the student leader) and the Student LPI Observer (anonymously completed by others chosen by either the student leader or the assignment administrator).

The Student LPI offers an opportunity for students to learn about themselves by making a commitment to liberating the leader within, and building a plan to do so. Module 2 covers the Student LPI in full: how to administer it and how to use it with your students and your program champions. All of the Student LPI statements are provided in Appendix A. We recommend you discuss The Leadership Challenge core philosophy and The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership model with your students prior to delivering their Student LPI report to them. In this way, you establish a context and set the stage that will best enable them to learn from their feedback.

MOVING AHEAD

Once students have completed the personal-best leadership experience and have been given an overview of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Model, they are well prepared to explore the model in depth. Before doing that, a module on the Student LPI will give them data on their current leadership behavior so they can refer to it throughout the remainder of the program and beyond. Their Student LPI data thus provide a baseline for them to work from in developing and strengthening themselves as leaders.

