

L.E.A.D.

LEADERSHIP – ENHANCED, ACHIEVED AND DEVELOPED

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to develop a framework in which a curriculum on leadership could be developed. This framework specifically addressed the needs of middle school students. Throughout Alberta many middle schools teach elements of leadership through various courses, or mini projects. A course dedicated to teaching the essential elements of leadership for middle school students is unique.

The leaders of our school population and the future leaders of our world are the students attending our schools. What these people think, believe in, and act upon will help determine the future course of world events. Students need to gain knowledge about what leadership is, the different types of leadership and the skills associated with leadership but, most importantly, they should learn how to implement leadership skills.

In this project, an 'action research' approach was used to develop a new curriculum design, specific to one situation, with the potential of transferability to other middle school settings. The participants were me as the teacher, the grade eight students enrolled in the leadership course and the principal of the school. As the students and I progressed through the course components, we evaluated the quality and usefulness of each component employing the 'triangulation' technique developed by Elliott and Adelman (1976). Data from the journal entries of all participants were collected once a week and summarized. What the participants wrote, the feelings they expressed and the explanations they gave of their perceptions were the key to understanding particular topics. All have contributed to the development of a leadership curriculum, unique to our school and owned by all.

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Introduction

Statement of Problem

What components of leadership are essential in the development of curriculum for middle school students?

Recently I moved from one administrative position in my school district to another, becoming vice-principal of a junior high school. In two years, my present school will be re-located into a new building with new educational philosophy. It will become a “new middle school”, designed to provide a transition between elementary and high school. Curriculum will be based on “the unique characteristics of the preadolescent and the young adolescent” (Hadden, 1999).

To help students make the change from a junior high school mind-set to middle school philosophy, I am responsible for the development of a leadership course directed primarily towards our grade eight students. During my investigation into leadership curriculum specific to middle school I have become aware that, in Alberta, this type of curriculum is not readily available. I have found numerous projects dedicated to leadership and elements of leadership in high school curriculum but nothing that is directly related to the middle school.

In accordance with many middle school philosophies I believe that one of the keys to staff and administration success in a school is to have the students of the oldest grade in the grade cluster ‘on side.’ When older students understand and support a school’s philosophy and direction, new students are more quickly assimilated into that particular belief system and its routines and processes.

Moreover, I believe this can be best accomplished when the students are empowered to recognize their unique talents and encouraged to see themselves as part of a school community. As Sergiovanni (1991) notes:

In successful schools, things ‘hang together’: a sense of purpose exists, rallying people to a common cause: work has meaning and life is significant: teachers and students work together and with spirit: and accomplishments are readily recognized. (p.77)

Throughout Alberta there are now more than twenty schools designated as middle schools. It is my understanding that many of these schools teach elements of leadership through various courses (eg. Health), or mini projects. I believe that a course dedicated to teaching the essential elements of leadership for middle school students would be unique, and something most educators would want to learn more about. Many educators, and especially administrators, involve themselves in sessions and courses on ‘how to be an effective leader.’ I believe it could be just as valuable to a school’s mission to teach groups of students some of the theory, skills and knowledge specific to effective leadership.

In Alberta over the past number of years there have been many attempts to instruct high school students in the skills necessary to become leaders. There have been sessions, projects and sections of courses devoted to the subject. For example, the high school course ‘Careers and Technology Studies 1020 – Leadership,’ is a module currently offered in this province to grade 10 students. These various undertakings have offered only portions of any particular leadership model. One criticism of many leadership models is that they tend to be of the ‘pre-packaged’ or ‘out-of-a-can’ type, often

formulated by organizations with a particular bias or focus. Accordingly, each leadership 'project' tends to focus on different characteristics of leadership and very few, if any, of the courses require participants to put their skills into action. This project addresses the need for a framework in which a leadership program can be developed. This framework will pay particular attention to the needs of middle school students.

It is not likely that all leaders are born with the ability to lead. Like Steen (2000), I feel that, "Within each person lies the potential for great leadership, regardless of age, size, shape, gender, race or ethnic origin" (p.11). I believe skills of leadership can be taught, either through life lessons or through formal lessons. I started this project believing that students should gain knowledge about what leadership is, the different types of leadership and many of the skills associated with leadership. Most importantly, I felt they should learn how to implement their skills. In the book, *How to Start a Leadership Class*, Linda

Teague Rogers (1991) states that, "a leadership class offers students the opportunity to work with peers and adults in a setting that offers them real-life experiences."

Many of the activities learned in this course were designed to be conducted outside the classroom, through frequent visits into the community. The personal development of each student was an important focus for the course. Content included a better understanding of the student's 'self-concept', improvement in self-esteem, decision-making skills, goal setting, and service to others. One of my goals was that students who complete this course should be better able to recognize their own leadership abilities and develop them for the future.

Literature Review

Leadership Defined

When people discuss *leadership*, different images come to mind. For some people the word reminds them of a specific person, or a position of power or authority. Greenleaf (1991) states that this is the most widely accepted concept of leadership. Greenleaf defines this type of leadership as “the hierarchical principle that places one person in charge as the lone chief” (p.61). Others may focus on personal characteristics that they have come to associate with leaders. Covey (1989) defines this type of leadership as *interpersonal leadership*. It is described as an “exercise of each unique human endowments” (p.216). Characteristics include self-awareness, imagination, conscience, and independent will.

Another popular image of leadership refers to the skills and accomplishments of leaders. Leithwood, Begley and Cousins (1992) term this *expert leadership*. An expert leader depends on a high degree of knowledge that is relevant and applicable to the situation.

Leadership in the dictionary is defined as “the state or position of being a leader.” According to Bennis and Nanus (1985) and Hodgkinson (1983), decades of academic analysis and investigation has supplied 350 definitions of *leadership*, with no clear and unequivocal understanding of its meaning. Bennis and Nanus believe that of these 350 definitions many are in contrast with each other. They attribute this to the change over time with trends, fads, and political tides. Hodgkinson believes that the concept of leadership is global and has a set of observational characteristics that are infinite.

Schein (1992) in his article *Leadership and Organizational Culture*, argues the most consistent findings state that leadership may only be defined in a particular space and time. This would account for the variance in the characterization of an effective leader and, consequently, the difficulty in pinpointing the components essential to leadership in such areas as curriculum development.

Historically, mainly social psychologists, historians and sociologists have developed research theory on leadership. Most articles and texts concerning educational leadership focus on the needs of the school administrator and the teachers, not the students.

Research on the components of leadership regarding students is a very narrow focus in a vast field.

My own opinion of leadership would have to parallel Warren Wilhelm's, as stated in his article *Learning from the Past Leaders* (1996). He contradicts Bennis, Nanus and Schein by writing that there are in fact core characteristics of leadership that are common throughout time. These core characteristics include "basic intelligence, clear and strong values, high level of personal energy, the ability and desire to grow constantly, vision, infectious curiosity, a good memory and the ability to make followers feel good about themselves" (p.222). Similarly, Covey (1989) states that there are three core character traits that are the foundation of leadership. The first characteristic is *integrity*, which is defined as the value we place upon ourselves. The second characteristic is *maturity*, which is a balance between conviction of feelings and considerations for others' feelings. The last characteristic is *abundance mentality*, which is defined as being able to appreciate the proactive nature of others. It is important to note that Wilhelm believes there are enabling behaviors that allow the 'raw' material of leadership to transform itself

into *effective* leadership. These enabling behaviors include empathy, predictability, persuasive capability, the ability and willingness to lead by personal example and, finally, communication skills.

Myths of Leadership

Wilhelm (1996) mentions a number of myths associated with leadership.

They include the following:

1. *Leadership is a rare skill.* Everyone has leadership potential. While notable leaders are as rare as great runners, great actors and great painters, everyone has some ability with running, acting, and painting.
2. *Leaders are born, not made.* No one person is born with the extraordinary genetic gift that signifies s/he will become a future leader. The majority of capabilities and competencies of leadership can be learned.
3. *The leader controls and directs.* Leadership is not an exercise of power as much as it is the ability to empower others.
4. *A leader must have charisma.* It is important to understand how to motivate others. Charisma is the result of effective leadership; those who are good at it are granted a certain amount of respect. (p.221)

Leadership is not defined as the exercise of power over others. Instead, it is an exercise of wit and will, principle and passion, time and talent, and purpose and power in a way that allows the group to increase the likelihood that shared goals will be accomplished (Sergiovanni, 1994).

Future of Leadership

Recent literature on leadership reflects some dissatisfaction with the traditional approaches to the subject. With increasing frequency, leadership is being characterized as a social process that involves all the participants in a given situation. There are many different theories and models that are based upon this alternative understanding of leadership. For example, Schein's (1992) model is termed 'resource mobilization' perspective. This views leadership as a resource and an on-going process, rather than an element of personality. It is a resource in the sense that it may be applied to achieve a specific goal and that it recognizes that all people have unique experiences, enabling them to take on differing leadership roles.

One other similar model of leadership that seems to be drawing attention is called the "transformational leadership model" (Strauss, 1990). This model of leadership has been in circulation for approximately 20 years. More recently, it has received greater attention as an interdisciplinary model. As the name implies, transformational leadership refers to a shift in practice to fit the situational needs or goals. Sergiovanni (1990) writes that in transformational leadership both leaders and followers are united in the pursuit of higher-level goals. This unity enables both leaders and followers into a new and different direction. "The successful leader is also a good follower, one who is committed to ideas, values, and beliefs" (Sergiovanni, 1990).

In order for the transformational model to be used as a framework for the development of a leadership curriculum in an educational setting, a number of key questions would need to be answered. They include:

- What is the community vision of leadership?

- What is the role of the leadership class in the dynamics of the school environment?
- What personal leadership traits do the individual students possess?

There are various curriculum programs available on the subject of leadership. Three I have been able to locate clearly have their own bias regarding what is important for students to learn. The “Leader’s Resource Tool Kit,” developed by C.I.R.A. (The Canadian Active Living Challenge) focuses on the need for daily physical education. The program developed by C.A.S.A.A. (Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisors) centres attention on the needs of student councils. Lastly, the “Leadership 2000” program puts emphasis on workplace-related skills. Within each of these programs there are common components that have been identified in the literature review. These components may be labeled differently but are, in essence, the same. They include understanding self, types of leadership, goal-setting, problem-solving, communication skills, peer help, conflict resolution, and organizational skills.

Covey (1995) suggests “The leader of the future, of the next millennium, will be one who creates a culture or a value system centered upon principles.” In similar fashion, a study conducted by Bennis and Nanus (1985) of 90 corporate leaders identified the following five key skills related to values.

1. The ability to accept people as they are, not as you would like them to be.
2. The ability to approach problems in terms of the present.
3. The ability to treat those who are close to you with courtesy.
4. The ability to trust others.
5. The ability to collaborate with others. (p. 66-67)

It is hardly surprising that with a subject such as leadership, which is in constant change, there is no specific recipe for a course of study. A major goal for the educational system should be to promote good leadership skills for all students. I believe leadership development should be a responsibility, not an alternative for our school systems. In preparing students to lead us into the 21st century, we must assist young people to discover and value for themselves the responsibility of citizenship, and the skills and attributes essential to positive, effective leadership.

Methodology

Action Research Defined

In this study I used an 'action research' approach. It is characterized as a qualitative, post modernistic approach to research. As Palys (1997) states, qualitative research is 'human centered methodology', based in social sciences, trying to understand human behaviors. Marshall and Rossman (1989) describe qualitative research as reporting and displaying descriptive data, with the purpose of portraying the daily events within the study.

Action research was chosen as a strategy because of the strength and richness of data that can be collected using that approach. Marshall and Rossman state that "the strength of the qualitative study that aims to explore a problem or describe a setting, a process, a social group, or a pattern of interaction" (p.145). Similarly, Strauss (1973) supports the use of qualitative investigation in observing, "probably the most fundamental operation in the analysis of qualitative data is that of discovering significant *classes* of things, persons and events and the *properties* which characterize them" (p.108).

Historically, Kurt Lewin (1944) is thought to be the first social scientist to define action research. He defined it as a form of self-reflection inquiry by participants in a specific situation. Furthermore, he suggests that educational action research is a form of research that places control over processes of educational reform in the hands of those involved in the action. Schmuck (1997) describes action research as a planned inquiry, "a deliberate search for truth, information or knowledge. It consists of both self-

reflective inquiry, which is internal and subjective, and inquiry oriented practice, which is external and data-based” (p.28).

According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), action research “relies on observational data, supplemented with specimen records. Describing these behaviors and analyzing the influence of the environment on them are the primary goals of this approach” (p.10).

Carr and Kemmis (1986) in their book, *Becoming Critical: Knowing Through Action Research*, define action research in an education context as follows:

A family of activities in curriculum development, professional development, school improvement programs, and systems planning and policy development. These activities have in common the identification of strategies of planned action, which are implemented, and then systematically submitted to observation, reflection and change. Participants in the action being considered are integrally involved in all of these activities (p.154).

In this project, an action research approach has been used to develop a framework for a new curriculum design, specific to one situation, with the potential of transferability to other middle school settings. Incorporating some of John Elliott’s (1980) ideas of “teacher-based inquiry” for curriculum reform, some of the following characteristics were considered.

1. It is a process initiated by teachers in response to a practical situation they confront.
2. The practical situation is one which traditional curriculum practices have disestablished and rendered problematic by development of student resistance.

3. The innovations proposed arouse controversy within the staff group because they challenge the fundamental beliefs embedded in existing practices about nature of teaching, learning and evaluation.
4. Issues are clarified and resolved in free and open collegial discourse, characterized by mutual respect and tolerance for each other's views and in the absence of power constraints on its outcomes.
5. Change proposals are treated as provisional hypotheses to be tested in practice within a context of collegial accountability to the whole staff group.
6. The management facilitates a bottom-up approach to the development of curriculum policies and strategies. (p.5)

The project participants were me as the teacher, the grade eight students enrolled in the leadership course and the principal of the school. These *participating* members were considered equal members in the development of the project. Lewin (1944) emphasized the need to involve the participants in every phase of the action research process. He believed the involvement of the participants would give a deeper insight to the 'social conditions' of a particular situation. Furthermore, each of the participants would be 'stakeholders' in the democratic process of decision-making, following a collaborative non-hierarchical approach. Carson and Sumara (1997) propose action research as a "living practice", "like Zen practices, like writing practices, ... particular practices that require that one's lived experiences be configured in particular ways" (p.xvi).

Richard Schmuck (1997) writes that action research can either be in the cooperative or collaborative form. Schmuck defines cooperative action research as "joint efforts to reach the same end", while collaborative action research is "joint effort to promote

individual ends” (p.99). In this project, all participants worked in a “cooperative” manner towards the same end, producing a curriculum specific to the given situation. Dash (2000) refers to this type of action research as ‘Participatory Action Research’ which is claimed to be the most widespread approach in use today. Kemmis (1993) classifies participatory action research as “emancipatory”, which is defined as “research always connected to social action...the aspiration to change the...world for the better through improving shared social practices, our shared understanding of these social practices, and shared situations in which these practices are carried out” (p.5).

Model of Action Research

The model of action research I chose to use for this project mirrors and incorporates elements of many models. Authors such as Kember and Kelly (1993), Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), McKernan (1996) and Schmuck (1997) refer to a *spiral* effect in planning, acting, observing and reflecting. I tried to use such a process in this project. As well, I referred to the work of Townsend (2000), who suggests a twelve stage cycle with the following components:

1. *Define the focus or the problem.* Ask the “right” questions.
2. *Collect information.* Read the appropriate literature, consult with colleagues, talk to the experts.
3. *Make sense of the information.* What is relevant? What is do-able? What can be modified and adapted to suit our particular circumstance?
4. *Report and Discuss.* Preliminary conclusions and potential courses of action needed to be shared within the group.
5. *Plan action.* A written plan should be one of the products of this stage.

6. *Take action.* Put plans into effect. Reflect in action and on action.
7. *Collect information.* Document carefully.
8. *Analyze and evaluate in a continuous way.* Try to make sense of what's happening and why. Refocus, as necessary.
9. *Assess achievements.* Use all the evidence available to determine what has been accomplished, what may have gone wrong, and why.
10. *Publish results and conclusions.* Share within and beyond the group, beyond the school, beyond the district.
11. *Celebrate.* Not only at the end, but at all appropriate times. Consolidate learning and gains.
12. *Future action.* Begin the process again.

Using a combination of these methods the students and I were able to determine whether or not our plans were appropriate and our goals achievable. Through a democratic process, over time, all participants in this project helped decide upon the leadership components for the course.

In the initial stages, my role was that of the facilitator, presenting to the students various subject materials to get the process started. From that point forward, through discussion, reflection, and negotiation the students and I decided the direction to be taken for the unit. The materials used to develop the component parts of the course were a combination of those presented in the literature review and those developed through the action research experience. The final product will eventually be organized into one booklet and will be used again at the present junior high school and the future middle school.

Data Sources

As the students and I progressed through the course components, we evaluated the quality and usefulness of each component by asking the question “How does it contribute to the achievement of course goals?” (Appendix D) In order to evaluate the usefulness of each of the component parts I employed the ‘triangulation’ technique developed by Elliott and Adelman (1976). It is defined as, “The gathering accounts of a teaching situation from three quite different points of view; namely those of the teacher, his pupils and a participant observer.” Marshall and Rossman (1989) describe triangulation as “the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point” (p.146).

In the case of this study, data from the journal entries of all participants were collected once a week, and summarized. At the beginning of the school year, students were given a duotang to use as their journal. This allowed for easier access for me to the students’ written thoughts and opinions. From the journals, I was able to extract specific themes, perceptions and examples of learning expressed by the students. Each week I prepared weekly summaries of the students’ contributions. They included reflections on the topic of concern, the plans that were made, actions that were taken, impressions and personal opinions about the action taken and reactions to them.

One difficulty I encountered was in the consistency of the data collected for evidence. The difficulty was presented in the *how*, when interpreting multiple opinions. I determined that in order to stay consistent I would have to try to make sense of both individual and group meanings. Carson and Sumara (1997) state that the purpose of collecting data is “to further the communicative action of members of the group: their understanding of themselves and others, the setting, and their capacity to act” (p.26). The

process of analyzing data demanded a “heightened consciousness” so that recurring ideas and themes were not lost.

The data was summarized, organized, manipulated and, above all, contemplated. My own reflection was an on-going process, a continuing attempt to make sense of the processes and problems as they arose and to provide direction for future planning. What participants said they believed, the feeling they expressed and the explanations they gave were the key to my fuller understanding. According to McKernan (1996), “for the purpose of action research, the diary is a personal document, a narrative technique and record of events, thoughts and feelings that have importance for the keeper. As a record, it is a compendium of data which can alert the teacher to developing thought, changes in values, progression and regression of the learner” (p.84).

Whenever researchers enter into the lives of others at the level of intrusion associated with qualitative research, significant problems of ethics are raised. As suggested by Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (1987), it is important to follow a predetermined set of guidelines. In this action research project there were several concerns regarding confidentiality that needed to be addressed. The students who were genuinely interested and volunteered to contribute were the only individuals included in the research. Individual participant names were replaced with numerical identification. As well, a color tab filing procedure was used for data management.

From journals, only the entries related to leadership were identified to illustrate a specific point in the final analysis. Through content analysis, specific themes from the participants’ reflections were identified to produce interpretations. Consistent with a ‘naturalistic’ methodology, I looked for patterns or trends from the perceptions, opinions

and documented experiences of participants. As one example, I looked for “novelty and potentially illuminating perspectives” (Glaser & Strass, 1967).

Other potential problems associated with the use of ‘action research’ methodology need to be noted.

They are as follows:

1. *The first and most crucial problem related to who the researcher is.* How individual researchers interpret data depends upon their own bias. All researchers enter the field of study with their own personal “history,” and how they use this “history” to interpret what they experience depends on them. In Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) book *Basics of Qualitative Research*, they use the term “Theoretical Sensitivity,” which refers to a personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning from the data, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand and the attribute of having insights.
2. *The conscious realization of my ability to “reflect-in-action”* (Schön, 1988). Schön argues that it is difficult to think about what you are doing while you are doing it. He believes what in fact does occur is “reflection-on-action”, which is the ability to look back over an event and accurately clarify the experiences into future planning.
3. *The validity of the data collected.* I had to be convinced that the statements made in the documentation were truthfully and sincerely stated. A further concern related to the question of external validity, or how the information gained might be used to make generalized theory or statements.

Because I have many professional years of experience in a classroom setting, I do have some of the skills necessary to understand what is truly happening. I am not without bias, but I have acquired an understanding of how things work, and why, and what will happen under certain conditions. Within limits, I have been able to make sense of what happened during this study with respect to internal validity. Through collaborative decision-making, reflection and joint action, mutual trust among the participants was formed. With all of the participants committed to enhance their own situation, I believe the likelihood of insincerity was reduced. Regular discussion and refinement of provisional results further promoted a greater internal validity.

In developing curriculum for a specific need and situation, such as with the course on leadership, I believe it is necessary to adopt a more experimental approach. What could be more exciting and unique for middle school students than to practice leadership skills while helping to develop *their* curriculum devoted to leadership? The traditional practice of having the practitioner at center stage is replaced with educational practices emphasizing the importance of all of the participants' perspectives. All can contribute to forming an original piece of work, owned by all. Action research enables this shift to take place.

Findings - Journal

The development of leadership within a student is similar to that of a gardener growing a plant. The gardener understands that each seed has the potential for growth but the growth must be nurtured. "Growth occurs through interaction between the seed and its environment or, more precisely, that the seed and the environment create a self-reinforcing growth process" (Senge,1999).

Over the past four months, since the conception of this project, the students who enrolled in the leadership course and I have grown in many different ways. I have observed and the students have illustrated with their actions and comments wonderful examples of true leadership. The observations I have made I believe will validate the essential need for a course like L.E.A.D. to be offered to our students and other junior high and middle school students. The strength of 'empowered' students and what they can contribute to a school community is immeasurable.

Greenleaf (1991) writes "Raise the spirit of young people, help them build their confidence that they can successfully contend with the condition, work with them to find the direction they need to go and the competencies they need to acquire, and send them on their way" (p.172).

How students feel about themselves and their function within a school is a key factor in their academic life.

Getting Started

Moving from one school to another presented many unique challenges, especially when I was moving over as a new administrator. Each school has its own 'climate' or 'ethos,' of which everyone within that school has a direct or indirect understanding.

There are rules, traditions, values and codes that are “sort of” understood by all. They permeate everything within the school, “the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or avoid talking about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or don’t, and how teachers feel about their work and their students” (Deal and Peterson, 1999).

Sergiovanni (2000) states that “Culture is generally thought as the normative glue that holds a particular school together. With shared visions, values, and beliefs at its heart, culture serves as a compass setting, steering people in a common direction” (p.1). In my case, not only was I a new person but a new administrator, bringing with me my different ideas and ways of doing things.

One of the new ideas that I brought with me was my project on leadership. Fortunately, for me, there was a need for an additional course at my new school to supplement existing course offerings. An elective course on French had attracted insufficient numbers of students and an alternative course had to be offered. Because the school district was constructing a new middle school in the town the principal and I agreed that it was perfect timing to develop a course on leadership.

(Appendix A)

The course was developed for our grade eight students, “the future leaders of our school.” In an interview I conducted with the principal, he stated that a leadership course would help the students “buy into the school” and help them become “internally motivated.” In contrast to my own enthusiasm, however, the initial reception from the teaching staff and the students towards the idea of a leadership course was somewhat reserved.

My first task in getting my course and project 'off the ground' was to sell my idea to a group of prospective grade eight students. I attempted this at a time when I was still trying to figure out for myself what the course would be about. However, I muddled through a first meeting and was able to describe my intentions for the course, the framework in which the course would be presented and some of the possibilities for its development.

In total, ten students decided to take on the challenge of helping develop this new course for the existing junior high and the future middle school. Of the ten students who registered, all were girls. I found this to be interesting because not more than one week after registering the ten girls I read an article in the Globe and Mail on September 5th noting a certain trend in schools. According to this article, girls are now surpassing boys in most academic core subjects at school. It was relevant to my situation because the leadership course was intended for those students who have a desire to achieve and participate in the betterment of their school. Why the boys in this grade didn't enroll, I'm not sure. That might be the focus of a future project. Karnes and Bean (1993) state that the outlook for women as future leaders is good. They believe the increase of women in political leadership and their occupation of positions of power in the corporate world will continue.

The students enrolled in this class were an above-average group academically and socially. They appeared to get along very well with each other, having attended and enrolled in the same classes over the past year. In my initial descriptions I characterized them as energetic and lively.

The first item we discussed was the course instruction plan that I had prepared. It was the only document I had prepared in advance. Following the protocol of the action research model I wanted the students to be equally involved in the course development. I believed that if I supplied them with a lot of structured materials I would defeat the purpose of my study. I described to the students in general the course description, the rationale and how I perceived I was going to assess their progress.

The students' reactions were positive and I sensed a feeling of excitement towards the upcoming year. The first journal question I proposed to them dealt with their expectations for the course. I was interested to find out that many of the activities or units they wanted to take part in were activity-based. They keyed in on the citizenship component that I described in my course outline. It was as if they were looking for an excuse to be involved in their school and the leadership course was their outlet. I believe the students were excited to take part in a course that linked what they would learn to practical exercises in the world outside their classroom.

Having a group of students with such dynamic personalities, it was my goal to encourage their enthusiasm and empower them as individuals. Right from the start I felt I was able to tap into the high levels of personal energy and infectious curiosity. In the book "This We Believe", which was developed by the National Middle School Association (1998), it is recommended that curriculum for students at this particular developmental stage should be relevant and challenging, and should increasingly drive towards independence for the students involved. In addition, students must be "nurtured in making choices and decisions about curricular goals, content, methodology, activities, materials and means of assessment"(p.22). The personal development of each student has

been a planned outcome in developing a framework for this course. Encouraging the participants to put their skills into action is a fundamental goal of the course. According to Leithwood, Begley and Cousins (1992) “Many schools, now and in the future, assume responsibility for assisting students in the development of social and attitudinal outcomes” (p.15)

With these things in mind, I developed lessons and units that I believed these particular students would enjoy, with the majority of the lessons being activity-based and discussion-orientated. I also structured the classroom for discussion and inclusion. At the beginning of most classes the students moved the desks out of the traditional lines left by the previous class and into a large arc. In this arrangement, students could see each other and, I believe, feel that they could participate equally. I felt I was encouraging “citizenship.”

Sergiovanni (1990) concludes that there are three principles for enabling citizenship.

1. The freedom of every member of society as a human being.
2. The equality of each with all the others as a subject.
3. The interdependence of each member of a commonwealth as a citizen (p.143).

I believe that providing the opportunity for shared leadership among the individuals in the class promoted the development of stronger citizens in our school. The validation and the sharing of the students’ thoughts encouraged belonging to our ‘team’, with ‘team’ defined as a group of individuals having a common mission and focus towards the betterment of themselves and each other.

It didn’t take long for the L.E.A.D. students, as they became known, to receive attention from the rest of the student body and the community. For various reasons,

student council hadn't existed at the school for a number of years. Although the leadership course was constructed as an option, people began to see this group of students enrolled in the class as an exclusive group. The leadership students came to represent the void left by the student council. This presented both difficulties and opportunities for the students in my class.

It seems that in our concern over the opening of the new middle school we had overlooked some important members of our school community, the grade nine students. Senior students are generally granted a certain status within a school culture. They are given privileges and responsibilities that they have earned by virtue of their age, grade, and experiences. Unfortunately, for some of the grade nine students in the school this year, their privileges and status seem to have been "usurped" by the L.E.A.D. group. Some events that had been traditionally organized by the grade nine students were developed and coordinated by the leadership students. To make matters worse, some grade nine students felt alienated by the teaching staff and administration. In the past, the grade nines had always had a teacher advocate on staff through whom they could voice their concerns, someone who would help organize their efforts. This year, due to staffing changes and an oversight by the administration, the grade nine students had no one they could identify as an advisor, and this added to their frustration.

The second difficulty the L.E.A.D. students encountered came in the form of the expectations placed upon them by individual staff members. In class discussions, several L.E.A.D. students revealed their dissatisfaction with this added responsibility. According to the students, some teachers would remind them regularly of their role as leaders in the school, especially if they misbehaved. As one student commented, "We are only having

fun like the other kids.” The position of ‘role model’ was a position with which some of them did not feel comfortable. It was not something they had anticipated prior to enrolling in the course. I believe they enjoyed the responsibility they had been given within the school community but had difficulty with the added expectations.

In yet another way, additional pressure was placed on the leadership class. It became the medium through which community groups and organizations attempted to spread their messages through the school. Whether they wanted to or not, the L.E.A.D. students found they had a key role in the changing structure of the organization of the school. The addition of the L.E.A.D. class shifted the internal dynamics the school.

In the original conceptualization of this project, the intention was to develop a course framework. This was to be followed by the development of course components, using the opinions of the students and the principal to evaluate the strength of each component part. It became evident quickly that the original proposal was more than could be accomplished in one year. This was partially due to the course scope and sequence that evolved, to the comprehensiveness of individual course components, and to some of the directions the students chose.

Many significant events and learning opportunities took place while components were being developed. Because of this, the students and I decided to choose six lessons from the course content to illustrate the essential elements of the course. To determine which of the many lessons should be used for this purpose, students were asked to indicate in their journals the six most important lessons they had experienced. They were asked to describe the activity as well as why these lessons were significant to their learning. The following lessons were those chosen by the most students.

Learning Illustrated

Lesson One

This first activity chosen demonstrates the ‘learning by doing’ philosophy so prevalent in middle schools. It offers a natural ‘hook’ to the students’ educational experience that goes beyond the traditional lecture strategy. This took place during a two-day trip we made to Edmonton. We were invited by the Students’ Council & Leadership Advisors Association of Alberta to represent the south portion of the province at the annual meeting for student leaders. Also represented at the conference were approximately fifty junior high and middle schools.

The majority of the students at the conference were there to learn more about the functions of student councils and not the functions of student leadership. Many of the presentations catered to an understanding of fundraising, or strategies for boosting student participation within the school, or creating an awareness of community programs. My initial response was concern for how my students would react to the agenda for the two-day event. I thought that the events and workshops would be disappointing to my students because they were not leadership-specific. I was surprised by the reactions of my students. Each time I met with my students I was overwhelmed with their ideas and suggestions for things they wanted to implement at our school. As one student wrote, “going to Edmonton gave me the opportunity to meet new people and learn about the different activities other students in Alberta are doing in their schools.” In my own reflections I observed the need to allow students the opportunity to *experience learning in a multitude of different settings*. The learning my students experienced did not occur

solely as a result of what was presented to them. Rather, it grew out of their efforts to integrate what they had learned into their own situation.

Another essential element illustrated by the experience of attending a leadership conference was the opportunity for situational *challenge* provided to the students. They were out of their own community and there was an element of 'risk' that they could not have experienced by attending a traditional class. Outside their normal comfort zone, students had the opportunity to showcase their abilities and expertise. For example, one student wrote, "I enjoyed learning how to develop an action plan that would cut down smoking in school and in our community." (Appendix B) This was a 'real life' activity that was relevant to this particular student and something she genuinely wanted to learn about. The students were responding positively to the kind of challenges captured in the following quote: "Middle school education should meet young adolescents' need to identify with serious issues in the contemporary world and to find direction in considering those issues" (N.A.S.S.P.,1998, p 17).

Another element illustrated through their participation in this event was the need to give students *independence* in making decisions for themselves. Each student was given the opportunity of choice. The structure of the sessions encouraged individual initiative. Most of the students had a true interest in and, therefore, had ownership of, their learning. Spence Rodgers (1998) wrote that "Motivation is the focusing of energy caused by a desire or need." Giving students the opportunities to lead their own learning is a key to instilling motivation. Letting them be active participants in their own learning can help generate a need for future learning.

Lesson Two

The second lesson the majority of the students wrote extensively about in their journals and commented upon during open discussion was a lesson titled “Stepping Stones.” (See Figure #1) The objective for this lesson was to encourage each of the individuals within a group to work together to solve a problem. Their task in this situation was to transfer members safely across an imaginary river without falling in. In order to make the task more difficult the students were instructed not to communicate verbally. The task involved a great deal of trial and error and team cooperation.

Lesson Plan Two

Subject: Self-Understanding
“Stepping Stones”

Objective(s): (1) Students will work cooperatively in teams to solve a problem.

(2) Identify effective and ineffective team behaviors.

Materials: 10 pieces of scrap paper, and a large room or hallway.

Directions

Use a hallway at least 10 metres long, or a gymnasium. Group the class into two separate teams. Allow one less *stepping stone* (scrap paper) than there are team members.

Explain to the students that you would like them to imagine that between the two markers there is a raging river. Their task is to get each member across the river, using the scrap paper as stones. As each team attempts to cross the river, members must decide how to use their stepping stone to their best advantage. This task involves trial, error and team cooperation. Team members will need to experiment and help one another.

While the first team attempts to cross the river, the other team should stay in the classroom so that they cannot watch. This will allow each team to approach the problem without having seen the other team work on it.

Discussion Questions

1. What was the toughest part of this exercise for you? The most enjoyable part?
2. How did you work together? Did a leader emerge? How were problems resolved?
3. What did your team do that proved particularly effective? Ineffective?
4. What did you learn about teamwork from this activity?

Reference: Leadership 2000 p.232

Figure #1

A number of essential characteristics of leadership were demonstrated through this particular lesson. The traditional belief of having one person as the decision-maker or boss was challenged. One student wrote, "Being the boss isn't important. If you get everyone's opinion you can resolve your problems more quickly."

The idea of a top-down approach to leadership did not appear to be part of the solution for these students. They had developed a sense of trust in each other's abilities and were confident in their group as a unit. The essential idea that the *position of leader may flow uniformly* within a group and be dependent on the situation was quite evident throughout this activity. Each of the group members suggested alternative ideas until a common understanding was reached. "In a way we were all leaders," was a conclusion several of them reached.

According to another student this lesson, "showed how communication is possible without the use of speech". In order to be successful, group members had to develop other forms of communication. Without being able to verbalize their understandings students were visibly frustrated with this challenge. Each group toyed with expectations placed upon them by this activity, doing such things as whispering to other group members. To their credit, the temptation to move outside the rules was overridden in every group.

Communication was demonstrated through body language, written suggestions and eye contact. Each group member had to depend upon and trust the judgements of the other members in order to be successful.

Lesson Three (Appendix C)

There is a great *diversity in the attributes of true leadership*. “What is a leader?” is a question the L.E.A.D. students and I contemplated quite regularly. It was a question to which we could not give a definitive response. We finally came to the conclusion that the word *leader* had numerous definitions, and those definitions depended on the situation.

To bring meaning to this question, the students and I developed an activity that we continued as an on-going activity throughout the year. It began as an opening activity for one lesson. The objective was to develop opinions on characteristics of influential people. I began the lesson by asking students to split up into small groups. Then each group was asked the question, “Describe the characteristics of a leader?” The process involved having students develop a list of characteristics of a leader and then share their understanding with the rest of the class. It quickly became apparent that each group’s lists were different. This introductory activity that was originally planned to take five minutes absorbed the entire class.

The significance for me in this lesson was rooted in the belief that students need time to ‘get off track’. The quality of the event that took place was much richer and more powerful a learning opportunity than what I had originally planned. The list developed by the students illustrated the diversity of their understanding of leadership.

Following this activity, students periodically contributed ideas to the list. Having students continuing to suggest ideas gave the activity a life of its own. Students were engaged in this activity because they *initiated their own learning*. The students had enough trust in the learning process we had developed for our classroom that closure to the activity was not an issue. I could see these learners needed a sense of meaningful

choice and inclusion in decisions and processes. The process that they were obviously and genuinely interested in was more important than the objective I had intended to teach. Offering the students the freedom of choice within the curriculum was what made this a rich activity.

Lesson Four

In the process of developing a new school philosophy, I have found many learning opportunities that have contributed to my own professional growth. One such learning moment occurred at a middle school team retreat. We were asked, as a group to step out of our comfort zone, risks our dignity, and performs a 'fashion show'. (See Figure #2)

Each member of the group was assigned a position within a design team. Each member was given a specific job to perform within the group. One person was assigned as the artist, designing the clothing. Another individual cut the materials and the third person was responsible for piecing the design together. The last two people in the group were designated the 'model' and fashion writer. On the surface this activity appeared to be an 'ice-breaker'. However, there were numerous lessons to be learned beneath the surface of this activity. As one example, the need for *teamwork* within a group was well illustrated.

In order to be successful, all teams must be able to overcome problems through cooperative activities. This requires independence within the group as well as interdependence. The amount of success that a group experiences depends primarily on the quality of relationships that develop among group members. Teams must be able to cooperate and problem-solve effectively enough in order to achieve their goals.

Lesson Plan Four**Subject: Communication**

“Fashion Design”

Objective(s): (1) To demonstrate how communication can be accomplished through body language.

Materials: Newspapers, scissors, paper and pencils.

Activity:

The teacher divides the class into groups of four. *No* member of a group may talk during the activity. Each person must assume one of the four positions (designer, model, seamstress, and advertiser). The design, modeling and advertisement must be done separately. Once each of the stages are completed the model may “showcase” the design to the rest of the groups. In order to do this successfully a “runway” may be constructed using the desks as boundaries. During the presentation the advertiser should announce the new *fashion*.

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe how it felt not being able to communicate verbally. How did you overcome this?
2. How did you decide who was going to do each of the four roles? How did you communicate this?
3. What were the expectations of you, in your role?
4. What were some of the problems your group faced? How did you overcome the problems?

Figure #2

The activity of developing a fashion show was something I knew my students would love. One student wrote in her journal, "I liked the fashion show because you got to work as a group, making a fashion statement. The only problem was not telling other people what to do." Students had a great time designing a newspaper dress for a fictional model. At first, individuals appeared self-conscious about the roles they had been asked to assume. This appeared to be overcome through the encouragement of other group members and the key understanding that they were *cooperating, not competing*. Each person in the group had the power to influence how well group members worked together.

This activity also encouraged creative thought. There were no parameters set in the design of the garment, except the group's own imagination. I observed a lot of care and thought in each of the designs. Student appeared aware of their role in the group, and seemed focussed on doing well. The interactions between members were almost exclusively positive. It was easy to see that when interest is high and individuals are proud of what they are doing together, a better overall group climate is created.

Lesson Five

Planning for the year's activities meant thinking about the future goals of our course and the mandate of our group. The process involved developing both short term and long terms goals, as well as the processes and structure for each event. (See Figure #3)

This was not an easy process to accomplish, given that the class was made up of ten very unique and thoughtful individuals. Their enthusiasm for our year of activities was almost overwhelming. Each student had her own ideas and intensely wanted to share

them with the rest of the group. I found that I had to structure activities more, without suppressing the students' thoughts and feelings, in order to develop this lesson.

As a student wrote, " With ten girls and their opinions it was impossible to agree on one idea. It was like a debate, one side would say yes to an idea and the other would say no. *Compromise* was very successful. Not everyone's ideas were completely accepted but through exchange of opinion we accomplished a very good activity list."

L.E.A.D. Activity YEAR PLAN 2000/2001

SEPTEMBER

1. Welcome Back Barbecue and Dance

OCTOBER

1. 'Candy Count' Contest
2. Halloween Costume Competition

NOVEMBER

1. 'S.A.D.D. Day' for Remembrance Day

DECEMBER

1. Bake Sale
2. Toy Drive & Food Drive
3. Christmas Banquet & Dance

JANUARY

1. Teacher Picture Guess – Jr. High Years
2. Hot Lunch

FEBRUARY

1. 'Matchmaker'
2. 'Cupid's Cuties'
3. Valentine's Dance

MARCH

1. 'Spirit Week' (Crazy Hair, Green Day, Formal Day, Retro. Day, P.J. Day)

APRIL

1. Easter Egg Hunt
2. Candy Draw

MAY

1. 'Spring Fling Dance'

JUNE

1. Battle of the classes
2. Video Dance Party

Figure #3

In order to come to a consensus on this decision we needed to step back and reflect on our vision for the year. This in itself became a ‘teachable moment’, an opportunity to teach a relevant concept. Before the students could understand the value in developing a vision statement they first needed to understand the meaning and purpose of a vision statement. Once they had that clear understanding, they ‘bought into’ the reasoning behind the development of one for our class. Sergiovanni (1990) states, “Vision is a compass that points the direction to be taken, that inspires enthusiasm and that allows people to buy into and take part in the shaping of the way” (p. 57). A vision statement describes what a group wants to accomplish over a period of time. Having this basic understanding enables a group to focus its energy.

What the L.E.A.D. students defined as our vision was to encourage students to show positive school pride through their participation in school activities. Our goal was to be the catalysts that instituted this positive change. We would organize activities and events that would spark interest in the students, encouraging them to participate.

Lesson Six

One of the key objectives in the development of the leadership class was to give the students opportunities to see themselves in a positive way. The lesson ‘I Can’t vs. I Choose not to’ illustrates the need for students to examine the limitations they place upon themselves (See Figure #4). These limitations effect academic life and lives outside of school.

Learning to understand feelings and their relationship to thought is an important step in understanding how to act. As a student commented in her journal, “how I think about myself affects who I am on the outside.”

This lesson extended over three classes because of the influence it had on each of the class members. We discussed at length the students' list of *can'ts* and the possible reasons behind why they believed them to be truths. It was interesting to discover that most students' perceived misgivings were based on external influences. I found this activity disheartening when I observed some students say they did not attempt certain activities because of fears of other's opinions. One student commented that she can't play hockey because her grandfather said that only boys should play hockey. What is said or acted upon by others has a lasting impact on youth. I'm not sure we, as adults, always understand the potential of our influences.

Lesson Plan Six**Subject: Self-Understanding**

“I Can’t vs. I Choose not to”

Objective: Students will learn the power of the words “I Can’t” and how they may limit their abilities to succeed.

Materials: pencils/pen

Instructions:

1. Students are asked to take five minutes and write personal statements that begin with the words “I can’t...” They may use their life at school, their social life, their home life, their future ambitions. The more personal the statements are, the more meaningful the exercise will be.
2. After completing their written statements, the students pair up and read their list.
3. Next the students reread the list of statements with one substitution in each sentence: They replace the word “can’t” with “choose not to”.
4. As a large group, they discuss the difference between the words “I can’t” and “I choose not to”.
5. Have students identify on their own the statements that are impossible for them to do. Then compare these with the number that are things they simply refuse to do.
6. Point out that the real control comes from inside them. “I can’t” implies being unable to control the situation. “I choose not to” gives control over the situation to the individual.

Optional Activity

- Have the student collect their “I can’t” statement and place them in an empty shoebox. Have the student follow you out of the classroom to a pre-determined “burial ground”. *(The shoebox can be disposed of in a variety of ways, the important aspect is the ceremony.)

Reference: C.A.S.A.A p.11

Figure #4

At the same time, I enjoyed this lesson because it allowed the students to hear about other people's apprehensions. This awareness brought the group closer together.

On an individual level the students were able to bring their "can'ts" to the surface and examine the character of each one. They all were able to see that feelings are normal, predictable and, often, controllable. One of the conclusions I reached after this activity was that, ultimately, students need to develop a deeper understanding of their own feelings in order to develop their own abilities.

Conclusion

The background practical insights and theoretical knowledge I have experienced over the past year, developing a course on leadership, have been extensive. As an educator and a researcher, I believe that I am at the beginning stage of a process of curriculum development that, I hope, will evolve into a key activity in our school's program. I agree with Hollibrook's (as cited in Deal & Peterson, 1999) concept of emergent culture which supports the following ideas:

1. If the existing curriculum is not working, new ones should be found.
2. Students learn best when instruction fits their interests and engages them as active partners.
3. Skills and knowledge should be integrated, not fragmented into isolated parts.
4. We can be successful with all children.
5. Teaching and learning involves the whole school. (p.105)

In forging new ground in the development of leadership curriculum, the students and I have learned many things together. For example, we learned the strength of communication. One student wrote in her journal that "to be in a leadership class you have to be responsible and learn a lot about communication skills". I have learned the importance of discussion and using communication tools such as journals. I believe students and especially adolescents learn more quickly when given the opportunity to communicate openly with each other and the teacher. The numerous teaching opportunities that were created with individual students and the larger group through the medium of discussion and journal writing showed me the importance of these strategies.

However, through this process a number of questions have arisen. It has been said that the questions we pose, as educators, are as important, even more so, than the answers. Accordingly, I have framed the following questions and responses to provide a summary of this action research project.

1. *Did the introduction of the L.E.A.D. class impact our school culture?*

I believe the answer to this question is affirmative. Over this past year and the next we will be reconfigure our junior high school into a middle school. In order for this transition to take place there is need for numerous changes. One of the first challenges and changes

I believed we needed was the introduction of a student leadership course. In order to foster the force of change, we must advocate for a genuine leadership role for our students.

Within each of our students exists abundant energy, (this may be said particularly about adolescents) an energy that is sometimes overlooked and misinterpreted. I believe students need to feel valued, cared about, and respected, and have a sense of belonging. What was offered through the L.E.A.D. class was the opportunity for all of this, and the chance for personal and group understanding and success. I believe this was accomplished through 'true' or authentic empowerment of students. The word *inspire* is derived from the Latin word *inspirare*, which literally means, "to breathe life into" in that sense, I think these students were really inspired by their participation. Tapping into the student's energy through *L.E.A.D.* engaged the students in our school and gave them a much-needed voice. As the school principal observed, "the course has proven much more successful than I ever imagined it would be. I see real growth in the students especially.

It seems like they have matured much beyond their chronological ages and this is really surprising for grade 8 students. The students are much more out-spoken, confident and willing to take on almost any task. This course has given them the opportunities to ‘practice’ these traits in real life, in school situations, and they have handled them admirably”.

My global objective for this project was to address the needs of middle age students in the area of leadership. Under this umbrella of leadership, the specific objectives I set for my students included the developing of self-esteem, understanding interpersonal relationships, developing a team concept, active living and goal setting. Throughout this study and my observations of it, I believe that each one of these objectives has been attained.

2. *Was action research an effective research tool?*

At the core of action research are the ideas of planning for change, acting on the plan, and carefully observing and reflecting. A critical component in action research is the idea of group participation and the changing of practices and activities. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) support this idea, noting that “action research is concerned equally with changing *individuals*, on the one hand, and on the other, the *culture* of the groups, institutions and societies to which they belong” (p.16). With this in mind, I believe action research was a most effective way to elicit the change that we were looking to incorporate in order to begin the transition from a junior high school to a middle school. Using a collaborative approach, and examining what the students said in their journals and in open discussions, shaped the course content and particular events within the school. This demonstrates the concept that in order to effect changes of groups and

institutions, one must also work to effect changes in the individual. Students' feedback from their journals indicated that they enjoyed the process because it allowed them to have an equal part in ongoing dialogue. They contributed to the data, the reflection and, most importantly, they frequently expressed satisfaction with the knowledge that they "played a part" in the process.

3. *Based on this project, what instructional changes will be made?*

Looking into the future, I see a continued need for this course to in our school. I believe the knowledge, skills and attributes taught in this course are lifelong proficiencies, which can benefit all students in the school, and improve our school community. With this in mind, I am considering a number of modifications to enhance the L.E.A.D. course.

The first adaptation for next year will be to offer the course in two semesters. This will allow a larger group of students the opportunity to take it. With the inclusion of more students, our school will benefit in a number of ways. One benefit will be the growth of student ownership over school matters and the ability of staff to develop feelings of inclusion within our school. Allowing for more student-created activities and programs should increase students' feelings, of belonging. Having two separate classes of students should also increase the opportunity for collaboration between students. Sergiovanni (1990) states that organizations that provide a common understanding of purpose will increase the sense of "who we are" (p.147). In promoting this understanding, Sergiovanni advocates for a shared empowerment among those who are involved in the school community; administration, teachers, students and parents. When the school community

is empowered, in this manner, the likelihood of greater commitment to a set of shared purposes and values are increased.

The second adaptation I believe I will bring about in future course development is the order in which I present the course. I will begin the course with a unit dedicated to the history of leadership. One activity the students this year enjoyed was examining the lives of leaders of the past. They enjoyed observing leaders more closely and discussing their personal qualities and leadership attributes. By teaching this unit first, I believe I will be able to provide a smoother transition into the study of each component part of leadership.

Many of the activities we accomplished this year were based on positive cultural change within our school. In the future, one of my objectives for this course will be to make it more active within our community. This will enable the students the opportunity to make a positive impact, participating in projects outside the school community. One required component to this course has been the development of citizenship. To that end, each student was required to volunteer within the school or at a school-sponsored event. By working with other people outside the school setting, I believe students have the opportunity to learn many life lessons. They can be presented with the opportunity to solve problems with people other than members of our class. In addition, through community involvement, students can be engaged in meaningful change. Working with others and supporting the community can help bring out the special skills each individual possesses. I believe the reward for this kind of involvement in the future is the development of individuals who become adult visionaries and leaders.

Final Word

The idea of student leadership is not meant to be a “wait and see” concept. In order for students to understand their leadership potential they need to be presented with opportunity for ‘real’ leadership within the school. By assuming leadership positions, students not only are able to exercise their abilities, but are able to influence change globally. Real experiences are empowering, and a way of affirming the student’s role within the school and into the community. A moving example of this was the recent acceptance of the student-developed Y.A.A.P. Seed Grant Application. It was an activity the students were genuinely interested in pursuing and developing. Because of the students’ initiative, a program involving parents, community organizations and students will now be incorporated in our school. I believe this illustrates that involving students means more than placing students in the leadership process, it means making them part of the leadership process.

Finally, it is my experience that leading and learning depends upon the cognitive connections made between the past experiences and present situations. In this case, students were placed in a new or ‘risk’ situation in order to test their abilities to develop their own cognitive connections from past to present. The process of learning to lead is as important as the final product of leading. Picasso once said “It would be very interesting to record photographically, not the stages of painting, but its metamorphoses. One would see perhaps by what course a mind finds its way towards the crystallization of its dream” (Senge, 1999). I believe through the challenges of developing the L.E.A.D. course I have witness metamorphoses of my students. Through the process of action research the students and I have constructed a course that has been beneficial to all the participants

involved. With the direct help of the students this has been a positive experience for me, helping to develop a curriculum specific to our school, its future, and its future students.

Appendix A

Interview with Principal - (August 2000)

Interviewer	Respondent
<p>First of all thank-you for letting me do this interview on a nice sunny day like today. My focus for this interview is to get your opinion on leadership. I'm going to ask you a couple of questions. If you find that the questions are not worded correctly or you don't understand them please ask me to repeat them. First question. One of the courses that were offering at (School) for our grade 8 students this year is pertains to leadership. Why do you believe students should learn about leadership?</p>	<p>Alright. Yeah, you bet, not a problem.</p> <p>Let me attach my answer to our situation here at Baker, first of all. Maybe as a general statement it is important junior high kids have some kind of buy in into school. Certainly, the courses and some kids are going to be internally motivated to do well in courses, but other kids aren't as much. I think those kinds of kids, in that age group of kids its' important to catch them, I think that they should have input into the school. Making their own decisions. Having some ownership into that. I think they can have a larger, feel that they can have a larger stake in school. So, I guess leadership is that course that we can do that. That is kind of a general note. The other more specific answer attaches to an activity we did last year with our grade sevens. I don't think it is necessarily tied into what happened in Taber or anything like that. May be partially the safe and caring school movement.</p> <p>A program called Avepy designed by the John Howard Society in Alberta. What Avepy is, is an alternative violent education programming for youth. I don't think we have really violent kids here, at (School). But I think they needed some of the social skills and the conflict resolution skills that we automatic assume they have. So we felt that it would be a good thing to aim to our grade sevens. I'd like to continue that earlier this year but I'd like to keep it at the grade seven level. Getting back to the leadership question. A leadership option I hope can offer grade eight a sort of natural extension of that</p>

	<p>program. The worst thing I think we can do is take our kids through the Avepy program in grade seven and then not do any follow up. This leadership option hopefully will have some carry over from Avepy. I think you've got some good leaders in grade eight and some very articulate kids. I believe they should have some say in the school. Especially, now that we are looking towards the new middle school. Even though these kids won't be in that school. I think they might have some really good ideas about what we should put in there.</p> <p>It's going to be designed for kids in that age group. So I think we can use their expertise that way. Again, back to junior high may be our kids in grade eight this year in the leadership course. If they decide something as a group something school wide I believe you can have automatic buy in. It's kid developed, kid's ideas. The rest of the student population automatically buy into things a lot easier. So in essence that's what I believe leadership should be or what that leadership course should be. Sort of a follow up to the Avepy program in grade seven. Skills building these talents that the kids already have in grade eight. I think we can develop our own curriculum as we go, we make it fit our situation.</p>
<p>What do you mean by "buying in?"</p>	<p>I guess what I mean by 'buying in' is, for example kids come up with something. I don't know if we have it by room reps or representatives from each of the four grade eight classrooms. They come to a meeting to give input. I have a feeling groups of kids would think that would be neat. Then we let the kids take that plan and run with it, organize the details and make a go of it. Then I think the support from the kids would go along way, greater than if you or I came up with an idea. We might think it's a</p>

	<p>great idea but it's not the grade eight kids idea. If a leadership student came up to a grade seven kid telling them their idea it would be more powerful. If the student's plan an activity, organize it, and we let them run with it, then I think we will have some buy in and support from the rest of the student body. I guess that what I meant by the buying in.</p>
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Appendix B

Y.A.A.P. Seed Grant Application

A. Information of Youth Applicants

Names of the youth applicants and/or youth organization etc:

Students Names

Name and address of Lead youth applicant:

Lead Class

Phone number: N/A Fax: N/A

Email address: N/A

Local organization supporting the project: R.I. Baker School

Contact name at organization: Darran Lorne

Phone number: N/A Fax: N/A

Email address: N/A

B. Project Information

Name of project: Youth Outreach Project

TWO goals of your project:

1. To be a support for peers in need of help solving their problems.
2. Increase support systems and decrease risky behaviors.

Age of youth applicants: 13-14

What do you want to do? We would like to have a conference that would help break the communication barriers between students and their parents. In particular, communication dealing with risky behaviors. We hope to have monthly questions and

answers in our school newsletter regarding issues students are concerned about. Also, we hope to include surrounding schools in this program. Educate other students as well.

Why these activities? (rationale): We feel that there is a problem with communication with parents concerning risky activities. With our activities, we will help students and their parents deal with these concerns.

How will youth be participating?

- Organize conference (planning, implement, evaluating conference)
- Developing newsletter
- Offering a support system
- Researching important topics

C. Work Plan

Major Activities & Timelines

- Conference – Spring 2001
- Newsletters – Beginning Spring 2001 and ongoing

Partners

- Other local schools
- Chinook Health Region – Tobacco Reduction Coordinator
- School Counselors

'In – Kind' Contributions

Office Supplies	\$500.00
Computer Use	\$500.00
Volunteers	\$500.00
Rentals	\$500.00
Consultation and Planning	\$1000.00
Photocopying	\$300.00
Speakers (Honorarium)	\$500.00
Advertisement	\$200.00

TOTAL SEED GRANT REQUEST: \$3000.00

E. Evaluation and Sustainability

Evaluation: How will you judge whether your project was a success

We hope to attract at least 100 students and parents to the conference. We plan to hand out an evaluation form at the end of the conference asking what be helpful to them. We believe the monthly newsletters will keep our conference sustainable.

We hope that the value of our newsletter will be recognized. From this we hope to find funding in order to keep going.

We agree to carry out the project as we have outlined in this proposal to the best of our abilities.

Lead youth applicant (signature)

Contact at local/regional support
organization (signature)

Date

Appendix C

LEADERSHIP IS ...

L.E.A.D. Students 2000/2001

- A COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY

1. Seeing the diversity - In all organizations there are many people with a vast array of talents. Each person has the skills that need to be utilized in different situations.
2. Allow others to lead - A leader is someone who encourages others to take on the challenges without feeling threatened.
3. Acquiring knowledge - In the pursuit of becoming more. Knowing that you know nothing.
4. Having confidence in one's own abilities.
5. Smiling when you don't feel like it.
6. Allowing diversity in thought and opinion from others.
7. Letting others see your weaknesses.
8. Working collaboratively with others.
9. Setting priorities in life - Allowing the important things to come first.
10. Serving to the betterment of others.
11. Having character.
12. Having charisma.
13. Having courage.
14. Having commitment.
15. Being able to communicate.
16. Showing generosity.
17. Having self - discipline.
18. Showing initiative.
19. Being open - minded.
20. Having problem - solving abilities.
21. Building relationships.
22. Having integrity.
23. Being a liberator.
24. Showing loyalty.
25. Having energy.
26. Reaffirming the purpose.
27. Enlightening the way.
28. Motivating.
29. Exploring the unknown.
30. Being a hard - worker.
31. Learning from experience.
32. Internalizing the rewards.
33. Understanding.
34. Seeing the full view.
35. Modeling.
36. Curiosity.
37. Being a team player.

38. Having courage.
39. Enjoying the challenge.
40. Being Spontaneous.
41. Seeing the positive.
42. Trust.

Appendix D

Course Instructional Plan L.E.A.D. (Leadership – Enhanced, Achieved and Developed)

Rationale

Throughout Alberta many middle schools teach elements of leadership through various courses, or mini projects. A course dedicated to teaching the essential elements of leadership for middle school students is unique. The leaders of our school population and the future leaders of our world are the students attending our schools. What these people think, believe in, and act upon may determine our world in the future. Students need to gain the knowledge about what leadership is, the different types of leadership, skills associated with leadership but most importantly they should learn how to implement their skills.

Course Description

Using the ‘action research’ model, teacher and students will work collaboratively together in deciding the essential components of a leadership course. The final product will then be available for future use for course instruction at the school site. This course will incorporate the theoretical and practical applications of the leadership model. Class time will be divided between classroom instruction, partner/group activities and large group activities, acquiring and using the basic knowledge of leadership. The students will develop skills related to: understanding self/interpersonal relationships, team building, leadership styles, active living, goal setting, event organization, mediation/conflict resolution, public speaking/debate, service to others.

TENTATIVE YEAR PLAN - Course Instructional

September

1. Introduction – Introduce self and group to one another.
2. Explain course plan, expectations and student evaluation
3. Develop classroom rules and routines.
4. Develop *Activity Year Plan*
5. *Instructional Unit* – Understanding Self/Interpersonal Skills
 - Communication
 - Self – Awareness & Strengths
 - Friendships

October

Leadership Styles

1. Define concepts and practices related to leadership.
2. Identify characteristics of past and present leaders.
3. Distinguishing between power, influence and authority.

Team-Building

1. Inclusion/interdependence
2. Leading and following
3. Effective Meetings

November/December

Event Organization/Celebration and Recognition

1. Project organization (Planning process)/ Tournament Scheduling
2. Publicity
2. Project Evaluation – Surveys, checklists, rubrics etc.

January/February

Goal Setting

1. Agendas
2. Organizational Skills

March/April

Mediation & Conflict Resolution

May/June

Public Speaking & Debate

This course is designed for students to:

- Increase self-esteem.
- Understand different styles of leadership.
- Apply knowledge of leadership.
- Develop interpersonal skills.
- Acquire basic organizational skills and use these skills to plan co. and extra-curricular activities.
- Increase understanding of the importance of an active life style.

Evaluation:

30% Assignments - Individual and group worksheets, case studies, presentations, debates, questionnaires, interviews, research, essays.

15% Quizzes – Unit exams, Self Assessment

25% Participation – Effort, attitude, role-playing, punctuality, attendance, courtesy, preparedness for class.

15% Journals – Weekly journal entries.

15% Citizenship – 50 hours of co./extra – curricular volunteerism.

Appendix E

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