Incorporating SERVICE LEARNING Into LEADERSHIP EDUCATION: Duke TIP's Leadership Institute

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Lindsey returned from her summer break with a renewed enthusiasm for learning and plans for a service project to launch in her high school. Over the summer, she had designed an "alternative spring break" to Nicaragua, a service project in which students from her high school would work with local Nicaraguans to build houses in Central America. Lindsey's project was inspired by her experience at the Duke University Talent Identification Program's Leadership Institute, a 2-week, intensive exploration in leadership theory and practice. The Institute combines rigorous academic study with community-based service learning experiences, challenging gifted students to recognize and embrace their unique leadership potential.

The Duke TIP Leadership Institute[1] was developed specifically for a 2-week summer experience; however, the model can be applied to today's high school classroom. Through a combination of fundamental leadership skills and guided service learning, students identify important unmet needs within their community and begin working to address them. This authentic learning experience aids students in personal development and fulfills curricular objectives by connecting the school and the greater community.

It's not always easy to get high school students to see the intrinsic rewards of community service. Teachers face many obstacles in attempting to integrate leadership into their classroom: lack of time, a rigid curriculum, and the pressures of meeting state and national accountability standards. Additionally, many students and teachers still assume that leadership is an innate gift and not something that can be learned. The Duke TIP Leadership Institute embraces the philosophy that leadership is a teachable set of skills and that many bright students demonstrate leadership potential (e.g., good social judgment, responsibility, and confidence), but may need guidance to become better leaders.

The federal definition of gifted and talented recognizes demonstrated or potential talent in leadership as an area in which students can be identified for special services (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). Schools should develop methods for identifying and serving students talented in this area, but few currently incorporate leadership education into their curricula (Karnes & Bean, 1990; Pfeiffer, in press). Programs such as the Duke TIP Leadership Institute can serve as models for schools and teachers interested in recognizing and developing the leadership abilities of their students.

The Benefits of Service Learning

The Duke University Talent Identification Program (TIP) developed the Leadership Institute in response to a growing interest in youth leadership development, deciding that traditional leadership training would not wholly fulfill the needs of gifted students.[2] A service learning model was selected for three reasons. First, Duke TIP was interested in introducing gifted students to opportunities for community and civic engagement. Second, service learning teaches gifted students through real-world experiences. An experiential approach allows students to learn by constructing meaning as they research, plan, volunteer, engage in authentic problem solving and decision making, and apply other valuable skills (i.e., communication, organization, goal setting, conflict resolution, etc.). Finally, service learning allows students to pursue their own interests and direct their course of study.

To better serve the diverse needs of students, TIP encourages students to apply their study to an area of their own interest while at the Institute. In small groups, students work with others who share similar interests, researching a subject with the goal of identifying a specific need on which to focus. The service learning approach recognizes that gifted students work particularly well when they are able to personalize and construct their own agenda for learning. In addition, authentic leadership experiences allow students to develop, practice, and modify their leadership style and skills as needed.

In addition to empowering students to direct their course of study, the service learning model embodies TIP's mission to deepen students' commitment to civic engagement. Gifted students in particular have the potential to make a difference in their community, but some of them simply haven't had the opportunity to do so. Many gifted students have a great capacity for leadership, but may lack the social skills associated with traditional leadership. Service learning allows these students the opportunity to lead, and, when combined with meaningful guided reflection, it gives students personal insight into a social issue, thus stimulating their desire to get actively involved in their school and community. As students serve in the community, they *experience* issues instead of simply reading about them. This first-hand experience gives students direct knowledge of, and an active interest in, the area being studied, motivating them to enlist others in their project and make a difference.

This direct experience in the community through service learning can evoke strong emotions, creating a desire to use their skills to make a greater difference both within their communities and beyond. Quite often, students' experiences will increase their awareness of other cultures and social classes within their community. The process inspires them to look at a topic through the lens of many disciplines and gives them the opportunity to become involved with issues within larger arenas, including their school, their community, nonprofit organizations, religious affiliations, and the government. Service learning also helps gifted students gain self-confidence and take risks, challenging them to work outside their level of comfort. In doing so, students realize that they can achieve beyond their self-perceived limits, both socially and intellectually. For example, many teenagers would be intimidated working in a shelter for abused women and their children. Dan has been mentoring children at two shelters since

attending the Leadership Institute, and he recognizes the unique role model he can provide for the students there since they "are eager to learn from someone who is not quite an adult, yet much older than they."

Framework of Leadership Theory

Service learning is not fully effective unless it is integrated into a framework of leadership theory. Hollace Selph, TIP's director of educational programs, developed four constructs for the Leadership Institute that can be introduced into any leadership curriculum:

I.   Leadership in Theory and Practice
II. Leadership in Real and Imagined Worlds
III. Personal Leadership: Self-Reflection
IV. Personal Project: Leadership in Action

I. Leadership in Theory and Practice

Before students develop service projects, they should understand differing models of leadership. The Duke University TIP Leadership Institute begins with an intensive investigation into leadership theory grounded in scholarly research. In small groups, students study different models of leadership theory before presenting their findings for critique and discussion. Based on this research, students construct definitions of leadership, including characteristics of good leaders and differing styles of leadership. Duke TIP's Leadership Institute has used Robert Greenleaf's *The Servant as Leader* (1991) as a text because it provides an understanding of service integral to the theory of service learning. This text would serve as an excellent introduction for teachers interested in service learning.

As students identify the basic qualities of effective leadership, they learn

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and practice these skills, which include collaboration, verbal persuasion, focus, planning, and prioritizing. Students practice facilitative leadership skills through role-playing, simulations, mock meetings, and collaborative planning. They acquire new skills necessary for effective leadership, including social and interpersonal skills, active listening, presentation skills, group dynamics, setting goals, negotiation, and conflict resolution. These skills help students better observe and analyze leadership theories and practices in both the real world and in hypothetical situations.

II. Leadership in Real and Imagined Worlds

To further illustrate the theories studied, students research real-world leaders and analyze each person's distinctive leadership style. Research centers upon authentic leaders and how theory applies to their leadership styles and accomplishments within their field. Students consider gender, age, economic status, and cultural issues so the leaders are drawn from a variety of contexts.

To complement their study of famous leaders, students meet with a diverse group of local leaders representing different service areas within the community. In the past, this panel has included a leader of a homeless shelter, an AIDS activist, a local politician, businessmen and women, and leaders of religious communities. These leaders interact with students through panel discussions and more directly in small-group question-and-answer sessions. The diversity of the participating community leaders also further illuminates gender, age, economic status, and cultural context in leadership. This panel activity is well adapted for use in schools, too. Teachers can ask students to identify leaders in their community and involve the students in the process of selecting and inviting the panel of leaders.

After students look at real examples of leadership in action, they analyze a fictitious leader found in literature, television, movies, or comics, thus allowing them to think more creatively about leadership theory and practice. Duke TIP has successfully used *Ender's Game* (Card, 1994) and *Make It So: Leadership Lessons From Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Roberts & Ross, 1996). Additionally, films such as *Pay It Forward* (2000), *The Miracle Worker* (1962), and *Gandhi* (1982) have been incorporated into evening activities to

stimulate conversation about leadership styles in a fictional and historical context. Teachers should think of books, films, or historical figures already in their curriculum that might lend themselves to a study of leadership.

III. Personal Leadership: Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is an integral part of TIP's leadership curriculum for two reasons: Guided reflection fosters a meaningful service experience, and it encourages students to discover their own personal style of leadership. Although the actual service experience itself may be a determining factor in whether service learning will be meaningful to the student, the self-reflection that accompanies the service is of equal importance. To ensure meaningful reflection, TIP's Leadership Institute uses criteria developed by Patti Clayton and her associates at the North Carolina State University Service Learning Program. According to this model, guided reflection must:

- combine both individual (e.g., journal) and collaborative (small-group discussion) mechanisms;
- explore the various dimensions of experience (personal, interpersonal, organizational, cultural, systematic, and content-specific);
- explore the full range of aspects of learning (knowledge, skills, attitudes/values, behaviors);
- provide guided practice in making connections and becoming reflective-in-action;
- be carefully structured in accordance with the objectives of service learning to produce personal, civic, diversity-related, and academic learning outcomes;
- result in the articulation of specific learning outcomes;
- include feedback from both peer leaders and instructors that is informed by an understanding of critical thinking processes;
- be challenging, continuous, connected, and contextualized (Eyler & Giles, 1999); and

A Plan for Implementing Leadership in the Classroom

1. Help students identify needs within the community that relate to their interests.

2. Guide students in research relating to the subject (e.g., if students want to help the homeless, have them study local and national articles on the homeless).

3. Help students identify community organizations that relate to their area of interest.

4. Establish service learning opportunities for each student. This may be done on an individual basis, where each student identifies a setting for service, or small groups of students may work at a few different sites.

5. Foster meaningful service learning experiences through guided self-reflection. Have students keep journals about their experiences, recounting successes and failures. In groups, allow students to discuss the contents of their journals. Ask students to consider their own strengths and weaknesses and have them describe their personal style of leadership.

6. Guide students in further research more specifically aimed at their area of concentration. This research should range from theory (e.g., an essay on the causes of poverty) to articles in the local paper. It should also include further research into school and community resources that address the need within their community.

7. With the help of these school and community resources, have students develop proposals for their own service projects. Have students identify community mentors who can assist them in their projects.

8. As a class, discuss the feasibility of each project and have students offer suggestions for improvement.

9. Continue self-reflection as students begin their projects. Ask students for periodic updates on their projects.

10. When students have completed their projects, ask them to write a final report on their experience, detailing their successes and their failures. These reports can help guide other students as they begin projects in years to come.

- be sensitive to the developmental stage/needs of the one reflecting and be structured so as to promote ongoing development of higher order reasoning skills (Clayton et al., 2001).

Students begin this self-reflection almost immediately after the completion of each service experience. Reflection allows students to see the difference that their actions have made within the community, even when such actions had seemed insignificant at the time of performance. As Brianne, a student in Duke TIP's Leadership Institute, said about her experience at the Ronald McDonald House:

> Even though we spent the first half of our first day cleaning (much to our disappointment), I think we all learned later what a difference we had made. If one of us had not cleaned tables or swept floors, then someone else would have had to do it later.

The first stage of reflection is helping students to see how they, as individuals and as a group, can make a difference in their community. Once students understand their ability to make an impact on a small scale, they are empowered and inspired to do more. After her experience at the Leadership Institute, Brianne continued her leadership in the field of community health by organizing an organ donation awareness program in her church and high school.

Self-reflection encourages students to be self-critical of their own leadership style and role within the community. The reflection process also gives students a chance to analyze failures or times when their project doesn't go according to plan. Menaka organized the first annual Race Against Domestic Violence in her county, but was "disappointed

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with the number of people who actually turned up to participate." Even so, Menaka raised over $500 for a local shelter, and she reported that "I have grown as a leader because it was very difficult to take on such a task, but I did it." Guided reflection also encourages students to look within themselves to discover their strengths and weaknesses, values, and personal definition of effective leadership. This self-analysis allows students to determine their own unique leadership style before planning their service projects. During this part of the reflection, students:

- create a model for an effective leader within a particular setting;
- present their individual analysis to the seminar group for discussion and critique; and
- construct a personal matrix of values and ethics and apply this to the development of leadership in action.

Again, this aspect of the program works well for gifted students since the act of learning is personalized, providing them the freedom and flexibility to construct a personal definition of leadership. After students begin to recognize their unique, individual style of leadership and their values as a leader, they are ready to transform their skills and knowledge into action.

IV. Personal Project: Leadership in Action

After students have studied leadership theory and practice, researched specific areas of service interest, served in the community, and reflected on personal values as a leader, they are ready to plan individual service projects. Within Construct IV, students

- create a strategic plan for a volunteer leadership project to be implemented at the student's local school or community;
- identify personal leadership characteristics, values, and ethical concerns that justify this choice of project; and,
- present a project plan to the group for critique and feedback.

During the final day of the Duke TIP Leadership Institute, students convene in an afternoon forum in which they present an overview of their experience as related to each of the four constructs. The presentation ends with a brief overview of the service projects they plan to implement in their community, including the potential mentors they have identified and the

organizations with which they might work. During the final part of the presentations, students critique each proposed service project, offering suggestions for improvement. Although some of the proposed student projects have been large in scale, other projects are smaller activities within school organizations led by our students. It is important that students plan their projects according to their own comfort level, the needs of their community, and the time that they can devote to the project.

Impact on Gifted Students

The Duke TIP Leadership Institute serves as a model for teachers interested in adding authentic leadership training and service learning experiences to their curriculum. Both the cognitive and affective characteristics of gifted students are addressed and enhanced in this model. Through the implementation of this model, students

- learn valuable, transferable skills through exposure to a variety of leadership theories;
- analyze different styles of leadership and gain the opportunity to interact with and question real-life leaders;
- engage in self-reflection to define their own personal leadership preferences; and
- transform all their ideas, knowledge, and skills into an original service learning experience of their selection.

Gifted students are most stimulated and challenged when engaged in high-level critical thinking activities. The advanced level thinking skills emphasized in Bloom's taxonomy (1956) are all incorporated in the Duke TIP Leadership model. For example, students apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge to real-world situations (application). They analyze a variety of leadership styles and theories (analysis) and utilize this information to construct their own leadership style and preferences (synthesis). Because leadership is a dynamic concept that may require periodic modification to achieve the desired goals, students learn the importance and value of receiving feedback regarding their projects to ensure that their established goals are achieved (evaluation).

Although many classrooms today experience considerable time restraints with regard to the standard course of study, the skills and concepts of leadership should be infused into the existing curriculum. Such skills will assist students in seeing the connections between the content being studied and the real world. In addition, the skills developed through leadership experiences (e.g., communication, organization, goal setting, conflict resolution, problem solving, decision making, etc.) are lifelong skills that can be applied to any discipline or field of endeavor. Finally, service learning is an essential element in leadership training that stimulates a new generation of children and youth to strive toward making a difference in their communities. GCT

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End Notes

1. The Duke University Talent Identification Program accepts approximately 40 gifted students into the Leadership Institute each summer. Students are selected based on grade-point average, standardized test scores, teacher recommendation, essay, and participation in extracurricular activities. Financial aid is available for students demonstrating need.

2. The TIP Leadership Institute began in 2000 and has been built on the collective expertise of experienced TIP staff members, instructors, and faculty from leadership education and service learning arenas in higher education.