

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

## Bringing student leadership to life



Leadership is needed in all walks of life including family, school, work, sport, and community. Each child has a capacity to lead others if the circumstances are suitable and their skills are nurtured and developed.

Frequently those students who take up leadership positions in classrooms and within schools possess qualities and personal characteristics that reflect the predominant school values. This makes sense as leaders in most fields embody the values, whether explicitly stated or not, of the people or organisation that they lead. However, this shouldn't prevent the development of leadership capacities of students who don't fit the traditional leadership mould or may not always embody a school's core values.

### The building blocks of leadership

There are five building blocks that are essential to developing leadership in a diverse variety of students. They are:

1. Presentation skills
2. Responsibility
3. Organisation
4. Teamwork
5. Emotional intelligence

These building blocks traverse different cultural norms, diverse personality styles and are applicable to a wide variety of situations requiring leadership. They form a firm basis for a leadership program in any class, year level or school.

### Putting student leadership development into action

It's my observation that schools with successful student leadership programs have worked hard and strategically to promote leadership capacities across year levels, rather than via an ad hoc approach that relies on the skill and interest levels of individual teachers. The following features are also common in schools with quality leadership programs:

#### Prioritise service

Student leaders are encouraged above all else, to serve others and enrich the educational communities that they represent. While student leadership may provide a wonderful personal growth opportunity for the students involved, leadership is most effective if students develop a service and benefit mindset.

#### Develop personal leadership first

Leadership capacities need to be developed in a personal sense before they are put to the blowtorch of the public domain. For instance, it's easier for a student to speak in clearly in front of an audience if they have developed the confidence to clearly articulate their thoughts in one on one and small group situations inside the classroom.

## Promote mindset

Thinking like a leader precedes acting like a leader yet many students are expected to show leadership behaviours without due regard to their mindset development. Successful leadership development starts with the development of appropriate mindsets, which lead to skills practice and application.

## Practise mentoring

Mentoring is one of the most efficient ways to accelerate student leadership development in a school or class. There are four domains of mentoring to be practised including being a mentee, being a mentor, passing on learning and leaving a legacy. These are all easily incorporated into a leadership program.

## Induct school leaders

Leaders in high profile positions such as school, house captains or peer mediators are formed into a single leadership team and undertake an induction program and receive ongoing support throughout length of a project, the term or school year.

How does your class or school leadership program measure up? It's well worth spending the time reflecting on student leadership development as the benefits of a strong leadership program to a class or school are enormous. School tone, classroom culture and teacher satisfaction generally rate far higher in schools that value and implement strong student leadership development.

 There is a workbook for this professional learning module

 There is a video for this professional learning module

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Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia's leading parenting educators. He's an award-winning speaker and the author of 12 books for parents including *Spoonfed Generation*, and the bestselling *Why First Borns Rule the World and Last Borns Want to Change It*. Michael is a former teacher with 15 years experience, and has 30 years experience in parenting education. He also holds a Master of Educational Studies from Monash University specialising in parenting education.