

Student Leadership

To lead is to serve...to give...to achieve together

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

It was almost thirty years ago the Attitude Concepts' STUDENT LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP series began. After a quarter-century-plus of presenting several thousand of these sessions, much data concerning this important topic has become evident, and it has a huge impact on the success of all those aspiring young leaders.

Leadership training is ongoing. It is not a one-time-drive-by at student leadership workshop or a few days of leadership information exchange at a summer camp; although, these do play an important role as a part of the building process. They create a window-of-awareness concerning the infinite possibilities available to all student leaders if they are willing to pay the price of personal commitment and dedication in accomplishing the given goal.

Taking a class in swimming does not a swimmer make; in fact, that's the easy part. Leadership is a VERB; it requires ACTION. Unfortunately, that is where we lose many of the eager candidates in the first test of leadership effectiveness. The student leader must stay the course and must—in essence—give up giving up.

The study of brain development indicates many people are not ready

to make logical decisions until their mid-20's. The cortex of the mind does not fully mature until then. Teenagers often make choices based on the part of the brain called the "amygdalla", the emotional decision-maker.

Therefore they see things through a very strong I/ me filter ("What's in it for me?") rather than a we/ us context ("How can this benefit the group?") This is not meant to be disparaging, merely

to explain the maturation process. Therefore expecting students to mature rapidly and respond to the ongoing responsibilities of group welfare over personal gains may be asking more than the adolescent mind is ready to embrace; and the developmental process cannot be hurried. PATIENCE IS WANTED, NEEDED, REQUIRED.

The #1 concern for the vast majority of young people is, "How will this affect me?" Every decision and choice is strongly based on this ongoing personal inquiry. In many cases they are struggling to discover *who they are* blended with *who they think they should*

be. Our priorities (as adults) and their priorities are often many miles apart. Although group cooperation and unconditional acceptance can be highlighted/emphasized through seminars, meetings, leadership

curriculum, it often is short-lived when it comes to the leadership payment of personal sacrifice. Like it or not, much of the educational culture is focused on competing for everything from "getting attention of

from friends" to the "winning first chair in the band auditions." It will take an ongoing REINFORCEMENT to make the requisite behavior modifications.

The pendulum of commitment swings wide for the younger set, or as my friend says, "They are predictably unpredictable." Again, this is just a matter of the natural growth time needed. It is something beyond our control; we must work with it, not against it. We can influence the way they behave by constantly giving them positive options, however each and every student is responsible for his/her behavior. And, as we know all too well some of them will make destructive choices even when the

**Leadership is a VERB;
it requires ACTION.
We must be prepared for
our student leaders to
fall short of intention,
then encourage them to
correct their errors
and make a second
attempt. If we give up on
them, they will quickly
give up on themselves.**

Student Leadership

To lead is to serve...to give...to achieve together

right decision is clearly apparent. We must be prepared for our student leaders to fall short of intention, then encourage them to correct their errors and make a second attempt. If we give up on them, they will quickly give up on themselves.

Ultimately the foundation block of student leadership centers on their willingness to be a positive role model for their peers. We can certainly assign assorted tasks for them to accomplish, give them the chance to become involved in various aspects of the program, but all of this has to be carefully monitored, explained, re-explained, shaped, revised, and constantly reviewed to focus the students on a positive growth and development pathway. That, in itself, can be a full-time teaching job. Constantly remind them: **Leadership isn't something you do; it is something you are.**

Reality says: The I/me logic will generally win-out over we/us logic. For the most part, student leaders care deeply about doing what is right, but they need to be directed, affirmed, re-affirmed, re-affirmed again (and again!) Reinforcement of the desired behavior is absolutely necessary.

In the words of Samuel Johnson, "What we hope ever to do with ease, we must learn first to do with diligence."

Those who garner the immeasurable value of a solid student leadership program know it is more than mere delegation; it is a never-ending teaching assignment with a flexible lesson plan each and every day.

Is it worth all the extra work? ABSOLUTELY! Moreover, it demonstrates our own dedication to the growth of those very special people who choose to make a difference.

Please enjoy this often quoted poem from our favorite author, *Anonymous*.

I Went on a Search to Become a Leader

I went on a search to become a leader.

I searched high and low. I spoke with authority. People listened. But alas, there was one who was wiser than I, and they followed that individual.

I sought to inspire confidence, but the crowd responded, "Why should I trust you?"

I postured, and I assumed that look of leadership with a countenance that flowed with confidence and pride. But many passed me by and never noticed my air of elegance.

I ran ahead of the others, pointed the way to new heights. I demonstrated that I knew the route to greatness. And then I looked back, and I was alone.

"What shall I do?" I queried. "I've tried hard and used all that I know." And I sat down and pondered long.

And then, I listened to the voices around me. And I heard what the group was trying to accomplish. I rolled up my sleeves and joined in the work.

As we worked, I asked, "Are we all together in what we want to do and how to get the job done?"

And we thought together, and we fought together, and we struggled towards our goal.

I found myself encouraging the fainthearted. I sought ideas of those too shy to speak out. I taught those who had little skill. I praised those who worked hard. When our task was completed, one of the group turned to me and said, "This would not have been done but for your leadership."

At first, I said, "I didn't lead. I just worked like the rest." And then I understood, leadership is not a goal. It's a way to reaching a goal.

I lead best when I help others to go where we've decided to go. I lead best when I help others to use themselves creatively. I lead best when I forget about myself as leader and focus on my group...their needs and their goals.

To lead is to serve...to give...to achieve together.

--Anonymous

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser is a well-known name in the music education world as a teacher, clinician, author, composer, consultant, adjudicator, and above all, a trusted friend to anyone interested in working with young people in developing a desire for excellence. His own career involves ten years of successful college band directing at Northern Michigan University, the University of Missouri, and New Mexico State University. Following three years in the music industry, he created Attitude Concepts for Today, an organization that manages workshops, seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the pathway-to-excellence. Tim presently holds the Earl Dunn Distinguished Lecturer position at Ball State University. Tim is the Executive Director of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc., and he serves as the national spokesperson for MENC's "Make a Difference with Music" program. His books The Art of Successful Teaching, The Joy of Inspired Teaching, Music Advocacy and Student Leadership, and Everyday Wisdom for Inspired Teaching are best sellers. He is co-author of Hal Leonard's popular band method Essential Elements - 2000.