

The Hard-Cold, Truthful Facts About Student Leadership

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

STUDENT LEADERSHIP has been a part of most band programs since bands first came on the scene. Whether postured as “officers” or “student assistants” (plus all other distinguishing labels), those who were part of the “leadership team” were assigned various duties to support the forward progress of the band. Traditions of leadership practices were passed down from class to class, and soon “the way we do leadership” was established for the given program.

When we first began doing individualized school leadership workshops (1981), it was a newfound addition to most band cultures. Today there are several presenters across the country, and they are all doing a great service to the profession.

The following thoughts are a reflection of my own experiences, and they are designed to support the advancement of leadership training for all. The basic theme of all the workshops we presented has been **SERVITUDE LEADERSHIP**.

Servitude leadership is a philosophy and set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations and ultimately creates a more just and caring world.

After 35+ years of speaking to various groups (mostly students), some things continue to become apparent, and it is important to bring these awarenesses to those who have student leadership programs in place, or are thinking about creating a student leadership program.

The reality is: **THE MESSAGE (ITSELF) HAS LITTLE (if any) LASTING POWER.** What it does do is allow the participant(s) to witness what IS possible when there is a sense of focus, personal engagement, and a willingness to contribute to their colleagues. As with any behavior, it has to be reinforced or any newfound understanding will quickly evaporate. The key is **REINFORCEMENT, REINFORCEMENT and more REINFORCEMENT.**

NOW the question is: If there is not any permanent shift in the students’ level of maturation/commitment and dedication...then **WHY** avail them to any preparatory leadership information in the first place?! It would seem to be a waste of time and effort. The answer to the inquiry is best explained in the following quote from René Daumal:

You cannot stay on the summit forever; you have to come down again. So why bother to go there in the first place? Just this; what is above knows what is below, but what is below does not know what is above. One climbs, one sees, one descends. One sees no longer, but one has seen. There is a way of conducting oneself in the lower regions by the memory of what one saw higher up. When one can no longer see, one can at least still know. We live and love by what we have seen.

STUDENTS CONNECT TO WHAT IS RELEVANT TO THEIR PERCEIVED SURVIVAL:

If the student leaders do not feel they are gaining personal benefits by extending themselves to serve others, the message of “GIVING” is of little (if any) value. The I/ME reasoning is dominant, and to embrace the patterns/habits of a WE/US theme will only happen when the students are recognized and/or acknowledged for “going above and beyond the call of duty.” They need this immediate attention/recognition to serve as a reward for their chosen behavior. To perpetuate the positive response, it is imperative to continue the (immediate and long range) extended pay-off compliment(s). It requires a never-ending cycle of behavior modification.

SERVITUDE LEADERSHIP REQUIRES A HIGH LEVEL OF MATURITY:

Maturity is the ability to understand how one’s behavior impacts others.

Most young people are concerned about themselves. Their personal wants and needs will be a much higher priority than the selfless concern and support of others. This is not good or bad, it just IS. It is also the main reason the shared servitude leadership message does NOT sustain itself much past the workshop setting. Honestly, it often doesn’t make it to the exit door. It is a challenge for most adults to focus on the welfare of others, so expecting

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a teenager to have the wherewithal to be constantly seeking ways to serve is simply not realistic. However, that doesn't diminish the value of SERVITUDE LEADERSHIP; it is just the reality of the mind set at their age.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

This is the PRIMARY FILTER for young people... While it is easy to give lip service to the theme of HELPING OTHERS, there is a vast difference between TALKING IT and WALKING IT. The part of the brain (frontal lobes) that makes "logical/sequential" decisions is not fully developed until the mid-20s. The student leaders are making choices based on (for the most part) EMOTIONAL JUDGEMENT. Decisions are made "at the moment"...and they can be made without any consideration or understanding of the "consequential outcome." Present moment instant gratification is primary, and that often promotes ill-fated choices/behavior/attitudes, etc. Again, not good or bad, but merely part of the growth development process of every individual.

IN CONCLUSION:

For any leadership workshop/clinic/session/camp to have any long term IMPACT, it requires an ongoing consistent/targeted set of reminders that focus on the

theme of SERVING OTHERS. Those "reminders" have to be instituted time and time again...and again, and again... AND AGAIN!

I have not found any shortcuts or substitutions for the step-by-step, day-in/day-out guidance by a director/teacher/sponsor. The seed will only TAKE ROOT if it is watered and nurtured in the predictable lengthy journey...

REPETITION OF THE MESSAGE IS THE KEY. In the 3 1/2 decades I have been presenting these sessions, I have not found any shortcuts or substitutions for the step-by-step, day-in/day-out guidance by a director/teacher/sponsor. It is a slow (often gruelingly slow) forward progress. Of course I believe it is worth the effort for the positive growth and development of the student, but it is not a "quick fix" by any stretch of the imagination.

The seed will only TAKE ROOT if it is watered and nurtured in the predictable lengthy journey from: "I want to be a leader." to "I am an effective leader."

With all that said, please know how much I respect and admire those visionary

educators who are keenly aware of the immeasurable value availed to all those who are involved in a worthy student leadership program—one that is designed for the positive growth and development of the aspiring young leader as well as all those who are followers.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Strike Up the Band.

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser is a trusted friend to anyone interested in working with young people in developing a desire for excellence and a passion for high level achievement. His career involves ten years of successful college band directing at Northern Michigan University, the University of Missouri, and New Mexico State University. Following his tenure at the university level, he spent three years with McCormick's Enterprises working as Executive Director of Bands of America. In 1981, he created Attitude Concepts for Today, Inc., an organization designed to manage the many requests for workshops, seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the area of positive attitude and effective leadership training. Over two million students have experienced his acclaimed student leadership workshops over the last three decades. Dr. Tim presently serves as Vice President of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc., Senior Educational Advisor for Music for All and NAMM (The International Music Products Association) and is an adjunct faculty member at Ball State University (Earl Dunn Distinguished Lecturer), Indiana-Purdue/Ft. Wayne University, and Butler University. In addition, he serves on The Midwest Clinic Board of Directors and the Western International Band Clinic/American Band College Board of Directors.