

Leadership Skills

A LEADER influences the behavior of others. Students can be leaders. There are many school-related leadership activities in which you may participate. In addition, there are various resources you can take advantage of if you want to learn and hone your leadership skills.



Objective:



Define leadership, and identify student activities, organizations, and resources.

Key Term:



leader

Preparing Leaders

If asked to think of a leader, who comes to mind? What skills and characteristics do leaders possess? Can you think of people in the health care industry, past or present, that you would consider leaders? Do you think anyone can be a leader? Can leadership be taught?

LEADERSHIP

A **leader** is a person who influences the behavior of others, helps facilitate change, and helps others reach common goals and objectives. Leadership is more challenging to define because there is more than one theory (system of assumptions or a hypothesis) regarding its definition. Many early theories explain leadership by examining the qualities common to successful leaders in addition to the duties and responsibilities of those we consider leaders.



FIGURE 1. There are many theories about what makes a great leader.

The qualities of successful leaders differ, but many leaders are passionate, enthusiastic, responsible, conscientious, creative, admirable, compassionate, insightful, determined, and fair. Leaders have special duties and responsibilities to those they lead. They provide direction to others, mediate, advocate for others, delegate tasks, coordinate events, supervise, oversee and lead meetings, motivate and encourage others, and resolve conflicts.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

There are various activities in which you can learn and hone leadership skills. Some of these activities are public speaking (i.e., speech class or clubs), student government, peer mediation groups, conflict resolution and crisis-prevention groups/courses, club or team membership, school sports teams, and National Honor Society. You can participate in leadership workshops on topics such as interpersonal communications, stress management, team building, and peer mediation. There are advocacy (active support for a cause) activities, such as blood drives, food drives, health fair, support groups, and tutoring.

You may acquire leadership skills while doing volunteer and charity work, such as community service projects, school-related jobs (i.e., Open House tour guide), church-related projects, and assistance at hospitals. Membership in local or national student leadership organizations is another great way to acquire leadership skills.



FIGURE 2. Great leaders can motivate employees to work beyond their perceived capacities.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

There are many student leadership organizations. An Internet search can be helpful in locating national and local organizations. Several student leadership organizations help develop



DIGGING DEEPER...

UNCOVERING ADDITIONAL FACTS: Leadership Defined

While the concept of “leadership” may be complicated and difficult to define, it is not impossible. In fact, there are numerous books and resources on the topic. The challenge is often that there are too many leadership theories. Some theorists focus on qualities between the leader and the followers, but other theories look at variables such as situational factors and skill levels.

Research the different leadership theories. Then write a three- to five-page paper on the theory that you support. Your paper should outline each of the theories you discover and then go into depth on the theory of your choice.

skills in the areas of health science technology and health occupations. These organizations include Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), the National Student Leadership Conference (NSLC), and Skills U.S.A.

Summary:



A leader is a person who influences the behavior of others, helps facilitate change, and helps others reach common goals and objectives. Leadership is often more easily explained by examining the qualities common to successful leaders in addition to the duties and responsibilities of those we consider leaders.

There are many activities in which you can learn and hone leadership skills. For instance, there are many student leadership organizations. Several student leadership organizations help develop leadership skills in the areas of health science technology and health occupations, such as Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), the National Student Leadership Conference (NSLC), and Skills U.S.A.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Explain why leadership is not easy to define.
2. Give two examples of how a student can learn or practice leadership skills.
3. Define advocacy.
4. List a leadership organization in the area of health science technology and health occupations.
5. Defend your definition of leadership with a paragraph-length answer.

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Discover and investigate the student leadership organizations at your school. If you are not a member of one of these organizations, interview a member. Ask about how his or her leadership skills have improved since joining the organization.

Web Links:



Leadership Styles

http://changingminds.org/disciplines/leadership/styles/leadership_styles.htm

Good Leaders

<http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk/leadership-styles.html>

Nursing Leadership

<http://juns.nursing.arizona.edu/articles/Fall%202002/Valentine.htm>