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# Dare to Care: Teaching Leadership to Gifted Students

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DARE TO CARE: TEACHING LEADERSHIP TO GIFTED STUDENTS

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

Sarah E. Fox

\*\*\*\*\*

Western Kentucky University  
2014

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2014

## ABSTRACT

This thesis details the creation and execution of the class “Dare to Care: Teaching Leadership to Gifted Students,” which was offered through a Saturday enrichment program to gifted middle school students. The class combined the study of leadership skills with the idea of being a change agent—a leader who uses his or her abilities to make a positive difference. This thesis documents the lesson plans of the class and students’ reactions to each lesson.

Keywords: gifted education, leadership

*To the memory of my grandmother,*  
**Zora Nell Ragland Apple Barton**

“Learn as much as you can about everything you can. Knowledge is something no one  
can take away from you.”

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Major Field 2: History

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Rationale of Project**

I first heard Dr. Joe Renzulli, director of the former National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented at the University of Connecticut, speak on gifted education at the World Conference of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Students in Louisville, Kentucky. Dr. Renzulli has devoted his career to studying gifted students and ways in which education systems can help gifted students develop both as scholars and people.

During his keynote address at the conference, Dr. Renzulli did not speak about the topics most people associate with gifted education: the importance of advocacy, helping each child develop his own gifts, or understanding the needs of gifted students. These topics are important, no doubt. Yet, Dr. Renzulli focused on a rare topic: how can gifted students be encouraged to become leaders who use their gifts to effect positive change?

Dr. Renzulli gave examples of people such as Marie Curie and Nelson Mandela. These gifted people utilized their leadership abilities to effect positive change. These examples resonated in my thoughts during and after the conference. I wondered what might result if gifted students were taught to appreciate their own capacities to lead. Perhaps they would value their gifts with new eyes. Perhaps they would be more eager to seek and effect positive change in the world.

As a result, I designed my Capstone Experience as a project in which I taught leadership classes to gifted students. This paper details my project by discussing my lesson plans, students' reactions to each class activity, and personal reflections regarding the outcome of project. I conducted this project with the support from The Center for Gifted Studies at WKU.

### **Purpose of Project**

The purpose of my project was to determine whether leadership education can impact students' self-awareness of leadership potential and increase student understanding of effective leadership methods. My hypothesis was that leadership education can increase both students' knowledge of leadership skills and self-perception of those skills. This project could be effective as a tool in advocating for the inclusion of leadership curriculum into the education plans of gifted students.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership has been recognized as an area of giftedness since 1972 as stated in *The Marland Report to Congress. The Marland Report (1972)* was the first national report that identified and defined gifted education. Leadership continues to be identified as a type of giftedness to this day, and some states mandate identification in that area along with the provision of services. According to 704 KAR 3:285, leadership is one of the five categories of giftedness in which students in the Commonwealth of Kentucky can be identified. The national Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2002), currently in effect, defines children with “evidence of high achievement capability...in leadership capacity” (p.1) as worthy of gifted services.

Nevertheless, the current literature about leadership education does not agree on a unified definition of giftedness in leadership. According to the National Society for the Gifted and Talented (2014), students gifted in leadership “may assume responsibilities, have high expectations for themselves, foresee consequences and implications of decisions, exhibit decision making skills, like structure, and exhibit self-confidence or organization” (par. 9). MacGregor (2007) stated in *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens* that leadership qualities include “having a sense of direction, respecting power, thinking creatively, embracing differences, acting with passion, managing unexpected

situations, and modeling humility” (p. 17). *The Marland Report* (1972) does not define giftedness in leadership but rather leaves identification up to “professionally qualified persons” to recognize “outstanding abilities” in students “capable of high performance” (p. 2). According to Michael Matthews, (2004):

It is possible to assemble some common denominators that appear in most characterizations of youth leadership. These include (a) its social nature, particularly as expressed through relationships and the exertion of interpersonal influence; (b) its developmental aspects, which appear to be even more central among young leaders than among adults and which involve building general, as well as task-specific, skills; and (c) its particular context, including the organizational setting, surrounding individuals, and other external structural features that influence the ways in which particular individuals express their leadership abilities. (p. 79).

Therefore, it is clear that a unilateral definition of giftedness in leadership is yet to be determined. In addition to the challenge of defining leadership, relatively few schools or school districts offer leadership education or training to gifted students. Roberts (2007) noted in *Gifted Child Today* that “although not new to gifted education, [leadership education] is a topic that has often been overlooked” (p. 1). Despite the lack of emphasis placed on leadership education, many gifted educators acknowledge that leadership education is essential to developing the full potential of all gifted students. “Children who are gifted and talented intellectually or in a specific academic area, in creativity or in the visual and performing arts, benefit from leadership development. Society will gain as



their leadership capacities are valued and furthered with leadership training” (Roberts, 2007, p. 1).

In his keynote address to the 2013 World Conference of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, Renzulli asserted:

The world is changing rapidly, and we are in great need of leaders in all walks of life.... I believe that if we have a purpose for gifted education—it’s not just to get people to have great grade point averages and high test scores (those things are important)—but to focus on developing force people: inventors, designers, creative writers, artists, entrepreneurs.

Renzulli’s speech focused on the need for gifted educators to not only encourage gifted students to grow in their areas of high achievement but to also grow as leaders in their respective fields. Unfortunately, according to Bisland (2004), “Many districts do not equate leadership education with traditional academic education, and teachers often do not receive proper training in leadership skills development. Consequently, students are given limited opportunities to develop their potential” (p. 1).

However, despite the fact that opportunities to intentionally develop leadership skills are often lacking in gifted education programs, many independent leadership curricula have become popular in mainstream education. One such contemporary leadership education movement is The Leader in Me (2014a) program. The Leader in Me has been instituted in schools throughout the world from the United States to Egypt to India. The program is built on the methods elementary school principal Muriel Summers utilized to turn A. B. Combs Elementary Schools in Raleigh, North Carolina, from a failing system to “the number one magnet school in America” (“Leader in Me,” 2014b,

par. 6). The program emphasizes “leadership, accountability, adaptability, initiative and self-direction, cross-cultural skills, responsibility, problem solving, communication, creativity, and teamwork” (“Leader in Me,” 2014b, par. 3).

Mariam MacGregor, the founder of Youthleadership.com, has written her own leadership curriculum for teenagers and children. Her *Building Everyday Leadership* series (2007) emphasizes that “it is educators’ jobs to teach teens that leading is as much about promoting positive attitudes and respect as it is about achieving success” (p. ix). MacGregor’s leadership material, like The Leader in Me program, targets all student groups—not just students gifted in leadership.

Current literature on leadership stresses the need for more research to be done involving leadership education. An article appearing in *Gifted Child Quarterly* stated:

Youth leadership identification and assessment instruments, as well as programs and program evaluation procedures, have been widely criticized on the very basis of their lack of a solid base in adult leadership theory (Foster, 1981; Oakland, Falkenberg, & Oakland, 1996; Shore, Cornell, Robinson, & Ward, 1991).

Although a general feeling persists among practitioners that youth leadership training is a worthwhile endeavor, such programs often depend, at best, on implicit unexamined ideas about how young people develop leadership traits and what being a leader entails. (Roach, Wyman, Brookes, Chavez, Heath, & Valdez, 1999, p. 5)

The challenge in addressing the needs of gifted leaders lies in the lack of research-based programs. “The validation of many existing measures of youth leadership appears less than adequate when considered in light of the scrutiny to which other standardized

measures are customarily exposed” (Matthews, 2004, p. 106). Yet, one way scholars are attempting to remedy this problem is by applying research completed on adult leadership habits to youth and gifted leadership habits (Roach, et.al.,1999). Others, like Steven Covey, the creator of *The Leader in Me*, have chosen to turn to experience as the best teacher and develop their own curriculum. Nonetheless, current and accurate research in the field is needed.

Therefore, the current literature on leadership education shows two trends. First, it is widely accepted that leadership education is important. Many educators see leadership education as beneficial for all students. Secondly, despite the fact that gifted educators agree that leadership education is crucial to preparing gifted students to become future leaders in their respective fields, few leadership courses especially for gifted students have been instituted. It is exciting that more attention is being paid to leadership in the realm of general education. Yet, more could and should be done in the study of leadership education in regards to gifted students. Therefore, the purpose of this project was to design a leadership course for gifted students in middle school and highlight the process and outcomes.

## CHAPTER 3

### PROJECT DESIGN

This chapter outlines the project design, the class objectives, and the procedures used in this project.

#### **Project**

The project stems from the class I taught as a part of Fall Super Saturdays offered by The Center for Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University: Dare to Care: A Study in Socially Active Leadership. For more than twenty years, Super Saturdays has been a Saturday enrichment program offered by The Center for high-achieving and/or high-interest students in grades 1-8. The Center for Gifted Studies hosts Super Saturdays twice a year, in the fall and winter. Each Super Saturdays lasts four weeks, consisting of 2 ½ hour sessions each Saturday. More than 1,000 students participate in Super Saturdays each year and come from a plethora of backgrounds. Super Saturdays services students ranging from southern Indiana to northern Kentucky to south of Nashville, Tennessee.

Western Kentucky University serves as the main campus for Super Saturdays. Teachers are WKU faculty and educators from Bowling Green and surrounding areas.

Oftentimes, The Center for Gifted Studies invites WKU graduate and undergraduate students to serve as volunteers in classrooms in order to build community between the educators and the students and to enrich the experience for students. However, this CE/T, *Dare to Care: A Study in Socially Active Leadership*, documents the first time a WKU undergraduate student has taught a Super Saturdays class as a part of the WKU Honors College Thesis Experience.

### **Participants**

Participants ( $n = 6$ ) enrolled in *Dare to Care: A Study in Socially Active Leadership* voluntarily. In order to qualify for Super Saturdays, students demonstrated high-abilities or high-interests within their home educational environments as documented by an educator's signature on the application form. The class *Dare to Care* was offered for students in grades 5, 6, and 7. In this class, there were two females and four males. Three students were identified as white with three identified as non-white. All six students formally met the criteria for being identified as gifted and talented in Kentucky with one student being identified specifically as gifted in leadership.

I received IRB approval to conduct the project. (See Appendix A). After receiving IRB approval, a consent letter was mailed to the students' parents explaining the project and asking for permission to use students' reactions to the class and leadership survey answers as a part of this thesis. (See Appendix B). All six students' parents gave permission for their results to be used.

## **Class Objectives**

Due to the limited amount of time allotted for Super Saturdays (a total of ten hours over the four weeks), it was important that I identify key leadership concepts to stress in class. The following list details the objectives. All the concepts I chose to stress were also key components of MacGregor's (2007) leadership lessons in *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens*.

1. Students will be able to identify and define seven types of power.
2. Students will be able to describe ways in which the seven types of power can be used negatively and positively.
3. Students will be able to describe the term *ambiguity of power*.
4. Students will be able to apply the term *ambiguity of power* to their everyday lives.
5. Students will be able to execute effective communication skills and identify ineffective communication skills.
6. Students will determine external factors that influence their leadership choices.
7. Students will be able to describe multiple conflict-management styles.
8. Students will be able to identify various situations in which differing conflict-management styles would be appropriate.
9. Students will be able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses as leaders.

## **Assessment**

Based on the class objectives described above, I created a leadership survey of five questions to provide qualitative evidence of students' growth to support the

anecdotal evidence discussed in Chapter 4. Once I finished writing the leadership survey, I verified that the questions aligned with the objectives and activities for my class. This leadership survey was administered as a pre-and posttest. Students had 15 minutes to complete each survey. See Appendices C and D for the pre- and posttest surveys.

## **Procedures**

Dare to Care: A Study in Socially Active Leadership was taught during the Saturdays of November 2013 starting on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and ending on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Parental consent forms were mailed two weeks prior to the first class. Once parental permission and student assents were obtained from all six students, baseline data in the form of a pre-assessment were gathered in the first session.

Each 2 ½ -hour-session addressed learning goals focused on specific skills. Activities came from *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens* (MacGregor, 2007) and *Building Everyday Leadership in All Kids* (MacGregor, 2013). Ideas were also incorporated from the Seminar course of the Kentucky Governor's Scholars program which I attended in 2010, as well as my imagination.

## CHAPTER 4

### LESSON PLANS, STUDENT REACTIONS, AND ASSESSMENT DATA

Chapter 4 documents my lesson plans for each of the four Super Saturdays sessions. Each session explanation begins with a table displaying how much time I allotted for each activity, the supplies needed to complete the activity, and the leadership theme under which I categorized the activity. The chart is followed by a description of each activity.

#### **Session 1**

Table 1 displays the general information I used to organize Session 1.

Table 1

*Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 Session 1—Power*

Time	Activity	Supplies Needed	Theme
9:30-9:50	Pre-Assessment	Colored Paper	
9:50-10:20	Newsstand Activity	Construction Paper, Colored Pencils	Identifying Leadership & Power
10:20-10:50	Leaders in My Life	Worksheet	Identifying Leadership & Power
10:50-11:20	Whose Line Is it Anyway?	6 scenarios, 6 random items	Identifying Leadership & Power



11:20-11:50	Tarp Game	Giant Tarp	Identifying Leadership & Power
11:50-12:00	Talk-Back Books	Journals	Reflection

**Activity: Newsstand Activity**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses as leaders.
- Learning Goal: Students will identify leadership goals and imagine themselves as future global leaders.
- Idea for Activity: *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens* (MacGregor, 2007, p. 9)
- Required Materials: Construction Paper/Markers/ Blow-up Globes
- Approximate Time: 20 minutes

### Activity Description:

I asked the students to take the globe in their hands and run their fingers around the continents. I encouraged them to envision themselves traveling to different places—to Africa, India—even places around the United States. Then, I challenged them to identify one problem in each of those places and make a plan in which their leadership could play an active role in solving the problem.

I explained that I would like to someday work in Africa to help provide better educational opportunities. I then charged the students to draw a picture of themselves solving a problem somewhere around the globe on the construction paper provided. Each student was to create his own newspaper cover with himself as the head story.

The purpose of this activity was two-fold. First, it was a get-to-know you game, in the traditional sense. Most classes make use of ice-breaker activities in order to orient the students to the new classroom and each other. However, unlike traditional icebreakers, I wanted the students to project into the future. Instead of defining themselves to their peers by expressing their interests or “something interesting about themselves,” they were defining themselves by who they hoped to become. From the beginning, I chose to make the students aware that leaders envision ways in which their leadership can create positive change. In this way, I infused the first activity with a social activism component of leadership.

The activity was successful in that the students understood their task and completed it well. One student, whose parents were from India, stated that he would like to become a doctor and improve the healthcare system in India. Another student told me that her family had migrated from Pakistan, and her interests centered on studying and

improving women's rights in Pakistan. An African-American student from a metropolitan area said that she wanted to work on improving equality in education for minorities.

Other ideas mentioned involved engineering new defense technologies and solving the nuclear waste situation in Japan. For students in grades 5, 6, and 7, these were clearly impressive goals.

### **Activity: Leaders in My Life—Leadership Identification**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to identify and define seven types of power.
- Learning Goal: Students will identify leadership characteristics demonstrated by leaders with whom they interact often.
- Idea for Activity: *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens* (MacGregor, 2007, p. 16)
- Required Materials: Printed worksheet/Pencils
- Approximate Time: 20 minutes

#### Activity Description:

I distributed the “Leaders in My Life” worksheet (MacGregor, 2007) to my students. The worksheet describes qualities of leaders such as “Does the Right Thing” and “Manages Unexpected Situations” and then asks the student to write the name of a leader who fulfills that category in his mind. I gave the students five minutes to fill out the worksheet and then allowed them to write their answers and justifications on the marker board. Then, each student had a chance to explain how the leader he picked exhibited those qualities.

This activity allowed the students to understand that different people value different methods of leadership. The diversity of ideas evoked by this activity provided a solid foundation for discussing different leadership styles later in the course.

This activity fostered an important discussion in the classroom. Most of the time, the students identified people such as grandparents or siblings they admired for leading with strong, assertive personalities. From this discussion, I saw that the students in the class viewed leaders as those who took charge, spoke up, and were confident. The students did not identify qualities such as compromising, listening, and thinking as leadership qualities. Therefore, throughout the class I stressed that leadership is situational and different leadership styles can be effective in different situations.

**Activity: The Power Wall**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to identify and define seven types of power.
- Learning Goal: Students will understand the different definitions of “power types.”
- Learning Goal: Students will understand that leaders can utilize different types of power and that power types are often ambiguous.
- Idea for Activity: Power Definitions taken from *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens* (MacGregor, 2007, p. 33)
- Idea for Activity: My imagination
- Required materials: Power titles and definitions typed and cut onto strips of paper/  
Tape
- Approximate Time: 30 Minutes

Activity Description:

I taped the power titles and power definitions onto the wall before class started.

The terms and matching definitions were as follows:

*REWARD POWER*

Based on a leader's ability to provide positive consequences if people do what is asked of them.

*REFERENT POWER*

People want to do what a leader says because they like the leader or want to be liked by the leader.

*LEGITIMATE POWER*

Based on a leader's position. People see the position as one that gives the leader power.

*INFORMATION POWER*

Based on a leader's access to knowledge that is perceived as valuable.

*EXPERT POWER*

People respect the leader's knowledge and are influenced by it.

*CONNECTION POWER*

People see a leader as having power because of his or her relationships with influential people.

*COERCIVE POWER*

Based on a leader's ability to invoke fear in people.

\*I paraphrased these terms and definitions using the Power definitions found in *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens* (MacGregor, 2007, p. 33).

On the power wall, I mixed the words and definitions and asked the students to attempt to match the words and definitions together. After the class discussed the definitions of each power term, we talked about *ambiguity of power*. Ambiguity of power refers to the fact that different situations require different types of power and each type of power can be used for good or for bad. For example, the students initially thought that coercive power (i.e., power based on a leader's ability to invoke fear in his followers) could only be bad. One student gave the example of Hitler and said that people feared Hitler and so they did what he said, regardless of the consequences. I acknowledged that this was a good example, but coercive power could be good as well. For example, when a parent tells a child not to touch the hot stove "or else you will get burned" that parent is attempting to make the child fear a burn in order to keep them safe. This kind of coercive power can be beneficial.

The students and I discussed each power definition in terms of ambiguity of power. I asked them to provide concrete, practical examples from their everyday lives to support their ideas. The students enjoyed this activity and asked to repeat it again the next week.

#### **Activity: YouTube Power Activity**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to describe ways in which the seven types of power can be used negatively and positively.
- Learning Goal: Students will synthesize their knowledge of "power definitions" with the idea that power affects almost every relationship in life.

- Idea for Activity: My imagination
- Required Materials: YouTube/Laptop or computer with over-head projector
- Approximate Time: 15 minutes

Activity Description:

I asked the students to watch videos I chose from YouTube and decide what type of power each video displayed.

For example, I showed a clip from Disney's "The Lion King" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdHRbZATyW8>). In the clip, the antagonist Scar (a lion), yells at his assistant Zazoo (a toucan) and scares Zazoo. It was clear to the students that this clip showed coercive power because Zazoo does exactly what Scar asks of him due to his fear of being eaten.

I showed another clip from Disney's "The Little Mermaid" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpDgWm4HBW8>). The seagull, Scuttle, tells Ariel (the mermaid) that a fork is a "dinglehopper"—a device humans use "to straighten their hair out." This video allowed the students to return to our discussion involving the ambiguity of power. The students decided that this video exhibited negative information power. Just because a leader is in a position of authority does not mean that his information is always accurate or true.

I highly recommend incorporating YouTube into leadership lessons. YouTube can be informational and is easily catered to the audience of students. It signals informality and often encourages students to talk who are normally shy. In this case, the YouTube power activity allowed the students to become more comfortable with each other while discussing the lesson as well. Many of them found that they enjoyed the same videos.

They laughed out loud, quoted their favorite parts, and retained the information accompanying the activity three weeks later.

**Activity: Power Role-Playing**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to describe the term *ambiguity of power* and apply it to their everyday lives.
- Learning Goal: Students will imagine and enact real-life scenarios in which different types of power could be utilized to create different effects.
- Idea for Activity: My imagination
- Required Materials: None (props optional and can be anything teacher chooses)
- Approximate Time: Depends on number of students (for 12 students—20 minutes)

Activity Description:

I divided the students into pairs and assigned each pair a power term. Using props I brought from my home (e.g., hat, plastic flowers, plush sea turtle, etc.), they had ten minutes to create a small skit that represented the power term they were assigned. Once they had established their skit, they had to think of a creative way to redo the skit so that the power was used in the opposite way it was originally intended. In this way, the student examined the power terms and used their imaginations to explore concepts of ambiguity of power.

Students reacted to the Power Role-Playing activity in different manners. The more outgoing students thoroughly enjoyed the activity. These students especially appreciated the thrill of improvising new skits to accommodate different types of power. On the other hand, the shy students were obviously uncomfortable with the activity. In



subsequent classes, (I taught a variation of this class the next Super Saturdays session for females only), I placed this activity during a later session. It worked better once students were wholly comfortable with each other, the teacher, and the environment. Learning through interaction does not work nearly as well when students are uncomfortable being silly.

**Activity: The Tarp Game**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to execute effective communication skills and identify ineffective communication skills.
- Learning Goal: Students will identify their own styles of leadership when working with a group.
- Idea for Activity: The Kentucky Governor’s Scholars Program Seminar Course
- Required Materials: Tarp
- Approximate Time: 15 minutes

Activity Description:

I laid a large plastic tarp in the floor and asked all the students to stand on the tarp. I told them to imagine that the tarp was surrounded by hot, bubbling lava. The only way to get out of the lava and be safe was to turn the tarp completely over. The catch was that all students had to be standing on the tarp at all times. I warned that if the group let one of the team members fall off the tarp, there would be “negative consequences.” In order to keep mystery and suspense in the game, I did not tell the students what the consequences of stepping off the tarp would be.

Initially, all the students tried voicing their ideas at once. No one listened to each other and many began pulling on different sides of the tarp without consulting the others.

Some students simply stayed standing and looked confused. I encouraged them to think about how a good leader might handle the situation. At this point, a leader emerged. She began to facilitate the discussion and went around the tarp asking everyone to voice his ideas. As she was half-way through this strategy, another student attempted to take over and said that he knew how to solve it. He began telling everyone what to do, and they followed without questioning.

However, this student's method proved to be unsuccessful. Additionally, as he tried to pull one corner of the tarp over, he pushed one of his classmates into the "lava." As a result, I took a blindfold and tied that classmate's arms behind her back. The lava had damaged her arms, and now the group had to compensate with a new problem. Soon after, the student who took control fell into the lava. I told him that the lava hit his mouth and that he could no longer speak. This opportunity allowed me to create a power vacuum in the group. The student was not pleased with the new circumstances and attempted to motion to the others—still telling them what to do—but they stopped responding.

The girl who initially asked every group member for his opinion stepped back in as the facilitator and, using the ideas of several other classmates, the class managed to flip the tarp over while all remaining standing on the tarp. The class took approximately twenty minutes to complete the activity. For such a small class, this was a relatively long amount of time. This alerted me to the fact that sessions in communication and team-building could be beneficial to the students in the class.

Like the Power Role-Playing activity, my students gave the Tarp Game mixed reviews. Students that felt they had a voice and could try their ideas enjoyed the

experience. Quieter students often felt forgotten or ignored. It is crucial that any teacher using this game insists that all ideas be heard and facilitates the game in such a way that students respect each other's opinions. At the end of the four weeks, the students repeated the game and worked together much better.

**Activity: Talk-Back Books**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses as leaders.
- Learning Goal: Students will reflect on leadership concepts covered in Session 1.
- Idea for Activity: The Kentucky Governor's Scholars Program Seminar Course
- Required Materials: Composition Notebooks/Pen
- Approximate Time: 15 minutes

Activity Description:

I gave every student a composition book and asked him or her to reflect on the day. I asked all the students to particularly concentrate on the tarp game. I asked the following questions: Had a leader emerged? Did more than one leader emerge? If yes, did the students like the leadership style of that leader(s)? How could the game be related to the concepts on the power wall or to ambiguity of power?

I also told the students that by writing in the "Talk-Back-Books" I could get to know them better. Since we only had a limited amount of time in class, I encouraged them to tell me more about themselves, ask me questions about my life, or start a dialogue regarding a leadership-related issue we could debate together.

The use of Talk-Back Books proved to be one of the most beneficial parts of the entire course. Students honestly reflected on the class and told me both what they enjoyed

and did not enjoy. Students asked me questions about my experiences in leadership positions which fostered unique and beneficial conversations regarding tricky situations and moral issues. Most importantly, the Talk-Back Books provided a channel for each student to express his or her individual voice. Through the Talk-Back Books, I could challenge and encourage students.

The use of Talk-Back Books is time consuming for the teacher. For only six students, I spent two to three hours weekly writing in talk-back books. However, the time invested is well spent. Students benefit from the individual attention and the teacher gains a deeper understanding of each student as an individual.

## **Session 2**

Table 2 displays the general information I used to organize Session 2.

Table 2

*November 9, 2013 Session 2—Communication*

Time	Activity	Supplies Needed	Theme
9:30-10:10	Maze Game	7 blindfolds/another classroom	Communication
10:10-10:30	Non-Verbal Communication Discussion	None	Communication
10:30-10:40	Snowflake Activity	White Paper	Communication
10:40-11:20	Walk the Line	Line down the middle of the classroom with tape—Agree/Disagree	Making Decisions

		Signs up	
11:20-11:50	Last Piece of Paper Activity	25 strips of paper (five different colors) for each student	Making Decisions
11:50-12:00	Talk Back Books	Journals	Reflection

**Activity: The Maze Game**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to execute effective communication skills and identify ineffective communication skills.
- Learning Goal: Students will identify basic concepts of good communication.
- Idea for Activity: My imagination
- Required Materials: Extra classroom and desks (or another way of making a maze)
- Approximate Time: 30 Minutes

Activity Description:

I created a maze in the classroom using desks and chairs. The desks formed the outer skeleton of the maze, and the chairs provided extra obstacles. I taped dark construction paper over the windows of the door, so students could not see the maze.

I divided the students into teams of two, giving each team one blindfold and instructing them to decide who would be the blindfolded follower and who would be the leader. The students then blindfolded each other, and the student who could still see led his partner by the arm to the next door classroom. I then opened the door and told the seeing partners that they had to guide their partner through the maze with only their

voice. They could stand in front of or behind their blindfolded partner, but they could not touch their partner.

I then asked the seeing and blindfolded partners to switch places. The students who had just gone through the maze now guided their partner through. There was one catch, however. The seeing partner could no longer stand in close proximity to their blindfolded partner. All the seeing students had to stand at the entryway to the classroom and speak loudly and clearly to guide their classmate through the maze.

The students did poorly at this exercise at first. They did not give concrete, explicit directions to their partners, and often the blindfolded students got frustrated as they bumped into chairs or felt that their seeing partner was doing an insufficient job. However, every team eventually made it through the maze. The students did a much better job communicating with each other during the second round. I then had the students sit down with their partners and tell them what they liked and what they did not like about the partner's communication style. A group discussion about verbal communication followed. I stressed how effective leaders give clear instructions that enable their followers to complete a task as simply as possible. The students gave each other tips on how to make their instructions more clear.

Our class determined that listening is just as important as speaking, sometimes. It was up to the blindfolded partner to recognize and follow his partner's voice even though the blindfolded partner was exposed to much more information. All in all, the students found this task exciting and thrilling. They asked to do it again several times and were always motivated to try new ways to communicate effectively.

### **Activity: Non-Verbal Communication Role-Play**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to execute effective communication skills and identify ineffective communication skills.
- Learning Goal: Students will identify methods of non-verbal communication.
- Learning Goal: Students will understand how leaders can use or misuse methods of non-verbal communication.
- Idea for Activity: *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens* (MacGregor, 2007, p. 41)
- Required Materials: None
- Approximate Time: 10 Minutes

#### Activity Description:

I modeled behavior for the students and asked them to comment on how that behavior made me appear. I used the model behaviors discussed in *Building Everyday Leadership in all Teens* (MacGregor, 2007, p. 41).

#### Model Behavior 1: Slouching versus standing straight and tall

-The students and I discussed that slouching indicates weakness. It is better for a leader to stand tall with both feet planted firmly on the ground. This stance suggests confidence and strength.

#### Model Behavior 2: Direct and deliberate eye contact versus avoiding eye contact

-I stated a sentence looking the students directly in the eyes and then stated the same sentence looking at the ground. The students said that firm eye contact made me

appear honest and confident. When I looked at the floor, I appeared to be insecure or hiding information.

Model Behavior 3: Stating facts with my hands only extended below my shoulders versus stating facts with my hands flailing above my shoulders

-The students agreed that wild hand gestures implied a loss of control over a situation and desperation. They felt that it often benefitted leaders to stay calm and cool and to utilize hand gestures that matched that state of mind.

The students and I then talked about how shaking hands, in American culture, communicates much as well. We discussed the importance of looking people in the eyes when shaking hands and using a firm grip. The students then formed a “baseball lineup” and practiced shaking each other’s hands, offering constructive criticism as they walked down the line. It was amusing and exciting to watch these future leaders honing their communication skills together.

These activities are conducive to student participation, and I recommend allowing students to try each model behavior in front of a partner. This can both relieve the stress of sitting for long amounts of time and enforce each behavior in students’ memories.

**Activity: The Snowflake**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to execute effective communication skills and identify ineffective communication skills.
- Learning Goal: Students will identify the importance of giving clear, concrete instructions.
- Idea for Activity: *Building Everyday Leadership in All Kids* (MacGregor, 2013, p. 114)



- Required Materials: white printer paper/scissors
- Time: 10 minutes

#### Activity Description:

I gave every student a piece of paper with unclear instructions about folding the paper and then tearing it. For example, I asked the students to fold the paper in half, but did not specify whether they should fold it horizontally or vertically. Once each student folded the piece of paper into a tiny box, I again gave them vague step-by-step directions. As a result, when the students opened the papers, all the “snowflakes” were quite different. This prompted a discussion regarding the clarity of communication. Just like in the Maze Game, I wanted to emphasize that effective leaders clarify information and allow those following them to ask questions to clear up misunderstanding. Good communication, I relayed, can prevent many problems.

Overall, students found this exercise boring. They understood the point of the exercise long before it had concluded and became frustrated when I refused to provide them with clearer directions. I tried this exercise with younger students in the next Super Saturdays class I taught (i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students), and they responded much more positively.

#### **Activity: Walk the Line**

- Class Objective: Students will determine external factors that influence their leadership choices.
- Learning Goal: Students will identify that leaders often have to make choices that may go against popular opinion.
- Learning Goal: Students will learn how to debate their ideas respectfully.

- Idea for Activity: The movie *Freedom Writers*
- Required Materials: masking tape
- Time: 30 minutes (can be longer or shorter depending on student response to the activity)

Activity Description:

I took a piece of colored masking tape and used it to separate the classroom into two halves with a line down the middle. On one side of the classroom, I hung a sign that said Agree, and on the other side of the classroom I hung a sign that said Disagree. Before beginning the activity, the students and I talked about the concept of respectful debate—how there are ways to disagree with another person and defend one’s opinion without alienating or upsetting the opposing side. We decided that truly listening to the position of the other side and attempting to “place oneself in another’s shoes” was ultimately very important.

Then, I explained the Walk the Line game to the students. I would read statements then students could move to the Disagree or Agree side of the classroom. The stronger the student felt about the issue, the farther he should be from the line in the middle. If a student did not feel strongly about an issue or felt neutral, he should remain on or near the line. The purpose was for students to make a decision, defend their decision, and then have an opportunity to change their decision based on other’s comments, if applicable.

I started with uncomplicated, straightforward questions. I read statements such as “I like dogs better than cats” and “I love pizza.” After a few fun questions, the students and I delved into more serious issues:

-I am influenced strongly by my parents’ political choices.

- I think bullying is an issue that should be dealt with in national laws.
- I think immigrant numbers into the United States should not be capped.
- I think digging for oil is more important than being concerned about the environment.
- I think funding for gifted education should take precedence over funding for sports programs.

I created these questions by looking at a list of modern social issues on Wikipedia. It is important that any teacher who completes this activity at a later date makes the topics relevant to current events.

The students took the game seriously, and much thoughtful debate resulted from the activity. The students adamantly advocated for their opinions, but some changed their minds as well. Towards the end of the activity, it was evident that the students were considering new angles to issues. The students most appreciated that I was asking tough questions. When I said the activity was over, they all groaned. When I asked why, one student expressed that he never got to talk about “grown-up stuff” that actually mattered. We continued with the activity then as I made up more questions.

In retrospect, this activity was one of the most beneficial parts of the entire course. Through this, the students became enthusiastic about grappling with contemporary social and moral issues. This dovetailed perfectly with the social activism part of the course I intended to introduce during a later session. Through the Walk the Line activity, my students demonstrated their hunger for real-world application of the ideas we discussed in class. It was exhilarating for me to see relatively young students

eager to understand and invest in issues that would normally be ignored by people their age.

I ended this activity by encouraging students to keep up with current events by exploring a plethora of news sources. I asked them not to simply consider one news source but to branch out and look for contradicting information which would allow them to think critically and analytically about each issue. I also encouraged them to examine international news outlets as opposed to solely relying on domestic news sources.

**Activity: The Last Pieces of Paper**

- Class Objective: Students will determine the external factors that influence their leadership choices.
- Learning Goal: Students will identify the motivations behind their own choices.
- Learning Goal: Students will understand that leaders often make choices motivated by their backgrounds/culture/priorities.
- Idea for Activity: The Kentucky Governor's Scholars Program Seminar Course
- Required Materials: strips of paper in four different colors, Ziploc bags
- Time Required: 30 minutes

Activity Description:

I gave each student a Ziploc bag with 20 pieces of colored paper. The bag contained five strips of blue paper, five strips of green paper, five strips of pink paper, and five strips of orange paper. On the blue strips, I told the students to write five people who were important in their lives and helped define who they were. On the green strips, I asked them to write five material things which were important to them (e.g., iPod, instrument, religious book, etc.). On the pink strips, I asked them to write five memories

that defined who they were. Finally, on the orange strips I asked them to write five goals or dreams they had.

Once the students had written on all the strips, they sat in a circle around the tarp (used in the previous week's lessons.) I then asked them to pick one strip of paper that was not very important to them and crumple it up and throw it on the tarp. They all looked at me like I was crazy but did it anyway. Then, I asked them to decide on three more strips of paper they could do without and crumple those up and throw them on the tarp. One more...three more...five more....

By this point, the students were struggling to make decisions. Did they give up their technology or their beloved pet goldfish? They asked me if they could stop—everything was important to them—but I told them that sometimes leaders were placed in situations requiring them to make sacrifices and challenging decisions. Leaders could not give up in these times of difficulty but rather had to conduct cost-benefit analysis to choose the best decision possible.

Time was running out, however, so I let the students end with three strips of paper (as opposed to ending with one as my original plan entailed.) However, the activity still affected the students deeply, and I asked them to end class writing in their Talk-Back Books about The Last Pieces of Paper Game. Who or what was left? Why was it important? What had they learned about leadership from this activity? Almost all of the students wrote that their parents were left on their papers. Most valued family members, religion, and ideals. Even though the students represented different backgrounds, many similar themes appeared among them.

\*The session ended with time for each student to write in his Talk-Back-Book.

### Session 3

Table 3 displays the general information I used to organize Session 3.

Table 3

*November 16, 2013 Session 3—Conflict Resolution*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies Needed</b>	<b>Theme</b>
9:30-9:45	“What is my Managing Conflict Style?” Inventory	None	Teams/Conflict Resolution
9:45-10:15	Discuss Conflict Style Results	None	Teams/Conflict Resolution
10:15-11:15	“The Island Game”	Island Game Worksheet	Teams/Conflict Resolution
11:15-11:30	Discuss “The Island Game”	None	Teams/Conflict Resolution
11:30-11:50	Plan for Parents’ Session	Construction paper/Markers	Reflection
11:50-12:00	Talk Back Books	Notebook	Reflection

#### **Activity: What Is My Conflict-Management Style? Inventory**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to describe multiple conflict-management styles.
- Learning Goal: Students will understand that different leaders deal with conflict differently.
- Learning Goal: Students will identify their own conflict-management style.

- Idea for Activity: *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens* (MacGregor, 2007, p. 92 & 95)
- Required Materials: Inventory Printed
- Approximate Time: 15 minutes

Activity Description:

In order for the students to understand that different methods of dealing with conflict exist as well as the idea that different conflict management styles are appropriate for different situations, I asked the students to take MacGregor's Conflict Style Inventory: "Managing Conflict: What's My Style?" (2007, p. 92) The students spent the first 15 minutes of class completing that conflict-style inventory.

The five options offered in the Conflict Style Inventory were Accommodating, Avoiding, Collaborating, Competing, and Compromising. After calculating their scores, we spent the next 30 minutes of class discussing the definitions of the different conflict-management styles. Using the definitions provided by MacGregor, I wrote the definition of each style on the board. For example, for Competing I wrote: "Objective: Deal with the conflict one way, my way." For Avoiding, I wrote, "Objective: Stay quiet and remain neutral." The students and I then had a discussion about how each type applied to real-life scenarios. We discussed that conflict-management styles, like the concept of power, are often ambiguous. Different situations require different styles of conflict management and different leaders prefer to handle adversarial situations in different manners.

We then went through each management style and brainstormed scenarios in which each style could be effective. We described situations in which using that particular leadership style could be detrimental. For example, the students had a

particularly invigorating discussion involving Avoiding. Most of the students in the class felt that conflict should rarely be avoided but rather faced squarely and concretely. Some conflicts would simply increase if not dealt with. However, after discussion, they decided that some conflicts are not worth the consequences that will ensue. We discussed the meaning of the phrase “choose your battles,” and they debated when that advice seemed appropriate. For example, one student said that it was always appropriate to stand up for a friend being bullied, but some petty conflicts between friends were better left alone.

I encouraged the students to particularly pay attention to their own scores in relation to the information we were learning. Which score was their highest? Why did they think that was? One student said that his highest scores was Competing, which made sense because he did not like to negotiate. He thought leaders should be firm in their beliefs and tell others what to do.

I also encouraged the students to consider their lowest scores and why they believed they scored so low in that area. The same student suggested that he had scored the lowest in Compromising and Collaborating because of the reasons aforementioned. After a long discussion, in which all students enthusiastically participated, they agreed that no one conflict-management style could work in every situation. They felt that they needed to seek balance in their own decisions as leaders.

At the conclusion of this activity, the students were eager to continue the discussion. So I gave each a dry erase marker, and the students made a web of conflict-management style situations on the marker board. Therefore, this activity overall took much more time than I had originally allotted. Nevertheless, I felt the deviation from my plan was well spent as this was a lesson that resonated with all the students throughout



the course. The lesson provided a timely opportunity to review the meaning of “ambiguity of power” as well.

**Activity: The Island Game**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to identify various situations in which differing conflict-management styles would be appropriate.
- Learning Goal: Students will make a group decision with peers, navigating conflict by experimenting with different conflict-management styles.
- Learning Goal: Students will become aware of their strengths and weaknesses when handling adversity.
- Idea for Activity: The Kentucky Governor’s Scholars Program Seminar Course
- Required Materials: List of 12 imaginary characters (from my imagination)
- Approximate time: 45 minutes - 1 hour

**Activity Description:**

I prepared for the activity by creating a list of 12 imaginary characters. For each character, I gave an occupation title (such as neurosurgeon, chef, or baby), an age, and a list of acquired skills. (See Appendix E for The Island Game characters sheet.) I then gave each student in the class the list of 12 imaginary characters. I drew a picture of an imaginary island on the board and told the students that they were stranded on an island in the middle of the ocean and could choose six of the 12 on the list to join them on the island. The goal was for them to create a self-sustaining community on the island and to choose characters who could aid them in making the best life for themselves as possible (considering they were all children.)

I told them to each look at their own lists separately for five minutes, decide exactly whom they wanted to come to the island, and make a case for those people. After five minutes, they would then have to come to a unanimous group decision by any means they decided in order to choose the six people they would invite to their island.

The students worked diligently and then began their deliberations with each other. At the beginning of the debate, I told them that they could not ask me questions. They needed to work together and pretend as if I were not there. I would simply take notes on their actions and decisions. At first, one student suggested that they each go around the circle and say which six they wanted and why. Only three students were able to state all their opinions before other students began to assert their own opinions out of turn. This evoked a heated debate about the method of choosing and conducting business. More assertive students wanted to discuss after every decision. Other students, more concerned with time and equity, wanted each opinion to be heard separately and calmly before a discussion ensued. The frustration between the two factions became evident, but I stayed silent. Whenever they asked me for advice, I told them that they needed to work together without my input.

After roughly 30 minutes, they still could not make a unanimous decision. Three characters were agreed upon, but the students hotly debated the final three individuals they desired to choose from the list. I told them that they only had ten more minutes with which to make a unanimous decision, stressing that all parties must comply. The new time limit made the students uneasy. Then, one suggested that they use democratic means and take a vote. Other students still wanted to discuss, but they decided that they would

rely on majority rules. After taking a vote, three more winners were chosen and the game was over.

This was an interesting solution to the time problem. I had never seen a group rely on majority rules in order to make the final decision. Their decision prompted a new discussion about majority rules, groupthink, and the pros and cons to voting rather than coming to a consensus based solely on discussion. Using McGregor's information on Majority Rules, *Building Everyday Leadership in All Teens* (2007, p. 101), we considered appropriate and inappropriate times to use majority rules. I applauded their decision in this instance. There was a good choice in order to come to a fair, concise agreement in a limited amount of time.

The students and I then continued with a conversation regarding the process they pursued in The Island Game. We considered the opinions of those who wanted more open discussion versus those who wanted to debate and refute the others. Both sides expressed frustration but also excitement over making a final decision. Other students felt that some students had acted too authoritatively and taken charge, not considering and listening to the ideas of all group members. I explained that good leaders seek the opinions of extroverts as well as introverts, and we discussed the importance of listening, compromising, and cooperating.

Overall, the Island Game proved to be one of the most beneficial activities of the entire course. It allowed students to take charge of the classroom. Likewise, it required that students practice many different leadership skills. I recommend this activity as a culminating exercise of any leadership class.

### **Activity: Preparing for Parents' Session**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses as leaders.
- Learning Goal: Students will identify the activities that helped them grow the most as leaders.
- Idea for Activity: My imagination
- Required Materials: Construction Paper/Markers
- Approximate Time: 30 Minutes

#### **Activity Description:**

I divided the students into four groups. Each group of students identified the activity from the past three sessions they were most eager to show their parents. The four groups decided to do The Maze Game, The Tarp Game, The Power Wall, and The Island Game. The students had 30 minutes to create posters and plan how they would teach their parents. The goal of this activity was to stress to the students that they were now leaders — leading their parents in activities in which they previously participated as followers and learners. The students eagerly planned for the parents' session and each contributed well to the group projects.

\*The session ended with time for each student to write in his Talk-Back-Book.

### **Session 4**

Table 4 displays the general information I used to organize Session 4.

Table 4

*November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 Session 4—Making a Difference*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies Needed</b>	<b>Theme</b>
9:30-10:00	Globe Discussion	Giant Blow-up Globe	Making a Difference
10:00-10:45	Leadership Review	Markers/Marker Board	Reflection
10:45-11:15	Post-Assessment	Post-Assessments	Reflection
11:15-11:30	Prepare for Parent Show n' Tell	All materials	Reflection
11:30-12:00	Parents' Session	All materials	Leading Others

**Activity: Envision the Difference — Embrace the Globe**

- Class Objective: Students will be able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses as leaders.
- Learning Goal: Students will imagine themselves as future change-agents.
- Idea for Activity: Dr. Kevin Lamoreaux, University of Winnipeg
- Required Materials: Blow-up globes, markers, construction paper
- Approximate Time: 15 minutes

Activity Description:

I asked each student to take the globe in his hand and turn the globe so that the Global North was facing up. I then asked the students to consider why they had all chosen to turn the globe in that direction. From outer-space, there is no true “north” or “up-or-down.” I expanded this point to explain that many of the conceptions we have of life or society often come from our cultures. We often don’t realize the impact these influences have on our ways of thinking.

Thus, I challenged the students to discuss this issue. We discussed the role that redefining knowledge plays in leadership. Leaders must be creative and innovative and strive to see old issues in a new light.

From this discussion, I encouraged the students to revisit their ideas from the beginning of class regarding the ways in which they wanted to impact the globe. I asked them to expand upon those ideas and provide concrete examples of steps they could take to realize those ideas. I wanted them to use their imagination and their knowledge at the same time. Finally, the students and I discussed how their goals and the concepts we had learned in class influenced one another.

**Activity: Leadership Review**

- Class Objective: Students will review all prior Class Objectives.
- Learning Goal: Students will synthesize the leadership and social activism information they learned through the class and apply it to their own lives.
- Idea for Activity: My imagination
- Required Materials: Marker board and markers
- Approximate Time: 45 minutes

Activity Description:

I devoted the remainder of Session 4 to a complete review and reflection upon all the activities and concepts covered throughout Super Saturdays. Instead of teaching the students, I asked them to each pick an activity or topic and teach me. They corrected each other or added information as we covered the topics. Most importantly, the students reflected on the importance of their new leadership knowledge and stated ways in which

they could apply this knowledge to their own lives. This demonstrated to the students the amount of growth they achieved in a matter of four weeks.

The remainder of the session was devoted to the parents' session. The students ran the parents' session independently, and it was a success. All the students showed great pride in relaying their new knowledge about leadership skills to their parents. We started the parents' session with The Maze Game. Each student picked one parent to lead him through the maze. The parents did not do very well, and then students sat down with their parents and explained communication techniques that would have improved the parents' performance.

After the Maze Game, the students broke into three stations. The three stations were The Tarp Game, The Power Wall, and The Island Game. The parents rotated from station to station participating in the activities and receiving a mini-lecture from the students involved. It was a joy to watch the students excel at teaching their parents. They were enthusiastic about the topics and encouraged their parents to all participate. I ended the parents' session by thanking all the parents for allowing their students to be a part of Super Saturdays. I was sad to see the students go, but it was fulfilling to know that they were leaving the classroom better equipped to use their gifts as leaders.

### **Assessment Data**

I administered *The Everyday Leadership Skills & Attitude Inventory* (ELSA; MacGregor, 2010) at the beginning of the first session as a pretest and at the conclusion of the last session as a posttest. The ELSA consists of 49 questions written for young teenagers. It allows teens to assess their own leadership attitudes and skills using a four-point Likert scale: Not like Me (Never); A Little like Me (Sometimes); Often like Me

(Usually); and This is Me! (Always). Each score corresponds to a level of competency in the following leadership-related areas: Self-Awareness (SA); Working with Others (WWO); Qualities of Leadership (QOL); Communicating, Listening, and Being Heard (CLBH); Decision Making and Problem Solving (DMPS); Social Solutions (SS); and Seeking Opportunities (SO). Each student calculated his own score in class.

During the last class, students compared their pre- and posttest results. The students discovered that, on average, their scores increased in every category. The students felt that they could better identify their own leadership characteristics as a result of the class, and their ELSA scores confirmed this belief. Students saw the biggest self-growth in the category of Working With Others. This discovery was exciting for me because I stressed teamwork throughout the course.

In order to balance the quantitative data drawn from *The Everyday Leadership Skills & Attitude Inventory* (MacGregor, 2010), I created a survey of five questions to provide qualitative data. I linked the survey questions to the specific learning objectives and activities of the course. I administered this assessment as a pre-and posttest in conjunction with the ELSA assessment. See Appendices C and D for the pre- and post-test surveys.

An interesting trend appeared in the students' surveys. This trend showed that students were very likely to use terms referring to *independence*, *bravery*, and *taking control* during the pretest. In contrast, students did not rely on these terms as heavily during the posttest. In the posttest, students instead also used terms such as *cooperate* and *compromise* to describe admirable actions of leaders. Students' posttest results showed a much broader and diverse understanding of leadership concepts. In the posttest surveys,



students often mentioned that leadership is ambiguous and many different leadership styles and types of leaders exist.

This data is exciting because it mirrors growth in relation to the curriculum I used in the class. My goal was to expose students to a variety of leadership methods. Due to the fact that during the first class most all students identified leaders as controlling and in-charge, I spent a significant amount of time stressing the importance of compromise and cooperation in certain situations. For example, during The Island Game, I repeatedly encouraged the students to compromise in order to come to a unanimous decision. Students' scores clearly reflected this teaching. However, it is important to note that students did not give up their previous conceptions of leaders (i.e., that leaders are strong, independent, etc.) — instead they added to their understanding of the diverse ways in which leaders can lead and still be effective.

## CHAPTER 5

### REFLECTION ON PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to determine whether leadership education can impact students' self-awareness of leadership potential and increase student understanding of effective leadership methods. Overall, this project proved to be a success. The students fulfilled my original objectives of the class and demonstrated eagerness to apply the leadership concepts in their everyday lives. The leadership surveys students completed at the beginning and end of class showed this trend as well. Students' posttest leadership surveys usually associated a much wider range of leadership skills with effective leadership than did their pretests. Paired with students' reactions to the lessons in the class, it was clear that the class helped students to expand their understanding of what it means to be a leader.

In a broad sense, this project suggests that the inclusion of leadership education into the curriculum of gifted students is advantageous and accessible. It shows that high-ability and high-interest students possess the capacities to grapple with complex social issues and examine leadership qualities from the framework of their own lives.

In the words of one student, "I've learned that being a leader isn't about being the boss of everything. Cooperation and listening are the two most important things I learned in this class." Another student expressed, "I learned that you don't have to be a leader around the world, you can be one in your own backyard." It is my hope that this project will inspire others to build upon my work and empower future generations of gifted

students to see themselves as instruments of positive change both in their own backyard and around the world.

### **Limitations**

It is important to note that 100% of the students involved in the project were formally identified as gifted (though only one student was identified as gifted in leadership.) Thus, one might argue that this project was more successful because of the population who enrolled in the class (i.e., formally identified gifted students). This project is limited by the fact that it did not address how successful a similar leadership/social activism course would be in a more heterogeneous classroom.

Again in regards to replication of the project in a more traditional classroom, it is also important to note that each session of Super Saturdays was 2 ½ hours in length. Therefore, I had a significant amount of time (i.e. four consecutive) Saturdays during which students could concentrate solely on the class activities. If this class were replicated in a traditional classroom and the lessons had to be broken down to fit smaller time frames, the results may be different than those found in this project.

### **Implications**

Despite its limitations, this project reflects positive results. In only four weeks, intentionally designed leadership education inspired students to recognize a diverse set of leadership skills and think more analytically about their own beliefs and thought-processes.

As a result of this project, I taught SuperSaturdays again in February 2014 and more purposefully incorporated social activism components into the leadership lessons. Students' pretest and posttest results from Winter Super Saturdays 2014 showed a much

clearer understanding of both general leadership and socially responsive leadership. In this way, this project helped me improve my future lessons for other students.

It is my hope that this project will serve as a model for gifted educators interested in beginning leadership classes for their own students. The study of leadership is rewarding for all involved. Educators should feel free to use this project as a template, but I urge each teacher to be creative with activities and lessons. Students are quick to recognize ingenuity modeled by a teacher. When planning activities, I found that I was most successful when I planned with my specific students in mind. I deliberately catered the lessons to my students' strengths, weaknesses, and interests.

Finally, the best moments in leadership class will be those in which the educator finds himself unnecessary. It is his goal to subtly but persistently challenge his students to be independent. When students feel comfortable debating with the teacher or suggest new ways to complete activities, he will know that he is on the right track to nurturing future leaders.

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## Appendix A: IRB Research Approval Document



*INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY*

DATE: October 2, 2013  
TO: Sarah Fox, student  
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB  
PROJECT TITLE: [518487-1] Dare to Care: A Study in Leadership  
REFERENCE #: IRB 14-107  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project  
ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: October 2, 2013  
REVIEW TYPE: Exempt from Full Board Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by an implied consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Mooney at (270) 745-2129 or [irb@wku.edu](mailto:irb@wku.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB's records.

## Appendix B: Informed Consent Document

### INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are excited that your child has chosen to take the Fall Super Saturdays class *Dare to Care: A Study in Leadership*. This class is designed to help your student improve his/her leadership abilities by increasing knowledge about effective leadership skills, broadening understanding of what it means to be a leader, and developing sense of self-worth. In order to determine the success of the course in accordance with its goals several measures will be taken and thoroughly assessed. The researchers request a few minutes of your time to gauge your input and add to any data gleaned from the program. Thank you for your help.

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**Project Title:** *Dare to Care: A Study in Leadership*

**Investigators:** Ms. Sarah Fox, WKU Student and Dr. Tracy Inman, Associate Director of The Center for Gifted Studies at WKU. Sarah Fox may be reached at [sarah.fox115@topper.wku.edu](mailto:sarah.fox115@topper.wku.edu) and Dr. Inman may be reached by calling 270-745-2742.

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you give your agreement to participate in this project.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask her any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. **Nature and Purpose of the Project:** The three purposes of the class *Dare to Care* are to increase students' knowledge about effective leadership skills, broaden students' understanding of what it means to be a leader, and develop a sense of self-worth within the students. In order to determine if these three goals are being met, in order to determine the success of the course in accordance with its goals several measures will be taken and exhaustively assessed. The researchers request a few minutes of your time to gauge your input and add to any data gleaned from the program.
2. **Explanation of Procedures:** An anonymous parental survey will be given to complete at home and return at the beginning of the second session of Super Saturdays on November 9, 2013.
3. **Discomfort and Risks:** There are no known discomforts or risks associated with this project.
4. **Benefits:** The project in its entirety will affect research on the importance of providing leadership education to gifted students. This research, through presentations, will benefit other educators who are developing leadership skills in young people.
5. **Confidentiality:** All surveys are anonymous. It is asked that you provide no identifying indicators or marks.
6. **Refusal/Withdrawal:** Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

*You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.*

If you have any questions or comments about this study, please do not hesitate to contact the researchers, Ms. Sarah Fox, at [sarah.fox115@topper.wku.edu](mailto:sarah.fox115@topper.wku.edu) or Dr. Tracy Inman, at 270-745-2742.

***Your continued cooperation with the following research implies your consent.***

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY  
THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator  
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129





## Appendix C: Pre-Assessment Leadership Survey

### Dare to Care: Learn to be an Effective Leader

Please answer the following short answer questions as thoroughly as possible.

1. What are the three most important characteristics of a good leader? Why?

2. Name one famous world leader and tell an important contribution she or he has made to society.

3. What do you think your strongest quality as a leader is? Why?

4. What do you think your weakest quality as a leader is? Why?

5. What are two things you hope to learn in this class?

## Appendix D: Post-Assessment Leadership Survey

### **Dare to Care: Learn to be an Effective Leader**

At the beginning of Fall Super Saturdays, you answered many of the questions below. Think back to those answers and reflect on how your answers may have changed as a result of the class.

1. What are the three most important characteristics of a good leader? Why?

2. Name one famous world leader and tell an important contribution she or he has made to society.

3. What do you think your strongest quality as a leader is? Why?

4. What do you think your weakest quality as a leader is? Why?

Now please answer two more questions about the class as a whole:

5. How has your understanding of leadership changed as a result of this class?

6. What are the two most important things you have learned in this class about leadership? Please explain your answers.

## Appendix E: The Island Game List of Imaginary Characters

### The Island—Character List

**1. Neurosurgeon**

Skill: Highly skilled in medicine and surgery.

Age: 73

Gender: M

**2. Secretary**

Skill: Skill in typing, answering phones, secretarial services. Also has skill in sewing.

Age: 25

Gender: F

**3. Chef**

Skill: Has skill in cooking gourmet cuisine. Has also worked in lower-scale restaurants.

Age: 63

Gender: F

**4. Nurse**

Skill: Skill in nursing.

Age: 46

Gender: M

**5. Mechanical Engineer**

Skill: Engineering, especially automobiles and machines

Age: 33

Gender: F

**6. CEO of Wal-Mart**

Skill: Leadership and Management

Age: 52

Gender: M

**7. College Student Majoring in Architecture**

Skill: Has completed general education classes. Also has completed ROTC training.

Age: 19

Gender: M

**8. Teacher**

Skill: 35 years' experience as a teacher, but also trained in survival skills

Age: 62

Gender: F

**9. Army Commander**

Skill: Experience abroad and domestically in the US Army.

Suffers from a broken arm.

Age: 54

Gender: F

**10. New mother**

Skill: Airline stewardess by trade. Mother to child below.

Age: 27

Gender: F

**11. Baby**

Skill: No skills yet acquired. Healthy.

Age: 3 month

Gender: M

**12. Therapist**

Skill: Skill in helping patients deal with trauma.

Age: 44

Gender: M