

It's Time to Teach Leadership in a New Way to Improve Student Development and Your School's Image in Your Community

Introduction

It's January, a time for new beginnings, fresh starts and the shedding of old habits and ways that may have held you back. In this Report, I want to reveal some of the old habits of teaching leadership and, together, we'll shed some of those old habits, so you can make room for a fresh new start, and make a real difference in the lives of your students.

The old way of teaching leadership to youth and adults was to introduce students to other leaders who have been successful. The goal was to inspire students to take action because of these leaders' successes. Those leaders were introduced in many ways. Martial arts schools and elementary/middle schools would invite



inspiring speakers to address their students; direct students to read empowering books; provide powerful training materials; and conduct one-on-one mat chats, discussions, and even training drills to teach leadership. After years of these methods, I've found an emerging pattern, when working with other leadership instructors. A change is needed because these old methods are no longer working, as children (and adults) are losing interest, ignoring practice and not learning the way they should.

Leadership is a theory; it's an idea. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to learn from a book, a lecture or even by studying other leaders. To become a leader, your students must PRACTICE being leaders. They

will practice at home, school and work; and practice in your community, through acts of kindness and donation of their time on projects that are important to them.

Then, later in life, when they need these highly sought-after leadership skills, they'll have them. When opportunities present themselves to utilize their leadership skills, they'll have these incredibly powerful tools in their tool belts.

Your students will have experiences, past successes to draw upon, the confidence in themselves and the integrity to lead their groups to success in the future. Your students' future leadership outcomes depend on their intensity level and amount of practice today.

Understand that you can't learn baseball, piano, math or martial arts by reading a book on the subject. To excel at any of these activities or subjects, you must practice. It's absurd to think that you can become a leader by reading a book or even taking a test on the subject. To become a great leader, you will have to practice a very specific set of leadership skills!

Your Role as the Instructor

As head instructor in charge of your leadership development program or G.O.L.D. Leadership Team, you have a very important role: To provide tools and training, so your students can develop real leadership traits that they can take with them for the rest of their lives. Your role, as an educator, is to provide materials in such a way that your students are fully engaged and learning something very real about leadership.

The new way of teaching leadership will not be found in a book or through the empowering talk of a leader, but, instead, in making students the action heroes of their separate journeys.

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Action Heroes

When a child thinks of the term “action hero,” they immediately associate it with characters like Spiderman™, Batman™, Superman™ or whomever is popular today. Help your students understand that these action heroes are not real, but that they can become real-life action heroes.

Take a moment during your next leadership meeting to look little Johnny in the eyes and tell him, “Johnny, you can become a real-life action hero,” and then turn to Suzy and tell her, “Suzy, you can become a real-life action hero, too... when you begin to apply the lessons of your martial arts training in our community through community-action projects.”

It’s important to follow this thought with a very specific plan or set of lessons. You should have a well-developed plan to make them the action heroes of their journeys. Give them opportunities to engage in leadership roles by completing community projects that are important to them. Track the results and demonstrate certain leadership traits, experientially. This is the new way.

Develop and Implement a System

When I first started our students on Project-Based Leadership Training (thanks to its introduction by Master Tom Callos), we experienced some great results with the projects we tackled. Our students gained a sense of pride and ownership in what they accomplished. They grew individually and as a leadership team. They were able to practice courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, indomitable spirit and other leadership traits during the actions they were taking. They were indeed learning real-life examples of what it takes to lead a group to success. The problem was not the projects and the training, but tracking them and the system we were using at the time.

The students were not being rewarded for their efforts, as they should have; and we were managing 5 to 10 projects, simultaneously, without any real system for tracking them. I had a hard time determining which projects were starting, and being completed. Our school’s project portfolio was beginning to grow,



but we didn’t have anything in place to record our students’ journeys. When we started, photos, video and journals were non-existent.

The system that I now use to track our students’ leadership training is known as the National Leadership Team. You’ll find more at www.LeadershipStudents.com. It is a systemized way for your students to practice leadership through project-based leadership training.

Since we’ve begun tracking their journeys online, our students are excited to plan their next projects and record their results through videos, photos and journal entries. This is the new way of teaching leadership because it is a powerful example of how small actions can turn into big results. Whether you use my system or develop your own method to track their progress, this new method of leadership training will inspire your students to take action and achieve great things by becoming action heroes in their communities.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Leadership, as a definition, theory or a lesson from a book can be discussed and studied, intellectually, but never internalized and applied without action. For many years, scholars have studied different leadership styles, methods and traits; however, to develop real

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leadership skills and traits through experience and practice is a completely different story.

The “art of leadership,” just like your martial arts, is different for each individual person. Each person will lead his or her team/group to success differently. Each leader can draw upon past experiences to understand his or her strengths and weaknesses. Each leader knows, through practice, what techniques and methods work best for him or her to inspire his or her team to greatness. Real leadership must be practiced, it must be developed and it must be internalized for each individual leader.

Action Heroes in Your Dojo

Your students will learn how to take action in their community and you’ll see a difference in their ability to lead by example during classes. I’ve found that our students are retaining the lessons from their projects, internalizing them, and then applying them to other areas of their lives.

Martial arts practice on the mats is only enhanced further when students truly feel like action heroes in their community. They feel confident and strong by taking action with other friends and family. They’ve learned real leadership, and they are applying it in your martial arts classes.

You’ll find that not only have you built a team of Black Belts that can throw amazing techniques and honor the life skills and lessons learned during your martial arts class, but also they are “Black Belt Leaders” in the community. They are the action heroes that the public recognize in the newspaper, on television and in the many videos and documentation about your community-action projects that your school and students have created and share on social-networking websites such as YouTube (a great marketing tools). When you have a system for teaching real leadership (Action-Based Leadership), you’ll find that you’ve built a team of leaders who are just as good at assembling a team to lead a project to success as they are at executing a great side kick. When this happens, your program will be so valuable to parents that they would feel silly not to be involved in your school and its leadership team.