

MY RENAISSANCE JOURNEY

Facet: Services to Youth

Principle: A Renaissance of the MIND

Topic: Leadership

Goals:

- To identify the character qualities of an effective leader, showcasing African descended leaders as the examples of leadership in action.
- To introduce various styles of leadership, emphasizing good communication, vision/forward thinking, and risk taking as important traits. Discuss the pros and cons of each.
- To introspectively look at themselves at age 12/13 (seventh grade) and begin to define their leadership style. Draw comparisons to various African descended leaders. Who are they more like? Less like?

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF A LEADER?

Textbooks often describe leaders as **a person that has the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals**. Leaders can influence significant change in their environment (home, school, community) and serve as a role model to the people around them. Great leaders have and communicate their vision and set high but achievable expectations. Effective leaders are intelligent problem solvers but they surround themselves with supporters who are even smarter. Respected leaders instill pride and they gain and cherish the trust of their followers.

Leadership seems to have more to do with an individual's personal character than a specific set of behaviors. Character can be described in a variety of ways¹:

Char-ac-ter
(kar' ik ter)
n. ["to cut, engrave"]
The stable and distinctive qualities built into an individual's life which determine his response regardless of circumstances.
<i>American Dictionary of the English Language</i>

We will define character as.....

- The inward motivation to do what is right
- Who you are, even when no one is watching
- The key to true success in every area of life

WHAT TYPE OF LEADERS ARE YOU?

One of the most important responsibilities a leader has is to make "good" decisions. Often times, leaders are charged with the task of making decisions that impact millions of people. Each day, decision makers are determining how much we pay in taxes, who is hired to fill a vacant position, and whether our country goes to war or maintains peace.

Decision-making is a learned skill that is critical because it is necessary in everyday life. The average person probably makes hundreds of decisions daily. Though many of those decisions are minor, we know that making one poor choice can be life altering and even deadly.

We see the consequences of poor decision making every evening on our local and national news programs. We see images and hear thousands of dismal, often tragic events resulting from the consequences of poor decision making skills. Shocking statistics associated with African American youth document these examples related to poor decision making:

- increased peer pressure
- alcohol and substance usage
- deaths resulting from automobile accidents and gunplay
- teen violence
- smoking
- gang activity

- teen pregnancy
- over eating and obesity

BLOG
Poor Decision Making
<p>Click the link below to blog about experiences you have had with the pressures identified above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you handle the situation? • Did you give in to peer pressure?
CLICK THIS LINK

The ability to make good decisions crosses every economic, religious, cultural, and racial group. Whether you are a national leader or a school leader, making good decisions starts with having a core set of values (Character Qualities) that you live by. **Remember: Character is your inward motivation to do what is “right” even when no one is watching.**

THINK ABOUT IT
Test your character by evaluating how you would respond to the scenario described below.
Character Trait
You consider yourself to be an honest and trustworthy person.
Scenario
Your teacher leaves you in the classroom to make up a test you missed earlier in the week. You are having trouble with one of the questions and the answer key to the test is in plain sight on your teacher’s desk.
Dilemma
Option A: Do you peek at the answer key because taking one answer won’t hurt anyone?
Option B: Do you rely upon your own knowledge and accept whatever grade you get?
Good Decision
If you are “truly” an honest and trustworthy person, integrity must be used at all times, not just when it is convenient.

WORKSHEET ACTIVITY

Complete the "Character Inventory".

What character qualities guide the decisions you make in life? Fill in the blanks by describing how you would respond to each scenario. Reflect upon your responses and determine where you can make improvements to strengthen your character.

Click this link to access the worksheet

It's your life and you decide how you will live it. Take a moment to visit the "IT'S MY LIFE" website where you can play games to test your character, view videos, ask advice, and read how celebrities like Bow Wow, Raven Symone, Jordyn Sparks, and many more get the confidence to be a strong leader. Simply click the link below and Have Fun!

LEARN MORE

Play Games and Listen to Celebrities

<http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/cheating/index.html>

Leaders are individuals whose goals are for a good greater than themselves and whose behaviors are consistent with their values.

THINK ABOUT IT

Read and Analyze: Do you believe the behaviors and actions of the individuals in each situation are consistent with their value statement? Why or Why not?

SITUATION #1 (Brittani)

Brittani's value statement: The most important thing is to have the respect of my friends and others in my group.

Situation: Brittani has been lectured by her teacher for acting out in class.

Action: Brittani tells everyone after class that the teacher just couldn't take a joke and she might have to give her teacher some lessons in comedy.

READ AND ANALYZE SITUATION #2 (Jeremiah)

Jeremiah's value statement: The most important thing is to learn as much as I can so that I will be able to get a good job that allows me to make a contribution to my people and society as a whole.

Situation: Jeremiah has not been able to get into the computer lab to do his assignment. Every time he tried to visit the lab, all the stations were busy. As a result, he came unprepared to class.

Action: Jeremiah explains to his teach before class that he was unable to get to the computer lab to do the assignment, but he would like to make up the work and maybe do some extra research that the teacher feels will expand his knowledge in the area of study.

What are the 49-Character Qualities?

Character Qualities

Throughout this lesson, we will refer to the 49-Character Qualities defined by an organization called *Character First!* *Character First!* is more than a program-it is a leadership model that can help individuals strengthen relationships, improve communication, and build teamwork. The character qualities are listed below but we encourage you to review the comprehensive list with correlating definitions which may be viewed in the resource center. You may also visit the *Character First!* website at www.characterfirst.com

READING ACTIVITY

Review the complete list of 49-Character Qualities and their definitions.

[CLICK THIS LINK](#)

49- Character Qualities

Alertness	Diligence	Humility	Security
Attentiveness	Discernment	Initiative	Self-Control
Availability	Discretion	Joyfulness	Sensitivity
Benevolence	Endurance	Justice	Sincerity
Boldness	Enthusiasm	Loyalty	Thoroughness
Cautiousness	Faith	Meekness	Thriftiness
Compassion	Flexibility	Obedience	Tolerance
Contentment	Forgiveness	Orderliness	Truthfulness

Creativity	Generosity	Patience	Virtue
Decisiveness	Gentleness	Persuasiveness	Wisdom
Deference	Gratefulness	Punctuality	
Dependability	Honor	Resourcefulness	
Determination	Hospitality	Responsibility	

WORKSHEET ACTIVITY

Complete the "Character Recognition Worksheet"

Identify a friend who demonstrates strong character qualities that you admire. Define one of their attributes and explain how you have benefited from this trait.

[CLICK THIS LINK TO ACCESS THE WORKSHEET](#)

What is a Leadership Style?

Leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. *Character First!* has identified 7-Leadership Perspectives (Styles). Each style has distinctive goals and there are pros and cons to using each. To define the style that best suits you, view the complete list of 7-Leadership Perspectives in the resource center.

READING ACTIVITY

Review the complete list of 7-Leadership Perspectives.

[CLICK THIS LINK](#)

7-Leadership Perspectives

- **The Visionary** – is committed to growth, looks beyond problems to causes, and develops precise solutions for success.
- **The Teacher** - imparts wisdom, maturity, and skill to others; validates direction and ensures completeness.
- **The Server** - sees and meets others' needs, frees them to accomplish goals, and invests time and energy in their success.

- **The Organizer**- visualizes final results and directs resources for the successful completion of goals
- **The Mediator** - is deeply loyal and compassionate; analyzes the benefits and problems of a given direction
- **The Idealist** - has integrity, is open to correction, is willing to identify problems, and speaks the truth boldly
- **The Provider** - is resourceful, prudent, and thrifty; constantly ensures the best use of all available resources

THINK ABOUT IT

Think about the people you interact with each day. Who do you respect as a leader? Who is your role model?

- What character qualities do they exhibit?
- What is their leadership style?
- How has their style helped you or others?

CAN YOUNG PEOPLE BE LEADERS?

In Search of the Boy King

Young people rule! For King Tut, that wasn't just an expression. Tut was only eight or so when he became ruler of Egypt. Ten years later, he died mysteriously. Archaeologists didn't find his secret tomb until 1922ⁱⁱ. To learn more about King Tut and his reign as king, visit the resource center for a list of articles, videos, games, and brain teasers.

LEARN MORE

Visit the Resource Center to review King Tut articles, videos, games, and brain teasers.

CLICK LINK

BLOG
The Life of A King
Ancient Egyptians wanted King Tut to be happy in the next life. So they crammed his tomb with things he might need. These included golden treasures and everyday stuff. What type of things do you think they may have included?
CLICK THE LINK TO BLOG

Now that you have attended the King Tut exhibit at the museum, can you imagine what it would have been like to have him as your leader?



WRITING ACTIVITY
Reflective Writing: An account of personal experiences; personal view point; individual perspective
JOURNAL WRITING: Write a 5-paragraph, editorial column on the King Tut exhibit and his reign. Discuss his leadership characteristics, style, and from your perspective, critique how effective he was as a ruler.
SUBMIT: Consider submitting your article to the Editorial Department of your local newspaper.

There have been many great African American leaders throughout history (i.e. Barak Obama, Oprah Winfrey, Nelson Mandela, Muhammad Ali, and Thurgood Marshall) and they all have different leadership styles. You can learn about their style and how they overcame adversity by reading the short stories in the resource center.

BLOG

The Responsibilities of Being a Leader

Supreme Court Justice and Civil Rights Leader Thurgood Marshall was willing to do whatever necessary in order to achieve his dream of legal equality for all Americans.

How did the pursuit of his dream sometimes place him in danger?

CLICK LINK TO BLOG

WRITING ACTIVITY

Persuasive Writing: a writer takes a position FOR or AGAINST an issue and writes to convince the reader to believe or do something. This is a technique used in advertisement and political debates,

FACT: In 1967, Muhammad Ali refused to be inducted into the Army.

QUESTION: Was Ali's refusal an act of courage, or a criminal act?

WRITE: Select a point of view and write a 5-paragraph position statement.

DEBATE: Ask your friend to write the opposing side of the argument. See whose position is most convincing. Ask your teacher, parents, or another student to be the judge of the debate.

LEARN MORE

Learn how to lead so others will follow. Click below.

<http://www.toastmasters.org/MainMenuCategories/FreeResources/QuestionsaboutLeaders>

HOW IMPORTANT IS COMMUNICATION WHEN YOU ARE A LEADER?

Many of the problems that occur in between people are the direct result of people failing to communicate. Faulty communication causes the most problems. It leads to confusion and can cause a good plan to fail. ***Communication is the exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another.*** It involves a sender transmitting an idea to a receiver.

The Process of Communication:

Effective communication occurs only if the receiver understands the exact information or idea that the sender intended to transmitⁱⁱⁱ.

- **Thought:** First, information exists in the mind of the sender. This can be a concept, idea, information, or feelings.
- **Encoding:** Next, a message is sent to a receiver in words or other symbols.
- **Decoding:** Lastly, the receiver translates the words or symbols into a concept or information that he or she can understand.

Barriers to Communication

Anything that prevents understanding of the message is a barrier to communication^{iv}:

- **Culture, background, and bias** - We allow our past experiences to change the meaning of the message.
- **Ourselves** - Focusing on ourselves, rather than the other person can lead to confusion and conflict.
- **Perception** - If we feel the person is talking too fast, not fluently, does not articulate clearly, etc., we may dismiss the person.
- **Stress** - What we see and believe at a given moment is influenced by our beliefs, values, knowledge, experiences, and goals.

Non-verbal Behaviors of Communication

To deliver the full impact of a message, you can use nonverbal behaviors:

- **Eye contact:** This helps signals interest in others and increases the speaker's credibility
- **Facial Expressions:** Smiling is a powerful cue that transmits happiness, friendliness, warmth, and liking.
- **Gestures:** If you fail to gesture while speaking you may be perceived as boring and stiff.
- **Posture and body orientation:** Standing erect and leaning forward communicates to listeners that you are approachable, receptive and friendly. Speaking with your back turned or looking at the floor or ceiling should be avoided as it communicates disinterest.
- **Proximity:** Maintain a comfortable distance for interaction with others.
- **Vocal:** To be effective, learn to manage your voice tone, pitch, rhythm, timbre, loudness, and inflection.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about how to give public speeches, visit the Resource Center.

[CLICK THIS LINK](#)

WRITING ACTIVITY

Rhythm & Rhyme Poetry: I am a Leader

JOURNAL WRITING: Write rhythmic, rhyming poem about your character qualities, role, responsibilities, risk and rewards as a leader.

RECITE: Recite the poem for your family, friends, and teachers.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE?

Leaders have vision! To have vision means the leader has an imagination that creates a mental images of something that is not presently real but there is a strong desire for it to come into existence in the future. The vision is the BIG PICTURE. Vision requires the dreamer to be creative, forward thinking, a planner, and a strategic risk taker.

- **Creative:** To be original, imaginative, resourceful, and innovative.
- **Forward Thinking:** To be cutting-edge, radical, far-reaching, and different.
- **Planner:** To be prepared with a plan of action.
- **Strategic Risk Taker:** To be a person that thinks through and plans for possible rewards, hazards, and consequences.

Leaders make their vision come true through **S.M.A.R.T.** goals. They take a BIG PICTURE and make it **Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely.**

DID YOU KNOW
S.M.A.R.T. goals
<p>To set a Specific goal, you must determine....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">*Who: Who must be involved?*What: What you want to accomplish?*Where: Determine a location.*When: Have a definitive time frame.*Which: Identify risk, requirements, and constraints.*Why: Understand your purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal. <p>Measurable - Establish a way to track your progress towards reaching your goal.</p> <p>Attainable – You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach your goal when you select a goal that is important to you. You make a way for it to come true!</p> <p>Realistic - Your goal is probably realistic if you truly <i>believe</i> that it can be accomplished. Ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.</p> <p>Timely – Plan to achieve your goal within a specific time frame.</p>

WORKSHEET ACTIVITY

Complete the **S.M.A.R.T.** Goals Planning Form: *Creating a BIG PICTURE Vision*

You can realize your vision through **S.M.A.R.T.** goals. Use your imagination to identify something you would like to accomplish. Remember, visionary leaders are creative, forward thinking, planners, and strategic risk taker.

CLICK THE LINK TO ACCESS THE WORKSHEET

You have learned a great deal about what it means to be a leader. You understand that leaders are driven by a core set of values (character qualities). Leaders have a specific style and they are effective communicators. Leaders have vision and plan for their success.

Now its time to tell your story! Write your own autobiography (life story) in the context of being a student leader in the 21st Century. Describe your leadership style, character qualities, the challenges facing leadership today, and your vision for the nation's future.

Remember: An autobiography is the story of someone's life told by and from the perspective of the subject.

WRITING ACTIVITY

Autobiography: An individual life story written by and from the subject's perspective.

JOURNAL WRITING: Write your own autobiography (life story) in the context of being a student leader in the 21st Century. In 5-paragraphs, describe your leadership style, character qualities, the challenges facing leadership today, and your vision for the nation's future.

BLOG

Who Are the Leaders In Your Life?

Some people are lucky enough to have a special teacher or mentor in their lives to

help **develop their leadership skills**. For Oprah, it was her fourth grade teacher, Miss Duncan.

Have you had a special teacher or mentor in your life who helping you develop into an effective leader?

If so, why is this teacher or mentor special? What did she/he do that made her/him special?

CLICK TH ELINK TO BLOG

ⁱ www.CharacterFirst.com

ⁱⁱ National Geographic Kids

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.nwlink.com/~Donclark/leader/leadcom.html>

^{iv} <http://www.nwlink.com/~Donclark/leader/leadcom.html>