

52

leadership
ideas

you can use with students



52 Leadership Ideas You Can Use With Students Developing Leadership Qualities in Students from Kindergarten to College

Table of Contents

How to Get the Most Out of This Book.....	2
1. Cultivating the Gift.....	3
2. Building Character and Discipline.....	4
3. Building Vision and Creativity.....	7
4. Building Relational Skills.....	10
5. Building Planning Skills.....	14
6. Building Problem Solving Skills.....	17
7. Building Values and Ethics.....	20
8. Building Courage and Risk Taking Skills.....	23
9. Building Teamwork and Servanthood.....	26
10. Building Communication Skills.....	29
11. Building Identity and Self Esteem.....	32
12. Confirming the Gift.....	35
13. Bonus Idea: A Rite of Passage.....	38

Leadership Ideas for Kids

How to Get the Most Out of This Book

You don't have to read this book all the way through. That's the beauty of it. It is designed to be a small reference guide to you as a parent, teacher or campus worker. It is chalk full of ideas that are inexpensive, easy to pull off, and that teach some ingredient of leadership to the young person with whom you share them.

These ideas can be used at a school, at home, at a civic organization, at a nonprofit group, at a church youth group, at a company or at a retailer who employs students. Some of the ideas are better suited for college students, while others are better in a middle school or high school context. Still others are ideal for a K-12 school. You'll notice many of the ideas can be used with any age—only the conversation afterward will vary.

I've included fifty-two ideas. There is one for each week of the year. They are listed under ten categories. I suggest you select the young person you wish to invest in, then evaluate what they most need to learn about leadership. Is it people skills? Is it problem solving? How about vision? In addition to the 52 ideas, I've included a bonus idea in this expanded edition. Once you pick the category, try one idea per week. Here's what I would do if I were you.

First, determine to do the idea *with* them. You are a tour guide not a travel agent. Don't just tell them what to do and where to go—go with them and do it together. You'll both be better for the experience, and you'll have more talking points afterward.

Second, prepare them for the experience. The ideas include field trips, interviews with leaders, exercises around the house, conversations around a TV show or video, and experiments with others in your community. Just in case you are more excited about teaching them leadership than they are to learn it, you'll want to talk with them and get them mentally ready for the time you spring it on them.

Third, keep a journal of your experiences together. Ask them to do it, too. This will enable you to chart their growth and record exactly what you were thinking and feeling along the way. Later, you can actually spot the improvements you both make.

Educators have confirmed that people learn 10% of what they hear; 50% of what they see, but 80% of what they experience first hand. Be sure you don't reduce this to a lecture on each subject. Gently push them to try the ideas themselves. You'll find that many of them are just plain fun, and will spark both great conversation as well as lots of laughter.

My goal is that these ideas will help you and your students grow as individuals and as leaders on your life journey. They're designed to expand the student's positive influence in this world. I believe you'll see great fruit from practicing these ideas.

Cultivating the Gift

Two years ago, our daughter Bethany turned thirteen. Prior to her birthday, we had already noticed signs of her becoming a teenager. There was a hint of an independent spirit; she had formed definite opinions on every topic; she requested a cell phone and a personal television for her room; public kisses from dad were embarrassing; and she was already shaving her legs! (Aren't girls supposed to wait until after they get married to do that?)

Because my wife, Pam, and I recognized the significance of this time in her life, we decided to do something to help her transition well into womanhood. In Jewish culture, young men and women experience a bar mitzvah or a bat mitzvah. These celebrations are designed to be a rite of passage into adulthood. In America, most of us have no such ceremony. Our closest event is getting a driver's license or high school diploma. Consequently, boys grow older, but often don't grow up. Girls want the privileges that come with age, but not the responsibilities that go with it. Pam and I decided to plan a significant year for Bethany that would enable her to be ready for a life of responsibility and leadership.

We sat down with Bethany, and selected six women whom we would ask to be one-day mentors for her. Over the next year, these women met with our daughter and let her shadow them for a day. They let her watch them at work, at home or on a trip. During that day, each of them shared a "life message" with Bethany. A message they wish someone had shared with them when they were 13, but no one did.

What happened was amazing. These women took our idea to a whole new level. Sara, a nurse, knew that Bethany was considering becoming a nurse, as well. So she took her to a hospital maternity ward and the two of them spent the day helping mothers give birth to babies. That afternoon, Sara took Bethany to a class she taught for teenage mothers, many of them unwed mothers. At the close of the day, Sara's life message for Bethany revolved around abstinence. (You can imagine that her message got through to Bethany much better than my lecture on the subject!)

Holly took Bethany on a one-day mission trip to urban Atlanta, where she worked with underprivileged kids who live in government housing. Betsy, a flight attendant, surprised Bethany by flying her up to New York City, months after the September 11th attacks. One after another, these ladies invested in our "little girl" one day at a time, for a year. They discussed topics like radical integrity, service, making your life an adventure and how to use her influence for noble purposes.

These women's voices still ring in Bethany's ears. Their messages weren't different than ours, but their voices were. Over the year, we noticed Bethany gaining confidence. She became secure when making difficult choices and experienced an increasing influence with her peers. We believe this community of mentors solidified our values in the home.

At the end of the year, we brought these six women together for an evening of celebration. You can read about it in the final section of this book. The night brought the mentoring process to a climax for Bethany. The evening had "teeth" to it, however, because of the experiences that occurred during the year.

Building Character and Discipline

It's Good For You

Sit down and discuss the things you and your young person really don't like doing. It may be a habit like sweeping the garage or some other chore around the house. It may be listening to or interacting with someone who seems un-loveable. It may be physical exercise or the discipline of waiting. It could even be eating a vegetable you don't like.

Choose two of these "undesirables" and make them disciplines. Deliberately do what you don't like doing. Practice them daily for one week. Put them down on the calendar and hold each other accountable to do them. (If you do them for two weeks, chances are they will become a good habit!)

Afterward, discuss the results. Did you feel a sense of accomplishment? Did you waver in your commitment? Talk about how daily disciplines pave the way for conquering laziness and indifference. How have you gained a personal victory by practicing these disciplines?

Walk Through a Graveyard

At sunrise or sunset one day, drive out to a local graveyard. If you can, find an old one, where the gravestones have descriptions on them of the people who are buried there. Walk through the property, reading the epitaphs of each one you pass.

Afterward, sit down and discuss what you saw. Think about the lives of those who are described on those gravestones. Then, talk about the future. What kind of person does your young person want to be, as an adult? What do they want to accomplish before they die? What will be their values? Their purpose? Their methods? What are their motives?

Take a few minutes and journal these thoughts on paper. Consider that we have a mission to live for and it is our goal to discover and work towards that mission.

Leadership Interview

Select a community leader who exhibits integrity and discipline. Set up an interview with them and ask them how they built that discipline in their life. Ask them how they determined to live with integrity, and how they stick to it, when it is difficult. Ask them how they failed along the way, and how they eventually gained victory over their flesh. Write down their answers and review them on the way home.

Finally, think about how you can follow those who led you, and how you can learn from their triumphs and failures.

Promises, Promises

Sit down and try to remember some promises you and your young person have made in the past. Make a list of them, and be sure and include some you failed to keep.

Next, select one of those unkept promises (to yourself or to someone else), and determine to keep that promise for one whole week. Fix your eyes on it as a clear goal. Write it down, and help each other think of steps you can take to keep the promise. Hold each other accountable. Write notes to each other; remind each other daily.

At the end of the week, talk it over. What does keeping a promise do to your sense of integrity? How does it positively affect your character? Does it strengthen your discipline? Remember that it is better that you should not make a promise than that you should make an promise and not fulfill it.”

Watching the News

Take some time each night for a week and watch the evening news on television. Look for news stories on people who either exhibited strong character (integrity and ethics) or failed to do so. (Trust me—these reports will not be hard to find.) Talk about each story and summarize what you think they had decided that made them act the way the person did. What values had they determined to live by: self-centered; self-promoting and self-protecting or civic-minded, others-centered and self-sacrificing.

Next, I recommend both you and your student make a list of four to six words that you intend to live by; words you believe describe the man or woman you hope to become by the end of your life. Share your list of these “core values” with each other and tell why you chose the words you did.

Building Vision and Creativity

Bag of Vision

Fill a bag with several strange, unrelated items from around the house. The more weird the items are the better. Then, have each family member reach in the bag and pull one out. Give them a minute to think about it, then have them tell an imaginary story about the item—perhaps how it originated. Afterward, have them share a practical use for the item they've chosen, for which it was not originally designed. The item should solve a problem or address a human need in some way. Allow vision and creativity to flow.

After this crazy little exercise, talk about the importance of vision and creativity. What role does our imagination play as we come up with new ideas to solve problems? What can we use our ability to be creative and have vision for?

Our imaginations can be used for good or bad purposes. Either way, they are powerful.

Pick Up Your Burden

Sit down with your young person, and talk about their school. What's happening on their campus? Once you get the conversation going, ask them to name one problem at their school that really needs to be solved.

Challenge them to “adopt” that problem as their own burden. Have them make a list of steps that could be taken to solve the problem. (These may be imaginary steps depending on the size of the burden they have chosen). Get them thinking about their vision for helping make the school a better place instead of complaining about how bad it is.

Finally, have them write about, draw a picture or clip out photos from magazines that depict the vision they have for their school. Have them create a mural if they wish. Then, post these pictures in their room as a reminder to both pray and act on their vision.

Spin the Globe

Gather around your family globe. Talk about the different needs people have around the world. Ask your young person to spin the globe, and have them point to a certain spot on it, as it revolves. When it finally stops, identify what country their finger is pointing.

Then, discuss the culture, the people and the needs of that nation (the CIA World Factbook can be very helpful!). Use the Internet, an encyclopedia, or a news source to determine the needs and problems of that country. Finally, decide what one thing you could do to help the country you've discussed.

Find a Historical Mentor

Select a biography of a great leader in the past. Find one about a man or woman who had a big vision, and accomplished something great for the world. Read the biography together, or at least a chapter from the book. You may want to pay your young person a good sum for reading the book—after all, they get paid for doing chores; why not pay them for feeding their mind and heart with inspiring stories?

After they are finished with their reading, discuss the highlights of the book. Ask them what they enjoyed most about the story. Ask them how that leader caught his or her vision to make a difference in the world. What enabled them to endure hardship and finally achieve their goal?

Creative Shopping

For dinner one night, assign each of your young people one food item to shop for. Give them some money, and send them to the grocery store. Allow them to pick whatever they want to buy from a particular food group: protein, vegetable, fruit, dairy, starch, etc.

When they arrive home, examine the variety of items they have chosen. Then, give them permission to put on their creative thinking hats, and put together a great menu from what they have chosen. This will require both vision and creativity on their part. Help them only when it is necessary.

As you eat the meal, talk about their thinking process. How did they make the decisions on the menu? What was the most creative part of the meal? How did they get the ideas they came up with? Talk about how those who prove themselves trustworthy with little tasks are usually those entrusted with big tasks.

Building Relational Skills

Be a Host

Visit the home of someone this week. Take your young person with you, and warn them to watch how well the person you visit hosts you, as guests. (You could also have them watch you, as you host guests in your own home.)

Afterward, talk about what it means to host others. A host is someone who takes initiative with others and makes them feel comfortable. They often guide the conversation, and do a lot of listening in the process. Then, explain that relational leaders are “hosts” in the relationships and conversations of their life. They are not guests, waiting for someone to tend to them.

Finally, have your young person practice hosting others this week. Have them focus on the needs and interests of others in conversations, not their own. Have them find one good quality about each person they meet and compliment them about it. Talk about how they are doing each night as you close out the day.

How’s Your Bedside Manner?

Pick a holiday coming up this month to celebrate. It doesn’t have to be a big one. It could even be something like Ground Hog Day or St. Patrick’s Day. Use it as an excuse to visit a hospital (or a children’s hospital if you like), and celebrate the day with patients.

Gain permission from the hospital staff to walk through a floor on the hospital and visit each of the patients there. (Children’s hospitals are great!) Take a small gift to them and get acquainted with each of them. Encourage them, as you discover their need for listening and laughing. Use this opportunity to build your people skills with those you don’t even know. Work at focusing on them, rather than yourself and your discomfort at being in a building full of sick people. Look for ways to serve them.

Afterward, discuss what you learned about people and people skills. What were some common discoveries you made about human nature? (i.e. we all like to be encouraged). What did you discover about yourself and your relational skills?

Love the One You Don’t Like

Sit down together and talk about people who are difficult to be around—people who you don’t connect with easily. (You might even be so bold as to say you just don’t like them). Then, each of you choose one of these people to focus on this week.

Each day, direct your attention to them, but don’t announce what you’re doing to anyone. You may want to begin with conversation, giving them your undivided attention. Later, you may write them a note, affirming any good qualities you see in them. Perhaps you can do

something to serve them and meet a need in their life. Maybe in give them a gift. The key is to do something that demonstrates love each day.

At the end of the week, talk about how you did. Was it hard? What made it difficult? How did the experience stretch you in your relational skills?

People Skills Test

This idea can be done in a variety of ways. On a vacation or outing with your young person, tell them you are going to give them a “test” on their people skills afterward. Prepare them to interact with others while on the trip—even a simple trip to a restaurant where you talk with a waitress. Don’t tell them what the quiz questions will be, but just prepare them to be ready to evaluate their experience when it’s over.

When you are finished, sit down and give them the quiz. For example, after a meal at a restaurant, you may want to ask them: Did you remember the waitress’ name? What was it? Did you show interest in her personal life? Did you ask about her family? Did you leave her with a word of encouragement? Were you able to give any words of wise counsel? Talk over questions like this. Being aware of these issues will eventually build good habits in relationships.

Listening Test

This one is fun, if you take it seriously. Determine that you and your student (s) will not talk about yourselves for an entire day. You will only listen to others, and if you talk at all, it will be about the other person with whom you are conversing. This exercise will force you to become completely “others-minded.”

By not talking for a day, you will notice your listening skills will emerge. You will also find you don’t have to say many of the things you typically say on any given day. Finally, you will learn the power of focusing on others instead of yourself. This is the foundation of relational leadership.

At the end of the day, discuss what you learned about yourself and about others. Can you continue a similar practice indefinitely?

Building Planning Skills

Event Planning

Choose an event that would normally be planned by an adult. It is preferable that the event be something on the calendar each year. Instead of planning it yourself, ask your young person to do all the preparation. For instance, if you have a pet, let your young person make arrangements for pet care while you are out of town. If you don't, perhaps you can allow your young person to plan their own birthday party, given parameters of time, budget, and number of people who can attend. Depending on their age, check on them periodically, to make sure they stay on track and get answers to their questions. Allow them to follow through all the way to the completion of the event. When it is over, discuss what happened..

Cash for Clothes

At the beginning of a new semester of school, sit down with your young person and discuss how much money you might normally spend on clothes for them. Once you arrive at a figure, tell them things will be different this semester. Give them the sum of money you agreed upon, and tell them they can have control of their clothes budget. They can get whatever they want, but that's all the money they will receive for the semester.

Talk about how they must assess their needs, and plan on distributing the money between what they want and what they need. The decision, however, is completely up to them. If they choose to "shoot their wad" on a nice coat, that's fine. They will just have to wear the same shirt and pants the rest of the semester.

Discuss the story of the tiny ant, who, although he is the smallest of creatures, plans and prepares for the future, and maintains a good attitude along the way. The ant needs no one to tell him what to do, because of his predisposition to plan and work hard.

Map Quest

Before taking a long trip or vacation, grab a map and ask your young person to plan the entire road trip. Talk them through the details, if necessary, but give them as much responsibility as you think appropriate. For instance, if you take a vacation, talk about how many days you will take to drive to your destination, where you'll need to refuel, eat and stay overnight, and even how much the trip might cost. Let them do the math and prepare the details of the trip.

Ask your young person what factors went into the planning of your road trip and how they calculated the stops along the way.

A Game Without Goals

This idea works especially well if your young person enjoys sports. Attend a ballgame of any kind—football, baseball, hockey, soccer or basketball. Enjoy the game together.

Afterward, have a discussion at a restaurant. Have them imagine for a moment what that game might have been like had their not been any goals. How long would the game have lasted if the football field had no end zone; if the basketball court had no basketball, if the soccer field had no goal, etc? Have fun for a few minutes talking about how ridiculous the whole arena of sports would be without a goal. There would be no point. No one would come to watch, no athlete would want to play.

Then focus on their life for a moment. Life is just like sports in this way. There is no point without a goal, a mission. There would be no fulfillment. Perhaps this is why so many go to work everyday yet have no joy, and why they can come home, change their clothes and go play on a softball team—and have all kinds of energy for the game. At work they're unaware of the goal, the other revolves around a goal. Next, ask them what their goals are in life. Ask them what steps they could take this year to move toward it.

Planning Their Financial Future

Over dinner sometime, discuss a big financial goal with your young person. Is there something really big they'd like to purchase? Is there something they want to invest in? Is there anything they are presently saving money for?

Once they come with something they really want, determine to plan how they can best save enough money for it, and how much time it will take. Factor in allowances, and any special project they may undertake to earn some extra money. Also factor in money they should give to the Lord and other necessities. Help them to focus on this goal, and not give in to the temptation to squander their money on other things, outside of their plan. Make this a project.

Once they achieve their goal, or when they give in to temptations, discuss what lesson they can draw from their wisdom or foolishness.

Building Problem Solving Skills

Choose a Crisis

Sit down and watch the news on television together, with a notepad in hand. Before the telecast, ask your young person to choose one crisis or problem reported in the news. If you prefer, read through the newspaper together. (There will be several stories in every newspaper or broadcast!) Once they choose the crisis, have them write down all the details you both can remember from the report. Then, pose this question to them: If you were in charge of this problem, what would you do to solve it? Ask them to assume leadership in their imagination, and jot down what steps they would take to remedy the crisis, from start to finish.

Evaluate their steps when they are finished. Did they leave anything out? Is their solution realistic? How expensive would it be? Did they diagnose the problem accurately? Are there any steps your young person could actually take to implement their solution?

Watch a Movie

Check out the local movie listings to see if there are any movies showing where the plot involves solving a problem. You will notice that often a majority of the plots involve a dilemma that the lead character must resolve. Pick a good one, and go see it with your young person. Prepare them for a discussion afterward, over some dessert.

Discuss the story in detail. What was the problem? Why was it a problem? Who solved it? What did they do? Was it the best solution? Discuss the idea that all real leadership is about solving a problem.

Visit an Amusement Park

Visit an amusement park together, with your young person. (It may be difficult to imagine visiting an amusement park without them!) Tell them as you enter the park that your goal is to have fun, but to also learn something. Prepare them to look for ways the amusement park could improve. Ask them to look for problems. Perhaps the customer service could be better. Maybe the lines for the rides require people to wait too long. It could be the restrooms are dirty or too hard to find.

At dinner time, after you've had plenty of time to spot problems, discuss them. Where were the places that ought to improve? Then, have your young person suggest ideas on how the park could make them better.

Read All About It

Choose a leadership book that you and your young person can read. Over the next week, select what chapters you each will read, or choose to read the whole book, if possible. Optimally, the leadership book will specifically discuss problem solving. One suggestion might be *Habitudes: Images that form Leadership Habits and Attitudes*. In these books, you'll find a chapter on problem solving. When you have read it, discuss your personal application to the principles taught in the book

Put action to the instruction. For more ideas on books to read, check out the Growing Leaders website, at: www.GrowingLeaders.com.

Act It Out

Sometime when you're together, come up with a challenge that you and your young person believe is a legitimate problem in your school or community. Talk about it, then discuss possible solutions. Then, narrow it down to one. Finally, choose an evening when both of you act it out together, (the problem and solution) before friends or family members. You might make it like a game of charades, where those watching try to figure out what you are doing, and what problem you are trying to solve.

Learn it. Do it. Pass it on. Talk about how you can pass on problem solving skills to others.

Building Values and Ethics

Lost and Found

Go to the shopping mall with your young person. As you window shop, secretly drop a \$10 dollar bill on the floor, where they will see it. Make sure they do not know you are the source of the money. When either of you spot it, don't offer any suggestions to them on what to do. Allow them to reveal their heart. Will they keep it? Will they find a way to return it to the owner? Is it even possible to find the owner? Wouldn't everybody claim that it was their money? Within a few minutes, you and your young person will be ready to discuss what to do with your find.

Once he or she draws a conclusion, talk about how it reflects the personal values they've embraced. What kind of values have you both chosen to live by?

TV Lies

This one is fun. Watch TV some evening, or see a movie in which you know one of the characters has questionable values. Explain to your young person they are to watch the commercials or the show for the purpose of discussion. Either during or after the program, discuss how often you saw lies in the commercials, the program or the movie. How do commercials over-promise what they can deliver? Did you hear any outright lies? How did the characters in the movie or program display unhealthy values? Were they deceitful? If so, why were they?

Now discuss this. How do they reflect real life? How can you live out a positive culture in your home or school?

The Hiding Place

I got this idea from a friend who's had great success with it. It will take a little preparation. Choose a night to talk about the people during World War Two who refused to cooperate with Nazi Germany, as they murdered millions of Jewish citizens in several countries. Talk about how many of them took their Jewish neighbors in and hid them in secret rooms or crawl spaces in their homes. Their efforts saved countless lives, even though it cost some of them their life, when the Nazis discovered these hiding places.

Next, simulate the experience in your own home. Pick a secret room in your basement, your attic or a crawl space under your home. If you can, play a tape or CD with the sound effects of bombs and gunfire, or perhaps a thunderstorm. Grab some flashlights and run to the hiding place you've selected. Tell your young people you have thirty seconds to get there, or you will be captured. You may even want to surprise your young people (if they are old enough

to experience it), by having a neighbor come in and look for you, as if they were trying to capture you. Do this for as long as everyone seems to be engaged in the exercise.

Afterward, talk about the experience. How did you feel? Ask your young people: Is there anything you believe in so strongly that you would risk your life for it?

Stand For a Cause

Sit down with your young person and choose an organization that stands for a cause, and work for it. The cause could be feeding the homeless, it could be building homes with Habitat for Humanity, or it could be cleaning up the roadsides in your community. Be sure and choose one you believe in.

Pick a Saturday and go help them. Take a stand with them. Do something that communicates you believe in putting feet to your values. Talk over what it really means to believe in something.

Memory Lane

Take out some old photos of you when you were growing up, and look them over with your young person. You might even want to get some hot chocolate and sit down with a photo album for an entire evening. Talk about some fun memories you had growing up. Talk about what was happening when the pictures were taken, years ago. Try to remember the pivotal moments when your life was shaped as a young person.

Next, begin to talk about the values your parents passed on to you. Discuss the ones you wish they would have given you, if you feel you didn't receive a strong foundation of values. Whenever possible, talk about what your parents did right, as they raised you.

Next, choose six core values that you and your young person believe would be good ones to embrace today. You may choose words as simple as honesty, service, or generosity. Practice them.

Building Courage and Risk Taking Skills

Attempt the Impossible

This idea works best when both of you make the commitment and hold each other accountable to keep it. Sit down together and determine to attempt something this week you couldn't pull off easily. It may be a big goal they set for school, or it could be taking the risk to talk to someone about character. Both you and your young person should share what you'll attempt this week. The key is to step outside of your comfort zone. Share what happened at the end of the week.

From Procrastination to Progress

This week, identify one personal goal you've procrastinated in fulfilling, one that you've never gotten around to achieving. Share it with your young person. Then, ask them to do the same thing. Talk about why we procrastinate and what role fear plays in the process. Once you discussed your unrealized goal, force yourselves to make a decision on it this week. Act on it in some way. Take a step toward fulfilling it. Once again, hold each other accountable to the step you say you are going to take.

Very often, procrastination is directly tied to fear. We wait on doing something because we are afraid of the outcome. We might fail. We might look stupid. We might not know what to do in the middle of the whole thing. So—we procrastinate. Sometimes the best remedy is one simple step of action. Think and discuss this step of action and hold one another accountable.

Raising Cash and Courage

Sometimes the scariest thing for people to do is to raise money from people they don't know. It's a test of courage. That's what this little idea revolves around. Have your young person choose a charity they really believe in. If they don't know of any, check some out on the Internet. Then, go raise \$500 from people you don't necessarily know, for this worthwhile organization. Make a list of those you can talk to, and what you'll say when you discuss the project. Then, take time this week to approach these people with your idea.

Shadowing

Invite your young person to shadow you at work, one day. Choose a day where they can observe you in a variety of tasks, and where you can talk them through responsibilities you have on the job. For most young people, this kind of thing is very enlightening, and depending on how old they are, a little intimidating. Show them the relationship between responsibility and courage. Communicate how a person must step up and perform some

difficult (even intimidating) tasks simply because they must be done. Show them the relationship between your conscience and your courage. Commitment breeds courage.

Afterward, discuss some historical characters where commitment and courage were evident. Talk about how leaders feel responsible which leads them to do courageous things.

Taking Initiative

This idea has two options, depending on age of your young person. If they are younger, go out to eat at a restaurant. Once you are seated at your table, have your young person lead the discussion on what everyone wants to eat, then have them do all the ordering, when the waitress or waiter comes. (You might even ask your young person to remember the name of the waiter!) Through the dinner, have your young person take the initiative to care for all the needs—from refills on the drinks to ordering the dessert. This will require both initiative and courage.

If they are older, have them identify a person who exhibits courage and risk taking skills. Ask them to take initiative to set up an interview with them and ask them what gives them courage. You can go with them, but make sure your young person has a series of questions ready to ask and can take initiative on guiding the conversation.

Afterward, debrief your experience. Whether it was a dinner out or an interview with a courageous leader, discuss what they learned. Talk about why leadership requires courage.

Building Teamwork and Servanthood

Feeding the Homeless

Locate a local homeless shelter or soup kitchen. Go together to the shelter and serve meals to the homeless. Be sure and get your young person involved in the process. Let them experience what it means to serve others, on a team of people.

Afterward, discuss how it made you feel. Describe your experience to one another: how did you feel about serving the needy? How about the sounds, the smells and the sights of it all? Did you feel uncomfortable? Why was it important to have a team of people serving? Could one person get the job done?

Family Work Day

Plan a family work-day, some Saturday. Assemble a team of people, or your entire family and go through closets to find clothes and other items that you don't need and that would be useful to the Salvation Army, or some other charity that provides for the needy. Make it a team effort, organizing items into boxes or bags. Include everyone in taking the items to the charity you have chosen as well. This will become a win/win/win: you get rid of things you don't need, the needy benefit, and you learn what it means to work as a team.

Afterward, take some time over pizza to discuss how the role each of your team or family plays and what the special contribution each makes.

Work to Win

Prepare to hand out Saturday chores, some weekend. Ask each young person (if you have more than one) to do a list of chores that are appropriate for their age.

Without telling them, hide an envelope with money in it or tickets to a ballgame, and put it where they'll find it if they do the chores very thoroughly. For instance, if you tell them to clean out the sofa—you may hide ten dollars under the cushions that they can find and keep if their work is thorough. Or, you may tell them to clean out their closet, and you can hide some tickets to a movie or ballgame—and they'll find them if they are thorough. The winner is the one who works with excellence. Hopefully, everyone will win.

Service Trip

This one will require you to plan ahead. Investigate volunteer opportunities that your school or some other organization may be sponsoring locally. If possible, plan to go on a cross-cultural mission trip together and serve in some unfamiliar place, such as to the inner city or

a different-culture neighborhood. Make sure it's a place where you are out of your comfort zone and that you are concentrating on serving others.

This kind of a trip does wonderful things for those who participate. Once you return home, take some time to debrief the experience. How did you work together as a team? What was the highlight of the trip? How could the service you rendered on the trip become a lifestyle for you at home?

Team Building

This one is an activity that may take different forms depending on the season of the year. For instance, in the fall, you may have lots of leaves to rake in your yard. Why not ask your young person to rake leaves for you or for a needy person who lives nearby. Sit down with them and suggest that they organize a team to do the raking, and offer to pay them for their effort. Talk about how many people they'll need on the team and what's involved if they're going to do a good job. (If it's winter, you might have them shovel snow; if it's summer or spring they could wash cars.)

The key to this activity is preparation. Be sure and take the time to really discuss how your young person can make this project work. Get them organized. Whatever you are going to pay them, give the money to your young person to divide up between the team members. Let them experience what it means to be a supervisor and see the job through to the end.

Building Communication Skills

Adult Interaction

Learning to communicate is inseparable from good leadership. The better we communicate, the better our chances are of becoming an effective leader. What's great about it is that young people can learn communication in some of the simplest situations.

For instance, the next time you host a party in your home, ask your young person to help you serve the guests. Give them a job where they will have to interact with adults—such as overseeing the punch bowl, or taking coats, or passing out snack plates. Having a job will make conversation less awkward for them, yet it will get them mixing socially with adults.

Another idea to reach the same goal can take place the next time your young person is due to for an appointment. When it's time, have your kids call to set up their appointments to see the dentist, or to get a haircut, or to see the orthodontist. This will be easy for some temperaments, but challenging for others. However, anytime we have to communicate in order to accomplish a goal—it is good for us.

Writing Contests

Check with your local schools to see if there are any writing contests for young people to enter. The next time there's a contest, challenge your young person to enter it. Have them write on something they really care about—but encourage them to do it with excellence. Talk through the writing process with them and help them to get their point across in the most colorful and effective way possible.

Once the contest is over, talk about what they learned from it. Ask them what they understand about making a point clear and compelling.

Backyard Book Club

During the spring or summer, host a Backyard Book Club at your house. This will not only give you an opportunity to teach to kids, but to allow your young person to help lead it. Teach books that reinforce positive values or leadership skills- William Bennett's *The Children's Book of Virtues* is a great place to start.

Ask your young person to teach the younger kids, or to read the story each day. Give them a chance to communicate with others, and accomplish something in the process. After the week is over, talk about what they learned, from helping to lead it. Discuss how those who teach have a greater responsibility, and a greater impact on others.

Editorials

Sit down with your young person and read the editorial section of the newspaper. Talk about why newspapers include this section each day. After reading a couple of them, have your young person choose an issue they are interested in, and write an editorial of their own. They can keep it simple and short, but work with them to make it compelling. This may get them reading the editorials in the following days to see if theirs gets published!

During the process, talk about the power of words. An old proverb says that death and life are in the power of the tongue! That's quite a statement. What do you suppose that means?

Role Reversal

This one is fun when you have two generations present. It is ideal for the family. Take some time one evening and play a game called: Role Reversal. This is where the adults and the young people switch roles—and learn some revealing lessons in the process.

Have the young people become parents, and deal with a young person who had just lied to them, or perhaps came home late one night. Encourage everyone to really step into the parts. This may take a little time, but try to get past the laughter and consider what both generations are experiencing. Come up with at least three tough situations you might experience in real life, and play the role reversal game. Afterward, take the time to discuss what each person felt. How did communication take on new forms, when the roles were changed?

Building Identity and Self Esteem

Brag on Them

This one is simple, but could have a memorable effect on your young person. Find three adults this week, and spend time with them along with your young person. At a natural, appropriate time, brag to them about your young person, in front of them. Don't make it syrupy or unbelievable, but simply affirm the gifts or strengths or qualities your young person possesses, in front of them. Few things have a more lasting effect than for a young person to listen in on adult conversation, especially if it pertains to them. The conversations I remember most growing up were not ones between me and an adult, but between two adults when I was eavesdropping. When we are growing up, a good part of our self esteem is derived from what those we respect think of us. This is your chance to build the esteem of your young person by talking positively about them in their presence.

Hanging Out with Giants

Take some time to discuss some great leaders of the past, with our young person. Ask them about some of their heroes who might be considered good leaders. Pay your young person money to read a biography of one of these favorite leaders who accomplished great feats. In fact, you may want to read the same book together. Later, take time to discuss what you learn from the leader. What were some highlights about their life? What enabled them to achieve what they did, or excel above their peers? What did you both identify with in their life? What can you do today, that you learned from reading about their life?

Biographies create mentors out of former leaders that we can learn from.

Identify Their Gift

This exercise is key for building both a sense of identity and some leadership direction for your young person. Take some time to focus on your young person's strengths: their natural talents and their acquired skills. Discuss the issue with them. Make a list of the strengths that fit into each of these three categories.

After you've helped your young person identify their primary gift(s), focus your attention on developing that gift or talent. For instance, if they possess word gifts or a talent for speaking or writing, direct them to enroll in speech class or to audition for a play. If they are good at organizing things, help them find a leadership role or a student government position that would allow them to groom that gift. In other words, find a match for their gift and a role. I believe that when young people find their strength, then choose to serve in the area of their strength—they will naturally find themselves leading in that area eventually. Influence grows out of personal gifts.

Say I Love You...

This week, make a point to say “I love you” and hug your young person daily, even if they are in the “too cool to hug back” stage. Don’t worry about their response or lack of response. Initiate the act of affirming your love for them and their value to the group, or the team or the family they are part of. Nothing improves a person’s sense of worth more than being reminded of how much they are loved and valued by others.

Our greatest sense of security comes from unconditional love. When we have it, we don’t fear rejection or judgment or failure. Few gifts prepare us to lead others more than knowing assuredly that we are loved and valued for who we are. Young people can perform at their best when there is a foundation of love and grace beneath them.

Assess and Evaluate

Do some homework and identify some personal assessments your student can fill out on themselves. These can be instruments that measure:

1. Personality (i.e. The DICS Profile, or Meyers Briggs Temperament Analysis)
2. Strengths (Gallop StrengthsQuest)
3. Motivational Needs Profile (Measuring what motivates them to participate)
4. Emotional Intelligence (Measuring the emotional security; i.e. EQi)
5. Love Language (Measuring what speaks value and love to them)

Once you complete each one, take time to talk about your results. What did the test conclude about you? What did you learn about yourself? Finally, record the results in a single place. You may even want to draw a diagram or silhouette of your student and place the results from these assessments inside the diagram and post it on your mirror in your room to see each day as you prepare for the day.

Confirming the Gift

In the beginning of this book, I shared the story of my daughter Bethany, and her thirteenth year. During that year, my wife and I, along with Bethany, selected six women that we admired and respected, and asked them to be one-day mentors for our little girl. Each of these ladies spoke into her life and shared a “life message” with Bethany during the day they had together. Some of them went on trips, some allowed Bethany to shadow them at work, others just spent a fun day together, sharing in a safe conversation, some values they wanted to pass on to her. Needless to say, it made a lasting impression on her.

The year came to a climax when we invited all six of these mentors to our home for a dinner party. We had four objectives at this party. First, we wanted these women to meet each other and see the others who were participating in this special year. Second, we wanted to say thank you for their investment in our daughter. Third, we wanted Bethany to have a chance at the end of the year to share with them the lasting lessons that she learned from them as they spent time together. Finally, we wanted to spend the evening offering a word of encouragement to Bethany—not only from mom and dad, but from six older females who were models of the kind of life she wanted to live as she grew into adulthood.

Dinnertime was a fun time of sharing. Many of the ladies did not know each other, and only had Bethany as a common ground at first. It was a great time for Bethany to sit down again with adults and host conversation with adults. Following dinner, we moved into our family room, where Bethany took some cards out. On the cards, she had written personal thank you notes to these women, sharing specific things she had learned from each of them. It was a meaningful time for the women, but especially good for Bethany who had to put into words the value she had gained from their lives.

As they left that night, Bethany presented them with a gift, once again to express our thanks to them for such a valuable investment in her young life. The year and that particular night accomplished everything we hoped it would, as we planned it months before. I had to laugh as I tucked my young son, Jonathan, into bed that night. Crawling under the covers, he told me: “Dad, I already know the six guys I want to mentor me when I turn thirteen.”

I love to create hunger in young people to reach high and become everything God intended for them to be. I have the privilege of doing this not only with my two children, but with thousands of students across the country every year. And you do too, with the young people right under your nose. It’s one of the highest aims we can strive for. Don’t allow survival to become your goal. Don’t let mere maintenance satisfy you. Look deep inside of those students with whom you work. There’s gold inside of them. They have influence—everyone one of them. Help them uncover the “light” in them, so that they could influence their world. It begins with you and a handful of simple ideas.

Bonus Idea: Rite of Passage

The original edition of *52 Leadership Ideas You Can Use with Students* was finished before my son turned thirteen years old. In this expanded edition, I'd like to share with you the mentoring experience my son, Jonathan and I, had together with four other dads and sons, during their thirteenth year.

We called it “Champions Training.” It was designed to be a group experience between five fathers and five sons, who were all approximately the same age. The boys were all in middle school, and we dads believed they needed a “rite of passage” into adulthood. Much has been written on this subject, by men and women far wiser than I am. This term simply means that the fathers wanted to create an unforgettable year that would help prepare the boys for manhood. Sadly, this is rare in America. In many cultures, from the Hebrews in the Middle East to the countries of Africa, traditions have been established as a “rite of passage” for boys in their culture. It is an experience where the boys understand that they are no longer just a child, but are growing into adulthood; they are becoming a man—with responsibilities and rights that go with it. Let me share what we did this year, if only to spark your own ideas.

Getting Started

We began by meeting as fathers and determining what kind of ideas and principles we wanted to share with our sons. (I am so thankful for this group of dads who took the initiative with the idea of a mentoring group!) We decided to allow a friend of mine, Brent Sapp, to guide us on this path. He has taken the word, “CHAMPIONS” and used each letter to remind the dads and sons about a virtue to be developed in their life. The word champions stands for:

- C – Courage (We discussed the need for bravery)
- H – Honor (We discussed how to act with honor and show respect to others)
- A – Attitude (We discussed keeping a positive attitude in all situations)
- M – Mental Toughness (We discussed the need for discipline and good thinking)
- P – Purity (We discussed the temptations they'll face and how to overcome them)
- I – Integrity (We discussed the need for honesty and character in life)
- O – Ownership (We discussed how to steward time, talent and money responsibly)
- N – Navigation (We discussed how to plan for the future and make good choices)
- S – Service (We discussed serving others with the gifts and talents they possess)

We used this template as curriculum for our meetings each month. As you consider a guide you'd like to use, these virtues worked very well for us. We took two or three meetings to cover each virtue. Unfortunately, they are not available in written form. For ideas, you may want to check out our “Habitudes” books at: www.GrowingLeaders.com, if you're searching for a guide or curriculum. These books teach leadership qualities through the power of an image, an experience, and a discussion. Habitudes are images that form leadership habits and attitudes. The images (pictures) ignite all kinds of conversation and discovery.

At our first meeting, we decided how often we would meet with the boys, where we would host the meetings and who would share responsibility for each one. (We rotated the responsibility and location for each meeting).

At the first official meeting, we created an environment that felt very much like a sacred covenant signing. We lit “tiki” lamps outside, one for each of the virtues. We had the boys sign a paper committing themselves to the year-long training. Then they sealed it with wax and a signet ring. On that first night, they all received a book, a journal to write down all they would learn over the next 12 months, and a safety box to lock it all up in between meetings.

Along the Way

Over the year, we exposed the boys to a variety of people and places. For example, during the meeting on “navigation” we took our sons to a private airport, where Dan Cathy, president of Chick Fil-A flew in to meet us on his jet. He took the boys up in the air and did some creative flying. Later, Dan talked to the boys about a “flight plan” for their life.

We took the boys downtown to help load trucks to feed the homeless and underprivileged. They watched movie clips, read from their books, took trips and interviewed leaders from all over the country. Before the year was over, they had met Truett Cathy, (founder of Chick Fil-A), Jeb Bush (governor of Florida), Kyle Petty (NASCAR driver), Todd Peterson (Atlanta Falcons kicker), Colonel Paul Trotti (from the army), and Tony Dungy, the year his team, the Indianapolis Colts won the Super bowl! In addition we met with local men, from pastors to financial planners, to build wisdom into the boys. We attempted to meet every other week, on a Sunday afternoon, as it fit into our calendars.

In addition to the group experience, each of the dads provided some personal touches for their own sons. My son Jonathan got to meet best selling authors John C. Maxwell and Andy Stanley for a few minutes that year. He also got to go to Hollywood! Jonathan loves acting and theatre, so a friend, David Christie, who was a line director for a movie in Hollywood, joined in our venture. David invited Jonathan to see the making of part of a movie over a long weekend. Jonathan even got to be an extra in that movie!

The Ceremony

At the conclusion of the year, the dads planned a ceremony, where we would review the lessons of the year, then give them some special gifts and knight them with a sword. That night, each of the boys read a letter they wrote, detailing the most memorable meetings of the year and what they learned. Next, we moved to a table where each dad described how proud they were of their son and why—then gave him a cardboard cut-out of a drawing. It was a picture (drawn by a professional artist) of their son dressed as a super hero, with his own super-hero name. (The boys loved seeing themselves with huge muscles.) Finally, we moved to the knighting ceremony, where we placed the sword on their shoulders and head and pronounced them a knight for the 21st century. It was an intimate setting where we dads got to say the things we all felt for our sons. The boys got to keep the sword.

The Celebration

The final gathering included a huge host of people. It was our version of a bar mitzvah. Moms, siblings, friends and extended family came to this celebration where we described all we did over the year and celebrated the boys growth into manhood. We showed video footage from the year, presented each son with their own “Champion” ring, passed the baton of manhood on to them and even read a letter to them from the president of the United States! President Bush had written a personalized letter to each of the boys, congratulating them on their growth and challenging them to be leaders as adults.

It was a year Jonathan and I will never forget. My hope is that he’ll pass on that ring and sword to his son one day.

Want More?

At [Growing Leaders](#) we are committed to equipping the next generation with tools to discover their gifts and influence the world around them in a positive way.

If you are a parent, a teacher, a youth worker, a coach or you work with kids in any way, we want to stay in touch with you and help you equip those students to become all they were meant to be. We offer a variety of tools on our website. Below are just a few...

A daily blog with ideas on leading the next generation: [blog.growingleaders.com](#)
[Workbooks, DVDs, PDFs and CDs](#) to discuss with students

A [National Leadership Forum](#) for school staff, parents and youth workers

A plan for organizations to nurture a leadership culture that impacts all students

A [team of communicators](#) who travel & speak to schools, organizations and churches

For more information, contact us at: [GrowingLeaders.com](#)