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Applying Theory to Practice:
Virginia's Secondary School Leadership Courses

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The former vice-president of Council on Education and the director of the Center for Leadership Development said, "Colleges and universities by their own proclamation are in the business of developing leaders for society." Are American high schools in this business of developing leaders, too? The phenomenon of teaching leadership is beginning to find its way to secondary schools. The purpose of this paper is to explore how the phenomenon of teaching leadership can and is effecting American secondary schools. This involves discussing the problems of our education system as the results of a paradigm shift in America's learning needs. The emerging leadership courses can theoretically work as a solution to these problems and make our high schools and their students stronger than ever before. This study also surveys the leadership courses currently offered in the state of Virginia. An analysis of the survey provides a look at the current practice of leadership courses. The final task of the paper is to offer suggestions to adapt theory to practice, to determine what changes need to be made in order for students, schools, and communities to get the most out of their high school leadership course.

The Virginia Regional 1994 Teacher of the Year, Leslie Fortune is tired of the endless bashing of the American school system. He says that teaching is the most noble of all professions because the teacher is tasked with "holding a mirror before students and challenging them to see not only their current likenesses but more importantly reflections of their sooner-than-expected portraits of tomorrow" (Fortune, 1994, 16.) There is no doubt that a good teacher is worth his or her weight in gold. However, there is also no doubt that there is room for improvement in our education system. Fortune admits this:
"Americans view their country as being in a state of siege. Anger and frustration lead to demands for change. The irony? Only through education can we effectively resolve our problems" (15.)

Our education system is not without its own problems. In 1993, the American public ranked the “lack of discipline as the third biggest problem facing public schools, followed by fighting/violence/gangs” (Jenkins, 1995, 222.) A poll in the November 1994 issue of the Virginia Journal of Education reports that violence and poor discipline top the secondary schools’ list of problems. According to Gallup Polls taken in 1988, 31% of American secondary students had feared for their safety over the year. The number of high schools that hire dogs to sniff for drugs and task teachers to search students for weapons is growing. Violence is increasing as the use of alcohol and drugs, which had dropped for several years, is again reportedly on the rise for the high school age population. The status of secondary schools add to the long list of teacher responsibilities the role of acting as the police.

School problems are not rooted solely within the school system; often problems are based in society as a whole. Problems often center around “at-risk” students. At-risk students are students that have failed at least one course, have been retained in a grade one or more times, frequently miss school, have been suspended or expelled, and have to change schools frequently (Hunter, 1993, 52.) Brother Eagan Hunter writes that “the American family—the backbone of earlier societies—is degenerating. The 1990 US Bureau of the Census reports that the US now has the highest divorce rate in the world, with one out of every two marriages ending in divorce” (54.) Of at risk students, only 55% come from traditional families. The loosening of the family influence upon the growth and
development of our nation's youth indicates the need for another institution to provide what students once received in the home. "Delinquency arises when there is a 'loosening of ties to conventional social institutions, including the school'" and the family (Jenkins, 1995, 222.)

This delinquency does not only include disciplinary problems, but also lower academic achievements. Education scholars cry for schools to pay more attention to non-college bound students. In the President's words, "The US has a lousy system for youth who don't go to college" (Clinton, 1993, 50.) The United States has the highest dropout rate among the advanced industrial countries (D'Andrea Tyson, 1993,53.) Even those students who stay in school need to do better. The 1983 "A Nation At Risk" publication revealed that 13% of all seventeen year olds are functionally illiterate and 40% of minority youth are functionally illiterate. Many seventeen year olds do not possess the "higher order" intellect skills we should expect of them. 40% cannot draw inferences from written material, only one fifth can write a persuasive essay, and only one third can solve a mathematics problem requiring several steps (Niebuhr, 1984, 26.) When the new SATs made their debut in 1995, scores did increase by five points in the verbal category and by four in the math category. However, there is still a significant gap between scores of males and females and between whites and minorities (Facts on File, 1995, 637.) President Clinton said that America must measure its education by international standards; he is correct when he says that we are still at risk (Maehr, 1993, 233.)

At a national level, many Americans are feeling the anger and frustration that Fortune described. Herman Niebuhr offers a possible explanation for the direction of this frustration towards the nation and its school system. Niebuhr makes a three pronged
argument that the United States is going through a “watershed time” of change. He believes that American society is moving through a watershed period of fundamental change and discontinuity. Niebuhr’s “watershed” is similar to Thomas Kuhn’s paradigm shift and what Peter Drucker calls “the age of discontinuity.” Regardless of the word choice, Americans are finding that the old understandings and old ways are no longer adequate. The most visible example is the need for a transformed economy which will be competitive internationally and will maintain our standards of living. Niebuhr then argues the national learning process, within which schools and colleges provide a part of the necessary life learning skills, is in disarray and is inadequate for guiding the United States through the watershed. This disarray includes the entire school system—students, teachers, administration, curriculum, and structure. He concludes his theory with the belief that a new, stronger learning process is being born now (Niebuhr, 1984, 12-14.)

Niebuhr believes that the United States is caught in the midst of a paradigm shift. This shift is redefining American society and its school system. An important impetuous for this dramatic change was mentioned by Niebuhr and Clinton. Today’s students must be judged on an international standard because of the new global economy. “The nation’s educational system is essential to the development of worker competence and company competitiveness” (D’Andrea Tyson, 1993, 52.) By focusing on the new demands on our work force and their impact on the American economy, Kenneth Gray offers a different view of the problems of American secondary schools.

The prediction of Japanese industrialist Konosuke Matsushita is that in the race for international markets, “America will lose” because, he says, they are infected in the brain with a disease he calls “Taylorism.” Taylorism is the belief that both the preordained
natural order and the maximization of profits dictate that the fittest should manage as benevolent dictators and that the rest should work. The former should do the thinking while the later follow directions; consultations between the two groups are discouraged, since these interactions threaten authority of the managing class. This concept was named after the father of scientific management, Frederick Winslow Taylor.\(^1\) Gray uses literature on Total Quality Management (TQM) to show that Matsushita just may be correct. In American industry the worker and the customer are typically the last to be considered.

"Where are the elitist attitudes of Taylorism learned? For one possible answer, most of us need only remember our own high school days and how we, as students, treated one another" (Gray, 1993, 371.)

"Despite all the rhetoric about equality, high schools teach elitism, not egalitarianism" (372.) One predictable characteristic of every high school in the United States is the existence of an officially identified and certified “in crowd” of students. The “in crowd” is anointed, honored, and awarded by teachers, administrators, school policies, and the public. They are enrolled in the honors courses with the best teachers and the smallest class size. “The ‘in crowd’ is referred to as the country’s future leaders. Leaders of whom? Those less blessed—the remaining students who are taught by the same system that they are inferior, that their opinions don’t count, and that they are destined to be subordinates” (371.) These students who feel inferior as the destined subordinates, are the at-risk students who are already open to less than positive influences.

\(^1\) In fairness to Taylor, he was one of the first to argue that “dictatorial managerial methods were inefficient and that close cooperation between owners and workers was the secret to greater profits and less labor strife” (Gray, 1993, 371.)
Teachers are guilty of Taylorist views as well. Jeannie Oakes, who studied the inequalities in high schools, found that teachers, either consciously or unconsciously treat the bright students as future peers and the less bright as future subordinates. When asked to list the most important lessons learned by high school students, teachers hoped the brightest would learn to think logically and critically and the less bright would learn good work habits, respect for authority, and practical or work-related skills. When students were asked the same question, high-ability students spoke about learning to think critically; lower-ability students talked about filling out job applications. Studies also show that the effects of Taylorism run even deeper into the student psyche. High school students in college preparatory classes “stated that they viewed themselves as both brighter and socially superior to students in other programs of study.” By showing examples of Taylorism in both the secondary school students and teachers, Gray makes the critical point: both groups carry these attitudes from high school to the work force.

Gray further explains how the new economic order requires mutual respect, not elitism and alienation. If only for the sake of the nation’s economy, “it is time to move beyond Taylorism in our high schools” (372.) To move from the “in crowd” to one crowd, Gray suggests curricular integration which can be achieved by creating opportunities for interaction between students in various programs of study. Gray says this goal can be accomplished by making academic education more applied or by requiring that, in order to graduate, all students must participate in a team project. (374.) A third method for creating one crowd, one new team for the future American work force, would be to require students to take a leadership course in order to graduate.
Theoretically, a leadership course could help solve current problems within the American school system. If Niebuhr is correct about schools being caught in a period of watershed change, a leadership course could help bridge the path from the old understandings to the new paradigm of equality and mutual respect in American society and schools. If Gray is correct about schools teaching superior and subordinate roles, a leadership course could enhance team-building skills for students of all ability-levels and, in the long term, strengthen America's economic forces. A leadership course could teach conflict resolution, build self-esteem, and expand critical thinking which would deter violence, drop-outs, apathy, and the other problems within secondary schools.

A leadership course does not necessarily promise to create leaders. The Jepson School of Leadership's mission is to “teach for and about leadership.” High school leadership courses can do the same. No matter if a student immediately enters the workforce or continues institutional learning, he or she will be called upon to act as both a leader and a follower. Even while still in high school, students can benefit from knowing “for and about leadership”. Regardless of leader or follower, a leadership course can teach competencies for leadership—community service, critical thinking, public speaking skills, and self-confidence. A leadership course can teach theories about leadership—situation, motivation, and group dynamics from multiple perspectives.

John F. Kennedy High School in College Park, Maryland, is graduating its first class of students from the Leadership Training Institute (L.T.I.) in June 1996. A quotation from one of L.T.I.'s leadership student shows that a course in leadership can teach competencies required for being an active citizen, leader or follower:
Since I have entered L.T.I., I have pulled off major banquets, seminars, and camping trips, all with the help of my peers. I have gone to the school board to speak on behalf of the L.T.I. and our school. I have started community beautification projects and done many things for which I can consider myself a leader. The L.T.I. has honed my leadership skills by giving me the self-confidence, advice, and opportunities that it takes to be a leader (interview, 1996.)

Leadership courses can also provide the opportunity to teach life/leadership skills such as empathy, critical thinking, public speaking, and self-confidence.

In order to understand another person or group, one needs to be able to view the situation through the other’s shoes. Empathy is an important skill for both leaders and followers and community service can teach it. Community involvement benefits students of all academic ability-levels. Gifted and Talented Coordinator Barbara Lewis writes in the February 1996 edition of Educational Leadership, that “serving others hooked gifted students on learning.” She says that service is a need of the gifted. “When gifted children find their paths of service, they experience a deep sense of fulfillment, as if there’s some reason that they are here” (Lewis, 1996, 71.) Community service targeted at at-risk students showed them that “they can and should make valuable contributions to large goals” (Delany, 1994, 12.)

A service program involving in a Florida high school that specifically targets at-risk students found that community service actually improved the students’ academic self-image and their performance in school. Community service actually was found to prevent students from dropping out of high schools. The University of Florida’s Department of Education provided nine at-risk students who were seriously considering leaving high school with the opportunity to practice community service twice a week. The at-risk students assisted students with multiple, severe disabilities at another high school. A pre-
and post-questionnaire was given to students participating in this “Students Serving Other Students” project and a pre-algebra class with students of similar age and ability level.

The questions asked were: 1. Where would you rank yourself in your High School class?, 2. Do you have the ability to complete college?, and 3. How do you rate yourself in school compared with your close friends? The at-risk students pre-questionnaire results were 1. 8/9 Average, 2. 3/9 Yes, and 3. 9/9 Average. After four months of community service, the at-risk students’ questionnaire results changed dramatically. In June, 4/9 students saw themselves as above average, 6/9 students felt they could make it through college, and 4/9 students felt they were above the ability-level of their friends. The results of the pre-algebra class was not as positive; the results dropped in all three categories after four months of school (12-13.) A leadership course with community service not only opens students’ eyes to a leader’s role as a servant to his or her followers (for example, an elected official serving the public, and the restaurant manager serving employees), but students serving others revitalizes a student’s interest in his or her academic work.

Leadership courses are arenas for creative and critical thinking exhibited through public speaking; life’s lessons are never dull, so there is no reason for a leadership course to be monotonous either. A leadership course lends itself towards “doing the subject,” “exhibitions of mastering,” and “authentic learning” (Schneider, 1994, 132.) Students benefit from purposeful, stimulating tasks that permit expression through a variety of ways that have value beyond the instructional setting. There are five standards for differentiating authentic learning from traditional classroom tasks, all of which are fundamental in learning leadership competencies. They are higher order thinking, depth of knowledge, connectedness to the world beyond the classroom, substantial conversation,
and social support for student achievement (133.) Through leadership course activities such as community service, interviews, debates, guest speakers, role-plays, case studies, oral reports, and mock trials students learn essential citizenship skills. All five of these values can make stronger leaders who perceive the common goal to include followers’ interests. Teaching these values can also make stronger followers whose voice will be heard when it is time to hold their leader accountable for his or her actions.

Most of these authentic learning tasks involve a student getting up in front of a class to speak and could possibly open a student up to public criticism. They require a student to try something he or she has never done before. The more a student tries something new and finds that he or she can try again or succeeded, the more the student’s self-confidence grows. Self-esteem in schools is a lot more than a “feel-good” movement (Youngs, 1996, 59.) Self-confidence and self-esteem give a student the courage to practice all of the other skills that a leadership course can teach. There are six faucets of self-esteem that are beneficial to any student. Self-esteem creates a sense of physical safety, emotional security, identity, belonging, competence, and purpose (64.) A leadership course can nurture self-esteem with student-to-student and adult-to-student relationships in a positive environment through group projects and team-building exercises.

Leadership courses can offer more leadership competencies than commitment to service, critical thinking skills, oral presentation skills, and high self-esteem. Leadership courses can also include other topics such as decision making, conflict resolution, and time management. However to a certain degree, without the study of leadership theories, these are life-skills without any direct impetus to lead or demand leadership.
By teaching leadership theories, students can expand their view of leadership and their role in relation to it. A leadership student from Kennedy High School’s L.T.I. says how a leadership course can develop and foster a broader view of leadership:

In the past I believed a leader to be any person that led a group, organization, or another person in a good or evil direction. But now I realize that real leadership is something positive...Leadership means taking the steps to make a positive change in society and in the lives of other people as well as oneself. It also means to help others in the right direction. A leader does not have to be a president or a famous person; it can be anyone who aids others to make positive change by taking action himself (interview, 1996.)

The “about leadership” side of a leadership course can enlighten students to leadership theories, such as situation, motivation, and group dynamics, that remind them to keep a multi-perspective view.

Leadership scholars have been publishing leadership theories in earnest since the 1970s and James M. Burns’ Leadership. Whereas the competencies answer the question of “how?,” these theories help students answer the question of “why?” Students can learn the importance of being aware of the context of leadership in the situation theories. This theory can teach students that they are actually all equal; it states that each situation demands different traits and behaviors from a leader. Hence, the leader in one situation may not be the leader in another. An example which directly relates to high school students deals with extra-curricular activities. The basketball team captain may not be the ideal person to lead a school pep rally. The president of the physics honor society may not be the ideal individual to lead the school’s Kindergarten mentoring partner. The situation theory teaches that almost everyone is a leader in some situation and nearly everybody is a
follower in another situation. It also helps student to critically analyze the environment for clues to ideal leader behavior.

Other major clues for an aware student to discover are related to theory based on motivation and group dynamics. By studying motivational theories, students can find out what makes other people (leaders, followers, students, adults) act the way they do. It can also help a student understand his or her own actions by deducing what makes him or her decide on various actions. Motivational theories explore an individual's level of needs and wants and the different types of rewards and punishments. Group dynamics theories can help predict the emotional climate of his or her group and the motivational techniques that should help the group meet its goals. Group dynamics theories can help students sharpen their observational and reflective skills as they watch the groups of which they are a member, such as a family, McDonald's, or a sports team. A leadership course that includes the theoretical side of leadership offers students the academic rigor of learning, observing, and applying theory. Because theories vary in their points of view, students also receive the benefit a multi-perspective course curriculum.

In our changing economic realm and diverse society, an important perspective that leadership courses can teach is multi-culturism. "Teachers in the United States and various other nations in an ever-shrinking world will have to be more insightful practitioners of a multi-cultural education if they are able to meet the challenges that confront citizens in the fast-paced, extremely fluid, highly unequal societies of the information era" (Davidman, 1994, 2.) Multi-cultural learning involves learning about differences in the definitions of leadership and also the similarities of all leaders. Similarities do occur across national borders; the problems and issues of basic human
nature create the same leadership challenges regardless of the continent or country. The lessons and experiences help students develop the ability and the desire to be active, responsible citizens at various levels of our democracy. Multi-cultural learning objectives fit neatly into a leadership course that encourages students to see the world through eyes other than their own. It “prepares future citizens to reconstruct society so that it better preserves the interests of all people and especially those who are of color, poor, female, and/or disabled” (183.) Researching leaders and the views of leadership within different cultures can help a student become more reflective of leaders and leadership in his or her own culture. With a blend of leadership competencies and theory, a leadership course can prepare America’s future leaders/followers for and teach America’s future leaders/followers about leadership.

Besides educating both leaders and followers for and about leadership, a leadership course can also set the standard of duty and obligation to others. A leadership course directed at students who will be both leaders and followers actually teaches concerned, active citizenship. “Citizenship education has long been one of the goals of public education in the United States” (Schneider, 1994, 132.) When students are not receiving lessons on basic values that produce caring citizens at home or elsewhere, for the benefit of society, our nation’s future, and the individual student’s future, it is a duty and obligation of our American schools to prepare America’s future voters for active citizenship.

“After the family, the school is the primary social institution to assume the responsibility of teaching children appropriate social behavior. Through the process of teaching educational skills and social values and providing rewards and punishments,
schools are intended to empower children to become responsible, productive adults" (Jenkins, 1995, 221.) A leadership course can embrace certain values that are necessary for a community of concerned citizens. The National Association of Secondary School Principals, the world’s largest principals’ organization with over 42,000 members verified the worth of a value-based curriculum in May 1995. They “stout-heartedly” endorse the “Community for Caring” program that promotes five specific values—caring, responsibility, respect, trust, and family. (McCarthy, 1995, 66.) Plagues of teenage pregnancy, violence and gunplay, drinking, drug abuse, classroom apathy, children from broken homes with physical and emotional violence and high crime neighborhoods “cannot be fought without the spiritual force of positive values to counter the negative ones that drain the hopes of too many children” (67.)

A leadership course for all students can promote these and other values as well. Caring can be taught by multi-cultural perspective teaching and community service. Responsibility can be transmitted through a challenging environment that encourages students to produce up-to-standard work. Respect will be the result of mutually positive transactions between students and between student and adult (such as the community guest speakers and teacher) (Chamberlain, 1994, 204.) Trust can be learned through rising self-esteem and through tasks that hand over responsibility to the student. A study by Edward Wynne, a University of Chicago professor of Education, came to the conclusion that although teaching character and values is a controversial subject, increased efforts to teach values creates precious payoffs (Wynne, 1995, 153.) An official of the Norfolk Education Association said, “People forget that we teach values on a daily basis: Attendance, coming to school prepared, a work ethic.” Values like caring, responsibility,
respect, and trust "are values that all humans should have for one another" (McCarthy, 1995, 67.) Values that promote concerned leaders and followers can be taught in a leadership course.

A leadership course can fulfill the value vacuum that seems to be growing in America’s high schools. A carefully structured leadership course can deter school misbehavior and at-risk delinquency by channeling energy towards community service and academically rigorous theories. A leadership course can help end Taylorism in schools by universally teaching important leadership competencies such as servant leadership and leadership theories that promote varying strengths and weaknesses as recipes for different types of leaders. Professor of Leadership at the Jepson School of Leadership writes, “leadership education provides an avenue to prepare young people for deliberate, active involvement in society.”

High schools are choosing to enter the avenue of preparing active leader and follower citizens by offering leadership courses. The trend of leadership courses is just beginning to take shape although they clearly have so much to offer students, schools, and the community. Do the pioneer high school leadership courses live up to their expectations? A survey of Virginia’s leadership courses reveals what is exactly what is being taught under the guise of “Leadership.”

To produce the findings on Virginia’s leadership courses, the following methodology was followed. Of the 269 public high schools in Virginia, 75% (202 high schools) were contacted. Of Virginia’s 95 counties, 87% (83 counties) were represented in this survey by at least one high school. This phone survey found 32 leadership courses that were currently offered in Virginia’s public secondary schools. For a list of these
schools, see Annex A. The guidance department confirmed whether or not the high school offered a course in leadership. If the high school did offer a course in leadership, two surveys were sent to each school. One survey went to the principal and the other to the leadership course teacher. The surveys collected information about the curriculum content of the leadership course, the students taking the leadership course, the teachers teaching the course, and the institutionalization of the leadership course within the high school. A copy of the surveys is enclosed in Annex B. Of the 58 surveys sent, 18 were returned; nine principals' surveys and nine teachers' survey were returned. The information was then compiled and analyzed.

This study was only concerned with actual courses of leadership. The determining factor of what qualified as a course of leadership was if the leadership program was listed on students' transcripts. High school guidance counselors reported during the phone surveys that their students participated in leadership workshops and seminars or received leadership training indirectly through other courses. Over twenty counselors reported that their high school offered a course in leadership through the Junior ROTC program. Over ten counselors reported that the extracurricular club the Future Farmers of America (F.F.A.) teaches a leadership-type course. As a suggestions for further research, secondary school leadership programs and workshops, leadership in the J.R.O.T.C. program the F.F.A. association should be explored.

What is Being Taught in Virginia's Leadership Courses?

Leadership has hundreds of definitions and the essential elements of leadership can change depending on one's definition. Almost every high school interprets the essentials
of leadership differently. This was reflected in what subjects they reported are being taught in their classes. Parliamentary procedure, public speaking, self-esteem and group dynamics were almost offered in most courses. Fairfax County offers county guidance for their leadership course; a Fairfax leadership course text outlines communication skills, team building, leadership styles, problem solving, conflict management, stress management, and campaign management. In most of the courses, lessons centered around Student government activities such as Homecoming, Prom, and school-wide community service and spirit events. Except for lessons in leadership styles, only one leadership course offers leadership theories as part of its course content.

Not only is what is being taught in leadership courses different, the methods for course content selection is also unique to the school. Courses were obviously all based on student interests and needs, but the involvement from forces outside of the individual high school differed. The decision of course content varied from solely up to the teacher to committees including multiple disciplines to "Central Office" or county level involvement. Three of the high schools that responded in the survey (12.5% or four of the 32 total Virginian leadership courses) created their curriculum with committee members from the University of Richmond's Jepson School of Leadership. The leadership courses all report teaching methods based on cooperative learning--group interaction, class discussions, debate, oral reports, and student-led classes. Teachers use their own combination of real life experiences, guest speakers, computers, videos, leadership curriculum guides from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the Fairfax county text (only in Fairfax county leadership courses), and outside readers such as John F. Kennedy's Profiles in Courage as resources for their leadership courses.
What Students are Taking the Leadership Courses?

Leadership courses are reportedly offered usually for one elective credit, although four surveys reported that their leadership students do not receive any credit for the course. Virginia high schools' leadership course class sizes range from 9 to 55 although most classes have around 25 students. All returned surveys reveal that when there is only one teacher, between 15 and 22 students is the ideal class size. The high school that offers two leadership course sections, with 55 and 43 students, has two “sponsors.” The ideal number of students when there are two teachers is reportedly 30 students. Of the teacher surveys that were returned, only two leadership courses were open to all high school students. Two more teachers said that their course will be open to all students. The rest of the courses were directed at students in leadership positions such as the Student Activity Committee, the Student Government Association, and Class officers. Approval for admittance is required from guidance counselors, teachers, and/or parents.

Most courses rely on the application process to decide which students are admitted into the leadership courses. Of the students who apply, the surveys report “most” are admitted to the leadership programs. Taking the leadership courses are mostly student leaders. Four surveys report that the leadership course represents a cross section of their high school population, but one clearly specifies that there are “no low achievers.” One leadership course is offered to less than one percentage of the high school population; another reports it only accepts average to above average students. The latter high school is a special magnet program for students that specializes in social studies, global economics, and leadership for a student’s entire four year high school career. Students in this leadership course apply while they are in eighth grade; their acceptance is based on
grades in Middle School, teacher recommendation, test scores, and the application essay.

This is the only magnet school in Virginia that is specifically geared towards leadership and government.

**What Teachers are Teaching the Leadership Courses?**

From the levels of involvement reported on the surveys, the teachers teaching leadership courses are those that are willing to go the extra mile for students. All students have multiple responsibilities other than the leadership course that range from other courses to football coaches. Leadership teachers appear to come from varied disciplines including French, math, English, agriculture, and social studies. The majority of teachers usually work with high-level students; five are student government sponsors, one is the Gifted coordinator, and two teach AP courses. The remaining leadership teachers include a principal, a vocational advisor, and a first-year standard English course teacher. Not all teachers report that they know of other high school leadership courses. Fairfax county leadership teachers meet yearly and Hanover county leadership teachers and parents meet monthly.

**What do Leadership Courses offer Students, Schools, and the Community?**

Although the survey showed the creation of high school leadership courses was primarily for the students' needs, leadership courses have also benefited the school and the community. All of the surveyed leadership courses began within the last six years and most appeared in or after 1991. All the surveyed leadership courses, except for one, is a year long course. When asked why the leadership course was created, the vision came from different origins. In one case, the leadership course was created to professionalize the work the student government leaders were doing and to give them academic credit for
their work. Another course's original objective was to “give the teacher a free period.” The current leadership teacher of this course sees the course objective “to build confidence and skills in students who already have leadership ability by making them self-reliant.” The magnet leadership course began because the Central Office, the Henrico County, saw a need for a government/leadership course. Other examples of the response from this survey question include “the need to teach student leaders responsibility and to prepare them for future roles” and simply, “to meet the needs of students.”

This section of the survey attempted to explore the extent of institutionalization of the leadership courses. All leadership courses reported strong, some extremely strong, parental support of the leadership course. The teachers and principals reported that there is community support for the leadership program. Their example of this involvement was the community guest speakers. Although over half of the leadership teachers report that community service is a component of their course, only one leadership course reported an extremely strong relationship with the community; this leadership course has an Advisory Committee of “20 proven leaders of the community.” When the principals were asked if the leadership course made any effects on the rest of the high school, three answered “not yet” and the other six declared that the leadership course did have positive effects on the rest of the high school. Of the principals who answered the question, all said that the leadership course should be an integral part of the high school: “needs to be major part of the curriculum.”

An analysis of the surveys from high school leadership teachers and their principals reveals that Virginia is in the progress of transforming some of the theoretical benefits of a high school leadership course into practice. Virginia secondary school leadership courses
are excelling in several aspects of their leadership courses: community service requirements, self-confidence building, use of technology and cooperative learning, and interdisciplinary perspectives. The two major recommendations to speed theory into practice are the establishment of an organization for leadership teachers and the inclusion of all students in offered leadership courses.

Virginia’s current leadership courses set a high standard for the rest of the nation to follow. Over half contain community service as part of their curriculum. The trend of community service is growing and some high schools require community service hours for graduation, give credit for community service, or offer a course called “service learning” which is based on students’ volunteer activities. Community service is a must for a leadership course because of its benefits for students of all ability-levels. Virginia’s leadership courses have grasped the importance of nurturing self-esteem and self-confidence. Almost every survey reported a growth in self-confidence as an effect the leadership course had on its students: “Of course they have better self-confidence after the leadership course.”

Leadership teachers are also using the latest technology to help in their instruction. The surveys report that computers, CD-Roms, videos, and other media are rescues in the leadership classroom. Since leadership includes studying work processes, it is important that students are familiar with such technology. Technology is continually changing basic work processes such as planning access to information, information management, communication, and creative expression (Wager, 1990, 12.) Teachers also reported that with technology, they use cooperative learning in their classrooms. Cooperative learning students do just as well on standardized tests as students in regular classrooms, but they
have the added benefits of working as a team. (Kantrowitz, 1993, 73.) The teachers of the leadership courses come from very different disciplines; they each bring a different perspectives to leadership subjects. From reports of examples of assignments, students are keeping leadership courses open to multiple perspectives. One teacher explained her class' long term project that explored Virginia's tobacco industry and its effects on the economy, environment, and culture. Multi-perspective subjects taught using cooperative learning and the latest technology enhance a student's opportunity to learn for and about leadership.

The trend of teaching leadership in high schools is growing. After the first year of the magnet school for social studies, leadership, and global economics was open, applications for the next year tripled. In Fall 1996, they will leap from one to three leadership course sections. According to the phone survey with guidance counselors, five more Virginia high schools are planning to offer a leadership course beginning in the next school. Not only are the number of high school leadership courses increasing, national centers that could be sources of information and guidance for brand new secondary school leadership courses are growing. The US Department of Education funds two major national leadership centers. The National Center for Educational Leadership (NCEL) is located at Harvard's Graduate School. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is home to the National Center for School Leadership (NCSL) (Anson, 1992, 299.) Even with the first undergraduate program in Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond, and rest of the state and national increasing attention towards teaching leadership, the head of the Accreditation Office of the Virginia State Department of Education, Charles
Finley says that the local school board should be the determinants of high school leadership courses.

Based on the surveys results, there is clearly a need for a state-wide agency or organization for leadership course teachers. A central office of sorts needs to be created that will create a network of communication, channel for funds, a market for needed resources, and Standards of Learning for leadership courses.

Currently, there is no network of communication for the leadership course teachers that are scattered across the state. One survey was returned by a first-year teacher who acquired the leadership course as part of her English-teacher duties. She had no resources except outlines from the previous leadership teacher and did not know of any other high schools that offered courses of leadership. Even teachers within Fairfax county, where the county established guidelines and a course outline, reported that they did not interact nearly enough. With all the responsibilities of a teachers, there is little time to continually re-invent the wheel. A forum for exchanging ideas, successes, problems, and questions is needed. This network could provide needed leadership workshops for teachers to educate math, English, and social studies about leadership theories. Most current leadership teachers have plenty of practical leadership experience but very little experience in leadership studies. Perhaps one of the already existing leadership institutions like the NCEL at Harvard, the NCSL at the University of Illinois, or the University of Richmond's Jepson School of Leadership could work with the State Department of Education to establish this necessary network of communication for high school leadership course teachers.
Another specific need of the leadership courses is a financial need. The programs that were set up by the county, like Henrico and Hanover, do not have the problem that other schools face. The leadership course draws funds from other disciplines. The survey reports that leadership courses are funded through various other departments such as English, Social Studies, and the Gifted and Talented Program. Most of the leadership courses that are primarily student government are self-funded by class fund raisers. The Social Studies Curriculum Resource Handbook lists over 100 special funds for projects like a leadership course. A network could put the word out to organizations that would be interested in financially supporting leadership courses and alert teachers to where to go for financial backing.

An organization for high school leadership courses and their teachers would also open a market for resources currently missing in many leadership classrooms. The NASSP does have a number of books and videos that aid leadership course teachers. They have a monthly magazine edited by Lyn Fiscus that offers leadership lesson plans. However, not all of the teachers know about the NASSP’s leadership-instruction tools. The surveys report a need for more “up to date” works including videos, activity guides, case studies. There is an urgent plea for a leadership text that “combines theory with current moral social issues” and that will “hold students’ interests.” An organization for leadership courses will increase the market for resources leadership teachers could use.

A specific resource that the leadership courses need and teachers could use is the establishment of Standards of Learning for a Leadership elective. Standards of Learning are established by the State Department of Education to “promote consistency of quality and an opportunity for every student to excel.” They include the program goals,
objectives, guidelines, and actual S.O.L. objectives. There are established S.O.L.s for all major high school courses including math, science, English, and history/social studies.

"S.O.L. establish a framework which defines the foundation upon which a solid curriculum may be built, indicates a possible scope and sphere for instruction, suggests instructional ends not means, and capitalizes the strengths of programs now existing in local divisions" (S.O.L. for VA Public Schools, 1995.)

A leadership course organization could encourage and oversee the creation of Standards of Learning for Virginia’s secondary schools. The organization could ensure that local school boards and the teacher maintain flexibility to keep leadership courses attune with current topics. However, to “promote consistency of quality and an opportunity for every student to excel,” the organization could make sure that guidelines are created. Currently, the Department of Education suggests S.O.L.s for certain elective courses that are offered in most VA schools and are an important part of the total education programs of our schools. In a S.O.L. packet for the electives of oral communication, theatre, and journalism, the Superintendent of Virginia’s schools said, “Since an elective course consumes the same time and energy as a required course, it is obvious that these courses need the same careful planning and design that required courses need.” It does not exceed the interest and concerns of the State Department of Education to establish S.O.L.s for leadership courses. The state published “minimum guidelines for citizenship" in 1980. Leadership courses are quickly multiplying; an organization would help the Department of Education remain progressive and up to date by establishing Standards of Learning for Leadership courses.
The surveys report more than the need for a secondary school leadership organization. Their results also report that Taylorism—the nurturing of the preordained division of leaders and subordinates in institutional structures—is alive and well in the newest aspect of American secondary schools. Right now, most leadership courses are specifically geared towards students of the “in crowd,” the students who are favored by the school system and its teachers, awards, and grading structure. One teacher wrote that her objective as a leadership course teacher is “to build confidence and skills in students who already have leadership ability...” Another survey specifically points out that “low-achievers” are absent from his high school’s leadership course.

Based on the results of the surveys, leadership courses are not preparing America’s future leaders or followers for the new global economy. In order to create a work force that trusts each other and is capable of making sound decisions that will benefit the entire country, Taylorism must disappear from our school system. Leadership courses as they are reported from the surveys are still infected by Taylorism. The realm and content of leadership courses is designed to combat elitist attitudes. However, the selection process for the current leadership courses needs to change. Ideally, a leadership course should be a requirement for graduation, but since that suggestion is too future-oriented for now, leadership courses should be open and encouraged to all high school students.

The more diversity there is in a leadership class, the more opportunities there are for students to learn to mutually respect the strengths and weaknesses of each other. Gray suggests that a method for ending the benevolent dictatorship of the “in crowd” is to structure the school to promote one crowd. Homeroom is as close to “one crowd” as a high school can probably become. “Homeroom is a truly unique phenomenon because it is
probably the only circumstance, other than lining up for graduation, in which students are
thrown together on a purely random basis—indipendent of course selection, intellectual
ability, athletic prowess, family income, or race. High schools need more opportunities of
this type” (Gray, 1993, 374). If a high school required a leadership course for graduation,
this homeroom population would be partners in oral reports and teammates in group
projects. A leadership course with a true cross-section of society would get the message
to students that they need to, and can, understand each other for the benefit of our
America.

Leadership courses must do their best to work towards a class that has equal
representation of the entire school. The students and the community benefit from the
inclusion of all students in leadership courses. One way for students to obtain the
maximum benefits from a leadership course is to change the selection process. According
to the surveys, nearly every leadership course has some sort of an application process.
The premise behind an application process is that there are certain criteria that an
individual must meet in order to be accepted. The flip side of this process is that there is,
at the very least, a chance of rejection; those who do not have the ideal traits, the perfect
resume, or model behaviors are not accepted. Thus begins the feelings of superiority of
those chosen and the subordination of those denied. Even “requiring approval” from a
counselor or another teacher sends a message to students that they are not responsible for
their own future. It is imperative for both higher and lower academic ability-level students
to be in the leadership course together. Higher students will have priceless opportunities
to widen their perspectives and increase their ability to put themselves in others’ shoes.
For long after high school, these students will not be too quick to judge, be willing to listen, and be more reflective individuals.

A leadership course, especially one as random as homeroom period, might be even more beneficial to the lower-ability and at-risk students. Students in lower-track or lower-ability are sent a signal that they are less merit worthy and this dampens their expectations for self and future. Courses that cater to lower-ability students actually spend less time devoted to instruction and are more likely to be taught by less experienced and less effective teachers. A leadership course could be the remedy for situations where students get caught in a rut or track that does not allow or help them to reach their full potential.

"Students themselves are an important part of the learning process. Therefore, attending a class alongside highly motivated and academically successful students enhances one’s chances of success” (Arun, 1995, 187.) Leadership competencies such as critical thinking and self-confidence can be and should be taught to all students. More than just the nine Florida at-risk students could reap the benefits of community service if they participated in a leadership course. “Making adolescents’ experiences as rewarding and productive as possible is right and humane; we all depend on them for our future” (Nightingale, 1990, 13.)

The United States does depend on students for our future. Our political, economic, and international future rests on all, not just the “in crowd,” of today’s students. According to the US Bureau of the Census 1992, “fewer than half of the American birth cohorts ever attain any post-secondary education” (Arum, 1995, 199.) It would seem, therefore, that the community of our nation would benefit by including non-college bound, lower-ability, at-risk students and the brightest of the bright in leadership
courses. Thomas Jefferson once said that an educated citizen is the foundation for a democracy. What kind of skills do Americans want our future American and global citizens to have in order to make educated decisions that will determine our future?

America cannot afford to pretend that our future lies only in the hands of the “in crowd.” It is to the local community and the national community’s benefit to include all students in a leadership course.

Virginia’s pioneer high school leadership courses are discovering that applying theory to practice is not easy. Aside from their many successes, two specific suggestions to strengthen the leadership courses are the establishment of a secondary school leadership course organization and welcoming the entire student population into the leadership courses. These Virginian first 32 leadership courses are laying the foundation for the success of America’s future in her students.

These first 32 leadership courses in Virginia are sending a signal to America. These leadership courses, their students, and their teachers are addressing the problems of our American school system and the disarray of the whole transforming American society. These courses are representative of the examination of our problems and our solutions that define what a leadership course can theoretically offer our world and its inhabitants.

These courses are the first in Virginia to rise to the impressive task to attempt to make theory a reality in our schools. These first 32 leadership programs are taking the business of leader development into their own hands.
ANNEX A  Virginia High Schools That Currently Offer Leadership Courses
ANNEX B  Teacher and Principal Surveys
ANNEX C  Literature Review
ANNEX D  Works Cited
<table>
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<th>School</th>
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<td>Amelia County HS</td>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>8500 Otterburn Rd Amelia County Courthouse, 23002</td>
<td>(804) 561-2101</td>
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<td>Amherst County HS</td>
<td>Amherst</td>
<td>PO Box 410 Amherst, 24521</td>
<td>(804) 956-9391</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ft. Defiance HS</td>
<td>Augusta</td>
<td>PO Box 38 Ft. Defiance, 24437</td>
<td>(540) 245-5050</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stuarts Draft HS</td>
<td>Augusta</td>
<td>Rt. 4 Box 108 Stuarts Draft, 2447</td>
<td>(540) 946-7600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annandale HS</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>4700 Medford Dr Annandale, 22003</td>
<td>(703) 642-4100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centreville HS</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>6001 Union Mill Dr Clifton, 22024</td>
<td>(703) 802-5400</td>
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<td>Chantilly HS</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>4201 Stringfellow Rd Chantilly, 22021</td>
<td>(703) 222-3090</td>
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<td>Edison HS</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>5801 Franconia Rd Alexandria, 22310</td>
<td>(703) 924-8000</td>
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<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>3500 Old Lee Hwy Fairfax, 22030</td>
<td>(703) 219-2200</td>
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<td>7521 Jaguar Trail Falls Church, 22042</td>
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<td>Langley HS</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>6520 Georgetown Pike McLean, 22101</td>
<td>(703) 287-2700</td>
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<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>6540 Franconia Rd Springfield, 22150</td>
<td>(703) 924-8300</td>
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<td>Madison HS</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>2500 James Madison Dr Vienna, 22181</td>
<td>(703) 319-2300</td>
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<td>Marshall HS</td>
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<td>7731 Leesburg Pike Falls Church, 22043</td>
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<td>McLean</td>
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<td>1633 Davidson Rd McLean, 22101</td>
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<td>Oakton HS</td>
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<td>West Potomac HS</td>
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<td>6500 Quander Rd Alexandria, 22307</td>
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<td>9414 Atlee Station Rd Mechanicsville, 23111</td>
<td>(804) 730-3395</td>
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<td>Lee Davis HS</td>
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<td>7052 Mechanicsville Pike Mechanicsville, 23111</td>
<td>(804) 746-5261</td>
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<td>Patrick Henry HS</td>
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<td>12449 W. Patrick Henry Rd Ashland, 23005</td>
<td>(804) 752-6023</td>
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<td>Freeman HS</td>
<td>Henrico</td>
<td>8701 Three Chopt Rd Richmond, 23229</td>
<td>(804) 673-3700</td>
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<td>E.C. Glass HS</td>
<td>Lynchburg City</td>
<td>2111 Memorial Dr Lynchburg, 24501-5599</td>
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<td>Heritage HS</td>
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<td>(804) 582-1147</td>
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<td>Nottoway HS</td>
<td>Nottoway</td>
<td>Nottoway, 23955</td>
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<td>Powhatan HS</td>
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<td>4135 Old Buckingham Rd Powhatan, 23139</td>
<td>(804) 598-5710</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stonewall Jackson HS</td>
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<td>PO Box 385, Mount Jackson, 22842</td>
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<td>Southampton HS</td>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>23350 Southampton Pkwy, Courtland, 23837</td>
<td>(804) 653-2751</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ocean Lakes HS</td>
<td>Virginia Beach City</td>
<td>885 Schuman Dr., Virginia Beach, 23454</td>
<td>(804) 721-4013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warren County HS</td>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>240 Luray Ave, Front Royal, 22630</td>
<td>(540) 635-4144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Finley, Charles. Virginia Dept. Of Education, Head of Accreditation. (Interview)

Fiscus, Lyn, ed. *Leadership for Student Leaders.* (Interview)


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