LEADING FROM AUTHENTICITY
Using Strengths-based Coaching to Clarify the Leadership Identities of Year 11 Boys

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International Boys’ Schools Coalition Action Research Program 2018 - 2019:
Boys and Stories: Pathways to Learning
THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

• Traditional Grade 12 prefect system
• ‘Leading Edge’ student leadership development programme
• Applications for prefect were not grounded in the strengths, skills and competencies of the individual
• Fifteen volunteer Grade 11 boys, in the final term of their Grade 11 year

Research Question:

“How can personal leadership narratives help Grade 11 boys to clarify their leadership identity?”
THE RESEARCH ACTION

1. Teaching a new language of character strengths, within a context of leadership.

2. Individual coaching conversations, structured around the theme of the boy’s personal leadership goals for his Grade 12 year.

3. The boy expressed his personal leadership narrative as a short video using the digital storytelling medium of Adobe Spark.
My Personal Leadership Manifesto
Self-awareness was evoked, as evidenced by a shift in boys’ language.

“... language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about.” - Whorf
WHAT ARE MY SIGNATURE STRENGTHS?

“… some of my strengths that were low down should be higher up, like spirituality.”

“Everyone has different qualities, leading is just noticing those qualities within yourself and others and then using them the right way.”
WHAT IS MY BODY SAYING UNCONSCIOUSLY?

“I am very passionate about certain topics and my body language and expressions show that.”

“I neglect the idea of personal space and should resist the temptation to converge on others’ conversations.”
WHEN AM I MOST IN FLOW?

“I was able to take out a vital question: how to apply the getting into the zone like in a tennis match into other areas of my life.”

“My mind is always busy thinking about my next [life] goal, but in hockey that just goes away and the only thing on my mind is that game. Which is nice.”
WHAT ARE MY BLIND SPOTS?

“I’ve always known that leadership is about sacrificing yourself for the betterment of others.”

“Is that fun?”

“...there is a time and a place.”

“I always saw leadership as a servant role ... this mindset hasn't changed. Just the reminder that small things matter. Enjoy the small moments too.”
A boy’s location within the Leadership Identity Development (LID) model stages correlated with the scope of leadership mission to which he aspired.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2 – Exploration/Engagement</th>
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<tr>
<td>“It sounds like you are already the head of your club?”</td>
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<td>Boy F: “I’ll claim it!”</td>
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<th>Stage 3 – Leader Identified</th>
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<td>“The house is a shambles and it didn’t work sweetly. I want to get order back into the house.”</td>
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<th>Stage 3 to 4 Transition</th>
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<td>“A grade 8 or 9 boy shouldn’t be scared to engage with an older boy. I want to bridge the gap. That’s what I’d like to achieve.”</td>
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<th>Stage 4 – Leadership Differentiated</th>
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<td>“To meet a goal – I’m caring, I’m loving – everyone must come together, even if it means I don’t go as far. We did this together as a team.”</td>
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Interventions that seek to build self-awareness, like strengths-based coaching, can be used as part of leadership identity development.

The new language and narratives could be considered more authentic and more coherent.

Locating a boy within the LID model, on a continuum of broadening view of leadership might surface the next developmental step for him.

Further inquiry might follow adolescent boys on a longitudinal study to further understand the applicability of the LID Model.
- What are appropriate coaching conversations in Grade 10? In Grade 9?
- How might the Prefect system be adjusted based on these findings?
VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues
The Character Strengths of a Flourishing Life

Wisdom
- Creativity: Originality, absorptive capacity
- Curiosity: Inquisitiveness, soul-searching
- Persistence: Perseverance, industry
- Love of Learning: Enthusiasm about new challenges, love of reading
- Perspective: Wisdom; providing wise counsel

Courage
- Bravery: Self-reliance, fearlessness
- Kindness: Compassion, altruism
- Social Intelligence: Emotional intelligence; aware of others’ feelings

Humannity
- Perseverance: Resilience, industry
- Love: Giving love and being loved
- Teamwork: Citizenship, social responsibility
- Leadership: Organizing group activities

Justice
- Fairness: Just; not letting feelings bias decisions about others
- Honesty: Authenticity; integrity
- Self-control: Self-control, self-discipline
- Spirituality: Religiousness; faith; purpose

Temperance
- Forgiveness: Mercy; accepting others’ shortcomings
- Prudence: Careful, cautious, taking undue risks
- Modeling: Modeling positive behavior

Transcendence
- Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Awe; wonder; elevation
- Hope: Optimism; future-mindedness; future orientation
- Playfulness: Spontaneity; being silly and having fun

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AN INVITATION: DEVELOPING A PERSONAL MANIFESTO

“Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another.” ~ John C. Maxwell

“Don't be trapped by dogma—which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” ~ Steve Jobs