



*“Growing Great Leaders”*

**Dr. Alan E. Nelson**

With Nancy, Jeff, Josh & Jesse Nelson

## What experts are saying about KidLead

*If you care about cultivating leadership qualities in kids, you can't afford to miss this remarkable book by Alan Nelson. Filled with an abundance of practical ideas, this book explains new and creative ways of building competence and character in the next generation.*

– Les Parrott, Ph.D., Founder of RealRelationships.com,  
Author of *3 Seconds*

*KidLead is a wise and soulful guide for helping young leaders find their place in the world, that place where one knows how and why "I matter." It teaches us how to nurture purpose and contributions and send our young out into the world with hope and focus. I highly recommend it.*

– Peter Benson, Ph.D., President of Search Institute,  
[www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

*Practical. Relevant. Authentic. These words describe the book you have in your hand. Kidlead is a tool you can use and a reference guide you can refer to over and over again as you equip your kids to be leaders. If you think your child might be a leader, this is your handbook to coach them on their journey.*

– Dr. Tim Elmore, President of GrowingLeaders.com, Author of  
*Habitudes*

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ISBN: 1-4392-3815-4  
ISBN-13: 9781439238158

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*Alan taps the soul and future in this book. The bottom line is that kids can lead, and they need a place to exercise their leadership. KidLead shows that children are capable of next level leadership at a young age. It will assist you in empowering your kids to spread their wings of leadership now so they can soar when they are older.*

– Craig Jutilla, President of Empowering Kids, Inc.

*The **LeadNow** training program has been a great addition to our after school programs and has enhanced our students' leadership capacity and ability to work together as a team. We are proud to be able to offer such an effective and meaningful program for our children and families.*

– Laurie Corso, Principal in the Poudre School District, Colorado

*I think it is invaluable to begin teaching leadership to kids. That's when we're going to influence them for a lifetime of leading. I've been working with national leaders for years, and I believe that the best time to begin training them is when they are young.*

– John Kotter, former Harvard professor and bestselling author of Leading Change and A Sense of Urgency

## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to Jeff and Marina DeWit, whose lives reflect both the influence young leaders can bring as well as the belief in growing great leaders. I met Jeff as an early teen and watched him grow into one of the finest young leaders in his field. We're proud to call you friend.

I also dedicate this book to George Barna, a friend who sowed the seed of this venture during my malleable midlife maelstrom, and to all the KidLead Certified Trainers and their Koaches. May you succeed greatly and forever be inspired to leave a legacy of leaders

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## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to readers: David Sandys, Nina Lewis, Tiffany Miller, Steve Grant, and Roy Pina, KidLead Certified Trainers whose feedback proves that we can accomplish more together than we can as individuals.

Thanks also to MWatts, an extremely fine editor who made this book more effective.

## Foreword

*KidLead's training was an awesome experience for me. I got to do fun leadership-related activities and hang out with other young leaders like me. I also got to learn how to be a better leader while I was doing all the exciting projects. KidLead showed me what it takes to be the best leader I can be. The trainers and coaches worked hands-on to make us better leaders. They encouraged me to take action when leadership is needed, simple or not. KidLead has taught me not only how to be a better leader but also how to be a more responsible person. This book explains the principles behind the training. I recommend this book to all adults who want to help kids like me reach their leadership potential.*

-Daisy White (age 11)

*I've always known that I was a leader, but I wasn't sure how to bring out the traits deep inside of me and put them to good use until KidLead. The best part of the process was how much support the Trainers gave me. Through the KidLead activities and training, I learned more about my leadership abilities and that even though we're just kids, we are still able to contribute a lot to our communities and families. After this experience, I ran for student council at my school, since I felt more confident in being a leader and knew how to use my leadership traits. When I was elected to student council, I had an opportunity to use the training I learned and put it to good use. I love KidLead's training and know you will enjoy this book, as a parent or teacher.*

-Bryce Gesick (age 12)

## Preface

### From My Heart

This is the book I wish my parents had read. One of the motivations driving this project and our work with preteens and teens around the country through KidLead is that as I look back at my life, I believe I never reached my leadership potential. I think that if someone had seen my ability and helped me develop it, I would have been more effective as a leader. So this book and our KidLead training curriculum are motivated, in part, as I've wondered how much of my potential I haven't used. My hope is to invest in others so that when my short spurt on earth has lapsed, there will be hundreds of thousands of more successful leaders, due to their early development.

I'm pretty much a typical, middle-aged, white guy. I walk and play tennis, but I'm not going to set any world records athletically. Yet money down says that I could beat the world's fastest man in a race. No kidding. All I'd need ... is a big enough head start.

Imagine giving your child a ten- to twenty-year head start on other leaders. Consider the benefits of a large number of young leaders entering our communities, corporations, and nonprofit organizations with the experience of a middle-aged veteran. Exciting, isn't it?

No single book will transform your youngster into the next Abe Lincoln, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Ghandi, Winston Churchill, or Billy Graham. But KidLead will show you practical ways for giving youth a head start to become effective, ethical influencers who will impact the world for generations to come.

One final note: While I (Alan) am the driving voice behind this book, my wife, Nancy, has been a significant influence in creating the content. She is one of the most exceptional leaders I know and

is a KidLead Master Trainer, amazingly gifted with children and teens. Plus, we've invited our three sons, Jeff, Josh and Jesse, to add their input pertaining to youth leadership. Nancy and I have done what perhaps no sane parent writing a book should do—we've asked them to share their honest feedback as to what we could have done better in developing their leadership potential, in hopes that you can learn from our lapses.

## **Introduction**

### **A New Idea for Raising Great Leaders**

There are few experiences more enjoyable in life than being well led, participating on a team or in an organization that works together with a shared vision toward a common goal. When each member uses his or her strengths, everyone feels fulfilled. Even defeat is less disappointing when it's a part of a well-led team, just as victory is less satisfying when it is obtained amidst dissension, conflict, and dysfunction. Most of us have experienced both in our lives. We prefer being well led. Unfortunately, most people can recall negative leadership experiences more easily than positive ones.

My appetite for understanding how leadership works has persisted most of my life. After completing a doctorate in leadership from the University of San Diego, collecting over seven hundred books on the subject, and writing half a dozen books and over one hundred articles, I knew at midlife that I wanted to invest the second half of my life developing leaders full-time. But a decade of training and coaching adults had jaded me a bit in terms of how much adults can or will really change.

I remember as a boy, Grandpa Larkin asked me to guard a concrete sidewalk he had just poured. He didn't want neighborhood kids scrawling their names or wandering pets leaving their paw prints permanently. Grandpa told me to stand there until it dried. I took my responsibility seriously, making sure that no one or nothing disturbed the sidewalk as long as it was impressionable.

In a way, people are like that sidewalk. Adults are like dried concrete, but kids are wet cement. I began studying developmental processes, and then for three years, along with a dozen volunteers and over one

hundred kids, I prototyped an executive-level, high caliber leadership program that is now called **LeadNow** and **LeadWell**. Although I was skeptical at the beginning, what I saw convinced me that kids with the right aptitude can learn and articulate leadership principles and skills much faster than adults. The results were so astounding that at forty-nine, with no paycheck in sight, I left my full-time job with salary and benefits to launch KidLead, a nonprofit, educational organization dedicated solely to raising effective, ethical leaders.

In today's world of change, the clarion call for more effective leaders is constant and resounding. With all the transitions happening in society, demand for competent leaders overshadows supply. The last three decades have produced a seemingly nonstop stream of leadership scandals, from Wall Street to Pennsylvania Avenue to Church Road. Our souls mourn the loss of trust due to leaders who disappointed us with hollow character and shallow competence. MBA programs now include ethics courses, hoping to address this moral malaise, while watchdog groups sniff out more power gone sour. Unfortunately, that's too late. Something else is needed to develop the character and competencies of those who would lead. Is there hope or will cynicism prevail? Instead of waiting for graduate school, a decade after most moral psychologists believe that character has been cast, why not raise a generation of robust leaders by training them how to lead while they are still moldable?

This book is a compilation of our team's work and discoveries. The final chapter describes the training program itself. Our society needs serious leadership training that teaches kids how to be effective, ethical leaders. Most youth programs labeled as "leadership" teach general character development, serving, assertiveness, and self-esteem instead. While these qualities are important for life in general, they do not specifically focus on leading, how individuals influence others to work together toward common goals.

### Ten Benefits for Those Who Read This Book

KidLead is a book that shows parents, teachers, coaches, and children's workers how to identify kids with various degrees of influence aptitude, as well as develop them into ethical leaders while

they are still malleable. Here are ten ways we believe this book will benefit you and the children you influence.

1. You'll learn to identify leadership aptitude indicators in children, often observable before preschool. These indicators typically emerge during early socializing, so astute adults can discern who may benefit the most from intentional development. You'll be shown how you can obtain a free diagnostic tool called the Social Influence Survey. It will further clarify observable influence aptitude.
2. You'll learn how to recognize behaviors that diminish leadership development. Parents and teachers often wilt the spirit of a leader because of their own overbearing personalities or in trying to gain control and compliance. We'll alert you to common ways adults inadvertently do this so that you can avoid it.
3. You'll learn how to diminish the negative influence of young leaders behaving badly. Most adults do not understand the difference between a young leader trying to explore his or her influence capabilities and typical, childish misbehavior. Leaders not given specific guidance often act out, causing friction in families, classrooms, athletic teams, and neighborhoods. Teachers can significantly reduce classroom disruptions by applying some very simple but counterintuitive tactics.
4. You'll learn practical ways of developing the leadership aptitude in children. As we've interacted with kids and their parents and developed trainers through our KidLead programs, we've uncovered best practices that you can apply with your children. These principles will help you unlock your child's leadership potential, often by tweaking everyday activities.
5. You'll learn why teaching ethics in the context of leadership by the age of fourteen is so important. Moral psychologists believe that most character is in place before the teen years.

Most cultures in history and the world have rites of passage into adulthood between the ages of twelve and fourteen. That leaves us a four-year window when ethical leadership training is most crucial. You'll discover what this window is.

6. You'll learn how to teach your child to distinguish good leaders from bad ones. Kids are drawn to peer influencers. That's why it's essential that they are able to identify positive leadership role models from negative ones, the latter of whom will lead them astray. You can help your child learn how leadership works and how to avoid bad influencers. Everyone, leader or not, can benefit from understanding how it is that individuals influence others to follow them and strive for certain goals.
7. You'll learn key differences between behaving like a parent and behaving like a leadership coach. With a few minor adjustments, you can significantly enhance the decision making ability of your child, the way s/he interacts socially, and his or her emotional intelligence for influencing others. Leadership development is not just a manner of understanding your child; it requires knowing yourself and the way you interact with your young leader.
8. You'll be able to give your kids a competitive advantage for college. More and more universities are looking beyond GPA, and ACT and SAT scores. They look for leadership experience and extracurricular involvement. Military schools actually have a numerical point system for this. By developing leadership skills in your child, you increase the likelihood s/he will find the better college and job. We'll show you how to construct leadership projects to give your child real-world experience that can be placed on a résumé or college application.
9. You'll be able to show your child how to lead up and laterally. Very few books discuss this; most focus on "leading down." Preteens and teens will need to utilize a different approach until adulthood or even middle age. Even then, the changing

style of leading will require upcoming leaders to influence differently than they have in the past.

10. You'll learn a lot about leading. One of the most common things we hear from parents whose children go through **LeadNow** training is how much they learn about leading, themselves. Everyone talks about leadership, but when you break it down into bite-sized chunks, it suddenly makes more sense to a lot of people. We define the essence of leadership and the sixteen most sought after qualities people look for in their leaders.

Plus, we've sprinkled the pages with stories from leadership experts we've interviewed and sometimes their kids. We believe you'll benefit from hearing from some of the best in terms of how they raised their children or how they were developed as young leaders.

### Discussion Activators and KidLead Ideas

Throughout the rest of this book, you'll find dozens of designated *KidLead Ideas*. These are practical activities to help you begin applying what you've read. Our goal is to change attitudes and behavior, not just theorize or philosophize.

Plus, we'll conclude every chapter with a few questions designed to help you process the content at a deeper level. These are more effective if you discuss them with your spouse or, better yet, a group of parents, teachers, or youth workers.

### **Author's Note Regarding the Use of Pronouns**

We've tried to interchange the use of male and female pronouns throughout this book. We believe that the ability to lead is not limited by gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, education, or age.

## **Section I.**

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### **Developing Young Leaders:**

#### **Strategies**

## Chapter 1

### Growing a Great Grown-Up

“If you want to change the world,  
focus on leaders.  
If you want to change leaders,  
focus on them when they’re young.”

**-Alan E. Nelson**

#### What Leadership Is Not

So you want to grow a great leader? Bravo! The fact that you’ve begun reading this book shows that you probably understand how important leadership is to the effective functioning of society in general and how leading can open so many doors in life. But we need to begin this book by telling you that leadership is different from success. You can be a success in life and never become a leader.

Success is about reaching our potential. It is about discovering how our Creator made us and who we were designed to be; it is about understanding our innate worth and developing emotional intelligence; it is about valuing people and using our gifts and talents to the best of our ability. This is why we’re here on planet earth, to serve others with our gifts so that at the end of our lives, the net impact on the world is in the plus column, not the minus. At the end of the day, the year, the life, it’s not about us. It’s about others and what we add to society.

So here I am, founder of a national preteen leadership program, telling you in the opening chapter that your child doesn’t need to be a leader to be a success. I want to say it up front because over the years we’ve met a lot of people who are under the impression that if you’re not a leader, you don’t matter. That’s just not true. To be an effective, ethical leader is a wonderful calling in life, but there are many wonderful roles you can fulfill, leader or not.

A lot of us parents, teachers, coaches, and children’s program directors hope that our kids will become great leaders. And why

shouldn't we? Leaders tend to have more opportunities in life, are better known, and leave their marks on people and the organizations they serve. In addition, leaders tend to receive more perks and higher paychecks, for the most part. Like the old saying goes, "If you're not the lead dog, the view never changes."

Chances are you're reading this book because you want to help someone younger than you achieve more. The older we get, the more we understand that the real hope for the future is in developing our children while they're pliable. If you're around fifty like me, you're in a life stage psychologists say is characterized by a desire to invest in those younger than us so we can outlive ourselves. Again, we applaud you for picking up this book to see how you can help your child and others become more confident, competent, and influential. Way to go.

*KidLead* is *not* a book on parenting. It's about leadership development, equipping adults to raise leaders who are effective and ethical. Therefore, this may be the strangest opening chapter you'll ever read in a leadership book. During our work with leaders and their families over the last twenty years, and during our time spend developing the KidLead training programs, we've discovered that a lot of people confuse success and leadership. Your child can be a success in life whether or not s/he ever becomes a leader.

Leadership may be the most overanalyzed and underutilized concept in America during the last few decades. Thousands of books exist on the topic, not to mention scores of training programs, degrees, magazine articles, consultants, and discussions. Try googling the words "leadership" and "leader," and you'll be exhausted by the results.

Years ago, Nancy was hired by John Maxwell as the junior high director of the church that John led near San Diego, California. Every week, more than one hundred junior high schoolers filled the room. One of the students was "Kyle," who consistently disrupted the group. Nearly every week, her staff members had a new Kyle story. For some he was just plain irritating: the way he made noises, called attention to himself, and behaved inappropriately. But when Nancy looked at Kyle, she had a different perspective. Kyle looked like a young version of her boss, John Maxwell, so she tried to imagine what he might become as an adult.

When it was time for Kyle to graduate from junior high, Nancy wrote a letter to him.

*Dear Kyle,*

*I want you to know how proud I am of you. I think that you are very talented and that you will grow up to do great things with your life. I believe in you.*

*Love,  
Nancy Nelson*

About ten years later, Nancy was speaking at an event when a woman came up to her. She said, "You probably won't remember me, but I'm Kyle's mother."

"Yes," she said. "I remember Kyle. How is he?"

"He's really doing great," the woman said. "He made it through high school and now college, in part, thanks to you."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Well, you know that letter you wrote to him in junior high?" Kyle's mom asked.

"I do," Nancy said.

"Kyle kept it taped to his mirror," his mom said, tears welling up in her eyes. "Sometimes, when he was having a difficult time in school or life in general, he'd take your letter down and read it. He'd highlighted in bright yellow, 'I believe in you.' You made a difference in Kyle's life."

Nancy gave her a big hug. "I'm so glad he's doing well," she told her.

That's what kids need. They need parents, teachers, adults, youth workers, coaches, and mentors to come alongside them and speak words of encouragement to them, to see their potential and to bring it out of them, regardless of whether they ever become leaders. Your job is to find what it is that your child is good at so that s/he can excel at it—or at least do better than most. Your responsibility is to fan those flames.

**KidLead Idea:** *Imagine the type of person you'd like your child to become, regardless of his or her leadership ability. Think of 3 people and 2-3 things each you admire about them. Chances are, these are more about who the person is (attitudes, character traits) than what s/he can do or what s/he possesses. Consider how you can foster these qualities in your child.*

## Reading Your Child

Bestselling author Max Lucado told me some of his ideas on raising young leaders. Max said that one of his favorite quotes is: "Children are not books to be written, but to be read." One of the best things we can do for our children is to discover their unique gifts and aptitudes and develop them—not force kids to become what we think they should."

One thing we've noticed in KidLead, as well as during a decade of coaching a variety of our sons' sports teams, is that a lot of us parents have skewed views of our kids. I've talked to numerous volunteer and paid coaches who've told me about the parents of their team, who think their kid is going to be the next MLB, NHL, NBA, or NFL star, even though only a fraction of 1 percent will even make the first cut of pro sports. In fact, only about 3 percent will play their sport beyond high school. There's a difference between desiring the best for our child and thinking s/he is going to become the next All-American, Steven Spielberg, Bill Gates, or President of the United States.

I remember when one of our boys was in T-ball, and a friend and I volunteered to be the coaches. We didn't know a lot about baseball since neither of us played the sport in college or high school. We lived in Scottsdale, Arizona, where there are quite a few professional baseball players. Three of the kids on our team that year belonged to Matt Williams and Kurt Manwaring, who were starters for the San Francisco Giants. The cool thing is that both dads, while being very supportive of their kids, put no pressure on their children or us as coaches. I really appreciated that. Knowing how to encourage those who were less equipped than they were was a sign of good leadership.

Matt and Kurt realized that it was just T-ball. Not always, but usually, high-pressure parents are not the greats but the wannabes, living out

their own dreams through their kids. Parents are biased. We should be. But separating a loving bias from a legitimate assessment of abilities and aptitudes is important for the sake of the child.

Sometimes in KidLead, we see parents who have quite different perspectives of their kids than we do. While some of this is normal and perhaps even healthy, it can also become a disservice when we put undue pressure on our children to become what they're not.

**KidLead Idea:** *Before they see it, you do. Write 5 strengths you observe in your child. After you write them, sit with your child, look him or her in the eyes and tell them your list without disclaimers or modifications. Don't say, "Jill, you can be good with people—not all the time, but if you want to be." Keep it positive. Say, "Jill, you're really good with people! That's a unique ability you have."*

## Letting Go of the American Myth

The American culture is a wonderful environment for pursuing our potential. It's a place where people can realize their dreams. But sometimes these values go too far. It's almost un-American to suggest that a person can't become whatever it is s/he wants to be. "Who are you to tell me what I can't be? What right do you have to limit my potential?"

The goal of this book is to unleash leadership potential. An aptitude is a fundamental wiring or orientation that gives us the ability to learn and develop a skill faster and outperform others in a specific area. Positive psychology helps people focus on their strengths. Researchers such as Gallup, Jim Collins, Marcus Buckingham, and others have noticed that people do best in life when they discover and deploy their strengths.

Our goal is not to walk around discouraging people, telling them what they can't do. We are suggesting that parents and those who work with children help them discover their gifts. Every child is filled with incredible potential in a variety of areas. Most parents wouldn't grieve if their child were not a ballerina, a math whiz, a computer geek, a mechanic, or a star athlete. Therefore, if a child is not inclined to lead and shows little interest in influencing others to work together

for common goals, that's okay. They may exhibit some of these characteristics later. They may not. Leading isn't for everyone, but if it is for your child, we'll help you develop that potential and begin the development early.

Some people think this kind of talk is elitist, but elitism says, "I'm better than you." Leaders are not better or worse; they're just different. We're looking for those who are different in the social science of influencing, who exhibit an intuitive ability to motivate others to do what they otherwise would not do, especially in groups.

Unfortunately, the typical leader in our culture doesn't begin to receive formal leadership training until the ages of twenty-five through thirty-five, if at all. How sad that kids have to wait so long to not only lead but also to receive skill development in this area.

As a result, we miss a very critical time in the point of young leaders' lives when we can teach them the character components that may make or break their leading as adults. KidLead is about tapping that potential now and developing it so that at the time most leaders begin their formal training, they'll have ten to twenty years of experience. Imagine the difference.

If you watched the early editions of Donald Trump's TV show *The Apprentice*, you saw how intelligent, talented individuals can be incompetent when it comes to leading. Many of these young leaders came on the show, thinking that leading means bossing others and telling them what to do. They frequently failed to organize the team, build camaraderie, and tap the strengths of group members. The reason is that most of these people never received early leadership training. They didn't lack potential, just development. Like most leaders in our culture, the people on the show had not begun learning to lead until they were young adults.

- Leadership is the process of helping people accomplish together, what they could not as individuals.
- Leaders are those who get leadership going.

### Defining Leadership

Based on the previous, simple definition, we believe that not everyone can, should, or even desires to become a leader. We realize that this smacks of being un-American and may irritate some reading this book. A lot of people desperately want to believe that anyone can become a leader, but assuming this is a disservice to those lacking sufficient aptitude for learning leadership effectively.

Being a good leader is quite different from being a person of character, confidence, and assertiveness. Having leadership qualities is different from having good self-esteem, caring for others, possessing emotional intelligence, and making good choices. While we want our leaders to have these qualities, you can possess these and not lead. We cannot find any hard research showing that everyone can be a leader, in the organizational sense of the word. If leadership were everything, it would become nothing.

Every child, regardless of leadership capacity, deserves to have good self-esteem, strong character, initiative, confidence, people skills, and a sense of purpose. This is about being a fully engaged, healthy human being, not leadership. The reason we want these qualities in those with leadership aptitude is because a leader's life and decisions affect so many. We all suffer when those who lead us lack these important qualities, as can be seen in the endless string of corporate

and organizational scandals. But being a mature person does not make a person a leader.

Denying the idea that everyone can become a leader is not the same as telling someone, "You'll never be a leader." Sometimes, you just don't know if a child has leadership capacity. Late bloomers exist. Family of origin and early childhood experiences can muddy our self-expression. Sometimes, adults shut down the leadership ability in their children, resulting in young leaders remaining incognito. Our goal should be to help those with observable leadership aptitudes discover, develop, and deploy this capacity. Leading, like any other inclination or natural ability, needs to be identified and cultivated. Our responsibility is to assist our kids to be great grown-ups, regardless of their gifts.

**Jeff Nelson (the author's son) on the informal influence of leader-parents**

I think it helps when you grow up with parents who are leaders themselves. You catch a lot of conversations and experiences that make you feel more comfortable leading yourself. When I was a freshman in college, I started a table tennis club because I like ping pong and there wasn't a club for that at my university. My junior year, I was elected to student government as the student representative that supervised all the campus clubs and student organizations. This opened up other doors to interact with leaders in the university, administration, and around the country. Then I ran for student body president, losing by a few votes. The experience taught me to take advantage of opportunities. Along with my parents' and others' encouragement, I learned to take positive action toward leaving an organization better than I found it.

### Three Roles in the Leadership Process

One of the most important things that parents, mentors, and teachers can do in the lives of children and youth is to help them discover their unique signature, which consists of who they are and what they're good at. This empowers them to pursue endeavors they

are likely to excel at and enjoy. By this we do not suggest saying, "You're not good at \_\_\_\_\_" or "You'll never be a \_\_\_\_\_," but rather identifying where the child's potential lies. Everyone plays one of three vital roles in a typical leadership process. We'll call them the big "L," little "l," and "F."

A big "L" is a person who is a natural leader, someone who will consistently, habitually, and intuitively gravitate toward roles and situations where s/he can express these gifts. S/he feels frustrated in settings where leadership is poor or absent. We estimate that 10-20 percent of people have some degree of this type of wiring. They are what we call "leaders," whether they are leading at the moment or not. These individuals multiply their efforts by organizing others. By investing in these people, you'll likely see significant return because they grasp leadership skills more readily and will influence more people. Focusing on influencers is the forte of our KidLead training programs.

The little "l" refers to a person who can learn various leading skills but does not do it naturally. Exhibiting such actions must therefore be very intentional. Consistent leading wears out an "l," whereas it tends to energize the "L." An "l" can lead situationally but will not likely become a leader as we defined it previously. Sometimes you'll hear adults confess this. "I'm not really a leader, but someone needed to do something, so I got recruited." This person can be a great asset and may find himself or herself in middle management or smaller leadership roles. We estimate that about 60 percent of people are in this range. These individuals who can benefit from training but are far less apt to see the same results as those with big "L" aptitude. Learning to lead is more frustrating, difficult, and less fulfilling for an "l," but it can benefit the leadership process.

The "F" stands for follower. These are very important people, but they shy away from leading and will often run the other direction. We estimate that 20-30 percent of people are strong "F"s. They loathe being put in charge, and others tend to feel the same if they are. "F"s need to understand how leadership works so that they can be healthy, proactive team members and so that they can recognize and avoid bad leaders.

A majority of people are followers most of the time. That's good, since it allows everyone to use his or her talents in areas where they matter most. Leaders help us do that by setting direction and getting

us organized. "L"s need to learn how to follow, since leading is not needed all of the time and so they can be more effective at leading. If you have an "L" in your family, you'll want to intentionally develop this quality as well. The world has too many autocratic, self-centered leaders, primarily because these "L"s never learned how to be good followers. But teaching an "F" how leadership works and how to be a responsible team member is quite different from training an "L" how to lead effectively and be a servant.

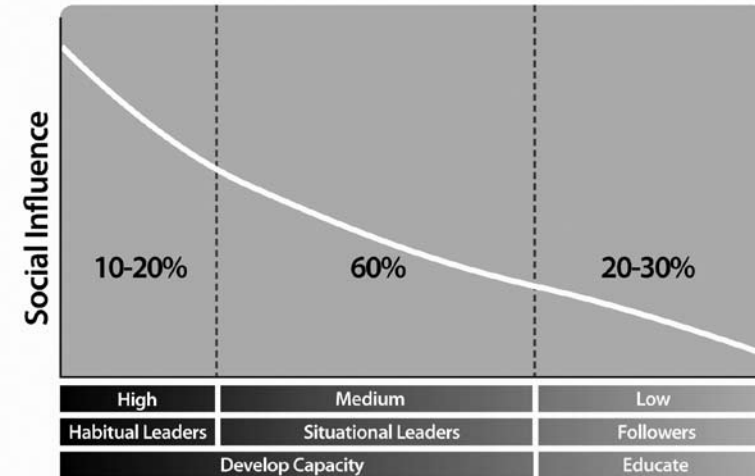
The bottom line is that "L"s need "F"s, and "F"s need "L"s. Every successful team is made up of "L"s and "F"s.

Since no one can fully predict who will and will not become a leader later in life, our best estimate is to identify those who exhibit observable behaviors and intentionally develop them early. These children are most apt to enjoy and benefit from intentional leadership development, since the best predictor of future behavior is past and present behavior. Whether or not you agree with our concept of leadership aptitude, you'll find ideas for developing your child's potential no matter what his or her capacity.

The graph portrays the approximate percents of "L"s (left side), "I"s (middle section) and "F"s (right side). This is similar to other aptitude curves that depict a small minority with a lot of talent, a majority that has some ability to learn skills through intentional effort, and a trailing minority with low to nil capacity. The goal for those with some ability is to develop it. The others can be educated on how leadership functions so they be positive team players and avoid becoming victims of bad leadership.

Although one might think that those closest to the left axis need not be trained because of their natural ability, the opposite is true. The reason you want to identify and develop these future leaders is so they can get a significant head start on leadership and ethics training, since without the latter they run the risk of doing great damage as they use their influence for bad.

### General Population Leadership



### Discussion Activators

1. What is your working definition of leadership? How is it similar or different from the one the author presents?
2. Why do you think it is helpful to distinguish leading from other successful living skills?
3. Discuss this age-old question: Are leaders made or born?
4. Name a few people you know, and practice determining whether they are an "L," "I," or "F."