



# Student Leadership Development Assessment (SLDA)

Leadership development is an increasingly valued process among organizations. But how do you know how you're doing? SLDA is a self-assessment tool for organizations seeking to better understand the depth and effectiveness of their leadership development of children and youth. SLDA is an internal consulting instrument that catalyzes discussion and raises issues pertinent to developing next-generation leaders while they're moldable.

Following is a succinct yet insightful approach to looking at the quality of your student leadership development. SLDA uses the term *student* because it was created primarily with schools in mind, but will work in any organization that seeks to develop young leaders as part of its overall objectives.

SLDA works best if responded to by individuals involved with student leadership development. Answer the questions individually and then either average the scores or share individual answers. Provide sufficient time for discussion and determining action steps.

SLDA was developed by Alan E. Nelson, Ed.D., a leadership development specialist focusing on leaders between the ages of 3 and 23. He is the founder of KidLead, a non-profit organization dedicated to identifying and developing leaders while they're moldable, to raise effective and ethical influencers globally.

## Student Leadership Development Assessment

**Instructions:** Respond to the following questions. Keep in mind the basis of your answers, looking for tangible and measurable means of substantiating your responses.

A. We provide student leadership awareness training for our teachers/staff, to help them be more aware of student leaders as well as developing their leadership skills in school.

0 – none      1 – hardly      2 – some      3 – yes      4 – a lot

B. We identify students with strong leadership aptitude and place their names on a list for intentional development and/or as a team approach to training students.

0 – none    1 – vague idea    2 – formal discussion    3 – list    4 – list with action steps

C. We have a student council or designated student leadership team.

0 – none    1 – very informal    2 – inactive council    3 – active    4 – active & trained

D. We facilitate student-led team projects in school.

0 – none    1 – not student-led    2 – rarely    3 – occasionally    4 – frequently

E. We facilitate student-led team projects done outside of school.

0 – none    1 – not student-led    2 – rarely    3 – occasionally    4 – frequently

F. We have a clear definition of how we view leadership.

0 – none    1 – general    2 – verbally coherent    3 – written    4 – written with detail

G. We distinguish leadership from character training, service, academic excellence, and/or popularity.

0 – not at all    1 – not much    2 – some    3 – yes    4 – definitely

H. We do parent training regarding leadership development of their children.

0 – not at all    1 – not much    2 – some    3 – yes    4 – definitely

I. We do an assessment to analyze and improve our student leadership development program.

0 – no 1 – hardly mentioned 2 – annual review 3 – discuss regularly 4 – hire pro

J. We provide a specific, distinct student leadership development program. (If you mark “no” here, the questions K-S may be N/A for your organization: “not applicable.”)

0 – no 1 – very informal 2 – student council 3 – modest training 4 – concentrated

K. Student leadership adult advisors receive training specific to their roles.

0 – no 1 – brainstorming 2 – book/magazine 3 – conference 4 – concentrated

L. Program materials/curriculum we use are developed by professionals in the field.

0 – N/A 1 – wing it 2 – wrote our own 3 – pull from experts 4 – expert design

M. Students receive specific leadership training.

0 – none 1 – 1-4 hrs/yr. 2 – 5-9 hrs/yr 3 – 10-20 hrs/yr 4 – >20 hrs/yr

N. Our leadership training uses active learning methods (learn by doing).

0 – N/A 1 – book/lecture 2 – mediated 3 – most 4 – nearly all

O. Students receive feedback on their leading.

0 – N/A 1 – very little 2 – not consistent 3 – some 4 – consistently

P. We measure the effectiveness of our leadership training program.

0 – N/A 1 – very little 2 – some discussion 3 – testimonial feedback 4 – scientifically

Q. Our leadership training program is based on best practices available.

0 – N/A 1 – not sure 2 – think so 3 – yes 4 – yes and validated

R. Students receive materials to retain what they’ve learned and use at home.

0 – N/A 1 – rarely 2 – occasionally 3 – usually 4 – always

S. We have a professional leadership trainer/organization periodically help us assess our program and monitor our progress with updated information in the field.

0 – N/A 1 – doubtful 2 – non-professional input 3 – rarely 4 – yes

T. Parents and/or the local community recognize our organization specifically for our student leadership development programs.

0 – no 1 – perhaps 2 – rarely 3 – we hear it sometimes 4 – we hear it a lot

**Add the sum total of all the values and divide by 20 for an average.**

**This is your SLDA Score: \_\_\_\_\_**

Use the following key as an overall description of your situation along with some possible action steps.

**0.0-1.0 Very low student development**

*Summary:* Chances are, leadership development is a low value in this organization. Perhaps this is because organizational managers are primarily focused on other priorities and/or they do not possess a personal passion for leadership development and/or they do not feel confident pursuing this.

*Possible Action Steps:* If you are fine with this assessment, embrace it and be sure that you do not claim to do leadership development merely as a marketing tool. Self-awareness is valuable.

**1.1-2.0 Low student leadership development**

*Summary:* Chances are leadership development is valued, but not highly prioritized compared to other programs. Organizational managers may be focused on other organization matters and/or they do not possess a personal passion for leadership development and/or they do not feel confident in pursuing this.

*Possible Action Steps:* Determine what part of this summary may be true and if changes are desired. If so, look at the specific items you answered 0, 1, and 2 and consider bringing in a professional leadership development specialist to help you develop a more specific leadership development program.

**2.1-3.0 Medium-strength student leadership development**

*Summary:* Chances are you value leadership development and invest at least a modest amount of time and resources to accomplishing this.

*Possible Action Steps:* Look at your strengths and applaud these issues. Then consider brainstorming ways to improve what you offer, based on some of the items you answered 0, 1 and 2 on this assessment. Two ideas would be to invest more in your leadership development program advisor training and to research top training materials and programs that would take your SLD to the next level.

**3.1-4.0 Very strong leadership development**

*Summary:* Obviously leadership development is a priority to you. Congratulations!

*Possible Action Steps:* Consider how to continue honing your program, using it more effectively as a marketing tool and leveraging the leaders in your organization for peer leadership formation. Be sure you keep up on the latest programs and resources available to organizations such as yours that take student leadership development seriously. Consider sharing your ideas with others as a catalyst in this field.

**Open-ended questions to facilitate discussion:**

1. How does our organization define leadership, and is this agreed upon by key people?
2. Why is student leadership development important to this organization?
3. What questions have we not really considered before? Any surprises in our answers?
4. What are potential benefits of an effective student leadership development program?
5. What are 3 next steps we could take based on what we learned from this assessment? (Include people for accountability, timelines, and reporting preferences.)

For more ideas on improving your student leadership development, consider the book *KidLead: Growing Great Leaders* ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)). KidLead is a non-profit organization dedicated to identifying children and youth with leadership aptitude and developing leaders while they're moldable. It certifies trainers to use its executive-caliber training curriculum in organizations committed to providing the very best in available training for ages 10-18. For more information, go to the KidLead website: [www.kidlead.com](http://www.kidlead.com).