
The Opportunity for K-12 Students in Public Schools:

Teaching Leadership via Cable in the Classroom and via the Internet

Concept Paper by Herb Rubenstein

Introduction

The focus today in K-12 education is reading, writing and arithmetic. Teaching to the "standard," be it history, grammar, foreign languages, math or science is seen as the way to improve student test scores, the holy grail of measuring student performance and achievement. The No Child Left Behind Act has guaranteed that this will be the approach for the next decade.

This approach is as strong on content as it is weak on "context." Teachers when I was in K-12 spent significant and enormous energy on teaching students *why* it was important for them to learn. Although the word "leadership" was not often used especially in the 60's when I was in the K-6 levels, by the time I reached high school in the late 60's each student at C.E. Byrd High School in Shreveport, Louisiana was taught the importance of learning enough to be a leader, to be able to influence, if not control, your own destiny and to be knowledgeable enough to make the right decisions to lead your own life and use your leadership skills to contribute to others. The context for learning was forcefully and effectively made and student performance in that school reflected the success of creating, teaching and instilling this leadership context into the student body.

Today, through the use of technology, leadership can be taught to K-12 students. Since teachers of all subjects have almost universally not received leadership development training, they are not capable of teaching leadership to K-12 students. The time is right with Leadership High Schools opening up in Chicago and San Francisco and other major cities and the bottom falling out in our public schools of giving students the right context for learning.

The Proposal

I propose the creation of a series of courses in leadership to be delivered to K-12 students via the internet, cable in the classroom and other approaches that could include, if funding were available, workbooks, an interactive website and other supportive educational media. I am aware of a foundation already creating film clips of students in the K-12 range discussing their "leadership experiences." I will draw from a large body of developing leadership, teaching approaches, multi-media technologies and content in developing these courses. These courses will be equally suitable for use in public schools, private schools, home schooling and other learning environments (libraries, community centers, recreation centers like the Boys and Girls Clubs where I formerly served as Chairman of the Board of Directors.

A children's version of my upcoming book: ***The Leadership Era: The Handbook for Defining Your Role in the 21st Century*** could serve as an online or paper text book for this course. My first book, ***Breakthrough, Inc.: High Growth Strategies for Entrepreneurial Organizations***, published by Financial Times/Prentice Hall is now available on line through a unique arrangement with the publishers.

As the person who raised most of the \$50,000 to fund cable TV in the new Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland in the late 1990's, as a Member of the Board of Directors of the International Leadership Association and Co-Chair of its 2004 Annual Conference on "Improving Leadership Around the World," I am uniquely qualified to build this course. I have built other online courses on leadership and boards of directors and am currently in negotiation with the National Institute for Trial Advocacy about building a first of its kind

leadership development course for lawyers. I have written nearly 30 articles on leadership and spoken to hundreds of audiences on the topic.

Budget and Timeline

At this concept stage, I have not prepared a budget or timeline for this project. The goal would be to work intensely and make these courses available for the 2005-2006 school year. I expect that the age grouping for the courses would require that a course be built for 1st and 2nd graders, a separate course for 3rd and 4th graders, for 5th through 8th graders, and two courses for high schoolers, one for 9th and 10th graders and one for 11th and 12th graders. While some of the content will overlap, each age cohort will require customization in the course.

We can include online tests, online or paper handbooks and can help students create paper and online journals where they can track their "leadership experiences."

Conclusion

The public school systems and the 1.5 million children in home schooling can not learn the leadership lessons they need to learn to be effective learners, effective citizens and lead effectively. Only through the world of modern philanthropy can such a series of courses be built. While they may be some business model that allows these courses to generate revenue, the best distribution system for these courses will be a blend of books, supportive materials, film, internet, DVD, CD and using all available technology tools to promote a wide distribution.

These courses would first be built in English, but there are many other languages and many other "cultures" that would benefit greatly from these types of courses.

I welcome your thoughts and comments on this concept paper for leadership courses for our K-12 students.