

LeadYoung™

Student Leadership Development Assessment (SLDA)

Leadership development is an increasingly valued process among organizations. Many schools say they're interested in student leadership development, but very few ever seriously assess themselves on how they do in this area. SLDA is a self-assessment tool for organizations seeking to better understand the depth and efficacy 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 2 and 25. 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. Dr. Nelson is also a Lecturer of Management at the Naval Postgraduate School where he teaches organizational behavior and communication.

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. Place the corresponding numeric value to your answer in the blank in front of the question/statement.

___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). KidLead is the world's leading non-profit organization dedicated to identifying children and youth with leadership aptitude and developing leaders while they're moldable. It certifies trainers to use LeadYoung Training Systems, executive-caliber training curriculum for ages 2-18. LeadNow (ages 10-13) requires a 1-day certification to use and LeadWell (ages 14-18) requires a 3-hour webinar for licensing. For more information, go to the KidLead website: www.kidlead.com.