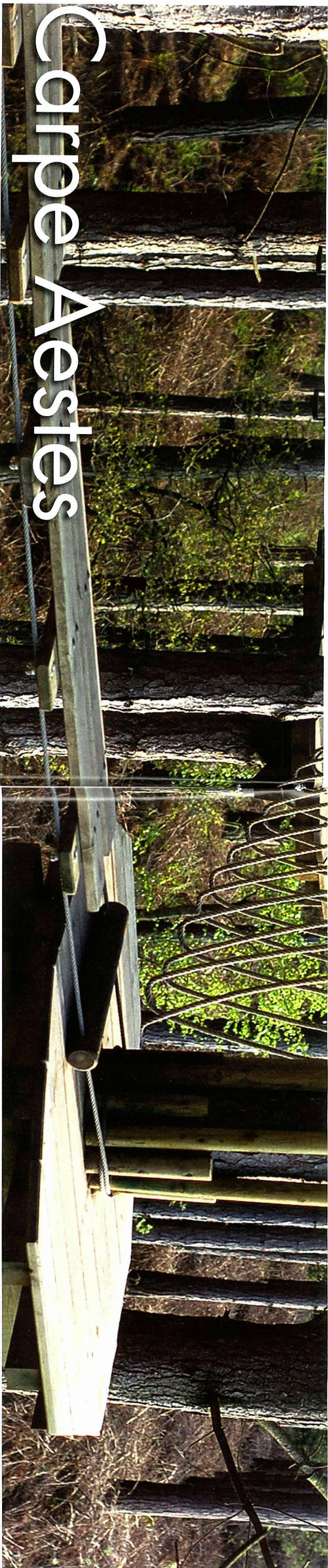


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LOOKING @ LEADERSHIP



Take time this summer to heat up student leadership training.

Alan E. Nelson

Most of us are familiar with the phrase, *carpe diem* (seize the day), but student leadership should *carpe aestes* (seize summer). Many people in education celebrate the traditional summer break that's rooted in the agrarian practice of freeing up kids and youth to work family farms. But those of us who interact with student leaders can take advantage of nonschool time to intentionally develop our young leaders.

Most people in public education see summer as an opportunity to relax, vacation, or work a second job. But for those who work to develop young leaders, summer provides a unique opportunity to help them be more effective in getting a head start for the fall. If we don't take advantage of this season, we'll leave a lot of potential untapped. Here are three reasons why you want to take advantage of summer and then three ideas of how to do it.

Summer Is a Great Season for Developing Leaders

More Bandwidth: When you're inundated with classes, and club and student government activities, it is difficult to focus on leadership training.

Experiential Opportunities: Summer is loaded with programs for kids, preteens, and teens, where student leaders can plug in to exercise their influence abilities and practice leading. Everyone's looking for extra help, whether it's the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, or school summer camps.

Fall Prep: Once school begins, it's more difficult to provide quality planning times, so summer is the perfect season to get a head

start on prepping for the fall and new school year activities, plus helping new student leaders bond with returning leaders and receive mentoring from transitioning graduates.

Ideas for Young Leader Summer Training

Create a leadership training camp: One school in the Silicon Valley hosts a summer camp in which students involved in leadership activities gather in late July or August, and dedicate a week to leadership training. Students participate in mini-projects, coaching, and giving feedback as they take turns leading in a concentrated program for students to hone their leadership skills.

Coach a team of community event activists: Most communities explode with summer activities, designed to occupy children and youth and to keep them stimulated while parents work. Many of these programs seek quality young people to help staff them.

Why not facilitate a leader labor force, in which students can assist programs involving teamwork, supervision, and problem solving. You'll want to provide periodic coaching, so that students are reflecting on how they're leading as well as what they can do to improve, and bring those skills into your school setting in the fall.

Design a summer leader club: Although a dedicated week may not be possible for you or your students, consider hosting a weekly leader club whereby you provide an array of meetings that focus specifically on leadership development. You might read a leader book and discuss it. You might go on a field trip to interview business and community leaders. Give the students leadership challenges, where they take turns leading their peers in problem solving or doing trainer games. This weekly, 1–3 hour

training keeps your team united during the summer and also exercises their leadership muscles.

Some potential challenges might remain—summer jobs, vacations, and your own lack of desire to be focusing on students when you may not be expected to or you are volunteering your time. But taking advantage of summer opportunities can help you the entire school year. As a young adult, someone told me that the way to get ahead in life is to work while others sleep. By rising an hour or two early, while everyone is still in bed, you get

ahead over time. The same is true in terms of student leadership development. You can accomplish a lot by getting a head start and putting in a little more time than the rest. *Carpe aestes* this year and see how much better your student leaders function during the entire school year. ■

Alan E. Nelson, is the author of *LeadYoung*, founder of KidLead (www.kidlead.com), and a lecturer of management at the Naval Postgraduate School, who lives in Monterey, CA.

< LEADERSHIP LESSON —Breaking the Ice>

With summer coming and new members being added to your group, here is a way to get some good ideas for icebreakers—have students do the work. This is something that can be done and graded for a leadership class—or as an assignment for student council or NHS chapter members.

Icebreaker Format

(To be typed and copied before day of activity—Enough for class)

- Your name
- Title of the icebreaker
- Date of icebreaker
- Credit source of material (Where you got the idea for this activity)
- Goal or objective of activity
- Risk level (Low, Moderate, High)

The grading for this assignment is two grades:

- For content appropriateness and material for class being prepared before your presentation (This means you will need to have the things to be copied a day prior to needing them, if materials are not prepared with this timeline most made on this grade will be a 100)
- Class presentation (Leading of group, material, execution of activity, applications, extensions, challenges, and any other item you would like to address about material)