

The Spinning

DIS

DIRECTOR
INSPIRER
STRATEGIST
COLLABORATOR

Key things to consider in the socio-emotional development of student leaders.

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ut of the 700 books on leadership in my personal library, one of my top ten favorites is *Primal Leadership*, by Daniel Goleman and associates, with its application of emotional intelligence in the context of leaders. Goleman shows that leaders who are more effective with socio-emotional competencies are far less apt to derail because of relational issues. Although this sounds heady and obvious at the same time, the socio-emotional factor is just as vital in developing student leaders. Here are three of the most pertinent principles we teach trainers in our curriculum certification process.

Identify students with a knack for reading people and being able to convey their ideas effectively to peers.

When you find students good at perceiving the emotional states of their peers, you're halfway there in discovering those with strong leadership potential. But perceiving

another's emotional state alone may indicate a friend or budding counselor and not a leader. In Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences, one of the eight quotients is "interpersonal." Within that strength is a domain called "leadership." Leaders intuitively possess the ability to both sense how other people are coming across and convey their ideas and perceptions to others. Goleman concludes that people can raise their emotional intelligence, so one of the goals in student leadership development should be to assist young leaders in picking up social cues in the leadership process. Imagine how wonderful life would be if our adult leaders had honed their people skills as pliable influencers.

Model emotional intelligence to student leaders.

I know—easier said than done, but young leaders are subtly seeking cues on how to lead. As a mentor, coach, and adviser, you are the one they're looking to for actions and attitudes they'll mimic. That's an awesome opportunity

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and responsibility. How does a leader admit wrong, seek forgiveness, respond to criticism, motivate a laggard, and handle a conflict on the team? These are hot button issues among leaders. The ability to respond appropriately in tense social settings is directly correlated to a leader's effectiveness. Leaders are change agents. Psychologists tell us that 80% of people are by nature averse to change. That sets up leaders for significant challenges in moving people away from status quo and toward whatever vision, goal, or objective is in the leader's mind. Getting there with sensitivity is vital for keeping people on board. Practice what you preach and preach what you practice.

People who interact with young leaders need to be aware of how their own social-emotional chemistry affects their students. Various personalities tend toward certain leadership styles that can enhance or diminish a young leader's development. Four dominant styles are the Director, Inspirer, Strategist, and Collaborator.

- **A Director** is a leader whose style is most stereotypical of a leader. The Director is direct, clear, strong, and often dominant. The positive aspect of the Director is that people feel confident and clear in what needs to happen. The downside is that bossy, prideful, overly strong leaders can offend and alienate people.
- **An Inspirer** is a leader who motivates people to follow a dream and pumps them up to accomplish great things. This is positive when inspiration and passion are needed. The downside of Inspirers is that hype can overwhelm strategy and as excitement wanes, teams are left wondering (and wandering) what to do.
- **A Strategist** focuses on a plan to accomplish a goal. The Strategist is thoughtful, introspective, and less prone to overcommit or overwhelm. The downside of the Strategist is paralysis by analysis and a melancholy disposition that intimidates and causes fear.
- **Collaborator** tends to be appreciated by people, incorporates others into the mix, and is good at keeping people on board. This is helpful when team members might otherwise offend each other or fail to work together. The shortcoming of the Collaborator is an unwillingness to face conflict, fear of taking a big risk, and even laziness.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Director	Strong, decisive, clear	Bossy, intimidating, selfish
Inspirer	Positive, motivating, upbeat	Vague, lacks a plan, fickle
Strategist	Thoughtful, logical, detailed	Unresponsive, fearful
Collaborator	Likable, good under pressure	Slow, avoids conflict, lazy

Here's the point: Every style has its strengths and weaknesses, but adult sponsors can unknowingly convey the idea that their way is the best way. Directors frequently and unknowingly convey the idea that directing is the best way to lead. Inspirers cause non-inspirers to think everyone needs to be highly motivational. Strategists subdue more outgoing personalities, and collaborators may squelch more outgoing personalities. To become more aware of the chemistry that exists between their preferred style and a student leader's style, advisers need to become self-aware, even to the point of estimating the strength of their leading and personality. For example, a level 5 (very high) director may intimidate a level 3 student director to the point she masks her ability and is then perceived as passive or a nonleader. A level 4 inspirer can cause a level 3 collaborator student to feel that he doesn't measure up. Conversely, lower level adults may not sufficiently challenge higher octane students, leaving potential on the table.

A well-adjusted and self-aware adult sponsor will understand the importance of how his or her personality and preferred leadership style influence student leaders with differing styles and capacities. Adjusting our own style for the sake of developing our student leaders is an important skill set that we must develop as advisers. The result is grooming young leaders who become both confident and competent in their own unique styles and who are aware of others' unique wiring. ■

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