

# From the Guest Editor

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## Leadership is a “Must” for Children Who Are Gifted and Talented

This special issue of *Gifted Child Today* examines a very important topic in gifted education: leadership. Although not new to gifted education, it is a topic that often has been overlooked. Leadership was listed as a category of giftedness in the Marland Report (1972), the first national report on gifted education, and in *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* (1993), the second and only other national report on gifted children, and several states include leadership in their state definition of children who are gifted and talented.

All children need to develop leadership skills. Like talent in the visual arts or in athletics, children who display talent in leadership need to have their leadership talents developed. Children demonstrating talent need opportunities to hone and develop their leadership skills in a variety of settings. Also, children who are gifted and talented intellectually or in a specific academic area, in creativity, or in the visual and performing arts benefit from leadership development. Society will gain as their leadership capacities are valued and furthered with leadership training. They will have opportunities in their careers to assume leadership roles, and they need to be prepared to lead in responsible, positive ways. They may use their leadership skills in direct and indirect ways to change various fields of endeavor, their communities, and beyond.

Leadership is more than having a position to which one is elected or appointed. The key ingredient in a “real” leadership opportunity is setting a goal and devising a plan to work with others in reaching it. Leadership is about making things happen. Children and young people can create opportunities to build their leadership potential by identifying situations within their neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, or in other settings in which they can lead.

Of course, not all young people who are talented in leadership have positive goals. Certainly, these individuals need to be included in leadership training. What a difference it will make when children's goals become positive in their direction. What an opportunity changing goals from negative to positive would make to our world!

Leadership can be included in the content of the classroom. Teachers can lead discussions on the importance of leadership as they teach about the leaders in history, science, art, technology, medicine, and so forth. They can focus on the importance of leadership skills as they teach students to communicate orally and in writing. Those skills are essential for effective leadership, but young people may not see these as leadership skills unless the teacher relates them to leadership. Planning, decision-making, and problem-solving skills are basic skills for leadership that educators are developing among all their students. A great pianist or soccer player doesn't become great without practice. Likewise, practice in a variety of situations is important to becoming an effective leader. That practice can begin in a classroom with educators who value the development of leadership potential.

Various leadership opportunities can develop potential. One such way is service learning. Robert Pleasants, Kristen Stephens, Hollace Selph, and Steven Pfeiffer tie service learning to leadership development. They provide strategies for using service learning with a summer program, as well as extending this experience in a school setting. How early can one begin teaching leadership to children? Amy Bisland presents examples of leadership activities that can be used with young children who are gifted and talented. This article highlights that it is never too early to develop talent, including leadership talent.

The article by Amy Bisland, Frances Karnes, and Yolanda Cobb describes resources and Web sites that are rich with leadership possibilities. This information will aid teachers as they build leadership into the learning experiences in their classrooms.

Jennifer Jolly and Todd Kettler present an example of an authentic assessment technique for identifying leadership talent. They indicate that observing leadership behaviors is useful in identifying children with high leadership potential.

Elizabeth Shaunessy and Frances Karnes describe instruments that can be used to help young people and educators assess levels of leadership development and make plans for growth.

This special issue on leadership focuses on leadership and provides practical strategies for identifying and developing leadership talent. Please remember that leadership is important for all children and that it is a “must” for children who are gifted and talented. **GCT**