

## **Building Future Leaders- One Step At A Time**

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As you drop your child off at the Kindergarten door for the first time, you won't think about their last day in grade school, their high school years, or the day they leave for college. You'll hope for a day without tears, a teacher who loves them, and the new friends they will make. But, each new day is also an opportunity to help your child learn to lead.

It is said that the job of a parent is to prepare a child to move forward without them. But, how do we do that when all we want to do is protect them? We do it, one day at a time with the help of our family, our friends, and our schools. Parents and school staff are partners in building future leaders. It is a shared goal that all students stay healthy and happy, but also that they feel strong and capable to handle what life brings. Each school, and each parent, must prepare students to move successfully to the next level in life.

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Some children are just natural born leaders, aren't they? They are confident and charismatic. They seem to move through life's challenges with ease. Others are more tentative; they seem to need more handholding and more coaching. Every child needs to learn to lead with confidence and capability. They need to be able to trust in themselves to problem solve and work with others in a positive way. We can teach them the skills they need by working together, one step at a time.

21<sup>st</sup> Century leaders must be effective communicators, both verbally and in writing. Teach your child to listen to others with their ears, eyes, and heart. Having empathy for others allows us to work more collaboratively and with kindness. Teach your child to respectfully communicate his/her ideas and questions, even when they are different from others in the group. All perspectives are worthy of consideration and understanding.

21<sup>st</sup> Century leaders must know how to collaborate. Teach your child to see more than one point of view. Everyone can't be the leader all the time. We all have different strengths. We can learn from each other if we can see that everyone has value and something important to share.

21<sup>st</sup> Century leaders must be confident. We don't learn to be successful from never trying and never failing. We learn by trial and error. It's okay to fail! In fact, it is through failure that we learn how strong we are and that gives us confidence. If everything is easy all the time, children will never learn to deal with adversity and come out the other side. Let's face it; life is full of adversity, and we need to learn how to handle it and bounce back.

21<sup>st</sup> Century leaders must be able to create and problem solve. Teach your child to think of more than one way to get something done. Let your child do his/her own school project, even if yours would be prettier. Encourage your child to try new things, get involved in the arts, sit outside and dream. Let there be moments of quiet in your home and downtime. Give your child room to breathe, reflect, and be bored. Creativity will come from that.

Lastly, 21<sup>st</sup> Century leaders need to have character. Teach your child to be honest and kind. Teach them to love God and treat others as Jesus would. Teach them that a loving heart, a strong faith, and caring relationships will enable them to be leaders, one step at a time.