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## Developing Student Leadership: The Use of Programs and Methods to Build Adolescent Leadership Capacity

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DEVELOPING STUDENT LEADERSHIP: THE USE OF PROGRAMS AND METHODS TO  
BUILD ADOLESCENT LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

by

Jonathan D. Waldron

A specialist project submitted to the Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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# DEVELOPING STUDENT LEADERSHIP: THE USE OF PROGRAMS AND METHODS TO BUILD ADOLESCENT LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Jonathan D. Waldron, Ed.S.

Western Michigan University, 2020

High school students have a wealth of opportunities to practice leadership skills. Focusing on the importance of leadership training to help teens develop and strengthen their ability to influence, in this project I evaluate the current research about best practices in adolescent leadership training. Although best practices suggest that students grow as leaders with intentional training and guidance from mentors and coaches, few students who hold leadership positions in school or community organizations receive any training at all. This paper describes the necessity for, and creation of a program designed to inspire, motivate and strengthen leadership skills in high school students.

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Jonathan D. Waldron

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## INTRODUCTION

*“I feel like we have a lot of leadership programs in the school, but we aren’t really trained for any of them. We are put into the position and are immediately thrown into the rush of it all. I am not saying this is a bad thing at all. I think it’s good to start getting the experience quickly but I think there is an opportunity to make the transition into it all smoother”* (Mattawan High School Student, 2019).

### **Problem Statement**

High school students typically have many opportunities to serve in leadership positions. Within the formal school structure, leadership includes roles such as sports team captains, student government representatives, and band section leaders. Informally, students lead within friend groups, *ad hoc* clubs, and classrooms. In both formal and informal settings, adolescents have many opportunities to assume the title of leader. However, there are few, if any, formal leadership training opportunities for students before and during the time they hold student leadership positions. Many students report that once they assume a leadership role (either selected by peers, adults, or self), they receive little or no ongoing leadership motivation, or training, or preparation for their leadership role (Voelker, Martin, Blanton & Gould, 2019). Others report that their only leadership education is self-driven, through books, websites and other resources that they find themselves. In fact, in a survey of students at Mattawan High School, two-thirds of students who hold formally assigned leadership positions have received limited or no leadership guidance from adults.

## **Problem Background**

When the author John Gardner (2007) discussed leadership, he primarily found his audience to be adults seeking leadership guidance for organizations like corporations and universities. His examples, therefore, were often historical leaders like Winston Churchill and Thomas Jefferson, or corporate leaders who exemplified the values he identified as leadership. His definition described a leader's ability to persuade a group by word or example to move toward a common goal. Although he was writing about the power of leadership in the adult world, this definition is appropriate for the world of adolescents as well. Captains of athletic teams are charged with building community among their teammates, ensuring that all players understand their positions and work together for the success of the team. Marching band section leaders are asked to support peers in their musical and marching skills through practice and repetition, with an eye on the common goal held by the entire band. No doubt there are innumerable examples of teen leaders facing situations that fit Gardner's definition of leadership.

Considering leadership as a key component to the success of an organization or undertaking is something people have been doing for many years. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) report that there are examples of people studying leadership dating back to "antiquity" and are discussed in "the works of Plato, Caesar, and Plutarch" (p. 4). Then, as now, people seem to be seeking better ways to be leaders, and better ways to develop leadership skills. "Throughout the centuries," Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) continue, "leadership has been intimately linked to the effective functioning of complex organizations" (p. 5). The definition of leadership presented by Gardner above suggests that leadership is the ability to persuade groups toward a common goal. Gardner's perspective is echoed by Kouzes and Posner

(2007), who explain that, “success in leadership is now, and will continue to be a function of how well people work and play together. Success in leading will be wholly dependent upon the capacity to build and sustain those human relationships that enable people to get extraordinary things done on a regular basis” (p. 71). Leadership can be one of those concepts that everyone discusses, but that is easier to recognize in action than it is to define. Thus, it’s broad study has led to various, nuanced definitions. This report will focus on the definition articulated by Gardner above, and echoed by the other experts cited throughout the paper. We will consider that leadership is one’s ability to persuade others by word or example to pursue a common goal.

Over the course of my 18 years as an educator working with high school students, I have been struck by two related, but seemingly oppositional ideas. First, many students are open to the idea of leadership and are willing to embrace the responsibility of leadership. Some of these positions are formal, such as band section leader, team captain, student government, or president of a student club. Others evolve informally, for example, when students are recognized as classroom leaders, in science lab groups, or even in social circles. Whether formally or informally, students often embrace the opportunities to be leaders. In fact, in a survey I conducted of students who hold official leadership positions at Mattawan High School, more than 80% believe that they have leadership ability.

On the other hand, in spite of the numerous opportunities to be leaders, many students express that they have limited or no leadership training. Unfortunately, the lack of initial leadership training and ongoing leadership-oriented inspiration that students experience leaves them alone in the task of understanding what it really means to be a leader on the fly. This understandably leads to unpredictable performance by organizations and individual students.



Despite the lack of formal training, most students welcome the opportunity to lead again in their future. However, approximately one-third of student leaders note they are less likely or neutral to seek leadership opportunities in the future.

High school students grow as leaders, benefiting their school and the broader community when supported by adults in positions to coach and mentor. In fact, it is in the community where we may see the greatest results from our young leaders. As Winchester (2018) explains, “if youth find validation in who they are and are empowered to recognize their own agency in addressing issues that impact them, we accelerate their leadership development as well as their potential to have a positive impact on society” (pp. 27-28). The long term impact of this leadership development may manifest in social, political, or economic contexts, but may be largely dependent on our young peoples’ recognition of their ability to be leaders.

Gould and Voelker (2012) suggest that leadership is “defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 38). The ability to influence others to a positive and productive end is an exciting prospect, and young people have a unique opportunity and responsibility to influence the world around them. I do not think I am alone among those who work with teens in feeling that their energy and skill is exactly what we need to face some of the grand problems that face society.

Leadership author John Gardner once gave a passionate speech to a group of teen leaders, arguing that young people must not wait patiently for change, but rather, they must act. “Who gave them permission to stand aside? I’m asking you to issue a wake up call to those people - a bugle call in their ear. And I want you to tell them that this nation could die of comfortable indifference to the problems that only [they] can solve. Tell them that!” (Gardner, as cited in

Bowman, 2014, p. 59). Like Gardner, I believe in the potential of young people and seek to better equip them for the challenges and responsibilities which are uniquely theirs.

### **Importance of the topic**

Surprisingly, there has been limited work into high school student leadership development. “Past research has not specifically focused on adolescent leadership role in extracurricular activities” (Hancock, Dyk & Jones, 2012, p. 87). Rather than focus on student leadership, many scholars have directed their attention to the role of coaches and others rather than peer to peer leadership (Voelker, Martin, Blanton & Gould, 2019, p. 182).

Despite the lack of research, developing student aptitude remains at the heart of working with teens. Witnessing the student leadership growth and maturity is extremely fulfilling for many educators. The same adults who assign young students to various roles within their schools are the adults who will benefit from seeing these youth grow into the responsibilities and expectations of these roles, resulting in a more satisfactory experience for all. “Inspiring and nurturing tomorrow’s global leaders in a contemporary secondary-school setting merits being an educator’s highest priority and most lasting legacy” (Bowman, 2014, p. 62).

It is not only the adults in education who care about helping young people to grow as leaders. Our students want to lead, and they feel as if they have what it takes. In my experience, students believe that they have the ability to become leaders. In a survey I conducted of students who hold leadership positions at one high school, 50% of responding students shared that they believed they had leadership potential before ever taking on a formal title.

Recent literature suggests that, frustratingly, “there are practically no concentrated leadership development programs” for children and teens (Nelson, 2010, p. 24). Work by

Voelker et al, (2019) explains that, although most schools provide ample leadership opportunities, many schools simply place students into leadership positions without appropriate support, structure or training (p. 191). The work, therefore, is to explore what strategies are shown as successful in the literature, as well as to explore the outcomes of one specific newly implemented leadership program.

Teens, both in formal positions of leadership and those who are informally recognized as leaders, have told me for years that they would benefit from increased opportunities for leadership inspiration and training. As one student shared, “I think that our school gives everyone a fair opportunity. However, I feel that sometimes the adults in these programs offer little specific leadership guidance. It would have made my experience easier and less stressful if an adult was there to help guide me through everything at the beginning” (Mattawan High School student, 2019).

In response to this problematic lack of training, I propose the development of a program to specifically instruct and motivate high school-age leaders, to equip them in their current and future leadership positions. A gap exists between what is currently available for students and what is needed for their development. Because everyone has the potential to be a leader, this program should be widely available to high school students. I will facilitate this program’s development and offer it to students in Mattawan High School and other high schools in the surrounding community.

## Goals of the project

There were two primary reasons that I participated in developing a student leadership program in our community. First, it is important to understand the current literature as it relates to student leadership development programs, how students develop leadership skills, and where they find ongoing inspiration as leaders. Because of the many leadership opportunities afforded high school students, there is value in understanding whether the literature identifies the extent to which current student leadership training strategies are effective.

Secondly, the Kalamazoo area has a strong reputation for a leadership training and inspirational conference targeted at adult leaders. Along with other education and community leaders, I had an interest in determining how students would react to their participation in such an event, and the support by area high schools for their own students to participate as well. Along with a number of other educational and business leaders in the community, we engaged in planning conversations over a three-year period. The idea, as explained in the published literature from the economic development agency *Southwest Michigan First*, was to create a “two day transformational experience in which [potentially hundreds of high school-aged] attendees will learn tangible lessons and gain tools and inspiration for pursuing a college education and preparing to contribute meaningfully to the world” (see Appendix A).

Together, these things help to lead us to the primary goal of this project. This report will articulate the current state of leadership training and inspiration as it relates to high school leaders, and explores best practices for this training. Using the example of a newly created two-day leadership training program for emerging high school leaders in the Kalamazoo area, the

report will outline program development, as well as explore the students' responses to their participation. This work will inform practitioners, for both those who work directly with high school students and for those who develop student leadership and inspirational programming.

### **Population and Sample Background**

This project and research was conducted with students and staff at Mattawan High School in Mattawan, Michigan. Mattawan is a suburban community near Kalamazoo, Michigan that is approximately midway between Detroit and Chicago. Mattawan High School is a public high school that serves nearly 1,200 students in grades 9-12 with a staff of 56 teachers, and many other administrative, professional, and support staff. In this "midsize suburban" school, 11% of students receive free and reduced lunch and 15% of students are identified as non-white (School Directory Information, 2019). The school is structured with the teaching staff organized by academic departments. These departments use the Michigan Merit Curriculum as the basis for curriculum development, daily lessons, and common summative assessments. Students may be enrolled in Honors or Advanced Placement classes, as well as two-hour block classes if they need additional time or support in their learning (Eastman, 2019).

The high school building is more than 20 years old, and has had several additions, the most recent of which was completed in 2016. The surrounding neighborhood is semi-rural/suburban near the larger cities of Kalamazoo and Portage. Families in the community are historically supportive of the school. Over the years, this support has been demonstrated through multiple votes for bonds to enhance school district facilities, security, and technology (Eastman, 2019).

Student academic performance at Mattawan High School is well above the state average as measured by state-administered standardized tests, Advanced Placement test results, and state reported graduation rates. The school staff has placed a priority on increasing the academic intervention opportunities to increase learning outcomes for all students (Eastman, 2019). As a traditional high school, Mattawan High School in Mattawan, Michigan is an appropriate choice to adequately represent the experiences of student leaders who participated in the leadership training program that is described here.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In his seminal work on the nature of leadership, author John Gardner (2007) presented a clear and concise definition of leadership. “Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (p. 17). Leaders, therefore, are able to use their actions and words to persuade others to follow them in the pursuit of a common goal. But, Gardner (2007) cautions, it’s important not to confuse leadership with status. “Even in large corporations and government agencies, the top-ranking person may simply be bureaucrat number 1. We have all occasionally encountered top persons who couldn’t lead a squad of seven-year olds to the ice cream counter” (p. 18). Whatever status someone may have, it doesn’t guarantee that someone will be influenced enough to act.

The power of influence is a key component of what makes someone an effective leader. “What qualifies people to be called ‘leaders,’” suggests Grenny et al. (2013), “is their capacity to influence others to change their behavior in order to achieve important results” (p. 6). The suggestion that leaders have ability to influence others does not mean that a leader is one who simply imposes his or her will on others. Rather, leaders inspire and empower others to do more than they expected that they could. The skills to do this are not necessarily found naturally in leaders. Rather, leadership is intentionally cultivated by seeking out mentors and coaches and by continuous learning and training (Grenny, Patterson, Maxfield, McMillan, & Switzler, 2013).

Too often, I would argue, we assume that the skills of leadership will simply and naturally evolve out of a person when they are placed into a position of authority or influence. This is as true for adult leaders as it is for teens. Those of us who work in high school-type

settings have seen team captains, marching band section leaders, and student congress representatives who are named to their positions and are expected to lead based simply on their newly formalized title. What has been missing is the coaching and instruction about what leadership is; replaced instead with the assumption that the student will simply grow into leadership by virtue of the authority of their position.

Moreover, too often the selection of these students assumes that the only way to lead is to hold a formal position. If we assume that leadership is something that only some people hold, or that can only happen if someone holds an established and named position of power, we are myopic. “Leadership is not some mystical quality that only a few people have and everyone else doesn’t...We can tell you without a doubt that there are leaders in every profession, every type of organization, every religion, and every country, from young to old, male and female. It’s a myth that leadership can’t be learned - that you have it or you don’t. There is leadership potential everywhere we look” (Kouzes & Posner, 2016, p. 4). Kouzes and Posner (2016) argue that we should stop wondering where the leaders are and instead look in the mirror. We must realize that leadership skills are widely distributed among people and that we need not wonder whether we have what it takes to lead. The real question is, “Can you, and those you work with, become better leaders than you are today? The answer is a resounding yes” (p. 11). All young people benefit if the adults in mentoring roles around them believe that they have leadership potential.

This is an encouraging subject matter to explore. If one agrees with the authors above, that everyone has the ability to be a leader, then those of us who work with young people should feel particularly positive. Rather than asking, “Who has the ability to be a leader on this team (or



club, or band, etc.)?”, we can redirect ourselves to ask, “How can we get the people on this team (or club, or band, etc.) to realize their leadership abilities?”

Opinions on the development and maintenance of leadership skills, especially as it relates to adults, are commonly understood to be widely published and available. In fact, the bulk of the literature regarding leadership surrounds how adults may best lead their teams, rather than placing a focus on examining the strategies for developing young leaders (Voelker, Martin, Blanton & Gould, 2019, pp. 182-183). Although less available, there is a body of work that relates to leadership development for high school students.

The point of mentioning the existing literature here is to allow those who work with high school leaders a bit of context. These adults should be reminded that there are a wide range of opportunities for high school students to participate in leadership activities. However, many of the students who (either formally or informally) assume leadership positions lack specific training or guidance regarding their responsibilities, even though there are clear and measurable benefits for offering this type of training. Finally, there are some positive examples of leadership training, as well as ongoing inspirational programs for leaders that are important to share.

### **Opportunities for high school students to be leaders**

Over the course of their high school experiences, 83% of high school students participate in at least one extracurricular activity (Hancock, Dyk & Jones, 2012). More than one-in-three high school students participate in fine arts, academic or vocational-oriented extracurricular activities. These activities, along with athletics, “continue to serve primary avenues for developing the leadership capacity of those who engage in their activities” (Rosch & Collins, 2017, p. 10). Gould and Voelker (2012) agree, suggesting that involvement in high school sports

may offer “some of the most potent contexts for learning leadership within schools” (p. 39).

Lizzio et al. (2011) also suggest that the access students have to leadership roles stems from participation in these types of groups. “Student leadership development is commonly advanced through strategies of formal leadership roles or through participation in extracurricular activities” (p. 86).

While Rosch and Collins (2017) suggest that “student involvement data are relatively sparse within high schools,” it is self evident to anyone who becomes familiar with the culture of most public high schools (p. 9). At Mattawan High School, more than three dozen interscholastic athletic teams, a dozen interest area clubs and a variety of opportunities in the arts present us with an example of a typical school (Appendix D). Therefore, there are over 100 students who serve as formal leaders and some who hold positions in multiple organizations. In addition, there are many more who are informal leaders in social circles, classroom settings and outside of school organizations.

Student leadership opportunities in schools can take many different forms. Formally, at many schools, students may be captains on interscholastic athletic teams. High school band programs often identify students as instrumental section leaders. Numerous school-sanctioned clubs identify students as formal leaders. Informally, leadership opportunities are found in study groups, social circles, classroom networks, and other “informal leadership activities and opportunities embedded in classroom practices offer the potential” for whole school leadership (Lizzio, Dempster & Neumann, 2011, p. 88). Hancock (2012) indicates that students who are involved in extracurricular activities, whether in official positions of responsibility, and those who act in unofficial positions, see “development in their own perceptions of their leadership”

skills (p. 96). This information can reassure us that by simply making sure that students have access to leadership positions, they may see their leadership capacity grow in some, albeit small, ways. Those of us who serve as mentors and coaches for young people should see this as encouraging news. After all, if simply serving in positions of leadership means that student leadership ability grows slightly, imagine what formal leadership training will do for these willing, emerging leaders.

### **Reasons for scarcity of leadership training**

However, the experience of many high school leaders is that participation, perhaps with a formal title of responsibility in an extracurricular group, may be the extent of their leadership preparation. That is, when a student is named captain of an athletic team in the 11th grade, he or she may not have any measurable training or specific adult guidance in terms of their leadership. The literature indicates that many high school leaders receive “little to no education and training” from coaches, mentors and teachers regarding their formal or informal leadership positions (Voelker, Martin, Blanton & Gould, 2019, p. 182). Students seem to agree with this assessment. As one student told me, “I think that our school gives everyone a fair opportunity to everyone...However, I feel that sometimes the adults in these programs offer little specific leadership guidance. It would have made my experience easier and less stressful if an adult was there to help guide me through everything at the beginning” (Mattawan High School Student, 2019). This is not unique to sports. “Although most schools provide ample leadership opportunities, they run the risk of inserting young people in roles without appropriate support” (Voelker, Martin, Blanton & Gould, 2019, p. 190). Whether in formal positions of leadership or

informally recognized as leaders in other environments, students would benefit from leadership training that is intentional and targeted specifically for young, emerging leaders.

There are several reasons that high school leaders are not given appropriate leadership training. Nelson (2010) suggests that the lack of leadership training stems from adults who fail to recognize the leadership abilities that adolescents already possess. “We as adults have set the bar far too low in the area of youth’s ability to learn leadership skills. When adults see a budding leader, they’ll often make a remark such as ‘Someday you’ll be a leader,’ suggesting that leading is something adults do, not kids” (p. 24). Gould and Voelker (2012) offer another idea, suggesting that coaches may be well meaning, but not nearly intentional enough about making leadership training a priority. “In a qualitative study with former high school sport captains, none reported being formally trained or prepared by their coaches for the leadership role,” perhaps because their coaches do not have the time and resources necessary for such preparation. (p. 38). In my own experience, intentional leadership training in school-related settings is something that falls lower on the priority list than actually running the club or team. For example, pressed for time, coaches tend to focus on teaching fundamentals or designing strategy, rather than on developing leadership capacity among players. Band directors find their time absorbed by helping instruct students on technical skill and on marching technique. Leadership positions are given to students with good intentions, but the directors may find that there is not time to dedicate to helping students navigate their new leadership responsibilities.

Regardless of the reasons that leadership training is not consistently offered to teens, Winchester (2018) implores adults who work with young people to take action regarding leadership development. He suggests that the adults supporting adolescent leaders must actively

and intentionally “allow them to create space, get out of their way and assist in fostering agency” (p. 28), thus decentering adults. This may not be an easy process for adults, offering that this may make them examine their own “social location, positionality and ideology,” which may be a humbling experience. The benefits, though, are profound, as we will have greater opportunities to see students first realize their ability to impact the world around them, and then to actually act in service to their communities.

### **Benefits of leadership training for high school students**

As Winchester (2018) argues, one of the benefits of intentionally training and empowering students to be leaders is that our young people have greater skill and agency (sense of self-determination and belief that one’s actions matter) to tackle the problems they see around them. This is not the only benefit of intentionally training our students as leaders. Rather than selecting student leaders and hope they “figure it out as they go,” Nelson (2010) outlines a number of the positive outcomes of intentional leadership training for young people. Among them, he finds that by actually treating students as leaders during training activities, students develop a self-image as leaders, including both “behavioral and attitude changes” (p. 22). Rosch and Collins (2017) agree. They point out that “students who experience success through their involvement often experience threefold levels of growth - as their skills improve, their leadership self-efficacy grows as well, given the real-world impact they see; and in such a volunteer-led setting, their motivation to lead increases as well” (Rosch & Collins, 2017, p. 17).

Students need leadership training to give them an opportunity to practice leadership as if in a laboratory setting. The skills of leadership, after all, are not acquired in a short period or exclusively during narrow experiences. “Leader development involves the development of

complex skills that necessitate that individuals persist in their development over several periods of their life” (Rosch & Villanueva, 2016, p. 53). Therefore, another benefit of intentional leadership training is that it often develops into a life-long pursuit. Ray (2016) puts it this way: “When students have a meaning-making structure to help make sense of their leadership experiences, their ability to be reflective about their experiences sets the foundation for a lifetime of learning and leadership growth” (p. 98). Dee Vonde (2004) has seen evidence of this in her evaluation of an individual high school leadership program at one high school. She notes that a positive outcome is that former participants in the program continue to find opportunities to be leaders long after high school. Some return to assist with programs at the high school, while others join or initiate new programs after they transition to college or the workforce. As she explains, “the purpose of the Leadership program is to provide students with training for life, helping them to develop leadership and personal communication skills that can be utilized in their future endeavors” (p. 16). Among these future endeavors, according to Rosch and Collins (2017), may be important adult skills as these students seem to become adults who are committed to performing community service, registering to vote, show increases in confidence and self-awareness, and show greater success planning budgets and managing resources (p. 13). Clearly, the benefits of leadership training for high school students make a compelling case for adults to act with intentionality.

### **Best practices in leadership training**

My evaluation of the literature suggest that there is not a one-size-fits-all type of training that best suits high school leadership development. Clearly, because of the lack of support that students currently experience, appropriate training is both necessary and will be beneficial. If, as

several authors suggest, long-term leader development efforts should start by supporting the motivation that an emerging leader feels, this development will increase with value on future leadership development opportunities, then capitalizing on students' motivation and desire to lead by offering some type of training is of paramount importance (Rosch & Villanueva, 2016; Blanton, Sturges, & Gould, 2014). While the training offered may not be all encompassing leadership development preparation, given the choice between nothing and something, the limited option is at least better than forcing students to figure out leadership with no intentional training whatsoever.

One strategy, exemplified by Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership (HOBY) programs, are concentrated training programs that serve to increase leadership inspiration and capacity among high school students. HOBY invites high school students who may or may not have formal leadership titles at their schools to attend a weekend conference packed with speakers, breakout sessions and service activities (Ray, 2016). Programs like this typically focus on inspirational leadership, and depend on ongoing, personal coaching as continued leadership development. This type of ongoing coaching seems appropriate to build on the initial inspirational leadership training experience. Hancock et al. (2012) support the importance of ongoing coaching for new leaders. "Adults who interact with adolescents should continue to support and encourage them to become engaged in school and community contexts and remain active throughout their adolescent years" (p. 97).

Another strategy, as explored by Nelson (2010), Winchester (2018) and others, recommends multi-session, ongoing leadership training experiences. Blanton et al, (2014), as well as Nelson (2010), explain their individual, module-based programs aimed at student leaders

as a part of, or an extension of the regular school day. Each group met weekly over an extended time, and endorsed the idea of voluntary participation. Each of the programs described revolved around a scripted curricula that included movies, discussions and activities. The “continued practice of leadership takes place over time, and it is more likely to emerge slowly, throughout a season or school year” (Blanton, Sturges & Gould, 2014, p. 3). If this type of program is embedded in the classroom setting, it could cast a wider net to train young leaders, possibly leading to a more “whole-of-school approach to leadership capacity-building” (Lizzio, Dempster & Neumann, 2011, p. 86). Winchester (2018) agrees with the benefits of an ongoing program, although his method is based more on service-based learning, is separate from the school, and is more student-driven. He explains that once students understand a “courageous conversation protocol” (Winchester, 2018, p. 32), they are freed to engage in the community work that they feel is necessary.

Both of these strategies are based on adults believing that all students can lead. As Nelson (2010) warns, many adults fail to recognize that students have the ability to learn leadership skills and make positive changes in their communities. When we do choose students for leadership training, we often limit our choices to a small, select group. Nelson points out that “sometimes teachers confuse academic excellence with leadership. Students who get high grades and are compliant are sometimes deemed leaders, but many of them do not gain the respect of their peers.” Conversely, students tagged as troublemakers are sometimes strong leaders, even if their leadership manifests in ways that disrupt the classroom (p. 21). Nelson isn’t the only researcher to suggest that adults may overlook students with leadership potential, and give too few kids access to leadership training. Sometimes, students, and teachers confuse



popularity with leadership. “For example, if one wanted to predict who would be a leader as an adult, we would recommend someone who was a leader as an adolescent” (Schneider, Ehrhart and Ehrhart, 2002, p. 295), but, if adolescents are narrowly identified by teachers and peers as leaders, we miss an entire population of students who would otherwise benefit from leadership training.

Developing high school student leadership skills require ongoing, intentional adult coaching and mentorship. While the training may take the form of one-time events, or it may take the form of longer, more sustained programs, unless students have real opportunities to practice leadership with guidance, they will not develop into the leaders that they have the potential to become. By developing cultures where students have the freedom (and training) to say things like, “Here’s what I have done so far and here’s what I need help with” (Bowman, 2014, p. 63), leadership training moves beyond depending on the formation of the program and into the development of the relationship.

Athletic coaches [and educators] are in an optimal position to develop leadership intentionally as a means of improving team performance as well as enabling youths to be more productive members of society. Gould and Voelker (2012) describe scenarios where coaches and educators not only select formal leaders but commit to ongoing leadership meetings, to provide leadership resources to students, and to provide them with authentic leadership opportunities. This cuts to the heart of the youth leadership development literature. Students have the ability to lead, and in many cases have the desire to use this ability to make a positive difference in the world around them. The best way to foster their emergence as leaders is to provide them initial training, either as a stand alone event or as an ongoing program, and then to

support them with ongoing coaching, motivation and mentorship. When we fit these pieces of the leadership development puzzle together, the full leadership potential of our students may be unlocked.

One important consideration for any practitioner involved in youth leadership development is the imbalance in research into youth as compared to adult leadership development. Although there is substantial literature regarding leadership, leadership development, and ongoing leadership motivation, much of that work is either general in nature or oriented specifically toward adults. Relatively little work has been done to expand our understanding of the importance, quality, and best practices for adolescent leaders. Future work in this area could cover a number of important areas. First, further research into best practices and existing programs oriented around teen leadership development would strengthen the existing assumptions of what helps young people learn and sustain leadership skills. Second, there is limited research into ways that such training could be most appropriately disseminated to students. For example, because of the earlier commentary that many coaches and adult leaders expressed a lack of time to dedicate to such training, researchers could share guidance into the most effective ways to build leadership capacity in high school-age students, regardless of the formality of the position.

## METHOD

The action research section of this project has three components. First, I conducted a leadership-oriented survey in January of 2019. The survey was electronically sent to 100 Mattawan High School students who serve in formal student leadership positions, including student government representatives, team captains, band section leaders, and club presidents. Students received the survey in their school-provided email, and were told that the survey would be anonymous and participation was optional.

The second aspect of this project involved the creation of a high school-focused leadership event for students throughout southwest Michigan. This grew out of my own observations that leadership development events for students are rare, or only available for a small number of students. I knew that in 2011, Southwest Michigan First (Southwest Michigan's Economic Development agency) [had] launched an annual event to get people in our region excited about being great leaders - no matter their age or what title they held at their job (see Appendix B). Therefore, in 2015, I brought six students (along with two district administrators) to the event, entitled *Catalyst University*, to see if it was appropriate for student leadership development. After participating, I was a part of a team that contacted Southwest Michigan First to discuss the possibility of creating a high school-focused component of Catalyst University to support adolescents along their leadership journey. Over the next few years, we worked with a number of representatives from Southwest Michigan First to discuss the benefits of expanding Catalyst University to include a high school student focus, school participation, student needs, and other variables. In 2018, we were excited to learn that Southwest Michigan First had decided to create High School Catalyst.

What resulted was a two day event in June 2019. The first day was a half-day leadership conference designed specifically for high school students to experience things like motivational leadership speakers, individual career-related strengths surveys, and a panel of recent college graduates. The focus was for students to realize their own current and future potential as leaders in their communities. The next day, students joined thousands of local adult professionals for a full day of motivation and leadership speakers.

I decided to take more than three dozen students, but emphasized that it was important that their participation would be voluntary, and that the group would be a mix of students with formal leadership roles, those who were known as informal leaders, and students who a teacher felt “has leadership in them, but doesn’t realize it yet.” I asked teachers to make recommendations for students and met with them in small groups to describe the event and explain why I wanted them to participate. Because of the financial support of local businesses and the local school foundation, we were able to lower the Southwest Michigan First charge for each participant from \$300 to \$50, and I was able to assure students that money would not be an obstacle. I told them that if they could not pay, they could still participate. I also asked two teachers from our school who are emerging teacher-leaders to participate as chaperones and participants. In total, there were 300 students who participated in *High School Catalyst* from 17 high schools in southwest Michigan with 45 participants from Mattawan. *Catalyst University*, on the second day, had over 2,600 participants.

The *Catalyst* experience explored leadership from three particular areas of focus. First, several of the speakers and presenters focused on the importance of motivation. Students were especially touched by the personal story of an artist who uses photography to rally charitable

support for communities after natural disasters, and by a small business owner who started a business in her garage and persevered as she and her company experienced challenges before finally seeing success. These and other motivational stories by people who had come from diverse backgrounds were powerful motivators for students who admitted to me that they often feel that their leadership challenges might be impossible to overcome.

The second focus area that *Catalyst* explored was the power and essential nature of collaboration and teamwork. Covered by a number of speakers, students were also able to participate in a corporate-style personal strength's survey. The students were introduced to the importance of recognizing one's own strengths on a team, and supporting teammates with complimentary and supplementary strengths. They were also given a powerful message about the power and importance of exploring and practicing weaknesses to help them become strengths, rather than to simply consider them liabilities. In a post-*Catalyst* survey response, one student shared the power of this message by recounting the metaphor of handwriting from the *Catalyst* speaker. "She taught us that strengths are like how we write with one hand. We could probably write with the other hand, but it would be difficult and not as good. But, someone else might be able to write with their left hand perfectly. So, while I'm good at some things, someone else is good at something that's harder for me. We can make a good team together" (Mattawan Student, 2019).

The lessons on motivation, collaboration, and teamwork were echoed by other speakers and presentations about a third area of focus. Both *Catalyst* days placed significant emphasis on empowering leaders. Students were able to hear powerful success stories from business, the arts, and non-profit leaders who shared their personal messages of how to make a difference on the

world around us. Speakers discussed the importance of perseverance, goal orientation, and positivity. Lessons about finding happiness and meaning in whatever work we do struck our students to see that high school leadership is not just a training ground for their future, but it is a way for them to positively impact their community.

After *Catalyst* was complete, I sent a survey to the 47 students who participated in the event in June of 2019. Students received the survey in their school-provided email, and were told that the survey would be anonymous and participation was optional.

## **Results and Recommendations**

### **Surveys**

This data from the first survey sent in January 2019 supports the conclusions from the literature regarding high school students' leadership opportunities and training. Students indicate that they believe that they have leadership ability and that there are sufficient opportunities to assume formal leadership roles within their school. Whether chosen for their role by peers, adults or both, they generally believe that they have "what it takes" to lead their respective groups. However, in concurrence with the literature, many report that they have received little or no ongoing leadership training from the adults associated with their groups.

Generally, students expressed confidence in the potential of their leadership ability, with 88% of students either "very" or "somewhat" confident in their leadership potential when they first assumed their current role. Twelve percent described themselves as "hesitant but hopeful" and none of these students described themselves as "not at all confident." Clearly, students who hold formal positions of leadership at Mattawan believe that they have ability to be leaders.

However, after serving in a position of formal leadership, the number of students who feel that they are "up to the task" is 82%, suggesting that leadership confidence of these students has waned somewhat with experience. Perhaps one reason for the decline in confidence echos the suggestion in the literature that many student leaders fail to receive much guidance or leadership training. This survey indicated that 33% of student leaders have received specific leadership guidance either to a limited extent or not at all. Although they continue to want to grow as leaders and seek out future leadership opportunities, 85% of student leaders say that they have a desire for formal, structured leadership training.

These findings are echoed in the narrative answers that some students included in their survey responses. While they describe satisfaction with leadership opportunities, several students indicated a desire for more leadership training. “I would have liked to have a leadership class to help me learn about some of the more intricate parts of leadership.” “It would have made my experience easier and less stressful if an adult was there to help guide me through everything at the beginning.

The June 2019 survey given to students who participated in *High School Catalyst* confirmed the literature in a number of important ways. Among them, whether holding formal student leadership positions, or whether recognized as having leadership potential by teachers, have a desire to grow their leadership skills. Although only 52% of these participants had experience as leaders with formal leadership roles, 96% of participants expressed an interest in working together in the future to make their school community better.

The overall feedback from these students was that their sense of leadership was enhanced, and they were empowered by this experience. “I am excited to implement what I have learned within my community.” “I took so much away from the incredible speakers and really was inspired by the people around me. It was an unforgettable experience that helped me grow not only as a leader, but as a person! This information, coupled with the fact that 96% of respondents said that participating in High School Catalyst was a positive experience, it is clear that it was an important step in providing intentional leadership training and motivation to the students at Mattawan High School.



## Recommendations

The literature, and the survey results offered above concur with one another, and together, can help to offer guidance for those of us who work with aspiring high school-age leaders. Our students want to grow as leaders, but need opportunity, training, and ongoing support for that development to occur.

This project illuminates two primary recommendations for developing leadership capacity among high school students. First, we must recognize the encouraging fact that our students are excited and willing to grow their leadership skills. Whether given opportunities to act informally in classrooms or other contexts, or in formal roles through student organizations, if we make sure to allow them opportunity and guidance, they can and will become leaders who can make a difference in the communities around them. While it may be tempting to think that only a small number of students have the interest, and the capacity to lead, the number of potential leaders in our schools is much broader than we may realize. We sell them short if we assume that only some students have capacity or interest, or if they need a formal, assigned leadership position. The literature is clear, when adults suggest that only students who demonstrate characteristics like compliant behavior, academic achievement, or peer popularity have the ability to grow as leaders, they are neglecting a large group of potentially willing and competent leaders and change makers. All students should be extended opportunities for formal and informal leadership responsibilities. Adults should tell them that they “have what it takes” and back that up with actual, tangible opportunities to make a difference.

But, providing students with opportunities to be leaders is not enough. We must not only provide high school students with opportunities to lead, but we must also provide ongoing

leadership training, support, guidance and mentorship. As an example, *High School Catalyst* serves various aspects of this for students in southwest Michigan. By tailoring an event that motivates and offers insights to new and emerging leaders, and by giving students the confidence to know that others see them as leaders, it is an example of how communities can ignite leadership among students. Although this type of event is important, it should be one step in a longer and ongoing program of guidance for participating high school leaders. Coaches, teachers, administrators and other adults commit to this type of important and inspiring event with ongoing and personal guidance that helps each student learn how to lead in whatever context they find themselves in.

## CONCLUSION

A student I know recently returned from a statewide student leadership conference. She excitedly explained to me that after this weekend experience, she is noticing herself looking for leadership opportunity in a variety of settings. She shared that she has always felt as if she has good ideas, but didn't really know how to apply them into action. The leadership conference helped motivate her to become a leader on her tennis team, even though the coach didn't assign formal captains. While her coach didn't offer leadership support, she was able to relate what she learned at a short conference into a new environment, thus continuing her training in a hands on manner.

Leadership conferences and other one time events are not the end of the story. But they play an important role. When we place students into positions of leadership without guidance, they are frustratingly left to find their own path. We owe it to them to offer them the opportunity to learn how to lead with support from the adults around them. This support may take the form of short-term motivational leadership events like Catalyst University. It may also take the form of ongoing, structured meetings within the school setting.

Because adolescents have so many opportunities to practice their leadership skills, high school is a wonderful opportunity for that practice to be intentionally guided and supported by mentoring adults. The benefits of this leadership development apply to students, who recognize their own ability to solve the problems that they face, but also apply to our school and community. Students who shape their ability to positively influence groups to achieve a common goal have an impact both on the groups that they participate in now and into the future.

Whether structured as a short term event, or as an ongoing program, we all benefit when we support teen leadership training. It is up to us to embrace the idea that high school students are ready and willing to be leaders. They simply need to be coached, supported and encouraged. With this support, the impact they will make on their community will be remarkable!

## Appendix A

### Catalyst University 2019: High School

#### About the Program Flyer



**CATALYST UNIVERSITY 2019  
HIGH SCHOOL**

 **ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

**WHAT**  
**CATALYST UNIVERSITY • HIGH SCHOOL CATALYST**

Catalyst University is a one-day leadership conference—featuring world-class speakers, incredible peer-to-peer interaction, and an energizing atmosphere—that empowers leaders who want to take control of their destiny. Bringing together nearly 3,000 community members and thought leaders under one roof, Catalyst University is guaranteed to shift attendees' leadership into overdrive.

Southwest Michigan First is expanding Catalyst University in 2019 to include High School Catalyst, with experiences curated specifically for high school students! Why? At Southwest Michigan First, we believe that the greatest force for change is a job. In order for our community to truly thrive, we need inspired leaders, and great leadership starts now! Helping our young people to develop their strengths, be successful in their education and reach their full potential is one of the wisest early investments we can make.

The tailored programming of High School Catalyst includes a unique half-day gathering on Western Michigan University's campus. Students will develop a better understanding of their individual strengths, be inspired by motivational speakers, learn the essentials of managing finances, and see role models of young leaders whose higher education paved the path toward opportunity. The following day, at the main Catalyst University event, students will mingle with nearly 3,000 regional business leaders.

**PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

- **Gallup® CliftonStrengths Assessment and Review:**  
Students will complete this assessment prior to attending the event. A large group session will be facilitated at the event, enabling students to understand how to capitalize upon their greatest strengths.
- **Tools in Effective Financial Management Discussion**
- **Nationally-Recognized Motivational Speakers**
- **Panel Discussion Featuring Young Leaders**
- **Live Interactive Philanthropic Experience to Engage Students in Giving Back to the Community**
- **Attendance at the Catalyst University Event:**  
Full day of programming, including nine nationally-recognized speakers, entertainment, lunch, snacks, and auxiliary materials

**WHO**  
**300+ HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN**

Southwest Michigan First's High School Catalyst will engage approximately 300 high school students from around the region.

Students can expect a two-day transformational experience in which attendees will learn tangible lessons and gain tools and inspiration for pursuing a college education and preparing to contribute meaningfully to the world.

**WHEN**  
**JUNE 19 AND 20, 2019**

**Day 1 | High School Catalyst | 1:00 PM to 5:30 PM**  
*Registration Opens at 12:00 PM*  
 Western Michigan University, Miller Auditorium, 2200 Auditorium Drive, Kalamazoo, MI 49008

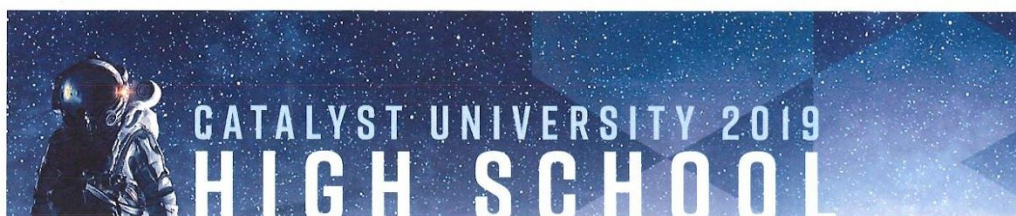
**Day 2 | Catalyst University | 7:45 AM to 5:00 PM**  
*Registration Opens at 7:00 AM*  
 Wings Event Center, 3600 Vanrick Drive, Kalamazoo, MI 49001

 **CATALYST UNIVERSITY**  
 PRESENTED BY SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST

## Appendix B

## Catalyst University 2019: High School

## Information for Students Flyer



## INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

## WHAT

## HERE'S THE STORY

Southwest Michigan First is an economic development agency headquartered in Kalamazoo, Michigan, that believes the greatest force for change is a job. The people who work there also think it is important for the region to be filled with people who love what they do for employment and are also great leaders.

So, in 2011, Southwest Michigan First launched an annual event to get people in our region excited about being great leaders—no matter their age or what title they held at their job. They called it Catalyst University, and it keeps getting bigger and more influential every year.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE  
EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME?  
DO YOU WISH YOU COULD  
DISCOVER WHAT REALLY DRIVES  
YOU, EXCITES YOU, AND GIVES  
YOU A SENSE OF PURPOSE?

But we couldn't stop there. It has always been a dream to share this same experience with high school students, who are at a critical stage of figuring out who they really are and how to make their dreams happen. That's why we're launching High School Catalyst. Join us on this epic leadership journey!

High School Catalyst is a two-day event. On Day One, you get to be part of a half-day leadership conference designed specifically for high school students. On Day Two, you get to join thousands of professionals from our region at the full-day leadership conference. It's going to be epic.

## WHY

## YOUR LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Are you ready for the experience of a lifetime?

Do you wish you could discover what really drives you, excites you, and gives you a sense of purpose?

You are not going to want to miss the first ever High School Catalyst! This two-day leadership event will be action-packed with:

- Nationally-recognized speakers inspiring you to live out your leadership
- Access to a live interview panel of young professionals who can share the real deal on figuring out college and career
- An opportunity for you to discover your unique strengths and learn how to maximize those strengths for your future
- A chance to be part of giving \$1,000 to a local charity
- And so much more!

And you get to do all that with more than 300 of your peers from high schools across the region. Are you in? We thought so!

## WHEN

JUNE 19 AND 20, 2019

**Day 1** | High School Catalyst | 1:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Registration Opens at 12:00 PM

Western Michigan University, Miller Auditorium, 2200 Auditorium Drive, Kalamazoo, MI 49008

**Day 2** | Catalyst University | 7:45 AM to 5:00 PM

Registration Opens at 7:00 AM

Wings Event Center, 3600 Vannick Drive, Kalamazoo, MI 49001



**CATALYST  
UNIVERSITY**

PRESENTED BY SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST



## TOP 10 REASONS

### YOU NEED A SEAT AT HIGH SCHOOL CATALYST

- 1 There will be fun, food, music, and surprises at every turn.
- 2 You get to join more than 300 high school students and meet new people from other schools.
- 3 You get to hear eight amazing national speakers on stage over two days.
- 4 You get your very own individualized Gallup® CliftonStrengths Report.
- 5 You will hear young professionals talk about their experience with college and how they went about entering their career.
- 6 You will get access to tools for effective financial management.
- 7 You will be part of giving a local organization \$1,000 to do good work in our community.
- 8 You will be part of a major leadership conference with over 3,000 other people in one place. The energy is electric.
- 9 You will be feel inspired and energized, ready to take on the world.
- 10 You get a swag bag. Boom!

## ARE YOU IN?

### HERE'S YOUR CHECKLIST TO GET THERE

- Let your parents/guardians know you are going! Be proud. Dance a little. We encourage it.
- Get your phone out and put June 19 and June 20 on your calendar.
- Register for the conference online. Your school point person (probably the person that invited you to come) can give you the link to register and tell you if your school has a special code. You must register by May 1, 2019.
- You will also get a link and code to complete a survey online called Gallup CliftonStrengths. This assessment will help you discover your Top Five Strengths. You need to do this BEFORE the conference. Trust us. The day will be so much better if you do this in advance. Please get it done by May 1, 2019.
- Make sure you take off of work for June 19 and 20 (or cancel your other plans—this is the place to be).
- Line up transportation or ask your school point person what the plan is on how to get to the event and then back home.

Follow us on twitter @CatalystU2019 (#CatalystU2019). Like us on Facebook at Catalyst University. Learn more about the event at [www.catalystuniversity.me](http://www.catalystuniversity.me).

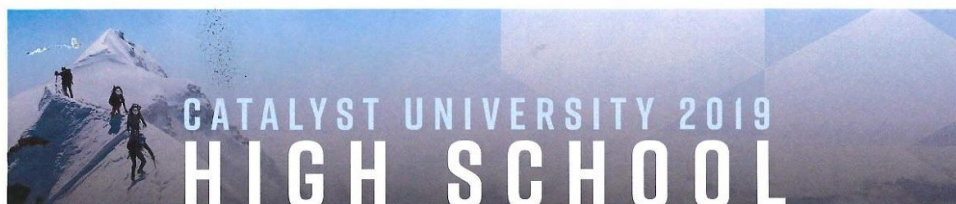




## Appendix C

### Catalyst University 2019: High School

#### Information for School Point Person Flyer



#### INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL POINT PERSON

Southwest Michigan First is thrilled that your school will be participating in High School Catalyst and Catalyst University on June 19 and 20, 2019! Expanding Catalyst University to include our community's young people has been a long-awaited dream, and we are beyond excited that YOU will be part of making the magic happen.

You have been identified as your school's **point person**, which means we will be working directly with you to coordinate your participation. Our goal is that you feel prepared, informed, and supported along the way. The following information outlines important details and responsibilities you will have as the point person. Here we go!

##### 1 | IDENTIFY THE STUDENTS WHO WILL BE ATTENDING HIGH SCHOOL CATALYST.

Your school has determined the number of students who will be attending High School Catalyst. It is your job to decide on who those students will be and the way in which you will select your students.

You can pick stand-out leaders, rising stars, budding potentials or anyone in between. We ask that you select students who will be entering their junior or senior year as of Fall 2019. They should also be at least 15 years old. Other than that, the selection process is up to you.

##### 2 | COORDINATE EVENT REGISTRATION WITH YOUR STUDENTS.

We will provide you with a link for your students to register online.

Each individual needs to register using this system by May 1, 2019. Your students will also be given a registration code, which will waive the \$300 ticket price.

THE FOLLOWING OUTLINES  
IMPORTANT DETAILS AND  
RESPONSIBILITIES YOU WILL  
HAVE AS THE POINT PERSON.  
HERE WE GO!

Follow us on twitter @CatalystU2019  
(#CatalystU2019). Like us on Facebook at  
Catalyst University. Learn more about the  
event at [www.catalystuniversity.me](http://www.catalystuniversity.me).

##### 3 | ENSURE THAT YOUR STUDENTS COMPLETE THE GALLUP® STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT.

As part of High School Catalyst, students will become more aware of their unique strengths and feel inspired to put those strengths into practice at school, at work, and in our community.

Gallup's CliftonStrengths is a world-wide, best-practice assessment tool designed to help professionals and students identify their top strengths. We will have a focused session on Strengths, including a guest speaker, during High School Catalyst.

Students will be given a code that allows them to complete the 20-minute CliftonStrengths assessment online and then access their unique Strengths Report.

All assessments must be completed by May 1, 2019. Your job as the point person will be to give the students their individual code and make sure they complete the assessment on time.





#### 4 | SELECT ADULT CHAPERONES TO ATTEND THE EVENT WITH STUDENTS.

As the point person, it is expected that you attend Day 1 | High School Catalyst on June 19 from beginning to end. This will be a unique experience for you to connect, encourage, and build relationships with your students.

Additionally, as the point person, it will be your responsibility to line up adult chaperones for your group on Day 1, June 19 only. We ask that you recruit one adult per 20 students who are attending the event (1:20 ratio) to help keep the event safe and on track. Chaperones should be responsible and good role models. School staff or teachers are excellent (and preferred) options. If chaperones are a parent/guardian, they will need a background check. We can walk you through the process.

#### 5 | PROVIDE ONGOING COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS.

It will be your job as the point person to ensure your students are informed and know what to expect for the two-day event.

We also want parents/guardians to stay informed and feel proud of what their student has accomplished by being part of High School Catalyst! We will provide you with all the information you need for both students and parents/guardians, so you can pass it along to your group as needed.

#### 6 | STAY CONNECTED

If you have questions along the way, please feel free to reach out to the team at Southwest Michigan First at any time.

We will continue to communicate with you as event details are being released. For instance, you can expect a detailed itinerary for the two-day event. You can email or call Gretchen Slenk at [gslenk@southwestmichiganfirst.com](mailto:gslenk@southwestmichiganfirst.com) or 269.303.5493.

#### 7 | PREPARE TO ANSWER LOGISTICS QUESTIONS WITH THESE ANSWERS.

##### Will there be food at the event?

Absolutely! No one will go hungry at this epic two-day event. There will be snack-type foods and beverages provided for students at High School Catalyst on June 19, 2019. Catalyst University on June 20, 2019, offers lunch as well as snacks and beverages throughout the day.

##### What about transportation and parking for the event?

Your students will be responsible for lining up their own transportation to and from the event on both days. You are welcome to coordinate this detail with them if you want to arrive as a group. We will provide parking information and maps for you as the event gets closer.

##### What is the dress code for the event?

Casual. We ask that students keep in mind that they are attending a leadership conference, but we want them to be comfortable. School rules should be the guide. (Jeans, for example, are totally acceptable.)



## Appendix D

### Mattawan High School Athletic and Club Offerings

## Sports Offered

The Board of Education recognizes the value of interscholastic athletics to our school community. The primary purpose of the athletic program is to enhance the comprehensive educational experience of students. Mattawan places top priority on the values of good sportsmanship, academic scholarship, scope of programs, and safety of participants.

The athletic program strives to provide students the opportunity to exercise and test their athletic abilities in a context greater and more varied than that which can be offered by the classroom alone. Game activities and practice sessions should provide many opportunities to teach the positive values of educational athletics.

### Women

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| ● Basketball        | ● Golf           |
| ● Soccer            | ● Track & Field  |
| ● Competitive Cheer | ● Lacrosse       |
| ● Softball          | ● Bowling        |
| ● Cross Country     | ● Sideline Cheer |
| ● Swimming          | ● Volleyball     |
| ● Alpine Ski        |                  |
| ● Tennis            |                  |

### Men

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| ● Basketball    | ● Football      |
| ● Baseball      | ● Track & Field |
| ● Lacrosse      | ● Golf          |
| ● Soccer        | ● Wrestling     |
| ● Cross Country | ● Hockey        |
| ● Swimming      | ● Bowling       |
| ● Alpine Ski    |                 |
| ● Tennis        |                 |

# Mattawan Clubs 2019-20

- • **Anime Club**
  - o Wednesdays 3-5, Rm 121
- • **Baking Club**
  - o 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the Month after school, Rm 149
- • **Be nice.**
  - o 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Weeks of the Month during Seminar, Rm 225
- • **Book Club**
  - o 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the Month after school, Rm 121
- • **Chess Club**
  - o Fridays after school, Rm 163
- • **Dance Team**
  - o Tryouts in October, Rm 134
- • **Dungeons and Dragons**
  - o Mondays and Fridays after school, Rm 130
- • **Fellowship of Christian Athletes**
  - o Wednesdays after school, Rm 215
- • **French Club**
  - o Twice a Month on Thursdays after school, Rm 131
- • **Game Club**
  - o Tuesdays 2:30-4pm, Rm 145
- • **Gay Straight Alliance**
  - o Wednesdays after school, Rm 130
- • **Green Team**
  - o Wednesdays after school, Rm 116
- • **LEO Club**
  - o 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Month after school, Rm 115
- • **Model UN**
  - o Monthly, Rm 212
- • **Science Olympiad**
  - o Tuesdays and Wednesdays after school, Rm 161
- • **Spanish Club**
  - o 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the Month after school, Rm 134
- • **Student Government**
  - o Rm 208
  - o Class of 2020
  - o Class of 2021
  - o Class of 2022
  - o Class of 2023
- • **Techie Club**
  - o Tuesdays and Thursdays after school, Auditorium (blue door by band rooms)

## Appendix E

### Student Leadership Survey Questions

Distributed January 2019

The first survey, The questions were as follows:

- a) What is your grade?
- b) What was the first grade you attended in Mattawan Schools?
- c) Including this year, many years have you held a formal leadership position in school? (if you hold more than one position, please answer for the one you've held the longest)
- d) How many years have you held a formal leadership position in an organization not associated with school? (this might be a religious organization, employer, service club, etc.)
- e) If you had to say right now, what are your plans after high school? (multiple choice from drop-down menu)
- f) Were you selected for your current school leadership position by peers or by adults or both?
- g) When you were selected for this leadership position, what was your initial perspective of your own leadership skills? (multiple choice: Confident that I had what it takes; Somewhat confident that I could figure it out as I went along; Hesitant but hopeful; Not at all confident in my own abilities)
- h) After holding a leadership position for some time, what is your current perspective of your own leadership skills? (multiple choice: I am up to the task!; I am figuring it out as I go; I am not especially confident, but it's working out okay; I'm really struggling)
- i) After holding a leadership position for some time, do you feel like you have experiences and lessons that you could offer to others holding similar positions?
- j) When you were selected for this leadership position, did you seek out leadership advice from books/videos/websites on your own? If yes, which one(s)?
- k) Since you took on this leadership position, an adult related to this program has offered specific leadership guidance to you. (multiple choice: Yes, to a great extent; Yes, to some extent; Yes, to a limited extent; No, not at all).
- l) The training and experience from this leadership opportunity have made you... (More inclined to seek out future opportunities to lead in various organizations in your life; Less inclined to seek out future opportunities to lead in various organizations in your life; About the same as before.)
- m) Would you benefit from more access to face-to-face leadership training through the school?
- n) Would you benefit from the chance to interact with others who have similar leadership responsibilities in our school and in other schools?
- o) Do you have any other thoughts or comments about leadership training and opportunities here at school? (Optional narrative response.)

## Appendix F

### Post *Catalyst* Survey Questions

Distributed June 2019

- a) What is your grade (rising, next fall)
  - b) Including this year, how many years have you held a formal leadership position in school? (if you hold more than one position, please answer for the one you've held the longest)
  - c) If you had to say right now, what are your plans after high school?
  - d) When you were approached about participating in Catalyst, what was your initial thought about the fact that someone in the school saw leadership in you? (multiple choice: I wasn't surprised. I see myself as a leader; I was a bit surprised, but I know I've got it in me; I had no idea that others saw me as a leader. I didn't really recognize it in myself.)
  - e) Was participating in Catalyst a good experience for you?
  - f) I told you all that I'd like you to be more empowered to make positive changes to our school. Would you be willing to meet on occasion next year to brainstorm some ideas? (multiple choice: Absolutely yes! I've got ideas already!; Yes, but I don't have anything specific I'm thinking of at this time; Maybe, if I have time. It isn't really a priority for me; No; I don't see the point.)
  - g) What feedback (both positive and constructively critical) would you like to offer to the organizers of Catalyst? (I'll send your answers along to them to use for their future planning) (Optional narrative response)  
(answers below)
- *When I first walked in, I was very impressed by the initial presentation of the stage and the lighting. It was a good way to get everyone excited and ready to go. If I were to suggest one thing, it would be to have everyone move around more. It may just be high schoolers, but it got quite difficult to sit for a long period of time.*
  - *I'm glad that the speaker line-up included outlooks on many aspects of our futures, from achievement to education to work to finances.*
  - *Personally, I thought this experience has been impactful. I enjoyed the High School Catalyst event because from it I was able to see what my strengths are and how I can use those to be better for me and for others. I also liked the being able to visit different organizations at their table and I even joined some programs because of it. Overall, I thought the High School day was a good experience to be a part of. The second day of catalyst was really empowering. I really enjoyed listening to each speaker and what they thought we should do to improve our own lives and the lives of other people too. There were so many inspiring stories and ideas. I came out of there wanting to do something impactful in my life that would help others. I am really glad I was able to be a part of a wonderful and inspiring event.*

- *Catalyst was very fun and engaging, especially the second day. I appreciate that the second day encompassed more topics applicable to overall life and leadership. On that note, I wish that the High School Catalyst had more emphasis on life after college and on topics less education-based.*
- *I had a blast being with my friends and learning so much at Catalyst! I took so much away from the incredible speakers and really was inspired by the people around me. It was an unforgettable experience that helped me grow not only as a leader, but as a person!*
- *I believe this will not just improve us as people, but the school all around.*
- *Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to attend this event. Without your help many of us would not have been able to be part of this experience. Thank you for allowing me to participate in an inspiring event that changed how I view things. We all appreciate what you did for us and allowing us to be a part of an unforgettable and amazing experience. Thank you!*
- *I would just like to say thank you for giving us this opportunity and I hope I can attend in future years. I felt that, as an individual, learned more than I could have imagined from the two days.*
- *Thank you for giving us this opportunity! Many of us experienced two days of fun and inspiration, and were able to take things away that we can apply to ourselves and our environments in order to make a positive impact.*
- *It was an invaluable experience and I am thankful to have been able to go. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience alongside my friends and have left as a better leader, and I am excited to implement what I have learned within my community.*
- *Empowering high schoolers, such as myself, to take control of our strengths to better the environment around us is the reason that we can hope for the future. You have given us an opportunity that I know I am grateful for.*
- *Thank you for organizing this great program with great speakers that gave many inspiring speeches and ways to set and achieve goals.*
- *Thank you so much for allowing me to go to Catalyst University. Some of the speakers there were the best I have ever seen in my whole life! The experience was life changing and the inspiration in every room was so abundant. Thank you for allowing us to go and learn so much more about our school, community, and future. Thank you!*

## Appendix G

## HSIRB Approval Not Needed Letter


WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Institutional Review Board  
FWA00007042  
IRB00000254

Date: February 5, 2020

To: Brett Geier, Principal Investigator  
Jonathan Waldron, Student Investigator

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair 

Re: Approval not needed for IRB Project Number 20-01-28

This letter will serve as confirmation that your project titled "Developing Student Leadership" has been reviewed by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Based on that review, the IRB has determined that approval is not required for you to conduct this project because data collected for a purpose other than research is being used (secondary data) and it does not meet the Federal definition of human subject.

#### 45 CFR 46.102 (f) Human Subject

(f) *Human subject* means a living individual **about whom** an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains:

- (1) Data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or
- (2) Identifiable private information.

*Intervention* includes both physical procedures by which data are gathered (for example, venipuncture) and manipulations of the subject or the subject's environment that are performed for research purposes. *Interaction* includes communication or interpersonal contact between investigator and subject. *Private information* includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, and information which has been provided for specific purposes by an individual and which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (for example, a medical record). Private information must be individually identifiable (i.e., the identity of the subject is or may readily be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information) in order for obtaining the information to constitute research involving human subjects.

"**About whom**" – a human subject research project requires the data received from the living individual to be about the person.

Thank you for your concerns about protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects.

A copy of your protocol and a copy of this letter will be maintained in the IRB files.

Office of the Vice President for Research  
Western Michigan University  
1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5456  
PHONE: (269) 387-8293 FAX: (269) 387-8276  
WEBSITE: [wmich.edu/research/compliance/hsirb](http://wmich.edu/research/compliance/hsirb)

CAMPUS SITE: Room 251 W. Walwood Hall

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