

Amanda Beyer
12th Grade
Hamilton High School

The Meaning of Leadership Today

Overall, the meaning of leadership in a changing world requires a leader that can adapt and change along with it. The ability to lead others is often mistaken as arrogance, yet a strong, passionate, determined and knowledgeable leader can often times bring about the necessary change needed to diffuse and improve a situation. The edge that makes a leader successful is the difference between change and chaos. However, leadership is no longer determined by who has the most wealth and power, yet it is measured by the ability to bring about positive transformation. The old saying “speak softly and carry a big stick” does not apply to today’s society. “I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people”-Mohandas Gandhi.

Historically speaking, Mohandas Gandhi was a great political and spiritual leader of India. He was an advocate of non-violence in his aim to help India gain its independence. By acting out his values in every aspect of his life, Mohandas Gandhi’s passion broke through to the world and his leadership inspired many others to initiate movements for civil rights internationally. Another influential leader of his time, Albert Schweitzer, worked as a minister at St. Nicholas Church in the late 1890s. Every word he emitted depicted the giving and empathetic relations he believed man should have toward one another. Nevertheless, Albert Schweitzer acted out the character his lectures insisted. The people did not have to linger on Schweitzer’s words, but watched closely as his lifestyle drew the picture for them. He traveled as a missionary to Africa, and served the people there as an example of leadership to all.

In the world today, people often look toward a leader for direction and strength, yet in order to establish direction, inner strength must come first, then outward example, and leadership follows. A leader who exposes themselves to diversity, and questions the process of change through knowledge will gain the trust and confidence of their peers. “Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other”-John F. Kennedy. The world is definitely a melting pot of cultures, religions, and beliefs and an effective leader in society today needs to have a vision that incorporates and understands the often strained ideals between them. Leaders, today, need to focus more effort on building collaborative relationships in order to help them succeed together rather than trying to compete alone. Business and economical success is no longer confined to one country or company, they have become globally intertwined. A successful leader acknowledges change and uses it as an opportunity to move in a new direction.

As I transition into college life, there will undoubtedly be times for my leadership to shine. With parents no longer there to steer me, I must plow my own path. Understanding that “leadership” does not just mean *knowing* my intention to study, I will take the charge to prioritize and lead myself in the right direction. I see myself being a positive influence on my friends to make the right decisions. If I act as a responsible individual, the image will be reflected on my peers.

The object of the childhood game “Follow the leader” is to mimic the actions of others. That concept of leadership is no longer a reality in today’s world. When we think of the term ‘leadership,’ what does it mean for us as a society? The dictionary definition of leadership is: “a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent.” However, being a leader is not just about being successful in doing one thing, it is about all the aspects of life combined: friends, religion, work, love, and family. A person who has lived their life as an honorable character will prove to be an effective leader who can inspire others through example. As Albert Schweitzer once stated, “Example is leadership.” Leadership descends from an ability to get others to believe in you and the change you are trying to bring about. Spirit, creativity, innovation, determination, intellect, drive, and passion are all qualities a great leader possesses, yet a person who can develop these and transfer them to others is truly a leader. “The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not followers”-Ralph Nader. If someone can fulfill their life dreams and lift others to a higher place along their journey, than they truly are a leader.