

I Can Be a Leader! Leadership Fun for Children

There has been debate among scholars about whether children learn to be leaders from their experiences or if leadership is something a person is born with. We know that all children have the potential to develop leadership skills. As adults, we can teach the skills necessary for children to take on leadership roles now and in the future. Involving children in leadership activities can help children:

- Boost their self-esteem
- Improve public speaking and communication skills later in life
- Teach them to identify their strengths and weaknesses
- Help them develop organizational skills
- Teach them to work with others

What types of activities help children develop leadership skills and qualities?

Many of the extra-curricular activities that school-age children are involved in often provide opportunities to develop leadership skills, including organized sports, dance, theater, camping, fishing, and martial arts. Many of these sports and activities help encourage teamwork and self-reliance, qualities of a good leader.

Community service activities are a great way to promote leadership qualities and give children the opportunity to share their leadership skills with the rest of the community. Community service can help children build confidence and teach them the rewards of giving to others. Arrange for opportunities to take the children in your care to help and volunteer. Be sure to have parents' permission and that you have addressed any safety concerns with the volunteer site.

- Animal shelters-collect food, blankets and toys for the animals
- Charity shops-collect and donate old clothes and toys
- Senior centers-visiting with seniors, eating lunch, reading with them
- Community clean up-picking up trash or raking leaves

There are many ways that you can help children develop leadership skills, such as:

- Match the child's interests with possible leadership opportunities.
- Look for examples of leaders in the local community or in the news to discuss with children. If possible invite them into your program to talk about their jobs.
- Talk about what types of leadership roles in which you, as an adult, are involved.

Look for leadership opportunities for children within the child care program. Talk with parents about how they can encourage leadership by giving children a leadership role in a family event or project. It is not as important what type of activities children participate in, as it is to find leadership and activities that children will enjoy and will benefit from.

Activity: "This is Me"

Materials:

Poster board or construction paper, crayons, scissors, magazines, and newspapers

Description:

Having the confidence to lead is an important part of leadership. Have children draw a picture of themselves on the poster board or construction paper. Have children cut out pictures from the magazine or newspaper that best show who they are. They can include their favorite foods and activities, pets, where they live, and whatever makes them special. After they create their poster, children can present to other children.

Activity: “How are we the same and different?”

Materials:

None needed.

Description:

Have the children sit in a circle and select one child to go first. Ask the child to point at someone in the circle who shares the same characteristic as him, such as a hair color. Then that child can find someone with a different characteristic, such as shirt color, that is the same. Allow the children to compare the similarities and differences between one another. Explain that everyone has differences and everyone also has things that are the same.

Activity: “How can we help?”

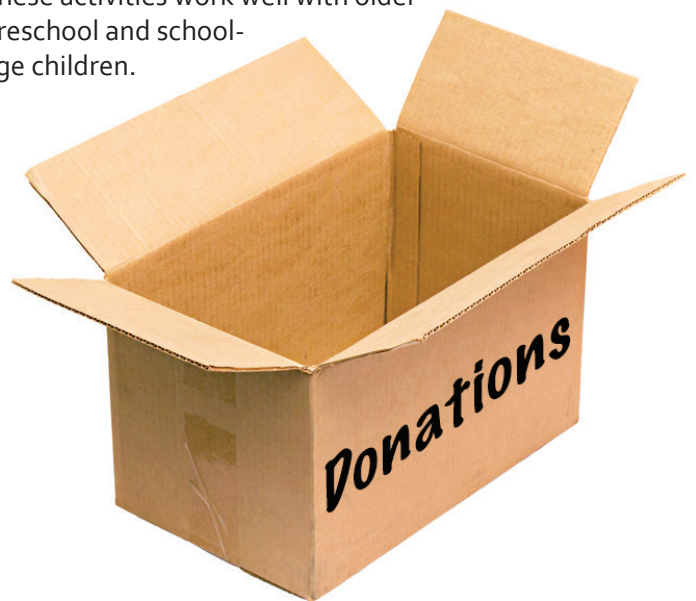
Materials:

None needed.

Description:

When children volunteer, they can take on leadership roles. Ask the children how they would like to help others in need. As the teacher, you can direct children to organizations in your own community that may need assistance. For example, if there was an article in the local paper about the dog shelter losing funding, you might suggest the children collect items for the shelter such as dog or cat food or blankets. If there is a child in the class that has a parent that is in the military and is deployed, you can suggest making cards or collecting treats to send to military members. Choose volunteer opportunities that give children a chance to lead and work with other children.

These activities work well with older preschool and school-age children.



Additional Resources:

Weikart, Phyllis S., and Elizabeth B. Carlten. 2002. *85 Engaging Movement Activities*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Zero to Three-National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families. “Tips on Helping your Child Achieve Confidence. Retrieved August 29, 2012. <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/social-emotional-development/tips-on-helping-your-child-self-confidence.html>

Choking Cautions

Young children can choke on small objects and toy parts. All items used for children under three years of age and any children who put toys in their mouths should be at least 1¼ inch in diameter and between 1 inch and 2¾ inches in length. Oval balls and toys should be at least 1¾ inch in diameter. Toys should meet federal small parts standards. Any toys or games labeled as unsuitable for children under three should not be used.

Other items that pose a safety risk and should not be accessible to children under three include, but are not limited to: button batteries, magnets, plastic bags, styrofoam objects, coins, balloons, latex gloves, and glitter.