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2nd Place Essay: The Art of Leadership

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The Art of Leadership

Leaders are an incredibly important part of any functioning society. Leaders guide, teach, inspire, challenge, motivate, and train individuals to become smarter, stronger, and more respected. Leaders have the ability to influence others with their words and actions. Effective leadership is an art. Leadership is not a direct set of rules to follow or books to read. Finding the correct way to lead cannot be found in a textbook. Leadership is a characteristic that is learned over time. Leadership is forming relationships, making connections, and meeting the needs of your followers.

When my dad became the manager of his own business, his dad gave him a few pieces of information. He was told that within his business he would become a preacher, doctor, teacher, psychiatrist, and coach. While my dad laughed at this statement, he quickly realized the truth behind this information. Leadership is flexible. A leader must be willing to play many roles in order to be well liked and successful. The way one leads in a church is going to be different than the way one leads in a school or business.

In art, there is no right or wrong answer. Art has no written rule of what it can or cannot be. Art is creative, free, and boundless. Science is straightforward, full of formulas and direction, and only one right answer. Unlike science, effective leadership should not be confined to only one correct method. There is a crucial need for variety to allow for the different types of followers a leader may encounter. The ever-changing variable that makes up extraordinary leadership is how a leader leads his or her followers. Every individual has different needs and learns differently. Leaders can use their own creativity, experiences,

and desires to effectually lead their followers. There is no special formula or rule that determines perfect leadership. A successful leader decides which tools to use and when to use them. What makes a leader effective is his or her ability to adapt to different environments, different types of followers, and different methods of leading.

When I was a manager of the girls' soccer team my senior year of high school, the coach demonstrated an excellent example of leadership being an art. Coach de Jager played many roles throughout the duration of the season. Not only was he coach to a team of girls, but also dad, doctor, teacher, friend, and biggest fan. Whenever a goal was scored, he would be the one to cheer the loudest from the bench. Whenever an injury occurred, he would be the first one to make sure everything was okay. Whenever someone was sad, he would be there to tell a joke, followed by his roaring laugh. Coach de Jager knew when to be serious and when to be fun. He not only coached girls in soccer, but also in life. He was quick to offer advice in any given situation. These extraordinary characteristics display how leadership is an art. Leadership is the willingness to be flexible, creative, and play many roles towards those who choose to follow.

Leaders make up a functioning society and improve the well-being of any individual who chooses to follow. Leadership has the power to impact all those who choose to listen. Just as art is full of many possibilities and not defined to one answer, so too is leadership. The most effective form of leadership is one that incorporates flexibility, creativity, and the idea that there is never a right or wrong answer.