

# **My Personal Leadership Emerging Leader Final Paper**

**By: Ann Jordan Rogers**

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**Past Leadership and Acceptance into ELI**

Upon finding out that I had been offered a spot in the Emerging Leader Institute for the Spring 2006 semester I felt very honored and excited about this great opportunity. Having known quite a few people who had previously gone through ELI, I was familiar with how the class was and the impact it had made others. I will admit that I was nervous about being in a class full of great leaders whom I had never met before. I felt very intimidated on the first day of meeting all of these individuals who seemed so wonderful but were complete strangers.

Before beginning this class I knew it was going to be difficult to go into a small classroom setting with no one I knew. Over Christmas break I thought about this a lot and decided I was going to put myself out there. Of course I am from a small town where I know everyone but I realized that without being open to change my skills as a leader would never improve. In convincing myself that this would be the only way I would make it through the semester, I have found that this experience would never have been the same if I had not.

When told to begin thinking about an individual leadership project I was very flustered because I was not from Lexington and had very few connections to people within the community. I had been involved with many leadership projects in the past but was never put in charge of them or had the whole event sitting on my shoulders. Although I had hesitation about my capabilities to complete an individual project I gave myself the benefit of the doubt when coming into this class. I knew I had to think on my toes and be prepared to find an issue that I was deeply care about.

### **Learning About Leadership**

Within the first couple of weeks of semester I realized how much I was going to

benefit from ELI. All the different speakers and presentations on the many different aspects of a leader caught my attention and taught me many characteristics of a leader. Topics such as leadership views, leadership styles, and collaboration of leaders have shown me a new way of leading.

The thing that caught me off guard during the first class of the semester was how different everyone's definition of leadership is. When trying to come up with our class definition we had to change it multiple times because people did not like one word within it. On this day I came to realize I knew how to see leadership in others but I did not know how to define what a good leader was like or what leadership was. It seemed like such a controversy topic because who says leadership is a positive idea, there are also bad "leaders".

As we got into the different speakers I gained a better understanding of what a leader should be like and the characteristics that one should possess. The first chapter within the Leadership Challenge by far helped me the most in learning what leadership should consist of. I have found that the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, as defined by this book, are a perfect way to become a well rounded leader. The Five Practices are:

- Model the Way
- Inspire a Shared Vision
- Challenge the Process
- Enable Others to Act
- Encourage the Heart

These five practices have probably inspired me the most within this class and as a future

leader.

Another topic presented to the class about leadership was the idea of passion about a particular issue. This aspect especially came in handy when coming up with a topic for my individual project. I have found that by finding something I am passionate about I can become more involved with that issue rather than trying to be involved in everything but not having a strong involvement with it.

### **Personal Leadership Style**

As this class progressed through the semester I became more aware of my own leadership style and what I wanted to change about it. Like many people I find it very hard to accept flaws about myself, but once again I knew I had to be open minded in order to grow as a leader. These flaws became very evident as we did personal inventories that showed what type of leadership styles each of us possessed.

Through the many different personal inventories I found that the DISC Personal Profile System was the most efficient and beneficial. From this I found that I was a dominant leader type. This seemed very accurate because it said that I held characteristics such as taking authority, making quick decisions, and managing trouble which I feel describe my personality. I found that I was more result-oriented and that my goals, according to this, were dominance and independence. Upon seeing these results I found that although I feel these are good traits, they are not in all situations. I definitely love to work on my own but to become a better leader I have learned that I need people, and although I like for everything to be perfect and run my way I have found that I will receive an occasional shock.

From these results I feel as though I have already shifted my skills and trait's as a

leader. I have put them to use during the group project held by the class and within my own individual project. During the group project I found that I cannot dominate everything and take complete charge. Through this I found there is a time to step back and let others tell me what needs to be done. In the process of completing my individual project I also used these results to help me along the way. Through preparing my project I learned that I need to seek for and accept help from others. I had so many people offer me help prior to the event so I took the necessary changes and used the help I had been offered.

### **Using Leadership Skills**

So now that I had a good idea as to what good leadership was and the traits that I needed to improve about myself, it was time to put them to good use. When coming up with my individual leadership project I definitely wanted to find something that I was very passionate about. I absolutely love children so this was a given that my project would have to do with children. I began searching for a way to do this and came across the Pediatric Oncology at the Kentucky Clinic. I quickly became very interested and educated myself about the clinic. I found contact information of the nurses within the clinic and collaborated with them on doing my project. Once deciding on doing my project there it was time to begin planning and using the leadership skills I had been taught.

By finding a topic that made me excited I became very motivated about the day the Easter Party would take place in the clinic. I began using the idea of vision and mission that had been presented to us in class. My vision was to lead a day of entertainment and fun for the children within the clinic. I wanted it to include an Easter egg hunt, cookie decorating, and pin the tail on the bunny. Next I had to move onto the

mission of how I was going to complete this project. I knew it was necessary for me to set a timeline for myself and accept the help of others that had been offered.

My project was successfully completed but there were also many things I learned from it. I learned I must stay motivated and headstrong when I set my mind to doing something. Also that when I envision something and use my skills to carry it through I can make a small difference in the lives of children.

### **Overall Reflection of the Emerging Leader Institute**

*“Do not think that you are the best and that you can do everything all by yourself - only teamwork brings the best results.”* This is a quote by Hans-Ulrich Schaefer that is found within the Leadership Challenge book. I feel that this quote sums up what I have learned during this semester of the Emerging Leader Institute .

During the course of this class I learned many things about leadership such as the importance of collaboration, finding a voice, and motivation. Although this was all translated to us in words during class, it was not until I actually got to use these skills to I learned the significance of them. Through my peer mentor group I learned to collaborate with others, especially people who were complete strangers to me. By using icebreaker games and getting to know one another it became easier to ask any of them for help when I needed it. Through my individual project I found my own voice when deciding on what I wanted my project to consist of. I found something that I was passionate about and stayed persistent with it until I knew it was going to take place. Motivation became very important during the process of completing our group project. Because there were so many of us it was as if many felt they could step back and completely let others do all the work. When it came time for everything to get done it was obvious this was impossible

so we had to continuously motivate everyone to become involved and do their part towards the completion of the project.

By taking away all that I have learned and the friendships I have made I have become a better person and leader. I have found that by being open to others and their ideas I can be a more well-accomplished person. ELI has been the best experience for me in college yet and I will never forget the friendships I have made and the leadership skills I have learned.