

START

Lead Well • Be Well • Do Well



Equip your kids with the mindset and skills they
need to thrive in a highly competitive world

Laurie Bodine

Foreword

by Bill Brady, Leadership Director at The Haverford School

Many have described the problems kids face growing up in competitive, college prep communities, including pressure from their parents who are concerned that they may be left behind in an increasingly demanding and uncertain world. What to do, in the face of these challenges, has been less clear. Until now.

Laurie Bodine is a powerful voice of reason and vision. In START, she presents a leadership path to success — and happiness — that works. Not only have I used START successfully in my own family, I have worked to integrate it into the classrooms and families of our school.

We have seen the impact START makes on developing essential leadership skills while building social and emotional capacity and connection. We have used START to unite our parents, teachers, and students with a common leadership language and process to navigate their lives effectively.

By shifting to a leadership mindset and committing to the START approach, you and your kids will reap the benefits now, and in the future.

INTRODUCTION

The Secrets of the 10%

“Only 10% of students are prepared to truly succeed, and to be happy and healthy in college and in life. I know who, and I know why, and it’s not what you think.”

For me, getting a good seatmate on a long flight is like winning the lottery. On a business trip to Washington, DC to speak at an ethics conference, I won big. My seatmate turned out to be a professor from Duke University who was friendly, engaging, and clearly, quite brilliant.

How lucky! I had long harbored the vision of getting my son into an elite school like Duke. And now I had five hours to find out exactly how to do it.

My son was four at the time.

The conversation didn’t go quite as I expected. I was looking for an insider’s list of to-dos, things I could start early to give my son an edge in admissions. But the professor challenged what I believed – what our generation of parents seems to believe – about raising “successful” kids. That is, raising the kind of kids who can, for example, get into a school like Duke. Or Harvard. Or any of America’s “Top Schools.”

He told me that in his experience and in that of his colleagues at other selective colleges, only 10% of students are prepared to truly succeed, and to be happy and healthy in college and in life. And he knew their secrets.

The professor explained:

“On the first day of freshman English, I give an assignment to write a paper – any format, any topic – and to turn it in at the next class so I can get a sense of each student’s ability. Immediately, hands shoot up. ‘How long should it be? What should the topic be? Should it be single-spaced or double-spaced? How will it be graded?’

I repeat the assignment and confirm that it won’t be graded, that I just need to gauge their proficiency level so I can tailor the class to meet their needs. But they don’t believe me; they’ve been conditioned not to. They line up at office hours, desperate for further direction, and when I don’t give it to them, they pull out their cell phones and call their parents. ‘He won’t tell me what to do – will you talk to him for me?’”

The professor continued:

“Over my 20 years on the faculty, my colleagues and I around the country have witnessed a progressive decline in student preparedness, initiative, and self-direction. These students are struggling – they’re stressed, misguided, and unhappy. They have no idea how to take the lead in their own lives.

But there are always a few – about 10% – who tackle the assignment without further direction. They write their paper and turn it in. Their behavior across the board is strikingly different. That difference is not about grades or test scores or the density of their résumés. It’s their approach to life and work – their confidence, their initiative – their willingness to step up and step in. They aren’t necessarily the most gifted intellectually, but I’ve come to discover that these 10% are the ones who have what it takes to succeed and to be happy and healthy – here at Duke, at work, and in life.”

The conversation was as disquieting as it was promising. I was stunned. How could it be that 90% of kids on their way to college, in college, and on their way out of college are struggling in such significant ways? How did we get to a place where parents of four-year-olds are planning how to get their kids into a good college, and where so many of us have come to think that this is normal – that we have no other choice?

I was determined to discover everything I could about the secrets of the 10% and how to put them to work.

Once home from the conference, I set to work. As a parent and an executive strategist working at the time for Baxter Healthcare, I began to notice striking similarities between the leadership and management of exceptional businesses and those of exceptional families and classrooms – especially with respect to developing, empowering, and inspiring leaders who can make a positive, productive, and constructive impact.

In what would become a decade of research in the workplace, at universities, on think-tanks, in elementary, middle, and high schools, on playgrounds, and in families, I set out to confirm, use, and then share the secrets of exceptional organizations, families, classrooms, and workplaces – the secrets of the 10% – and how to use them to equip our kids with the mindset and skills they need to navigate and flourish in the high pressure, high stakes culture in which they are growing up and will one day be working.

In the end, despite the widespread and accelerating changes in our increasingly competitive world, the news is good. What my colleagues and I have discovered in the research, including the evidence we’re generating in our own field studies, points to an efficient and effective framework that every family can use at home, starting today.

We are not the first to observe, analyze, nor report the implications of our competitive culture on the well-being and performance of our kids. We are also not the first to offer solutions to address the issues prevalent in our college prep communities. A list of those who have pioneered research in this field is included in the bibliography.

What we present in START is a synthesis of the compelling research organized into five straightforward steps that you can use with your family. The START Leadership approach is founded on principles that link leadership, happiness, and success – each of which is essential to be well and do well in today's competitive culture. The relationship of these three elements is important – and it leads us to

The Secrets of the 10%

1. Happiness leads to success (not the other way around)

When we are well, we can do well.

2. Leadership leads to happiness

When we develop mastery, autonomy and purpose, we thrive.

3. START leads to leadership

When we practice leadership language and processes, we build essential knowhow

These secrets are embedded into the five steps of the START framework. Kids raised with this leadership approach develop the emotional intelligence and intrinsic motivation that fosters initiative, meaningful connection, and engagement at home, at school, and ultimately at work and in life. They have opportunities to discover, tune in to, develop, and align their innate wiring and interests with the needs they discover in their family, school, community, and one day, at work, providing the sense of mastery, autonomy, and purpose that leads to well-being.

What's more, the START Leadership Process is enjoyable. Kids who experience this approach during childhood report greater satisfaction, joy, and hope, even in the midst of working hard and facing challenges. They learn to take the lead in their own lives, using what we call small "l" leadership, and to then take the lead in the pursuit of worthwhile goals, or what we call Big "L" Leadership. In so doing, they develop the attributes of effective leaders – *Responsibility, Resilience, and Resourcefulness* – that are essential for broad success.

The leadership approach outlined in this book provides a path to happier and healthier kids, giving them structure and space to grow into and live up to their full potential, even in crushingly competitive, college prep communities. It works for kids of all ages – from pre-K through college. And it's never too early or too late to begin.

In Part One, *The START Leadership Approach*, you'll find a discussion of a central challenge families face today, the case for leadership, and the definitions and processes that set the stage for implementation of the START solution.

In Part Two, *START Leadership in Action*, you'll find the five-step action plan you can use – starting today – to equip your kids with the mindset and skills they need to thrive now and in a future that's changing too rapidly to predict – including the ten skills executives and educators state are essential in high school students entering college and college students entering the workplace.

The skills fall into the categories of Responsible, Resilient, and Resourceful, the Three Rs of Leadership.

Responsible: *I know what to do and step up to do it.*

1. Self-Direction: They see the big picture. They set appropriate goals, and they take initiative and ownership to do the work necessary to achieve them.
2. Ethics: They choose right over wrong – even when choosing right is harder and no one is watching.
3. Global Awareness: They understand the perspective of others who may have needs and views that are different from their own.

Resilient: *I know why I'm the one to do it, and so stay with it, even when it's hard.*

4. Grit: They recover from setbacks and they forge ahead. They are willing, eager, and able to take on worthwhile challenges even when it is hard.
5. EQ: Their social and emotional awareness and skills enable the productive management of themselves and their relationships.
6. Social Responsibility: They put their talents to work to make a difference in ways that are meaningful to their community and to them.

Resourceful: *I know how to do it, and I know how to work with others to get it done.*

7. Critical Thinking: They have the knowledge, skill, and discipline to conceptualize, analyze, and synthesize information that leads to meaningful and productive decision making and outcomes.
8. Creativity: They have the knowledge, skill, and discipline to apply original ideas to generate meaningful value.
9. Communication: They persuasively give and actively receive essential information.
10. Collaboration: They work with and leverage a group's talents to realize shared goal.

Even at the youngest ages, our kids benefit from experiencing the meaning and context of these skills and from putting them into practice.

Training opportunities can be woven into daily life. Games, projects, chores, and selected books and movies can be used to support the development of each of the essential leadership skills. Once established, the leadership language and processes developed through informal and formal training establish vocabulary that kids can use, build upon, and take with them as they move through school, college, and into the workplace and life as adults.

We're in the midst of a leadership crisis – a crisis that executives and educators rank as a top concern. More urgently, our kids are struggling – yet they have no platform or power to resolve this alone. We, as parents, teachers, community leaders, and professionals, have the opportunity to step into the gap, to provide solutions, and to turn this situation around for our kids and for their future.

We can't wait for our schools, colleges, businesses and communities to shift. We must start at home, in our own families. We must encourage and foster our kids' well-being while modeling, teaching, and reinforcing the leadership mindset and skills that will prepare them to navigate and thrive in the face of rising challenges.

By providing the tools and the opportunities for our kids to take the lead in their own lives, we will equip them with exactly what they need to be well and do well in a highly competitive world. And in the process, we have the collective potential to shift the culture in our schools, communities, and businesses for good.

Let's START now.

We know all too well that in **today's high pressure, high stakes culture**, childhood for many has become a relentless quest to build a competitive résumé for top college admissions. As a result, **well-being hangs in the balance** for students—and their parents—in every college prep community, while in our rapidly changing, global economy, new grads are struggling to get started in record numbers.

Despite the cultural crush, about **10% of kids fare well in school and in life**. Intrinsically motivated, emotionally intelligent, and capable, they link success with meaning and joy as they take the lead effectively in their lives.

In START, Laurie Bodine has brought together cutting-edge research in academics, business leadership, and child development to reveal **the secrets of the 10%** and to provide an alternative to today's high-pressure environment. In five straightforward steps, START shows you how to optimize individual and family dynamics to **create a culture of leadership and engagement** where kids are inspired to develop the attributes and master the skills that are essential to success in a highly competitive, uncertain world.

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“If the highly stressed students I see had gone through this program, they wouldn't be in my office. They would have developed better tools, become more resilient, and have a better perspective on life.”

– Mother and Psychiatrist at The University of Pennsylvania

“START has improved my interaction with my kids, given me the tools I need to develop leadership in them, and made our family life more fun and rewarding.”

– Father and Manager at Workday

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Laurie Bodine, the mother of one son and two step-daughters, is the Founder of START Leadership, an education and training company in San Francisco. START's integrated leadership training equips students, parents, and professionals with the mindset and tools they need to lead well, be well, and do well in today's increasingly competitive and uncertain world. Laurie has 25 years of experience working for and with Fortune 500 companies in sales, marketing, technology development, strategy, and leadership.

Please visit: www.START-Leadership.com

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