

# START Leadership

*In the Classroom*



Equip your students with the mindset and skillset  
they need to lead well, be well, and do well  
in a highly competitive, rapidly changing world

Laurie Bodine, MBA  
Ron Duska, EdD

**Well Well Well Press**

# Preface

by Ron Duska, EdD, Lower School Head, The Haverford School

When students have the time, space, and guidance to tune into, develop, and align their innate Wiring and Interests with the Needs they discover in their family, classroom, and community, they experience the well-being necessary to do well.

In my twenty-five years as a teacher and administrator, I have witnessed a sharp rise in expectations related to student performance and achievement, with an increasingly narrow focus on academic success. With that, I have witnessed a steady decline in the connection students experience to themselves, to one another, and to the purpose of the work. This, as so many of us have seen, has come with a steady rise in stress, distress, and anxiety for students, and a steady rise in challenges for teachers.

In introducing the Leadership framework and tools described here in *START Leadership in the Classroom* to my school's faculty, students, and parents, we saw the impact START made on developing essential leadership skills in students while building social and emotional capacity and connection. In addition, START served to unite our parents, teachers, and students with a common leadership language, process, and practice, aligned by the shared vision of equipping students with the mindset and skill set they need to thrive and prosper in a highly competitive, rapidly changing world. As a result, we experienced a positive, productive, and measurable shift in the engagement and well-being of all the members of our school community – in the classroom, at school, and at home – that has endured.

We invite you to shift to a leadership mindset and approach in your classroom using the tools and processes we describe here and to experience the benefits for yourself, for your students, and for your broader school community.

# Chapter 1

## 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, Laurie, 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 a 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.

**“I know who, and I know why, and it’s not what you think.”**

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, 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%. I’ve researched and confirmed how to use them effectively 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 can be used in every family and classroom, 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 students. 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 in your classroom. 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%.

## **The Secrets of the 10%**

1. Happiness drives success (not the other way around)

*When we are well, we can do well.*

2. Leadership drives happiness

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

3. START drives leadership

*When we practice leadership language and processes, we build essential know-how for living life well.*

These secrets are embedded into the five steps of the START framework. Kids raised and educated 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 the cultural challenges we all 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 students 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 10 Essential Skills of Leadership**

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 students benefit from experiencing the meaning and context of these skills and from putting them into practice.

Training opportunities can be woven into daily experiences. On assignments in the classroom, in clubs, extracurriculars, advisory, and counseling, links can be made 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.

We're in the midst of a leadership crisis – a crisis that executives and educators rank as a top concern. More urgently, students 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 the culture to shift from the top, in our schools, colleges, businesses and communities. We can start in our own classrooms. We can encourage and foster our students' 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 students 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.

# Bibliography

## Research in Business

*Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman  
*Gallup StrengthsFinder 2.0* by Tom Rath  
*Good to Great* by Jim Collins  
*The Happiness Advantage* by Shawn Achor  
*Scaling Up Excellence* by Bob Sutton and Huggy Rao  
*A Whole New Mind* by Daniel Pink

## Research in Education and Child Development

*The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* by Wendy Mogel  
*Creating Innovators* by Tony Wagner  
*Excellent Sheep* by William Deresiewicz  
*Doing School* by Denise Pope  
*Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky  
*Mindset* by Carol Dwek  
*The Nine Intelligences* by Howard Gardner  
*The Price of Privilege* by Madeline Levine  
*The Path to Purpose* by William Damon

## Wiring Resource Links

Gallup Organization: [www.gallupstrengthscenter.com](http://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com) (small fee)  
Myers Briggs: [www.myersbriggs.org/](http://www.myersbriggs.org/) (free options available)  
High5Test.com (free)

We know all too well that in **today's high pressure, high stakes culture**, school for many has become a relentless quest to build a competitive résumé for top college admissions. As a result, **well-being often hangs in the balance** for students - and their teachers and 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**. Intrinsicly 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 and Ron Duska have brought together cutting-edge research in academics, education, business leadership, and child development to reveal **the secrets of the 10%**. Integrating the foundational elements of growth mindset, SEL, mindfulness, project based learning, and design thinking, START's single framework supports you in creating a **culture of leadership and engagement** where students are inspired to develop the attributes and master the skills that are essential to success in class and in the highly competitive, uncertain world they will soon enter.

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*“Over the past few years we have noticed a declining trend in student preparedness, initiative, and self-direction. But in just a few weeks using the START Leadership approach in our classroom, all are on the rise. The positive shift in student engagement and focus along with their ability to work independently has been remarkable.”*

*– 5th Grade Teacher, Colonial School*

*“We have seen the positive impact START makes in 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.”*

*– Leadership Director, The Haverford School*

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**Laurie Bodine, MBA** is the Founder of **START Leadership**, an education and training company in San Francisco. Laurie has 25 years of experience working with and for Fortune 500 companies in marketing, technology development, strategy, and leadership.

**Ron Duska, EdD** has 25 years of experience as a teacher and principal, working at the college, high school, middle school, and elementary school level in the Philadelphia area, including Villanova University and The Haverford School. Ron's first hand experience with START prompted him to join the START team to extend the reach of this important work.



For additional information and resources to support you in equipping your students with the mindset and skill set they need to lead well, be well, and do well, please visit [START-Leadership.Com](http://START-Leadership.Com) and find START books & workbooks at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)