

The Leadership Journey: Finding Your Path

Instruction in Self-Advocacy Benchmark:

Introduce leadership skills to support success in the workplace.

Note to those providing service:

These activities are developed in a way that allows the learner to gradually build upon their skills. Each student has different foundational skills so some students may need more support or instruction than others. With that being said, you can choose what activity you start with based on your learner's strengths and needs.



Extended Pathways

Students who are interested or enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) or postsecondary education, regardless of disability (remember to presume competence!), may or may not need some of the information that seems introductory in nature. Take as much or little time as needed based on student knowledge. More specific activities related to CTE and postsecondary education are identified as extended activities and pathways.

Preparation and Materials Needed:

- Know the student's knowledge or awareness regarding leadership skills (this helps with knowing how much time you may need to spend on an activity)
- Prepare needed assistive technologies and/or accommodations (ex: communication supports (visual, objects, pictures, voice output devices, etc.), physical supports/space access needs, vision supports, hearing supports, sensory needs/supports).
- Computer to access videos. Print materials in advance if necessary.
- Be sure to review and / or print PowerPoint slides in advance. Discussion prompts are included in the slide notes for the Leadership Language PowerPoint.



Print

- [Leadership Language \(PowerPoint\)](#)
- [Self-Evaluation - Leadership Section](#)
- [Leadership Scenario Cards](#)
- [Goal Action Plan](#)



Activities to Meet Benchmark:

Activity 1: Leadership Language

This activity aims to review vocabulary related to leadership skills.




Discuss: We are going to learn about leadership. What are leadership skills? [Note to Instructors: Allow students to share ideas and examples.] Leadership skills are a combination of many skills. These skills are important in school, work, and life! You may already know some and some may be new. Let's take some time to learn about these skills and reflect on times you used these skills. Examples can be from home, school, or work.



Resource: [Leadership Language \(PowerPoint\)](#). Feel free to modify the vocabulary list to meet the student's needs.

[Note to Instructors: There are prompts and discussion questions on each of the PowerPoint slides to help students learn and understand these leadership skills.]

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- **Active Listening** – listening and concentrating to whoever is speaking. This includes asking questions if needing more information or not understanding. When you do this, the person feels heard.
 - **Communication** - sharing information, ideas or feelings with others. This is important for effective leadership and advocacy.
 - **Responsibility** – a duty or task that a person is expected to take care of. It means doing what you are supposed to do.
 - **Collaboration** - working together with others on a common goal. This usually involves teamwork and sharing responsibility.
 - **Self-Advocacy** – speaking up for yourself and your own needs. Asking for what you want or need and explaining why you need it.
 - **Time Management** – organizing and planning your time to be able to do what you need to do. This includes setting goals and being able to decide what tasks are most important.
 - **Decision-Making** – making a choice or action when there are several options. This involves thinking about your options and picking the one that seems best.
 - **Problem-Solving** – identifying a problem, thinking through different ways to solve it, and choosing the best way to handle it.
 - **Leadership** – Using your skills to guide or inspire others towards a common goal.

Activity 2: Who Inspires You?

This activity aims to help students connect those they see as leaders and what skills make them leaders.



Discuss: You have more information about what skills a leader has and how leaders use those skills in different scenarios. Being a leader is not always about someone's status, like their job, awards they've received, or how much money they make. Being a leader is how they work with others towards a common goal. Think of the people you know. These can be people in your everyday lives or someone famous. Take a moment to think about people you think are great leaders. Who are they? What qualities makes them a leader? Here are prompting questions to help the conversation:

[Note to Instructors: Students can work individually or together as a group to discuss and share their thoughts about the leader they chose. As students share their thoughts about each question, write down their thoughts on the board for all students to see.]

- What qualities make a good leader?
- What ways can a leader help their team?
- What do they do when they are in charge of a project?
- How do they handle disagreements with others?
- What is the most important quality for a leader to have? Why?
- How do they balance being friendly while being in charge?



Review: Now, take a moment to think about yourself. Using the [Self-Evaluation Tool](#), complete the Leadership Section. As you consider those leadership skills and qualities, do you think you possess any of them? Are there skills you want to try and use? How can you build those skills?



Resource: [Self-Evaluation - Leadership Section](#)



Interactive Option: Invite a leader from the school or community to answer the questions above or other questions from students. These leaders can be from the school, like a principal, guidance counselor, or school board member, or from the community, like a hiring manager, business leader, board member of a nonprofit, or from business development). The leader(s) could join in person, virtually, or even be a recording.



Extending the Conversation

If you are interested in continuing to build your leadership skills, there is a tool called the [OhioMeansJobs Rubric](#) that can help you identify your leadership skill level. You can use this rubric to rate yourself or by asking someone else to rate you. Building and growing your leadership skills is a journey, use these results as a starting point to help you identify areas to grow.

Additionally, if you are a high school student and interested in gaining more leadership skills, consider the [OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal](#) as a potential path towards graduation. Talk with your team, including your caregiver(s), IEP team, guidance counselor or others if you are interested.



Resource:

- [OhioMeansJobs - Readiness Seal Information For Students and Families](#)
- [OhioMeansJobs Rubric](#)

Activity 3: Practicing Leadership

This activity aims to build better understanding of vocabulary terms using a role-playing activity.



Discuss: Now that you have more information about leadership skills, how can you use them? These skills are important for expressing your needs, handling challenges, and setting goals. These are skills you can practice in many places like home, school, in your community, and when you work. Using these skills can help you get supports you need to achieve your goals. Let's practice what this could look like!



Interactive Opportunity

Use role playing to practice leadership skills, collaboration, and decision-making.

- **Situation:** Assign or allow students to choose a project where leadership skills are needed. This can be a real or imaginary project or one from the Leadership Scenario Cards.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Assign or allow students to choose who is the Team Leader and who are the Team Members. One person is identified as the Team Leader and the remaining group members are Team Members. In smaller groups or if needing to demonstrate how to role play, the instructor may also join as a Team Leader or Team Member.
- **Plan the Project:** Have students work together for about 10-15 minutes to discuss the project. They should be able to identify a goal and next steps to share out afterwards.
 - The Team Leader facilitates or leads the meeting. They clearly communicate the goal of the project. During the discussion, they support Team Members to share ideas. When wrapping up the discussion, they help the team decide on next steps and assign tasks.
 - The Team Members share their ideas and make suggestions. They work through how tasks and responsibilities can be divided fairly and work to reach an agreement on a goal for the project and next steps.



Review: Have students share what they decided to do with their project. Try using these prompting questions to continue or start conversation.

- What project did they choose?
- What did they discuss on how to plan for the project and what next steps they should take?
- How did they choose to divide the responsibilities?
- How did they handle any disagreements?
- What is something the Team Leader did to support collaboration and decision-making with the group?
- What did the Team Members do to collaborate and work together? Were any Team Members leaders in their own way? If so, how?



Resource: [Leadership Scenario Cards](#)



Extended Pathways

Activity: Leading Change

This activity aims to set goals to practice leadership and self-advocacy skills.



Discuss: You have learned a lot about leadership skills. Now, let's focus on how we can use these leadership skills at home, at school, and at work. Below are some examples of how or where you could use your new leadership skills. Discuss these suggestions with the students or any topics students may want to discuss.

- Requesting help or resources for a project you are working on.
- Starting a new club or joining a student organization.
- Changing a policy or rule at school or work.
- Requesting an accommodation or assistive technology.
- Developing a Peer Mentoring program.
- Starting a donation drive for a need in your community.



Reflect: Did any of the scenarios spark your interest or relate to your situation? If you have an idea and want to do more with it, let's start by planning it out. You can set your path using this [Goal Action Plan](#) to document your goal, action steps, and more. Communicate your goal and action plan to others who may be interested or able to support you.



Resource: [Goal Action Plan](#)



Wrap-Up:

We explored many skills related to leadership. Leadership is not just one skill. It is many skills used at different times. It is not just about being heard but also about listening. It is not about having perfect work but about solving problems and taking responsibility. If you have many of these skills, keep using them. If you have skills you want to work on, I encourage you to share this with those who support you to help you achieve your goals.