

## Introduction

Gifted students may be well-suited for leadership roles. But, not every student will immediately see themselves as a potential leader – and others may not either, if they do not realize that leaders are not just “born,” but also developed.<sup>5</sup>

The following quote summarizes the need for individualized leader development interventions to help gifted students actualize their potential:

“...although many things can be done to increase learning, the assumption is that the truly talented will figure it out without any help... [but] there is no mechanism for discovering if those who did not “land on their feet” might have developed if only they had had some help (McCall, 2010).”

This poster suggests a general framework for providing that help by:

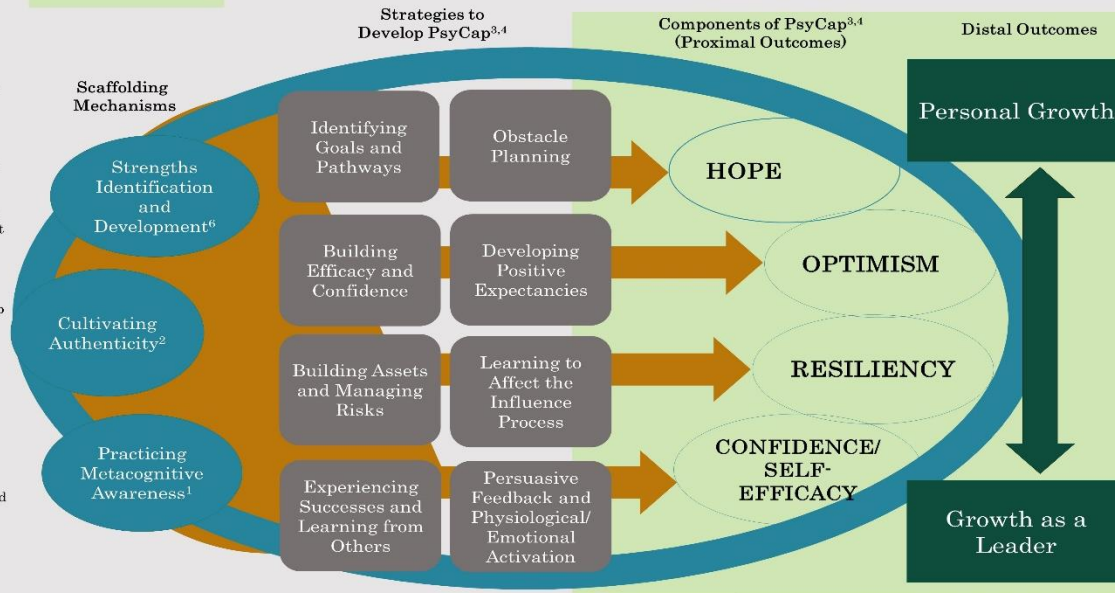
- recognizing that there are many effective ways to lead, and thus, that leadership potential exists in every gifted student
- accelerating students' readiness to develop as leaders by providing targeted support to increase both their *ability* and *motivation* to lead<sup>7</sup>

## Model Explanation

This model can be seen as cyclical, with each component potentially influencing and feeding back into others to shape a student's personal and leader development over time and across a variety of contexts and life experiences. Work on each component should be explicitly framed to target leadership situations, but personal and leader development should be discussed as reciprocal (and ongoing) processes.

## Model Purpose

This model represents combined knowledge from several well-established research literatures with the goal of providing a broadly applicable framework for encouraging a “whole person” approach to leader development in gifted youth.



Scaffolding mechanisms help students to begin to see themselves as leaders - to understand what they bring to the table that can be applied to their personal and leader development, and to identify authentic ways to engage in their own process of leader development.

Psychological Capital (PsyCap), is one's positive psychological resources, comprised of their combined hope, optimism, resiliency, and confidence. These resources can be developed through the activities listed in the brown boxes, and mobilized to help the student to grow as a leader and as a person.

- References**
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  4. Latham, G. P., & Locke, E. A. (1993). Building the leader of tomorrow: The development of leadership capabilities. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 2*(1), 11-19.
  5. McCall, M. W. (2010). Research on leadership development. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 3*(1), 1-10.
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## Interactive Poster Session Handout

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## Cultivating Psychological Capital in Gifted Youth as a Means of Personal and Leader Development

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## Capacities to Develop

### Scaffolding Mechanisms

**Why?** Helps learners understand how to get from where they are to where they could be.

**Goal:** To develop student beliefs in their ability to lead by increasing self-knowledge and clarity of self-concept

**Goal:** To provide a framework to support developing psychological capital

**Goal:** To help confront possible anxiety, perfectionism, and fear of asking for help/explanations related to leadership proactively

### Strengths Identification and Use

**Why?** Sometimes we think we must be good at certain things to be a leader – but, not even the greatest leaders have world-class strengths in all areas.

**Goal:** To help students understand their strongest routes for approaching leadership tasks based on their own unique strengths profile

**Goal:** To identify avenues for developing PsyCap (e.g., my strength of creativity can be used to cultivate hope because I know it is a way to reach my goals)

## Explanation

## Strategies to use with Students for Personal or Leader Development

- Design activities to help students understand that there are many different types of leaders, and many ways to be a leader that might not be evident. One does not have to be extroverted or a team captain to be a leader. For example, one could write articles for a school newspaper that help fellow students think differently about current events.
- Consider how the characteristics of gifted students could impact their engagement with developing these scaffolding mechanisms (e.g. critical and broad thinking may be an asset, perfectionism and imposter syndrome may need to be explored as potential barriers)
- Help students to think differently about their strengths. How do their strengths motivate them – would they be more comfortable taking on a leadership role if they did something they loved and were good at? How can strengths help the student to be more optimistic? How can they form teams with other students so that everyone can be a “leader” in the area in which they excel? What leaders can they identify that share their strengths? What are unique ways that strengths might contribute to leadership ability?

Authenticity

**Why?** Gifted students may struggle with downplaying their abilities, interests, compassion, or sense of integrity. An authentic leadership style is not only important for engendering follower trust and support, but authenticity is also correlated with higher levels of well-being and resilience.

**Goal:** To help students gain a clearer sense of who they are by identifying their values, emotions, motives, and goals.

**Goal:** Help students self-regulate, or figure out how to identify discrepancies in their values, beliefs, etc. and their actions and how to adjust accordingly.

Metacognitive

Awareness

**Why?** Can help students to make connections between past experiences and those in the present/future – it's great to learn that we might already have skills to tackle a problem that we didn't previously realize!

**Goal:** Help students make connections and transfer learning to different situations and contexts, both for their personal and leader development.

**Goal:** Help students engage in purposeful reflection about how they approach situations as an individual, how their experiences have led them to evaluate different tasks, and what strategies might transfer from one life context to a new leadership context.

Psychological Capital

What is PsyCap?

**PsyCap is a higher order construct comprised of hope, optimism, resiliency, self-efficacy/confidence – it is called a higher order construct because the combination of these four components together has been found to relate to more positive outcomes than any one component alone. Each component is distinct, but overlaps with the others. And, each involves cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes that have been studied extensively in different domains of psychology. PsyCap is concerned with not just who someone is in the moment, but who they can become. Focusing on PsyCap is a way to develop someone's positive psychological resources proactively, rather than waiting for a problem to arise or focusing solely on remedying deficiencies.**

**PsyCap can be seen as one's "motivational propensity" – so, after developing a student's ability to and belief that they can lead, increased PsyCap can help provide motivation to continue to engage in personal and leader development.**

**Increased PsyCap should result in greater effort from individuals, the ability to generate multiple solutions to problems, positive expectations about results, positive responses to setbacks, and thus, higher levels of performance in the relevant domain (e.g., leadership, personal challenges).**

Hope

What is PsyCap hope?

Hope is comprised of **willpower** (the sense of personal agency and desire to meet a goal) and **waypower** (the ability to anticipate potential barriers to goals and develop multiple paths through or contingencies for overcoming these barriers) in specific situations.

*Takeaway: students recognize that having clear goals helps one to meet them, and that if one approach does not work, there are many other possibilities. This allows them to remain hopeful even in the face of challenging situations.*

- Design activities to help students understand how their life experiences and important trigger events have shaped who they are - their beliefs, their values, and their views of themselves. Help them understand what unique barriers of and facilitators to leadership have resulted from these experiences, and ways to accept the "good" and the "bad." Help them to understand steps to develop into who they would like to be.

- Design activities that help students evaluate how they know what they know – for example – do I feel nervous about leadership because of a past experience? Is my hard work and ability to overcome failure in my dance class transferrable to helping a team to see the bigger picture in an area about which I am passionate? If I tried something new and it went well, why? Can I do that again in another situation to continue to increase my success rate? If I tried something new and it went poorly, why? Are there new approaches I can adapt? How will these new approaches help me to grow and develop into the person and leader I want to be? Help students to practice cultivating an "outer" internal monologue.

- **Why PsyCap?** Higher levels of PsyCap have been associated with positive outcomes across someone's development – these include students' level of environmental mastery over time (e.g., ability to adapt and manage), study engagement (relation mediated by intrinsic motivation), lower levels of learning, relationship, adaptive, career, and personality-related stress as college freshman, higher levels of job engagement, job satisfaction, job retention, organizational citizenship, innovative behavior, and lower levels of anxiety and cynicism at work, buffering against challenge/stress, and higher levels of PsyCap in followers (even if the leader was located remotely).

While not extensively studied in relation to youth/leadership, it is reasonable to believe that increased PsyCap would be beneficial to gifted youth in their personal and leader development. It has also been found that components of PsyCap are "state-like" and can be developed through short interventions.

- **Consider how gifted characteristics may impact the development of PsyCap – how can planning to develop student PsyCap include consideration of emotional intensity, sensitivity, creative problem solving, curiosity, twice-exceptionality, underserved populations, etc.? All of these things and more may be relevant in approaching increasing PsyCap depending on the individual student.**

- Have students brainstorm valued and appropriately challenging leadership or life goals (can draw from what they learned about authenticity) and different ways to meet them.
- Teach students to break goals into manageable sub-goals and to identify how they will know when each goal is accomplished.
- Have students work both alone and together to identify possible obstacles to goals, coming up with as many ways to confront them and/or strategies for reworking their plans/goals as possible.

Optimism	<p><b>What is PsyCap optimism?</b></p> <p>Optimism is having a <b>global</b>, positive view that one can succeed now and in the future.</p> <p><i>Takeaway: students who feel a sense of control over the good and bad things that happen in their life and can realistically challenge fears/difficulties will be more likely to expect positive outcomes over time.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Help students to identify self-limiting beliefs (related to leadership, for example), reflect on the accuracy of these beliefs, and develop realistic ways to challenge self-limiting beliefs (i.e. increase positive self-talk and positive expectations).</li> <li>● Help students to identify how they can exert control over different situations, even in small ways (can draw from metacognitive skills here).</li> <li>● Help students to realistically attribute positive outcomes to actions that they have taken, while attributing negative outcomes to things that they can change/fix – if there are things they cannot change/fix, help them to understand that the sense of loss/difficulty does not have to apply to all parts of themselves or their lives</li> </ul>
Resiliency	<p><b>What is PsyCap resiliency?</b></p> <p>Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from difficult events, or to increase one's sense of personal meaning, goal directedness, or utilization of support to even <i>increase</i> functioning after a difficult event.</p> <p><i>Takeaway: students who can anticipate and plan for difficulties and know what positive resources they can mobilize (and have practice mobilizing them) will be better prepared for struggle.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Help students to identify their own individualized risk factors for stress and difficulty to proactively plan how minimize risks or cope with them (e.g., upcoming contest entry, needing to learn a new skill, relationship changes, balancing a heavy course-load).</li> <li>● Teach students to identify their assets that can be used in times of difficulty (e.g., their passions, hobbies, friends, family, mentors, the knowledge that most struggles will not be ongoing).</li> <li>● Help students to create a storehouse of positive and proactive coping resources: the belief that one can learn from both good and bad events, knowledge of how to derive meaning from difficulty, frequent engagement in situations that bring up positive emotions, learning who to reach out to talk to before a significant stressor occurs, understanding that they do have power to influence events, learning how to emotionally disengage in a healthy way when needed.</li> </ul>
Self-efficacy/ Confidence	<p><b>What is PsyCap self-efficacy/confidence?</b></p> <p>Self-efficacy is having the belief that one can put forth their internal resources to successfully execute a specific course of action – one can have high self-efficacy in one domain (like writing), but low self-efficacy in another domain (like public-speaking).</p> <p><i>Take away: Confidence is a skill that can be developed with time and help from others – just because someone doesn't initially have the confidence to be a leader does not mean that this confidence cannot be built through experience, encouragement, and learning from others.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Help students to develop graduated mastery (set them up to achieve small, guaranteed leadership or other successes over time to help them gain confidence and experience “wins”).</li> <li>● Help students gain access to successful similar role models (the more we see someone like us able to accomplish something, the more we believe we can do it too).</li> <li>● Have students observe other people in a target situation (e.g., a leadership task) so that they can identify what results different actions tend to produce → encourage metacognition about this process.</li> <li>● Create a culture of positive affirmation and developmental feedback – it helps when we hear we are making progress and how to continue to develop – the more meaningful the person is giving the feedback (and the more meaningful people providing the feedback), the better.</li> <li>● Help students mentally visualize successful steps toward a goal, forecasting how certain actions might turn out and different contingencies dealt with.</li> <li>● Increase emotional and physical activation when possible – confidence may be more likely to develop when we feel energized about something we're working toward.</li> </ul>



## Resources on the Web:

- Using **positive psychology** in the classroom <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/positive-psychology-in-the-classroom>  
[http://www.aps.org/files/GELC%202014/Pre-reading%20Articles/Keynote\\_5\\_Boniwell\\_Seligmans\\_Positive\\_Education.pdf](http://www.aps.org/files/GELC%202014/Pre-reading%20Articles/Keynote_5_Boniwell_Seligmans_Positive_Education.pdf)
- A discussion **about moving away from competency-based models** of leadership <http://insights.ccl.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/LeadershipDevelopmentCompetencies.pdf>
- A broad overview of **psychological capital** <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/25708/hope-optimism-other-business-assets.aspx>
- In-depth discussion of **psychological capital** <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=leadershipfacpub>
- A broad overview of **authentic leadership**: <http://integralladershipreview.com/2550-fresh-perspective-3/>
- An in-depth description of the components of **authentic leadership** <http://www.ipccr.net/LDI/pdfs/sdarticle-can-you-see-the-real-me.pdf>  
Ideas for **metacognitive strategies**: <https://teal.ed.gov/tealguide/metacognitive> <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/metacognition/>
- **Strengths** development according to Gallup (charge for access to actual assessment) <http://www.strengthstest.com/strengthsfinderthemes.html>
- **Strengths** according to the Values in Action Institute (includes free, empirically validated online strengths-assessment, access to teaching strategies for use of strengths development in the classroom) <https://www.viacharacter.org/www/>

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