

# How to harness your child's leadership potential

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Developing young and influential leaders is not simply about individual success but, very crucially, about the positive impact effective leadership has on the communities and countries which are home to these game-changers. Having innovative, inspirational and solutions-driven leaders passionate about addressing sociopolitical challenges is vital for Africa.

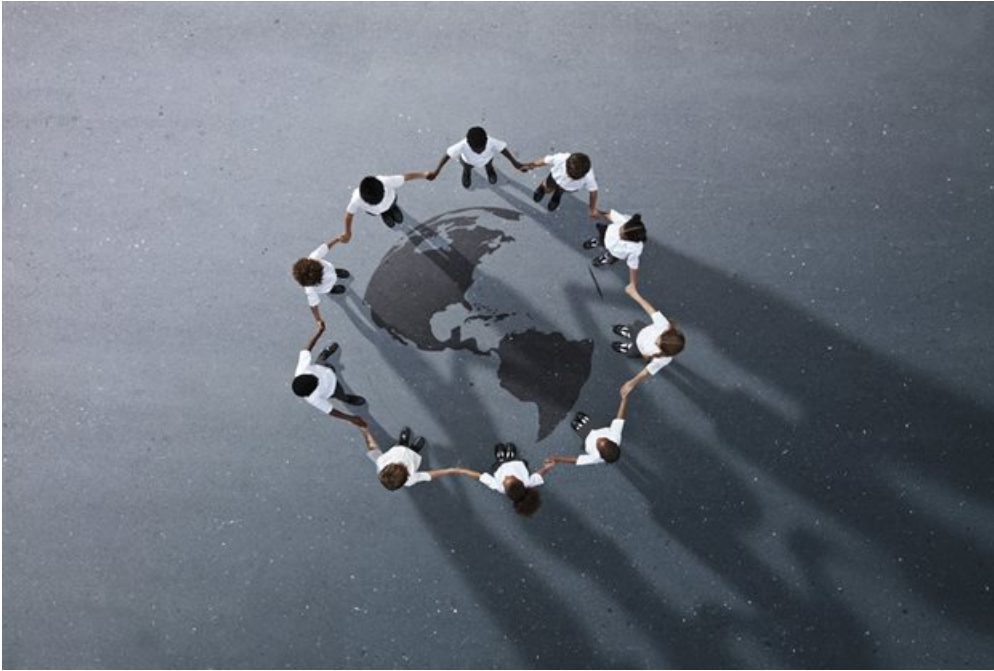


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We, parents, play a central and influential role in harnessing leadership capabilities in our children in a manner that promotes their development and future success. The starting point for parents is being able to identify such potential in our children. But what exactly does leadership look like?

In some cases, the capacity for leadership is clear, for instance when a child is the first to volunteer or step up to take responsibility in a given situation. However, it is vital that we recognise less obvious yet inherent leadership traits in our children. This includes characteristics such as being passionate about a subject or cause, possessing an active imagination, having a strong sense of curiosity, being vocal about their feelings and opinions, and having an innate calling to help others. It is important to note that not all of these traits will be exhibited by every child with leadership potential, but having one or more of these qualities and behaviours is a good indicator that a child could be a future leader in their chosen space.

## Get involved, engage

It is imperative that we get involved, stay engaged and help stimulate a leadership mindset in our children. Ways to achieve this include promoting reading, encouraging decision-making (even from a young age), helping to grow our children's confidence and being supportive of their ideas and undertakings. It is also important to create an environment conducive to growth, such as access to relevant mentors and exposure to like-minded peers who are able to motivate and guide our children along their leadership path and mission. A direct contribution from us would be to have a social circle or network consisting of other parents of high potential children. This promotes a sharing of experience and insights, and a sense of relatability.

Finally, promising young leaders need a structured setting where they can experiment, explore and test their abilities. And while the home environment plays a part in this, to truly expand knowledge and expertise, young people need to be in an educational environment that promotes character and academic growth. Since one cannot be an effective leader without practicing tangible problem-solving prior to going out into the real world, a safe space where students can try, fail, get feedback and learn is essential. Ideal curricula are those structured to develop a mindset of affecting change on the continent, inclusive of life-long and transferrable skills related to entrepreneurship, finance, problem-solving, business and ethical leadership. Such a setting also helps foster the social and collaborative acumen needed to flourish in a business or organisational setting in order to achieve success for both the individual and group. It equips learners with the intellectual awareness and practical competencies required to overcome challenges and maximise opportunities on a personal, societal and global scale.

Our support as parents is pivotal for our young people to realise their leadership potential. Not only will this lead to success and to them forging their own legacy in areas they are passionate about, but when done with social impact and outcomes in mind, this approach will also result in widespread transformation of the African landscape. It is never too early for us to start thinking about the path that our children should follow, and take constructive steps to get them onto that life path of excellence.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Faith Abiodun is the Director of Marketing & Recruitment at African Leadership Academy. Faith is an educator, entrepreneur, international affairs analyst, writer and speaker. He concurrently serves as Director of the International Relations Council through which he founded the ALA Model African Union in 2013, creating a platform for developing the continent's future public sector leaders.

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