

The Schoenstatt Group as Means of Education

The work developed in a small group can be viewed, after the family, as a second, personal educational arena (unlike the "public" educational field, the school, etc).

1. Keys to Leadership

Leadership is rooted in an inner authority that respects the unique life of others and encourages that unique life to reach out for something still greater. To have this inner authority, we must be "educated educators," that is, someone who is already "on the road" to forming his own life and knowing that this gives me the foundation for understanding others and leading them to great goals. In a word: if I am working on my own growth, I can help others grow. The foundation stones of this education are the core Christian values of *freedom* and *love*.

A good leader in Christ will, of course, be *anchored in God*. Let your leadership be inspired by prayer, frequent reception of the sacraments, and a personal relationship with Mary in the covenant of love.

A. Qualities of a Leader

1. Love and respect each person as a unique child of God.
2. Encourage and try to bring out the best in each one and group.
3. Be enthusiastic and have both feet on the ground.
4. Put the needs of each person ahead of your own.
5. Be able to adapt.
6. Be a good listener, patient and understanding.
7. Practice what you preach.
8. Have sound values and a firm sense of right and wrong.
9. Radiate a positive outlook on life.
10. Be firm and fair and know how to set limits.
11. Have faith in God and faith in the goodness of youth.
12. Pray for the ones God has entrusted to you.

7 Do's of a Leader

DO remember names.

DO spend 20 minutes preparing each meeting (best done at least a day before the meeting).

DO send out a reminder (phone, text or email) about the meeting.

DO know and follow the example of our Schoenstatt heroes.

DO invest in your own spiritual growth.

DO build on the covenant of love with the MTA.

DO entrust each one to God and the MTA in your personal prayer.

B. Wisdom for Effective Leaders

Here is an assortment of insights that you might find helpful:

- Know your resources (books, games, but especially *people*).
- Know your strengths and talents. What wealth do I bring to this task?
- Never stop learning. Keep honing your skills. Discover new resources. Rediscover the ones you already know.
- Be trusting. God leads his leaders.
- Earn trust. You can do this by being open, honest, fair, and consistent.
- Be respectful in word and deed, including to those not present.

- Use good relationship skills. Good places to start: use each person's name - avoid negative nicknames-, say "please and thank you," and smile!
- Accept each one where he is right now.
- Don't play favorites. Not everyone will appeal to you equally, but each deserves your respect.
- Believe in each person even when he falls short of your expectations. And: Expect the best from each person. They will rise - or fall - to meet your expectations!
- It is easier to generate interest and enthusiasm if you are interested and enthusiastic. "You can't start a fire with an icicle."
- Make learning enjoyable. Find ways to make it a game and an adventure rather than a chore.
- Help the others think things through for themselves.
- Encourage inner freedom. "*Freedom as much as possible, rules only as necessary, foster good spiritual life every way you can.*" Fr. K.
- If someone comes to you with a problem, listen thoroughly before giving advice. Many times the process of "talking it out" will help the person find his own answer.
- Don't be afraid to admit a mistake or that you don't know everything.
- Delegate responsibilities. Get others involved.
- Promote team spirit among the leaders. Learn from each other rather than make everyone go it alone.
- The team is more important than the players. No one person is so important that he can replace the team. "We win when the team wins."
- Important as teamwork is, goals are even more important than the team. Our goal is to help the person God has given us to learn to educate themselves to become firm, free, priestly personalities, and to help them develop deep attachments to God, Mary, self, and others.

Rules. Let the people clearly know what you expect of them. Rules are best if they are brief, to the point, and stated in a positive manner. They must be fair and consistently enforced.

Positive reinforcement. Help maintain order with a positive attitude. Praise and encouragement helps prevent trouble before it starts.

Know when you're in over your head. If you realize you're in over your head, refer the person and the situation to a more competent authority.

2. Leadership Development

Leadership development involves finding and forming other adult leaders. We want to take some time to get to know a new potential leader. This also helps spare new leaders from feeling they have to know everything at once. Start him off with small, manageable tasks. Take some time between meetings to share with him about the history of the group, the aims of the Branch, and tangible benefits. Leadership formation starts with just taking seriously the material the Group members are covering in the meetings. It can then progress to amore deliberate reading and sharing about the material in the meeting. If other issues or questions come up that you cannot resolve, ask your moderator or mentor for further insights or resources.

3. Junior Leaders

It is a real asset to a Schoenstatt group if older members help lead other groups or activities. Younger people look up to their next older peers, and junior leadership gives a chance to practice apostolate and being a leader. A preliminary step to fostering junior leaders can be the election of *group officers* (leader, treasurer, secretary) within the group itself. This can be done once the group reaches a certain maturity.

4. Leaders' Circles and Diocesan Committee

A fundamental part of encouraging leadership and local and regional initiatives from the branch themselves is the establishment of leaders' circle within the branch. Such group is usually made up of the Branch leader and the group leaders with their moderator or spiritual director. The branch leader is at the same time the person to represent the branch at the Movement's Diocesan Committee as a full member of this Committee.