



# The Leader in Me™



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is *The Leader in Me*?

*The Leader in Me* is a process for school-wide transformation that utilizes the basic leadership principles taught in Dr. Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. It's designed to enhance a student's life skills and workforce readiness.

To be most effective in the 21st century, students need to become proficient in core subjects such as reading, writing, science, and math. But it's becoming increasingly important to also be proficient in basic social and life skills. In short, students need to have the mind sets, skill sets, and tool sets to: 1) take care of themselves and become independent; 2) to interact well with others and become interdependent; and 3) to continually improve and stay current over time. *The Leader in Me* connects directly to these issues through the development of a leadership culture.

### How did *The Leader in Me* come to Westgate?

In 2012, a team of Westgate staff members explored various ways to improve student behavior school-wide. The team was looking for supports that would:

1. Have new and innovative ways to build community within the school.
2. Develop a common language for use with the students.
3. Support all aspects of a student's growth and development.

During this time, *The Leader in Me* book was brought to the team and a book study began. The team agreed that the process and philosophy of *The Leader in Me* might be a great fit for Westgate. In 2013, two Westgate teachers attended Franklin Covey's 7 Habits Training and began piloting the process in their classrooms. The response from students, parents, and staff was exciting and positive. The team then decided to bring *The Leader in Me* to Westgate's entire staff to explore the possibility of using it schoolwide. After many discussions and careful consideration, the staff decided to move forward with fully implementing *The Leader in Me* at Westgate.

### How was this process implemented at Westgate?

**Year 1 (2014-15)** — In 2014, a grant was written to receive funding for training and materials. Westgate was fortunate to receive a five-year grant sponsored by Panda Cares, the philanthropic arm of the Panda Restaurant Group. In the summer of 2014, the entire Westgate staff and a few parents received Franklin Covey training in basic leadership principles, including Dr. Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. The common language of the 7 Habits was taught to everyone. In the new school year, the staff started teaching these leadership principles to the students. By using this common language, these principles were embedded into classroom lessons, hall displays, and school-wide systems and activities. Later that summer the parents who took the initial training took further training in *The 7 Habits Families*, and by fall began offering classes to Westgate parents so that they had the same opportunity to implement this same common language at home.

**Year 2 (2015-16)** — Students and staff were given further opportunities to apply the principles by taking on leadership roles within the school (Student and Staff Lighthouse Teams, Action Teams, and Student Leadership Roles). A schoolwide WIG (Wildly Important Goal) was developed and implemented. Westgate students and staff also hosted a Leadership Day to showcase to the community all of Westgate's accomplishments as a school of leaders.

**Year 3 (2016-17)** — Westgate staff, students, and parents are taking further steps to strengthen the existing roles and activities while improving communication among all stakeholders.

## What is a leader? Why are we teaching all kids to be leaders when some people need to be followers?

Leadership is NOT about being a boss or being in charge of everything. It is about encouraging students and staff to take ownership for their learning and to unleash their own unique gifts, talents, and potential.

## What is my child doing during the school day with *The Leader in Me*?

Each Westgate classroom works to understand and implement the leaderships principles of the 7 Habits throughout the school year. Teachers use the common language in lessons, songs, videos, books, and games. Students have a variety of opportunities to engage in leadership roles both in the classroom and around the school. The common language is infused in all areas of the curriculum and has become a natural part of Westgate's culture.

## How is the success of *The Leader in Me* measured?

Westgate follows a Lighthouse Rubric to track progress in *The Leader in Me* process. This includes polling surveys to staff, students, and families. It also includes a requirement to document *The Leader in Me* journey through pictures, video, and artifacts. To fulfill a grant requirement, the 5th grade students complete a survey each year. Another measurement of success is done through the schoolwide Wildly Important Goal. During the 2015-2016 school year, the school focused on hallway behavior using (3) measurable parameters and improved 64% in 12 weeks! During the 2016-17 school year, the focus is on lunchtime behavior.

## Will *The Leader in Me* continue in middle school? Are other District 25 school's interested in becoming *The Leader in Me* school?

Currently other District 25 schools are exploring in different ways the concepts of *The Leader in Me*. At this time, Westgate is the only school utilizing *The Leader in Me* philosophy.

## Who is in charge of *The Leader in Me*?

There is no single person "in charge" of *The Leader in Me* at Westgate. All staff and students are involved in leadership roles in some way. It is truly a team effort between students, staff, families, and the Arlington Heights community.

## What is the Staff Lighthouse Team? Student Lighthouse Team? Action Teams? Student Leadership Roles?

**Staff Lighthouse Team** — Consists of (12) Westgate staff, and each staff member is on at least (1) Action Team. They meet weekly to discuss what's happening on the Action Teams, brainstorm ideas, ask for help, etc.

**Student Lighthouse Team** — Consists of (20) Westgate students, and each student is on at least (1) Action Team. They meet 1-2 times a month to discuss what's happening on the Action Teams, brainstorm ideas, ask for help, etc. In May, students apply to be on the Student Lighthouse Team for the next school year by filling out an application and completing a follow-up interview.

**Action Teams** — Action teams can consist of Westgate staff, Westgate students, or a combination of both. Each action team has a specific goal in mind. There are currently (14) action teams within Westgate, and they are: Assemblies; Communication; Documentation; Environment/Habit Boosters; Hospitality; Job Board; Leadership Day; Leadership Notebooks; Parent; Resources; Sunshine; Technology; Traditions; and WIG/Data.

**Leadership Roles** — Leadership Roles can be schoolwide or in the classroom. Classroom Leadership Roles are created and organized by each individual classroom teacher. As Schoolwide Leadership Roles become available, students apply and may be interviewed. The applications are tracked so that as many Westgate students can be involved as possible.

## Is there a way for parents to be involved?

Yes, a new Parent Action Team has recently been developed to assist the school with its third year goal of implementing the principles at home and into the community. Parents can also participate in the *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families* Parent Workshops when offered.

## How can I use *The Leader in Me* principles at home?

Begin by using the 7 Habits common language at home. By hearing the same language at home and at school, you give your child a strong message of what you believe is important and that we're all on the same team—the team that wants each child to succeed! To learn this common language, you can either enroll in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families* Parent Workshops offered through Westgate, or you can read any of the 7 Habits books. When parents and schools support one another, the sky's the limit! For more information on *The Leader in Me* at Westgate, look for communication through the Wolverine Weekly Newsletter.