

My Experience on Being a Leader.

Leadership is a quality that I've developed and honed throughout my life, both in school and in my community. From an early age, I found myself naturally gravitating towards leadership roles, whether it was organizing group projects, leading class discussions, or being the person my classmates turned to for counsel. Over the years, I've honed my leadership skills in a number of settings, and each has taught me valuable lessons about responsibility, collaboration, and tenacity.

I received a leadership award in the third grade, an acknowledgment of my potential to lead my peers, not because of academic superiority, but for my natural ability to guide and motivate individuals. I was not necessarily always the top student academically, but I knew how to build teamwork, develop trust, and motivate others. Even in my formative years of schooling, I knew that leadership was not necessarily about being the smartest in the room. It was about having the guts to lead and the heart to consider things from other individuals' perspectives. This third-grade award opened doors to my future leadership positions.

By the time I reached boarding school in grades 7 to 9, I had already embraced my role as a leader in the school community. I was class representative three years consecutively, and I was trusted by both

peers and teachers to be the voice of the concerns of the student body. As class representative, I served as representative between students and teachers, organized meetings, and ensured that we were heard. It was through this role that I realized the importance of being a good mediator, balancing my peers' interests and the priorities of the school.

During this time in boarding school I also found my passion for storytelling as a way to bring people together. I would often sit with my classmates during nap time, telling stories and sharing experiences that opened up into discussions. I discovered that leadership need not always come with a formal title; at times it is about building bridges and providing spaces where people feel valued and heard. I was fortunate to be in an environment where free dialogue and collaboration were encouraged, and I used that to my advantage by organizing casual conversations that brought harmony to my peers.

I was the primary school head girl, an experience that taught me lifelong lessons in service and responsibility. I was responsible for organizing school events, mentoring younger students, and representing the school's traditions and values as head girl. This experience played a significant role in shaping my understanding of leadership. I came to understand that leadership is not about being good at everything, but rather about being reliable, approachable, and someone whom others can respect and look up to for guidance.

However, my leadership experience was put on hold when I moved to Canada at age 15. The transition to a new country was difficult. I felt out

of place, particularly being one of the few Black students in my new class. I struggled with my identity and did not feel aligned with the powerful leader I once was. I wondered for some time if I could be a leader in this new environment. But over time, I regained my voice. I started leading devotionals at my school, where I was able to connect with my peers and regain my confidence in leadership. As I gained more comfort in my new environment, I became the shared school president in grade 12. This experience not only allowed me to reclaim my leadership position but also taught me how to face challenges with resilience.

Being the co-school president, I was responsible for representing the student body, organizing school events, and making decisions that affected the entire school. I strived to ensure that each student felt as if they had a voice in a welcoming environment. One of my biggest priorities was to improve communication between the administration and the students. I initiated regular feedback sessions where students were able to give feedback and recommendations so that the school was able to respond to their needs. I learned here the importance of transparency, listening, and collaboration. I understood that leadership is not just about decision-making; it is about creating conditions in which people feel listened to, valued, and cared for.

My leadership experience from school was also replicated in my work life. During my internship at Verafin, I was also assigned the responsibility of guiding a group of high school interns. This allowed me to apply my leadership abilities in the workplace. I had to oversee team

projects, delegate tasks, and ensure that everyone was working towards our objectives. The experience gave me excellent insight into teamwork and adaptability. I learned how to inspire people, handle adversity, and change plans when necessary. Workplace leadership was a great learning experience in my leadership development, and it opened my eyes to leadership in the working world.

As I get ready for my university life, I am excited to continue growing as a leader. I have realized that leadership is not a destination one reaches and remains but a journey. I am excited to take on leadership roles at university, be it in academic clubs, extracurricular activities, or the student government. I hope to leave a positive contribution to the university community by serving others, collaborating with my fellow students, and advocating for opportunities for everyone to succeed.

I understand that leadership is not only about titles. It is about exerting a positive impact on those around you. In university, I am excited to be involved in activities that allow me to apply my abilities in various contexts, be it through leading study groups, mentoring research projects, or participating in student activities. I believe that by working together with my classmates, we can create an inclusive and diverse community that fosters academic success and personal growth.

Leadership is influence, impact, and responsibility. It's about leveraging your strengths to inspire and empower others, whether in a classroom, a community, or a workplace. My experiences as class representative, head girl, school president, and intern have made me understand the

importance of listening, talking, and collaborating with people. These experiences have enabled me to view leadership as a dynamic and ongoing process. I am excited at university to continue my leadership skills, apply them to new contexts, and serve the university community.