

LEADERSHIP IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND NEURODIVERSE STUDENTS

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Introduction & Purpose

Neurodiverse students bring unique perspectives and strengths to leadership roles yet face distinct barriers in traditional leadership development approaches.

Our Goal: Demonstrate how Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model (Komives et al., 2005) can be adapted through experiential learning to support neurodiverse students in discovering and developing their leadership potential.

Benefits & Challenges

Benefits for Neurodiverse students:

- Enhanced self-awareness and confidence.
- Recognition of unique leadership strengths.
- Improved social and communication skills.
- Greater sense of belonging and purpose.

Common Barrier for Neurodiverse students:

- Traditional leadership models may not fit.
- Social communication challenges.
- Executive functioning differences.
- Imposter syndrome and self-doubt.



Strengths of Neurodivergent Students

- Persistence and resilience
- Authenticity and integrity
- Creativity and Innovation
- Attention to detail
- Hyperfocus/Enhanced focus
- Empathy and compassion
- Unique perspectives
- Visual thinkers and strong memory.
- Attention to detail.



College Readiness Connection

The LID Model enhances key college readiness skills:

- **Self-advocacy:** Learning to communicate needs and strengths.
- **Time management:** Through project leadership and planning.
- **Collaboration:** Working effectively in diverse teams.
- **Problem-Solving:** Addressing real campus and community challenges.
- **Self-Regulation:** Managing emotions and responses in leadership context.

The 6-Stage LID Model for Neurodiverse Students

Dependent Phase

Stage 1: Awareness

Building curiosity about leadership and personal potential.

Stage 2: Exploration

Trying leadership in low-risk, supportive environments.

Independent Phase

Stage 3: Leader Identified

Beginning to see oneself as a leader, seeking formal roles.

Stage 4: Differentiated

Understanding leadership as collaborative and relational.

Interdependent Phase

Stage 5: Generativity

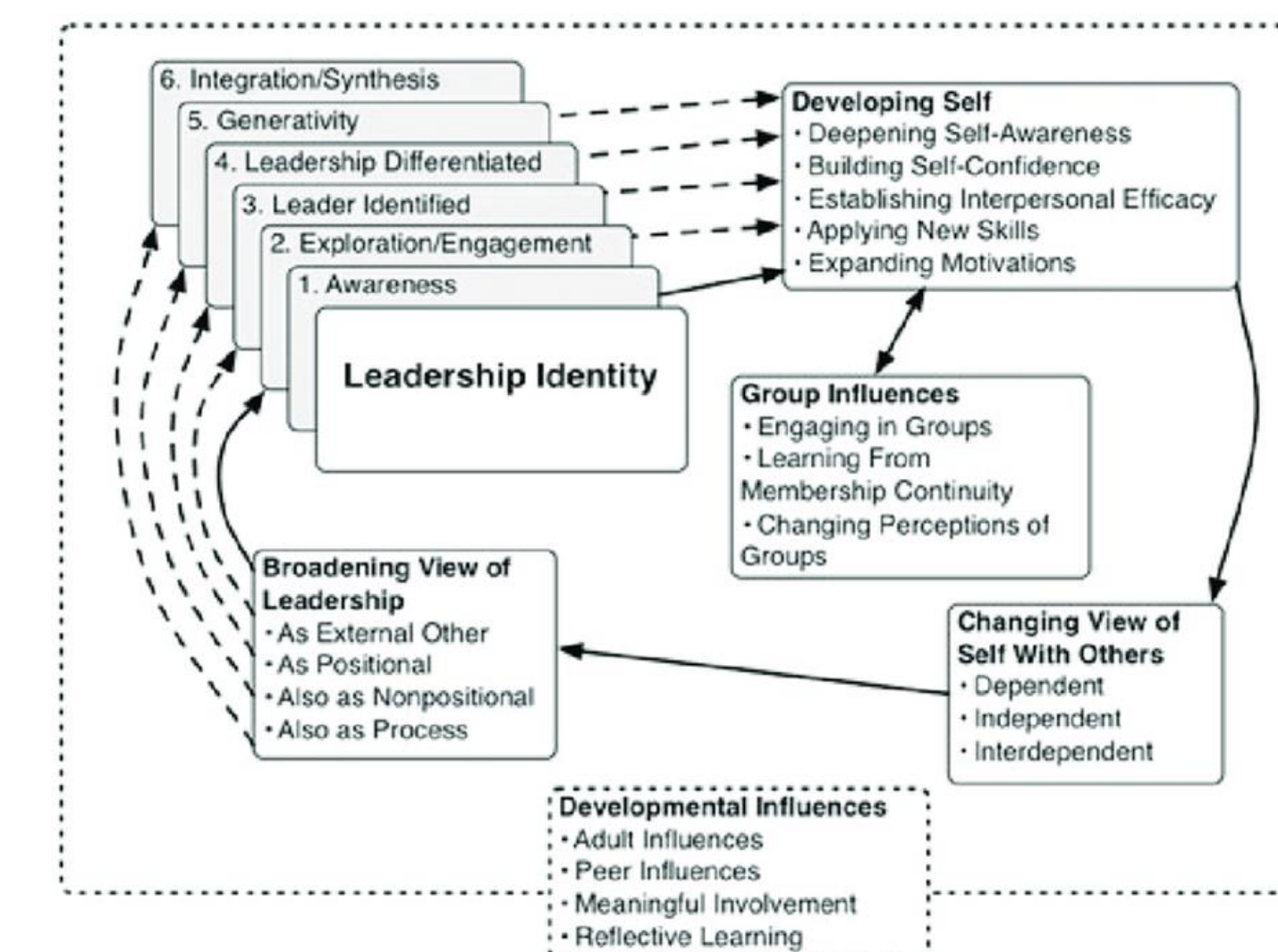
Mentoring others and creating sustainable change.

Stage 6: Integration

Leadership fully integrated into personal identity.

Key Adaptation:

Each stage includes structured reflection, peer support, and accommodations for different learning and processing styles.



Note: Adapted from *Developing a Leadership Identity: A*

Grounded Theory (p. 599), by Komives et al., 2005.

Implementation Insights

Best Practices for Neurodiverse Students:

- **Clear Structure:** Provide detailed expectations and timelines.
- **Multiple Formats:** Offer various ways to demonstrate leadership.
- **Peer Support:** Create inclusive group environments.
- **Strength-Based:** Focus on unique abilities and perspectives.
- **Reflective Processing:** Build in time for self-awareness development.
- **Accommodations:** Adapt activities for different learning styles.

Experiential Activities by LID Stage

Stage 1-2: Foundation Building

Values Game:

Connect personal values to leadership behaviors.

Leadership Bingo:

Recognize existing leadership experiences.

Reflective Journaling:

Explore leadership identity safely.

Stage 3-4: Skill Development

Team-Building Leadership:

Lead peers in structured activities.

Dilemma Role-Plays:

Practice decision-making.

Personal Timeline:

Map leadership growth and resilience.

Stage 5: Mentorship & Legacy

Mentor Match Program:

Guide younger students.

Sustainable Impact Projects:

Address real community issues.

Legacy Planning:

Create resources for future leaders.

Stage 6: Integration & Synthesis:

Leadership Philosophy Statement:

Articulate personal approach.

Community Partnerships:

Apply leadership in real-world settings.

TED Talk/Podcast:

Share leadership journey publicly.

Expected Outcomes

For Students:

- Increased Leadership self-efficacy and confidence.
- Enhanced college success and retention.
- Stronger career preparation and networking.
- Greater sense of belonging in campus community.

For Institutions:

- More inclusive leadership programming.
- Diverse leadership pipeline.
- Enhances support for neurodiverse students.

References

