

With additional support provided by:



# LEADERSHIP JOURNAL

# WELCOME TO YOUTH OF THE YEAR!

Congratulations on making the choice to be a part of Youth of the Year! Through this program, you'll learn the basics of leadership, and you'll also get lots of experience in exactly the types of skills that effective leaders need.

Being a strong leader can help you every day in ordinary ways - in school, at the Club and in the community. For example, you might be called upon to lead a student committee at school, design and manage large projects, participate in a small group in class, organize events and meetings, stand up to peer pressure or speak confidently to teachers, coaches and other adults. In all of these situations, you'll need to know how to communicate well, how to collaborate, how to solve problems creatively and how to think critically.

More importantly, the leadership ability you gain in this program will benefit you throughout your life, especially in college and in the career you choose. Studies show that employers are looking for people with leadership abilities, yet few young people have the skills needed to succeed in the modern workplace. Wherever you go in life, whatever your role, you'll be prepared to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world.

This Leadership Journal is for you to record your thoughts, questions, ideas and dreams about what you're learning and the kind of leader you're becoming.

# YOUR YOUTH OF THE YEAR JOURNEY

## What's the program about?

Your Youth of the Year journey starts with experiences to help you discover your **leadership potential** and develop your leadership abilities. Through **fun, engaging activities**, you'll develop skills essential for leadership in the **21st century**:

- Understanding Leadership
- Discovering Your Personal Identity
- Finding Your Spark
- Managing Your Personal Brand
- Standing Up and Speaking Out
- Listening for Understanding
- Working as Part of a Team
- Fostering Inclusion
- Having a Growth Mindset
- Setting and Achieving Goals
- Being a Responsible Citizen
- Finding Purpose and Vision

Once you've completed the program, you'll have the chance to participate in the Youth of the Year selection process. Youth who **embody excellence** in the areas of academics, character and citizenship and healthy lifestyles are recognized at the local, state, regional and national level. One **exceptional teen** is then selected to be **National Youth of the Year**, serving as an ambassador for Boys & Girls Club youth as well as a voice for the nation's young people.

### THAT COULD BE YOU!

If you decide to become a candidate for Youth of the Year, you'll complete an application, participate in an informal interview, write a series of essays and present a speech to the judging panel. Throughout the process, you'll have **mentors** to help you complete the application and prepare for the final judging and selection - and you'll **learn even more** about your own leadership ability and potential.

# LEADERSHIP – ARE LEADERS BORN OR MADE?

## What is leadership?

A popular myth says that leaders are born, not made, but the fact is, everyone has the potential to be a leader. Leadership can be learned – through **education, relationships, role models and experiences**, all of which help you discover, build and sharpen your leadership abilities over time.

Leadership has nothing to do with job titles, or being the “boss,” or even personal qualities – it has everything to do with **attitude, self-awareness and relationships**. Strong leaders are those who have learned and practiced and fine-tuned their ability to:

- take responsibility for their actions
- speak confidently about things that matter to them
- model respect and empathy for all people
- set an example for others
- make sound decisions
- try their best at everything
- set goals and work to achieve them
- stand up and speak out on important issues
- creatively solve problems
- work well in teams
- inspire other people to do their best

*Leaders are people who are driven by their passion, their core values, their purpose in life and their vision for the future.*

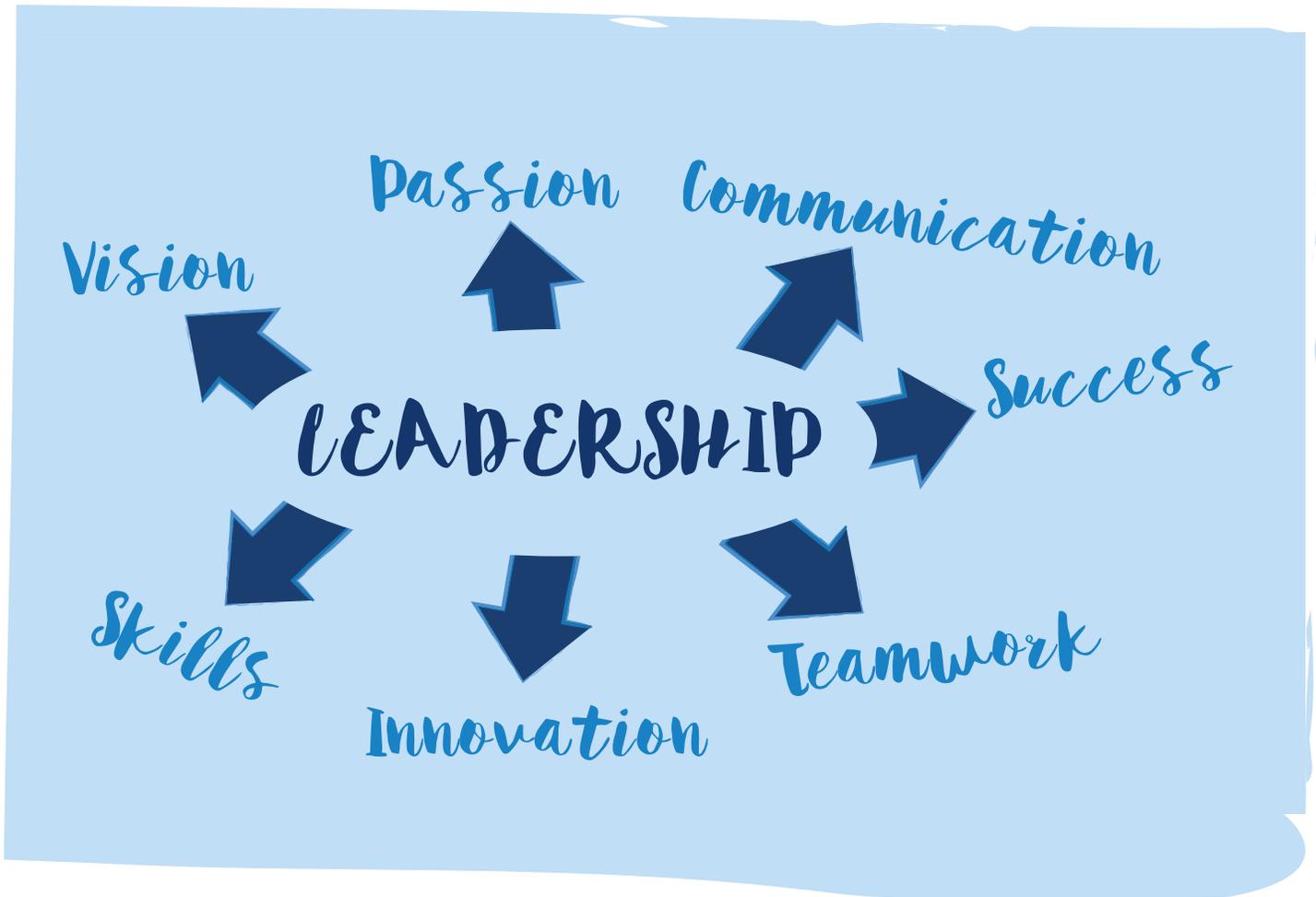
# LEADERSHIP – ARE LEADERS BORN OR MADE?

**encourage**  
**empower initiate**  
**decide passion vision**  
**respect stand work**  
**include value explore**  
**collaborate inspire**  
**solve challenge**  
**speak communicate**  
**grow listen innovate**  
**improve**  
**model**

*“Leadership development is fundamentally self-development.  
The primary instrument of a leader, teen or adult, is one’s self.  
Becoming a leader, then, requires teens to explore inner territory -  
who they are and what they care about.”*

Mariam G. MacGregor

# LEADERSHIP – ARE LEADERS BORN OR MADE?



## Five Practices of Effective Leadership

### 1. Model the Way

- Know your values and share them with others
- Set an example through what you say and do
- Make sure your actions are consistent with your values

### 2. Inspire a Shared Vision

- Imagine exciting possibilities for the future
- Encourage others to see those possibilities
- Help them recognize their own hopes and dreams

### 3. Challenge Things that Need to Change

- Look outward for things that can be improved
- Experiment with change by taking small steps
- Learn from your experiences (both successes and failures)

### 4. Empower Others to Act

- Foster trusting relationships
- Strengthen others by helping them build competence
- Collaborate with others as you work toward a goal

### 5. Encourage the Heart

- Recognize everyone's contributions
- Show appreciation for excellence
- Celebrate successes as a group

Source: James M. Kouzes, Barry Z. Posner, Beth High, Gary M. Morgan. (2013). *The Student Leadership Challenge: Student Workbook and Personal Leadership Journal* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), 12-14.

# LEADERSHIP – ARE LEADERS BORN OR MADE?

## What Are Pathways to Leadership?

As you move through the program, you'll be considering the specific types of education, relationships, role models and experiences you'd like to explore as you develop your leadership ability.

### EDUCATION

What are some credentials - degrees, coursework, certifications, independent learning - that you might want to explore as you develop your leadership abilities?

### EXPERIENCES

What types of experiences would be positive in helping you build leadership ability - jobs/internships, work with organizations, research experiences, leadership development? Which of these would you like to explore further?

### RELATIONSHIPS

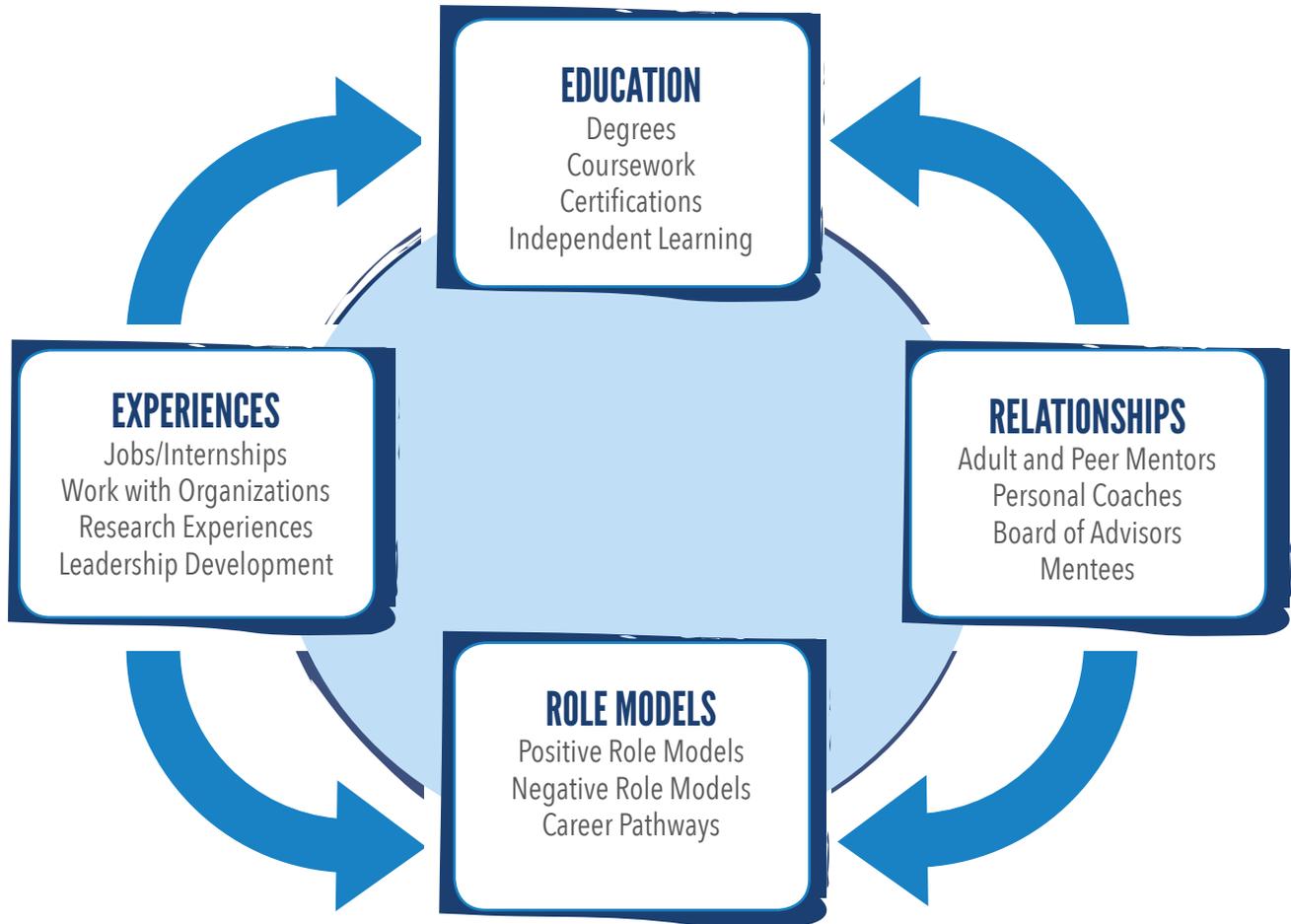
Who are some adult and peer mentors for you? Who might serve as a personal coach for you? If you created a "board of advisors" to help you develop leadership potential, who would be on the board? Who are people you can mentor?

### ROLE MODELS

Who are positive role models whose stories can inspire you to develop your leadership abilities?  
Who are negative role models - people you do not want to imitate in your path to leadership?  
Who are role models whose careers may be similar to your interests?

# LEADERSHIP – ARE LEADERS BORN OR MADE?

## Pathways to Leadership



# LEADERSHIP – ARE LEADERS BORN OR MADE?

## Building Your Pathways

**EDUCATION**

**EXPERIENCES**

**RELATIONSHIPS**

**ROLE MODELS**

# LEADERSHIP – ARE LEADERS BORN OR MADE?

*think note scribble reflect doodle*

# IDENTITY – WILL THE REAL YOU PLEASE STAND UP?

## Why is personal identity important?

Your teen years are a time to begin thinking about the question, “**who am I?**” You may find yourself acting differently depending on the situation and the people you’re with. You may experiment with different interests, friends or styles of dress. But underneath it all, there’s the question of who you really are – as you begin to figure out **what you think, feel and want**, you’ll begin to know who you are deep down and what you want out of life.

*“Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions  
drown out your own inner voice.”*

Steve Jobs

### Teen Survey on Identity

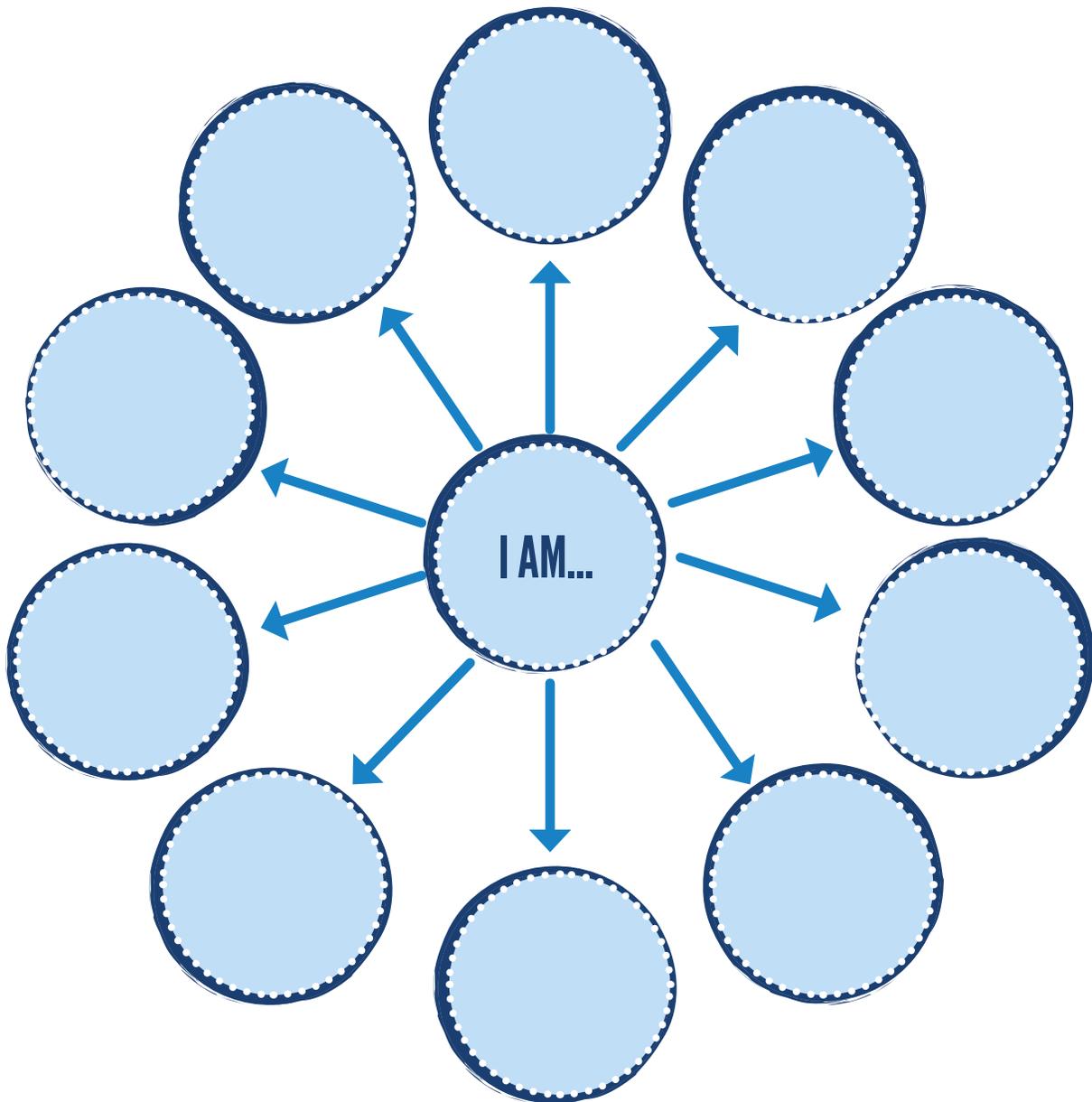
- 63 percent of teens say they **know who they are** while 37 percent do not fully know their identity yet.
- Teens say that “**Parents/Family**” (43 percent) and “**Activities/Hobbies**” (52 percent) are the two most important factors in shaping their identity.
- 84 percent of teens say their identity is shaped more by “**Nurture**” than by “Nature.”
- 63 percent of teenagers say that their **appearance is an important factor** in their identity.
- 37 percent of teenagers say that the way they view their identity now is not necessarily **how they will view themselves in the future**. Most teens (63 percent) feel that their current identity as a teenager will **follow them through life**.
- 66 percent of teenagers say that they feel **most people do not see them for who they really are**.

Source: Stageoflife.com, <http://www.stageoflife.com/StageHighSchool/TeenIdentity.aspx>

# IDENTITY – WILL THE REAL YOU PLEASE STAND UP?

## Mind Map – External Identity

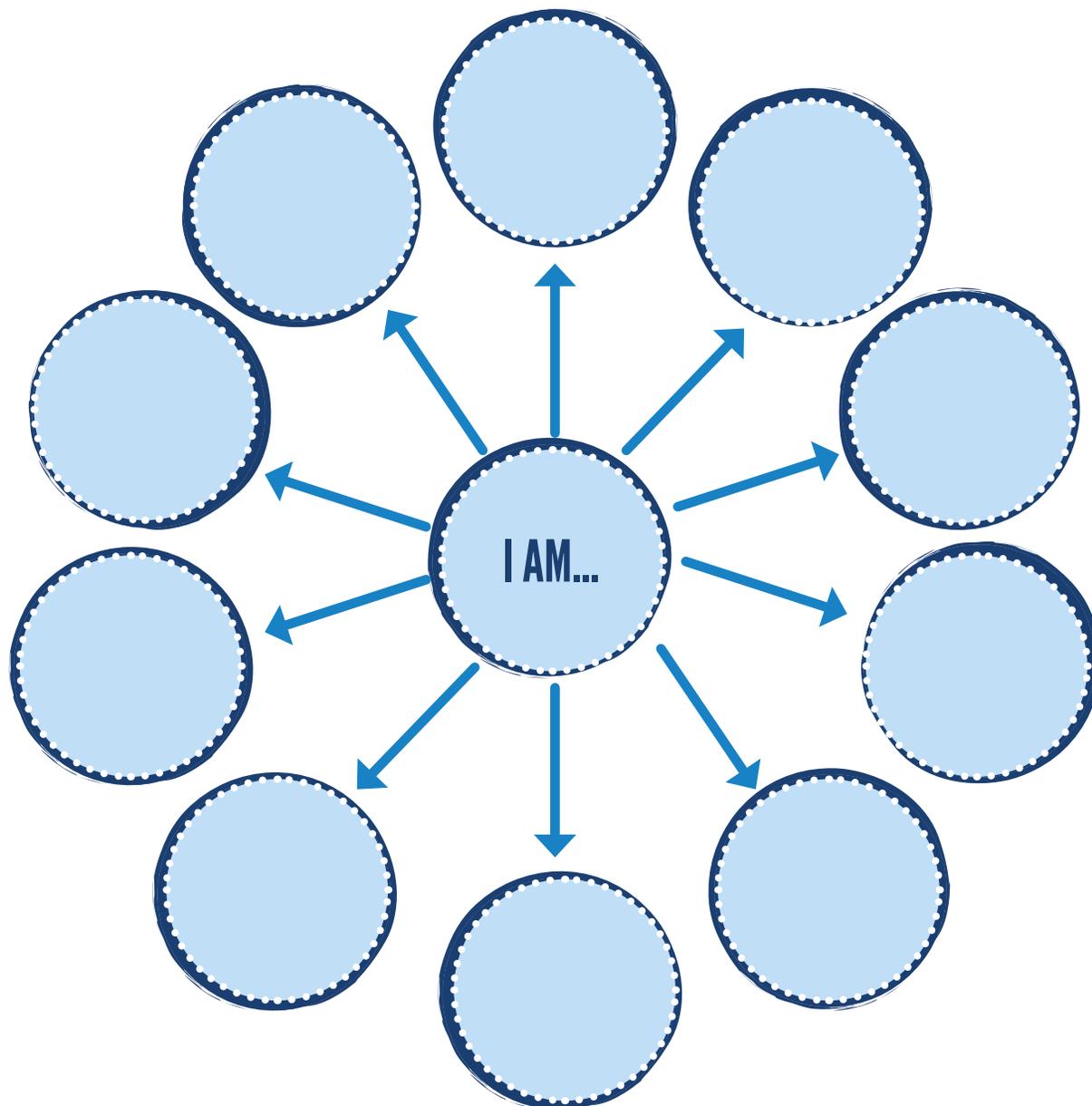
Your external (outer) identity is shaped as you grow up relating to particular people in particular places. For example, you are part of your family. You identify as American because you are a citizen. You go to school, so you identify as a student. If you join a sports team, you begin to think of yourself as a team member or a basketball player. Complete this mind map about your outer identities.



# IDENTITY – WILL THE REAL YOU PLEASE STAND UP?

## Mind Map – Internal Identity

Your internal identity is connected to your external, but has more to do with your thoughts, emotions, preferences and personality, instead of your social groups. For example, you may think of yourself as “caring” or “persistent.” You may prefer reading to playing sports. You may think of yourself as impulsive, or you may be someone who weighs all your options carefully before making a decision. Complete this second mind map, thinking about your internal identity.



# IDENTITY – WILL THE REAL YOU PLEASE STAND UP?

*think* *note* *scribble* *reflect* *doodle*

# PASSION – FINDING YOUR “SPARK”

## What does it mean to find your “spark”?

Discovering your “spark” simply means exploring and finding activities and interests – **your passions** – that motivate you to be the **best person you can be**. It’s through your passions that you express who you are and make a unique contribution to the world. Your spark could be something like music, sports or science – once you **discover and engage your passions**, you’ll begin to have a sense of your purpose and know what you want to give to the world.

This is a time of exploration! As you explore different activities and interests that excite and engage you, you’ll also be exploring who you are, **what you have to offer** and what others value in you. Try something new and see where it takes you.

*“Don’t ask what the world needs.  
Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it.  
Because what the world needs is  
people who have come alive.”*

Howard Thurman

## PASSION – FINDING YOUR “SPARK”

1. What is something you could teach someone else?

2. What do you like best about yourself?

3. What is something you've done that you're proud of?

4. How do you think your friends would describe you?

5. What do you like to do in your free time?

# PASSION – FINDING YOUR “SPARK”

*think* *note* *scribble* *reflect* *doodle*

## What is a personal brand?

[pur-suh-nl brand]

noun

1. the ongoing process of establishing an image or impression in the mind of others about an individual, group or organization.

You've probably heard the term "brand" applied to companies, but today almost every individual also has a **personal brand**. Whether you know it or not, **what you say and what you do** creates an impression in the minds of others. Especially with online profiles and social media, you're building an image for yourself with every single post.

It's important to pay attention and **decide what kind of brand you want to communicate** – to be intentional about the image you're creating and to make sure it reflects who you really are. Your personal brand is what **sets you apart from others** and makes you stand out as unique. It's not about creating a false impression of yourself – shaping an **authentic** brand means:

- accepting yourself for who you really are;
- helping others remember you and what's important to you; and
- your reputation in the mind of others.

*"Perhaps the best brand  
you can wear  
is your own identity.  
Be unique. Be yourself."*

[boardofwisdom.com](http://boardofwisdom.com)

# PERSONAL BRANDING – HOW DO OTHERS SEE YOU?

## Identifying Your Personal Brand

**Five words that describe you**

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**Five values that are important to you**

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**YOUR PERSONAL BRAND**

**Five unique skills or strengths**

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**Five passions – things you care about**

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# PERSONAL BRANDING – HOW DO OTHERS SEE YOU?

## Managing Your Social Media

**Site/audience** \_\_\_\_\_

**Profile name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Followers** \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal for using it** \_\_\_\_\_

**Brand you're communicating** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Brand you want to communicate** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Brand you want to communicate \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# PERSONAL BRANDING – HOW DO OTHERS SEE YOU?

## Elevator Pitch Template

An elevator pitch (or elevator speech) is a short summary that can **quickly** and **simply** communicate your skills and strengths to an interviewer, college representative or potential employer. It is called an “elevator pitch” because it should be possible to say this summary in the time it takes for a ride in an elevator – approximately one to two minutes.

I'm \_\_\_\_\_, I live in \_\_\_\_\_ and I attend \_\_\_\_\_.

NAME

HOMETOWN

CLUB

My interests are \_\_\_\_\_, and my skills include \_\_\_\_\_.

INTERESTS

SKILLS

People say I'm really good at \_\_\_\_\_.

STRENGTHS

and I'm passionate about \_\_\_\_\_.

PASSIONS

I would describe myself as \_\_\_\_\_.

ADJECTIVES TO DESCRIBE YOU

I hope to pursue \_\_\_\_\_.

POTENTIAL CAREER

and make a difference by \_\_\_\_\_.

CONTRIBUTION YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE

# PERSONAL BRANDING – HOW DO OTHERS SEE YOU?

*think* *note* *scribble* *reflect* *doodle*

## How do you know when to stand up and speak out?

Being a leader - whether in a formal leadership role or just in your everyday life - means standing up against injustice or speaking out for those who don't have a voice. Standing up against bullying, being honest when someone tells a racist or sexist joke or speaking up when others tease or belittle someone - it takes courage to speak the truth in situations like this. But you'll see that when you take the lead in speaking up, you'll set an example for others who feel the same way but are afraid to act. Staying true to your beliefs and speaking up, especially when others don't, is part of being a leader.

## **SPEAK UP, BE HEARD;**

**IF YOU DON'T SAY A WORD, EVERYTHING WILL STAY THE SAME WAY**

*“Whenever one person stands up and says, ‘wait a minute, this is wrong,’ it helps other people to do the same.”*

Gloria Steinem

VOICE – STAND UP, SPEAK OUT!

*think note scribble reflect doodle*

## Why is listening so important?

It's easy to think of leadership as "telling others what to do," but the most powerful leaders are those who **ask for others' opinions** and try to understand their point of view. These leaders realize that everyone has something valuable to contribute - and that any project, task, decision or goal is enhanced by a **variety of perspectives**. The most important learning and the best ideas emerge from a conversation - and that requires listening and really hearing what others have to say.

*"When you talk,  
you are only repeating what you already know.  
But if you **listen**,  
you may learning something new."*

Dalai Lama



# LISTENING – BEING OPEN TO NEW IDEAS

*think note scribble reflect doodle*

# TEAMWORK – COOPERATION, NOT COMPETITION

## How does teamwork relate to leadership?

An effective leader needs to be prepared not only to lead but also to be a **team player**. Learning to collaborate is the key to powerful leadership – whatever your role in a group, you need to be able to work in cooperation with others and **share leadership** with teammates. Working well as a team benefits the group, because individuals grow through mutual support and a sense of accomplishment. Teamwork also results in a **better outcomes**; when a team works together as a unit, they can accomplish more than individuals can do alone. Teamwork involves:

- working cooperatively, not competitively;
- contributing to the group with ideas, suggestions and effort;
- communicating clearly;
- listening to **all perspectives**;
- having a sense of responsibility for the results;
- **respecting different opinions** and preferences; and
- participating in decision making.

*“I suppose **leadership**  
at one time meant **muscles**;  
but today it means  
**getting along** with people.”*

**Mahatma Gandhi**

# TEAMWORK – COOPERATION, NOT COMPETITION

*think note scribble reflect doodle*

# INCLUSION – WELCOMING EVERYONE TO THE TABLE

## What does it mean to be inclusive?

**in-clu-sive**  
[in'kloo-siv]  
adjective  
1. containing all elements as part of a whole.

Being an inclusive leader means recognizing that everyone is unique and everyone deserves to be **respected as a human being** regardless of external characteristics. Diversity enriches all of our lives, so it's a win-win when we value differences and work to build **inclusive communities**. As the world becomes more and more diverse, it's more important than ever for young leaders like you to **model the inclusive attitude** the world needs. Here's what an inclusive community looks like:

- An inclusive community respects all of its citizens.
- An inclusive community allows people **access to resources**.
- An inclusive community fosters equal opportunity for all.
- An inclusive community works to **eliminate all forms of discrimination**.
- An inclusive community engages all its citizens in decisions that affect their lives.
- An inclusive community **values diversity**.
- An inclusive community responds to racist and other discriminating situations.



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T A L E N T S O R  
A G E S .

## Guiding Principles for Inclusion

### COOPERATION

Make sure everyone has a voice and a chance for equal participation

### APPRECIATION

Value all perspectives, viewpoints and contributions equally

### RESPECT

Treat everyone fairly, with civility and respect for them as human beings

### EMPATHY

Put yourself in the other's place and try to understand their experience

### RECOGNITION

Recognize differences between yourself and others, while looking for a common bond



# INCLUSION – WELCOMING EVERYONE TO THE TABLE

*think note scribble reflect doodle*

# MINDSET – WHY IT MATTERS

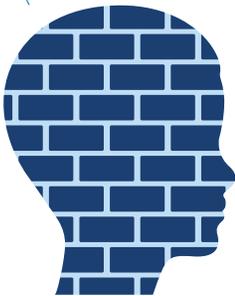
Why is it that some people seem to bounce back easily from challenges and others don't? The difference is that those who are able to cope well with difficulties have **resilience** – the ability to adapt to stress and adversity. The fact is that resilience is something that can be developed over time and is **important for success** in life and particularly for leadership. The **most effective leaders** know how to be persistent, face disappointment, learn from failure and adapt to change.

People who are resilient often have a “growth mindset” – the belief that their basic qualities and abilities can change and grow through **effort**, the right strategies and getting help from others. The opposite of a growth mindset is a “fixed mindset,” and people with this type of thinking believe they only have a certain amount of intelligence or ability that can't be changed. When people with a fixed mindset encounter a challenge, they quit too early because they don't believe they can succeed; those with a growth mindset **work harder**, change their strategy or seek help.

## 10 Growth Mindset Statements

### WHAT CAN I SAY TO MYSELF?

FIXED MINDSET



INSTEAD OF:

TRY THINKING:

- |  |    |  |
|--|----|--|
| I'm not good at this.                          | 1  | What am I missing?                             |
| I'm awesome at this.                           | 2  | I'm on the right track.                        |
| I give up.                                     | 3  | I'll use some of the strategies we've learned. |
| This is too hard.                              | 4  | This may take some time and effort.            |
| I can't make this any better.                  | 5  | I can always improve so I'll keep trying.      |
| I just can't do math.                          | 6  | I'm going to train my brain in Math.           |
| I made a mistake.                              | 7  | Mistakes help me learn better.                 |
| She's so smart.<br>I will never be that smart. | 8  | I'm going to figure out how she does it.       |
| It's good enough.                              | 9  | Is it really my best work?                     |
| Plan "A" didn't work.                          | 10 | Good thing the alphabet has 25 more letters!   |

GROWTH MINDSET



# MINDSET – WHY IT MATTERS

*think* *note* *scribble* *reflect* *doodle*

# GOAL SETTING – TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FUTURE

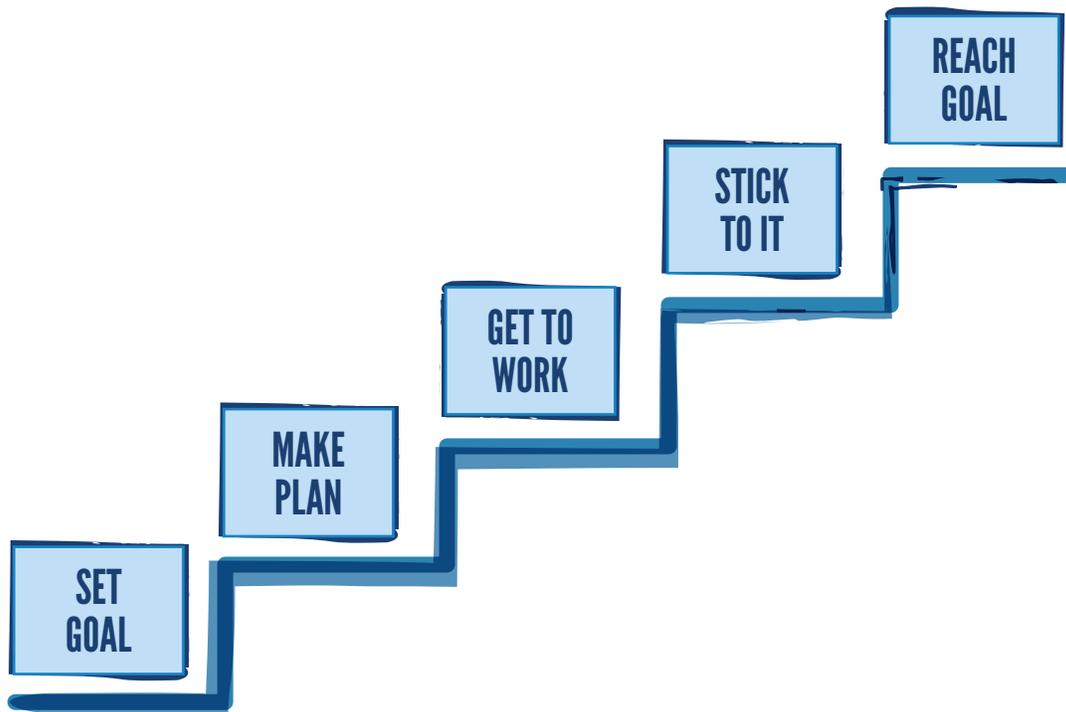
## Why should you set goals?

You've heard for years about the importance of setting goals – it's probably the single most important thing you can do to accomplish what you want in life. Through goal setting, you'll be able to define what's important to you and set priorities for making your dreams a reality. The process of goal setting also teaches you to develop a plan, check yourself to see if you're making progress, stay positive and focused, deal with roadblocks and – most importantly – it outlines the steps you need to take to get where you want to go. The basic steps for goal setting are:

- Have a clear vision of what you want.
- Identify the steps that will get you where you want to go.
- Stay focused on the goal and work hard to achieve it.

*“Setting goals is the first step  
in turning the **invisible** into the visible.”*

Tony Robbins



# GOAL SETTING – TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FUTURE

## Setting a Goal for Your Future

**Think of a goal** – something you’ve dreamed of accomplishing in your future. It can be something in the near future (short-term) or something further out (long-term). Be specific as you make a plan to achieve the goal.

**DESCRIPTION.** What is your goal?

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**TARGET DATE.** When do you want to accomplish this goal?

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**SUPPORT.** Who will support you to accomplish this goal? Who will check in with you along the way?

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**ACTION STEPS.** What steps are needed for you to reach your goal?

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**OBSTACLES.** What might keep you from achieving your goal?

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**SOLUTIONS.** What can you do to overcome these obstacles?

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# GOAL SETTING – TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FUTURE

*think* *note* *scribble* *reflect* *doodle*

## What is Responsible Citizenship?

Teen leaders need to have a real sense of commitment to their community – the desire to make changes for the better and the willingness to put forth the effort to inspire others to do the same. Teens who are responsible citizens find opportunities to be active in the community through community service and volunteerism, but they also model responsible living every day through:

- being respectful to people, animals and the environment;
- caring about the community and country;
- being informed about the needs in their schools and communities; and
- doing what they can to make their homes, Clubs, schools and communities a better place.



CITIZENSHIP – MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

*think* *note* *scribble* *reflect* *doodle*

## Why do you need to find your purpose?

pur-pose  
[pər-pəs/]

noun

1. the reason for which something is done or created.
2. an intention to accomplish something that is meaningful to the self and significant to the world beyond the self.

Having a sense of purpose is important because it's what gives you **positive energy** and keeps you **motivated toward a vision** or goal in the future. Teens who have a strong sense of purpose feel more gratitude, are more self-confident and feel more optimistic about the future - it's also very likely that people with a sense of purpose are **happier and live longer** and healthier lives.

Finding your purpose takes time - it doesn't happen overnight. But you can begin to explore it by looking at three factors: your **specific gifts and skills**; what you most **love to do**; and a specific **need you see** in the world around you. Where these three things meet - that's where you'll find clues to your purpose.

**+ HELP PEOPLE  
YOUR TALENT  
PURPOSE**

# PURPOSE – FINDING MEANING AND VISION

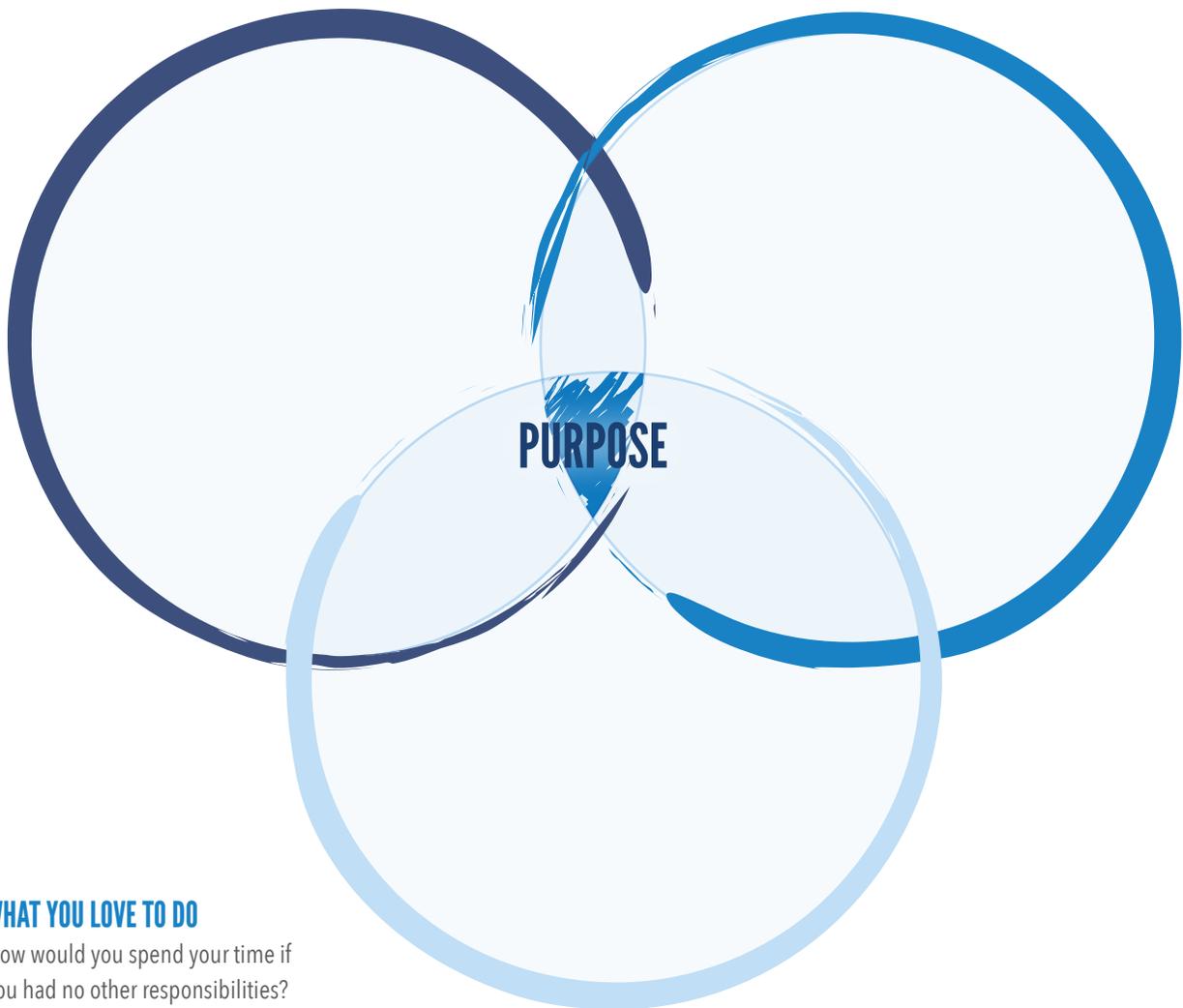
## Identifying Your Purpose

### A NEED IN THE WORLD/TARGET/USER

What is begging to be addressed?  
What keeps you up at night or makes you angry that not more is being done about it?

### YOUR SKILL/GIFT

What do people compliment you on that comes naturally to you? Think beyond the resume.



### WHAT YOU LOVE TO DO

How would you spend your time if you had no other responsibilities?

Source: Patrick Cook-Deegan. (2016). "Seven Ways to Help High Schoolers Find Purpose."  
Greater Good Science Center, University of California Berkeley.  
[http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven\\_ways\\_to\\_help\\_high\\_schoolers\\_find\\_purpose](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_ways_to_help_high_schoolers_find_purpose).

# PURPOSE – FINDING MEANING AND VISION

## A Vision for Your Future

### Vision

As you think about a vision for your future, consider these questions:

- How can you use what's best about you to make a positive impact in the world?
- How can you use your strengths and passions most effectively?
- What intersections do you see in things that interest you, things you're good at and specific needs you see in the world around you?

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### Goals

Setting goals gets you moving toward the vision you want to create. Now write down seven goals (or steps) that can help move you toward your desired future.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

A VISION FOR YOUR FUTURE

*think note scribble reflect doodle*

PREPARING FOR  
THE YOUTH OF  
THE YEAR  
APPLICATION  
AND SELECTION  
PROCESS

## How Can You Improve Your Writing Skills?

Many teens are afraid of writing, but it's a skill that can be **learned and practiced**. You can write well if you follow some basic **principles of effective writing**:

- be clear about your central idea and what you want to say;
- organize your ideas well;
- provide evidence and examples to support your central idea;
- use clear and accurate language; and
- proofread for spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Writing well is an important skill now and in your work life in the future. Effective leaders are recognized for their **ability to communicate clearly**, and writing skills are especially important in a technology-driven culture. The words you write, just like the words you speak, have the potential to **motivate and inspire others** and to change their ideas about important issues.

*“Make it simple.  
Make it memorable.  
Make it inviting to look at.  
Make it fun to read.”*

Leo Burnett

## Three Simple Rules to Improve Writing Skills

### **RULE 1: ONE POINT PER SENTENCE**

People think that shoving as many points as possible into one sentence makes them sound smart, but simplicity is the key. One point per sentence is a good rule to follow. As a guideline, a sentence shouldn't have more than two commas in it; more than this and it becomes convoluted and confusing.

### **RULE 2: USE THE RIGHT PREPOSITIONS**

Prepositions are linking words. Things like since, for, by, with, between, despite, onto, of, until, etc. They're words we never think about. We take them for granted. But unfortunately, many people use them incorrectly.

### **RULE 3: CUT, CUT, CHOP, CHOP**

In writing, less is more. Verbose writing is not fun to read, and it screams at the reader that you don't really understand what you're writing about so you take five sentences to explain it instead of two. When reviewing your work, ask "Is there a way I can make this point using fewer words?"

Source: The Study Gurus, <http://www.thestudygurus.com/help-improve-your-teens-writing-skills/>.

# ESSAY WRITING – MAKING YOUR WORDS COUNT

## Possible Essay Topics

### ESSAY 1: MY CLUB EXPERIENCE

Describe your time in the Club, including how long you've been a member, key aspects of your Club involvement and the most important contributions the Club has made to your academic, personal and leadership development. Please share any ways in which the Club has helped you overcome challenges or obstacles that you may have experienced. Be sure to highlight any significant leadership roles you've held at the Club, as well as other participation in Club programs, service initiatives, etc.

### ESSAY 2: MY VISION FOR AMERICA'S YOUTH

The National Youth of the Year is BGCA's ambassador for America's young people. He/she represents the interests of millions of young people and elevates important youth issues by engaging with elected officials, corporations, the media, educators and the broader public. Please describe your vision for America's youth and which significant challenge you would address as National Youth of the Year. Please describe this challenge in detail, as well as the experiences that helped you develop your perspective about it. In what ways can Clubs help other youth who are facing this challenge? Complete your essay by briefly presenting one clear solution to address the challenge.

### ESSAY 3: MY PERSONAL BRAND

In the 21st century, each of us has a brand, just like a company or a product. We stand for something in the minds and hearts of our friends, teachers, mentors, family members and associates. As the National Youth of the Year, your personal brand will become associated with Boys & Girls Clubs of America's brand. Which qualities define your personal brand? Which three adjectives describe your personal brand and why? What do you stand for in the hearts and minds of those who know you? What are your goals and purposes in life? How would being the National Youth of the Year help you build your personal brand?

# ESSAY WRITING – MAKING YOUR WORDS COUNT

## Getting Ready to Write

### CHOOSE ONE OF THE ESSAY TOPICS

Which topic speaks to you, excites you or motivates you? Which one do you already have ideas about? Remember the activities you have already completed, and think about how you can draw on these to help with one of the essay topics.

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### READ THE ESSAY TOPIC CAREFULLY

Highlight key words. Identify the task words that indicate what needs to be done (such as “describe,” “share,” “highlight,” etc.). Jot notes about the various parts of the topic that need to be addressed.

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### BRAINSTORM IDEAS IN RESPONSE TO THE TOPIC

Jot down any related ideas or points you can think of. Make note of anything related to the topic that comes to mind, even if it’s something you need to find out more about later.

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# ESSAY WRITING – MAKING YOUR WORDS COUNT

## THINK OF A MAIN IDEA

What is one idea that summarizes all your responses to the topic? Is there a theme or pattern you can see in all the ideas that jumps out at you? If you were talking to a friend and had to sum up all your ideas in one or two sentences, what would you say?

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## ORDER YOUR IDEAS

Order your ideas in a logical sequence, numbering them in a way that makes sense. Make sure every point in this list relates to the essay topic, and cross out anything that isn't related or that doesn't do something important.

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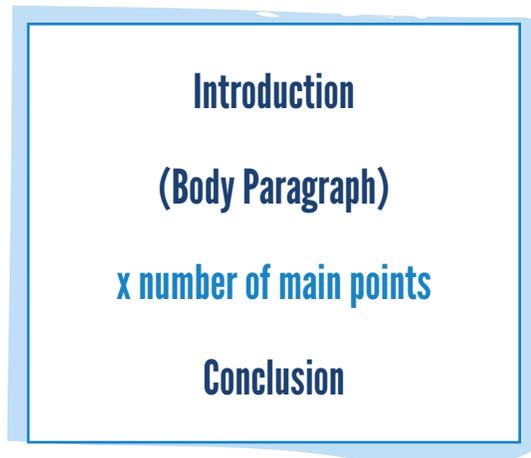
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## Structure Your Essay

Every essay must have a structure to make it readable. Breaking down an essay into sections helps the reader understand it. All essays should follow this simple formula:



### INTRODUCTION

- Introduce the **topic** of the essay; tell the reader clearly what you're going to talk about.
- Make it clear what your **opinion** is with a clear thesis statement (what you want to show).
- Briefly outline the **main points** you're going to make in the order you're going to address them.

### BODY PARAGRAPHS

- Body paragraphs are the meat of your essay (usually three to five paragraphs in an essay).
- Each paragraph contains its **own main point**.
- Include **facts, details and examples** to back up the main point of the paragraph.
- The main point of each paragraph should **contribute to the argument** of your essay.

### CONCLUSION

- Tell the reader **what you talked about** or argued.
- **Sum up** what the essay was about.
- Use words such as "**Finally**," or "In conclusion," or "To summarize."

## Craft a Strong Argument/Thesis Statement

### WHAT IS A THESIS STATEMENT?

- The thesis statement is the main idea of your paper - what you want to argue or prove.
- A good thesis statement is short and simple: it should be no longer than one sentence.
- A good thesis statement is limited to one main idea.
- A good thesis statement presents a definite point of view (what you want to prove).

### STEPS FOR WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

- Start by turning the essay topic into a question: "What is my vision for America's youth?"
- Then, answer it in a complete sentence: "My vision for America's youth is education."
- Next, take a definite position: "All youth in America must have access to education."
- Now, make your position original: "Education is important for success in work and in life."
- Finally, strengthen it with supporting points: "With an education, a young person not only has more career options, but also has a greater chance of being healthy and living a longer life."

TURN YOUR BRIGHT IDEA INTO A

## *Thesis Statement*

### 1. QUESTION

TURN THE PROMPT INTO A QUESTION!

### 2. ANSWER IT

ANSWER THE QUESTION IN A COMPLETE SENTENCE, RESTATE THE PROMPT, TAKE A STANCE!

## Order Your Ideas Logically

Once you figure out what you want to say, you still have to figure out how to say it best. Which idea should you start with, and how should you order the others?

### LIST ALL THE IDEAS YOU WANT TO INCLUDE

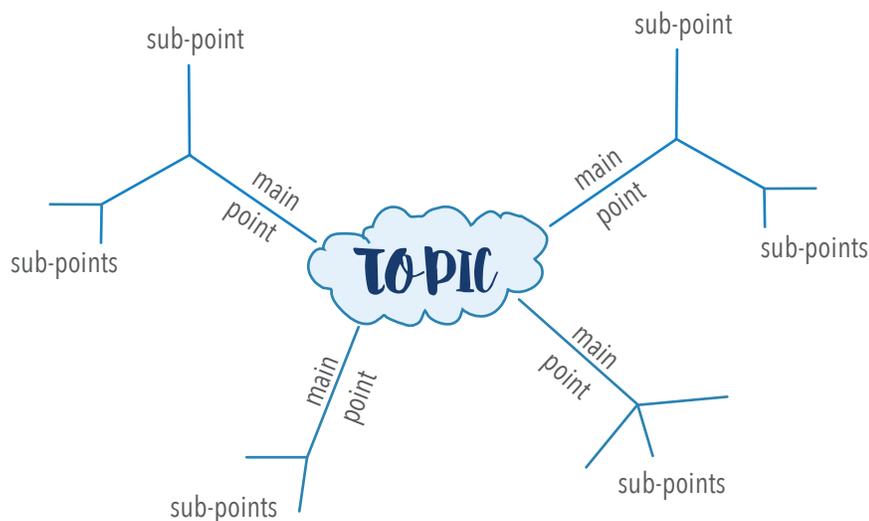
- Jot down all the ideas that are important to your essay topic.
- Group all related ideas together.

### MAKE A DIAGRAM OR SKETCH OF THE IDEAS

- Which ideas are the strongest (the main points)?
- Which are the smaller details that aren't as important?
- Label the ideas as main points and sub-points.

### ORDER THE IDEAS

- Arrange them in a logical order appropriate to your topic.
- Do you want to move from general ideas to more specific ideas?
- Do you want to start with the strongest ideas? Or build from less important to more important?
- Are you telling about events in your life and, if so, do they need to be in chronological order?



# ESSAY WRITING – MAKING YOUR WORDS COUNT

*think* *note* *scribble* *reflect* *doodle*

## Why are interviewing skills important?

Learning to communicate well - listening well and responding confidently - is a crucial skill you'll need throughout your life. Whether you're interviewing for college admissions, for a scholarship application, for a job or for any other purpose, you'll need to be aware of your strengths, abilities and passions and be able to demonstrate self-confidence - the belief that you will succeed in a particular situation or at a specific task. People with confidence are more likely to be positive, engaged and enthusiastic - all important qualities for leadership.

## Ten Things to Remember When Interviewing

1. Be on time
2. Dress appropriately
3. Don't chew gum
4. Speak clearly
5. Make sure your phone is turned off
6. Sit up straight
7. Pay attention
8. Be aware of body language
9. Don't bring a drink with you
10. Let the interviewer take the lead

## Tips for Being Confident in Interviews

### **FOCUS ON YOUR STRENGTHS**

Try not to focus on what you can't do, but think about your strengths and talents and the things you're good at, the things you've accomplished and hope to achieve.

### **ACT CONFIDENT AND EVENTUALLY YOU'LL FEEL CONFIDENT**

Acting confident is the first step to feeling confident. Overcoming your fear by appearing confident is a great way to stand out from others.

### **BE YOURSELF**

The most important thing is to be absolutely authentic, letting the interviewer see you for who you really are. Be proud of who you are – not cocky, but comfortable in your own skin.

### **SHOW YOUR ENTHUSIASM**

The best way to show enthusiasm is to smile, listen carefully and offer interesting comments or questions when appropriate.

### **LET YOUR MESSAGE LEAD**

When talking about yourself or any other topic, make your message worth listening to. State your opinions honestly, but respectfully. Show that you have passion about your message or topic.

## Sample Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your personal brand?
2. What is your greatest weakness?
3. What is your greatest strength?
4. How has the Club contributed to your leadership development?
5. What motivates you?
6. What are you passionate about?
7. What accomplishment do you feel proudest about in your life?
8. What's a goal you've set and achieved recently?
9. What is the greatest challenge facing young people today?
10. What are three adjectives that describe you?
11. What change do you hope to make in the world?
12. What is a long-term goal you would like to achieve?
13. How has the Club helped you overcome obstacles?
14. How would other people describe you?
15. What is a positive character trait you have?
16. How would you describe your experience at the Club?

# INTERVIEWING – RESPONDING WITH CONFIDENCE

*think note scribble reflect doodle*

# PUBLIC SPEAKING – A KEY TO LEADERSHIP SUCCESS

## Does public speaking really matter?

As a student, you're be expected to speak in front of classes, deliver oral presentations, talk to project teams and speak in extracurricular clubs and groups. You have important things to share and need tools to speak in public effectively and confidently. Having confidence and comfort when speaking in public - whether your audience is a small team or a large group - is important for getting your point across, capturing listeners' attention and engaging them with your ideas. The more you practice and build speaking skills, the more ready you'll be to speak powerfully and persuasively as you stand up for what you believe, defend your values and lead in school, at the Club and in the community.

Effective public speaking is a life-long skill, one that will serve you well not only in school, but also in your life and career. By sharpening your speaking skills, you'll be better prepared for the workplace and to succeed in a world that requires you to communicate ideas clearly.

*“Speech is power; speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel.”*

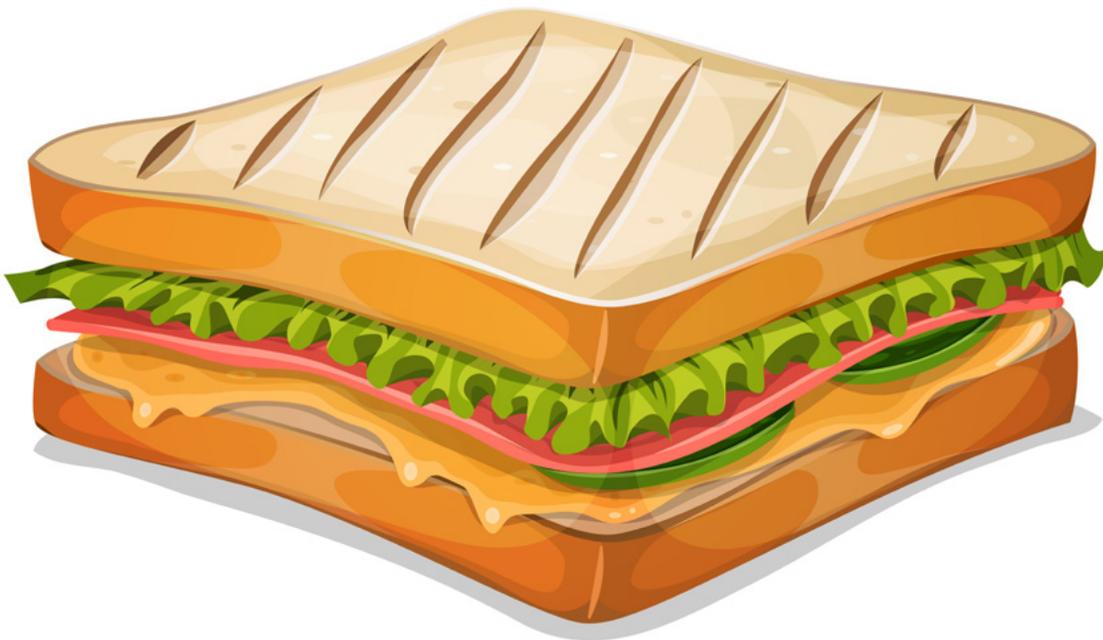
Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Basic Parts of a Speech

The basic speech format is very simple and includes three main parts:

1. An **opening** - that introduces the topic
2. The **body** - where most of the information is given
3. An **ending** - that summarizes the speech

You can think of the speech like a sandwich - the opening and ending are the slices of bread holding the body (filling) together.



# PUBLIC SPEAKING – A KEY TO LEADERSHIP SUCCESS

*think note scribble reflect doodle*

## Do you have everything you need?

As you complete the preparation for the Youth of the Year selection process, pause to consider **how prepared you are**. You can begin by doing an **assessment** of your leadership ability - the skills you've gained by participating in the program. Are there areas that you've done particularly well in? Are there areas that still need some work?

It's also a good time to **review** all the information, materials and resources you need to complete the application process. Use the checklists in this section as you **gather your resources** and put it all together.



# APPLICATION – PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

## Assess Your Leadership Ability

Using a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being high and 1 being low), rate yourself on the following abilities.

Understanding of personal identity \_\_\_\_\_

Awareness of spark/passion \_\_\_\_\_

Strong personal brand \_\_\_\_\_

Ability to stand up, speak out \_\_\_\_\_

Good listening skills \_\_\_\_\_

Ability to work in teams \_\_\_\_\_

Inclusive attitude toward others \_\_\_\_\_

Growth mindset \_\_\_\_\_

Goal-setting skills \_\_\_\_\_

Good citizenship \_\_\_\_\_

A clear purpose and vision \_\_\_\_\_

Overall leadership ability \_\_\_\_\_

## Preparing for the Application Process

# Candidate Essays

- Do you have all the information you need to write the Candidate Essays?
- Can you highlight important contributions the Club has made to your development?
- Can you identify a challenge or obstacle the Club has helped you overcome?
- Is there research you'd like to do as you think about your Vision for America's Youth?
- As you look back on your Leadership Journal, do you know enough to describe your personal brand?
- Is there a mentor you'd like to work with on your essays?

## Preparing for the Application Process

# Interview

- Is there any additional preparation you would like to do to prepare for the interview portion of the application process?
- Are there specific aspects of the interviewing process you'd like to improve before your interview?
- Is there a mentor you'd like to work with to help you with your interviews?

## Preparing for the Application Process

# Speech

- Your speech will be based on the three essays, so you'll need to touch on the high points of each in your three-minute speech. Have you thought of a way the essay questions relate to each other?
- When you think about your purpose, is it something that relates to all three of the essay topics? Could your purpose be a way to connect them?
- Is there a mentor you'd like to work with to help you with your speech?

**Preparing for the Application Process**

## **Letters of Recommendation**

- Have you thought about individuals who can write letters of recommendation for you?
- Who are they, and will you reach out to them with an in-person visit, by email or by telephone?
- Do you know what you will say when you ask for a recommendation?
- Are you prepared to give them some background on the Youth of the Year program and talk about your interest in leadership?
- Do they have enough information about you to say clearly why they are recommending you?

## Preparing for the Application Process

# Candidate Qualifications

- What information do you need to locate, and what materials do you need to gather, to respond to these questions?
- Look back over your Leadership Journal. What would you say are your greatest leadership abilities? What do you need to improve?
- What examples can you provide for leadership, character and service, academic excellence and healthy lifestyles?

### Preparing for the Application Process

# Supporting Materials

- Have you requested a copy of your high-school transcript?
- What other supporting documents do you have that you'd like to include with the application (awards, certificates, special recognitions, articles, employee evaluations or resumes)?
- Do you have copies of these, or do you need to locate them?
- Do you have a professional headshot (with 300 dpi or greater resolution)?

# APPLICATION – PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

*think* *note* *scribble* *reflect* *doodle*



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