

CASE STUDY

Sector: Education

Lead From Here

Transforming K-12 Education
Through Leadership Development





Overview

“The Ravenscroft community, guided by our legacy of excellence, nurtures individual potential and prepares students to thrive in a complex and interdependent world.”

— Ravenscroft School mission statement

What potential can be realized when a school seeks to develop all students as leaders in a culture of leadership? What impact would holistically integrating leadership development into the K-12 experience have on students, teachers, school staff, and the overall school community?

One school is learning the answers to these questions by joining forces with the Center for Creative Leadership in a unique “research incubator” partnership.

Ravenscroft is an independent college preparatory school founded in 1862 in Raleigh, NC. It offers comprehensive education to students from the greater Raleigh area, starting with pre-K and going through 12th grade. The school has a long tradition of shepherding the development of the “whole child,” focusing not just on academic excellence, but on the social development of children. A critical component of that is how students mature into citizens and leaders.

If you read professional journals, magazines, other literature, and listen to news programs and other documentaries, [Lead From Here] competencies and language are going “viral,” which means our students will have a head start in leadership when they graduate and become involved in post-secondary education and in the workforce.

— Upper School faculty

Cover Photo: Lower school student performs at String Orchestra, Choir, and Raving Ravens Concert.



The Ravenscroft School campus in Raleigh, NC

In 2010, the school was starting to plan for its 150th anniversary, and school leaders were updating the strategic plan. In considering the school’s mission to prepare students to be successful in a dynamic, complex world, Ravenscroft’s leaders realized they had an opportunity to strengthen their approach to holistic student development by deliberately focusing on citizenship and leadership development.

[Lead From Here] has had a major impact on all three of my children, but watching my senior embrace it and use it is amazing. He is now willing to take ownership of mistakes, take risks so he doesn’t stay in his comfort zone, learn from mistakes, be FAR more collaborative. I believe LFH helped him differentiate himself from other kids during the college application process as well.
— Ravenscroft parent

That ultimately led to Ravenscroft connecting with the Societal Advancement group at CCL, an innovative team working to extend CCL’s mission and impact by providing world-class, research based leadership development to groups that have not traditionally received it, such as K-12 students, public school administrators, and communities in Africa.

Driven by a compelling theory of change, CCL believes that early leadership development occurs within multiple contexts and systems, is carried out through the interpersonal relationships we develop, and can empower youth by giving them—and adults who support them—tools to increase self-awareness, improve connections with others, and ultimately change their communities.

The collaboration between Ravenscroft and CCL has resulted in a major investment in a systemic initiative—perhaps the first of its kind—that is transforming the entire Ravenscroft community: from school leadership to students, faculty, staff, and even parents. This ground breaking approach to teaching, learning, and leadership at Ravenscroft is called *Lead From Here* (LFH).

The lessons that Ravenscroft and CCL have learned in developing and implementing the LFH initiative hold promise for other schools that wish to transform their curriculum, teaching, and culture to empower students to thrive. Ravenscroft’s experience highlights the importance of involving the entire school community in a systemic change initiative. It also demonstrates the powerful impact of leadership development on student experiences.



Ravenscroft's Challenges and Goals

Ravenscroft leaders are constantly asking themselves how they can better prepare their students for a future that is always unknown.

In the 21st century, the school's primary challenge is preparing their students for an uncertain, fast-changing, global environment. That means ensuring that students are well-prepared academically. But recent research shows that "deep learning" experiences—those most valuable for students' long-term development—go beyond academics.¹ Input from parents over the years has reinforced the idea that Ravenscroft students will need more than just purely academic skills to succeed and thrive. In one meeting, for example, a group of parents listed the ability to work effectively in teams, the ability to work with people from other cultures, compassion, integrity and leadership skills as key attributes their children will need.

Thus, an additional priority is finding ways to continue to provide all Ravenscroft students with the skills to maximize their exceptional learning experiences while also providing Ravenscroft graduates with leadership skills they can apply as they enter college, earn degrees, move into the working world and find their place as citizens. Such a focus would distinguish Ravenscroft and its students in competitive arenas while also equipping them with the skills to lead and effect change in their social worlds and communities throughout their lives.

And so I think what we've then done is uniquely creative programming that is not anywhere else. It truly is becoming infused in all that we do. It's not this siloed activity that you do in advisory and then it's never touched on again. That's maybe where there's springboarding, but then it's in the classroom, it's in our language, it's in how we evaluate students and it's in how we address behavior issues. I mean, it's in all that we do, in a fairly short amount of time.

— Ravenscroft faculty member



Teacher Ms. Jessalyn Crawford works with two of her students.

Embarking on such changes within a school is not merely additive, it is transformative, and incredibly challenging work. In the early stages, as CCL and Ravenscroft discussed how to enhance Ravenscroft's existing citizenship and leadership efforts, they realized that meaningful change for the school would have to go far deeper than just additions to the curriculum, student volunteer service activities, or leadership workshops. To be effective, meaningful leadership development would have to infuse—and transform—the *entire* school community: from staff, faculty and administrators, to students, alumni, and even their parents.

I love that there are so many opportunities for people to lead, both formal and informal. I like that while I may be leading a meeting with one set of objectives, those same people can be sitting in a room about a different subject and leadership has been explicitly given to someone else. And that all of us feel our voices are heard and shared. It's a special institution in that regard.
— Ravenscroft faculty member



Ravenscroft girls make a blanket on Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service.

Developing a Plan Together

Starting in 2011, CCL and Ravenscroft worked together to identify the skills and competencies of citizen leaders—Ravenscroft’s vision for what its students would become as they go forth into the world.

That process led to the creation of three areas of leadership development and citizenship, called the Citizen Leader Framework, which makes up the core of the LFH initiative. As students progress from pre-K through high school, they go through a series of development cycles to foster leadership competencies. In elementary, middle, and high school they focus first on Leading Self (grades K–2, 6 and 9), then Leading with Others (grades 3–4, 7 and 10) and finally on Changing Your World (grades 5, 8, 11–12).

The learning journey begins very early, in preschool, when young brains and ideas about the world are forming at an incredible rate. The learning experiences in each grade level and stage of the process are designed to be developmentally appropriate for that grade level, and, by cycling through the framework three times during a pre-K to 12th-grade tenure, citizen leadership development paces with the growing cognitive complexity of the students. As a result, students’ citizen leader identities and capacities are deeply rooted and available to inform every choice they make.



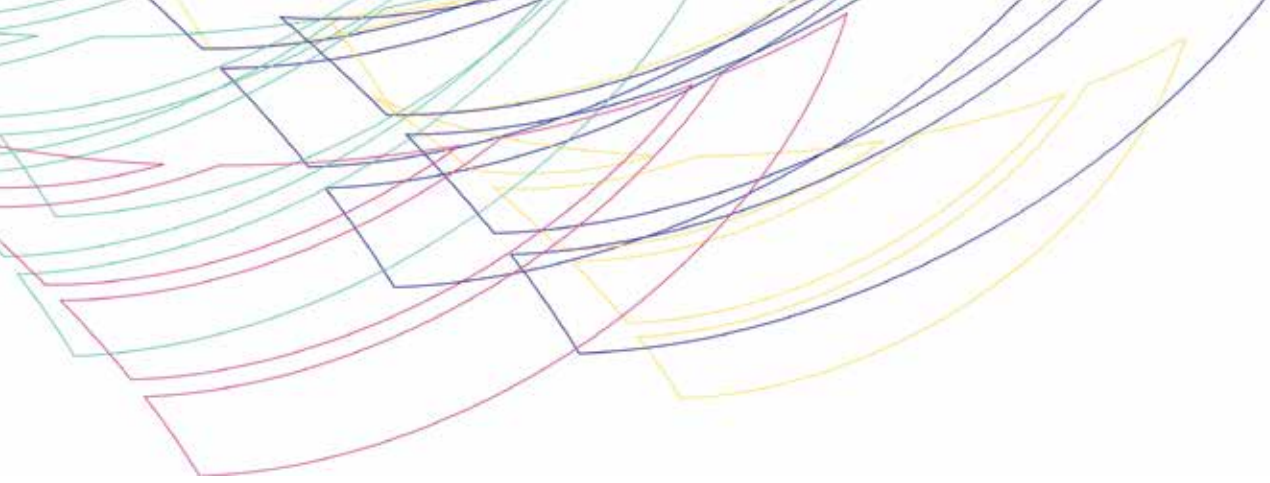
First-graders honor US veterans at the Ravenscroft Veterans Day celebration.

Putting the Plan into Action

A hallmark of the systemic solution that Ravenscroft and CCL have developed is that responsibility for enacting LFH is distributed throughout the entire school community. While student outcomes and experiences are a central focus, the school recognizes that faculty and staff must be equipped to facilitate the delivery of all content—not only the Citizen Leader Framework—in an engaging manner. In this way, Ravenscroft is capitalizing on another aspect of CCL’s early leadership theory of change: leveraging the power of interpersonal relationships and experiences to maximize youth development. Those who work with youth are equipped with the skills and tools they need to support student development.

Faculty and staff driven

Ravenscroft faculty and staff were deeply involved, early on, in the process. Most faculty, administrators and staff have traveled to CCL’s Greensboro campus to engage in training related to the core leadership competencies. Their understanding of these principles is critical to translating them into age-appropriate activities and lessons that integrate well with the Ravenscroft educational experience. In 2016–2017, the entire faculty of Ravenscroft began a yearlong training experience focused on facilitation skills and student-centered learning, a core method of delivery that creates classroom environments that foster leadership development opportunities.



Direct instruction

Ravenscroft and CCL faculty have developed—and continue to refine and innovate—grade-level appropriate curriculum that provides students learning experiences that enable them to apply their citizen leadership competencies naturally in their own lives. These lessons include experiential activities, scenarios and role playing, videos and discussion, and many other strategies of engaged pedagogy. After each lesson, students discuss and reflect on their experience and what they've learned.





Kindergarteners, parents, and a teacher enjoy a game at the Lead From Here picnic.

Mentoring moments

Some of the most powerful developmental mentoring moments take place when they are unplanned. Preparing all faculty with the appropriate tools and skills enables faculty and staff to be intentional about identifying teachable moments, inside and outside the classroom, where they can discuss with students how particular leadership competencies and citizen leader values might be applied. This can be as simple as discussing with young students how and why to include an excluded classmate in recess play, to as challenging as discussing political and social points of view surrounding a presidential election.

I am on the 5th week of doing field hockey, a sport I've never done before. I get a little frustrated sometimes with people trying to help me because I thought I was doing it right, but based on what we talked about today [during our LFH lesson], I will be more open to suggestions.
— Ninth grader

Infusion into academic curriculum

Teachers are increasingly infusing citizen leader ideas into their curriculum. For example, seventh graders go to the Heifer International Global Village in Maryland to learn about hunger, malnutrition and starvation around the world. This gives students an opportunity to think about the impact of their actions on others, to grow in empathy and compassion, and to strengthen their appreciation for differences. This is just one of many examples. The 2016 year-end review found that **92% of Ravenscroft teachers** made reference to LFH or related competencies in course materials in the past month.

92%

Faculty and staff as role models

Children and adolescents model the behavior they see in adults in their lives, so faculty and staff members' adopting—and talking about—citizen leader behaviors can be a powerful influence on students. School employees are encouraged to let children see how they wrestle with making good decisions and to model constructive ways of responding to poor decisions.

Involving parents in the process

Parent involvement and leadership in the transformation at Ravenscroft is critical. Ravenscroft created a Parent Leadership Council to help involve parents directly in Lead From Here. The head of school and assistant head of school have facilitated activities and discussions about LFH, and members of the Parent Leadership Council have provided examples of how they're using citizen leader competencies in their home.

Parent efforts have expanded to include a series of parent workshops focusing on core citizen leader competencies. In the 2016–2017 academic year alone, there will be 15 parent workshops covering six key topics. Parents learn about the competencies related to each topic, engage in activities and role playing to learn how to utilize the content with their child (and spouses, friends, and colleagues), and leave with an expanded skillset and toolset to support their child's citizen leader development. More than 500 parents have attended these workshops over the past two years.

We accidentally found a better way to communicate in our marriage!
— Ravenscroft parent

Key Results—Leadership Essentials Program

Faculty, school staff, and administrators take part in leadership development workshops at CCL. Those programs provide immediate value for participants. In one recent program, 21 participants were asked to rank how the experience impacted them on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5, and the scores averaged to produce a group score. Among the results:

Further developed my own leadership potential—4.9

Am better prepared for daily work—4.57

I will be able to apply the knowledge and skills learned in this program to improve my impact on the organization's success—4.95

Participant Comments

“They are wonderful. A warm, funny group. They made what could have been a boring and cumbersome two days into one of the richest professional development trainings I have ever had.”

“They were very knowledgeable about the information. They shared personal stories that connected the information to life at Ravenscroft. They are passionate about the concepts and ideas.”



Pre-Kindergarten students form a line at the opening-of-school flag raising.

Lessons Learned So Far

Five years into Lead From Here, Ravenscroft's transformation into a more intentional learning community of citizen leaders progresses with some significant insights and changes. Each year, Ravenscroft and CCL conduct evaluations with multiple stakeholders to measure progress and learn how effective the Lead From Here implementation has been. That feedback helps drive ongoing improvements in the program. Here are some of the key lessons Ravenscroft and CCL have learned together through this process.

Leadership development can occur with students as young as 4. Developmentally appropriate experiences can begin to introduce students to key values, mindsets, and skills that will make them more successful during and after their school years.

Leadership is a muscle. It must be exercised to get stronger, and those exercises are different at different stages of development.

Leadership development enhances student academic development. Leader attributes such as resilience and resourcefulness, as well as a growth mindset, contribute to academic success and success in athletics and the arts.

Academic learning relationships are transformed by the infusion of leadership. LFH positively affects ongoing development of meaningful, consistent learning relationships between faculty and students that directly support students' growth, their development and our educational community's wellbeing. Strengthening these relationships supports Ravenscroft's entire academic environment and culture of learning.

Organizational change supports individual change. LFH has been successful in part because it is not purely about the students. Rather, it seeks to change how administrators, faculty, staff, and even parents go about their work, and how they interact with students.

Developing leadership skills requires a diverse group of participants. Everyone benefits and develops stronger leadership competencies when they're able to work with a diverse set of peers and teachers. The process of working with people from different personal, cultural, social and professional backgrounds, as well as different ages, is an example of leadership in action, which students will need to do to be successful.

Everyone learns at a different pace. Students, teachers, administrators, staff, and parents absorb and model leadership competencies at different rates. Some of those differences are developmental—younger students learn differently than older students, for example. Some of those differences relate to the wide-ranging experiences, expectations, personalities, and professional roles in the diverse Ravenscroft community.

Everyone can Lead From Here. Every individual, regardless of their position or grade in the school, can lead because everyone has leadership potential. LFH helps all members of the Ravenscroft community see themselves as leaders, discover their potential, and make choices about how they can lead with others to create positive change.

The Lead From Here transformation has begun, and the early results are highly promising. The charge to help all youth become ready to “thrive in a complex and interdependent world” is a systemic school-wide challenge requiring everyone in the system to continue to learn and grow as leaders. Seeing all students as leaders, and creating the school environments that foster leader development for all, will transform the shape of education. There is little doubt that lessons learned here could be applied to many other educational institutions, both public and private. As we are learning with Ravenscroft, infusing leadership development (models, mindsets, tools, and leader attributes) throughout an educational institution enables it to deepen its capacity to be a cutting-edge learning institution and unleashes the potential of leaders at all levels. What if every school could make this leap?



Middle-schoolers participate in outdoor Lead From Here activities.

Can I just say that I love CCL? I love the impact it has made on me personally and professionally. I love how it fits perfectly with educational philosophy and globalization. I love that you mean what you say and you say what you mean. I love the footprint CCL is making on the Ravenscroft community.
— Ravenscroft faculty member



Endnotes

¹ Huberman, M., Duffy, H., Mason, J., Zeiser, K., O'Day, J. (2016, October) School features and student opportunities for deeper learning what makes a difference? Retrieved from <http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Report-5-School-Features-and-Student-Opportunities-for-Deeper-Learning-Oct-2016.pdf>

² Ravenscroft mission statement. Retrieved from <http://www.ravenscroft.org/page.cfm?p=9>

To learn more about this topic or the Center for Creative Leadership's programs and products, please contact our Client Services team.

+1 800 780 1031 +1 336 545 2810 info@ccl.org



Center for Creative Leadership®

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) is a top-ranked, global provider of leadership development. By leveraging the power of leadership to drive results that matter most to clients, CCL transforms individual leaders, teams, organizations and society. Our array of cutting-edge solutions is steeped in extensive research and experience gained from working with hundreds of thousands of leaders at all levels. Ranked among the world's Top 5 providers of executive education by the *Financial Times* and in the Top 10 by *Bloomberg Businessweek*, CCL has offices in Greensboro, NC; Colorado Springs, CO; San Diego, CA; Brussels, Belgium; Moscow, Russia; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Johannesburg, South Africa; Singapore; Gurgaon, India; and Shanghai, China.

CCL - Americas

www.ccl.org

+1 800 780 1031 (US or Canada)
+1 336 545 2810 (Worldwide)
info@ccl.org

Greensboro, North Carolina

+1 336 545 2810

Colorado Springs, Colorado

+1 719 633 3891

San Diego, California

+1 858 638 8000

CCL - Europe, Middle East, Africa

www.ccl.org/emea

Brussels, Belgium

+32 (0) 2 679 09 10
ccl.emea@ccl.org

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

+251 118 957086
LBB.Africa@ccl.org

Johannesburg, South Africa

+27 (11) 783 4963
southafrica.office@ccl.org

Moscow, Russia

+7 495 662 31 39
ccl.cis@ccl.org

CCL - Asia Pacific

www.ccl.org/apac

Singapore

+65 6854 6000
ccl.apac@ccl.org

Gurgaon, India

+91 124 676 9200
cclindia@ccl.org

Shanghai, China

+86 21 6881 6683
ccl.china@ccl.org

Affiliate Locations: Seattle, Washington • Seoul, Korea • College Park, Maryland • Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Ft. Belvoir, Virginia • Kettering, Ohio • Huntsville, Alabama • San Diego, California • St. Petersburg, Florida
Peoria, Illinois • Omaha, Nebraska • Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan • Mt. Eliza, Victoria, Australia