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Leadership

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My presentation is going to be on the importance of owning your story. In this, I will delve into the topics of authenticity, the fears surrounding vulnerability, the rewarding aspect of owning your story, how our story is constantly changing as we live our lives, and how one's story shows importance both within this program and beyond. It is a very complex topic and one that takes its roots from the fact that I really found a sense of belonging in this Leadership program. At the same time and also far before, life was always happening behind the scenes. I experienced high successes and also contended with deep lows. While some may call high school a career, a track to college, or simply school, I define it for myself as a journey. It is when I navigated through circumstances while being able to learn a lot about myself. I am glad to have gotten to share a lot of those moments with members of this program while tackling my self growth and making the connections that I hope may last long after I leave here. I hope my legacy is an inspiring one that encourages others who fill my place to be the best leader they can be. I want to be remembered as somebody who succeeded and supported others up alongside him. Leadership has felt like family to me and been a pillar through the wildest moments of my life. I value the memories made, professional skills learned, reflection done, and opportunities opened by being a part of this program. I truly believe each one of these people will achieve unbelievable things because their grit, determination, creativity, and care for one another is an admirable way to be setting foot into a world that needs them.

First, I should state the beginning question: what is authenticity? There are a few aspects of one's overall revealed identity that shows how authentic one is on a spectrum. Confidence is key because these types of individuals are not afraid to show their true selves. This means showing the good and the bad which accompanies a willingness to be wrong sometimes (or embarrass yourself, cherish the weird moments). Lastly, an authentic identity acknowledges themselves (think inner voice) and is aware of how their core values affect their daily life.

Actual acts of authenticity are so much harder to do than they are to explain, so I will now delve into how at the middle of this idea is vulnerability, as well as why there is valid fear

preventing us from getting to this point. Many may relate to the feeling that if they showed some parts of themselves, others might reject them. It might be viewed as “too weird” or “too out of character” for them. Others might have had one of these experiences or something similar that causes them now to not feel safe opening up to others again. One thing I definitely experienced was just not being in touch with myself at all. I was very out of touch with my personal needs and started basically living along with other people’s lives without paying much attention to my own. These are all things to work through and the TED talks I have picked out do an excellent job explaining how to possibly start overcoming these barriers. I chose two in case one or the other was already picked by another person. My first option would be [How to Figure Out What You Really Want](#), which states that one should self audit, follow their freedom, and engage with thoughts in order to move forward with life. Stahl had a lot of insightful statements, of which my favorite were, “Realists are often just dreamers who got their hearts broken along the way,” and, “Clarity comes from engagement, it does not come from thought.” My second TED talk choice would be [The Power of Telling Your Story](#), which segues well into the benefits of being authentic because Colenso explains how unique stories foster connection and contribute amazingly to groups.

Owning your story most often leads to a more fulfilling and less stressful life. It’s quite a lot more difficult to be someone we aren’t than to be ourselves because we can’t possibly keep up with someone else forever and still make it look natural. No matter what we do, we are left feeling like a static person, lost without any sense of purpose. In your own narrative, you are free to do whatever you most deeply desire. This leads to you finding your actual passions as whatever you come up with will be aligned with your true beliefs. You begin to familiarize more with yourself and become aware of what makes you unique. You take up a special place in this world and are more aware of that, of its impact. This is when the right people also begin to gravitate towards you. When you are sharing a bit about yourself, you can surely stop after a long list of accolades. However, many are more interested in hearing a story, some balance of highs and lows in your life, that poses you in an authentic light of the human experience. It allows them to empathize with you, relate to you, and connect on a deeper level.

Our story will keep developing as long as a new sun keeps rising each day. When we own our story, we are the authors and have at least a realm of control over our path in life through the intentional actions we set forth. When we fail, learn, and succeed, there is insight to be taken

from our own experiences. When we carry this learned insight, it develops into who we are. Both good and bad things happen to unknowing people each day. I believe not everything happens for a reason. Rather, we give meaning to each moment and in that way, we serve as constantly dynamic characters in our own lives.

Learning to own our stories now will lead to success in applying this mindset to both the current Leadership program and your future career/university interests. Although many don't consider diversity beyond a group's race or income, the truest definition of diversity is that people in this room who have come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences meet in commonplace and come up with collaborative ideas. I once heard from someone in an interview that "life is a group project". We truly do create the best things by hearing a multitude of perspectives. This program is diverse because it is amazing to think that when we leave school each day, each one of us is living life differently. Diversity is an asset because it brings perspectives to the table that you may not have previously considered and the ideas that you may not have thought of on your own. When representing the student body, this is unique because we have so much diversity on campus. If we even consider it from one angle, clubs and sports at the high school, that represents nearly forty different interests there are on campus. You all as student leaders have the ability to, and do, amplify the voices of students every day. Your biggest superpower, in being authentic with yourself, is enabling that in others.

The assignment for Leadership would be quite broad by choice. I would simply ask each individual to create something that represents them in some way (think creatively and put in some effort), and send that in to me either in person or by gmail at 62806484@riponusd.net. It may be challenging but that is the point because I really want everyone to consider the larger ideas within my intended message. I would also not really be grading these other than a turned in/good effort vs missing/late/no effort since any other interpretation would be subjective and unfair. I would hope to put these together somehow and possibly showcase how diverse we all are in our own ways.

For my associated community service project, I have not reached out to any of my fellow seniors yet so I think I'm opting to do this one alone. I have a couple of ideas but my first one is missing a lot of the key details because I worry I've been too ambitious. I want to randomly interview lots of people on campus or even in our wider community to ask them what they feel is unique about them. I then want to create something (this is where it gets vague) that resembles

what makes all of these people unique and physically place this creation somewhere that it can serve as inspiration for other people to own their story, be their authentic selves. This idea was encouraged by a project I did with MJC for my Art Appreciation class a couple of years ago. Since I do not know what kind of creation I would be making, the process in mind is kind of unknown at this point. I would need a sense of how large the creation would be and where I would want it put in order to see who I need permission from. I also need to weigh whether it is even plausible for me to create something that in depth. Since we are actually executing our community service projects this year, it adds a new complicated dimension to the plan.

My second community service idea is a funded scholarship. I would have two options for members of Leadership and the rest of our community to possibly be involved with me. They could either donate any amount of money towards the scholarship fund or they could help publicize its occurrence and get people interested. Once we had funds, we would do social media coverage of a speech competition with the prompt of “What is your story, and how has that influenced who you’ve become/will influence how you lead your life in the future?” I would likely offer the opportunity for prominent community members or teachers from any RUSD school to judge. Depending on how much scholarship money we had, I would either give an equal amount to every participant or do a cascading award amount based on 1st place, 2nd place, 3rd place, etc. I would need to secure a location for the event and would want it to be held at Ripon High. As I ponder this idea more, I may consider changing the speech prompt just to make it more clearly answerable because participation will increase if people actually understand and get excited about the prompt. Alternatively, this could be a written scholarship essay and I would have the judges just read the applications that are submitted. Many people are afraid to share out loud regardless of the topic so I would not want that to prevent anyone from having an opportunity to speak.

Summary Outline:

Authenticity

- confidence to show your true self
- not afraid to listen, not afraid to be wrong
- they acknowledge themselves and their own core values

Fears surrounding vulnerability

- Fear of rejection
- Feeling of distrust or unsafe
- Not in touch with yourself

Rewarding aspect of owning your story

- You get to feel more free
- You get to find what you actually want
- You will feel your unique place and be aware of how your experiences give unique insight among your peers
- Quite frankly, it is more difficult to be someone we aren't because it just isn't natural

How our story changes as we live our lives.

- not everything happens for a reason. Rather, we give the meaning to each moment and in that way we serve as constantly dynamic characters in our own lives.

Importance

- Diversity, I define, as the people in this room who have come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences to meet in commonplace and come up with collaborative ideas. I once heard from someone in an interview that "life is a group project". We truly do create the best things by hearing a multitude of perspectives.
- You all as student leaders have the ability to, and do, amplify the voices of students every day.