

Utilizing Leadership Skills with At Risk Middle Schoolers

Barbara Reese

Volunteer 4-H Leader
9012 Sowder Place
Nokesville, Virginia 20181
703-791-5862
bjreese@erols.com

About New Dominion

- ◆ Serves about 60 middle school students
- ◆ Students have been removed from their base school due to behavior problems, often violence
- ◆ Students come from three school districts and about 13 different middle schools

The Leadership Program

- ◆ About 45 minutes once a week in the classroom with the teacher present
- ◆ Combines life skills with leadership skills (budgeting, communication, etc.)
- ◆ Includes role modeling (I help out with other school wide activities and assemblies)

Program Topics

- ◆ What is Leadership?
- ◆ Learn About Yourself and Others
- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Teamwork Activities
- ◆ Goal Setting (Group & Individual)
- ◆ Conflict Resolution and Anger Management
- ◆ Decision Making with Character (CHARACTER COUNTS!)
- ◆ The Creative Leadership Process from PYLI
- ◆ Careers, Job Applications and Interviews
- ◆ Budgeting
- ◆ Community Mapping, Assessing Needs
- ◆ Planning an Event
- ◆ Managing Time and People (Staffing, Managing, Delegating & Leading)
- ◆ Recognition
- ◆ Fundraising/Finding Resources
- ◆ Representing/Advocating
- ◆ Evaluation and Reflection

Program Pros

- ◆ Show students the community cares
- ◆ Offers role models
- ◆ Encourages leadership through community service
- ◆ Teaches useful skills (communication, goal setting, teamwork, etc.)
- ◆ Sets high expectations

Program Cons

- ◆ Irregular attendance (students absent a lot and new students coming in all year)
- ◆ Not always consistent follow through with what is taught
- ◆ Most students return to non-positive environments (both home and school)
- ◆ Not enough chance to practice the skills

Some Insights

- ◆ Look past what you see (negative comments, bored behavior, etc.)
- ◆ Try to understand the environment they come from and adapt activities/lessons
- ◆ Behavior varies from day to day and student to students due to problems out of your control

Signs of Success

- ◆ Community Service - 3096 hours this year in ten different projects
- ◆ Pride when they succeed
- ◆ They know your name and call you by it
- ◆ They say thank you for something
- ◆ They say they were wrong about something.

Program Evaluation

- ◆ Using 40 Assessts - Pre/Post Test
- ◆ Unreliable due to many factors, primarily student attendance and attitude
- ◆ Subjective evaluation shows benefits - teachers want the program repeated
- ◆ I am not making a major change in any of these students now, but am planting seeds that may grow and blossom in the future