

At the House of Awakened Culture in Suquamish, squeals of excitement, cheers of accomplishment and the groan of an occasional defeat were all a part of the team-building activities.



WALK, TALK AND ROCK LIKE A LEADER A DAY OF SERIOUS FUN!

Joe Fenbert

Program Director, Association of Washington Student Leaders (AWSL)

A nine-card deck of slick concept cards, silly songs with motions, sit-down story times and a crew of cool high school role models are the ingredients that make the AWSL “Walk, Talk and Rock Like a Leader” workshop a hit for elementary students. Through engaging activities, planned reflection and a dose of good-old fashioned face

PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Creating a Culture, Ensuring Student Safety, Closing the Gap

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to face play, elementary students learn how to lead themselves, help others and make their schools a kinder for everyone.

Travis Howell, principal at Jennings Elementary School, Colfax School

District, explained how the “Walk, Talk and Rock Like a Leader” workshop fits into their school improvement plans.

“We have been developing ways to

Continued on page 42

Continued from page 41

improve our school culture through PBIS by developing school-wide common expectations that we are intentional about teaching,” said Howell. “The AWSL crew were instrumental in developing skills in teamwork, knowledge of inclusive recess games and growing leadership capacity among our students. Some of these students have now become leaders on the playground. Our K-2 age range is learning how to play appropriately while still having fun. It was a great day that has continued to have positive impacts on our school culture.”

WALK, TALK AND ROCK WITH STUDENTS OR STAFF

The “Walk, Talk and Rock Like a Leader” program is designed as a two- to three-hour program for up to 120 upper elementary students. High school students help ensure the small group teambuilding activities run smoothly while serving as positive role models during the day. For each concept, a card, song, activity and story cement the message.

Jeannie Isaak-Turner, a preschool teacher and parapro at Coulee City Elementary, said the program engaged all students.

“The way they incorporated songs,



Students participating in some WTR fun and games.

acronyms, leadership concepts and fun games was so helpful. As a teacher and a recess supervisor, it gave me great tools to use. It also taught the kids necessary social skills to get to know each other, play fair, play fun and include everyone!” she said.

“The program helped kids practice building positive relationships by listening, smiling, inviting, asking good questions and learning the strengths of their leadership style. I think it would be helpful for any group of people who need the important skills of getting along and working together as a team where

everyone is valued and appreciated. Let’s do it as a staff!”

One of the unique twists of the Coulee City Elementary program was the opportunity for non-traditional student leaders to serve.

“We reached out to our child development class to find the students to be the role models,” said Coulee City Elementary Principal Kelley Boyd, “Often, the student leaders of a school are used over and over again for special events. By using the Our Child Development Class students, it gave them an opportunity to shine and put some of their classroom knowledge to use in a practical setting.”

The frenetic pace of the program is balanced with intentional calm breaks for concept-based stories and reflection.



BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Each word in the program’s title serves as a metaphor. **Walking like a leader** means learning to be your best self each day through listening and building positive relationships through the Smile, Shake and Share technique.

Talking like a leader means learning and living leadership skills each and every day. Specific skills that are explored are being a positive member of a cooperative learning group through understanding that



Imaginary play is the hook that keeps the students engaged and moving.

everyone has a natural leadership style and the acronym Be NICE (Notice others to Invite, Compliment and Encourage).

Rocking like a leader means using your leadership skills to improve your school, community and world. This concept is addressed two ways. Students learn to improve play at recess through learning inclusive recess and table games under the guidance of the “Play of Allegiance”: Play fair, play fun, everyone plays with everyone. Students also generate ideas for the classrooms, hallways, lunchroom, going to and from school and on social media that fall under the categories Create a Culture where everyone feels like they belong, Ensure Safety where everyone feels comfortable and Close the Gap where everyone learns.

“When everyone works together, you can achieve what seemed impossible. It takes all types of leaders to achieve something,” said a Suquamish Elementary fifth-grader. “The program not only served our elementary students, it served our high school leaders as well.

Students at Suquamish Elementary eventually feed into either Kingston High School or the Chief Kitsap High School, so we intentionally brought

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in high school students from both schools,” said Gwen Lyons, principal at Suquamish Elementary. Lucy Dafoe, the principal of Chief Kitsap, and I worked together to recruit a group of student leaders. I’m not sure who had more fun and learned the most during the day, the elementary kids or the high school students.”

MORE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

The “Walk, Talk and Rock Like a Leader” program is one of three workshops offered to elementary schools. It provides a two-three hour leadership opportunity for the upper elementary grades. The 60- to 90-minute All Play workshop focuses on inclusive recess games and it is appropriate for both upper and lower elementary grades. The Leadership 101 workshop is designed as a day-long training for a student leadership council or room representatives. It highlights meeting skills, public speaking and how to be a role model.

Thanks in large part to the support of principals, AWSL spent the last several years building school climate and leadership programs for elementary students. Along with “Walk, Talk and Rock Like a Leader” for the middle and upper elementary grades, AWSL developed All Play, a 60- to 90-minute workshop for all ages of elementary students, focused on inclusive recess and table games. Another elementary program is Leadership 101, a day-long training on meeting and communication skills for elementary student councils or room representatives.

Adding in 25 years of middle level curriculum and program development, and more than 60 years of high school camps and conferences, the continued support of principals enabled AWSL to become one of the preeminent leadership programs in the nation, allowing us to build a continuum of leadership curriculum for students from kindergarten through high school graduation. ■

High school students are the “cool cards” that act as role models and leaders of small group activities.

