

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Report for Academic Year: 2008-2009

Gifted and Talented Class Navajo Preparatory School

Farmington, NM Tribal Affiliation: Navajo

Project Coach: Denise Joe

Regional Coordinator: James McKenzie

Navajo Preparatory School is a school for Native Americans designed to prepare students to attend college. The Youth Leadership Program is brought to the school through the Gifted and Talented class. This class is designed to utilize a course of study that provides more learning opportunities beyond the core curriculum at the school. Youth Leadership is used in this class to accentuate and grow the students' leadership skills as well as reinforce their drive to positively impact the community and the school.



LEADERSHIP PROJECTS:

◆ CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE:

The group held a *Christmas Toy Drive* for children living in a shelter provided by the Navajo Methodist Mission. The group collected donated toys to give to the children at the shelter during the holiday. Reflecting on the toy drive, Denise commented, "It was a success for two reasons: one, we were able to involve the entire student body at Navajo Preparatory School who donated the gifts and two, each child received more than one gift. The best part was seeing the smiles on the faces of the children when they opened their gifts!" The students organized and planned this entire project and the lives of so many children, in need, were touched.



◆ COMMUNITY GARDEN:

With sustainability and community in mind, the Youth Leaders took on the project of planting and maintaining a community garden at the school. They used organic produce as a means of giving back to their community. The vegetables grown in the garden were used for student meals in the Navajo Preparatory School cafeteria. The students committed to cultivating this project and reaped the rewards of giving back when the garden bloomed.



◆ SCHOOL RECRUITMENT:

Another project that the group carried out was School Recruitment to show how much they value their experience at school and giving back to their school. Group members, using a PowerPoint

presentation about Navajo Preparatory School, presented at various junior high and middle schools throughout the Navajo reservation in New Mexico and Arizona. They used this as a means of recruiting new students to attend the school. "This was an important project because it put the students in a leadership position as presenters and student leaders," said Denise. The students took great initiative in traveling and speaking publicly in support of their school.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- ◆ One of the biggest accomplishments for the Youth Leadership Program at Navajo Preparatory School, this year, involved the development of two students, Dominick Bitsui and Glenna Cly. "I saw tremendous growth in their leadership abilities and self-confidence," commented Denise. Through their active participation in group activities and Youth Leadership Projects, as well as through their guidance in working with others, the students exemplified leadership. Describing their accomplishments, Denise commented, "They put themselves into leadership roles and served as positive role models for the rest of the students in our Youth Leadership group as well as the entire student body."
- ◆ Just as notable as individual accomplishments this year were the accomplishments of the entire Youth Leadership group. While working to complete various projects, the students learned to work together to accomplish great feats in a limited amount of time. "Although at times individuals may have had other things going on, each student recognized the importance of teamwork when it comes to completing a group project," remarked Denise.

CHALLENGES:

- ◆ "I think the biggest challenge I face with my group is time," stated Project Coach, Denise Joe. This year, the Youth Leaders at Navajo Preparatory school were each involved with sports, other classes, extracurricular activities; they oftentimes found themselves spread thin. At Navajo Prep there is a strong focus on academic excellence. The Youth Leadership students worked hard to keep their grades up, while also devoting time to their Youth Leadership group.
- ◆ Another great challenge that the group faced this year concerned participation and motivation. At the beginning of the year, some students did not attend sessions regularly, and there was a sense of lethargy from a few of the participants. "When one or two people were missing, it made it difficult to complete a lot of the activities," commented Denise. To address this issue Denise asked for help in the form of a visitation, in which she and Regional Coordinator, James McKenzie, co-facilitated activities to initiate conversations about participation and leadership.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Youth Leadership Program assists children in developing leadership skills while generating projects that contribute to their communities. Each Youth Leadership group executes a project that benefits their community. The curriculum provides a framework in which students, guided by Project Coach volunteers, engage in activities focusing on improving leadership and confidence, both individually and as a group. Students learn to challenge their personal limits and achieve personal and group goals.



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