Teaching At-Risk Youth to Lead
Themselves to a New Future

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THE YOUNG LEADERS’ PROGRAM

• Program Overview
• How it works
• Program Benefits/Challenges
• Starting your own program
The Young Leaders’ Program

- EAL paired with academics (rotate stations)
- Horses transported to central Phoenix site
- Serves 20 “at-risk” children ages 6-13
- Meets 2.5 hours/1 day per week/10 weeks
- Partnerships
  - Phoenix Children’s Hospital Youth Homeless Outreach
  - Ibis Foundation
  - The Bridge UMC
  - Children First Leadership Academy
  - Parents/Guardians
WHY EAL and ACADEMICs

• At-risk children experience many obstacles to the learning process including the ability to:
  – pay attention/focus
  – stay on task
  – plan behavior/impulse control
  – communicate feelings/needs
  – build confidence and self-worth

[Diagram showing the relationship between EAL, Motivation, Reading/Writing Process, Reduced Obstacles to Learning, and their mutual benefits and leads to each other.]
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

• Low staff/volunteer to student ratios
  – 1:1 in horse area
  – 2:5 in classroom
• Students instructed on horse safety
  – Emotional regulation/preparedness prior to horse interaction
• Students accompanied anywhere on campus
• Multiple double gates

EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

• Consistent/Predictable Routine
  – Staff
  – Horses
  – Activities
• Low-risk classroom
• Training of staff/volunteers
• Provide coping strategies
• Connection between horse program and classroom activities
SAMPLE SCHEDULE

3:30-3:40  SNACK

3:45-4:35  SESSION 1
Groups 1,2  Horses
Group 3    Classroom
Group 4    Crafts
(Groups 3,4 switch ½ way thru)

4:40-5:30  SESSION 2
Groups 3,4  Horses
Group 1    Classroom
Group 2    Crafts
(Groups 1,2 switch ½ way thru)

5:30-6:00  DINNER

SAMPLE SCHEDULE
3:30-3:40  snack, t-shirts, schedule
3:40-4:35  Horse Activities

HORSE INTERACTION PREP
• Horses and herds
• Protection
• Communication
• Horsey breath
BECOMING A HERD MATE
Building Self-Worth

YOU ARE:
– Worth knowing
– Trustworthy
– Worthy of respect
– Worth being protected

SAMPLE SCHEDULE
3:40-4:35 Horse Activities

LETTING GO AND TAKING HOLD

• GROOMING
  – Horse lingo
  – Letting go

• LEADING
  – Emotion cards
    • Stability and support

• PAINTING
  – Emotional expression
  – Horse can handle it
SAMPLE SCHEDULE
3:40-4:35 Horse Activities

BECOMING A LEADER

• LEARNING TO LEAD
  — Communicating clearly
  — Problem solving
  — Building confidence

SAMPLE SCHEDULE
3:40-4:35 Horse Activities

BECOMING A LEADER

• LEADING as a TEAM
  — Collaboration
  — Confidence
• LEADING w/o a ROPE
  — Culmination of skills
  — Trust
  — Emotional honesty/ awareness
  — Becoming a herd leader
SAMPLE SCHEDULE
4:40-5:05  Classroom: Reading

• Read picture books (no text) to Minis
  – Create story from pictures
  – Practice telling story
  – Share story w/Minis
• Read own writing to Minis

SAMPLE SCHEDULE
4:40-5:05  Classroom: Writing

• Content over Construct
• Use pre-writing template to organize information.
• Write
• Draw
• Dictate
WHY WRITE?

• HORSES/BOOK
  – Situational interest
  – Jumpstart motivation
  – Quick success
    • Intrinsic motivation
    • Confidence

• GIVES STUDENTS A VOICE
  – Sometimes you don’t know what you know…
  – Students become the expert
  – I don’t want to write  →  Can I stay and work?

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

5:05-5:30  Classroom: Crafts

• Scheduled-time to relax, create, just be.
• Simple Crafts
  – Beads, paint, drawing, blankets, sun catcher
• Wall tiles
HORSES TO HOME
Remembering the Program

• Horse Hair
• Crafts
• Book
• Lessons I’ve Learned
  From My Horse
• Photo album
• Celebration Dinner

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

• Consistent attendance
  – Transportation
    • Groupings changed weekly (age vs. attendance)
  – School philosophy
• Communication with school
  – Basic philosophy differences
  – Changes in school schedule
• City distractions
  – Sirens, helicopters, workers
PROGRAM BENEFITS

• Students have increased ability to:
  – pay attention/focus
  – stay on task
  – plan behavior/impulse control
  – communicate feelings/needs
  – build confidence
  – improve reading/writing skills

GETTING STARTED
Is this program right for my center?

ON-SITE RESOURCES
• Staff
• Horses
• Equipment
• Volunteers

OFF-SITE RESOURCES
• Partners
• Population served
• Locations
• Funding