



LEADD

LEADERSHIP EDUCATION ADVANCING
DEMOCRACY & DIVERSITY
A PROJECT OF INTERFAITH ALLIANCE

A GUIDE FOR ORGANIZING A LEADD INTERFAITH YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Overview: The LEADD program ran from 2005-2012. We have posted the resources from the program below hoping that they will prove useful to those engaged in education about the First Amendment, issues of religious liberty and protection of the boundaries between religion and government. LEADD was constructed over concerns that U.S. high school age students in many places do not have a civics class that delves into the First Amendment and issues of religious liberty. Living in the most religiously diverse nation in the world, the founders of the LEADD program were concerned that if the next generation of leaders, citizens and community activists did not understand and appreciate both the diversity and the challenges that come with our diversity, that we would face growing conflicts over misunderstanding, and misinterpreting belief traditions outside of “our” own.

Looking at the history of how the founders of our country worked through the conflicts they faced at the time, reviewing Supreme Court cases, role playing and using quiet conversations, LEADD works to build awareness, understanding and trust across diverse beliefs.

Students who attend LEADD become immersed in the history of the First Amendment, particularly its Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses. The First Amendment is the foundation of America’s unique devotion to religious liberty and the hope in and vision for creating a truly pluralistic American society. Students learned about current policy, legislative and legal issues regarding religious freedom. Students who have attended LEADD have reported that they have a deeper appreciation for their own faith traditions and a better understanding of other beliefs.

Each program is influenced by the makeup of the students attending, by the local interactions or lack of by different communities. Reaching out to as many different local groups as possible is important in the process of having a successful program. World studies teacher, religious education staff from houses of worship, Interfaith Alliance affiliates and other local interfaith groups and Unitarian Universalist congregations have been some of the best resources for both getting the word out and for passing along additional local contact.

Collaboration: The success of LEADD was based on the need to bring together a diverse group of students. A group consisting of only one or two belief traditions will not have the same powerful effect of sharing these diverse perspectives.

Recruitment of Students: Descriptions are important: We describe LEADD the following way: LEADD was a leadership training program that taught students about the Supreme Court, history of religious liberty issues in the United States, cross cultural and cross belief dialogue and conflict resolution all while getting to know other students from different backgrounds. Parents want an educational experience. They want to know that their kids will be safe, that boys and girls will be monitored and that they have a way to get in touch in case of an emergency.

Is there a meeting of local clergy in your area to whom you could make a pitch? Are there religious education leaders at houses of worship or ethical societies you could reach out to? Are there High School history, politics, world studies teachers you could approach to get their recommendations for both students and to assist with a presentation? Not principals but teachers?

Asking students who their favorite teachers are in world studies or history or politics. Diversity is key to a successful LEADD.

Finding a meeting location: You need 1) a place for students, faculty and counselors to sleep- separate space for boy and for girls, 2) two to three break out rooms/spaces. 3) A space that can hold the entire group for large presentations 4) Outdoor area for breaks (Frisbee, soccer, fresh air, maybe space for a campfire at night?) You may find that some families will only allow their kids to come during the day. You may also find that a local chaperone from a house of worship is a requirement. Being flexible, reassuring parents of the student's safety and supervision is very important.

Staffing: 1) you need a coordinator for the program, for logistics, (might be the same person or two people) and a coordinator for recruitment of students- to collect applications and set up a system to keep in touch with parents and students. 2) A finance person to handle budget, collection of local funds to support the program and pay bills. The finance person may also coordinate requests to local house of worship, civic groups to contribute monies for scholarships. For the program side, you will need 3) a coordinator who give the introductions, outlines the program for the students on the first night. 4) You will need timekeeper(s) to keep an eye on the clock for the entire weekend to make sure you stay on schedule or adjust the schedule as needed. 5) You need facilitators for the Supreme Court exercise, 6) one for the Conflict Resolution workshops, 7) one presenter/facilitator for the history of religious liberty in the US. 8) Four counselors (two male, two female) to watch over the students at night and to informally encourage discussion after the day's last presentation. Counselors also keep an eye out for homesick kids, any health issues that need to be brought to the attention of the main coordinator.

Make learning fun: Build in break times, and encourage informal discussion at night. Students need time to absorb the information, to stand up and move around. LEADD has many effects. 1) Educational, as students learn more about the subjects, including history, government 2) personal- students meet peers from different cultural/religious/socio-economic backgrounds. Muslim students meet Jewish students, who meet Christian, Hindu, Atheists, and the spectrum in between. They learn there is diversity within every belief tradition as well as between faith traditions 3) Long term understanding that while there may be many differences amongst and within beliefs, the core principles, treating others with respect; How to live a fulfilling life? How to provide for my family? are all universal.

Materials/information to gather pre-LEADD.

1. Notebooks for materials (3 ring binders) Optional cloth bags/ string backpacks to hold all materials, Pens, blank paper for student to take notes.
2. Name Tags
3. Print out of Student names, emergency contact info, Special medical needs.
4. Video and print clips of current religion and society issues
5. List of current issues to use for "vote with your feet" exercise.
6. Movies to show- examples: A Dream in Doubt, West Bank Story and projection capability.

7. Copies of Forrest Church's book *The Separation of Church and State: Writings on a fundamental freedom by America's founders* enough for each student and faculty member. Beacon Press.
8. US Constitution and Amendments: http://www.amazon.com/PocketConstitution-Bicentennial-CommissionEdition/dp/0880801441/ref=cm_lm_f_tit_2 or Online version: <https://constitutionus.com>
9. Handouts on the Supreme Court, Founder's quotes to discuss, Diana Eck's pluralism definition, evaluations, permission forms.
10. Flip-chart paper, markers, non-marking tape
11. Laptops for online research.
12. Proof Insurance coverage where needed.
13. Medical care location information (At one LEADD we had a student suddenly become ill and needed transport to a nearby hospital by staff- She was treated and returned to the program)

These are basic guideline we followed in running the LEADD program. Please contact Interfaith Alliance Foundation: info@interfaithalliance.org with any questions or suggestions.