

R.E.A.L. Curriculum: An Example

Introductory (10 weeks)

The purpose of this ten-week curriculum is to develop concepts and methods of study needed to understand human relationships and to handle social issues and problems. Also, to develop thinking skills and competence in social criticism and action, so that students can engage in decision-making and participate in activities, which improve human welfare. Adult mentors will facilitate the curriculum, but discussions and projects are to be driven by students' thoughts and actions.

Ideas to be addressed (generated by students):

1. Challenging media stereotypes of youth
2. Police brutality
3. Breaking cycles of gang/domestic violence
4. Drug/alcohol abuse
5. The over-incarceration of youth

Instruction includes the following teaching methods:

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| *Cooperative learning | *Socratic questioning |
| *Storytelling | *Direct instruction |
| *Brainstorming | *Oral reporting |
| *Reciprocal teaching | *Problem solving |
| *Lecture | *Role playing |

**Small and whole-group discussions*

3 Modalities in use:

1. Tactile (writing/drawing/typing)
2. Auditory (music/spoken word)
3. Visual (visual aids)

Activities/resources are designed to direct students toward becoming:

1. Resourceful problem solvers
2. Capable group participants
3. Fluent and expressive writers
4. Active and responsive listeners
5. Critical analyzers of information and ideas
6. Effective, adaptable language users
7. Organized and articulate speakers
8. Motivated readers

Week #1: Getting acquainted: Orientation & overview of program adult mentors (facilitators), expectations, and goals.

Meeting 1: Place words of the week on the board and discuss briefly, “Respect, Excellence, Attitude and Leadership.” Communicate basic procedures and program design for both participants and mentors. Lay groundwork for the next ten weeks and begin team building. Discuss who we are; who students are; set tone for class w/ vigor and enthusiasm; discuss what will be happening over the course of the coming weeks; establish a good rapport base, which links to subsequent meetings; set expectations (e.g., rules, behavior, etc.); question and answer session to close.

Meeting 2: Continue open forum, further discussing the four key aspects of the program (i.e., respect, excellence, attitude and leadership). The focus will be on those aspects and their meaning and relevance to individual daily life.

Individual profile sheets will also be distributed for student and mentor completion. The sheet is designed to get to know minor things about individuals in the class (e.g., favorite books, movies, hobbies, etc.) Students and mentors will volunteer to read their sheets openly.

A newspaper article related to youth violence will be presented on an overhead projector and read aloud. Students and mentors will be engaged in pointing out the four key aspects of the program within the article. In closing the session, newspaper articles related to youth violence will be distributed along with composition books for students to write down all classroom activities, homework assignments, journal writings, artwork, weekly responses, daily thoughts, etc.

Educational Objective: Students will be exposed to whole group discussions related to affective and interpersonal issues. The desire is to start building rapport and closeness within the group/class. Reflection will also be a point in which students perceive the ways the four aforementioned program points relate to their daily lives.

Materials Needed: Profile sheets, varied copies of newspaper clippings, an overhead projector, transparencies, and composition notebooks.

Homework: Students are to develop a 4-paragraph personal response to a pre-distributed newspaper article related to youth in the media and find within the article the concepts of respect, excellence, attitude and leadership in either a positive or negative light. Students are to discuss why and how the issue is either positive or negative.

Week #2: Explore elements of journalism and various perceptions of reality.

Meeting 1: Write phrase of the week on the board and briefly discuss, “Being prepared.” Then, go over homework assignment. Volunteer students and mentors will be asked to read their 4-paragraph response to the article. Respect for each presenter should be shown throughout each response. Mentors and hopefully students as well will intermittently bring to light the various perceptions taken from the journalists with respect to the way the article is written. Continue team building by breaking students into small focus groups (e.g., a group

responsible for information re: police brutality, a group responsible for information re: gang violence, etc.)

Homework: Students and mentors will be asked to write their responses to the following 3 questions: 1) what were the circumstances of your birth? 2) Have you ever had a near death experience? and 3) Have you ever been wrongly accused?

Meeting 2: Both students and mentors will be asked to read their written responses to the homework questions and to elaborate. The cross triangulation approach (C.T.A.) activity will be initiated in the second half of class time. Mentors and students will write down their reaction to how the music and posted pre-selected newspaper article makes them feel; reactions can be written in any form (e.g., expository, second language, poetry, persuasive, etc.) respondents feel comfortable with; students will then lead a whole-group discussion re: their reaction pieces. Mentors will point out the relation the article has to everyday life in both a micro- and macrostructural context.

Educational Objective: Analyzing and identifying ways in which current events affect individuals and groups. Students will also be involved in developing organized and articulate thoughts in the process of writing and speaking. Storytelling and reflection will also link students and facilitators closer in a caring and trusting environment.

Materials Needed: One laminated poster-size article from a newspaper, an audio cassette/radio, music tape.

Homework: Students are to research and collect information (using those resources found in a library) related to their focus group (i.e., media stereotypes of youth, gang/domestic violence, police brutality, drug and alcohol abuse and the over-incarceration of youth). Student groups are to report their findings back to the rest of the class, a summary of their articles and reactions to them.

Meeting 3: (Computer lab time) - Dedicated to Fridays, computer lab time allows student groups to search the web for sites, articles and other publications re: the aforementioned focus group topics.

Week 3#: Evaluating information and different viewpoints.

Meeting 1: Write phrase of the week on the board and briefly discuss, "There is no unity without community." Student groups are to report back their findings to the rest of the class. As instructed in the assignment, student groups are to recount where the information was found, the author or organization responsible, and a summary or reaction piece to the article and its meaning to them. Whole group discussions will center on how this information affects students in a local, national, and/or global context. Group ideas and opinions related to this class's culminating event (The Community Forum) will be discussed here.

Materials Needed: Literacy group circle facilitator (either a student or mentor).

Homework: Students and mentors are to respond in their journals to the following assignment: 1) One thing you want to do before you die and 2) Write your epitaph.

Meeting 2: Volunteer students and/or mentors will read their homework writings. Afterwards, students will be engaged in an activity called, "Power Pairs." Students will be paired with a classmate of a different ethnicity, gender or social circle and asked to discuss two general questions: What is it that makes you proud to be who you are (ethnicity) and what makes you ashamed or uncomfortable to be that person? The objective here is three fold: 1) to help students reflect on and reveal personal information about themselves, which, in turn 2) continues to create a safe and honest environment where feelings and individual voices will not be ignored and 3) discuss stereotypes of cultures found in neighborhoods, on television and other places. One-on-one conversations will last about 15-20 minutes where upon pairs convene back into the larger class for whole group discussion. Students, with the prompt from mentors, are to relate these issues to various perceptions of reality and how these perceptions affect our judgments of and actions toward others. With the remaining time, a video on gang life will be shown. Student groups are to take note from the video where they see their group topic as relevant.

Educational Objective: Students will identify as process the importance of research and findings. Students will also probe into areas of intellectual thought that may or may not be familiar or similar to their own, exposing them to other ideas and narratives. Students will demonstrate competency in organizing and integrating information to formulate questions and solve problems related to investigation and research. Finally, students will identify the process of text interpretation.

Materials Needed: Television, VCR, and videotape.

Homework: Students will be asked to read 1 pre-selected article related to either racial profiling and/or youth incarceration. Students are to summarize the articles and write (no less than 2 paragraphs) their personal reactions to them.

Week #4: Exploring, developing, and exemplifying ways of resolving conflict.

Meeting 1: Write the phrase of the week on the board and briefly discuss, "As we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same." --Nelson Mandela. After discussion, whole-group dialogue will take place re: the homework assignment. Students will be asked to read their reactions to the posed article. Afterwards, students and mentors will be asked to relate the readings to personal life and ways of dealing with those issues. To that end, if there is time, students will be separated into their focus groups and given a topic-related conflict that requires a resolution. Students and mentors will be asked to develop alternative, but realistic, responses to resolving the conflict.

Groups will perform the wrong way first and then exemplify an alternative solution(s). Whole group dialogue will ensue after each group performance, hypothesizing, evaluating and critiquing each scenario and its resolution.

Meeting 2: Continue conflict resolution skits on focus-group areas of interest; reflect on the reality of such situations and the likelihood of the presented resolutions actually occurring. Afterwards, a free-writing exercise on the following: 1) Name a difficulty that you had to face, 2) What gave you the impulse to act, 3) What obstacles did you encounter and 4) How did you face (surmount or crumble) the difficulties?

Educational Objective: Students will be involved in hypothesizing, improvisation, role playing and demonstrating resolutions to conflict from creating and team building with classmates.

Materials Needed: 3.5 x 5-index cards and cassette/radio player.

Homework: Students are to finish the free-writing exercise. In addition, students are to explore library resources, namely using the computer lab to bring in more materials related to their focus groups.

Meeting 3: (Computer lab time) Research and inquiry.

Week #5: Comparisons with and attributes of yourself, your school, your community, your home and your culture.

Meeting 1: Write the phrase of the week on the board and briefly discuss, "Be a path maker and set an example." Students and mentors are to open a whole group dialogue surrounding the free-writing activity; reactions and commentary take place. Afterwards, students break into focus groups and discuss what materials and information they have to share. Afterwards, a video related to domestic violence will be shown. Following the video, students will break into groups of 3-4 and develop lists related to the rights of a woman and the rights of a man. Afterwards, students will reconvene back into the larger group and discuss the results. The class will be asked how domestic violence is linked to all focus group interests.

Meeting 2: Students and mentors will have an invited guest speaker dialogue with the class on issues of domestic violence. Students are to take notes on the lecture.

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate competency in organizing and synthesizing information into daily life as well as relating that information to the lives of others (via role-play or visual).

Materials Needed: TV, VCR, videotape, chop block paper, big black markers, and transparent tape.

Homework: Students are to make a list of topics and the responsibility they see themselves taking on (e.g., orator, commentator, co-organizer of the event, etc.) in the formation of the community forum.

Week # 6: Continuation of domestic violence segment and initiating section on escaping the intense grip of drugs and alcohol.

Meeting 1: Write the phrase of the week on the board and briefly discuss, "It is far better to be free to govern yourself than to be ruled by anything or anybody else." In a whole group forum, the class will review the previous meeting's subject matter. Afterwards, students will be engaged in an activity called, "Go or Stay." This exercise asks students, "To what degree do you stay or go in a relationship that is increasingly becoming about power and control?" After the activity, a discussion on the community forum will close out the period.

Meeting 2: Class will revisit the phrase of the week. After that discussion, students and mentors will have the opportunity to engage a guest speaker on issues of drugs and alcohol as well as participate in activities.

Homework: Students are to write their ideas, opinions and perceptions of the day's talk. Their responses can be written in the form of a poem, rap piece, song or drawn in any creative style. Students are also to bring to the next class meeting any writings, drawings, audio/video presentation ideas they would like to contribute to the community forum.

Meeting 3: Use of library or computer lab.

Educational Objective: Students are involved in using their writings, combined with publications and other sources, ways to communicate their ideas to an audience. Students also explore the fundamental nature of relationships between humans and how social dynamics play an integral role in these relationships.

Materials Needed: audiocassette player and guest speaker.

Week #7: Introduction to the elements of (formal) speech and interviewing.

Meeting 1: Write the phrase of the week on the board and briefly discuss, "As soon as healing takes place, go out and heal somebody else." -- Maya Angelou. Students and mentors will review the previous homework assignment in whole group format. Students are then to break into their focus groups and extract three main sub-categories in their topic that they feel need to be addressed at the community forum. Students who are interested in putting together an audio/video production will be able to dialogue about such ideas with an audio engineer and video facilitator. Discussions surrounding the community forum continue. The roles students play will be defined and the overall "who does what" will take place. Also, issues such as format, invited guests, and food will be on the agenda.

Meeting 2: Students will present their artistic expression (e.g., monologues) and/or role for the culminating event. These presentations will be audio/videotaped for review. Students will engage in constructive and critical feedback of peers.

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate competency in organizing and integrating information to formulate questions and solve problems related to investigation and research.

Week #8: Preparation for the culminating event and/or performances.

Development of presentation and interviews/monologues.

Educational Objectives: Students will demonstrate an understanding of how art and its many expressions work in creating and performing. There may be two groups (i.e., artists and student event directors).

Materials Needed: Video camera and audio equipment.

Week #9: Practice for the culminating event and/or performances.

Rehearse format, placements and roles for event.

Educational Objective: Students will demonstrate arts production and organizational skills.

Materials Needed: Video camera and audio equipment.

Week #10: Culminating event: The Community Forum on the Over-Incarceration of Youth.

Materials Needed: Video camera, audio equipment, podium, food and drinks.