

IMPACT



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Life Skill Lessons for Non-Traditional High School Students

The Situation

Many high school age students find themselves in an alternative setting because they have been unsuccessful in a traditional classroom. The learning styles of non-traditional high school students are different than traditional high school students. Therefore, for them to acquire the knowledge or skills necessary to be successful in our society, they must be taught using more hands-on methods. Classes are structured using blocks of time with the student taking the same subject for several days consecutively.

Our Response

To enhance the current curriculum, area teachers have requested help from the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System to teach practical life skills to better prepare the non-traditional student for adulthood in our society.

“Welcome to the Real World” is an active, hands-on experience that gives teens a chance to explore career opportunities and make lifestyle and budget choices similar to those faced by adults on a daily basis. In the simulation participants assume they are 25 years old, single, no children, and have completed their basic education requirements. Through the “Welcome to the Real World” program the students learn how to open checking and saving accounts, write checks, balance a checkbook, and how to set up a budget for the income of a job they

have randomly drawn out of the hat. They also learn the importance of education for success in the “real world.”

“How Rude!” focuses on social skills students will use throughout their lives in relationships and work situations. Table etiquette and basic manners are taught through creative teaching methods including the use of a jeopardy game to non-traditional students. The students learn how to set a table properly, which piece of silverware to use with each part of the meal, how to eat different types of food, what to do with the napkin, how to adjust to the social environment, and basic manners.

“Succeeding in the Working World” is a program designed to prepare students to enter the work force by emphasizing the development of a strong work ethic and job application skills. “Succeeding in the Working World” presents job preparation and interview skills by using a non-threatening role-play of a job interview. To demonstrate the importance of dependability, a special guest arrives after the class has started. In addition, the students learn the benefits of initiative, the importance of interpersonal skills, job application procedures, resume writing, and interview techniques.

Program Outcomes

These programs have been highly successful in teaching the non-traditional high school students skills they plan to implement in their lives. They

have been presented at six alternative high schools, as well as the 3-B Juvenile Detention Center, the Behavioral Health Center, Drug Rehabilitation Center, and Idaho Juvenile Corrections Center. Three hundred-forty non-traditional high school students have participated in these programs. For “Welcome to the Real World” 96% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that participating in the program will help them in the future. As for “How Rude,” 100% of the students participating agreed or strongly agreed that the activities were helpful.

Student Comments:

“Welcome to the Real World”

- “It gives you an opportunity to get a jump on what it’s like to have to deal with money. I am glad I took this class because without it I would’ve struggled.”
- “I think it has helped me with managing my money and will continue to help me in the future. Thank you.”
- “I understand how difficult and how much it costs to live on your own. I have more respect for my parents.”

“How Rude”

I learned:

- “When leaving to go to the restroom or something you put your utensils in an X on your plate and you put your napkin on your chair.”
- “All of the different silverware, what they are used for, and where they are set on the table.”
- “That you should tip the spoon away from you when eating soup.”

“Succeeding in the Working World”

I learned:

- “How to be on time [and] work with others.”
- “To dress appropriately and to come prepared.”

The Future

Life skill education using creative teaching techniques for non-traditional high school students must continue to be a high priority for the Extension System. The success rate of these students entering the adult world of our society may be dependent upon the skills they have learned through these three programs. This is why we have been requested to return to each of these non-traditional settings. In addition, we receive new requests frequently from teachers to whom the programs have been recommended.

For More Information

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