

THE KICK TEAM

JOHN W. MOORE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC

The Keeping It Classy Kids (KICK) team consists of two girls per classroom (about 80 girls in grades 5 and 6). The girls are nominated by their teachers as having leadership potential, but not yet meeting their full potential. KICK aims to develop girls' leadership skills, with an emphasis on good attendance, good behavior, friendship, and kindness toward others. The program ran for 15 weeks. It was one of the innovative proposals funded by a small grant from Francis Marion University—a partner on family and community engagement projects.

The school counselors who facilitated KICK met with eight girls at a time. In order not to disrupt instructional time, the meetings were held once a week during the girls' scheduled recess for about 15 minutes per meeting. Topics included friendship, goal setting, family commitment, etiquette/manners, teamwork, healthy choices, community involvement, college, careers, and hygiene. The topics were organized by four themes: Knowledge (I can discover and explore new things); Respect (I am loved and can love others); Forgiveness (I will not stay angry); and Humility (I don't have to be first). Some girls couldn't get enough. "I can't wait for our next KICK meeting!" said one. Parents reported, "My daughter looks forward to the meeting each week."

Some parents suggested topics, as one wrote "Will you talk with my daughter about girl drama in KICK next week?" Also lending support were community volunteers and guest speakers, including two news reporters, a city councilwoman, a police officer, an athlete and coach, a teacher, a college-age entrepreneur, and a pageant queen.

At the end of each meeting, the girls responded to a prompt about the topic in their reflection booklets. They shared their reflections at home with a parent each week. Parents

responded reactions to their daughters' reflections.

Early in the year, the girls made bracelets to represent their friendship and commitment to KICK. They also served as ambassadors of kindness for their classrooms. Each one sponsored a "Kindness Jar" in the classroom in which every kind gesture earned a "warm fuzzy" in the jar. When the jar was full, the class was recognized as a Certified Kind Classroom with a certificate to display. The Kindness Jars helped improve student behavior, as evidenced by the fact that approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of all classrooms with KICK representatives earned a certificate.

Toward the end of the program, the girls traveled to an elementary school in the area to teach girls in younger grades about what they learned from KICK and the importance of friendship. The KICK girls cherished the opportunity to be positive role models to the young students. The school also reported a 29% decrease in KICK girls' disciplinary referrals.

In the last week of the program, parents were invited to come for coffee and doughnuts to celebrate the completion of KICK. Team photos were given to each girl on a CD along with the book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People for Teen Girls*, by Donna Dale Carnegie.

The principal commented on the positive nature of the program, "... It was heart-warming to see these young ladies demonstrate and model character traits that were learned through the KICK program. They became leaders in our school who modeled kindness, character, and integrity, and who shared their special qualities with others."

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TYPE 2

BEHAVIOR