

## GPS Spring Seminar: Changemakers

**About our Project:** Our GPS class took on the Student Leadership Challenge this year. In fall we started our GPS journey considering the question: "Can anyone be a leader? Is Leadership everyone's business?" We thought about these questions in several different ways.

For example, our consideration included exploring what leadership means, how it's defined, and how it can be interpreted and applied. We also delved into understanding more about ourselves as leaders through self-inventories and small group discussions. Finally, we spent time learning about the five practices of exemplary leadership, as defined by Kouzes & Posner, and how those practices can be applied in our everyday lives.

Through this inquiry, the value and importance of 'everyday leadership' became clear. Everyday leadership describes the leaders we all value in our lives - the teachers that made a difference in our learning, the coach who believed in us, or the friend who we trusted to listen and care. Everyday leadership can be found everywhere and in everyone.

With this knowledge and keen understanding that 'everyday leaders' can be just as important and influential as leaders with titles and authority - we knew we wanted to spread this message to young people in our community through our service project in spring.

**Selection Process:** Our class thought through several different ways to spread this message of everyday leadership in the hopes of inspiring young leaders in the community. We used the Jamboard platform over several class sessions as a way to collaborate and share ideas in real time.

The image displays four Jamboard screenshots from a collaborative session:

- Top Left:** A board titled "#1: What makes a good partner?" and "#2: What are we looking for in a partner?". It lists various traits like "Driven", "Willing to work with others", "contributive", "patient", and "someone who is easy to talk to". It also includes a definition: "A good partner is someone who we can communicate easily with and is reliable. Also a partner that is able to help answer any questions we may have."
- Top Right:** A board titled "Ideas for who our partner might be?". It lists potential partners such as "The Boys and Girls Club", "Phuture Phoenix (JWB program)", "Chamber Teen Leadership", "AVID Program - middle school", "Head start program", "Big Brothers Big Sisters?", "GBAPS after school program", and "High school AVID Program and Link Crew". It also mentions "Jeff" as a potential partner.
- Bottom Left:** A board titled "WHY Statement". It contains the text: "The goal of our project is to teach students about leadership and help them learn more about college. This is important because this can help hopefully inspire a new generation of leaders." It also lists "influence others", "Set them up for success", "Build relationships", and "Encourage youth".
- Bottom Right:** A board titled "Link Crew". It describes the program as "A different than what they usually do" and lists activities like "Encourage students to join clubs/sports", "College video talking about our experiences with college for the Link Crew Leaders", "Leadership game (Jeopardy or Kahoot)", "Q&A session either in live virtual format or sticking with the pen pal idea", and "5 leadership stations that talk about the practices".

At the start of the semester, we talked a lot about how to best focus on our objective. We considered what makes a good partner and who in the community we might want to work with, created a collaborative 'why statement' to guide our work and after several discussions and

ultimately a class vote, we decided collectively to work with the Link Crew at De Pere High School.

We chose the Link Crew for a few reasons. First, the Link Crew is a group of junior and senior leaders at De Pere High School who give their time to help underclassmen acclimate to high school. Because these students are already school leaders, we thought they would be a great group to talk to about the Kouzes & Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership. The Link Crew was also a great choice for us because we could not only spread our message of everyday leadership with the upperclassmen members, but also the freshman they worked with. Both sets of students would benefit from learning more about leadership, how to see themselves as leaders, and gain information about college readiness.

**Small Group Work:** Soon after deciding on Link Crew as our partner, we dove straight into figuring out what we wanted to share with them, and how to break down the tasks into manageable pieces for everyone. We decided to split our class into 4 groups, each focusing on a different aspect of the project. Each group had a weekly meeting time outside of class and we used the 'PPP' method to organize our work: Plans, Progress, Problems. Groups talked about what they wanted to accomplish and formed task lists, each meeting the task list was reviewed to mark progress made on the project, add upcoming tasks to work on, as well as questions and concerns that may have come up. Looking back, this ended up being a super effective way to tackle this project and really kept the process smooth and efficient throughout.

**Project Plan:** Our final plan involved 4 different "mini-products" that were created by the 4 small groups.

- One group focused on creating a presentation geared towards the freshmen students at De Pere, talking about the practices of everyday leadership that we learned about, as well as leadership opportunities in high school. This was the first of 3 live virtual presentations that we did during De Pere's 'Flex Time', a flexible (get it?) time in the De Pere school day's schedule.
- The other 2 live virtual presentations that our class did were geared towards the junior and senior Link Crew leaders. One of our groups focused more on leadership in college and how to transfer their leadership abilities from high school to college.
- The other was focused more on the college readiness information that our class learned during the first semester, as well as general advice that we had about the college experience.
- Our final group was tasked with creating a sustainable product that De Pere Link Crew could use in future years, when our class members wouldn't be available to do these live presentations. This presentation was focused on the everyday leadership practices that we learned about and was designed so that it could be used by future Link Crew leaders to present to their freshmen groups. The group that created the slideshow recorded themselves sharing the information on the slides and created a Kahoot that went along with it.

**Final Thoughts:** Overall we are very proud of our learning journey in GPS this year - we took on the Student Leadership Challenge as first year students and feel in the end we were very successful. Not only do we feel more confident as student leaders at UWGB, but our service

project also fulfilled our goal of spreading the message that everyone can be a leader and leadership is indeed everyone's business.

Additionally, our class would like to give a huge thanks to De Pere High School and Mrs. Gajewski, the Link Crew advisor we worked with. As our community partner, Mrs. Gajewski played a major role in helping our class to set up the virtual meeting times, spread the word to the students, and encourage student attendance. Without her assistance and eagerness to help, we wouldn't have been able to pull this off so successfully.

Here are some of the things our class had to say about their GPS experience:

GPS has shown me what a good leader is. It has helped me become a better leader, by helping me become more confident in groups. To express my thoughts on a big project. It has also help me get better at asking questions, even the tough ones.

I know that I am capable of being a leader and at some point, throughout this course I believe I have showed it. I think I will feel more comfortable with taking the initiative to be a leader after taking this course because I know I can, and I know where my voice is as well.

This course has greatly increased my confidence and leadership skills. During the course of this class, I had multiple opportunities to go into a leadership role and I think those opportunities helped me grow significantly. I am happy I took this class and I hope that I can use the skills I learned in the future.

It's helped me add to my leadership abilities and made me much more confident in them as well. I think this project has helped prove to myself that I can be a leader and I think I'll be much more willing to step up for more leadership positions in the future.

Through my GPS experience I have learned to grow as a better leader. I'm not as nervous to speak my thoughts and ideas as well as being the first to break the ice when in a group setting. Moving forward I feel as though I will continue to step up more and really take pride in any position, I am in.

I think that over the past few years I've been finding my voice more and trying to step into more leadership positions and being a part of the GPS experience has definitely helped me even further. I've been able to see myself more as a leader than I would've a year ago, and I can't wait to take all I've learned and apply it to future endeavors!

Taking this course has honestly showed many skills that I have which I haven't seen before. It has increased my confidence levels, as well as taught me how to own up to things. I learned that persuasion, inspirations, and relationships can build a long journey of trust, and respect towards a cleared goal/or vision.

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