

Our Mission

The aim of our L.E.A.D. program is to aid in development of; leadership, self-esteem, self-control, conflict resolution skills, cultural pride and to have our young ladies be powerful members of our community. We believe wherever there is conflict there is a need for conversations and action. Our goal is also to involve parents in our program through our Parent Café' to strengthen the family unit. Our aim is to always remain neutral in our support operating in love, understanding and with the goals of positive resolutions for everyone.



Our Pledge

I Am L.E.A.D.

I wake with a purpose to **LIVE** the best I can. Blessed with breath of life and graced to live my life abundantly. I will not take my life for granted, it is a gift given to ME!!!

I walk with **ELEGANCE** and confidence for I AM made like no other. My beauty, inventiveness (ideas) and culture are followed by my style and grace. For i know without a doubt, i'm worthy.

I'm **AMBITIOUS** to take advantage of opportunities that will increase my life spiritually, emotionally and physically. I will be motivated and swift in making amends to my mistakes.

I will be **DAUNTLESS** pursuing dreams and living my greater destiny in life.

I am L.E.A.D. Lovable and capable!!!!

Current Staff

Ms. Mary Harrison — Allstate Insurance, Project Manager
Mrs. Janie Mccutchen — U-46 Retired Social Worker
Ms. Jocelyn Ashford-Yarbrough — U-46 Para Educator

For More Information, please contact:

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Or

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It takes a village and we're a small part trying to make a difference.
If you or you know of someone who would like to join our team,
please have them contact us.



I Am L.E.A.D. is an enrichment program aimed at developing leadership skills, cultural pride, self-esteem, self-control and conflict resolution skills for girl's grades 5th – 8th in School District U-46. Our programs support the achievement of physical, mental, social, emotional, spiritual, and economic success.

About Our Program

L.E.A.D., Living Elegantly, Ambitiously and Dauntlessly, was created to give every girl the opportunity to build a positive self-image, self-care, empowerment and development.

LEAD was founded five years ago by Mrs. Melissa Ross and Mrs. Janie McCutchen who were asked to create an enrichment program for African American and Bi-Racial girls. The goal was to help address issues, concerns and the lack of representation in the school district.

While our primary focus of participation is still African American/Bi-Racial girls, we welcome all girls who want to be a part of our program. The L.E.A.D program is designed for girls aged 9-14 and can be offered as a lunch time and after school program.



L.E.A.D. Goals:

1. Girls believe that their success in school and life depends on their ability to problem solve, think critically and make good choices.
2. Girls believe that meeting and connecting with girls of various beliefs, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds is beneficial.
3. Girls want to attend meetings with other girls, of a similar age, to engage in deep, and possibly uncomfortable conversations.

L.E.A.D Program has quickly grown to 8 middle and elementary schools since 2014 and its footprint is 'Let's Make a Difference.'

As we know, many girls struggle at school with issues, such as bullying and involvement in unhealthy friendships, just to fit in. This result is the development of negative self-talk and poor body image. We also want them to know, they are not alone.

With this awareness in mind, each L.E.A.D theme is intentionally designed to build self-confidence and support girls, so they take the time they need to learn about their authentic self. Once girls have a clear understanding of who they are, they are ready to take the necessary steps toward leading others to do the same. L.E.A.D is designed in a way that creates a comfortable, safe and non-judgmental environment for girls to dare to lead.

Our Successes

- Consistent growth from 1 school to 8 within 6 years
- Our first class of students graduated high school in 2019
- No drop outs and students have successfully moved on to the next level
- Strong sense of community and relationships
- Strong attendance and most students return to the program
- Increased parent support and participation
- We are committed to our students and their success



Our Curriculum

We begin each session by talking about highs, lows and hope for. This allows each girl to focus on what has happened over the last week or two to keep them reminded that life will provide more highs than lows. That each of us has more going for us than against us. Also, by stating a hope for each week keeps them hopeful for possibilities and not the impossible. They always have to write down a hope for each session.

Below are some of the topics we discuss:

- What is Living Elegantly, Ambitiously and Dauntlessly? We break it down so they have a clear understanding of what we are working towards
- Speaking without words – How we communicate with our bodies, tone and attitudes
- Communication – speaking with a purpose so that we are heard and understood, which includes being a good listener too
- Conflict resolution – restorative practice, avoidance and resolution
- Vision and goals – where are you going and how are you going to get there (Vision Board)
- Community – our responsibility to others (volunteer opportunities and activities)
- Self-Care – Physical, Social, Emotional



Elementary Schools – Our sessions are limited to 2 hours a month, so we stick more to the basics and cover those subjects that will be most beneficial. We invite speakers to come and provide information. Do some fun activities to support the lessons and of course we talk, laugh and have some fun.

Middle Schools – we meet weekly for 1.5 hours after school and provide more of an in-depth lesson and will have speakers to come to enhance some topics. We utilize videos and activities to reinforce the session. We talk and normally will have a snack. The activity bus is available to take students home.

