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Middle School- Grades 5-8
Theme: "Hearing That Different Drummer"

The following lesson plans will be used in an alternative to out of school suspension program: Remedy, Integrity, Structure, and Counseling also known as R.I.S.C.

The "Remedy through Integrity, Structure and Counseling" program (RISC) has been designed by administrators, guidance counselors, social workers and teachers as an alternative to Out of School Suspension or traditional In School Suspension. The RISC program is designed to extend character education by challenging students to think about their behavior and academic performance and how their personal choices affect their experiences in school and beyond. Through various exercises, written assignments and discussion, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and become productive, positive members of our community.

The RISC Program is traditionally assigned for a three day cycle where students are expected to improve their behavior and academic performance.

It is during this three day period where students will be introduced to Thoreau, to the idea of hearing that different drummer, to journal writing and to deep reflection. Students will use Thoreau's quotes, beliefs, and observations to reflect on their own behavior and ask themselves if they are indeed living deliberately through the decisions they make on a daily basis.

Students in the Program will also have the opportunity to take a walk outside, sit on the grass and write for a total of five minutes.

Stage 1: Identify Desired Results

Established Goals: "Hearing That Different Drummer". Understanding oneself through Thoreau's writings.

Enduring Understandings:

Students will understand that...

- In order to fit in they do not have to follow what others are doing
- Every decision is an important one, but we can learn from poor ones
- Being different does not mean being weird
- Following one's own path can lead to great success

Essential Questions

- Who determines right from wrong?
- What is our role in society?
- What is the importance of reflection especially when it comes to our decisions?
- In a culture where we are bombarded with ideas and images of "what we should be," how does one form an identity that remains true and authentic for her/himself?
- In a culture where we are bombarded with other people trying to define us, how do we make decisions for ourselves?

Students will be able to...

- Become aware of how self-identity influences life choices
- Recognize how choices and perspectives fluctuate as priorities, experiences, decisions and other items change during the middle school years.

Stage 2: Determine Evidence for Assessing Learning

Performance Tasks:

Day 1

- Writing down why they are in the RISC program. What poor choice have they made and why they think they have made it.
- Taking the quote "things do not change we change" and tying it into the decision that has brought them to the RISC program.

Other Evidence:

- Writing Prompts/Journal Writing
- Group Discussions
- Reflections

-Ask students to reflect on their poor decision and decide if they could have made another one that would have prevented the outcome they are now facing.

-Share with peers.

Day 2 (students will be given mirrors)

-Instruct students to look in the mirrors and list what they see in themselves that makes them unique--interests, friendships, social connections, school, work, beliefs, racial and sexual identity and so on, and also to note how they believe others see them. Students should list these qualities.

-Share with the class. Ask students to remark on what they view as the factors that influence how young people see themselves. And in essence how this affects the decisions they make.

-Ask students to think about quote number 6. What was Thoreau trying to say and how does this quote tie into the choices they make, why they make them, and essentially how they view themselves and how they think others view them.

-Explore the idea of living deliberately and if they feel that they do. Hear is where the philosophy of life comes in. How can following your own path, living deliberately, and not looking back help students understand where they are and where they are going.

Day 3:

Students will start their day with a goal setting activity. Looking back at their mirror exercise, their journals for the past two days, and the reason they were given RISC as a consequence---students will use their knowledge of Thoreau (from the

introduction) and make goals that will keep true to who they are, but that will also benefit the school. In other words---how---specifically---can these particular students set goals that will improve their behavior, help them make better decisions, and make them develop and explore their passions. Here the counselors and teachers assigned to the Program will work with each student and help them set these goals.

After the goal setting activity students will take a walk outside, sit with a partner, share one of their goals and why they have chosen the goal (2 minutes), and then simply observe their surroundings. Students will then take out their journals and while observing their surroundings in silence start working on their philosophy of life essay(1 page).

The essay will be finished when students return to the program.

Students will share.

Students will end the program by sharing what their take-aways were and how they will apply those take-aways once they are back in their regular classes.

Stage 3: Build Learning Plan

Learning Activities:

Introduction to Henry David Thoreau on Day One after students have reflected on why they are in the RISC program.

Students will each have a copy of "Henry David Thoreau for Kids: His Life and Ideas with 21 Activities."

Journal writing everyday -first five minutes of the program. Free write-- sort of like stream of consciousness--- so that they are warming up for the day's activities and lessons. After--- students will respond to a quote from Thoreau (see below) and share with the group.

Philosophy of life- Students will write their philosophy of life and decide what kind of life they should be living according to them and no one else.

****Because the program is only three days---there will be follow up visits to students so as to check on their progress, whether they are following through on their goals, and if they are following their own path.

Quotes to explore:

1. "Never look back unless you are planning to go that way."
2. "Live your beliefs and you can turn the world around."
3. "Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked, in which you can walk with love and reverence."
4. "If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."
5. "Things do not change we change."
6. "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."
7. "It is what a man thinks of himself that really determines his fate."

