



The Future Project

HOW CAN WE HELP all high school students—with or without attention, learning, and other challenges—to live out a dream? Educators are turning to The Future Project, for the answer. This nonprofit organization helps students discover their dream and embark upon a project that translates it into reality.

Dream Directors work alongside teachers to lead students through their personal dream journeys. They help fuel each student's passionate engagement in a personally meaningful project that betters the lives of others. The projects are wide ranging, from unique products to campaigns and special events that highlight a particular cause, to new clubs or organizations. Be sure to visit thefutureproject.org to watch videos and read stories of some of the many different examples.

Before being assigned to a school, all Dream Directors go through extensive training at the Dream Academy. Training focuses on several domains, including, though not limited to, the nine below:

PURPOSE: A far-reaching goal reflecting one's search for meaning that also contributes to making the world a better place. With help from Bill Damon of the Stanford Center on Adolescence, Dream Directors learn how to support students to identify their purpose and to create projects or organize events that engage it.

SPARKS: An activity or cause that fuels passion, joy, energy and purpose. Dream Directors find, highlight, nurture, and celebrate sparks that, for some students, have remained dormant and unexpressed.

GROWTH MINDSET: A belief that our abilities are malleable rather than fixed. Working with Stanford University professor Carol Dweck, a pioneer in the study of growth mindsets, Dream Directors help students learn to see their abilities as malleable and their mistakes and setbacks as learning experiences that can help them grow stronger.

HOPE: An optimistic view of the future that serves to strengthen one's ability to initiate and sustain progress



toward goals. Working with *Making Hope Happen* author and Gallup Senior Scientist Shane Lopez, Dream Directors foster a sense of hope and optimism about the future.

SELF-EFFICACY: Belief in one's ability to reach one's goals.

Dream Directors work to empower students and to show them that they can achieve the goals they set for themselves.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING: The five main SEL skills include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship skills. Students are more likely to succeed within social contexts and generate support from people and surrounding resources when they master these five SEL skills. Working with Tim Shriver and the Collaborative for Academic and Social Learning (CASEL), Dream Directors focus on helping students develop these skills.

21st CENTURY LEARNING SKILLS: Students will need a new set of learning, literacy, and life skills to succeed in the information age, according to the Partnership for 21st Century Learning. Dream Directors help students improve in many of these skills, including creativity, communication, collaboration, and collaborative thinking.

ZEST: Living life with a sense of excitement, anticipation, and energy. Zest represents one of the twenty-four human strengths described by Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman, two leading researchers in the field of positive psychology. Dream Directors model, highlight, and celebrate zest, among other human strengths, in their work with students.

SCHOOL CULTURE: The set of norms, values, rituals, ceremonies and stories that define a school. Dream Directors work to inspire both school spirit and student spirit.

During their training, Dream Directors learn to address other important constructs as well, including goal-setting, grit, self-determination theory, inspiration, intrinsic motivation, collaborative leadership, student engagement, and imagination.

According to Rebecca Block, vice president of research and evaluation, initial results are promising. Future Project schools report improved attendance, greater student engagement, and improved school environment. Additional results include:

- nine out of ten students who participate in Future Project activities show evidence of grit
- nine out of ten students report feeling more connected to their classmates after a year's work with a Dream Director
- 98 percent of students who lead projects or join a Dream Team (a group of eight to ten students chosen to work closely with each school's Dream Director) display a growth mindset

- 95 percent of Future Project alumni report that the experience continues to positively impact their lives.

In the ADHD literature, dreaming is often associated with being off task and wasting time. It's easy to forget that our dreams, when translated into meaningful action, can inspire us to new heights. That is why The Future Project can be of great benefit to all students, including those with ADHD.

Currently, The Future Project serves high school students only in the cities of Detroit, New Haven, Newark, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. With additional funding, the organization hopes to be able to reach out to many more schools in many other cities. To learn more about their inspiring work, visit thefutureproject.org or call 646-481-6145. 📞

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The advertisement features a central graphic of interlocking puzzle pieces in various colors (yellow, orange, red, green, blue). Below the puzzle pieces, there are silhouettes of five people in business attire, appearing to be in a meeting or discussion. The background is a light yellow color.