Strong Girls School

Levittown Public Library

Young Adult

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Aug 18, 2016

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Byline

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Strong Girls School is a young adult program that addresses gender bias, inequality and self-esteem-building for girls.

I got the idea for Strong Girls in 2012 after reading YA author Maureen Johnson's essay, "Why Do We Photoshop People?" with my writing group, who were, coincidentally, all girls. It sparked so much discussion about beauty, body image, self-esteem and the media that I knew there was a program there.

Advanced Planning

I began developing the program immediately but did not end up running it until 2014 because I was afraid to take a risk. I was worried about offering a gender-specific program, not being qualified to deal with potential issues, having the program fail or not being allowed to run it at all, among other things. I finally decided that it was worth the risk, and I'm glad I did. It's been so rewarding, personally and professionally.

To create materials for the weekly sessions, I used resources like The Dove Self-Esteem toolkit, "The Self-Esteem Workbook for Teens" by Lisa Schab, "The Body Image Workbook for Teens" by Julia V. Taylor and A Mighty Girl, a resource site for empowering books, TV shows and movies for girls. I also used several online video resources, such as Lizzie Valesquez's TED Talk "How Do You Define Yourself?", Emma Watson's speech on gender equality and Buzzfeed's video "Women's Ideal Body Types Throughout History."

Marketing

I created a flier promoting the program and also put program information in our newsletter. With these two simple efforts, I had no trouble getting a group of girls.

Budgeting

Most of the costs associated with the program have been for snacks; the girls are always hungry! We've also made some related crafts, which were relatively low-cost. **(View photos of these crafts under "Photo Slideshow" at right.)**

Day-of-event Activity

The only set-up required is some chairs for the participants. I also set out craft supplies when we are working on a craft.

I run the program by myself, but in the future, I plan to approach “graduates” of the program to help me run it. That way, the program will offer a peer-mentoring aspect and a community service opportunity. I want to empower the girls to help other girls, build life skills and become stronger.

The only real challenge is the same faced in any other discussion group — making sure no one dominates the conversation (including me!) and all points of view are respected.

Program Execution

The first time I offered the program, eight girls registered, and I ended up with a group of six. I’ve had as many as fourteen and as few as four. It works best as a small group program.

The first time, I ran it as a four-week series and found that we didn't have enough sessions to cover the material, and the participants didn’t want it to end. More recently I’ve been running it as a club, which can be a challenge because when new people join, I have to try to catch them up on the material.

This year, I’ll probably offer it as a six-week series, following the timeline below. (**View sample worksheets on some of the topics below under "Attachments" at right.**)

Weeks 1 and 2

- What is gender inequality?
- What is your self-image and where did it come from?
- What is beauty and who decides?

Weeks 3 and 4

- Negative messages and thought patterns
- Finding your authentic self
- Friendships
- Creating a support network
- Managing emotions

Weeks 5 and 6

- Relationship skills and dating violence
- Wrap-up: Amy Cuddy TED Talk, "Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are"
- Finish craft
- Program evaluations

If the girls want to continue on as a club afterwards for the rest of the year, we'll do that. I also use a written survey that they fill out anonymously at the end of the program, which helps me tweak the program.

Advice

I'd strongly recommend running this program. It offers an opportunity to empower girls, help effect social change and teach young people life skills. It is also an opportunity to build relationships, both with patrons in the community and with other organizations.

For more information about Strong Girls School, view my presentation from PLA 2016.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Document
friendship_tips.doc
Document
self_esteem_definitions.doc
Document
things_you_tell_yourself.doc
Document
to_be_a_woman_today.doc
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images









More Programs

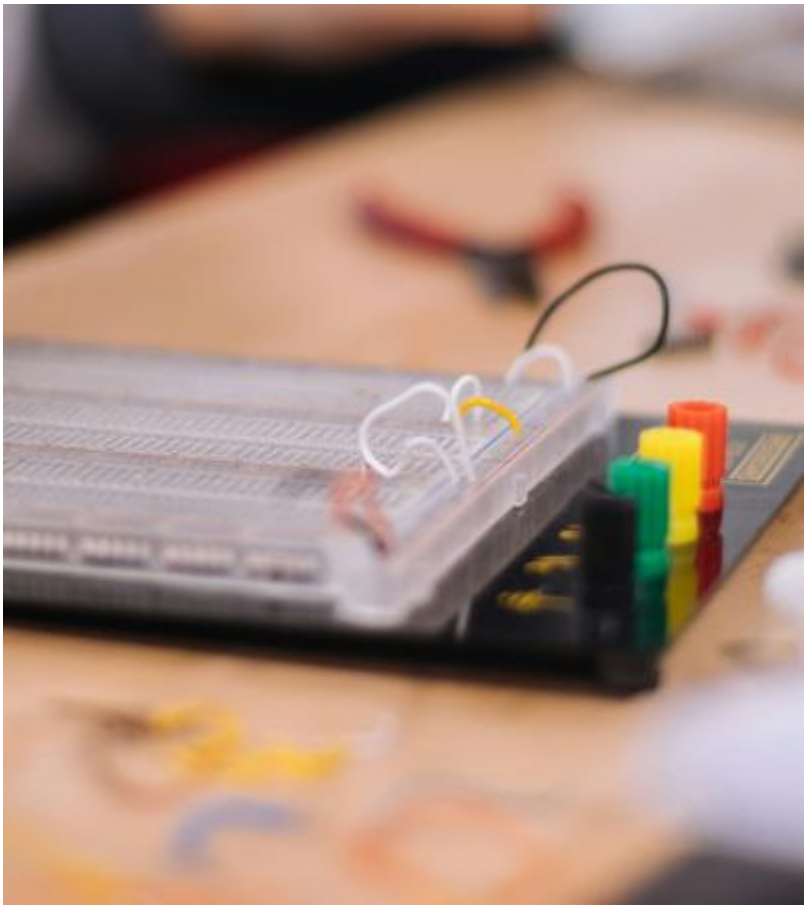
Jul 14, 2011
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ |
Image



Cooking Programs for Teens

Audiences:

Audience
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Aug 7, 2014
Children (9 and under)+ |
Image



Connecting Girls with STEM Resources

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Young Adult (17 - 20)