

Overview of Boomerang Project

The Boomerang Project, which houses the student orientation & transition programs WEB and Link Crew, is a company equally dedicated to both educators and students. Their goal is to provide resources and tools to help create schools that not only teach students, but reach them as well. They deliver superior, informative and worthwhile trainings and products for both teachers and students alike.

Overview of WEB

The WEB program provides a structure which guides 6th graders toward both academic and social success. WEB creates an environment where 6th graders learn that people at their new school care about them and their future by removing the culture of negativity toward 6th graders and replacing it with support and a sense of connection.

With WEB, students help students succeed by using members of the 8th grade class as WEB Leaders. These Leaders are extensively trained to be positive role models, motivators and teachers who guide the 6th graders to discover what it takes to be successful in middle school.

WEB is a yearlong orientation and transition program that has consistently made positive culture and climate changes throughout schools across the United States and Canada.

Grant and Program Planning

When applying for grant money, you will need to provide some basic information about the problem at your school and how WEB will address the problem. The specific problems or focus of schools will vary, but below is a general description of how WEB can help address existing problems with 6th grade success. You can make adjustments according to your specific needs or a grant's particular requirement.

What's the problem being addressed?

6th graders, experiencing a major point of transition, struggle through their first year of middle school. They are, as a whole, the largest at-risk student group in middle school. While some 6th graders have systems or people in their lives to provide support, many do not. WEB provides a structure that allows all 6th graders to have support throughout their first year of middle school.

Research

From NMSA publication:

Eighth and ninth grade is a defining period for teenagers, and researchers have noted adjustment problems during this transition period that include decreases in grade point average, attendance, feelings of connectedness, and co-curricular participation and increases in anxiety concerning school procedures and older students, social difficulties, and changes in relationships with parents (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999). Research indicates that students who participate in transition programs that actively involve students, parents, and staff members are less likely to drop out of middle school even when demographic and other information is held constant (Smith, 1997; Hertzog & Morgan, 1999).

From NASSP publication and Phi Delta Kappan:

Middle school dropout rates are significantly lower in school districts that have explicit middle school to middle school transition programs (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001; Smith, 1997). Effective programs address curriculum (e.g., academic rigor of courses); facilities (e.g., location of classrooms, restrooms); and safety and discipline (e.g., rules and discipline code); and provide accurate information (e.g., organization and logistics) (Mac Iver, 1990).

Transitioning to middle school brings up the same issues as any transition in life and, of course, then requires the same kinds of resources to help us get through it successfully. We can summarize the needs of the transition process in 3 areas. You might argue that although many middle schools understand at least 2 of the areas of need, they often succeed only partially in addressing these concerns for all students.

Need #1: Safety

Middle schools understand that they need to play a role in keeping kids safe. For many schools however, the focus is on keeping bad things from coming into the school. They invest in security and regulation to seal off the campus from the outside community. The greater safety issue for students is keeping them safe from the negative forces that are already inside the school. Issues like bullying, rumors, isolation and depression pose far greater safety risks on the average campus than external violence. This should not suggest that we stop keeping kids safe on school grounds, but rather than we pay equal attention to the other kinds of safety needs.

Need #2: Information

In all transitions, information is critical for moving us successfully through to a new stage. We need the what, where, how and when to aid our journey. Most schools understand that kids need to know what classes they have to take, what rules are important to administrators and teachers and what opportunities are available to them. The problem for most schools is getting the information to the students. Many schools believe that gathering large groups of new students and parents together and then talking at them is the most effective means of information dissemination. In reality, research shows this to be one of the least effective means. It might be highly efficient for the administration, but it may not ideally suit the information needs of the students and parents.

Need #3: Connection

In every transition we need to feel a sense of connection to the new situation. This is true whether we are connecting to a new job, a new child, or a new reality in our own lives. Study after study shows that for students, the more connected they are to their new school, the better they will do in all the measures that are important in tracking their success: grades, test scores, attendance and discipline are all positively affected when kids are connected.

How does WEB address the problem?

Using 8th graders as Leaders for 6th graders, WEB intentionally and structurally supports all 6th graders. On the first day, the 6th graders experience an interactive and powerful orientation where WEB Leaders begin to provide information, a sense of connection to their new school and someone to whom the 6th graders can turn in order to feel a sense of safety. The program then continues throughout the year with a series of follow ups where WEB Leaders and their 6th graders connect both inside the classroom and out. WEB Leaders, who have walked in the shoes of 6th graders just a couple of years ago, are able to provide the support that adults cannot due to the fact that teens turn to one another for advice and information about how to live in the middle school world.

As a comprehensive transition program WEB can

- provide support for 6th graders throughout their first year of middle school
- increase attendance
- reduce disciplinary referrals
- reduce bullying and harassment of 6th graders
- provide leadership development in 8th graders
- increase involvement in co-curricular activities
- improve school climate
- provide leadership development in staff members
- allow for positive interaction between staff and students
- decrease chemical dependency

WEB is the most studied and researched single transition program in the country. Data has been collected from individual school sites that use a before and after approach for some of their more important indicators of success including grades, discipline, connection to school and feelings of safety. With the correct implementation, WEB has also worked for several schools to increase test scores and lower drop-out rates. WEB also interfaces with the Search Institute's 40 Assets, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Model Programs Guide, as well as the Collaborative of Academic, Social and Emotional Learning goals and objectives.

How much does WEB cost?

Cost for attending the three day Basic Training is the greatest expense of the program. Once a school has made its initial investment in training their Coordinators, the ongoing costs are minimal. The cost for the three day Basic Training is \$2295 per person, all inclusive, meaning the cost of the training includes room, food, and materials at the three day Basic Training as well as including the cost of a fourth day of training that takes place the following fall, called the Follow Up Conference.

Once a school has made its initial investment in training their Coordinators, the ongoing costs are minimal. The must have costs are: t-shirts for the WEB Leaders and Coordinators, copy costs for Leader training handbooks, minimal supplies for the activities and nametags for the Leaders and 6th graders. Costs for the year long program that runs throughout the school year will vary, depending on the number and type of activities. We estimate that a middle school with a 6th grade class of 400 could run

a very solid program on \$1500 per year and that number could be dramatically reduced with community donations. Below is a sample budget:

Coordinator Training for Three People*

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| First person trained | \$2295.00 |
| Second person trained | \$2295.00 |
| Third person trained | \$2295.00 |

Training Cost Total **\$6885.00****

*Three is the optimum number of people to train, you could most definitely train two, but we have found that three people trained on a campus is the best working number in terms of sharing tasks such as communication with staff, logistical details, training the students, presenting material etc.

This is a one-time cost. No one would have to be trained more than once.

**This price includes all food and lodging for the training, all necessary materials including the Basic Training Handbook, a DVD of the assembly, an audio CD of all the activities, access to an on line database for use in making groups and general program organization, a one day Follow Up training in the fall in which you learn the details of the year long Academic and Social Follow Up program, a Follow Up Handbook with ten detailed lesson plans, and a DVD of those lessons actually being taught.

Necessary Supplies

Supplies for Spring Play Day, **\$ 100.00**

Leader Training Days and Orientation Day

Supplies include straws, paper, name tags, golf pencils, etc; many of these supplies can be reused each year so the recurring cost for these supplies will be less after the first year.

T-Shirts for WEB Leaders **\$ 700.00**

Money for these is often donated by local businesses, sponsors or other community members, either in whole or part, to cover the cost; this would be a yearly cost.

Academic Follow Up Supplies **\$ 100.00**

Costs here is nominal because most supplies for the Academic Follow Ups are on hand...paper, copies, pencils etc.

Social Follow Ups **\$ 500.00**

This is a general estimate and would depend entirely on what kind and how many Social Follow Ups you want to do. The cost here assumes several "high profile" Social Follow Ups like WEB Leader/6th grader movie night, an Ice Cream Social, After Schula Hula and a Field Day. However, many of the Social Follow Ups can be very simple with low or no cost, for example, WEB Leaders invite and eat lunch with their groups, WEB Leaders invite their groups to the Back to School Dance, Leaders meet their groups at break or lunch for a special treat, a check in and words of encouragement and praise.

Necessary Supplies Yearly Total

\$ 1400.00***

***These estimates are high and depend on the resources you have available as well as the number and type of activities you want to do.

Optional Supplies

These are costs you might incur, but that are certainly not necessary

Food for WEB Leader Training Days

\$ 500.00

(Pizza and bottled water for two training days; many schools ask their leaders to bring their own lunches to mitigate this cost)

Barbeque for 6th graders and WEB Leaders after Orientation Assembly

\$ 850.00

(Some schools choose to have a barbeque where they serve hamburgers, hotdogs, chips, soda/water to 6th graders and Leaders, again this is optional)

Optional Coordinator Conferences

These are conferences we offer that support the program, they are not mandatory and can be attended on a yearly or every other year basis. These conferences give you the opportunity to learn about changes/updates in the program, network with other WEB schools, get new ideas and activities, discuss your ideas and challenges with the trainers and other WEB Coordinators.

Follow Up Conference

(\$150.00)

As stated above, the cost of the first Follow Up Conference is included in the WEB Basic Training price.

Refresher Conference

\$ 825.00

This is a two day conference, cost includes lodging, food, training, training materials and supplies.

Evaluation

There are two levels of program evaluation that you will pay attention to: one, the training of the program; and two, the program's effectiveness in addressing the problem(s) you have defined.

Training

What did you learn at the three day Basic Training? What new skills or knowledge did you gain that will not only provide you success in implementation and maintenance of the program, but also in your

overall professional development? What was your overall experience at the WEB as well as how did specifically change or grow as a result of the training experience?

Program Effectiveness - Intent

What and how will you be measuring the effectiveness of WEB in addressing the problem(s) that you have defined? Is there something specific that the donor is looking at you to affect? Or, have you determined what you are trying to affect in implementing and running WEB? Focus creates energy, so whatever you have decided to address will be addressed and the more focused you are on the objective, the more effective you will be. For example, if you are addressing the issue of low academic performance, what pieces of the program will intentionally and structurally work toward improving that performance.

Program Effectiveness – Measurement

If the prospective donor provides a specific form of measurement, by all means use it and be aware of it before beginning implementation so that you don't miss opportunities. If the prospective donor does not have a specific plan, you will need to decide how and with what tools you will measure. Some possibilities are:

- Focus groups (both 6th graders and WEB Leaders)
- Listening groups (both 6th graders and WEB Leaders)
- Pre and post surveys (6th graders, WEB Leaders, parents, staff members)
- Data gathering (existing data that establishes a baseline and shows change upon implementation)
- Interviews (6th graders, WEB Leaders, parents, staff members)

No Specific Application, Proposal Basics

As you research potential funders, you will sometimes encounter that tricky situation - a donor who specifies: "No application form is required, submit proposal." A complete proposal has basic and consistent elements. When a brief proposal or letter is specified, you want to try to hit most of these points in a more abbreviated way.

Cover Letter - No more than one page

- Organization (who you are and your background briefly), purpose of funding, and the amount of your request should appear in the first paragraph.
- Include a contact name, phone number and address.

Proposal Summary - Limit to one page.

- State the organization making the request and link organizational background to the proposal purpose.
 - State your project purpose.
 - Briefly state how your project will be implemented.
 - State the results you expect from your project.
 - Include your total budget amount, other funds that are committed and the amount of your request.
- 90% of funding decisions by private donors and foundations will be made by the time the funder finishes reading this page. It must be concise, compelling, and clear!

Introduction to the Organization

- History
- General purpose
- Goals and objectives as they relate to this project, and in overview, as they provide a context for the work you want to undertake.
- Accomplishments, especially as they relate to this project or to your capacity to provide this project.
- Service areas and population served.

Statement of Problem or Need

- Use a funnel approach.
- Start with the generalized problem as it occurs in your community.
- Move to the conditions which make this a problem.
- Outline current resources that address this problem and identify gaps in those resources.
- Identify how your proposal will fill these gaps.

Project Goals and Objectives

- What specific goals are you trying to achieve?
- What measurable milestones will you reach in meeting those goals?
- How will you and the funder know that you are making progress towards your goals?

Methods and Schedule

- What actions will you take to achieve your goals?
- What steps must you take to achieve success?
- Who will do what? (Include here job descriptions and background statements of staff or the qualifications you will seek in staff for the project. This is true even if "staff" will actually be volunteers.)
- When will these actions take place?

Evaluation Criteria and Process

- How will you know whether you are achieving your goals?
- What will you measure to evaluate your progress?
- What records and information will you keep to allow you to measure your progress?

Budget

- More detail is better than less.
- Don't round out if possible. Use bids and estimates whenever you can get them - even if they are informal quotes.
- Don't pad your budget. Competent reviewers will know the cost of goods and services, and will understand prevailing wages. If they know you are trying to deceive them on budget, what else will they suspect you of trying to deceive them about?
- Do include all sources of support - including volunteer time, donated space and borrowed equipment.
- Don't shortchange the contribution your community is making to your project.