

INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE
2007-2008

PARENT HANDBOOK

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History

The mission of the Intercultural Leadership Initiative (ILI) is to help reduce racial tensions at Lakeland Union High School (LUHS) by promoting cultural understanding through inter-cultural experiences at the grade school level. This is a pro-active program which encourages students from the four feeder elementary schools, to explore issues of race and cultural diversity.

In the spring of 1999, a small pilot group of 7th grade students from Lac du Flambeau Grade School and North Lakeland Elementary School (NLES) were brought together for a number of face-to-face sessions, facilitated by adult facilitators from our community. During the 1999-2000 school year, the original pilot group plus a new 4th grade pilot group participated in the program. Based on the success of these pilot projects, the program expanded for the 2000-2001 school year to include all four feeder elementary schools. The project also continued to work at Lakeland Union High School (LUHS) with the original 10 students from the 1999 pilot. ILI's numbers have consistently grown over the years:

1999-2000: 32 students in 2 feeder elementary schools

2000-2001: 128 students in 4 feeder elementary schools and LUHS

2001-2002: 265 students in 4 feeder elementary schools and LUHS

2002-2003: 406 students in 4 feeder elementary schools and LUHS

2003-2004: 520 students in 4 feeder elementary schools and LUHS

2004-2005: 650 students in 4 feeder elementary schools and LUHS

2005-2006: 730 students in 4 feeder elementary schools and LUHS

2006-2007: 830 students in 4 feeder elementary schools and LUHS

The goal is to have the ILI program available for students from 4th -8th grade-so they have five years of connecting and working with each other before they enter high school. Our strategy has been to add a 4th grade group of students each year, while continuing to work with the students from previous years. This school year we will have students from 4th-8th grades from the four grade schools in the ILI elementary program.

There are three sessions per year for students in the elementary program. Students are split into teams and attend sessions where they learn about each others' cultures, traditions and the issues that have been barriers, and have caused conflict between them, over the years. They learn these concepts through experiential active learning techniques, games, initiatives and service learning projects that encourage a sense of community and healthy risk taking to solve problems. ILI sessions are led by professional facilitators from across the community, and are held mainly at LUHS or the LUHS school forest facilities, where students can explore these issues in a fun and safe atmosphere. ILI staff has developed curriculum specific to each grade level that specifically states each sessions' goals and objectives, connecting these to state, other publicly mandated standards of education as well as other "standards of the heart" ILI staff feel are essential for strong, healthy children.

The LUHS ILI program continues to work with 9th through 12th grade students to develop the pilot ILI program for the large numbers of ILI elementary students that began attending LUHS starting in the 2005-2006 school year. These students are mentors to the elementary students at each of their sessions as well as facilitators-in-training. In addition they hold regular bi-monthly meetings of their own at LUHS where they continue to work on issues of racism and the barriers between our cultures through more advanced experiential activities and service learning projects. In addition, ILI staff is helping these students discover their own gifts as facilitators and mentors for the younger students. ILI staff also offers 9th-12th grade students an After School Leadership Program every Wednesday after school for 2 hours for students who are seeking a more involved experience-students learn the local history of our communities and are also trained in advanced facilitation skills as group leaders/mentors for the elementary ILI program. The final component of the LUHS ILI effort is an After School Learning Center that meets Tuesday-Thursday after school in the student services room. Students who participate in this program have access to LUHS and ILI staff tutors who help them with their academic work.

At the Annual Cultural Fair during the school year all ILI students, their families and teachers are invited to attend a celebration of their efforts for the whole year. It is a showcase for the public to view some of the students' team-building projects, participate in ILI staff/student facilitated activities and games, and a great opportunity for everyone in the community to enjoy a showcase of all cultures in our area schools.

The effectiveness of the program is being studied by assessing student evaluations that are given after each session, teacher evaluation forms from each session, and annual attitudinal surveys that are filled out by students, parents and teachers. We are also involved in a longer term evaluation project that includes getting an understanding of a "baseline" of student understanding of cultural issues that we will compare in later years as the elementary ILI students begin to flow into the high school in greater numbers. True effectiveness is harder to measure, how children feel about themselves and each other, but we attempt to discover this through student journals and other methods.

The ILI project is housed at the Great Lakes Inter Tribal Council, Inc. (GLITC), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin. GLITC provides management resources and board leadership to the project, but no funding. All projects at GLITC are "stand alone", meaning they must provide their own sources of funding. From these sources of funding they pay rent for office space, and indirect costs for management and accounting services, which provide professional support for ILI and the more than 50 in-house programs.

Student Benefits

For students, ILI provides the chance to break the systemic cycle of fear, suspicion, mistrust and intolerance that has vexed their older siblings, parents and grandparents. The ILI sessions give students, for the first time, the opportunity to understand these concepts through a sequenced series of sessions in a culturally mixed setting.

- ILI brings adult facilitators together to share cultural knowledge, conflict resolution training skills and life experience with students from area schools.
- LUHS ILI students come to your child's sessions to act as role models, mentors and facilitators. This enables younger students to have positive experiences with LUHS students and the opportunity to see positive interactions between students of diverse backgrounds.
- ILI provides a forum for special presentations by guest facilitators who can highlight the diversity of cultural traditions and histories.
- Students from different backgrounds are encouraged to speak and interact in a safe and rewarding atmosphere.

ILI staff has written, and revised, specific curriculum that ties the goals and objectives of the program to various standards developed by Wisconsin state educators and legislators as well as a set of standards developed through our efforts in ILI. The purpose of this exercise was to illustrate how students are fulfilling many of these mandates while attending ILI sessions and to give focus and framework to the scope and sequence of activities we have developed for each grade level. ILI staff will be working with each school to try and identify curricular needs of teachers and tie these into some portion of the ILI student sessions.

What To Expect

If your child chooses to participate in this program, he/she will be assigned to a team of around 24-30 students. These teams will be split again in two, so most students will work in groups of 12-15 during their sessions. Each smaller group will work with a team of an ILI facilitator and LUHS ILI student mentors/facilitators.

- Each elementary school team will meet face-to-face for three full-day sessions during the school year. Each high school group will meet once every other week for an activity period as well as have

the opportunity to mentor/facilitate one of the elementary student teams throughout the year. The 2007-2008 session schedule is included in this handbook.

- ILI facilitators plan and lead all of the activities for each session, with help from LUHS ILI and Journey's students.
- The locations for these meetings will be mainly at Camp, Jorn (located in Manitowish Waters), the LUHS School Forest or LUHS .
- Your child's teacher, or teachers designated by your school, will accompany him/her to the sessions.
- The schools will provide transportation to and from each session.
- The ILI program provides a snack and lunch at each session.
- You and your child will be invited to attend the 7th Annual Cultural Fair at LUHS this coming school year.
- We ask your permission to survey your child's experiences in ILI to assess our strengths and weaknesses as well as what your child learns at their sessions. (Permission form included in this packet).
- There are no fees that you or your child need worry about for this program-** all funds are raised by ILI staff through grants and donations from your community neighbors. **If you are interested in donating to ILI please call Bob Kovar at 588-3324 ext. 167 and he will send you our "Friends of ILI" newsletter which includes information on giving.**

Parental Participation

You are encouraged to participate as well! If you are interested you may attend any of the sessions and either participate or observe.

- Fill in your email or phone number if you would like to be contacted about session dates and locations.
- Please check out the Parent Link on the new ILI website at www.ilileadership.org.
- Feel free to call anytime with your questions, suggestions or concerns. This is a community-wide project that will only improve with your input.
- Do you have any special activities or traditions from your culture that you would like to share at a session? Let us know on the attached parent form.
- Talk with your child about their ILI experiences-they will be full of questions and excitement after a fun day with their new friends.

ILI Staff Team

- Bob Kovar, Project Director bkovar@glitc.org 588-1067
- Ernie St. Germaine, Curriculum/Facilitator uncle_ernie29@hotmail.com 358-8496
- Craig Kerr, Student Development Specialist KERR@luhs.k12.wi.us 358-8455
- Matt White, Facilitator eatdirtandstuff@hotmail.com
- Alice McFarlane, Facilitator amcfarlane@glitc.org 588-1031

