



Blackboard



Let them lead: Tech-savvy student leaders reignite school spirit and unity

Going to prom, preparing for the SATs, and dreaming about life after the last bell are all familiar activities associated with high school. However, if you talk to anyone from **Vestavia Hills High School** you'll hear about another activity that's ingrained in their culture—learning how to lead.

“This program is about how you treat and respect others. People can build walls and lock doors around their schools for protection and people have done that, we’ve taken many measures like that, but you have to address it from within those walls as well. That’s what this organization does and it happens through these students.”



Mrs. Kym Prewitt
Teacher and Youth Leadership Mentor at Vestavia Hills High School



Through a program called Youth Leadership, students develop leadership skills, connect with others through bonding, learn to be change agents, and be the difference in a positive way for others.

Senior student Earl Bradberry summed up the program by saying, “There’s leadership potential in everyone. There are 600 students currently in Youth Leadership and with that many people walking around trying to be the difference, it really helps our school atmosphere.”

A major part of the program is instilling a positive and inclusive school spirit in the student body. So, when the Youth Leadership students noticed a lack of school spirit, they decided to take action.

“It really started out with a lack of school spirit,” said Sloen Zieverink, Senior at Vestavia Hills High School. “Then Mrs. Prewitt [the Youth Leadership teacher] asked us to do something about it. She encouraged us to figure out how we could turn it into something positive.”

The Youth Leadership students held a brainstorming session to come up with ideas. During the process the students looked around the room and noticed they were all on their cell phones. Then the lightbulb went off. Sloen recapped the moment by saying, “We realized we didn’t have anything that could communicate to us in an easy way that we all understand.”

Senior student Lucy Ankenbrandt added, “We really needed something that was going to send notifications and tell us about new events coming up. We needed something that was going to send out information and get more kids involved. Having a student mobile app was the best idea.”

STUDENT APP FACTS



**50% of students
downloaded the app**



**60+ information
sources and feeds**



**2,400 views of grades
in one month**

The students needed buy-in for a mobile app from their school and local leaders. After collecting input from other students, the team worked tirelessly to prepare an airtight pitch and practice their presentation. They confidently stood in front of their mentors, superintendent, chamber of commerce, PTO, and city council to explain how a student mobile app could positively impact their high school experience. Their leadership paid off and gained them overwhelming support from their community. “It’s really all about helping their peers. Parents can’t always make the difference. Teachers can’t always make the difference. But peers can, and that’s what drives this program and I’m so proud of these students,” said Mrs. Prewitt.

The final step in their plan was to announce the new student mobile app to their peers—a task that was cleverly executed during a school pep rally. The Youth Leadership students handed out pins covered in the app logo and a QR code for the app store. As students got their pins they immediately pulled out their phones, scanned the code, and downloaded the new student mobile app. Then standing alongside giant promotional posters, the students shared an inspiring presentation to the rest of the school. Within several weeks, the app was downloaded and actively being used by more than half the student body.



Today the students at Vestavia Hills High School use the app to stay connected. They frequently update it with sports news, student accomplishments, morning announcement videos, Relay for Life updates, and of course, Youth Leadership opportunities.

“I’ve had people tell me they check our app like they check Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook,” said Sloen.

Launching a student mobile app is just one of the initiatives the Youth Leadership students accomplished on their quest for uniting their school. Their journey to become confident leaders and caring peers is the true story of success.

“Our tagline in Youth Leadership is to “be the difference” and that’s what all of us try to do every single day. I feel like as long as we put our best foot forward and try to reach out to everyone we can then we’re doing our best.”



Sloen Zieverink
Senior at Vestavia Hills High School

“As a student, you have to want your school to be better. It takes a lot of motivation, so we would challenge other students to do a similar project. It has made my high school experience so much better.”



Lucy Ankenbrandt
Senior at Vestavia Hills High School

Get the details about the mobile app solution Vestavia Hills High School used in their story by visiting:

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