



Idaho Lives Project Newsletter Spring 2018



SPRING 2018

ISSUE 3

Idaho Lives Project Adds 14 Schools to the Sources Family

The Idaho Lives Project (ILP) ushered in the 2017-2018 school year by conducting 13 booster trainings and 14 new school trainings throughout our state between the months of September and February. Of the 14 new schools, ten were trained under the grant from the Division of Public Health while three were sponsored by the regional chapters of the Suicide Prevention Action Network of Idaho (SPAN) and the fourth was self-funded. We are proud to say that ILP has now trained a grand total of 63 Idaho schools in Sources of Strength: the preeminent evidence-based, peer-led prevention and wellness program.

Working with Idaho students and educators to spread the Sources of Strength message of hope, health and strength fulfills a critical need in our community. The ILP team has enjoyed welcoming cohort seven into our Idaho family of Sources schools and we look forward to announcing the eighth cohort this spring.

Cohort 7 Schools:

Cascade Jr/Sr High School, Cascade
Centennial High School, Boise
Heritage Academy, Jerome
Horseshoe Bend Middle/Sr High School, Horseshoe Bend
Lakeside Jr/Sr High School, Plummer
Marsing High School, Marsing
Marsing Middle School, Marsing
New Horizon Center, Pocatello
North Junior High School, Boise
Owyhee Combined School, Duck Valley Reservation
Pathways Middle School, Meridian
Rigby High School, Rigby
Riverview Middle School, Caldwell
Teton High School, Driggs

COHORT 8 APPLICATION

ILP IS CURRENTLY ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR OUR SOURCES OF STRENGTH GRANT FOR THE 2018 – 2019 SCHOOL YEAR. THE APPLICATION FOR COHORT 8 IS AVAILABLE ON THE [ILP WEBSITE](#) AND HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTED EMAIL TO ALL SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND PRINCIPALS. THE APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 2ND, 2018. WE HOPE YOU WILL ENCOURAGE YOUR NEIGHBORING SCHOOLS TO APPLY!

Look for the article at the end of this newsletter about our SPOTLIGHT SCHOOL:
Rimrock Jr/Sr High School!

Opportunity to Foster Belongingness in Schools: No One Eats Alone

[No One Eats Alone](#) is a student-led lunchtime initiative which promotes feelings of value, inclusion and acceptance by motivating students to sit with friends and classmates they may not typically interact with. This activity is a simple and powerful way to engage students as the drivers to assure every student feels a sense of belongingness at school. The State Department of Education (SDE) is committed to supporting the health and wellness of students and the professionals who serve them in schools throughout the state. As part of this effort, the SDE regularly convenes school personnel to strategize how to best serve children and identify what's working. During a meeting with school districts on the topic of fostering healthy school climates, the No One Eats Alone initiative was offered as a strategy that works to encourage students to support each other.



The Idaho Lives Project (ILP) supports the SDE's belief that participation in the No One Eats Alone initiative offers a great opportunity for Peer Leaders to reach out to their school community. Additionally, making the move to have lunch on a regular basis (once a month to once a week) with someone unfamiliar is an established component of Sources of Strength. ILP has developed a list of [Belonging and Capability Activities](#) to enhance your existing set of activities.

If No One Eats Alone is an initiative of interest to your Sources team, ILP would like to share the following **idea for a Sources of Strength campaign**:

In developing a campaign related to sharing lunch with a new person, Peer Leaders might take some group meeting time to role-play different strategies on how to approach an unfamiliar peer about having lunch together. Peer Leaders could also formulate potential questions they would be comfortable asking and answering during time with a new lunch-mate (we suggest creating questions focused on hobbies, classes, free time, etc.). Once Peer Leaders feel comfortable and have begun their No One Eats Alone campaign, they might take pictures of lunch-mate pairs and post the pictures on a lunch-friend wall.

The wall could also include question/answer samples and biographical information. As most of you know, all information for the lunch-friend wall must be screened and/or edited by an Adult Advisor. If your school chooses to develop a No One Eats Alone Campaign, please let us know how things go!



Scheduling Your Sources of Strength Meetings

Holding regular meetings with Sources Peer Leaders can be a challenge for schools. To support our schools in meeting this challenge we would like to share a few ideas we have gleaned from experiences in the field regarding the planning of Sources of Strength team meetings.

In many instances, Adult Advisors meet once a month to plan ahead for their Peer Leader team activities. This Adult Advisor meeting time can provide a pre-established structure for future meetings that include Peer Leaders, often resulting in a decrease in meeting length.



During your Adult Advisor meeting you may also find it beneficial to discuss dividing your Sources team into working groups with an Adult Advisor heading-up each group. Each group can then be assigned specific tasks relating to an activity. This set-up frees Adult Advisors to meet with their assigned Peer Leader group during their lunch period or prep-time (or whenever works best) to carry out their part of the campaign.

Additionally, if your school chooses to meet regularly as a full group, some schools opt to use only one or two Adult Advisors at each meeting. This allows the Advisors to take breaks and helps to prevent burnout.

The following are some examples of meeting scenarios employed by other Sources of Strength schools:

- ❖ Hour-long meeting once or twice monthly on the school's late-start Wednesdays
- ❖ One class period per month, rotated through the day
- ❖ ½ of 90-minute class period, twice a month
- ❖ 30 minutes once a month at lunch and one meeting during school-time per month
- ❖ Two 20-minute sessions per week during advisory period
- ❖ 90-minute class every other day (as an elective class)

Please let us know if you have an innovative way to meet and accomplish your activities. We love to hear from you and we can promote your solution to other Idaho Sources of Strength schools so that they can be successful as well!



To Share: Activity and Outreach Ideas Galore!



We, at the Idaho Lives Project, are continually impressed with the creative activities that your Peer Leaders achieve; not only do they embrace suggestions listed in the Adult Advisor Field Guides (available [online](#))– often with an awesomely unique spin – they also create new activities for their schools and communities.

Peer Leader teams have:

- ❖ Asked students to write thank-you cards or notes sharing acts of kindness that they saw others undertaking and posted them on walls and bulletin boards; one school read one or two of these cards over the announcements daily;
- ❖ Invited students and staff to write thank yous or acts of kindness on paper chain links to use on their Christmas tree; another school chose to hang their chain from the hall ceiling;
- ❖ Made floats for parades at homecoming, Veterans Day, and Christmas;
- ❖ Provided cocoa and treats before testing;
- ❖ Hosted activity night centered around skiing, lock-ins, a movie, etc.;
- ❖ Presented a Sources of Strength activity or concept during a football/basketball halftime;
- ❖ Made videos of classmates and/or staff sharing a strength;
- ❖ Implemented schoolwide color runs to celebrate the year, where each color station represented one of the strengths on the wheel.



Some Peer Leader teams have reached out to families and their communities with these activities:

- ❖ Family skate, bowling, and open gym nights;
- ❖ Presentations at Back to School night, community board meetings (such as Lions/Rotary Clubs), teacher meetings, and PTO/PTA;
- ❖ Presentations at feeder schools;
- ❖ Host an Outreach Night for parents and students coming in from Sources feeder schools;
- ❖ Sponsorship of booths at community activities and fairs;
- ❖ Community clean-up and/or clean-up of designated areas of road.

Many Sources teams also provide regular support activities for their schools including:

- ❖ Volunteering as homework buddies on designated days and/or after school;
- ❖ Putting together welcome committees for students new to the school;
- ❖ Pairing upper classmen with incoming freshman as mentors for the school year;
- ❖ Acting as guides for parents and students on registration days;
- ❖ Creating a Sources of Strength section in their school newspaper and/or inviting their local community newspaper to cover Sources activities.

Nice work to our ILP Sources schools! We are so proud of your dedication and ingenuity. Keep up the good work!



Listing the activities undertaken by our Idaho Peer Leaders inspired us to mention a new idea schools might be interested in trying out: **Sources of Strength bookmarks**. For this activity students create a bookmark highlighting one strength or the entire strength wheel. Peer Leaders can create bookmarks to hand out or lead a school-wide activity where students create their own. These bookmarks can serve as small but effective reminders of personal strength. If your school is interested in giving this activity a try, the Idaho Lives Project has an [online template](#) available. Peer Leaders are also more than welcome to design their own.

Research: Changing Our Brain's Focus

Changing our thinking from negative to positive means overcoming our "caveman" heritage. The brain's amygdala evolved to protect our early ancestors when they needed to scan the world for what might hurt or kill them; the amygdala was threat-radar. Dr. Rick Hanson, neuroscientist and author of *Hardwiring Happiness* states, "...The amygdala, which is like an alarm system in our brains, uses about two-thirds of its neurons to look for bad news." Thus, our seemingly negative view of the world is actually protective and part of our natural neurobiology.



Dr. Rick Hanson shares, "...our brains process positive stimuli very differently from negative stimuli...the brain is like 'Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positive ones.' Once it sounds the alarm, negative events and experiences get quickly stored in memory — in contrast to positive events and experiences, which usually need to be held in awareness for a dozen or more seconds to transfer from short-term memory buffers to long-term storage."

The lesson from Dr. Hanson and other neuroscientists: we need to 'savor' positive feelings and moments and take 15-30 seconds of 'savoring' so that the brain has time to store these experiences. We can then recall these "good" memories when we have tough or painful times and soothe and remind ourselves that there will be pleasant moments again. The more we practice savoring what is pleasant, the more connections we make and the more we build resiliency, positive attitude and hope. The opposite is also true in that the more time we spend ruminating over unpleasant situations, the stronger those connections become.

In a related issue, when we receive a performance evaluation by a boss, coach, or teacher and are given four very positive statements about our performance and one negative, our brains latch on to that one negative observation and seemingly skip over the positive. Research shows that if we receive five or six positive statements in addition to the one negative, the brain lingers less on the negative. We need to train our brains to focus on what was good and helpful in these evaluations. We need to savor what was positive while putting the negative piece into perspective. This will allow us to improve.

In our quest to do more and multitask, taking these extra seconds to "stop and smell the roses" is important so that our brains can develop helpful thought patterns that may become automatic in our responses and our thinking. These new thought patterns can help us to respond in a productive manner to challenging events or experiences and allow us to continue to move forward with positive personal growth.

For more information about any of the topics in this newsletter contact Judy Gabert: jgabert@idaholives.org, Andrea Eschen: aeschen@idaholives.org or Jennifer Dickey: jdickey@idaholives.org

SPOTLIGHT SCHOOL

Rimrock Junior/Senior High School

Bruneau, Idaho

Jamie Metcalf, a rock-star advisor for the Sources of Strength program at Rimrock Jr/Sr High School, will be presenting at the annual State Department of Education (SDE) Prevention and Support Conference, April 12th and 13th, in Sun Valley. Her session, April 12th at 1:15pm, is titled "Rimrock High School—A Spotlight Sources of Strength School." Jamie's session will focus on ideas for improving school climate and practical applications as well as strategies to use in school settings, whether a school has a Sources program or not. Of course, attendees will be interacting with and learning from each other.

Registration for the conference is available at <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/events/ipsc/>. In addition, there are scholarships available for the conference at Idaho Federation of Families site through the Restorative Justice Practices in Schools Pre-Conference Workshop at <http://idahofederation.org/wordpress/idaho-state-prevention-support-conference/>

We hope to see many of you at the conference!

Two students from Rimrock Jr/Sr High recently shared their feelings about their experiences with the Sources program. Elizabeth Varela wrote, "Sources of Strength has impacted me in a such a big and wonderful way; it's made [me] stronger physically and mentally as an individual..... and realize [that] there are people out there that care for you. It has brought us closer as a school and made us stronger as students. I am glad I get to be a part of Sources of Strength."

Andres Juarez stated, "Sources of Strength is building and creating a better environment and structure for many people and groups [at Rimrock High] and has changed a few things, all in a positive way. [For instance] our student body has become more open with one another. Sources has helped to break the silence and has created a better environment.....and a safe zone for students to express themselves and to not feel so alone [Sources] creates an environment where everyone is equal and accepted."

