

# Empower students to effect positive change - Ongoing ITP

## Invitation To Participate™



Metro Nashville Public Schools and Alignment Nashville created the **Developing Community Leaders (DCL)** program to “inoculate the schools” with positive student leaders in order to create a positive school climate. DCL is a 2-year high school program, offered during the regular school day, for 10th-12th grade students at ten (10) MNPS comprehensive high schools. The program targets “non-traditional” leaders, equipping and empowering them to effect positive change in their school and community.

The **DCL Committee** is committed to developing student leaders prepared to initiate and lead activities within their schools and communities that will result in a more caring and supportive learning environment. This year the **DCL Committee** developed and published a resource guide for the DCL teachers that includes information about community resources and case studies of the **DCL** experience.

### **The primary components of the DCL program are as follows:**

#### **1. Academic training in leadership**

**Developing Community Leaders** classes use college-level leadership development curricula developed by **Phi Theta Kappa** ([www.ptk.org](http://www.ptk.org)) to explore the concept of leadership and to develop and improve the students’ leadership skills. The courses integrate readings from the humanities, experiential exercises, films, and contemporary readings on leadership. The classes are offered as dual enrollment courses in most high schools, allowing students to earn college credit upon successful completion of the course(s).

#### **2. Diversity**

Student selection is a key component of the **DCL** program. It is essential that the student selection process targets “non-traditional” student leaders, including students who are leading in negative ways. School counselors and administrators must understand and support this process through staffing, scheduling, and other issues that have the potential to impact successful student participation in the program.

#### **3. Opportunities to serve that focus on culture change within the school**

Since a primary outcome of the **DCL** program is student-led improvement in school climate and to some extent community climate, students must be provided with opportunities to serve in meaningful ways.

**There are different types of service opportunities:**

- a. Charity work** - This category of service includes opportunities that are presented to students as a one-time or very short-term involvement and are not student-initiated or student-driven. For example, participating in a 5k run or a fundraising event for a charitable organization would fall in this category.
- b. Volunteerism** - These opportunities may be student-initiated but are not student-driven and are not necessarily

tied to specific learning objectives. Volunteering involves students offering to give of their free time and skills to help their school or community. A canned food drive or a clothing drive would be an example of students volunteering.

c. **Service learning** - Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities and is tied closely to specific learning objectives. Young people are active partners in a service-learning project, with strong voices in identifying community needs and planning service activities. They also play active roles in the evaluation of the project and its impact on the community. (Adapted in part from information provided by the **National Youth Leadership Council**([www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org))).

**While all of these types of service are meaningful, the DCL Committee is most interested in supporting service-learning opportunities for DCL students.**

#### 4. Professional development and support for DCL teachers

The **Developing Community Leaders** teachers must embrace the concept of student leadership and the ability of students to create positive change in their school and communities. The **DCL** teacher empowers students, building lasting relationships with them. **DCL** teachers must be certified by **Phi Theta Kappa** to deliver the curriculum, and they also must participate in service learning training as determined by the **DCL Committee** in partnership with **MNPS**.

**DCL** teachers from each school will meet together with members of the **DCL Committee** at least bimonthly in order to share ideas and resources, creating a professional learning community of leadership development experts. The **DCL Committee** will produce an annual resource guide that will provide valuable information about community resources that they have determined to be aligned with the **DCL** program outcomes.

#### 5. Community engagement

The primary focus of the **DCL Committee** is to identify and match community resources with needs of **DCL** teachers and students. The committee will review responses to this **ITP** monthly and will determine which organizations are aligned with **DCL** outcomes; these organizations will be included in an annual resource guide, which will be provided to all **DCL** teachers. In addition, committee members will refer teachers to community organizations as appropriate. These community resources will address one or more opportunities to serve listed in item number 3 above. Additionally, resources “identified on the fly” by **DCL** teachers, such as college student mentors, professors to teach a class, etc. will be addressed by the committee when possible.

## Developing Community Leaders (DCL) Project Description

The **DCL Committee** is seeking proposals from community organizations who wish to provide services and resources in support of these outcomes:

- **Short term:** Young people explore and develop themselves as leaders and understand how to make a positive impact on their school and/or community environments.
- **Intermediate:** Students will work with faculty, administration, parents, and other community members and organizations to engage the entire school community in defining and putting into action the elements needed for a caring and supportive school environment for all.
- **Long term:** High schools will have achieved a sustained, caring and supportive environment through the contributions and leadership of students.

The **DCL Committee** has identified the following broad categories of services that will be needed:

- **Service-learning support**
- **Staff development on youth engagement/service-learning**
- **Leadership development**

- Diversity appreciation activities

However, organizations are encouraged to propose services outside of these listed categories, as long as they support the outcomes listed above.

### **Expected Dates of Implementation**

The DCL program is currently underway and participation is welcome throughout the school year.

**© 2007-14 A Collaborative Initiative of Alignment Nashville™  
Invitation To Participate™ and ITP™ All rights reserved.**