



Step Up Junior High Challenge: Brief

The Step Up Junior High Challenge will take place over the course of the 2011-12 school year, providing an opportunity for middle school and junior high students to complete a project that will have a positive impact on their school and community.

- Who?
 - 1 advisor and a team of no more than 10 students from each participating middle/junior high school
 - The Advisor: A staff member who will recruit student participants, build relationships with youth, and supervise project development and implementation.
 - The Team: Students who have the potential to influence the behavior of other students on campus, with a special focus on higher-risk youth who may currently use their influence in a negative way.
- What?
 - The Summit: Teams from all participating schools will attend a Summit to get motivated, gain important skills, identify their topic, and develop their Challenge Project.
 - The Project: School teams will create and implement a project that addresses an important issue in their school or community.
 - The Challenge: Completed projects will be entered in a Challenge to win prizes for student participants and schools.
- When and Where?
 - September: Challenge Advisor Training at Tulare County Office of Education
 - October: Challenge Summit
 - October-March: Project implementation at school sites
 - April: Challenge Awards
- Why?
 - The Step Up Challenge provides a unique opportunity for middle and junior high schools to build leadership skills in students, who will create a project with a much broader impact on school culture and climate.
 - The Step Up Challenge is sponsored by the Tulare County Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force, whose goal is to decrease gang activity and support the growth of positive options for youth in the cities and rural areas of Tulare County.



Step Up Junior High Challenge: Overview

The Step Up Junior High Challenge is a unique opportunity for Tulare County middle and junior high schools to engage a diverse group of students in a project-based learning challenge throughout the course of a school year. The Challenge will guide youth and their advisors through the process of project development and implementation, as well as provide them with the skills and training they need for a successful project. Teams from all participating schools will attend a Challenge Summit. Teams completing a project will compete in a challenge to win prizes for themselves and their school. The Team Advisor, described below, will be critical to the successful completion of a school's Step Up Challenge project.

The Challenge Advisor

The advisor's primary role is to build relationships with youth in the program. Advisors typically work in the school and are known for their ability to connect with youth. Advisors may constitute the primary recruitment tool for the project and serve an important role in making sure that the project is completed successfully. In addition to relationship building, the advisor's responsibilities include:

- Identifying appropriate youth and recruiting them for the program.
- Identifying the needs and goals of the participants, the school, and the community, to help the team develop a project plan.
- Coaching and providing role models for each youth.
- Facilitating the development and completion of the project plan
- Acting as a liaison between the youth and the school/community to facilitate youth access to resources needed for the project
- Assisting youth in conducting presentations on their project to community or countywide audiences

The ideal advisor would have excellent relationship-building skills with youth, as well as in depth knowledge of the community and the youth who live there. The advisor could expect to spend time roughly equivalent to a campus club advisor. Advisors will receive a \$200 stipend upon project completion.

The Challenge Team

The ideal student team will be a diverse group of no more than ten 7th and 8th grade students from many social groups on campus. It is expected that the majority of the Challenge Team will be comprised of students who have the potential to influence others on campus, but who have not necessarily engaged in school activities in the past. This will likely include youth who currently have a negative influence on other students. However, students who traditionally participate in leadership and extracurricular activities may make up part of the group. Advisors will be trained



on the selection of their school's Challenge Team during the September Challenge Advisor Training. The students on the Challenge Team will work with their advisor to:

- Identify a goal or issue that is important to their school and/or community
- Develop a project plan and complete a project
- Conduct presentations on their project to school, community, or countywide audiences
- Final report to document the project (may be written, Power Point, video, etc.)

The Challenge Project

Each Team will design their Challenge Project to address a theme that is locally important to their school or community. Teams may choose from the following categories:

1. Gangs
2. Drug abuse
3. Relationships (peer pressure, bullying, relationship abuse, etc.)
4. Self (self-esteem, suicide prevention, etc.)
5. Other theme identified by the Challenge Team that greatly affects their school. (Teams choosing this category will need the approval of the Challenge Committee before moving forward with their project.)

The implementation phase of the Challenge Project will be October - March of 2012. Some project examples are listed below:

- Develop a campaign to stop bullying on campus, including training for students and staff on what to do if they witness bullying, an anti-bullying pledge for students and staff to sign, and anti-bullying signs around campus.
- Design a mentoring program that pairs older and younger students at their school.
- Create a video highlighting the theme of relationship abuse, including steps everyone can take to prevent and intervene in an abusive relationship.

Participating schools will submit anonymous pre- and post-data about the students participating in the Challenge Team, such as grades, attendance, behavior, and test scores. Advisors will administer a short, online pre and post survey to participating students to track changes in areas such as self-esteem, civic engagement, skill development, knowledge of the project area, etc.



Challenge Point System

Challenge Projects will be rated based on the five key elements of Service Learning. 20 points will be possible in each section, for a total of 100 points.

Component	Maximum Points
Component 1 – Meets a real school or community need	20 points
Component 2 – Coordinates with a community agency, another school, a business, or the community at large	20 points
Component 3 – Helps foster civic responsibility	20 points
Component 4 – Final report (written, Power Point, video, etc.)	20 points
Component 5 – Impact on the school or community	20 points
TOTAL POSSIBLE	100 points

The highest scoring teams may receive a site visit to verify the final results. Winners will receive a mini-grant that each school will be able to use for materials, supplies, or activities that are directly related to students. Students from winning teams will also receive a variety of prizes. Prizes will be given in the following categories:

Grand Prize	<i>For the project that demonstrates excellence in all five Components</i>	\$5,000
Impact	<i>For the project that has the most significant impact on the school or community</i>	\$2,500
Innovation	<i>For the most creative or original project</i>	\$2,500
Meeting the Need	<i>For the project that best identifies and meets a school or community need</i>	\$2,500
Sustainability	<i>For the project that will either be sustained long-term in the original school, or can be easily replicated in other schools and communities</i>	\$2,500

The Step Up Junior High Challenge Committee reserves the right to distribute prizes according to merit and based on desired outcomes. A minimum of \$15,000 will be distributed to the highest scoring schools.

Resources for Challenge Project Development

Bring Learning to Life (http://servicelearning.org/lsc/bring_learning/index.php)

Core Strategy: Project-based learning (<http://www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning>)

Key Elements of Service-Learning (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/sl/keyelements.asp>)

K-12 Service Learning Standards for Quality Practice (<http://www.nylc.org/standards>)

PBL-Online: The Online Resource for Project-Based Learning (<http://pbl-online.org/>)



Service-Learning: Making the Connection (http://dese.mo.gov/divcareered/Service-Learning/Connecting_SL_with_Other_Initiatives.pdf)