

DESERT HILLS HIGH SCHOOL



To whom it may concern:

When you visit Desert Hills High School it won't take long before you'll notice three words that appear on the walls of our hallways, commons area, library, and in classrooms. These words are our behavior commitments that all faculty, teachers, and students are committed to live. These words are an important part of the culture at our school; it's what we are and what we do. These words are: Respect, Responsibility, and Integrity. These critical life skills are essential to student success; they can impact grades, graduation, and attitude. There are many ways to teach respect, responsibility and integrity in school. The School of Life program at Desert Hills High is the best way we teach these life skills as well as others, it enables students to "school their toughest opponent" – themselves.

The School of Life program started 3 years ago as a positive alternative for students to complete restitution hours owed. Restitution hours are the time students must redo from missing class, trancies, excessive tardies, and essentially missing school too much. Students pay nothing to participate in School of Life and are awarded double the hours it takes to complete the course which is typically 8 hours. The School of Life program quickly became the preferred way for students to complete restitution.

Students love this program and it's changing their lives for the better. Not only does their attitude, gratitude, respect, and other behaviors improve we also tracked their grade point averages before and after completing the School of Life class and the results were astonishing. The first year of the program we saw an average increase of 16% in overall GPA some students as high as 22%. Students showed significant improvement in all classes and in education we get excited when large groups of students, especially at-risk students, have 2-3% gains overall so you can see why these results surpassed all expectations. Such positive results and improvement in GPA and all from an 8 hour course that rarely even mentions grades or homework. Even more exciting is the fact that some students who were not on track to graduate before School of Life were able to learn positive life skills, make changes for the better, school their toughest opponent, and earn their diploma. Saving kids from dropping out? Improve student's GPA? All in an 8 hour class that can happen in any school. How can this be? Well I'll tell you what I've seen in the three years I've watched School of Life positively impact students.

The School of Life class speaks to the individual and empowers them to make changes for the better. School of Life creates an environment where students learn and life flourishes. I've seen it happen over and over again. Imagine an after school program in schools, at no cost to students or parents, that improves behavior, grades, and in many cases saves students from dropping out and earn their diploma.

"DHHS is a community of lifelong learners held to high standards of academic scholarship, integrity, self-discipline, and citizenship."

PRINCIPAL - RUSTY TAYLOR
REGISTRAR - LORI WHITEHEAD



ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL - JUSTIN KEATE
ASST. PRINCIPAL/ATH. DIR. - KIM MONKRES

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Earning a diploma opens them up to all sorts of opportunities in life, whereas the alternative, statistics show, can hardly keep them at poverty levels.

Of course we couldn't keep this success to ourselves and every school I speak with about School of Life and the positive impact it has on students, then sees the data, asks how they can get it at their school. I tell them that all they need is a room, students in the room, and a commitment to collect data of students who take the course; the School of Life instructors take care of the rest. The School of Life is an important part of the culture at our school has such a positive impact on student behavior, and therefore grades and finally graduation completion. Gaining critical funding for this program is essential to keep it going in our schools.

I have never seen a better program in schools that speaks to the heart of each individual student and has such a lasting impact on their lives. The School of Life does not simply pass on valuable information but truly lights a fire inside them to be better people through living and becoming the life skills taught in the School of Life.

Justin Keate, Vice Principal, Desert Hills High

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Keate".

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