

LIVING ABOVE THE LINE



AMY ROH/
Tribune

Janessa Bohlen steps to the next square in a maze.



AMY ROH/Tribune

Isaac Mertens is directed by his teammates as he steps through the maze during an activity for youth leadership training Wednesday at the Holiday Inn. The students had to work together to find the correct path but could not speak during the exercise.

EXERCISES HELP BUILD LEADERSHIP SKILLS



AMY ROH/Tribune

Jacob Trausch, Kenzie Kral and Brianna Gentert point to the next square their teammate needs to move to in the maze.

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Walking into a conference room in the Holiday Inn, it's unsettling to see a group of 80 silent middle school students.

All that is heard is music. There's no talking, no laughing — no vocalization at all.

There are groups of three linked arm-in-arm walking over a grid, carefully stepping in certain squares, obviously avoiding others. The students were working to complete a maze, using the "buzz-beep" directions of the maze masters.

The students were working on completing one of many activities in a day filled with intellectual stimulation provided by the Quantum Learning Network, based in Oceanside, Calif.

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Leadership: Exercises help youths build skills

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"It's not just a boring lecture," Silver Lake eighth-grader Erin Plambeck said. "It's hands-on."

From 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Wednesday, students were engrossed in leadership building activities. The maze activity was used to show that success can come out of failure, QLN team leader Amy Smith said.

Educational Service Unit No. 9 made the event possible by using federal grant money. Lisa Smith, ESU 9 educator, was in charge of putting the event together. Lisa Smith, of no relation to Amy Smith, said ESU 9

has conducted QLN teacher training each summer for the last two years, but this is the first year the group has come to work with students.

The middle school students weren't the only ones who benefited from the training. Fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders attended a session on Tuesday, while high school students are attending a session today. Lisa said the students attending the sessions were selected by their respective schools based on their leadership abilities.

"They've all been identified as leaders by their teachers and

administrators," she said.

Amy said each activity develops certain skills, including problem solving, taking ownership of one's actions and developing a positive attitude, among others.

One thing facilitators talked to the students about was "living above the line."

"Living above the line is a place where you take ownership of your life," Amy said. "Living below the line means justifying, laying blame, denying and quitting."

The team facilitators also play a game with students,

where they are given \$86,400 every day. But, they have to use the money because after 24 hours, it goes away. At the end of the game, the secret is revealed, Amy said.

"Every day you're given \$86,400, but it's in the form of seconds. So how are you going to use those 86,400 seconds?" Amy said.

Lisa said she sees the value of this type of leadership development because throughout the course of the day, the students are being challenged and are rising to the occasion.

"They've had periodical opportunities to test out what

they've learned," she said. "And they're being held accountable for their actions."

Since ESU 9 covers a large area, students from throughout Tribland were attending the sessions, which made it all the more enjoyable for some students.

"I like it because I like doing activities with people I don't know," Red Cloud eighth-grader Brittany Lewis said.

Though students were learning life skills, they were not disappointed or bored, they said.

"We're having a lot of fun and learning a lot," Red Cloud eighth-grader Taylor Nieman said.