

Clever Minds adds classes for high schoolers
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TRUCKEE TODAY
Posted: 1/23/2007

Clever Minds, a tutoring and education business located in downtown Truckee, is adding a new series of classes geared toward juniors and seniors in high school.

The new "leveraged learning" classes will be taught by local teacher Sarah Dorland and will focus on improving teens' communication skills as they enter the hectic world of college and work.

Dorland, a tutor at Clever Minds as well as a social studies teacher at Forest Charter School in Truckee, said the program is a series of eight two-hour classes. The classes will be from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning March 6.

"A lot of students come out of high school without basic social skills, like how to shake hands, make eye contact, speak clearly and directly and make effective phone calls to get information," Dorland said. "These classes get them ready to work more effectively as an adult."

The classes generally entail learning better communication skills, making informed decisions, setting goals and learning from conflict.

The first class teaches students how to communicate with people better by understanding how others like to receive information.

"It's learning how to communicate with people by determining how they like to communicate," Dorland said. "It's learning the best way to get through to different people. For instance, if someone has a dominant personality, you want to be very direct to them, and speak in a strong, clear tone of voice. With other people, you need to be enthusiastic and friendly, or calm and steady. Instead of thinking about your own preferences for communicating, you think about others' preferences."

In later classes, students will learn how to set goals and strategies for reaching those goals. They'll learn that goals must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-specific

Then they'll learn about "informed decision making," Dorland said.

"Say, for instance, you're 17 and you want a motorcycle but your parents say forget it. You would learn how to address the issues. Motorcycles are cheaper to fuel, cheaper to buy, easier to store. You would also come up with a plan to counterbalance the negative information. You plan your conversation and how you are going to carry out the plan. You've made your decision and this is how you plan to make it happen.

Another part of the program teaches students to learn from conflict -- or, "communicating even when you're not getting along with everybody," Dorland said.

The skills combine to prepare teen-agers for what's ahead, Dorland said.

"The junior years in high school are when you really start to think about applying for college," Dorland said. "You start making adult decisions, learning how to interact with peers and adults in a constructive way. You're going to start driving, working and taking on more responsibilities. But many juniors and seniors aren't ready for that. This class helps them."

Article provided courtesy of the Reno Gazette Journal, <http://www.rgj.com>