
Title: Step Up and Lead: A Collaborative Leadership Experience Produced by Georgia 4-H and the Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals

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Summary: For the tenth year, Georgia 4-H, the Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals collaborated to provide a leadership conference targeting older elementary school students and middle school students. A total of 742 emerging student leaders, teachers, and administrators participated in the 2019 Step Up and Lead Conferences. These events provide hands-on activities that teach teamwork, public speaking, and leadership styles.

Situation: Georgia 4-H and the school systems of Georgia have been partners in education for over 114 years. Georgia 4-H seeks to enhance, compliment, and meet Georgia Standards of Excellence with content that we deliver through in-school programming, out-of-school programming, Environmental Education field studies, and extracurricular learning experiences. Georgia 4-H also prides itself on the development of young people in the areas of leadership, communication, and civic engagement.

Several years ago, members of the Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals (GAESP), an affiliate of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders, reported a need for additional leadership development for emerging youth leaders within their schools. Because government and industry leaders throughout our state recognize Georgia 4-H for preparing youth to be leaders, Hal Beaver, the GAESP Executive Director, approached Georgia 4-H with the idea of partnering together to address this need. Mr. Beaver was familiar with the leadership development training and opportunities provided to Georgia 4-H members and wanted 4-H to extend its leadership development expertise to a broader audience of older elementary youth. Step Up and Lead is the product of this collaboration.

Piloted in 2009, Step Up and Lead (SUAL) began with a series of meetings between Georgia 4-H and the GAESP in which common goals and a programmatic framework were negotiated. The first official SUAL conference was held in spring of 2010. In 2011, the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals (GAMSP) chose to offer the opportunity to middle school students, as well. Since that time, the program has been continuously evaluated and refined.

Response: In March of 2019, Georgia 4-H, in collaboration with GAESP and GAMSP, coordinated leadership conferences at Rock Eagle 4-H Center, UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center, Georgia Highlands College, and Georgia 4-H at Camp Jekyll. A fall conference series was also coordinated for September and October 2019. These conferences were held at Wahsega 4-H Center and again at Georgia 4-H at Camp Jekyll. Step Up and Lead Conferences feature motivational speakers and three workshops. The exciting and interactive workshops were designed and are facilitated by 4-H youth development professionals to engage youth and empower them in future leadership initiatives. These three sessions focus on strengthening communication and presentation skills, understanding leadership and personality styles, and team building and cooperation.

The conference planning team consists of Mr. Hal Beaver, Executive Director of GAESP and GAMSP; Mr. Jason Estep, Extension 4-H Specialist; Mr. Jeffrey Burke, State 4-H Events Coordinator; Mrs. Mandy Marable, Extension 4-H Specialist; Mrs. Melanie Biersmith, Associate State 4-H Leader; Mr. Steve Walker, IT Associate Director; Mr. Al Parker, Northeast District PDC; Dr. Lori Bledsoe, Northwest District PDC; Mrs. Melinda Miller, Southwest District PDC; and Mrs. Lee Anna Deal, Southeast District PDC.

Results/Impacts: A total of 742 students, teachers, and administrators participated in the 2019 Step Up and Lead Conference Series. Since its inception in 2010, the total program has served over 7,311 participants.

March 2019

Rock Eagle 4-H Center - 103 youth and 12 adults

UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center - 240 youth and 28 adults

Georgia Highlands College - 50 youth and 5 adults

Georgia 4-H at Camp Jekyll - 80 youth and 7 adults

September/October 2019

Wahsega 4-H Center - 61 youth and 8 adults

Georgia 4-H at Camp Jekyll - 133 youth and 15 adults

The goal of the conferences was to cultivate skills that will prepare participants for leadership roles within the context of their schools and communities. 4-H County Extension faculty and staff gathered qualitative data from participants. “Leadership,” “communication,” and “teamwork” were the most common themes.

In addition, the Step Up and Lead Conferences have provided excellent publicity for Georgia 4-H and built upon essential partnerships with the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders.



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