Leadership & Science Achievement in Teton Afterschool

Introduction & Background
Teton Afterschool endeavors to enhance student lives through group experiences, enrichment programming, and homework help. Working at TAS, I noticed students use negative language and teasing to interact with each other, and often engage in attention seeking, disruptive behavior during lessons.

Middle school students are highly social; decisions about engagement and behavior are constantly subjected to peer judgment. This project used leadership initiatives to increase group cohesion, decrease disciplinary actions needed, improve achievement in science lessons, and improve student leadership skills.

Focus Question:
What are the effects of introducing leadership initiatives into the science enrichment at Teton Afterschool?

Methods
I taught two units, covering similar place-based science topics: avalanche science and how to be a naturalist. During the second unit, each lesson began with a planned teambuilding activity and group debrief.

Data collection methods included a Leadership Confidence Likert Survey taken by students before and after the project, science content quizzes taken after each unit, a personal daily teaching journal, disciplinary action record, and student interviews.

Results
- Science content quiz grades significantly improved.
- Students rated themselves significantly more confident as leaders on pre and post Likert survey.
- Level 1 disruptive behaviors decreased.
- Total number of disciplinary incidents decreased.
- Students involved in disciplinary incidents decreased.

“I think we got better as we went on, and were quicker getting back on track.”
– Student Interview Response

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