

THE SPARK of Le Flambeau

Program Description and Instructions (Spring 2012)

Introduction

THE SPARK of Le Flambeau program is a unique language exchange program now in its fourth year; born from the collaborative efforts of Le Flambeau Foundation, student leaders, IT advisors and volunteer educators. The program consists of students and teachers from Haiti and the United States working together to improve students' proficiency in a first or second language. Each week, a new topic of discussion is posted and students must respond in their designated language. A student moderator team heads the program and works alongside Graders, consisting of an English Grader for Haiti students and an English Grader for U.S. students, who evaluate students' weekly responses and provide constructive feedback. Friendships between Haitian and American participants are encouraged. Students within the program learn to improve their proficiency in their designated language, and they also build team spirit and enduring friendships.

Objective: This program aims to improve fluency in reading and writing in English. For Haitian students this will increase their opportunity to succeed in the college entry TOEFL (score of 75 or higher) and/or SAT exams - it will also enhance employment options for them in Haiti as post-earthquake rebuilding moves forward. For the U.S. students this will increase their fluency in reading and particularly writing skills with the opportunity to connect with, and provide a community service to, students in and from Haiti. THE SPARK of Le Flambeau program also aims to extend this spirit of cooperation and service through Haiti-related activities.

Program Detail

• **Weekly Process**

- Every Sunday night, the moderator of the week:
 - Recaps the previous week's discussion
 - Announces the Spark of the Week awards (pulled from Grader comments)
 - Posts the Topic and Word of the Week
- Once the Topic and Word of the Week are posted, participants can post their responses on the blog until 12 noon on Saturday.
- On Saturday, the Graders evaluate the students' responses, provide constructive criticism, and announce the Spark of the Week awards.

• **Moderators**

- The Moderator team consists of a minimum of three students who serve as moderators for the program.
- Students in the Moderator team alternate weeks to serve as Moderators of the Week (description above).

• **Making Your Comments**

- Students are expected to respond to each weekly discussion topic.
- Each comment must:
 - Incorporate the Word of the Week
 - Have at least 75 words
 - Not exceed 200 words
- Recommendations for the format of responses:
 - State position
 - If desired, recognize the opposing viewpoint and refute it.
 - Support position with examples
 - Summarize and restate position at the end
 - Remember to be considerate of other people's points of views on a matter.
 - Use constructive comments rather than harshly criticizing others' opinions.

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- **Grader Review**
 - Each session will have at least two Graders: one English Grader for the Haitian students and one Grader for the U.S. students.
 - Role
 - On Saturday every week, the Graders post their comments on the students' responses to the week's topic.
 - The Graders are responsible for:
 - Providing constructive feedback
 - Providing tips to the students' responses.
 - Awarding the Spark of the Week.
 - Review process
 - Graders are advised to thoroughly review their respective students' responses and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses to provide suggestions that will help improve their proficiency in the language.
 - Selection of top performers
 - Each week, the Graders must each award the Spark of the Week to a student who has provided a thorough response that contains the requirements and proper use of language.
- **SPARK of the Week**
 - Each Saturday evening, Graders award the SPARK of the Week to at least one Haitian student and at least one U.S. student who were determined to be the top contributors of the previous week's discussion.
 - Selections are based on language use, grammar, content and depth of dialogue, along with the use of the Word of the Week.
- **Grader Tips**
 - It is important that students read teachers' comments and use them for improvement and future SPARK of the Week achievements.
 - These comments are located on the right-hand sidebar of the blog, under "Grader Tips."
 - Students should carefully examine and grasp these suggestions as they can help enhance the students' responses and language proficiency.
- **Field Trip**
 - At the discretion of your teacher, you have the opportunity to go on a Haiti-related field trip.
 - This will allow you to engage in and learn more about the vibrant Haitian culture as well as make a live community service connection with the Haitian community in your area.
- **Semester Grading & Community Hours Earning Schedule**
 - Students participating in The SPARK have the opportunity to earn community service points based on participation.
 - 1 point is assigned for every substantive comment made, 1 bonus point is assigned for being selected as the SPARK of the Week.
- **Etiquette**
 - Team Leadership-Language and comments must reflect a spirit of TEAM leadership. You achieve more as a team. Participate in creating an open and fun environment that allows for healthy and productive discussion. For example, encourage the input of other participants by asking questions.
 - No Personal Attacks- While it is OK and often healthy to disagree (or to agree), it is important to keep in mind to maintain respect towards others. Please comment on the statements that are made, not on the individual making them.
 - No Cursing- Please refrain from using any curse words, as they will not be tolerated.
 - Integrity- Please don't try to cheat by merely copying and pasting other people's words. Use the tools available to you but do not let them do all the work for you, as you will only cheat yourself of the learning experience and opportunities offered. Remember that you will eventually be tested either by your teachers, the TOEFL, the IBO, and/or the College Board, and cheating will not help you pass your exams.
 - Follow-through- Remember to post a response each week and to regularly communicate with your partner to ensure that he or she does the same.
 - Get Recognition - Remember that a Grader observes your comments throughout the week and gives recognition each week for great contributions - give your best and be THE SPARK.
 - Launch on Mondays / Deadline on Saturdays - You begin discussion on the new Topic of the Week on Monday mornings. All of your comments must be completed by 12 noon on Saturdays.