



# NEW YORK CITY EDITION Update

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## Something for Every School: Overcoming Obstacles

The Academy for Environmental Leadership and the Legacy School for Integrated Studies are using Overcoming Obstacles™ to help fulfill their missions, set themselves apart from other schools, and create strong communities of students prepared for college and careers.

In Brooklyn, the Academy for Environmental Leadership wanted its students to learn more about their environments and how to be proactive in solving local community



Educators from the Academy for Environmental Leadership attended the 2008 Achievement Awards gala to honor the accomplishments of New York City students using the Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program.

problems. The school held advisory periods in the past but found each time that it did not help them to advance their mission. To solve this problem, Overcoming Obstacles integrated service learning into its advisory life skills program, creating a project based curriculum in which the skills taught are immediately applied to an experience outside of school, resulting in more effective learning, understanding, and internalizing of the skill.

Located in Manhattan, the Legacy School for Integrated Studies needed a program that showcased the school's unique focus on creativity, diversity, and personal responsibility while also helping students form close relationships with peers and teachers. Using Overcoming Obstacles' Life Skills Program in their advisory periods was the answer. Small groups of students who work closely with the same teacher each week learn to develop study skills, prepare for college, and set realistic goals.

The Overcoming Obstacles curriculum team makes site visits to the schools and is thrilled to report that both schools are close to reaching their goals. Overcoming Obstacles was able to prove once again that it has something for every school.

## Call for Student Achievement Award Nominations

Overcoming Obstacles has begun its search for the 2009 Student Achievement Award honorees. Students who have participated in an Overcoming Obstacles program, used life skills to meet challenges in their lives, and set meaningful goals for the future are eligible for nomination. Winning students will be honored at the 15th annual Achievement Awards gala on October 22, 2009 at the Lighthouse, Pier 61 in Manhattan.

Applications are being sent to educators who currently use Overcoming Obstacles in their classrooms. The application packets include teacher recommendation forms, guidelines for a one-page personal statement written by the nominated students, and an outline of the winners' responsibilities as Achievement Award honorees. Applications will be reviewed by Overcoming Obstacles' staff and finalists will be contacted to arrange a meeting before the end of the school year. Applications must be received by Friday, May 29, 2009 and sent to:

Overcoming Obstacles  
125 Maiden Lane, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10038

Students selected as this year's Achievement Award winners are also eligible for \$10,000 scholarships for post-secondary education. The Jack L. Siegal Memorial Scholarship was created in memory of one of the first supporters of Overcoming Obstacles, Jack Siegal, who taught, by example, the importance of communication, decision making, and goal setting in overcoming life's obstacles. The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association Scholarship awards \$10,000 to students interested in careers in science and medicine who also personify the Overcoming Obstacles program.

For more information or to request an application packet, please contact our staff directly at (212) 406-7488.



Left to Right: Wayne Harris, Students in Transitional Housing Content Expert; Mary Wright, 2008 Student Honoree; Rick Folbaum, Master of Ceremonies.

# Middle School 534–Brooklyn Uses Overcoming Obstacles for Special Education

Principal Will Cooper already had a successful advisory curriculum using the Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program at MS 534. So, when he needed an advisory curriculum to meet the needs of the school's 6th, 7th, and 8th grade Special Education classes, he knew Overcoming Obstacles would be up to the challenge of creating another effective program for his students.



This colorful graphic is displayed on MS 534's website. It depicts the blending of two school cultures into a new identity which Overcoming Obstacles' advisory program helped to achieve.

MS 534 requested its first advisory program to help merge two schools' cultures and define their new identity. School environment, team building, civics, good citizenry, and service learning were selected as the curriculum's focus. Students completed service learning projects, which included a voter registration drive and a letter writing campaign to civic leaders regarding community problems.

The flexibility of Overcoming Obstacles' activity-based lessons allowed the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum team to design the Special Education advisory program to engage the students and make life skills instruction relevant to their needs. In addition to Overcoming Obstacles' hallmark focus on communication, decision making, and goal setting skills, this new curriculum concentrates on building confidence, teaching stress management and developing organizational skills.

## Teaching Life Skills One Topic at a Time

This spring, Overcoming Obstacles introduces three new stand-alone curriculum modules that address vital topics: service learning, bullying and buddy mentoring. Educators are invited to purchase them from our website ([www.overcomingobstacles.org](http://www.overcomingobstacles.org)) and visit our Facebook page to download new lessons, read more about our program, and post updates on how students are using life skills in their schools.

### Service Learning

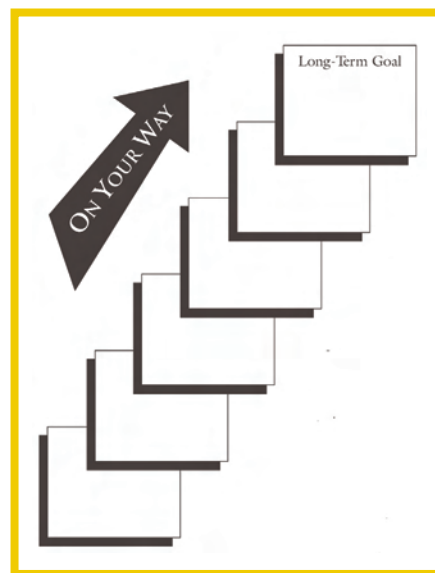
The Service Learning module is a how-to handbook that gives teachers a plan to carry out community service projects with their students and explains the components of a successful service learning program. The module includes over 25 activities that help students apply academic skills to solve community problems, engage in their school communities, and practice good citizenry.

### Bullying

The Bullying module gives educators over 15 activities to choose from to help them create safe school environments, confront and eliminate all forms of bullying, and establish rules and cultures of respect for their classrooms. Students learn to recognize the values of themselves and of their peers, and realistic ways to handle violence without resorting to anger, insults, and violence.

### Buddy Mentoring

The Buddy Mentoring module is an A—Z program that trains middle and high school students to teach life skills to younger students. With over 20 student-friendly lessons and implementation tips for educators, the program delivers countless benefits including: improved leadership and teamwork skills, student engagement in the larger school community, and a large-scale student impact.



Activity-based lessons like ON YOUR WAY help buddy mentors teach goal setting and decision making skills to younger students. With over 20 important life skills in the Overcoming Obstacles Buddy Mentoring program, mentors and mentees learn the skills they need to be successful in life.

Our Mission: To ensure that all young people learn the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life.



**Overcoming Obstacles**

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