

Quantum Leap: 15 Years of Success

Quantum Leap, a program that reconnects youth to their education, serves elementary, middle and high school students who have dropped out of school, are chronically absent from school, or have severe behavioral problems. In the Quantum Leap program, students participate in the design of their education, learning what it means to discover and pursue an intellectual, cultural, and community identity and to replace imposed discipline with self-discipline. Since Bennington College faculty members Susan Sgorbati and Daniel Michaelson launched Quantum Leap in 1999, the program has served over 2,000 students.

Currently, Quantum Leap is four programs at Mount Anthony Union High School, a joint class between high school students and Bennington College students called, “The Sababa Project” and a series of independent projects in the Bennington, Vermont community. The four programs at Mount Anthony Union High School are the Quantum Leap Exhibit Program, a classroom, directed by Ric and Danielle Crosier; the Mosaic Studies program created by Danielle Crosier; the Academic Mentoring Program directed by Story Graves; and Project Leap, an after-school program.

The Sababa Project is a class that meets every fall semester with four teachers (two high school teachers and two college teachers) and a classroom of high school and college students. The curriculum is based on a study of adolescent development and the topic of sustainability related to the environment, political conflict, and social justice. The class participates in the Museum Exhibit program as a showcase for their work.

Recent Quantum Leap independent projects have included The Pangaea Project, students studying and preparing meals with Chef and Restaurant owner, Bill Scully; quilting with The Quiet Valley Quilter’s Guild, a drama production with actress and director Janice Young of “Twelve Angry Jurors”, a Community Garden project, and Blooming Chefs with founder and director, Carol Adinolfi.

Quantum Leap’s success is rooted in two key principles:

1. The Plan – a process by which each student, with the help of an academic advisory, initiates an educational Plan based upon a student’s unique interests. The Quantum Leap Plan process is inspired by The Plan Process for students at Bennington College based on education philosopher, John Dewey’s “learning by doing”.
2. Mediation – a non-judgmental process for resolving conflicts in which all people involved share the responsibility for solving

problems. Quantum Leap educators mediate between students, families and school personnel to identify issues preventing the student from succeeding in their education. They help students implement an educational Plan that will allow them to reconnect to learning as an exciting and engaging practice. As a part of this process, students learn conflict resolution skills.