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Leadership event provides lessons in teamwork, communication

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High school leaders quickly learned Saturday morning that building a Tinkertoy model is not as easy as it sounds.

Only one person in each group knew what the model was supposed to look like. That person had to memorize the image then convey it to fellow group members.

At the end of the activity, which had students running all over the room and working together, each group's Tinkertoy model looked a little different.

None of the models was a perfect duplication of the actual model.

"Any frustration?" asked Kevin Randall, organizer of the activity.

Nearly everyone attending the leadership event at the Macatawa Bank Community Room, 139 E. Eighth St., raised a hand.

"I kind of figured there might be a little of that," he said with a smile.

Randall used the teamwork exercise as a morning activity for the program known as Leadership as a Lifestyle.

Forty-eight students participated in the eighth annual daylong training program, a new attendance record.

"It's continually growing," said Matt Pear, a senior at Black River Public School and a four-year veteran of the program.

Randall used the Tinkertoy activity to ask students about why communication breaks down in their everyday lives. He then explained to the future leaders that the Tinkertoy activity doesn't work because everyone can't catch the vision.

David Bos, also a senior at Black River, said he enjoyed the interactive nature of the event. Through the exercises, he learned some ideas he can use in his school's student council.

"A leader helps everyone reach their maximum potential," Bos said.

Mario Fernandez, a junior at Holland High School, said he absorbed a lot of tips about effective leadership communication.

"We have to respect each other," he said.

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