

As the Inspired year is now coming to a close, my heart aches to know that we have quickly reached the end but I am so thankful to have been able to be a part of this phenomenal program. Throughout the year, I grew as an individual, a team member, and a leader in more ways than I can even begin to explain. I tackled challenges, reached wonderful achievements, and most importantly- I gave a voice to my peers. This program has shaped me into a more well-rounded and better educated person while providing me with many opportunities that were absolutely astounding.

Hosting multiple voter registration drives was one of the many things I genuinely enjoyed about being an Inspired Leader. While the process was a great deal of trial and error, my teammates and I were able to be extremely successful and eventually register 100 percent of our senior class, many of the eligible juniors at our school, and seniors and juniors from other high schools in the state who don't currently have Inspire chapters. There were three main keys to our success that were very visible in every drive we hosted: communication, enthusiasm, and perseverance.

First, I believe the one of the first steps to being successful in anything you do is to communicate. The other three Inspired Leaders at my school and I had to be clear with each other what our plan was for the drive, when and where we planned to host it, and what we expected from each other. We also needed to inform our principals, teachers, and peers about our voter registration drives to make sure we had the proper permission to go forth with it and to ensure we had adequate participation. If we would have failed to do any of these things, our drives could have easily failed or been shut down by the administration. After making sure everyone was well informed of our events, we needed to show up energized and with a positive attitude. People respond better if your passion and excitement is evident to them because it intrigues them by making them want to be part of something enjoyable and worthwhile. Unlike us, not everyone was thrilled about filling out a voter registration form. Even when we had stubborn students who did not want to partake in our drives, we had to persist. We utilized our communication skills to explain the benefits of being a registered voter while remaining positive and polite. By doing this, we overcame these obstacles and successfully registered 371 people to vote.

Another obstacle, small but troublesome, we faced was students not wanting to register the moment that we asked them. When we weren't hosting drives, we would go into the gymnasium or cafeteria during lunches and ask students to register to vote. Because this is a break from class for them and most people just want to chat with their friends or play on their phones, we often ran into the issue of students saying that they would register at a later time even though it was the perfect opportunity for them to fill out the form. To overcome this we explained that the process would only take a about five minutes and we would more than happily assist them with it. That, along with a few other simple words of encouragement we were able to convince them to register right then. The results of this meant that we were closer to reaching our goal and allowed many people to take the first and most crucial step in letting their voice being heard.

Even though the year is coming to an end, I am determined to continue making a difference in my state by making sure people are registered to vote so that their voices can be heard. As others notice my passion for civic engagement, I hope that they are encouraged to be active so that together we can continue to make improvements for the condition of our state. As young people, we can make a difference. I want to face the future hand in hand as our voices are heard clearly on our visions for our state and country.