

NFL hall-of-famer helps at-risk kids

By: [Jennifer Howe](#)

Tampa, Florida - It's 30 minutes before one of the most significant moments in the lives of these students. It is the culmination of an 18-week program designed to change their way of thinking.

"When I first came to this school, I really thought, like, I could make it through high school without doing any work or not trying hard or anything like that," says 16-year-old Emanuel Herrera. "And then I realized that I have bad grades and I can't play sports that I want to play or anything like that, so I guess that's why they put me in the program."

The Amer-I-Can program was founded by NFL Hall of Famer Jim Brown.

He wanted to teach young people life lessons they weren't getting any where else.

Jim Brown says, "We all have a purpose, and I was very fortunate as a young boy to have interested people take me under their wing, and without that, I would never have been successful."

Senior Eddie Cruz says no one ever taught him how to manage his anger, so he fought constantly. After weeks in the Amer-I-Can program, his life is different.

"I learned how to control myself, really. Like all the negative stuff. Just throw it away," says Cruz.

The goal of the program is to help at-risk students learn life management skills, so they can success at school and life beyond.

And now, all those hours spent in class, learning a new way, have brought them here: a walk across the stage, a life long walk along a different road.

"I'm gonna feel happy, 'cause I finally got something to show somebody," says Eddie Cruz. "I did something, so people ain't gonna look at me like, 'Oh he's just a kid from the streets that wants to fight all the time. Hangs out with the wrong people.' I look nice today, and got something to show people."

Jennifer Howe, Tampa Bay's 10 News