

Higher Than I, Mentoring Program (HTI)

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Key words: HTI aims to help develop youth academically, physically, socially, spiritually, and mentally.

Funding Sources:

Various fundraisers and school budget

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

We currently have a budget of \$3,000 which will be used to fund a variety of college/ career tours.

Project Description:

Higher Than I, Mentoring Program (HTI) is dedicated to creating an environment for growth and development of the whole student and to successfully provide the services, resources and support needed to allow students to attain major goals or reach their career aspirations. With active and creative minds, it is our goal to develop and enhance a level of achievable excellence that is higher than students could ever imagine. We hold club meetings during school hours on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month. On the second Friday of each month we do a team building or social skill activity and discuss upcoming college tours and community service opportunities. Activities include Ted Talk sessions, vision boards, goals setting, and conflict resolution. The 4th Friday of each month we have a guest speaker from the local community and provide lunch for the speakers. During the first semester, field trips include an anti-bullying campaign with Gaffney Middle School and a Salvation Army Christmas Tree Angel trip to Walmart, courtesy of our club sponsors. During the second semester, field trips include Honda Battle of the Bands College Fair, CIAA College Fair, and various other college tours

Staffing Pattern:

- **Lead Facilitators:** Jessica Wilkerson, Darius Dawkins.
- **Female Facilitators:** Serena Rice, Mary Philips, Hyacinth Phillips.
- **Male Facilitator:** Phillip McHam

Population Served: 50 from various demographics

- 80% minority (African American)
- 40 females, 10 males
- Teen Parents
- At-Risk Youth Ages 15-19

Project Origination:

This project was originally founded in 2013 by Daniel Foster and Philip McHam. Due to a decrease in graduation rates and attendance issues, there was sense of urgency to form an outreach program that could target these concerns. The introduction of a youth mentoring program had never been done at the high school level before in the district. In the beginning the mentor program only served male students and there were approximately 15 members. However, over the years, female students proposed the idea to extend club invitations to female students as well. The inclusion of all students has contributed greatly to the growth and success of the HTI mentoring program, with the current club serving 50 students from various demographics. Mentors include counselors, graduation coaches, parent/community liaison/sponsors, and school nurses. To prepare mentors for the work that was envisioned, the team engaged in the NDPC certification program, allowing the team to become trained in dropout prevention strategies, working with students in poverty, and positive behavior

intervention. Using what we have learned thus far, an innovative plan was designed to evaluate student achievement, student discipline, and attendance, on a bimonthly basis.

Issues Addressed:

- conflict resolution
- goal setting
- self-worth
- bullying
- socio-emotional learning
- attendance
- responsible decision making

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

Our number one goal is for all our HTI members to graduate high school with a diploma. We work towards this goal using strategies such as goal setting, peer tutoring, weekly academic/attendance on-site pep talks, behavioral observations, and conflict resolution.

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:

Strategies include RTI via peer tutoring and weekly on-site pep talks in which we meet with students for 5 minutes to discuss any potential red flags such as attendance and declining engagement/academics.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

All our students from the pilot cohort of HTI graduated and many of them furthered their education at local colleges/ universities.

Project Timeline:

Annually

Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates:

100% graduation rate in 2019, 2 out of the 50 HTI members are currently at the alternative satellite school, OLA Copeland Learning Center.

Special Conditions, Expertise, and/or Skills Required to Carry Out Project:

- Consistency
- Leadership
- Compassion
- Accountability
- Time management skills
- Strong social skills (building relationships)

Current Status of Project:

The project is ongoing

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

Lead Male Facilitator

Lessons Learned:

- All students are potentially at-risk.
- One size does not fit all (each student is different).

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

Same does not equate to fair. We all are active in our own race in life but that does not necessarily mean that everyone is granted the same opportunities to win.