

**Higher Than I Mentoring Program**

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***Key words:*** Graduation, Attendance, At-Risk, Community Involvement, Early Intervention, Mentoring

**Funding Sources:**

- Club Logo T-shirt Sales: \$1,000
- Concession Stand Sales during Track Season: \$800
- Car Wash: \$200
- Club Sponsors: Sydney Rice, Cherokee County Sheriff Dept. etc. \$1,000

**Project Cost and Budget Narrative:**

We currently have a budget of \$3,000 which will be used to fund various college/career tours and fund transportation for outreach opportunities in our district.

**Project Description:**

Higher than I mentoring program is dedicated to creating an environment for growth and development of the whole student and to become successful in providing the services, resources, and support needed to confide with major goals or career aspirations. With active and creative minds, it is our goal to develop and enhance a level of achievable excellence that is higher than they could ever imagine. We hold a club meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of each month during school hours. On the second Friday of each month we do a team building or social skill activity as well go over upcoming college tours and community service opportunities. Activities include Ted Talk sessions, vision boards, goals setting, and conflict resolution. The 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of each month we have a Guest speaker from the local community as well and feed the mentees lunch. 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, Lawanda Moorer
- Male facilitators: Darius Dawkins, Philip McHam

**Population Served:**

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

**Project Origination:**

Originally founded in 2014 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 student 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 includes counselors, graduation coach, parent/community liaison/sponsors, and school nurses. In order 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 of our HTI members to graduate. We work towards this goal using several means such as goal setting, peer tutoring, weekly academic/attendance, on-site pep talks, and behavioral observations.

**Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:**

HTI via peer tutoring and weekly on-site pep talks in which we pull students outside the class into the hallway for 5 minutes to discuss any potential red flags such as attendance and declining engagement/academics

**Results (Outcomes and Achievements):**

All of our seniors from the first HTI class graduated and many of them furthered their education at several 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.

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

Leadership, compassion, accountability, time management, and strong social skills (building relationships).

**Current Status of Project:**

On-going, annually

**Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:** Lead Female Facilitator

**Lessons Learned:** All students are potentially at-risk; one size doesn't fit all (each student is different)

**Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:**

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