

Peer Power Mentor Program and College Friends Mentor Program

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Key words: Peer Mentor, Leadership, Mentee, College Mentor, Intervention and Prevention

Funding Sources:

Local supporters, Community Donations, Fund Raising, School Funds

Project Cost and Budget Narrative: Expenses:

- Peer Power Mentor Tee Shirts at approximately \$ 450.00. Each mentor recruited gets a tee-shirt. This cost can reoccur throughout the school year. Each tee-shirt cost ranges between \$8.00-\$12.00, depending on the student's size. Larger shirts are more expensive.
- Two field trips cost through school year. Monies vary on field trips, depending on if there is a venue cost. Most field trip venues are free.
- Peer Power Leadership Etiquette Luncheon (Awards Ceremony): Food Cost at approximately \$1,200 for group of 60 people. The awards cost at approximately \$400.00
- As the Peer Power Mentors grow in numbers, cost will increase with added events and current events.

Project Description:

The Horry County Schools; Loris High School Peer Mentor Leadership Program was piloted in the Spring Semester 2018 by the LHS At-Risk Coordinator. This program was created as an intervention for students who struggle academically and for students who have discipline issues. Although, there is no universal single definition of a mentor, LHS has adopted and defined a mentor as a “guided trusted friend; someone who builds a trusting relationship with other peers changing negative mindsets to positive mindsets influencing a more positive climate and culture within our school”. The LHS Peer Power Mentors specific job is to serve as leaders of the school. They lead their peers by being a positive example in academics and discipline. Currently, the LHS Peer Mentor select process is voluntary via student or mentors are recommended by a faculty or staff member. Once a mentor candidate volunteers or is recommended, the At-Risk Coordinator (Peer Mentor Coach) meets one on one to interview the mentor candidate. In this interview process, the mentor coach reviews their current grades and discipline record making sure they are an appropriate candidate for the program. The only major requirements for all LHS Peer Mentors are satisfactory and above grades and to be in good discipline standing. All mentors must sign a Mentor Creed stating our mission and purpose. Mentors must also sign a form stating their responsibilities as a peer mentor. Parental Permission must be obtained so parents/guardians must sign a permission form giving their consent for their student to be a LHS Peer Mentor. Following this process, A mentor is paired with one or more mentee(s)(classmates). The mentee selection is based on our most at-risk students. Students with Individual Educational Plan are elective first as a mentee if they are failing one or more subjects, they are considered the most at-risk student. The mentor and mentee are paired, introduced and they exchange contact information. A mentee has the right to refuse the assistance of a mentor at the initial introduction or can opt out at any time. Although a mentor's specific job is not tutoring, they can tutor in academic areas if they are successful in the academic area.

Since the peer power program started, officers and bi-weekly meetings have been established. The LHS Peer Power Mentor Program has a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasure and Class Senators (freshman-senior). These officers are appointed by the At-Risk Coordinator/ Mentor Coach bases on their performance in the program and their work ethic to get task accomplished. Meetings are held every two weeks during the school

day. The meeting time is from 8:00am-8:45am on Tuesdays bi-weekly.

As we move forward, other leadership groups are planned to be “birthed” from the LHS Peer Power Leadership Mentor Program. The At-Risk Coordinator has collaborated with local colleges to increase the “presence” of positive role models within the school. The College Friends Mentor Program was piloted in the Fall semester 2020 and modeled after the LHS Peer Power Mentor Program. College Friends Mentors are approved by the HCS District Office and coordinate with the LHS At-Risk Coordinator/Peer Mentor Coach on a schedule to visit the school and meet their mentee. The college mentors come to LHS during the school day as their schedules permits. They meet with the At-Risk Coordinator/Mentor Coach and the college mentor is assigned and introduced to their mentee. Per the college mentor’s schedule, they can visit LHS Monday–Friday during school hours to visit with their mentee in their class(es) during the time they are at LHS. LHS High School Peer Mentors and LHS College Friend Mentors have name ID Badges and LHS Mentor Tee Shirts to be identified in the school. ID Badges are required to be worn by the peer mentors before they enter a classroom to assist with their mentee. Tee shirts are upon the mentor’s discretion to when they want to wear them. Tee shirts are not mandatory to be worn in the school.

Staffing Pattern:

- At-Risk Coordinator/Mentor Coach, The At-Risk Coordinator/Mentor Coach operates and leads both the high school and college mentor programs.
- Faculty Advisors (Teachers) Currently, two teachers assist with the LHS Peer Mentor and College Mentor Program
- Administration Support

Population Served:

The population served are LHS At-Risk Students; Freshmen, Sophomore, and Junior Students, the number can vary on any given day. However, approximately 45% of the demographics served are African American Black Males, White Caucasian Males make up approximately 35%, and White and Black Females make up approximately 20% of the population of at-risk students. The at-risk student is defined as any student who is at-risk of failing one or more subject(s) with a grade of “F” (59-0). Typically, at-risk students who are failing more than one subject, are given a peer mentor as an intervention for success. The criteria for the at-risk student is based on unsatisfactory grades and students who have an IEP. Often, poor discipline and poor attendance are reasons why the student defined as at-risk have a grade of a “F” in their classes. The Loris High School student population is over 800 students. Students with an “Individual Educational Plan” who are at-risk are served first with a peer mentor. The At-Risk General Education Students will receive a peer mentor after the IEP At-Risk Students are serviced first. Unfortunately, our at-risk students outnumber our peer mentors. Therefore, not all at-risk students at LHS will receive peer mentors.

Project Origination:

The LHS Peer Mentor Leadership Program originated at Loris High School in Loris, SC—Horry County School District. The program was created by the At-Risk Coordinator as an intervention for success with students who are considered academically at-risk students. The peer mentors assist with creating a positive change in school and “**Lead by Example**”. The peer mentors work

hard to create positive change in the school environment, changing negative student mindsets to positive student mindsets and attitudes. Since the program started in the Spring of 2018, much has changed and the need for more support has become essential to the growth of the program. Therefore, two teachers have volunteered their time to become faculty advisors to assist in managing the growth of the program. They are responsible for facilitating with the meetings and communicating important news to the peer mentors. The program has gain recognition and respect by faculty, administration, parents and students of LHS. The peer mentor program has become more established and organized since the beginning in Spring 2018. We continue to strive daily to make positive change in LHS and outside of LHS.

Issues Addressed:

The issues/needs addressed are to improve students overall academic experience and build a more positive school climate/culture. Grades, attendance, discipline, social/emotional support, and self-esteem are some issues the mentors help change in their mentee's life. Research proves mentor programs help create positive change in students. By building relationships, this program creates a positive change for the "mentor" as well as the "mentee". The program is utilized by the At-Risk Coordinator as an intervention for the most at risk students at Loris High School.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

The desired outcome is to improve student's overall high school experience and success (grades, discipline, and attendance) within the at-risk population. The relationship is a valuable component in both the high school and college mentor program. By building a positive peer mentor/mentee relationship this creates a more positive school culture for positive change. The goal of this outcome is to increase the graduation rate to 100% and decrease the dropout rate to 0%. Improvement each school year is measured as a success.

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:

Both high school and college mentors are paired with struggling at-risk students who have been identified by the At-Risk Coordinator. Mentors are expected to lead by example in academics, discipline and attendance. Mentors know they are defined as a guided trusted friend that creates positive change. Mentors can tutor but tutoring is not the primary job of a mentor. Mentors model what it means to be a person of accountability, character, integrity and the importance of a work ethic within their mentees.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

- At-risk students receiving peer mentors improved their grades to satisfactory and above by 75% in the school year 2019-2020
- Reduction in absences decrease, but the percentage has not been determined.
- Peer mentoring opportunities for students wanting to make a difference has increased by 90% for the school year 2020-2021.
- Since the beginning of the LHS Peer Power Mentor Program started in Spring of 2018, the program has grown by 100% in peer mentor participation and involvement, faculty support, recognition, and student recommendations. The peer mentor program has also received recognition from the HCS Superintendent and other HCS Chief Officials in the district. Parental support and involvement have also increased by 55%. We are also recognized by Loris High School faculty and administration as being a vital part of the at-risk student's lives and truly making a difference at LHS.

- A Leadership Etiquette Luncheon rewarding Most Outstanding Mentor. On March 2, 2020 the “**1st Annual Loris High School Peer Power Mentor Etiquette Luncheon**” was created and instructed by Connie Jones, the At-Risk Coordinator/Mentor Coach. This luncheon was created to give the Mentors a leadership experience of dining in formal situations. The luncheon involved 2 schools in Horry County School District. The other school was HCS Program School, The Academy of Technology and Academics. The Culinary Arts students use their skills of preparing, cooking and serving the LHS Mentors a lunch consisting of Soup, Salad, Main Entrée and Dessert. Mrs. Jones instructed the students on important etiquette skills for dining in a formal situation. Students were instructed on the proper use of their napkin, utensils, sitting techniques, passing of salt and pepper/condiments and how to eat their soup, salad, main entrée and dessert using etiquette skills. Mrs. Jones also instructed the students on the “do’s and don’ts” of conversation topics. The luncheon also hosted the guest speaker for the afternoon, SC Senator Mr. Greg Hembree. Other dignitaries throughout the school district were special guests. This included HCS Superintendent, HCS Chief Officers, HCS Board Members, Loris Mayor, and the local newspaper and TV station were also attendees. This event was published in the local county newspaper and local tv station. At the conclusion of the luncheon, awards were given to each peer mentor and the Most Outstanding Mentors were announced. The luncheon was a proven success and will continue to be a tradition with the LHS Peer Mentor Program. Due to COVID-19 the luncheon was not allowed per our school district for safety and health reasons for the school year 2020-2021. However, plans are to resume this wonderful learning experience as soon as permitted by the HCS District.

Project Timeline:

Spring 2018- Current and ongoing.

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

Improve the graduation rate to 100% with at risk students. The goal is to keep at risk students on class rank timeline so they can graduate on time. Decrease drop rate to 0% at LHS.

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

It is crucial to have faculty and administration support at 100% and it’s necessary that faculty and staff understand the role of a mentor and how the mentor program operates.

The skills of leadership, integrity, accountability, time management, positive mindsets and attitudes are skills that are required for high school and college mentors. Meetings are conducted twice monthly to benefit both the mentor and mentee. College and high school collaboration for program success.

Current Status of Project:

Growing, expanding, development of new programs, and scholarship programs being “birthed” from the LHS Peer Power Mentor Program.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

As the At-Risk Coordinator at Loris High School I monitor grades and coordinate with teachers

daily to identify the at-risk students in our school. Therefore, I am persistently looking for new opportunities to grow our students in all life skills with academics being on the forefront. The LHS Peer Power Mentor Program and College Friends Mentor Program is proven to help develop both mentor and mentee in being people of excellence. My role as the At-Risk Coordinator/Peer Mentor Coach is to implement preventions and interventions for the at-risk population of students at our school. Building relationships via peer mentoring in one step to motivate students and create a more positive school culture and climate.

Lessons Learned:

It's a lot of hard work building a peer mentor program from the ground up. Total commitment to your job to help students be the best they can be is a necessary component for a successful peer mentor program. I have learned that mentors are students too, even though they may not be identified as an at-risk student. It is important to observe and hold mentors accountable for their actions so they can lead by example. Electing and utilizing mentor officers to help facilitate the efforts of a successful peer mentor program is a crucial element. The officers combine their efforts with the LHS Peer Power Mentor President and the Peer Mentor Coach to communicate important information among the mentor group. Communication is key with teachers, administration and all students involved.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

Supervising a high school peer mentor program and college mentor program is an additional full-time job added on top of your full-time job description, if you do any other job other than supervising a mentor program. A leadership class as a high school class elective would maximize and be beneficial the peer mentor program. Be prepared to work hours beyond your workday.