



Creative Approaches to Silent Mentoring

The following list of ideas pertaining to Silent Mentoring was compiled by JoAnn Hamm through the Search Institute's HCHY Listserve January, 2001.

JoAnn Hamm - Technology Resource Teacher
Edna Toliver Elementary School
209 N. Maple Ave.
Danville, KY 40422

Idea # 1:

At New Richmond High School in New Richmond, Wisconsin, we passed around a list of "motivate to graduate" youth--those who did not qualify for any extra programming but who had more academic promise than they were displaying! Staff put their initials after youth they wanted to invisibly mentor. ANY responsible and caring action was acceptable! Some staff started to show up in study halls of the youth and invite them to work in their room. Others detoured their usual routes to walk by the lockers and have informal conversations with the youth. We found that grade point averages increased for the youth during the year. Also, we take a survey of freshmen through juniors in the spring of the year to ask for helpful youth for peer helpers. We also solicit the name of a caring adult in the building. Almost every single youth of our 600 surveyed writes the name of an adult down; 70 of 72 staff members were recognized! This is a vast improvement from about 5 years ago when we first started our asset-building initiative. Only about 1/3 of the students wrote down staff members' names--and the same people were recognized over and over again rather than the broad base that we now see.

Nothing too formal about any of it; but it's that one to one attention that makes the difference! Good luck!

Marilyn Peplau
Authorized Trainer for Search Institute
"Retired" Guidance Counselor for New Richmond High School, Wisconsin

Idea # 2:

Are you talking about invisible mentoring? If so- have all the adults in your building name 20 kids they feel they have a connection with but don't tell them why. Tally the names and you will be left with a list of kids who no-one really knows or connects with. That's your best list! Then ask each adult in the building to make a point to speak to 1 kid you pick off that list for them and then everyone will be connected. Fast, easy, effective. Ann

Idea # 3:

Hi, JoAnn. Your program sounds like a really good idea. I coordinate our city's initiative on behalf of developmental assets ("It's About Time for Kids...Bellevue.") This past Spring, we hosted a training where one school's effort for "silent mentoring" was shared. Although, I think I remember that they used G.P.A. improvement as an indicator, I don't remember any specifics. Anyway, here is what they did.

Just after the start of the new school year, all the school personnel (teachers, administrators and non-instructional staff) got together and reviewed a list of ALL the students in the school. Then, each teacher put their initial next to all the students they felt they knew pretty well. Then, the staff identified all of the students without a teacher's initial next to it, and divided the names amongst themselves. The staff decided to make an "extra effort" to try to get to know each of these students a little bit better over the next quarter or semester. (Say hello, specifically ask them if they need homework help, etc.) They tracked all of their GPAs and, again, from I what I remember the effort seemed very successful. Simple but powerful--just like the concept of developmental assets:) Hope this information helps.

Robin Haaseth