YCC Students Take Initiative to Create Mentoring Program

At Academy of Finance (AOF) in Como Park High School (St. Paul, Minnesota), some vigilant seniors noticed that freshmen were having difficulty with socialization and adjusting to high school. They wanted to help. After brainstorming some solutions, these motivated students suggested a senior-freshman mentoring program.

The idea was implemented on a pilot basis in AOF. It paired each freshman with a senior mentor, some serving more than one mentee. The seniors took on a variety of advising duties:

- Helping acclimate the freshmen to high school life.
- Tutoring and helping track assignments and grades.
- Familiarizing them with the YCC program and culture – from the student perspective.
- Preparing them for work-based learning experiences.
- Introducing them to some of the fundamentals of job-seeking in preparation for YCC sponsored job fairs: communication skills, attention to personal appearance, resume-writing, and more.

After being in place for less than a year, the program has seen positive results, benefiting both the freshmen and the seniors. Contributing to its effectiveness is the fact that the mentees seem to be more receptive to advice and information offered by a fellow student, especially an upperclassman.

AOF English teacher Ms. Ouverson has seen the academic impact on her classes. Students in the section that received tutoring from their student mentors had fewer failing grades and were more aware of their grades in general, she reports. In addition, she says, the “seniors showed really great leadership, and I had many of them as freshmen. It was so cool to see their growth as people and to see them give advice based on experiences.”

Kenia, a senior who was involved in dreaming up the project and who took part as a mentor, offers her advice to schools that might be considering a similar program. She maintains that any mentoring is helpful, but that having younger and older students work together is especially valuable. “I think that getting the upperclassmen into underclassmen classes really forms a bond,” she says. She also points out that “the mentoring program has been good for the seniors. We have more responsibility, and it helps us prepare for the future and allows us to be able to handle more.”

Other senior mentors noted that the program improved their communications skills and taught them to be more patient. As they dealt with younger students who did not always understand what they were trying to convey, the upperclassmen had to channel their own frustration and look for alternative ways to get their message across.

The positive outcomes alone make such a program worth implementing, and according to Ms. Ouverson, it was relatively simple to put in into practice. She describes her program tasks as fairly modest: printing grade sheets for students and their mentors and meeting with the student lead to plan mentoring activities. She points out that even a simple system that has seniors monitoring a few underclassmen each can work wonders.

Congratulations on another YCC success story!

The Academy of Finance (AOF) at Como Park High School is part of the Academy of Finance and Academy of IT YCC program in St. Paul Public Schools (St. Paul, Minnesota).