

ESI Peer to Peer

BEST PRACTICES MANUAL 2018



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****We would like to extend a special thank you to Camille Adolphe for helping to synthesize the best practices.**

Welcome Message

This year New York City’s Young Men’s Initiative (YMI), in partnership with the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and the New York City Department of Education’s Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), embarked on the mission of supporting New York City high schools with existing peer-to-peer mentoring programs to increase the number of students engaged while strengthening and expanding the quality of service provided within priority communities.

The best practices shared in this guide reflect concrete and tangible examples of how schools intentionally utilized a culturally responsive lens to better address the academic and social development of their young people. The peer mentoring schools thoughtfully incorporated the lived experiences of their students into all aspects of their mentoring programing. We encourage you to connect with the peer-to-peer mentoring liaisons and, if possible, to visit their respective programs. **Enjoy the guide!**

Geographic Distribution

*** Assembled in alphabetical order

Bronx

- Eagle Academy for Young Men
(X231, District 9)
- Frederick Douglass Academy III
(X517, District 9)
- Urban Assembly School for Applied Math and Science (X241, District 9)

Brooklyn

- Brooklyn Preparatory High School
(K488, District 14)
- El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice
(K685, District 14)
- The High School for Human Rights
(K531, District 17)


Queens

- Channel View School for Research
(Q262, District 27)
- Martin Van Buren High School
(Q435, District 26)

Manhattan

- High School for Law and Public Service
(M467, District 6)
- Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change (M670, District 5)

School	Borough	District	Address	Contact Person	Email
Brooklyn Preparatory High School	Brooklyn	14	257 N.6th Street Brooklyn, NY 11211	Qiana Spellman	qspellman@brooklynprephs.org
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Eagle Academy for Young Men	Bronx	9	4143 Third Ave Bronx NY 10457	Beckner Joseph	BJoseph@eaglebronx.org
El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice	Brooklyn	14	250 Hooper Street Brooklyn, NY 11211	Christopher A. Costello	ccostello24@gmail.com
Frederick Douglass Academy III	Bronx	9	3630 Third Avenue Bronx NY 10456	Wilfredo Ubardo	wubardo@schools.nyc.gov
High School for Law and Public Service	Manhattan	6	549 Audubon Avenue New York, NY 10040	Alexandra Brown	abrown@06m467.com
Martin Van Buren High School	Queens	26	230-17 Hillside Avenue Queens Village, NY 11427	Garrett E. Richardson	gricha29@jhu.edu
The School for Human Rights	Brooklyn	17	600 Kingston Ave Brooklyn, NY 11203	Denise Jennings	Djeninn@schools.nyc.gov
Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change	Manhattan	5	200-214 W. 135th Street New York, NY 10030	Dr. Cynthia Carmona-Davis	ccarmon2@schools.nyc.gov
Urban Assembly School for Applied Math and Science	Bronx	9	1595 Bathgate Avenue Bronx, NY 10457	Ingrid Chung	ichung@amsbronx.org



The goal of the Senior/Junior scholars cohort meetings at Eagle Academy (EA) is to provide support for participating upperclassmen students in preparation for graduation and their post-secondary pursuits. Currently in the primary stages of implementation, the cohort meetings are divided by grade and are designed to help scholars take charge of their academic progress. They aim to encourage cultural patterns of college matriculation among the student body. The program specifically monitors students' graduation status and highlights the necessary steps to remain on track for graduation.

EA's cohort meetings provide a means for students to engage in critical reflective conversations regarding the college application process and general college experience. Initially the meetings were conducted by school counselors who are assigned to each cohort. However, through a series of trial and error of different methods, program instructors found that students were most engaged and receptive of materials when the meetings were led by their peers.

Student Peer Leaders are trained by faculty staff to provide an array of academic, emotional and social support for their peers. During training, the student leaders are prepared to lead conversations that address topics such as "How to Read a Transcript," college readiness and graduation requirements that focus on the mandatory high school credit accumulation and regents exams. In addition to academic support such as peer tutoring, the Student Leaders provide emotional support and discuss topics like struggling with senioritis. Faculty staff use role playing as a medium to familiarize the Leaders with facilitating a classroom setting.

Student Leaders meet twice weekly to debrief with faculty, establishing a web of support for the program.

When preparing for the cohort meetings, they assist in structuring the workshops by conducting the following tasks:

- Research methods that encourage credit accumulation
- Analyze student data by tracking academic progress
- Produce content for the meetings, including development of relevant topics, research of inspirational videos, and confirm catering for light refreshments for attendees

The cohort meetings are promoted among the school community via email, flyers, and postings in the internal daily memo.

The total costs to implement this practice estimate to \$750. Funding is allocated for refreshments during the cohort meetings and a leadership retreat for



the Student Peer Leaders. In addition to financial contributions from the school, Eagle Academy receives sponsorship from the Young Men's Initiative and the Expanded Success Initiative to implement the workshops.

Moving forward, Eagle Academy plans to host four annual cohort meetings: 1 meeting for each grade, from the freshman through senior classes. As the Academy currently explores best methods to establish a successful balance in programming, they aim to make improvements in program details, including update technical equipment, providing giveaways to students, building partnerships with community leaders and organizations, and establishing better methods of follow-up with students to ensure that they remain on course.



Frederick Douglass Academy III



At the Frederick Douglass Academy, faculty set out on a goal to develop a scholarly and well-rounded student body by raising awareness of contemporary global culture in the school. The goal is for students to understand how broader socio-cultural patterns in the U.S. impact their opportunities, their environments, and their relationships and interactions with a given environment. FDA developed the concept for a cultural competency intervention after observing patterns of biased cultural perspectives among student mentees, despite the students' limited exposure to life and cultures outside of the confines of their daily communities.

Geared towards male scholars from freshman to senior-age, the intervention began with an examination of the level of global and local knowledge among the student participants. FDA's Social Worker, also known as the Peer Leader, facilitates the workshops, and the school's principal organizes and establishes the logistic details for each meeting. The workshops are promoted via school announcements, posters and parent notification letters. In efforts to create genuine opportunities for human development and community service for the students, FDA partnered with Habitat For Humanity.

Meeting once per week after school, groups discuss topics that are relevant to the global socio-cultural landscape. The sessions begin with a question that sparks controversy or challenges specific social values, behaviors or actions that the student members typically exhibit or imply. The discussions lead to deeper exploration of overarching topics, encouraging students to analyze each scenario through the multipronged lens of identity, taking into account perspectives of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and secular/moral viewpoints.

After the conceptual goal of the intervention is achieved, program staff aim to travel with students locally, statewide, and internationally in an effort to expose students first hand to the diversity that molds contemporary global dynamics. FDA's partnership with Habitat For Humanity will generate opportunities for mentees to travel outside of New York State to experience different cultures while performing acts of service. These opportunities will allow students to open their minds and hearts to the global experience.

The biggest challenge of this endeavor is the students' shared intimidation of the unknown, and general sense of xenophobia. Participants who never had an opportunity to travel outside of their immediate environments are often reluctant to explore and experience new communities. The program continues to work with students to overcome those challenges, and relies heavily on testimonials from alumni participants. The alumni testimonies emphasize the social necessity for students to expand and grow.




The total cost to implement this practice is an estimated \$14,000. The program receives funding from the ESI: Peer-to-Peer Mentoring grant, the FDA school budget and contributions from program members.

Advice for schools interested in replicating this programming:

Be prepared to spend lots of time hosting workshops with participants. Additionally, dedicate energy to explore each topic deeply, influencing participants to feel competent and motivated to jump into action!



The Urban Assembly School for Applied Math and Science



UMOJA is a yearlong engagement program implemented at The Urban Assembly School for Applied Math and Sciences (UA+AMS). The program is designed to support the school's most at-risk young men in achieving high school graduation and matriculation into a college setting. Eponymous of the Swahili word meaning 'unity,' the program teaches young men about the importance of brotherhood.

The UMOJA annual program is launched at the beginning of each school year with a six-day retreat, which aims to prepare young men with the necessary leadership skills to make crucial decisions in their daily lives. A group of 20 ninth through twelfth grade students attend the retreat, and are accompanied by school staff and alumni who act as counselors. At the retreat, students work in small cohorts, known as “Crews” to discuss traumatic events in their lives. The Crew members last throughout the school year. The retreat culminates with a Kings ceremony, where parents attend student performances and recognition awards. The ceremony includes a luncheon where students prepare lunch for their families.

UA+AMS staff designed the curriculum for the annual retreat, coordinating items such as participant recruitment, trainings for adult staff and UMOJA alumni, and designing retreat itineraries and activities. Within the school, UMOJA coordinators promoted the program to the entire student body, seeking a maximum of six “at-risk” young men from each grade.

Incorporated as an extension of the school year, UMOJA provides a platform for participating young men to build strong relationships with school staff while receiving extra academic support on a weekly basis. The program is designed by the participants, resulting in genuine culturally relevant instruction by creating open spaces for dialogue on race and social justice.

The program's design also incorporates a cohort model, fostering an environment of collaboration and unity among the participants. Through small group sessions referred to as “Crew,” the young men are able to build stronger bonds with one another. Common topics of discussion in Crew sessions include navigating the loss of a loved one (through violence, drugs, and disease); police brutality and ideas for successful engagement with the police; and suggestions for coping with traumatic events. Relationships that are developed in Crew groups during the retreat often transition into the school year.

UA+AMS is a non-screening public school in NYC that serves 620 students in grades six through twelve. Based in the Bronx, New York, the school's population is representative of the surrounding neighborhood, which is located in the U.S. Congressional District with the lowest per capita income in the U.S. Data suggests that roughly 5 male students in schools like UA+AMS drop out each school year. UMOJA exists to serve that demographic with the goal of closing that gap. By shifting the focus from a deficit-based approach to assets-based, UA+AMS radically altered their methods of educating young men of color. That shift resulted in UMOJA.

UMOJA was designed by key leaders at UA+AMS including the principal, guidance counselor, the Head of Discipline and two teachers. Approximately 25

percent of UA+AMS' teaching staff are involved in the program by facilitating workshops and running small group discussions with students. Families also play a major role in UMOJA, as coordinators make frequent contact with parents and guardians throughout the school year. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend the pre-camp orientation, as well as the annual King's Ceremony—a showcase culminating the annual retreat spotlights the progress of UMOJA participants.

UMOJA highlights the following items, as they are key to transforming both the high school experience and future success of participating young men:

1. Authentic relationships with adult mentors and peer mentors
2. Frequent communication with parents
3. High behavioral expectations
4. Resilience training
5. Increased cultural experiences
6. A fierce sense of belonging

UA+AMS encountered significant challenges in its pursuit to implement UMOJA. To begin, it was difficult for school staff members to grasp the purpose of the UMOJA program. To address this issue, the administration aimed to be more transparent about the program objectives by leading professional development workshops. Another pressing challenge in executing UMOJA was maintaining sustainable funding for the program. Because UA+AMS' budget could not sustain UMOJA, administrators sought alternative funding through grants. Lastly, to ensure that both young men and women were being supported through the school's programming, UA+AMS implemented a sister program to UMOJA, called Nia.

Advice to schools intending to replicate UMOJA programming:

1. Build a staff whose commitment to the work will influence a transformation in their career trajectory.
2. Start small. Conduct a pilot program with a small group of young men to understand what works best for your students.
3. Set clear norms and expectations of the program, staff and participating students.
4. Sweat the small stuff, and pay close attention to details.

The total cost to implement UMOJA amounts to \$15,000. Prior to funding received from the Expanded Success Initiative: Peer-to-Peer Mentoring, costs were addressed using the school's budget. UA+AMS has since developed strong partnerships with ESI, working closely with Directors Paul Forbes and Camille Kinlock, and is able to incorporate ESI funding with their budget to secure staff income and student activities for UMOJA.

Moving forward, the UMOJA retreat will mark the beginning of each school year, welcoming both new and seasoned young leaders. UMOJA is a transformative experience for students and adults alike. It is empowering for all participants, and reinforces the importance of faith and unity to positively impact the world.

Testimonies:

“Umoja is a bonding experience between a group of young men where we become a brotherhood and establish our leadership skills to spread positivity to the world.”

—Student participant

“Umoja is welcoming, and creates a place for both students and staff to grow!”

—Staff member

At Brooklyn Preparatory High School (BPHS), student leadership is prioritized as a core value.

Their Peer-to-Peer Mentoring program is incorporated into the school day. Upperclassmen mentors participate in a mentoring elective class twice per week.

During the elective class, mentors have the flexibility to engage with mentees in any of the following activities:

1. One-on-one tutoring
2. Teacher check-ins
3. Progress report evaluations
4. Report card reviews
5. Pupil Path updates
6. Quality bonding time

It is through this open structure that mentors are able to address the needs of their mentees by individualizing the class activities. BPHS rewards mentors with elective credit for their time, and provides mentees with additional support.

This year Brooklyn Prep implemented their Peer Tutoring Program to enhance the peer mentoring experience. The Peer Tutoring Program operates every day after-school until 4:00 pm, creating more accessibility for mentoring pairs. Many students take advantage of the tutoring, and BPHS provides additional incentives and rewards for attendees. One example of the incentives is an extra-credit card for the work each student completes during tutoring. Specifically for mentors, the program presents them with opportunities such as mentoring trips, pending their achievement of a targeted goal. The

Peer Tutoring program allows space for mentors and mentees to further develop their relationships, while taking advantage of additional academic resources.

Mentors collaborate with teachers to implement the program. Mentors have the option to enter the classroom and assist mentees during class time, or to pull the mentees out of class for one-on-one mentoring in a separate space. If the students have a need for more time in peer mentoring, they can request to meet during lunch in the guidance office suite, or after-school during Peer Tutoring.


This year, BPHS also redesigned their Advisory curriculum to create a space for additional student leadership. They established the role of Peer Advisory Leaders (PALs). PALs are the cornerstone of the Advisory program, as they have a special role in engaging students and making advisory discussion topics more relatable. Each advisory has one designated PAL to facilitate lessons and conversations during the Advisory period. Discussion topics include conflict and communication, identity, healthy relationships, financial planning, social media and nutrition. PALs are selected to participate in a ten-week training program where they learn to engage students in critical conversations through circle talks. PALs also assist the Advisory teachers with lesson planning.



Peer tutoring, programming, peer advisory and incentives are all significant in the success of BPHS' Peer Mentoring program. These tools encourage meaningful relationships between mentors and mentees, empower student leadership and create a school wide culture of peer-to-peer support. Student Leadership is a practice that BPHS will continue to grow.



El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice



Student leaders at El Puente Academy host five annual Cultural Art Days. The celebrations address different aspects of the Academy's annual theme. Student-led events are major components of the Art Day celebrations, and influence school culture. Examples of annual events include Dia de los Muertos, Winter Solstice and FLY GIRL Fest. Teachers partner with students to develop culturally relevant workshops that align with the students' various interests. El Puente's Liberators Program is required to develop and lead one student-led forum during each Art Day, presenting every participant with an opportunity to gain skills in research and public speaking. This opportunity fosters strong peer mentoring and leadership development experiences.

The practice of student-led workshops is an integral part of El Puente's school culture and mission: "to nurture and inspire leaders for peace and justice." The workshops are a platform for the young scholars to participate in leadership roles, and share information about social justice issues that are most significant to them. This process creates a classroom setting where students can lead with their peers, and support their communities at large.

The following are some of the goals of the Liberators Program for student leaders:

- Planning, preparation, and facilitation of relevant content to peer groups
- Team-building through mentorship and modeling instruction
- Oral presentation and facilitating discussion skills

As school events approach, the planning component becomes a workshop activity for the after school program. Faculty leaders of the Liberators Program provide opportunities to engage students in workshops and content discussions that will lead to the student-led workshops. Teachers model practices of facilitation for students, and support

in the development of lesson plans for the workshop. For each Art Day, coordinators brainstorm topics that generate student discussion. Students then collaborate to research information and develop relevant activities that provide their peers with an understanding of the overall lesson. Once students plan for facilitation, upperclassmen student leaders volunteer, or are assigned to lead the activity. During each round of facilitation, leaders rotate responsibilities, creating an equal experience for all participants.

In the subsequent sessions, faculty share relevant resources (such as articles, texts and videos) with the students. After students share personal stories and current events on a given topic (eg., gun violence, LGBTQ discrimination, racial discrimination,) the group finalizes the event day theme. Students then follow a modified lesson plan template to execute the forum plans, while faculty members work to design timed activities and decide on student facilitators. In the final stage of preparation, students conduct rehearsals of the activities.

All students at El Puente Academy are invited to participate in the Liberators Program and lead

cultural events. Leadership responsibilities are given to upperclassmen students, as they typically hold experience in program facilitation. This process acts as a model for younger students, providing a reference for their leadership in later events. All stakeholders, including families, alumni and community leaders are invited to the events, as a means to provide encouragement and communal support.

The total costs to fund the Liberators Program is approximately \$10,000. Sponsorship from Men Teach, Expanded Success Initiative Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program, and Fair Student Funding is used to finance items such as sets for performances, food and per session rates for participating faculty. Funding also covers décor materials and supplies such as fabric, paint, and lights. Budget cuts pose a challenge for the Liberators Program. To address that obstacle, the school is working to become more resourceful with time and space.

Advice for schools interested in replicating this programming:

- 1.** Multiple sessions are needed to plan and strategize the models of the facilitation process.
- 2.** Create a space that encourages students to initiate and intentionally discuss their viewpoints on socio-economic concerns and current events.
- 3.** It is important to have support from classroom teachers, guidance counselors and other stakeholders to partner with student leaders during events to ensure clarity of information and support overall structure of the activities.

When teachers are active participants and planners, informal evaluations are taken by school leaders using a modified CRE Danielson rubric. After each event, staff gather to reflect and provide feedback


on the workshops and performances. Students also provide feedback on the day through their advisory groups. When activities are student-led, visiting teachers provide constructive feedback to the faculty leader for presentation improvement.

The Liberators Program is proven to influence significant shifts in students' academic and socio-emotional performance. Once students view themselves as leaders, they engage in school as empowered producers of knowledge and culture. Additionally, because this recurring program relies on presentation of new and culturally relevant issues, student participants are encouraged to be creative and responsible.

Community stakeholders benefit tremendously from attending the event days. Parents gain insight on the preparation their children receive in leadership and academic skills. Additionally, teachers are able to view new activity structures, and gain better understanding of students' skill sets and strategies to support students in the classroom. Other visitors can replicate new models for education, highlighting how students lead peer group discussions. They are able to learn about significant issues that concern young people, and gain insight on replicating this programming in their schools.

Moving forward, this practice will remain a major part of El Puente Academy's culture. To improve, the Academy aims to incorporate the Liberators Program into the school curriculum. Making this practice a norm in school culture fosters a commitment to leadership, as students view it as a symbol of growth and maturity.

The School for Human Rights



Faculty at the School for Human Rights (SHR) saw a growing need for students to gain professional competency. They noticed that upon high school graduation, students did not have the necessary skills to both develop resumes and professionally present themselves in interviews.

Several of the Peer-to-Peer advisors at SHR organized this practice throughout the school, developing lesson plans and activities. To address the concerns of a large student population, the teachers separated each group by gender, aiming to get the best performance from students. The program targets students in grades seven through twelve.

Peer-to-Peer advisors collaborated to create the lesson plan to meet the needs of participating students. Each teacher implemented the lesson in their own style. Typically, the lessons began with a video that illustrated the “do’s and don’ts” of interviewing. Afterwards, students were paired with their mentor/mentee to conduct a session of interview role playing. Lastly during their lunch, each pair of participants shared their interview role playing experience with the entire group.

To implement the program for sixty-two students, the total cost was approximately \$200, covering food and beverages for the luncheon. Funding was covered by a grant from the ESI Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program, as well as other resources.

One of the biggest challenges in implementing this program is having access to classrooms that are large enough for the students to meet. SHR overcame this obstacle by separating the groups by gender, and using two classrooms. Another

significant roadblock was the lack of time to conduct the activity. Although the coordinators were able to address the issue by dividing the workshop into two sessions—one discussing interviewing skills and the other focusing on resume writing, the program still faces time constraints that prevent students from completing each activity.

Teachers were able to informally evaluate the program while conducting the activities with the students. They noted improvement in personal behaviors, social skills and self-esteem among the participating students. The students enjoyed the activity and gained basic interview skills.

Advice to schools intending to replicate this practice:

- 1.** Enlist support from faculty members who have a passion for resume writing and who have the technical expertise.
- 2.** Practice with students in the classroom setting on a regular basis to ensure that their interviewing and resume writing skills are mastered.
- 3.** It is important to build the students’ esteem and confidence to ensure their comfort and success in interviewing for employment, college or extracurricular programs.



Testimonies:

“These sessions showed me how to be more prepared and organized when speaking with an interviewer.”

—Tristan King Pollidore, grade 12.

“This activity showed me what a good interview and a bad interview looks like. It also told me what I need to know to get a good job”.

—Khamani Griffith, grade 7.





Upperclassmen mentors at Channel View High School facilitate LOOP Lessons for their middle school mentees that are focus on the principle of respect.

Prior to this initiative, student leaders established peer mentoring programs that connected them with small groups of middle school students. Channel View administration observed the positive influences that student mentors made on their peer groups. The faculty and staff employed a practice that would build on those experiences by connecting more students with the leaders, and spreading the positive influence across the student body. The practice, known as LOOP Lessons, was a strategy to create opportunities for all middle school students to connect with the mentors in a classroom setting.

There are 20 faculty facilitators in the program. Their responsibilities are to provide the curriculum, activities, materials and programming logistics to the peer leaders for each lesson. The peer leaders are then prepared to meet with the group facilitators, who then implement the lesson plans with groups of mentors. Each group of mentors is responsible for implementation of the lesson in a middle school classroom. Hosting LOOP Lessons in a classroom setting twice per week creates a platform for all middle school students to access and interact with their high school mentors.

This practice was intended to reach all students in the entire middle school, grades 6-8. The group facilitators connected with the middle school teachers to arrange times for students to execute their

prepared lessons. After the mentors' first lesson was presented to the middle school students, feedback from both the students and staff was overwhelmingly positive. Approximately 350 students benefit from the LOOP Lessons, and the student leaders are invited to facilitate future lessons with the classes.

This portion of the peer to peer mentoring program is supported through the ESI Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program grant. The grant funds allow Channel View to run the LOOP Lessons, and work with young leaders to affect change within the school's culture.

Initially the only challenge that Channel View faced when implementing this practice was programming. Arranging class times that were conducive for both middle school and high school students was a challenge. Additionally, ensuring that the LOOP Lessons program had the support of the staff was equally important and a minor area of concern. Channel View prides itself on students' academic rigor. The opportunities to connect the middle school and high school students cut into instruction, and was an initial area of concern. However, the positive feedback and improvement of student interactions and school culture helped the school to overcome the initial challenges.

Advice to schools that are looking to implement this practice:

“Student voice is so powerful. Allowing our students to have a positive and influential voice to younger students is such a unique opportunity for our school, and we embraced it. Knowing that most of our middle school students stay with us for high school, we believe that the more contact our student leaders (upperclassmen) can have with our younger students in a positive forum, the more we are building on our school’s culture and environment.”

—Cheryl Vallejo, Dean and LOOP Advisor

Student leaders benefit from this program by demonstrating skills in leadership, communication, classroom management, time management and team building. Middle school students benefit from the positive influences of their upperclassmen peers.

Testimonies:

“The peer leaders that came into my class were so well-spoken, captivated the students’ attention, and were so respectful. My class really enjoyed it and would love to have them come back and do another lesson!”

—Annette Malloy, 6th grade Humanities teacher

“The LOOP students are welcome to come back to my class anytime. They were great with the students, and my class loved the activity that they did with them.”

—Jami Husnain, 7th grade Science teacher





The My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Peer-to-Peer Mentoring program at Martin Van Buren High School developed an annual ceremony to celebrate the achievements and commitments of its all-male participants. In establishing the ceremony, the advisor, also sought to address misconceptions of the program's purpose among school faculty by reviewing the origin of MBK at Van Buren and explaining the program's theory of change. The ceremony is presented to families and to the larger school community to highlight the impact peer mentoring is having on participating students.

The purpose of the induction ceremony is trifold, intending to support students socially, emotionally and academically. Each student is recognized for their participation in the program, regardless of academic performance or behavior. The goal is to ensure that participants feel appreciated, loved and welcomed by a community of peers and stakeholders who are cheering for their success. Each participant received a personalized MBK journal and other school supplies. Students who met the academic benchmark with an average of 75 or higher during the fall semester earned an MBK hoodie and t-shirt as their formal induction into the MBK community. Throughout the school year students have other opportunities to earn incentives for improved academic performance.

At the onset of the ceremony, stakeholders including parents, faculty and other invited guests engaged in a friendly icebreaker, purposed to expose them to the types of activities that are facilitated during peer mentoring sessions. The ceremony was also served as a celebration of and for family and community members. The PowerPoint presentation featured student reflections on both the peer mentoring program model and experiences they have had with the MBK community. Ceremony attendees

were able to see the substantial impact that the MBK Peer-to-Peer Mentoring program is having on young men of color, including school credit accumulation and improved attendance. Recognition and acknowledgement are basic human desires. The Peer-to-Peer program at Martin Van Buren seeks to provide participants with multiple opportunities to be both acknowledged and recognized.

Students who participated in the annual ceremony are predominantly 9th and 10th grade male students of color, and a mixed-gender group of upperclassmen peer mentors.

The induction ceremony is a collaborative effort. The advisor, mentors and mentees each serve different roles. Below is a sample list of delegated tasks for the ceremony:

MBK Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Advisor

- Order materials, draft agenda, create PowerPoint, and send out invitations

Peer Mentors

- Collect RSVPs from mentees, organize gift bags, send reminders to mentees to RSVP, decorate the ceremony space, serve food, prepare a music



Peer Mentees

- Share invitation with Parents and Family members

The planning of such an event begins months in advance. Many of the tasks covered included securing grant funding, assembling student incentives and planning ceremony details. The total costs of implementing the induction ceremony was approximated to \$2,500. We relied heavily on grant funding from ESI Peer-to-Peer Mentoring and an OCS budget.

Things to consider when implementing such a program:

1. Outreach to families can be difficult when there is only one advisor. For this reason, the advisor should utilize various forms of communications such as email and text messages to mobilize and to connect with families.
2. Public speaking can be a challenge for students. Consider building in time to practice presentations.

Advice to schools intending to replicate this practice:

1. Get your faculty involved. Explain the significance of their presence at the programming, and emphasize the inclusion and celebration of the participating students.
2. Allocate time to rehearse the presentation and conduct complete show run-throughs using the provided technology.
3. Balance time during the ceremony to showcase both the developed content, and student spotlights during the exchange of gifts.


Testimonies:

“The ceremony made me want to be a part of something.” – (Mentee)

“Thank you! Last night’s induction ceremony was great. You are an amazing director and those kids as well as that school are very lucky to have you...” – (Parent)

Manhattan

High School for Law and Public Service



The High School for Law and Public Service (LPS) invites ELL (English Language Learners) students to participate in the LIFT Bilingual Peer Mentor Program. The program aims to provide support for ELL students of color living in low income circumstances, a demographic in the school that shows patterns of disenfranchisement and lack of support. The school's goals are to demonstrate their commitment to the students as learners, to increase the students' efficacy and success, and to welcome them into the larger school community. The LIFT program is dedicated to helping ELL students become active participants in their communities and beyond.

Despite the school's efforts to create a more inclusive environment for its ELL student population, there is a pattern of resistance among the students. The ELL student demographic at LPS exhibits patterns of academic failure, disciplinary infractions, and social and emotional challenges. These patterns, in addition to the group's general sense of resistance, made them a seemingly intractable class that is difficult to reach. School administration felt that they had exhausted all ideas of recruitment in the LIFT Mentor Program with this student group.

LIFT coordinators and student mentors experienced low return on investment in their efforts of engaging with the ELL student group. A group of 26 ELL students were invited to join LIFT as peer mentees, however exhibited low attendance rates for a duration of four months. As a result, LIFT staff and mentors experienced extreme frustration with the small yield of success on their efforts. LIFT realized that the ELL group was unprepared to interact with their peers, and consequently would not foster successful peer mentor relationships. Another significant pattern to note was the group's scholarship challenges; during times of low

attendance at LIFT, the students only passed a maximum of one academic class per marking period. Their school attendance was strong (~80-90%), however, they often failed to attend academic classes throughout the day. Additionally, they exhibited high rates of class removal, resulting from distracting behaviors.

The students desperately needed an alternative bridge of support to encourage a more welcoming and inclusive experience. School administrators observed that the student group built their own community, which was rooted in acceptance of failure and antisocial behavior. They realized a need to appeal to the group by "meeting them where they are," both figuratively and literally to build positive relationships. The program focused on encouraging the group to understand their value as young people who are worthy of school, and social and emotional success.

School faculty and staff consulted on strategies to address the challenge. They conducted planning meetings, and volunteered for roles including study hall/tutoring teacher, trip planner, and

data collectors. The team also sought partnership from the Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility on SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) activity design specifically for ESL student populations. The LIFT team distributed fliers and invitation letters about the bridge support program to the community. Additionally, the Parent Coordinator contacted families of the target ELL student group, and hosted two family orientations for the LIFT program. Each of the school's administrators, guidance counselors, parent coordinator and teacher program coordinators attended the orientations. The meetings were conducted using a translator.

At the meetings, staff oriented the families on the details of the LIFT program, including planned steps for academic interventions, and efforts for social-emotional improvement. With a range of mandatory and voluntary components, the LIFT program's bridge support efforts included the following:

1. Mandatory Study Hall and Tutoring Support Period 9: To occur twice per week in the academic calendar. Attendance would be recorded, and students would be graded along a Pass/Fail rubric.
2. Lunch tutoring
3. After school tutoring
4. In-class structured assistance for students with poor Study Hall attendance
5. Trip to Chelsea Piers to foster community and relationship building
6. LIFT Peer Mentor Program – Lunch and Learn Opportunity
7. Social-Emotional Coaching – structured to segue into ESL classes with SBO consultant
8. Follow-Up Parent Progress Meeting




The total cost to implement the practice was approximately \$12,000 for 5 months. In addition to the general school budget, the program relied on funding from the Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Grant, the Strengthening Bilingual Program Grant (DELLs).

LIFT advisors are currently tracking scholarship per marking period, as well as student attendance rates and parent engagement to measure impact.

Advice for schools interested in replicating this practice:

“Our overarching advice would be to foster resilience and flexibility in program implementation. When one strategy doesn't work, take a short hiatus, [analyze] the data... to understand the “why...” then re-design. Think outside of the box and try new approaches. Meet your students where they are (figuratively and literally). Giving up is not an option.”



The Brothers On a New Direction (B.O.N.D.) program at Thurgood Marshall Academy hosts a series of weekly meetings, known as Redefining Success, with their young male students. Redefining Success addresses the social, emotional and academic concerns of students. Implemented in a student-driven atmosphere, the program presents a platform for students to design the curriculum, fostering a culturally relevant experience. The program uses positive peer culture to promote resilience training and highlight strategies for coping with student crises.

Redefining Success sessions serve as outlets for student participants to discuss a range of culturally relevant topics, receive praise and confrontation on behavior, address academic performance and gain exposure to a range of guest speakers, including alumni. Additionally, Redefining Success provides students with assistance on post-secondary preparation, including organizing college tours and exposure to alternative routes such as vocational training and enrollment into the armed forces.

Data shows that the majority of high school students who attend summer school at TMA were young men of color. In addition to their academic struggles, the students experienced social and emotional issues, both of which impede their abilities to reach full academic potential. Through intense discussion and planning, TMA developed Redefining Success as weekly Friday meetings to address the needs of this demographic.

Advisors from the B.O.N.D. program implement Redefining Success by incorporating three major components in its design:

1. Academic Chat: Students discuss their academic performance by analyzing report cards, teacher inter-visitations and online grading trackers. After analysis, students

are guided to create improvement plans to enhance their academic performance.

- 2. Hot Seat:** Each student has a chance to sit in the “Hot Seat,” located in the center of the group. While in the Seat, students receive constructive feedback from a peer, staff member of the larger school community or an advisor regarding their behavior during that given week.
- 3. Life's Work:** Students engage in a nontraditional teaching environment where they learn techniques for navigating society as men of color. This component encompasses a range of workshops including discussing current events pertaining to men of color, creating professional resumes, learning to wear a tie, or exploring safe tips on interacting with police.

Redefining Success is incorporated into the school curriculum. In recruitment efforts, B.O.N.D. advisors promoted the program to the school community, members of the school’s surrounding neighborhood and to parents during school orientation. Prospective students would then attend two of the Redefining Success sessions to explore whether the program supported their individual needs. After their trial, students are voted into the program by current members and advisors in a majority ruling.

Initially, Redefining Success was met by students with skepticism. Because conversations in the program discussions were explicit and crossed familiar boundaries among students, many felt uncomfortable posing questions and sharing experiences. To address the growing concerns among students, the program advisors established rules and boundaries for the sessions, reinforcing a safe and open space for conversation to flourish.

As a result of Redefining Success, students exhibited academic and behavioral growth. They were able to identify their individual areas of concern, such as low self-image and receive feedback from program staff and other student participants. The program aims for each student to master one challenge area within a cycle of thirty days, followed by another cycle that dedicated to another one which may impede their academic or social emotional growth.

Advice to schools intending to replicate the Redefining Success model:

1. Hold crucial conversations among all stakeholders.
2. Establish a dedicated program staff that is diverse and works efficiently as a team.
3. Ensure that your staff recognizes their responsibilities to be on-call for participants on a 24/7 basis.
4. The in-house staff is significant for implementing a practice that engages parents, students and the general school community.

Redefining Success is evaluated by examining data underperforming or under-credited students, students that graduated within four years, alumni who joined the workforce and alumni currently matriculated into a college setting.



The accomplishments of the Redefining Success program are growing in recognition. The NYC School District 5 Superintendent requested B.O.N.D. advisors to present for the District 5 Parent Coordinators and Guidance Counselors regarding TMA's male initiative and peer mentoring practices, in an effort to replicate programming throughout District 5 schools.

These practices were incorporated into Thurgood Marshall Academy's community for over 12 years. The TMA community continues to invest in the success of the peer mentoring programs, as they're proven to provide young men with academic, social and emotional guidance.



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