Student-Led School Improvement Campaign
Murray Hill Academy

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Challenge:
Building an Engaging School Culture

Related Elements of Student Voice:
Relationship Development
Community Building
Encouraging Participation

1. The Problem

- Some students do not feel a connection to each other, especially between grades (source: 40% of students surveyed agree)
- As a transfer school, it is sometimes hard for students to adapt to their new environment (source: 7 out of 9 students agree via focus group)
- There are not enough incentives for school community events (source: student government)
- Assemblies are sometimes not engaging to students (source: 76% of students agree)
- Low attendance at school assemblies (source: Mr.Nielsen, Ms.Banks, Mr.Chu, Mr.Burstein)

2. At the Root

Element #1: Encouraging Participation
When students feel like they can get support from staff/peers, they feel an obligation to do well in school, come to school, and have a voice (source: low inference notes, focus group)

Element #2: Relationship Development
When students feel a bond amongst themselves, they participate more in school/school-wide events/clubs/etc. (source: Mr.Nielsen- Student Government, Ms.Russo- National Honor Society)

Element #3: Community Building
Students being aware of opportunities within their schools allows for a more exciting school culture (source: Mr.Nielsen)

3. What's Already Being Done About It

- Last year, we attempted to create a mentoring program for frequently absent students, but mentees were absent from several meetings
- Teachers have tried to encourage students to participate in after-school tutoring sessions (STARs), but attendance at tutoring sessions is low (approximately five students per class)
- Students are reminded of school events (talent shows, spirit days) via intercom, however, many still choose not to attend.

4. What Students Think We Should Do About It
- Mentor Mixer/ Mentoring program for struggling underclassmen/transfer students (Focus group)
- Study hall area during lunch period for a quieter atmosphere (Focus group/student government)
- School-wide trips as an incentive for students to do well in school (Focus group)

II. Action Plan Outline

1. Name of Campaign: Peer Mentoring Program

2. The BIG Idea:
Murray Hill Academy will make a strong effort to engage students. All students should feel comfortable around their peers and be able to interact in a positive way. Matching up underclassmen (freshmen/sophomores) with mentors from the junior and senior classes will provide students with a connection to someone who has been active in the community already, and provide a successful model for younger students to follow. As a result, students will be motivated to come to school, improve grades, and be able to form long lasting bonds. By having a weekly mentoring program, MHA will encourage students to succeed.

3. How Campaign Will Strengthen Related Elements of Student Voice
Relationship Development:
Mentoring program helps build connections and foster support between students and the school community.

Community Building:
Mentor/mentee connections motivate students to interact with one another across grades.

Encourage Participation:
Mentoring programs provide support and encourage interpersonal skills. Through our meetings , we will inform students of opportunities and try to get them involved.

4. How Campaign Will Learn From/Build On What's Already Been Done
- Incorporate students into discussions
- Avoid hosting mentoring sessions during lunch time (based on staff and student feedback)
- Build on current events and engage students beyond the classroom
- Learn from trends in low grades/attendance/behavior
- Encourage students to attend Stars tutoring, and other extracurricular activities, such as student government

5. Measuring Progress

What We Will Measure	How We Will Measure
Attendance Rates	Pupil-Path/Attendance sheets
Engagement	Student Surveys
Continue Participation in Student Gov/Mentoring	Interviews, Surveys, Suggestion box

6. Steps to LAUNCH Campaign
1.) Spoke with principal/staff to organize dates for mentor mixers
2.) Spoke with teachers to get help with supervising events and organizing students
3.) Recruited students from 11th/12th grade Student Ambassadors to participate in mentoring program
4.) 9th and 10th grade teachers recommended students for mentoring program and 9th grade students given opportunity to opt into the program via survey.

7. Routine to ORBIT Campaign
1.) Distributed goal sheets every week at mentor meetings
2.) Held themed conversations at mentor meetings to help students bond
3.) Checked in with teachers on student attendance rates to see if mentoring program is helping
4.) Gave students entertaining quizzes to see how much they learned about each other. Tried to observe how well students were able to interact with one another
5.) Tried to emphasize a theme at every meeting so mentees could interact with other mentees
6.) Students allowed to request leaving this program if they did not feel as if they were helping/being helped. As a voluntary program, we focused on student voice and choice.

III. Outcomes

1. Tracking Progress

Snapshot #1: Mentee Surveys
According to an anonymous survey of 9th grade mentees, 75% of students believed that the mentoring program was beneficial for them both academically and socially.

Snapshot #2: Grade Data

Students	Cycle #1 Average (core classes)	Current Average (core classes)	% Change
Student #1	60%	65%	+ 5%
Student #2	66%	63%	- 3%
Student #3	87%	85%	- 2%
Student #4	95%	90%	- 5%
Student #5	74%	75%	+ 1%
Student #6	67%	72%	+ 5%
Student #7	60%	58%	- 2%
Student #8	60%	73%	+ 13%
Student #9	84%	74%	- 10%
Student #10	65%	59%	- 6%
Student #11	85%	71%	- 14%
Student #12	88%	80%	- 8%

*Note: This compares students' final grade from the first cycle of the year, with their current grades in the 3rd cycle. Their 3rd cycle grades are not finalized, and grades often increase at the end of the cycle as students complete missing assignments. Most students have shown progress or only slight declines. Only two students have shown significant declines, and that could change over the next month.

Snapshot #3: Attendance Data

Students	Cycle #2	Current	% Change
Student #1	75%	78%	+ 3%
Student #2	95%	92%	- 3%
Student #3	98%	98%	None
Student #4	90%	92%	+ 2%
Student #5	95%	88%	- 7%
Student #6	84%	86%	+ 2%
Student #7	89%	88%	- 1%
Student #8	92%	93%	+ 1%
Student #9	87%	89%	+ 2%
Student #10	63%	73%	+ 10%
Student #11	90%	93%	+ 3%
Student #12	87%	73%	- 14%

2. Reflections

- Making the program mandatory does not work. Some mentees are resistant to coming. We had better success when it was voluntary.
- Meeting during lunch wasn't a great idea because students were hesitant to give up their lunch period. It was better to incorporate into the regular class schedule.
- Larger groups are more difficult to organize. Smaller groups are easier to manage.
- Having mentees handle worksheets was challenging because many mentees often lose them. It was more efficient to give the materials to the mentors.
- Creating a stable schedule was difficult because random variables show up and alter the schedule. It is important to have a flexible schedule between mentors and mentees.
- When students were given specific activities, it hindered them. Allowing the students to choose options for whatever activities they desired provided a more comfortable work environment.
- Most students acquire better grades when they know a student is there to help and feel confident more with their social skills. The mentor mixer program is perfect for this situation.

3. Next Steps

- Consistent gathering of information especially with surveys
- Encouraging mentees who have were successful to become a mentor next year
- Start the program much earlier in the year so that kids get help when they need it and don't feel lost
- Next year's new students will need a support system at our school as they enter a new environment
- Provide incentives throughout the year as a way to show recognition for outstanding progress