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Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Invisible Mentors

Foxfire Center for Student Success, Ohio • January 2009

Topic: Dropout Prevention
Practice: Adult Advocates

Highlights

- The Invisible Mentoring Program allows a teacher to establish a connection with a student and learn more about the student in an informal and discreet manner.
- Invisible mentors work together to help one another determine ways to connect with particular students.
- Teachers participating in the Invisible Mentoring Program try various strategies and approaches during class time to reach out to students.

About the Site

Foxfire Center for Student Success
Zanesville, OH

Demographics
75% White
17% Other
9% Black

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47% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

20% Special Education

Foxfire Center for Student Success is an alternative high school in Zanesville, Ohio. It serves as a dropout recovery school for students from the local and surrounding districts.

The school provides:

- Ongoing monitoring of student interventions and immediate adjustments in these interventions if needed
- Invisible mentoring for all students
- Extensive academic supports for credit recovery through project-based learning
- Wrap-around services with an on-site community health nurse
- Small, personalized classes
- Instruction that is relevant and provides opportunities for students to work in the community

Full Transcript

My name is Katie Shawger, I teach Social Studies here at Foxfire. One of the programs that we have just started this year and are now utilizing is called the Invisible Mentoring Program. We were told at the beginning of the year to kind of monitor the students, like some of their behaviors, kind of get some reactions out of them, and then pick two students. And we were asked to pick one that we didn't really have a connection with and then one student that we did have a pretty good connection with. And then what we were asked to do with it after that is to just continue to monitor that student and journal on them, basically, write down maybe anything interesting that they talked about in class, something out of maybe the ordinary that they did, any specific behaviors, and things like that.

The goal of the program is just, at least for the students that we do not have connections with, is to learn more about that student. For the students that we did have connections with, it's just to kind of communicate with the other staff members that maybe necessarily don't have a connection with them different strategies that you try with them that would maybe work for some of those teachers. The students have no idea that we are actually being their invisible mentor. They have no idea that they are maybe the student that we have chosen. As far as the impact that it's had on students is, at least for me, the student that I chose that I didn't have a connection with, I'm starting to create that connection with this person. And for him, he has been kind of a different person in my classroom, I think because I have changed some of the environment around to meet his needs. He is getting more work done. He is asking more questions. He is cooperating so much better in the classroom. The students that I know better and have a relationship with, I think that the way that it's impacted them is they've gotten a chance now to maybe know me a little bit better, and they're kind of on a level with me where I think that they feel more comfortable. They know

now what kind of a person I am. I know what kind of a person that they are, and they feel little bit more comfortable, maybe if they have a problem, coming to me or any one of the other teachers and discussing that problem maybe seeking help.

When we are in our professional learning time, we discuss the students that we're mentoring. We tell the other teachers what we have seen in class, and they talk about things and reactions that they've seen out of those students in class. So, I think what's really great about that communication piece is, with the kids that you don't have a connection with, you learn more about them from their behaviors and reactions in other classrooms because they have different connections with those other teachers, and the students that you do have a connection with, they may not. So, you are able to tell them how they are towards you, how they act in your class, any behaviors and problems or incidents that they have in your class, you are able to tell them. I think it's just a matter of being aware.

The different strategies that I have learned that I would say would make me a better mentor is just continuously trying different methods in the classrooms with not only the students that I've mentored but the students that I haven't. Something worked for one student, well I'm kind of seeing reactions out of another one, I'll try that with him. So I think it's just a matter of trying different methods of my reactions to theirs in class.