

About the project ...

The purpose of the *Grade 8 to 9 Mentoring Transition Program* was to facilitate smooth transitions for students moving from elementary to secondary schools. Students making the transition from small, neighbourhood schools are often anxious about moving into a larger secondary school with many floors and rooms where they will have several teachers, new classmates and longer learning periods. To support students and reduce their anxieties, senior secondary students, with staff mentors, formed 'Link Crew Teams' at each secondary school. The selection criteria for crew team members included the ability to be a positive role model, to maintain commitments and to take on additional responsibilities. Team members played pivotal roles at Grade 8 Orientation Days and at Parent Information Evenings and were responsible for planning August and September activities to welcome and create links with all in-coming Grade 9 students. They maintained their commitment to the Grade 9 students by planning and participating in academic and social activities throughout their first year of secondary school year. All in-coming students were welcomed and easily began to feel a sense of belonging in their new school community.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- Immediately upon entering high school, Grade 9 students developed positive relationships and learned decision-making and problem-solving strategies that will contribute to positive high school experiences.
- The project created expanded leadership opportunities for senior students.
- Support for others through a team approach at both Grade 9 and senior levels positively contributed to individual achievement and a sense of efficacy for students, which supports the correlation between high levels of student engagement and student success.
- Principals noted that incidents of negative behaviour were reduced, school spirit increased and student participation in planned activities such as 'Cocoa and Cram', a social studying event held prior to exams, contributed to student success.
- The link crew teams created a sense of community and support that contributed to safe and caring school environments.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- Students are empowered to take the lead in transition activities when they are mentored by staff and provided with meaningful leadership opportunities.
- Students who are positive role models contribute in powerful ways to positive school climates - students listen to other students!