IGNITE peer mentoring

Because just one mentor can change a life.

Official IGNITE Booklet: Implementation, Curriculum, and Other Necessary Information and Materials
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IGNITE Mentor Training Manual
Welcome to \textit{IGNITE}!

\textit{The most valuable resource on a high school's campus is the one that is often trusted and utilized the least: upperclassmen.} Freshmen face many challenges and stresses as they try to navigate their ninth grade year, all the while deciding who they are going to be. An available and supportive group of upperclassmen could prove to make all the difference. These upperclassmen mentors have the potential to help freshman students be more engaged in school so that they can focus on their academics and find their identity in a supportive school environment, rather than being allured into reckless decisions that can negatively impact their lives. In this time of vulnerability, upperclassman peers can provide the support and guidance that allows freshmen to begin their high school careers, and their adult lives, on a positive note.

\textit{This is the dream behind IGNITE. The IGNITE program’s mission is to create a peer mentorship program that will provide freshmen with support during their transition.} This support will take the form of personal relationships with encouraging upperclassmen peers and an opportunity to engage in their school community. This support and greater school engagement then leads to a more successful transition to high school.

\textit{Peer support, especially from upperclassmen, has been shown to have a strong positive impact on freshman students’ sense of school engagement.} IGNITE will provide freshmen with an opportunity to build relationships with upperclassmen and will give them a comfortable space to talk about challenges they face. This peer support will allow freshmen to gain a sense of community in the school, which will increase school engagement. Increased levels of school engagement are proven to help freshmen in both academic and social arenas. Higher levels of school engagement also affect students behaviorally, as research shows that students who are more engaged have better attendance records, put more effort into their work, and participate more in class. As a possible result, this means they are more likely to move on to the next grade level, and also less likely to drop out. Students who are more engaged also show greater signs of self-efficacy, motivation, and aspirations.

\textit{This booklet will provide you with everything you need to kickstart the implementation of IGNITE at your school, and to follow through with a year of building relationships, improving the atmosphere at your school, and ultimately making a difference in the lives of freshmen at your school.} Contact us, so that we can provide support and guidance, connect you to other IGNITE programs, and share with you a Google Drive Folder of supplemental materials.

\textit{Let’s get started!}

\textit{The IGNITE Team}
What is the Challenge IGNITE Seeks to Meet?

The fundamental problem being addressed: difficulties of transition to high school

The transition from middle school to high school is one of the most vulnerable and thus critical times in influencing the course of an adolescent’s life. During this time, students tend to become less engaged in school, and this often leads to poorer academic performance and generally less positive high school careers.¹

School engagement is comprised of various factors, such as motivation, self-esteem, and general attitudes about school.² Studies have proven that students who are reasonably adjusted to school are more likely to put in a good amount of effort and thrive academically and socially. Furthermore, these students are much less likely to drop out of school or to engage in antisocial behavior.³ Supportive peers have the most potential to positively influence a student’s school engagement.⁴

The primary cause of the problem: lack of support

Freshmen in high school are placed into a totally new environment, many times without knowing anyone at the school. They face higher academic expectations coupled with greater peer pressure, all while still trying to navigate their own identities and find out whom they desire to be (a period that developmental psychologist Erik Erikson called “role confusion vs. identity”). This is a recipe for a very stressful and vulnerable time in one’s life, and it is a time when peer influence is most critical.⁵ One can either find a home and identity in his/her new school and become engaged in it, or he/she can find his/her home and identity in a less safe and constructive community, leading to potentially future-damaging decisions.

The importance and size of the problem

Measuring engagement in school is difficult, but it is easier to measure the main consequences of low school engagement: dropouts, high failure rate, low school attendance, and behavioral problems.

Trends indicate that more students than ever are dropping out between ninth and tenth grade. More students are required to repeat the ninth grade due to poor attendance, misbehavior, or academic problems that caused them to fail.

What is IGNITE's Model and What are IGNITE's Goals?

Theory of the Problem

Freshmen are challenged by the transition to high school because of significant changes in academic rigor and in school environment. Those students struggling in the freshman transition period exhibit lower levels of school engagement, marked by a decrease in motivation and an increase in alienation from the school environment.

Incremental Goals/Outcomes

IGNITE will provide freshmen with strong and stable mentor relationships that will positively influence their experience and development. Studies indicate that peer influence can have a positive effect on students’ school engagement when students are surrounded by positive peer role models whom they respect.

IGNITE will also provide freshmen with the motivation and opportunity for greater engagement in the school community, which leads to a greater chance of success academically and socially.

The high school upperclassmen student leaders will be given real responsibilities that will allow them to realize their potential in creating change in their school community. The establishment of this program will promote collaboration among the IGNITE team, local public school administrators and other school staff, upperclassmen and freshmen, thus promoting a better understanding by all of the needs of young people to succeed in today’s challenging world and economy.
How Does IGNITE Work?

*Bi-weekly Large Group Meetings

The core of the IGNITE program consists of bi-weekly (once every two weeks) large group after-school meetings between upperclassmen mentors and freshmen mentees. The meetings will be either structured or unstructured. In a structured meeting, there will be a central theme, based on topics that the mentors and mentees have identified as important to discuss. At the beginning of the meeting, a mentor will briefly share his or her thoughts on the day’s topic and then the freshmen will break into small discussion groups with their mentor to discuss the topic and anything else they want to talk about, using prepared discussion questions. The group will be able to also generally get to know one another in a safe, supportive environment. In an unstructured meeting, the mentors and mentees will have the time and the space to work on building relationships with each other. These meetings should be a time to relax, connect, or help the mentee with anything they need. Snacks would be a great addition, funding permitting.

*Monthly Mentor-Mentee Gatherings

As a supplement to the bi-weekly meetings, we suggest mentors provide opportunities for one monthly additional mentor-mentee meeting before school starts, during lunch, or after school. These meetings are informal and are meant for the freshmen to have ongoing opportunities to connect with their mentors. They can be one-on-one or mentor-mentee pairs can meet in a larger group. (For more details, see the Mentor Training Manual, 25).

*End of Year Reflection

There can also be a final celebratory retreat at the end of the school year (off-campus if resources allow) that will shift the freshmen toward their emerging roles as mentors and, indeed, school leaders. The retreat will also be a chance for the mentors to reflect on their experiences as they transition to post-high school life.

*How do I make this work for my school?

While we’ve found that this provided structure for IGNITE has worked in other schools, it is important to make it your own. IGNITE is a flexible framework for mentorship, meant to become a stable and ingrained part of the school community. Thus, if a modified form of IGNITE works better to fit the needs of your school (i.e.: meeting weekly rather than biweekly, having all meetings structured, etc.), then the changes can be made. It is just important to keep IGNITE's mission and vision at the forefront of your decisions. The first year of implementation will be the time to work out all of these details.
Implementing **IGNITE** at Your School

1) **Spring Semester Before Implementation: Selecting and Training Mentors**

You can select mentors in the manner that you think is best. We recommend selecting based on recommendations from other guidance counselors and teachers, as well as looking for students with an interest in volunteering. Once they are chosen, mentor training will begin (*see Appendix C: Mentor Training Schedule, 18*). The mentor training will highlight the responsibilities and duties upperclassmen have as mentors. The first meeting will be dedicated to getting to know one another and laying out a vision forIGNITE. The second meeting will focus on understanding the responsibilities of mentorship, and will include an overview of the resources for freshmen already in place at the high school, so that the mentors will know where to direct their freshmen mentees in specific circumstances. The third meeting will highlight the large group meetings and the mentors’ specific commitments throughout the year. The final meeting will be about marketing in the summer/ fall and deciding how best to reach the freshmen at your school. Additionally, the final training meeting is a great time to elect student leaders for the mentor team. Alternatively, you can choose the student leaders before training begins and have them assist you in the training program.

2) **Summer/Early in the School Year: Recruiting Freshmen**

There are two options for recruiting Freshmen who would benefit from the IGNITE program. First, you can offer the program and allow students who are interested to sign up. Secondly, you can offer the program to specific students who you think would benefit from the program.

Option 1: Market to All Freshmen
If you have a pre-orientation program or an orientation week for first-year students in the summer, it is a great opportunity to market the IGNITE program. Work with your student leaders to set up special presentations promoting IGNITE. Mentors should be required to be at the school during these presentation days to start building friendships with the incoming freshmen.

*Summer marketing*
If your school has a summer program for first-years, this will be a great opportunity to introduce IGNITE to the students. Mentors can set up different presentations throughout the two weeks and sit in on lunches to get to know incoming freshmen. This will already establish relationships between mentors and future mentees, which will hopefully get freshmen excited to join IGNITE in the fall.

*Orientation week marketing*
The upperclassmen can run various presentations during orientation week, with all the mentors introducing themselves to the freshmen class. One of these presentations can be in front of the entire class at their assembly. Mentors can also work with you to formulate a list of freshmen who may have had a challenging experience in middle school. Mentors could extend a personal invitation by approaching these students and telling them about what IGNITE has to offer.
Option 2: Select Specific Freshmen
You can use information you have from the students’ Middle Schools in order to approach students who may have a difficult time transitioning into High School. These may be students who struggled academically in Middle School or that their Middle School guidance counselors are already aware of personal problems that may make their transition difficult.

3) Fall Semester: Implementation

Mentors can host a kick-off event the following week after orientation, where all interested freshmen will get to meet the mentors. This will be the first of the large bi-weekly after-school meetings. The student leaders can work with their advisor to pair mentors to mentees, taking into account preferences, gender, and lunch block (See Appendices D, E, & F, 20-22). The number of mentees to each mentor depends on attendance, but there may be “mentor-mentee groups” in which a mentor is assigned to more than one mentee.

Mentor-mentee groups should be required to meet once a month aside from the large monthly meetings; they will select a certain time to meet up during school hours, whether this is during the morning, lunch, or right after school (See the Mentor Training Manual for more information, 25).

*Key Marketing Strategies

Data from our focus groups at Hillside High School suggests that although freshmen are interested in the idea of IGNITE, they do not like titling it as a “mentorship program”. For the most part, freshmen are on board with the idea of meeting upperclassmen through IGNITE, but believe the term “mentorship program” has negative connotations. It suggests a strict relationship in which the mentor has the power and the mentee is merely there to receive advice and instruction, which is not our philosophy of mentoring. Thus, IGNITE Hillside mentors focused on communicating the purpose of IGNITE without referring to the term “mentorship.” We found that freshmen were more inclined to participate in IGNITE if we described the program as a "chance to meet cool upperclassmen who shared similar interests" with them. We’ve found that terms like "upperclassmen friend" or "upperclassmen buddy" still relay the idea of our program without bringing about the implications of the term mentorship. We can describe IGNITE as an opportunity for freshmen to partner with upperclassmen who will offer support, guidance, and friendship throughout the year. Even if we avoid the term mentorship, we can describe IGNITE in an honest manner and still effectively generate interest among the freshman population. Again, this was what we found to work at Hillside, but it does not mean it will work for your school. If you have the chance, hold a few focus groups to understand what your classmates think of IGNITE and how they would actually want to be involved.

*Support From the IGNITE Administrative Team
The IGNITE administrative team is here to help! We know the process of starting a mentoring program can be daunting and we want to provide you with both the resources and person-power to make it happen. If you feel you need help with the various parts of implementation, contact us and we will get you what you need. We also can give you access to a Google Drive, full of supplemental materials. We can particularly help with the mentor training sessions, holding focus groups and developing a marketing strategy, matching of mentors to mentees, end of year retreat planning, or any other additional areas in which we can support IGNITE at your school. Contact us at ahanna@ignitepeermentoring.org or jjanco@ignitepeermentoring.org.
What are the Responsibilities of the Upperclassmen Mentors and the Staff/Teacher Advisors?

The organizational governance will be divided between the high school team of mentors and the high school staff/teacher advisors.

*Upperclassmen Mentors*
Attracting a group of 20-30 upperclassmen mentors will be essential to the success of IGNITE. Based on focus groups, it seems that several upperclassmen are already excited to be part of IGNITE. We will give them incentive to join this program by offering service hours to fulfill any academic or extracurricular requirement. The mentors will have the following duties:
  o Attend all training sessions
  o Be a part of summer and orientation-week presentations
  o Attend all bi-weekly large group meetings
  o Meet with mentee groups once a month on their own time, and generally keep in consistent touch with mentees
  o Attend end of year retreat

*High School Staff/Teacher Advisors/Guidance Counselors*
They will:
  o Be actively involved in working with mentors and in attending and helping with meetings
  o Serve as the points of contact for mentors and mentees on a day-to-day basis
  o Help to maintain the structure of the program from year to year
  o Be in consistent contact with the mentors and the IGNITE team

*Note: High School Guidance Counselors*
Guidance counselors are excellent resources to help attract both mentors and mentees. Oftentimes, the staff advisors for IGNITE are guidance counselors themselves. If not, we recommend reaching out to them, and asking them to help IGNITE with a few tasks:
  o Recommending potential mentors and/or mentees
  o Helping with mentor training
  o Connecting mentors to freshmen who struggled academically or socially in middle school
IGNITE Curriculum for Structured and Unstructured Large Group Meetings and Mentor-Mentee Group Meetings

* Structured Large Group Meetings

Each structured large group meeting, assuming it is about an hour in length, will follow the structure:

:00-:10 – Allow time for freshmen to gather in, find their mentors and get into groups
:10-:15 – One or more mentors introduce the week’s topic and share their insight on the topic
:15-:35 – Mentors, using guiding questions, talk with their group about the topic at hand, and discuss any questions the mentees have
:35-:45 – One of the mentors leads a recap of the meeting, asking mentors or mentees in each group to share thoughts
:45-1:00 – Refreshments and time to mingle and interact amongst groups

In the curriculum plan below, you will see a brief overview of the key points of each topic and discussion questions for the mentors to use in guiding discussion. During the training of mentors in the spring, this curriculum should be evaluated and mentors should edit it to tailor it to their own school and their own experiences. One or more mentors should commit to introducing the topic each week.

Meeting 1 – September: IGNITE Launch Event
The IGNITE Launch event will not have a specific theme. Instead, it will be the time for mentors to meet mentees in a fun and casual environment in order to better decide who they would prefer to have as a mentor.

Firstly, mentors and mentees will quickly create nametags as they enter the meeting room. The meeting will begin with an introduction of the program and welcome of the freshmen, followed by each mentor taking the floor and introducing himself/herself. Then, mentors and mentees will be instructed to mingle and get to know each other over the refreshments provided.

At the end, mentees who desire to continue in the program will be instructed to fill out a general information form with their name, gender, lunch block, phone number, email address. Both mentees and mentors will fill out the appropriate match preference sheet (See Appendices E, F, & G, 21-23).

Using this information, everyone should be paired into groups at a ratio of, at most, one mentor to three mentees. Groups should be same gender, and efforts should be made to match based on mentor preferences and possibly same lunch blocks (to make the monthly mentor-mentee group meetings easier to schedule).

Meeting 2 – October: Ways to Get Involved on Campus and Social Life
The theme for this first meeting is designed to immediately encourage the freshmen mentees to become engaged in their schools through clubs and organizations. This meeting
is meant to be an opportunity to introduce the freshmen to the wealth of opportunities to get involved on campus. The mentor can use this discussion period to suggest specific involvements to their mentees based on their interests.

“Social life” is also included in this week’s topic because it is critical to school engagement that freshmen feel comfortable socially. The discussion here should be focused on encouraging integrity and respect in social interactions, and encouraging involvement on campus to meet new people. Discussion time can be good for mentors to suggest particular people for the mentees to get into contact with.

**Discussion Questions:**
- Mentors begin by explaining what they are involved with on campus and how they met their closest friends.
  *What are some things you care about/ enjoy doing?*
  *What are some things you’re thinking about getting involved with on campus?*
  *Is there anything you wish you could do on campus, but don’t know how to get started?*
  *How has it been adjusting to high school in terms of meeting new people and having a friend group/ friend groups?*

**Meeting 3 - November: Study Habits and Time Management**
This meeting will focus on how the mentees are doing academically and how that can be improved by effective study habits and time management skills. Mentors’ advice here will be critical, as it is important for freshmen to develop healthy and effective study habits and time management skills sooner rather than later. Thus, the focus of this meeting will be discussion about what has worked for mentors (i.e. asking teachers for help, using a planner effectively, sleeping relatively early, doing weekend homework on before Sunday night, etc). Knowledge of academic support systems including tutoring programs and teacher after-school help hours (discussed during Mentor training) will be key.

**Discussion Questions:**
- Mentors will begin by talking about their most successful study habits and time management practices and how they have been helpful.
  *How has the transition been in terms of workload and difficulty of academics?*
  *Have you gotten to know your teachers/ do you know when they are available for tutoring?*
  *Have you gotten to know your guidance counselor?*
  *Do you use a planner to remember the homework you have due each day, and plan ahead so that you know you can get everything done?*
  *How do you balance your studying time with other after-school activities and family activities? How would you prefer your time to be balanced?*
- Mentors should provide information about academic support programs at the school.

**Meeting 4 - December: Stress Management**
Particularly with final exams and the end of the semester ensuing, it is important that this meeting is focused on ways that mentors have found to successfully manage their stress. Mentors should use advice that experts and guidance counselors use (provided in training manual), in addition to their own experience.

**Discussion Questions:**
- Mentors will begin by describing times when they felt stressed during freshman year, and times they feel stressed even today.
  * When have you felt stressed so far this year? What was the reason?
  * How do you normally deal with that stress?
  * Do you have a close friend or family member to go to during those times? (You can always go to your mentor!)
- Mentors will then discuss ways of coping with that stress that have been effective and ways that have been proven to be effective.

**Meeting 5 – January: Evaluating the First Semester, Ways to Improve**
With the beginning of the new semester, reflection on the way the first semester turned out is critical. The focus of this meeting will be looking back to the way the mentee performed in terms of academics, getting involved on campus, stress management, and social life.

**Discussion Questions:**
- Mentors will reflect on the ups and downs of their first semester freshman year experiences.
  * Overall, what was the best thing about first semester?
  * What was the most challenging thing?
  * Do you feel more comfortable at school now than you did at the beginning of last semester?
  * How do you feel about your academic performance? How can you improve?
  * How do you feel about your social/on-campus involvement? What can you do differently?
  * What are you worried about for this semester?
  * What are you excited about for this semester?

**Meeting 6 – February: Preparing for the Future – Thinking about College**
Now that mentees are a bit more adjusted to school, this will be a good time for them to consider how their actions during high school can impact their future. Without causing any undue stress or anxiety, this meeting is meant to provide an idea of the future and the college application process in the minds of freshmen so that they know what to expect.

**Discussion Questions:**
- Mentors will discuss how their actions during freshman year have affected their college admissions process. They will discuss what they know about the college process (in training manual) and the importance of taking freshman year seriously.
  * Have you thought about life after high school?
  * Do you want to go to college?
  * Do you know what colleges are looking for?
  * How do you think your actions this year will impact your future college choices?

**Meeting 7 – March: Social Life and Supporting One Another**
Some of the social pressures of high school can be pretty alluring and ultimately very damaging to the well-being of students. This meeting will confront some of those pressures and discuss how the freshmen are doing socially at their new school. It will then focus on the importance of unity and togetherness of the larger IGNITE group as a support network.

There will be activities that foster interaction amongst different mentor-mentee groups, with a potential group service activity developing from this meeting.
**Discussion Questions:**
- Mentors will talk about their process of adjusting to the new social attitudes and activities of high school, including a discussion about any pressures they may have dealt with.
  * Are you comfortable with your social life?
  * Do you feel like you have friends to come to talk about what’s going on in your life (you can go to your mentor!)?
  * What kinds of peer pressures have you noticed? How do you feel about those pressures (harmless/ problematic?)?

**End of the Year Celebratory Reflection – April: Transition to Leadership on Campus**
Instead of an eighth large group meeting, mentors and mentees will come together for a longer meeting of fun, reflection, and inspiration. The reflection meeting will begin with a meeting to congratulate the freshmen for successfully making it through freshman year. Throughout the meeting, there will be a mix of free time and meeting with mentor-mentee groups to reflect on freshman year and think about sophomore year. At the end, mentees will be strongly encouraged to sign on to become IGNITE mentors for the following year, and begin training. This reflection can take place on or off campus, and it can range from simply a longer version of a meeting to a day-long retreat.

**Unstructured Large Group Meetings**
We generally recommend alternating the bi-weekly meetings between structured and unstructured meetings. During unstructured large group meetings, the mentors and mentees will have the time and the space to work on building relationships with each other. These meetings should be a time to relax, connect, or help the mentee with anything they need.

**Monthly Mentor-Mentee Gatherings**
Remember, outside of the bi-weekly meetings, mentor-mentee groups should meet once a month in a more casual and informal setting. The conversation here can be about the topic of the large group meeting or anything else, and ideally will be more personal and an excellent way to develop the relationship between the mentors and the mentees. If mentees would prefer to meet one-on-one, or if scheduling conflicts require this, mentors should do their best to meet the mentees individually.
Appendix A: Program Evaluation Model

If you would like to evaluate IGNITE and see how much it is helping your school and areas in which you can improve the program, we suggest using the following program evaluation model. The main objectives of IGNITE are to provide freshmen with positive relationships with upperclassmen, to provide them with the opportunity for greater involvement in the school community, and to provide upperclassmen with responsibility and the confidence to make a positive difference in their communities (both now and later). Many of these objectives are difficult to quantify, so we will rely heavily on direct observations, personal and group interviews, and periodic surveys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Outcome or Objective</th>
<th>Benchmark(s)/Indicator(s)</th>
<th>Goal or Standard</th>
<th>Data Collection Strategy</th>
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| IGNITE will provide freshmen with more relationships with upperclassmen that will positively influence their experience and development. | *Number of participants in the program (more relationships built)  
*Reported positive, strong relationships between upperclassmen mentors and freshmen mentees  
*Positive reports about the freshmen experience as a result of upperclassmen interaction | A solid number of participants join the program and report at least one positive relationship with upperclassmen.  
The majority of participants report feelings of an improved freshmen experience because of the increased upperclassmen interaction. | - Attendance records throughout year for IGNITE meetings  
- Direct observation of student interactions at meetings  
- Interviews with freshmen throughout the year  
- Mid-year and end-of-year surveys  
- Discussions at end-of-year retreat |

| IGNITE will also provide freshmen with the motivation and opportunity for greater engagement in the school community, which leads to a greater chance of success academically and socially. | *Positive reports of increased affinity for school/feelings of comfort and lack of stress at school  
*Reports of ability to focus better on academics because of comfort at school  
*Possible indicator: decrease in freshman failure rate  
*Possible indicator: decrease in freshman dropout rate  
*Possible indicator: increase in freshman attendance rate | The majority of freshmen will report a smooth transition to high school and comfort at school because of IGNITE  
There will be high school attendance and zero dropouts among those freshmen in IGNITE | - Surveys mid-year and at year’s end  
- Interviews with freshmen about these areas.  
- Interviews with freshman teachers and administrators to gauge effect of program in these areas.  
- Freshman failure rate  
- Freshman dropout rate  
- Freshman school attendance rates throughout year |

| The high school upperclassmen student leaders will be given real responsibilities that will allow them to realize their potential in creating change in their school community. | *Attendance by upperclassmen at training/leadership meetings  
*Observed enthusiasm, accountability of upperclassmen  
*Reported increased confidence of upperclassmen | The upperclassmen selected to be mentors will be consistent in their attendance and involvement at meetings.  
They will report an increase in their confidence in their ability to create change that will translate to future endeavors. | - Open discussions with upperclassmen at leadership meetings and direct observation at monthly large-group meetings  
- Consistency of commitment to the program (attendance, direct observation, etc)  
- Interview upperclassmen individually to discuss impact of program on their ability to affect change/confidence |
| - Interview staff/teacher advisors |
| - Survey the upperclassmen at the end of the year |
Appendix B: One-Page Summary of IGNITE

What is IGNITE?
*IGNITE is a peer mentoring initiative that pairs high school upperclassmen with ninth grade students in one-on-one relationships in order to help the freshmen successfully adjust to their new high schools
*Our missions:
  1. to ease the freshman transition by providing students with the opportunity to build relationships with upperclassmen who will provide them with personal support and guidance, causing them to be more engaged in the school community and thus to have greater success both socially and academically
  2. to train and empower upperclassmen to be creative changemakers in their schools
*Our vision: that one day all ninth graders will have access to a strong peer support network and gain the encouragement they need to stay in school, be more engaged in school, and make strong life choices.

How does IGNITE work?
*Program Advisor (School teacher, staff member, or guidance counselor) leads training for upperclassmen on necessary responsibilities, skills, and knowledge
*A team of diverse upperclassmen mentors are present at freshman orientation and other events to spread the word about IGNITE. Students are encouraged to sign up and complete the IGNITE Matching Survey
*Opening Kickoff for the pairs to meet and begin their relationship
*Program Advisor matches upperclassmen and freshmen in one-on-one pairs based on the surveys
*Subsequent Bi-Weekly IGNITE Hangouts focused on different aspects of the adjustment to high school. The Hangouts provide a safe, welcoming place for the freshmen and upperclassmen to discuss anything.
*IGNITE Field Trips focused on building bonds among the group
*Closing IGNITE Celebration to congratulate the freshmen and encourage them to become mentors

What makes IGNITE different?
*IGNITE is different from other initiatives focused on supporting students through peer tutoring/advising/mentoring in that it has the following combination of features:
  1. it is focused on supporting and integrating students holistically, not just academically
  2. it is designed specifically to focus on ninth grade students and the challenges they face
  3. it is fully integrated in the schools that it works with (full partnership with administration and students)

What are IGNITE’s ultimate goals?
*to increase ninth graders’ sense of belonging at school and comfort level
*to decrease freshmen dropout and retention rate, especially first-semester dropout rate
*to increase capabilities and confidence of upperclassmen to change their communities for the better

*US Expansion: Goal is to expand across Jacksonville, FL this year and other areas in the southeast US in the coming three years. After the model has been proven successful in the southeastern US, school administrators and/or students across the nation can implement IGNITE at their schools, using our resources and admin support
Appendix C: Mentor Training Schedule

IGNITE
Projected Mentor Training Schedule

Meeting One: Getting to Know Each Other/ Mentors’ Visions for IGNITE
• Everyone will introduce himself/herself and get to know each other.
• Discuss expected outcomes for the freshmen involved in the program and the student body as a whole.
• Discuss what the mentors want to get out of this program.
• Introduce responsibilities of mentors (to be discussed more at next meeting)

Meeting Two: Mentor Responsibilities and Expectations, Available School Resources for Freshmen
• More specifically discuss the requirements and expectations that the program places on the mentor group (attendance at structured after-school and unstructured before-school/lunchtime meetings, consistent contact with mentees, etc).
• Talk about what qualities make an outstanding mentor
• A guidance counselor will discuss liability and the way of handling sensitive information if it is shared.
• Meeting will be conducted by high school faculty member.
• It will be a discussion of the different avenues for support on your campus (peer tutoring, clubs and organizations, teacher help), so that mentors can direct freshmen to these resources if applicable.

Meeting Three: Monthly Meetings/ Other Meetings
• Discuss more specifically the types of challenges that the upperclassmen feel the freshmen would benefit from discussing.
• Craft a tentative schedule for the bi-weekly after-school gatherings, with topics for structured meetings decided.
• Decide on which mentor, if any, would want to share at these meetings.
• Discuss the less structured, before school and during lunch mentor-mentee meetings.
• Discuss possibilities for the end of year retreat.

Meeting Four: Marketing for Orientation Week
• We will create our marketing strategy to get freshmen involved to make them realize that it is the “cool thing to do.”
• We will discuss the mentors’ involvement in Orientation Week, including a group speech to the freshmen class, tabling outside in order to give freshmen and their parents more information/encourage them to sign up.
• We will discuss importance of marketing at school and via text messaging/Facebook to make sure mentees know about the different meetings, particularly at the beginning.
• We will discuss ways to keep in touch occasionally over the summer.
Appendix D: Form for Mentees to Fill Out at Conclusion of First Meeting

Welcome to IGNITE!

First and Last Name:

Gender (circle one):    Male    Female

Cell Phone Number (if you have one):

Email Address:

Lunch Block:

Food Allergies:

Can you make it to bi-weekly meetings once a month?    Yes    No

Is transportation back home from school an issue?    Yes    No

Any other comments or concerns:
Appendix E: Mentees Preference Sheet

**IGNITE**

**Freshmen**
Match Preference Sheet

Name: _______________________________  
Cell phone: __________________________

Email: _______________________________  
Gender: _______________________________

Welcome to IGNITE! By filling out this match preference sheet, you are committing to attending the bi-weekly IGNITE meetings.

1. (Optional) Were there any upperclassmen that you feel you connected with in particular? If so, list their names:

2. What extracurricular activities are you interested in joining? (clubs, sports, music, theater, etc.)

3. What are your hobbies?

4. What are some qualities you look for in an upperclassman IGNITEr (ie: talkative, laid-back, artistic, athletic, someone with the same interests as me, etc)?
Appendix F: Mentors Preference Sheet

IGNITE

Mentors
Match Preference Sheet

Name: __________________________ Year: ___________ Gender: ________________

1. (Optional) Were there any freshmen that you feel you connected with in particular? If so, list their names:

2. What extracurricular activities are you currently involved in? (clubs, sports, music, theater, etc.)

3. What are your hobbies?

4. What are some qualities you look for in a mentee (talkative, shy/quiet, artistic, athletic, someone with the same interests as me, etc)?
Appendix G: Success of IGNITE in the Past

Foundation of Success: IGNITE in Jacksonville, Florida and Durham, NC

IGNITE Stanton

Jacksonville IGNITE’s first year was the 2009-2010 academic year at Stanton. It was established as a senior-freshman mentoring program, and marketed as such. The program saw 225 of the 311 members of the Stanton senior class voluntarily join the group and pledge to be a mentor. Because the program was put together rather quickly, there was “training” for the mentors. There was, however, a 30-minute meeting for all the mentors discussing the mission of the program, the responsibilities of being a mentor, and the expectations. Andrew selected a leadership team of 10 mentors, and 5 of them spoke at the Freshman Orientation Assembly. He worked with guidance counselors to pinpoint students most in need of mentoring and then extended them personal invitations, pairing them with the most dedicated mentors. Sign-ups were collected and mentors were matched to the 208 mentees who joined.

The program kicked off a month into the school year with IGNITE’s first lunchtime meeting. Free pizza was served and the mentees were told to go to the auditorium where their mentors would be waiting to find them. The mentors were instructed to wait in the auditorium with their mentees’ names in hand, ready to greet them. The mentors were instructed to exchange contact information and begin the relationship by having informal conversations.

From that point on, IGNITE had about 3 more large, lunchtime meetings between mentors and mentees. These included a first semester recap meeting, an IGNITE gift day, and a concluding meeting at the end of the year. The mission of the program, because it did not have a lot of preparation/planning time, was to create a change in the atmosphere of the school because of the sheer energy and amount of people in the program, and to create the connections between seniors and freshmen, relying on the seniors to work to maintain the relationship in the face of limited continuity of events.

The results of the program were great. IGNITE saw a 65% decrease in dropout rate during its first year of existence and survey results indicating that 78% of the freshmen in IGNITE said that it gave the school a more supportive environment, 69% said that IGNITE made a positive difference in their transition to high school, and 76% said that IGNITE made them feel more comfortable and welcome than if the program did not exist. The initiative is still going strong at Stanton and was the inspiration for other initiatives in the southeast US.

*Here are two helpful links:
www.stantoncollegeprep.org/news/IGNITE_InformationalBook.pdf and
http://www.dosomething.org/project/ignite-senior-freshman-mentoring-program

IGNITE Hillside

IGNITE Hillside has been operating since 2002. During the first semester at Hillside, the mentor team elected officers, participated in five Mentor meetings, and led four Large Group meetings with the freshmen. The Large Group meetings started with a “meet and
greet” type of event that allowed freshmen and upperclassmen to casually get to know one another. After that, freshmen signed up to be mentees and have been attending the more structured, focused monthly Large Group meetings ever since. The mentors also occasionally speak at freshmen classes in order to show their support and encourage freshmen to be a part of IGNITE. At the last Large Group meeting of the semester, I was excited to see Aaron, IGNITE president and a high school sophomore, smoothly run a discussion between mentors and mentees about everything from drugs to sex to fights to academics.

The following semester led to some challenges with attendance of mentees. While no formal evaluation project has been done, we have seen IGNITE’s success in talking with mentors and mentees after the year and hearing the positive feedback from Ms. Bostick, the program advisor and guidance counselor at Hillside. From hour-long conversations about our favorite basketball players to discussions about what college is like, our team of college students and the high schoolers truly bonded. It all culminated with our end of the year hangout at Duke; we had lunch together, explored the Duke Chapel just before a wedding, snuck into the Basketball Museum, and much more!
Worksheet #1: Freshman Year

Make a list of any challenge that you can think of (at home, at school, with friends) that teenagers may face. Once you complete your list, go back and star the ones that you personally experienced or had a close friend/relative experience.

Reflect on what you starred. What advice would have been helpful to you, during your first year of high school, in dealing with some of these challenges? Next, reflect on what you didn’t star. What about your experiences made it so that you didn’t face those challenges?
The role of a mentor

Before discussing the role of a mentor, it is important to define the term. Webster Dictionary defines a mentor as “a trusted counselor or guide.” The peer mentor’s goal is to help “guide the younger mentee’s development in interpersonal skills and self-esteem.” Words associated with the term mentor are usually friend, coach, ally, or role model.

Here are some of the main roles of a mentor:

- **Provide academic support:** A mentor should encourage smart academic choices and set an example for effort and hard work in the classroom. A mentor should be aware of the tutoring and afterschool resources if his/her mentee is struggling.
- **Be a role model:** A role should set an example through his/her actions. Qualities of a mentor include his/her responsible strong values, hard work and determination in the classroom, and ability to make the right choices.
- **Be attentive to mentee’s needs:** Mentors can “fill the empty spaces in these mentees’ lives with dependable, sincere, and consistent attention and concern”.
- **Be accountable:** Most important, a mentor must fulfill all obligations and be present at all gatherings. Accountability is necessary to build a trusting relationship.
- **Listen:** Many mentees have few people who will listen to them, so it is important to be that person for your mentee. Mentors must be active listeners and always show interest without judging. Although mentors should share their own values and have a conversation with their mentees, it is important to first and foremost listen to what they have to say.

A mentor is not a:

- Surrogate parent
- Therapist or counselor
- Social worker

You have not been trained in dealing with your mentees’ serious and personal issues. You are meant to listen to their stories, be supportive, and provide them a positive example and a reliable relationship. You should never treat this as a job. That will be apparent to the mentee and will negatively affect your relationship with him/her. Treat your relationship as you would treat any other friendship. “Mentors should seek to develop equality in the relationship through mutual respect, encouragement, and openness.”

Inappropriate behaviors for a mentor:

- Revealing any private information about your mentee to other people (unless the information is life-threatening, then talk to a counselor)
- Not showing up to meetings
- Not showing interest—talking to other mentors, texting, etc. during meetings

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8 Adapted from *Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors* for “Be A Mentor Program”.
Worksheet #2: What would you do?

1. What would you do if your mentee did not show up to the initial meeting?

2. How would you deal with your mentee if he/she exhibited rude behavior?

3. How would you deal with your mentee if he/she were not interested in the discussion questions?

4. What would you do if your mentee were not very talkative during the initial meetings?
The mentor-mentee relationship

Connecting mentors with mentees is a crucial element of any program. In general, however, the key to a successful match is NOT the degree of similarity between the mentor and the partner. The key is the mentor’s ability to tune in to, understand and accept what the partner is experiencing.10

The mentor-mentee relationship goes through three stages:11

- Developing Rapport and Building Trust
  - Mentees may be slow to give their trust, expecting inconsistency and lack of commitment, due to past experiences with adults. The mentor's trustworthiness and commitment may be tested, particularly when youth are from unstable backgrounds where adults have repeatedly disappointed them. During the testing period, mentors can expect missed calls, missed meetings, or angry behavior.
  - How to deal with this: Be accountable. Be on time for meetings and follow through with promises made to your mentees. Successful mentors are those that regularly contact their mentees, rather than waiting for mentees to contact them.12
  - Mentors must also ensure confidentiality. Nothing the mentee tells you will be discussed unless there is threat of physical harm to the mentee or to others.

- Setting and Reaching Goals
  - Once you gain the mentee’s trust, the relationship becomes less rocky. The next phase is to focus on setting short-term goals. It is important that the mentor has the resources necessary or has access to them in order to achieve a fit between what the mentee wants to learn/accomplish and what the mentor can teach/share.

- Bringing Closure to the Relationship
  - IGNITE mentor-mentee relationships last for at least a year. After the school year is up, they can continue in a more informal and sociable manner, as that of a friendship, or they can end; this often will depend on the feasibility given the mentor and mentee’s future plans. If the relationship will end, there are several steps to ensure a positive close to the relationship:
    - Use the closure process as a means to recall mentee’s progress and strengths.
    - Help your mentee grow from the process; reassure them about what they have learned and are capable of.
    - Discuss some positive actions and directions for the future and reassure youth about your confidence in them.
    - Mutually agree about how, when, or if you will stay in touch.
    - Follow through on that commitment.

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10 Taken from “Mentor Program Tips” from Mentors: Peer Resources, http://www.mentors.ca/mentortips.html.
11 Adapted from Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors for “Be A Mentor Program.”
Worksheet #3: Your Role as a Mentor

1. Can you think of any other roles of a mentor besides what has already been discussed?

2. Which of these roles can you see yourself excelling in? Which of these roles will be most difficult for you?

3. What can you do to improve so that you fulfill your roles as mentor?
A mentor’s responsibilities and duties

As an IGNITE mentor, you will be responsible for attending all regular gatherings (once every two weeks, with some exceptions depending on program location). In these gatherings, you will be expected to pair up with your mentee. These gatherings will either be free form or structured. If the meeting is free form, you will be expected to have regular conversations with your mentee. The goal is to listen and let the mentee take the lead. *During these meetings, don’t push your mentee to talk about a certain topic or issue. Don’t pry. Even if the conversation doesn’t seem to be especially meaningful, regular conversations allow for building a real and positive relationship between you and your mentee.*

If the gathering is structured, this means that the meeting will focus on a specific issue or skill-set important to the first-year transition. Most likely, discussion questions will be provided related to the issue of that meeting. You are responsible for keeping the conversation on track and sticking to the questions. Although the questions serve as a starting point for a deeper conversation, you want to make sure your conversation centers on the main theme.

You will also be expected to meet at least once a month outside of the gatherings. These meetings can occur during lunch, before school, or after school. These meetings are informal and meant to define the mentor and mentee’s relationship as a friendship. During these meetings, treat it as you would be hanging out with a friend. Ensure that the meetings feel natural and fun for them, and work on developing that trust as a friend.

Possible activities for you and your mentee during outside meetings:13
- **Talk.** Tell your youth those things that you wish you had known when you were in high school. You can do this anywhere, any time – over lunch, walking in the park, on the phone – whatever works.
- **Ask questions.** Teenagers need somebody to ask, “What do you want to do after high school?” and “What’s your plan for how to get there?” They will also need help answering those questions.
- **Tutor.** Mentors should feel free to help youth with homework. Getting involved with their curriculum is a good way to relate to youth and gain insight into the educational program. Mentors may also arrange for someone else to tutor the youth.
- **Attend youth activities.** If your youth is involved in extracurricular activities, is employed, or is involved in activities outside of the school environment, attend those functions, when appropriate, to show support.
- **Do things in groups.** Mentors should be encouraged to join in activities with other mentors and youth. Participants in mentor programs enjoy meeting, interacting, and sharing experiences with one another.

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13 Adapted from *Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors* for “Be A Mentor Program.”
Worksheet #4: Listening Habits

Complete the following activity.14

Directions: Read this list, and place a check in front of each habit that you now have, even if you use that habit only a third to a half of the time. Then, re-read the habits you have checked, and place two checks in front of those habits that you think you perform almost all of the time that you spend listening, perhaps 75-100% of your listening time.

1. I prepare myself for listening by focusing my thoughts on the speaker and the expected topic and committing my time and energy to listen.
2. I ask questions about what I have just heard before letting the speaker know what I heard and understood.
3. I follow the speaker by reviewing what he or she has said, concentrating on what the speaker is saying and anticipating what he or she is going to say.
4. I analyze what I am hearing and try to interpret it to get the real meaning before I let the speaker know what I heard and understood.
5. I look at the speaker’s face, eyes, body posture, and movement, and I listen to his/her other vocal cues.
6. I think about other topics and concerns while listening.
7. I listen for what is not being said, as well as for what is being said.
8. I fake attention to the speaker, especially if I’m busy or if I think I know what the speaker is going to say.
9. I show in a physical way that I am listening, and I try to help set the speaker at ease.
10. I listen largely for the facts and details, more than I listen for ideas and reasons.
11. I am aware of my own facial, body, and vocal cues that I am using while listening.
12. I evaluate and judge the wisdom or accuracy of what I have heard before checking out my interpretation with the speaker.
13. I avoid sympathizing with the speaker and making comments like, “I know just what you mean — the same thing has happened to me,” and then telling my story before letting the speaker know what I heard and understood.
14. I find myself assuming that I know what the speaker is going to say before he or she has finished speaking.

15. I accept the emotional sentiment of the speaker.
16. I think up arguments to refute the speaker so that I can answer as soon as he or she finishes.
17. I use “echo” or “mirror” responses to feedback to the speaker specific words and phrases the speaker has used that I need clarified.
18. I am uncomfortable with and usually reject emotional sentiments of the speaker.
19. I paraphrase or summarize what I have heard before giving my point of view.
20. I am easily distracted by noise or by the speaker’s manner of delivery.

Place an X in the blank by each number you have double-checked.
1__ 3__ 5__ 7__ 9__ 11__ 13__ 15__ 17__ 19__
2__ 4__ 6__ 8__ 10__ 12__ 14__ 16__ 18__ 20__

Now you have an inventory of your effective listening habits (all of the odd-numbered habits that you checked), your ineffective listening habits (all of the even-numbered habits that you checked), your most effective listening habits (all of the odd-numbered habits that you checked twice), and your most ineffective listening habits (all of the even-numbered habits that you checked twice)
Strategies in listening and communication

Barriers to effective listening\(^{15}\):

- Viewing a topic as uninteresting.
- Criticizing a speaker’s appearance or her/his communication style (verbal cues, nonverbal cues, or both) rather than responding to her/his message.
- Listening only for facts.
- Tolerating, creating, or failing to adjust to distractions.
- Faking attention.
- Listening only to what is easy to understand
- Permitting personal prejudice or deep-seated convictions to impair comprehension.

Ways to improve your listening skills:\(^{16}\)

- Develop a desire (motivation) to listen, regardless of your level of interest in the subject matter.
- Infer the speaker’s intent or purpose: what is the speaker implying or suggesting about her/his goals or needs?
- Determine your own purpose in every listening situation.
- Become aware of your own biases and attitudes. What words or ideas or beliefs function as “shock” words to you?
- Analyze your listening habits (both productive and unproductive).
- Be mentally and physically prepared to listen.
- Delay judgments; hear the speaker out before you make judgments.
- Listen not only for facts, but for main ideas, principles, concepts, and patterns.

Rules of communication:

- Make your communication positive.
- Be clear and specific.
- Recognize that each individual sees things from a different point of view.
- Be open and honest about your feelings.
- Be supportive and accepting.
- Do not preach or lecture.
- Learn to listen.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Allow time for your mentee to talk without interruption.
- Show you are interested in what he/she has to say.
- Listen for a feeling tone as well as for words.
- Ask questions when you do not understand.
- Set examples rather than giving advice.