Because just one mentor can change a life.

Official IGNITE Quick Start Guide
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*

**What is **IGNITE**’s Mission?**

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

**How does **IGNITE** Work?**

* A team of diverse upperclassmen mentors is created, by application or recommendation, and then trained on necessary responsibilities, skills, and knowledge
* Freshmen students are recruited as mentees, either through marketing programs to all Freshmen or through specific recommendations from guidance counselors
* Mentors and Mentees meet at the first IGNITE meeting, begin to get to know each other, and then complete the IGNITE Matching Survey
* Subsequent Bi-Weekly IGNITE Hangouts focus on different aspects of the adjustment to high school. The Hangouts provide a safe, welcoming place for the freshmen and upperclassmen to discuss anything. Half of the meetings are structured, with specific topics for discussion, and half are unstructured, simply providing an environment for mentor pairs to bond.
* Mentors also meet with freshmen outside of the Hangouts and chat with them via email, social media, phone, etc.
* End of the Year IGNITE Celebration to congratulate the freshmen and encourage them to become mentors

**How Can I Start **IGNITE** at My School?**

* Follow along in our Quick Start Guide or Full Curriculum Guide to learn how you can start an IGNITE program
* 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
* Note that 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.
Implementing IGNITE at Your School

IGNITE relies on the work of the high school team of mentors and the program’s advisors (staff, teachers, or guidance counselors at the school).

*Upperclassmen Mentor Responsibilities*
- Attend all training sessions
- Be a part of summer and orientation-week presentations
- Attend all bi-weekly large group meetings
- Meet with mentee groups once a month on their time, and generally keep in consistent touch with mentees
- Attend end of year celebration

*Program Advisor Responsibilities*
- Be actively involved in working with mentors and in attending and helping with meetings
- Serve as the points of contact for mentors and mentees on a day-to-day basis
- Help to maintain the structure of the program from year to year
- Be in consistent contact with the mentors and the IGNITE team

The following are the major steps to beginning the program. More detailed outlines of each step are provided in our Full Implementation Guide.

1) **Spring Semester: Selecting and Training Mentors**
   Options for Selecting Mentors:
   - Accept Applications from Upperclassmen
   - Ask Other Teachers and Guidance Counselors for Recommendations

   You can select mentors in the manner that you think is best, but we recommend looking for committed and responsible students with an interest in volunteering.

   Training:
   - Four Meetings Covering the Following Topics:
     - Getting to know one another and laying out a vision for IGNITE
     - Responsibilities of mentorship, resources for freshmen already in place at the high school
     - Topics of Discussion for large group meetings and the mentors’ specific commitments throughout the year
     - Marketing in the summer/ fall, deciding how best to reach the freshmen at your school, elections of student leaders for the mentor team

   A full training curriculum is provided in our Mentor Training Manual.

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

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) School Year: Implementation
IGNITE consists biweekly meetings, alternating between structured and unstructured meetings.

Structured 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

Topics for Structured Meetings Include:
• Ways to Get Involved on Campus and Social Life
• Study Habits and Time Management
• Stress Management
• Evaluating the First Semester, Ways to Improve
• Preparing for the Future – Thinking about College
• Social Life and Supporting One Another
• Transition to Leadership on Campus
• End of the Year Reflection

Discussion Questions for each of these topics is provided in our Full Implementation Guide. Mentors and Student Leaders also have the opportunity to brainstorm new topics during training.

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.