

Kick-Off Mentors Council Rock North Pilots New Student Mentoring Program

Each year Council Rock initiates new ways to make transitioning easier for incoming freshman. This year Ms. Pat Wargo, the C.A.R.E.S. coordinator at Council Rock North, was awarded a \$1,000 grant from the Council Rock Education Foundation for a comprehensive transition and mentoring program to be piloted at Council Rock North. Kick off Mentors (KOMS) is a professional mentor training program that establishes a core group of upper class student mentors who will make a positive impact on the school and change the lives of many of the incoming students.

This program provides an interactive orientation day right before the start of school and year-long connections between mentors and new students. At Council Rock North, volunteers were asked to apply for these mentoring positions. Each student who was approved had to meet certain criteria. There are 114 mentors and 19 adult leaders who volunteer to oversee the program. Each advisor and mentor signed a contract that they would be present on all training days.

The goals of the Kick-Off Mentors program are to:

- Provide new students with continued reinforcement of positive values
- Provide a continuing source of information as new challenges are encountered
- Maintain the mentors in a position to be positive role models
- Provide a positive atmosphere that will encourage students to stay in school
- Monitor progress and act as a safety net for new students
- Create liaisons between teachers, counselors, and administrators

The program began with an intense, one-day seminar in which professional KOMS Trainers trained the Kick-Off Coordinator Team on all of the logistics needed to implement the program. The trainer then came to CR North for a day in August to train the mentors. This was an exciting and interactive day, full of fun leadership and team building activities, and exercises to develop the skills needed to effectively work with the new students. The training session included:

- Understanding and developing school goals for the mentoring program
- Leadership training and problem solving activities
- Team building activities for student and teacher mentors
- Activities to improve listening skills and other mentoring skills
- Discussion of some of the legal and ethical issues involved in mentoring
- Developing and rehearsing activities for the Kick-Off Orientation Day
- Discussing the year-long mentoring sessions

Students also met for an additional half-day session and came in to decorate the freshman homeroom doors just before school started.

Mentors are each given five to seven students and work within teams. They run summer tours at the school. They go to homerooms during school and are also available to the new students as needed. Mentors will also tutor new students and will work in the school store to earn money to cover additional costs for the program.

The first day of school, groups of mentors, in their bright orange KOMS tee shirts, had several events scheduled to help new students navigate the layout of school building, locate lockers, follow their schedule, and find the offices of key staff members throughout the building. The day included a scavenger hunt, to familiarize new students with the building, and a pep rally.

Positive results were evident; there were far less students getting lost following their schedule, less students in the wrong classrooms and less locker problems.

Information on the program is being shared with CRHS South as the program is perfected during this pilot year. The program will be evaluated and key data will be collected including:

- Attendance
- Discipline referrals
- C.A.R.E.S. referrals
- Activity participation
- Grades

The program will also look into the benefits that being a mentor may provide a student. They can become involved, learn leadership skills and become more responsible citizens. Time spent with the program outside the school day can accrue L.I.N.C.S. hours.

Next year, flyers will be distributed to 8th graders with their report cards, to let them know about the program, and mentors may be asked to go into the middle schools and explain the program to incoming freshman.

Citizens For Education applauds Mrs. Wargo, the KOMS Team and the Council Rock Education Foundation, for providing this program as a key transition to the high school. For more information about the program visit the KOMS website at www.koprogram.com.