



PEER GROUP CONNECTION-HIGH SCHOOL

Ensuring That All 9th Graders Make a Successful Transition into High School

SUMMARY

Peer Group Connection-High School (PGC-HS) is an evidence-based and school-based program that supports and eases students' transition from middle to high school. This program taps into the power of older students to create a nurturing environment for incoming freshmen. PGC-HS is the Center for Supportive Schools' seminal peer leadership program, and has been implemented with a 70% sustainability rate in more than 175 high schools since 1979. A four-year longitudinal, randomized-control study conducted by Rutgers University with funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found, among other major results, that PGC-HS improves the graduation rates of student participants by nine percentage points and cuts by half the number of male students who would otherwise drop out. PGC-HS has been recognized by the National Dropout Prevention Center as a Model Program demonstrating *Strong Evidence of Effectiveness*, its highest effectiveness rating.

PROGRAM DESIGN

PGC-HS includes a year-long, credit-bearing, leadership course for high school juniors and seniors that meets daily and is taught by school faculty. Through their leadership course, these juniors and seniors become trained peer leaders who meet once per week with freshmen in outreach sessions designed to strengthen relationships among students across grades.

- PGC-HS's launch begins with the assembly of a Stakeholder Team of administrators, faculty, parents, and community members who receive the training, tools, and resources necessary to implement and sustain PGC-HS effectively year after year.
- Carefully selected faculty members participate in an 11-day intensive train-the-trainer course over a 1½-year period to learn how to run the program and teach the daily leadership course.
- As part of their regular school schedule, carefully selected juniors and seniors are trained in the daily leadership development class to become peer leaders and serve as positive role models, discussion leaders, and mentors for ninth graders.
- These peer leaders work in pairs to co-lead groups of 10-14 freshmen in outreach sessions once each week in which the freshmen participate in engaging, hands-on activities and simulations in supportive environments that enable them to practice essential academic, social, and emotional skills, such as critical thinking, goal setting, decision-making, time management, teamwork, and communication.
- During the second half of the school year, freshmen utilize their newly acquired skills to plan and execute a community service project, while continuing to participate in weekly outreach sessions.
- PGC-HS also includes a parent involvement component. Peer leaders organize and facilitate Family Night events for freshmen and their parents/guardians.
- Beginning in year two, 10th grade students who participated in PGC-HS as freshmen the previous year participate in booster activities led by the junior/senior peer leaders. The booster component reinforces the learning from freshman outreach sessions.

Over time, PGC-HS can have a significant impact on all schools – whether they are located in urban, suburban, or rural communities – at a cost of only a few dollars per student.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Peer Group Connection-HS (PGC-HS) program, please contact Dr. Margo Ross, Senior Director of Development, at 609.252.9300 x113, or mross@supportiveschools.org. You can also visit our website at www.supportiveschools.org.