RELATIONSHIP-CENTERED SCHOOLS:

A FRAMEWORK

August 2021
Reimagining K-12 Education where, along with academic rigor, supportive relationships are prioritized.

School districts/schools integrate a relationship-centered schools strategy and action plan into their overall teaching & learning strategy for supporting K-12 students.

This strategy and action plan come out of a consultative process led by MENTOR National & Affiliates.
Access to…

▪ Academic rigor
▪ Supportive and caring relationships

With both prioritized…

▪ ALL Students are known by at least one adult in school;
▪ Families are being engaged & prioritized by schools;
▪ Teachers are setting high/rigorous academic standards, and building supportive relationships with all students they teach; and,
▪ Administrators are transforming school culture so everyone feels that they belong & are part of a community.
VISION

- All youth have access to a web of support from caring adults and peers across educational settings, school and after-school environments, and can form empowering relationships which:
  - promote their pursuit of their passions, skills and interests
  - enable their access to and exploration of spaces where these can be pursued
  - help them overcome personal and/or institutional obstacles
  - build their social capital and networks
RELATIONSHIP-CENTERED
WHY RELATIONSHIPS?

- All students need:
  – Champions

Students would benefit from strengthening relationship ties and building webs of support that allow them to meet their goals head on.
MENTORING MINDSET

Intentional: I See You
- Always prioritize youth’s needs
- Have a positive and respectful view of youth and their families
- Honor the young person’s full self

Supportive: I Got You
- Commit fully to the relationship
- Be authentic and honest
- Do no harm

Developmental: I’m Here to Help
- Consider a goal-orientation
- Honor and strengthen the youth’s web of support
- Take a “critical mentoring” approach
- Be willing to grow and learn yourself

Communal: We’re In This Together
- Leverage community resources and role models
- Care about all young people’s circumstances
RELATIONSHIPS IN SCHOOLS: CREATING A WEB OF SUPPORT

- Mentoring in school-based programs
- Mentoring outside of school-based programs
- Formal group relationships
- Connecting/networking relationships
- Learning relationships
RELATIONSHIP-CENTERED SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

- Data Driven
- Relationship-Rich
- Exposure to People, Places, and Environments
- Experiential Learning
- Youth Centered
SUGGESTED RELATIONSHIP-CENTERED COMPONENTS

- All students experience higher quality, intentional, critically conscious, culturally responsive, healing informed relationships.

- Training for Youth on Building Social Capital & Networks
- Expanding Out-of-School-Time Opportunities, including Parent and Community Involvement
- Creating or Scaling Experiential, Project-based or Competency-based Learning Opportunities
- Providing Professional Development for Teachers and Staff on Relationship Skills
- Creating more opportunities for youth to build relationships in & outside of school
- Reviewing & Revising Policies to Ensure Development & Support of Positive Youth/Adult Relationships
- Measuring and Tracking of Student Relationship Quality & Web of Support
- Strengthening & Scaling Existing or Developing New School-Based Mentoring Services
SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

- **Quantity of relationships** measures who is in a student’s network over time.

- **Quality of relationships** measures how students experience the relationships they are in and the extent to which those relationships are meeting their relational, developmental, and instrumental needs.

- **Structure of networks** gauges the variety of people a student knows and how those people are themselves connected.

- **Ability to mobilize relationships** assesses a student’s ability to seek out help when needed and to activate different relationships.

** These are based on measurement outcomes proposed by The Christensen Institute’s Julia Freeland Fisher and Dr. Mahnaz Charania, They authored the following paper: The missing metrics: Emerging practices for measuring students’ relationships and networks.
LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

▪ Schools have a relationship-centered culture.
▪ Schools dedicate resources (financial, physical plan, human) to relationship strategy.
▪ Students graduate from school with robust, supportive networks & social capital.
▪ Students graduate with high levels of social and emotional well-being
▪ Students graduate at higher rates than previous cohorts.
ACTS AS A CONSULTANT

▪ MENTOR and MENTOR Affiliates consult school districts and/or schools

▪ Working with district and school champions, MENTOR:
  ✓ Conducts a Landscape Analysis
  ✓ Facilitates a Design Lab
  ✓ Develops an Action Plan
  ✓ Provides Coaching and TA
  ✓ Assists in creating assessment & evaluation plan
REQUIRED: YOUTH VOICE

- Hear from youth during Landscape Analysis
  - Focus Group Discussions
  - Student surveys
  - Interviews

- Youth participate in Design Lab

- Youth actions are included in Action Plan
COACHING & TA

- Coaching and Technical Assistance, which will incorporate relationship-based strategies into the school culture and system, will include:
  
  ✓ Training for district/school staff and mentors
  ✓ Program Development, including assisting with relationship mapping, as well as with the assessment and evaluation during the first year of implementing the Action Plan.
  ✓ Leverage partners, connecting school districts and schools to possible partners.