RESEARCH
Volusia County Schools is the 13th largest school district in Florida with more than 62,500 students. While the district has a “B” rating in the state’s accountability system, there is also a high mobility rate with 65% of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch and a significant problem with chronic absenteeism. Combine all of this with the COVID-19 pandemic that included students rotating in and out of face-to-face instruction, and you have a perfect storm for students in need of support for academics, social/emotional care, and generally assimilating back into a “normal” structured school day.

Research shows that mentoring has a positive impact on student learning, behavior, and attendance. However, the number of community volunteers/mentors was severely impacted by the previous year’s restrictions on visitors and volunteers. The number of active volunteers dropped to an all-time low (from 26,726 in 2019-2020 to 2,663 in 2020-2021). At the beginning of the 2021-22 school year the restrictions were lifted, but volunteers were slow to come back.

The school district’s newly adopted strategic plan identified mentoring as a strategy to improve school culture and address SEL concerns. Ideally, students would have a positive relationship with at least one adult on campus. Due to the significant drop in volunteers, the district launched a mentoring program encouraging employees to volunteer to mentor a student for 30 minutes/week during the school day.

PLANNING
Principals were critical to the success of the program. For the program to work, a mentor coordinator needed to be identified at each of our 70 schools. These coordinators would be responsible for selecting students, obtaining parent permission, and matching the student to a mentor.

Recruitment of employees (approximately 6,500) was also needed at the school and district level. Tactics included a video message from the superintendent, social media posts, website articles, e-mails to all employees, meetings with department heads and their staff, a brief training PowerPoint for employees to view on their own time, and a news release to publicly announce the initiative.

The program was named the League of Mentors with a superhero theme. The facilitator for volunteer/partnership programs was responsible for developing the marketing plan and collateral, as well as preparing the timeline for rolling out the program. All work was internal and no additional budget beyond staff time was established.

IMPLEMENTATION
The superintendent’s video message debuted at the Administrative Institute in July 2021, which was attended by more than 300 school and district administrators. The video was then provided for principals/departments heads to play at their Back-to-School faculty/staff meetings. Flyers were printed in full color for display and distribution via email. The district’s website featured information regarding how to become a mentor with a link to the recruitment video. Several all-staff emails were sent to every employee encouraging participation and outlining three simple steps to complete prior to being matched with a student.

EVALUATION
As of March 2022, we have concluded three-fourths of the school year and are still receiving inquiries from employees about the program. There are currently more than 340 employee mentors trained and matched with students. Some schools are rock stars with more than 30 mentors, but others need more assistance to get the program off the ground. We are making progress by reaching out to them individually. The pandemic has left many teachers and others feeling overwhelmed, but we are hopeful that our employees who have chosen to mentor have felt the positive effects of the program and will influence others to join the League of Mentors. An annual survey will be conducted at the end of the school year to determine improvement in school culture and climate in alignment with the strategic plan.
Recruitment Video (408 views): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGkQa7mLv7A

Videos for National Mentoring Month (January 2022):
- Indian River Elementary
- Horizon Elementary
- Deltona High
- Westside Elementary
- MASHUP

Photo of employee mentor with his mentee:
Social Media Images/Sample Posts:

Volusia County Schools

October 18, 2023

The League of Mentors is off to a great start this school year! All VCS employees - teachers, support and maintenance personnel, bus operators, district-based employees, and administrators can sign up to mentor a student once a week for 20 minutes. Studies show that young people who have a caring adult in their lives, in addition to a parent or guardian, assures them that they are not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges. Listening and encouraging goes a long way to help keep students on the right track.

#mentorshipmatters #mondaysmotivation
Enterprise Elementary School

Volusia County Schools

January 14

It's national #MentoringMonth!
Listen to VCS employees and students share the many benefits of their mentor-mentee relationships.

#mentorshipmatters
Training PowerPoint:

League of Mentors!

Training for VCS Employees
Additional information is provided in the NOTES section of each slide.

VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS

Flyer:

Be a Hero
Be a Mentor!

Volunteer to mentor a student

ALL EMPLOYEES ARE ENCOURAGED TO JOIN THE LEAGUE OF MENTORS!

Interested?

GETTING STARTED IS EASY!

1. Take the online training.
2. Complete the online application to volunteer.
3. Contact the Mentor Coordinator at the school of your choice.
4. Meet with your mentee weekly at the agreed upon time.
5. Log your time spent mentoring.

30 minutes per week
During student's lunch
No experience necessary

For More Information: Nancy Vealt, Facilitator Volunteer/Partnership Programs ext. 38361

VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS