

In recent months, middle school students have been allowed to participate in high school cross country running. I am proposing to develop a mentoring program with the middle and high school runners in regards to their physical performance and behavior to make this transition as smooth as possible. This program will help the middle school children to understand what behavior is expected on our team. Because there are many changes for younger athletes competing at a higher level with high school students, this type of transition can be very difficult for some and it can increase the probability of them acting out, becoming stressed, or possibly not wanting to compete. These middle school athletes will be held to higher academic, social and athletic expectations than they have previously experienced in a middle school setting and in a youth sports setting. Having an assigned mentor creates a welcoming environment. Quoted in Education week by Gewertz, 2017, Elaine Allensworth, the director of the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research says, "That first year is especially powerful, because it's the time students are developing their mindsets about whether they belong and can succeed." Among secondary education students, peer mentoring can help develop social-emotional skills, it can give them a sense of responsibility for and accountability to each other, and has the potential to create relationships important to young people that may otherwise ignore adults as a result of defiance (Gewertz, 2017; Blad, 2017). A study done at the University of Windsor in Windsor Canada, on the comparison of the satisfaction levels of athletes with mentors vs. athletes without mentors, show that the mentored had a much higher satisfaction levels in their overall athletic experienced compared to the non-mentored. Overall those mentored reported to feel more satisfied with their athletic performance than non-mentored (Hoffmann and Laughead). It seems that no matter the mentoring type, people feel more successful, accepted and happier when having a mentor mentee relationship.

In order to add a mentoring program to my school, I will need to contact the school principals of the high school and the middle school as well as the athletic director. With their permission, feedback and guidance, I will be able to adapt the program to meet the needs of our upcoming athletes. Within the

program I plan to focus on team building strategies, motivational support and teaching students how to model stretching, running form, and cool down exercises. A mentoring instruction program will be created around these focus areas in order to teach the mentors how to do their job effectively and properly. After the mentors have been trained at the beginning of the season, they will be responsible for mentoring their mentees.

The overall goal is to create a mentoring program that can potentially be used in other sports across high schools that are allowing middle school athletes to compete. This program should be a positive model for other schools to use to aid in the transition and overall experience for younger athletes. If this is done properly, it should create a comfortable, positive, and overall smooth transition for all involved. In order to make this available to others, a website will be created that includes all parts of the program. For example, it will have the type of mentoring, how it was implemented, and other helpful strategies.

I am still trying to determine what type of mentor/mentee program that I want to implement. Will this be a assigned mentoring program, teamwide peer mentoring, or will it be chosen by the mentor and mentees? I intend to do further research in these types of programs to determine which I would like to implement in my school.