

Did you know?! January was National Mentoring Month. National Mentoring Month is an annual mentoring campaign nationwide dedicated to celebrating and elevating the mentoring movement and the power of relationships. The National Mentoring month campaign is spearheaded by the Harvard School of Public Health, MENTOR and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Research confirms that quality mentoring relationships have powerful positive effects on young people in a variety of personal, academic and professional situations. Ultimately, mentoring connects a young person to personal growth, development, and social and economic opportunity.

Additionally, research shows that mentoring in schools has significant positive effects on two early warning indicators that a student may be falling off-track:

High levels of absenteeism (*Kennelly & Monrad, 2007*)

- Students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class. (*Public/Private Ventures Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*)

Recurring behavior problems (*Thurlow, Sinclair & Johnson, 2002*)

- Young adults who face an opportunity gap but have a mentor are 55% more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor. (*The Mentoring Effect, 2014*)
- In addition to better school attendance and a better chance of going on to higher education, mentored youth maintain better attitudes toward school. (*The Role of Risk, 2013*)

While many teachers and students have mentoring relationships naturally, USD 353 has gone a step further to incorporate mentoring into our schools. Wellington Middle School has built in mentoring time in students schedule through a course called Knight Time. Students keep their Knight Time mentor teacher for the duration of their years at WMS. Students set SMART Goals with their Knight Time mentor teachers and review progress of these goals weekly. Students also plan and conduct their student led conference with their Knight time mentor teacher.

“Through positive mentoring relationships, we meet students where they are and provide focused and specific instruction and projects to strengthen areas of weakness and enrich and stretch their talents and strengths,” says Dr. Janet Doud, WMS Principal.

At Wellington High School mentoring time is also built into the schedule through a course called Crusader Connections. Just like at the middle school, students are assigned the same Crusader Connections mentor teacher for all four years they are in High School. Students check in with

their Crusader Connections mentor teachers daily to monitor their progress on school work and to connect.

“The students really seem to enjoy having the one on one time to talk about their goals, their progress, and whatever else they need to talk about. Several of my students have made amazing strides on their schoolwork from the beginning of the year, because through the mentoring process we have been able to find resources to help them.” says Melissa Buchanan, CTE and business teacher.

Darla Carroll, language arts teacher, likes to celebrate the progress and accomplishments of her Crusader Connections class with parties. “We have celebrated with two parties first semester where everyone brought something or contributed to a taco party and then, a snack table. They're a great bunch and I enjoy them and all of their individual quirks. I worry about each one and the struggles he or she faces and it's rewarding to see them take on the challenges they do as they work through each week.”

Rane Case, CTE teacher, says that mentoring is an ongoing process where students are pushed to evaluate themselves and are held accountable. She says “ It reminds me of when I was taking classes for my Master's degree, and the professors would continually push me to re-evaluate my work and all I wanted to do was say I am done with that assignment!” She is particularly proud of one young student who struggled last year with accountability. This year, he has made amazing progress, has opened up to her more, and even stepped up as a leader for the other students in her Crusader Connections class.

As National Mentoring Month concludes, we want to take a minute to recognize and celebrate the work our teachers are doing to not only teach, but mentor our students.