

# Vestal High School



## Mentoring Program Guidebook

2012-2013

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## Vestal High School Mentoring Program Mission and Goals

Vestal High School has established a student-to-student Mentoring Program. This program, which was entirely initiated by the student leadership teams, partners ninth-grade students with juniors and seniors.

### **MISSION**

The Vestal High School Mentoring Program reinforces our belief that Vestal High School is a community of learners who support and care for each other. We believe that all incoming students should have a positive environment in which to learn and thrive. Our mission is to create a warm and welcoming school climate for all students, which maximizes their potential for success.

### **GOALS**

- Improve the transition from middle to high school.
- Provide a greater sense of community and belonging.
- Foster respectful interactions between all groups of students; thereby reducing misunderstandings and conflicts.
- Increase school pride.
- Create a safe learning environment.
- Model good relationships between upperclassmen and freshmen.
- Increase students' comfort with academic expectations and social relationships.
- Help students navigate the high school campus.
- Create opportunities for incoming freshmen to meet new students.
- Support each other through successes and struggles.
- Promote school unity.
- Develop leadership skills.

## Roles, Rules and Responsibilities

### **What is a mentor?**

A mentor is –

a friend, motivator, guide, coach, tutor, resource, confidant, listener, teacher, supporter, advisor, sounding board, network, negotiator, role model.

A mentor is not –

a therapist, counselor, bad influence, banker, mentee's sidekick, private secretary, taxi, social worker, parent, disciplinarian, psychologist, a homework doer, or flawless idol.

### **Characteristics and Qualities of a Mentor:**

- Willing listener
- Encouraging and supportive
- Patient and flexible
- Tolerant and respectful of individual differences
- Open minded
- Responsible/Reliable
- Committed
- Genuine/Interested
- Friendly
- Willing to take the lead and reach out
- Confident
- Personable
- Persistent
- Mature
- Kind
- Helpful
- Good student

### **Responsibilities of a Mentor:**

- Be committed to mentoring.
- Help and meet regularly with your freshmen or new student during the summer and school year.
- Give tips and work with your mentee when needed (throughout the year).
- Attend freshman orientation.
- Invite to school activities and support their participation in extracurricular activities.
- Attend all mentor training sessions both in the summer and during the school year.
- Take the lead and be confident in your leadership.
- Establish methods of communication.

**Responsibilities of a Mentor (continued):**

- Be available for questions, etc.
- Communicate with a staff advisor when needed.
- Build confidence in mentee.

**Rules:**

- Do use the 7 habits training; for example: Seek first to understand and then to be understood; make regular deposits in mentee emotional bank accounts, etc.
- Do build respectful relationships with mentees.
- Do communicate once a week informally (ex: text, call, facebook) and meet face-to-face at least once every two weeks.
- Do respect mentees' traditions, customs, etc., that may be different from yours.
- Do maintain appropriate confidentiality. (Do disclose with appropriate staff any illegal or dangerous actions and actions that may cause immediate harm or concern for self or others, etc.)
- Do not break confidentiality, except when appropriate, and then tell your teacher mentor or another appropriate staff member.
- May meet mentees at outside venues, such as the movies, bowling alley, park, etc.
- Do not drive or ride with mentees.
- Do not date mentees.
- Do not model poor choices and behaviors.
- Do not engage in school activities with one mentor without inviting the others.

**Who is a mentee?**

A mentee is any freshman or a student new to the Vestal High School

**Characteristics and Qualities of a Mentee:**

- Willing to meet with mentor.
- Committed to being mentored.
- Responsive to mentor's calls, texts, etc.
- Willing to ask questions when necessary.
- Willing to grow.
- Appreciative of differences.

## ***7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MENTORS***

### **Habit 1 - Be Proactive...**

- Plan every other week – set up opportunities to stay in contact with your mentees.
- Try doing one simple activity for yourself being proactive and share that practice with your mentees.
- Teach this habit – suggests ways your ninth-graders could plan ahead; share some of your trials and errors, challenges and successes when you first came to Vestal in your planning process.

### **Habit 2 - Begin with the End in Mind...**

- Remember the mentoring mission is to create a warm and welcoming climate for all students, which maximizes their potential for success.
- Share your “big rocks” stories in your school journey. Help your mentees sort their big and small rocks in the ninth-grade maze. Maybe you can help your mentees develop a road map for Vestal success.

### **Habit 3 - Put First Things First...**

- “Control, balance, do...” Remind your mentees that their journey requires changes and adjustments along the way.
- Look back over the mission and try to take each day and each situation one at a time.
- Share your hopes and struggles with the mentees. Show them your “flight plan” for eleventh grade and help them develop theirs.

### **Habit 4 - Think Win-Win Agreements**

- Review steps to solving problems.
- Talk about how to be a better listener.
- “Practice what you preach” with your mentees.

### **Habit 5 - Seek First to Understand...**

- Actively try to be a better listener and listen to others' concerns.
- Try to walk in the shoes of your mentees. Can you remember life in ninth grade? Was it so different than theirs?

### **Habit six - Synergize...**

- 1+1 can = more than 2, when we all work together.
- Can you and your mentees plan an activity or project to work on together?
- Together, try to learn from each other and look at things from different and new perspectives.
- Maybe together you will change the world or at least Vestal in 2012.

### **Habit 7 – Sharpen the Saw**

- Don't forget to do something fun for yourself.
- Laugh together!
- Suggest ways each mentee might enjoy life here at Vestal, like a movie, restaurant, mini golf, an athletic event, etc.

**Adapted from *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*; [www.FranklinCovey.com](http://www.FranklinCovey.com)**

## ACTIVE LISTENING/CONFLICT RESOLUTION

**"LISTEN OR YOUR TONGUE WILL MAKE YOU DEAF."**

*Native American proverb*

### What you see (Attending Skills)

### What you hear (Responding Skills)

Eye Contact  
Leaning forward a little or nodding  
Sitting still; no fidgeting or playing with stuff  
No interrupting  
Interested silence: giving a person time to respond

Verbal encouragers like "Tell me more," "Yeah"  
Agreeing with something a person has said  
Restating what someone says  
Reflecting what someone is feeling  
Asking open-ended questions like "What happened?" or "How do you feel about that?"

### ***It is easier for others to talk when I...***

1. Make good eye contact.
2. Am relaxed and show interest in the other person.
3. Listen attentively and don't interrupt.
4. Encourage the person to talk: "Can you say more about that?"
5. Try to see the issue from the other person's point of view.
6. Show respect for the other person, even if I disagree.
7. Don't give advice, lecture, judge or criticize.
8. Don't try to solve the problem for the other person.

## **"Steps to Solving a People Problem" - Better known as Conflict Resolution**

### **6 conflict-resolution styles some people use when problems arise:**

1. Directing/Controlling – "My way or the highway."
2. Collaborating – "Let's sit down and talk about it."
3. Compromising – "Let's both give a little" or "Something is better than nothing."
4. Accommodating – "Whatever you want is fine" or "It doesn't matter anyway."
5. Avoiding/Denying – "Let's skip it" or "Problem? I don't see a problem."
6. Appealing to the greater authority or a third party – "Help me out here."

### **Which style do you think a mentor should use to help resolve a conflict?**

### **Steps to solving a problem that might allow you to resolve disagreements peacefully:**

- Stop! The arguing...
- Identify the problem – Each person needs to state what is wrong in their own words. 'I feel when you do...'
- Brainstorm Solutions- Together list all possible solutions to the problem from both points of view.
- Pick a solution that all parties can live with – Win-Win.

Adapted from Educators for Social Responsibility; [esrnational.org](http://esrnational.org)

## **Bullying and Harassment**

You may want to talk to your mentees about bullying and harassment or a situation that may come up during the school year involving harassment. Here is some information you might use.

### **Information on Bullying/Cyber Bullying from the High School Code of Conduct**

**Bullying/Cyber Bullying:** Students may not intimidate, evoke fear or otherwise harass other students. Such behavior will not be tolerated and is a violation of the Code of Conduct. Bullying may include internet threats, on-line gaming, cyber bullying, text-messaged threats, instant messaging, e-mailing, name calling, unwanted physical contact, verbal or written insults, or otherwise demeaning behavior. Students should report all instances of bullying to a staff member or the SRO. Off-campus incidents of bullying/cyber bullying that impact the school day can be addressed through the Code of Conduct.

### **What You Can Do If You Are A Bystander To Bullying Or Harassment...**

1. Refuse to join in if you see someone being bullied or harassed.
2. Attempt to defuse bullying/harassment situations when you see them starting up.
  - a. Try to draw attention away from the targeted person.
  - b. If you feel safe, tell the perpetrator to stop.
3. Tell a teacher, parent or other responsible adult.
4. Offer your support to the person who has been bullied or harassed.

### **What You Can Do If You Are Being Bullied or Harassed...**

1. Talk to your parents or an adult you can trust, such as a teacher, school counselor or principal who can help you develop a plan to end the bullying/harassment and provide you with the support you need. If the first adult you approach is not receptive, find another adult who will support and help you.
2. Don't blame yourself for a bully's actions, but you can do a few things to help.
  - a. Do not retaliate against a bully or harasser.
  - b. Do not let the bully see how much he/she has upset you. If at all possible, stay calm and respond evenly and firmly or else say nothing and walk away.
  - c. Sometimes you can make a joke, laugh at yourself, and use humor to defuse a situation.
3. Act confident. Hold your head up, stand up straight, make eye contact and walk confidently.
4. Try to make friends with other students. A bully or harasser is more likely to leave you alone if you are with your friends.
5. Avoid situations where bullying can happen. Avoid areas that are isolated or unsupervised by adults and stick with friends as much as possible.
6. If necessary, take steps to rebuild your self-confidence. It is important to try to make new friendships with people who share your interests. Consider participating in extracurricular activities or joining a group outside of school.
7. Do not resort to violence or carry a weapon.



## Confidentiality

**When to Tell: I am not sure what to do. My mentee said:**

*"I'm being harassed at school... I'm afraid to go to school... I'm being stalked... I'm not eating... I want to die... I'm running away from home... I think I'm pregnant... My boyfriend hit me... I'm smoking weed... My parents are getting physical when they fight... All I want to do is sleep... What's the point of going on..."*

There may be instances when, as a mentor, you encounter a situation with your mentee that calls for outside help and intervention. As a mentor, you must remember your role and your responsibilities.

Remember, mentors are NOT:

- Trainer therapists
- Counselors
- Social Workers
- Parents
- Psychologists

Never promise a mentee that you will keep a secret. You never know what he/she might disclose. You must report any information in a timely manner that your mentee shares with you if this information is:

- Dangerous to oneself and/or others
- Hazardous
- Illegal

You are not alone. There are support systems in place to help you determine if a situation is outside your mentoring responsibilities. Staff advisors will determine if more action is needed. Never feel you are wasting time by checking in with one of these supports if you don't feel right about a conversation you have had or a comment a mentee has made.

The following support teams are here to assist you:

- Staff advisors
- School administration (Principal, Assistant Principals)
- School counselors
- School psychologist
- School Resource Officer

**Do not share information about mentees in casual conversations with friends or others.**

## Conversation Topics/Starters for Mentors

### **Intent of Conversation Topics and Ideas:**

- The topics are intended to support productive and meaningful discussions between mentors and mentees. The topics are not meant to be a checklist of brief questions, but rather a guide of general topics that can easily lead to additional conversation. Use this list of topics as a reference and as an organizational space for thoughts and conversations throughout the mentoring year.

### **General Topics:**

- What legacy would you like to leave at Vestal High School?
- What are your interests?
- What is your family like? Siblings? Have you ever moved?
- What is different about the high school and the middle school? What is the same?
- What do you think of... events, first few days of class, etc.?
- Discuss your strengths and weaknesses in school. What classes do you enjoy and with which do you struggle?
- Discuss social stressors, friendships, relationships.
- Mentor – explain how you overcame dislikes/adversity.
- Discuss test procedures in the school and why you think they are implemented.
- Discuss how you would handle different situations in school, at home or with friends.
  - You see a fight/you are involved in a conflict.
  - You have a problem in class.
  - You can't finish your work.
  - You are having trouble during your lunch period (finding people to eat with, etc.).

Discuss the roles, ideas, and philosophies of education. "Why do you think we are here?"  
"When will I ever have to use this?"

- How do you study for tests?
- What causes you the most stress in your education career?
- What makes Vestal different from other schools (identity, pride, etc.)?
- What are your goals? Socially – freshman, sophomore, junior and senior year?

Give students time to think about this:

- Goals for year: academic, social, etc.
- Goals for high school.
- "Dream job."

## **"Things I wish I knew when I was a Freshman"**

*Mentors should take time to explain and answer questions about these topics:*

- The basements are not connected
- KB Dance
- Den Men and Sporting Activities
- Pep Rallies/Spirit Week
- Places for Lunch
- Student Government works on the Talent Fest, KB and Homecoming
- Clubs
- The VHS Play/Musical
- Talent Fest

## NOTES

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