

The mentor program at Herlufsholm upper-secondary school

Introduction (“historical”)

In the 2010-2011 school year, we introduced the mentoring program in the upper-secondary school at Herlufsholm. This was part of the school's efforts to strengthen individual student's opportunities to realize their full potential. We started with the 1g classes, and the two following years the program was expanded to include 2g and 3g, so in the school year 2012-2013 all upper-secondary students had a mentor.

Mentor program structure

The purpose of the mentoring program is to strengthen students' academic and social skills through increased contact with adults. The program focuses on students' study habits, well-being, time management, and follow-through. Progress is evaluated by both students and the mentor-teams at the end of each semester. The mentor program is run by the class's team teachers. These three teachers also act as mentors for about 7-8 students in the class. The mentor program is organized by two coordinators: Vice Rector Jørgen Hvidtfelt, who is the liaison with the school management, and Inge Olhoff Jakobsen. Together we stand for, the overall design and coordination. We set up schedules and materials for use in mentoring teams, organize internal training and meetings for mentors, as well as an annual evaluation of the mentor program.

From the beginning of 1g to the middle of 2g each class has a weekly scheduled mentor hour. From the mid-2g to mid-3g there is one meeting every two weeks. IB students have a mentor hour each week until mid-3IB because IB students rarely meet as a whole class due to the number of elective courses.

The mentor hours consist of three different types of activities:

- Individual discussions; for example, making an action plan, an effective study environment, areas of special focus, report card results.
- Class activities; for example, using Lectio; social habits, grade level related activities and tasks, subjects and assignments, study habits.
- Mentor group activities; for example, instructions for common assignments, well-being, thematic discussions, evaluation.

Mentor scheme of humanity

The mentor program is based on modern psychology's emphasis on developing supportive interaction between significant adults and young people. The starting point is therefore a resource and solution-based approach to working with the class and the individual student. We do our best as mentors to live up to this. At times it is challenge for us because the differences in the role of a teacher and a mentor. Therefore, there are annual internal training courses for mentors where we focus on and rehearse the role of a supervisor, as well as theme meetings where we look at more specific issues. In the current school year, we have for example addressed the issue of conflict management, which resulted in a common policy of steps to follow when conflicts arise between students. There is now an internal document for teachers to refer to, and for students and parents to see in the next edition of the School Handbook.

The work of the Mentor Teams

The class's teacher teams have multiple tasks to fulfil. In addition to the overall academic organization of the school year in cooperation with other class teachers, the team also plans mentor work with the class as a whole and their individual mentor students. There are specific academic issues depending on grade-level that are addressed, while there is also be time for regular mentor conversations.

It is an essential goal of the mentoring program that all types of students should be offered the support needed to fulfill their potential and hopefully be motivated to develop themselves as human beings. There can be significant differences in students' needs: Some students need a lot of help to structure their lives and for an additional adult who can listen to their challenges; others just need a little 'push' to raise the bar; while some are almost completely independent but can benefit from being inspired to seek new challenges. In all cases, the mentor does his or her best to meet individual needs and distribute the time available for mentor conversations. In certain cases the mentor, most often in consultation with the student, informs other adults about a given issue to ensure that it is resolved in the best way.

Experience with tutoring

After a total of four years, the last two with a fully implemented mentoring program, it is natural to ask whether the many resources the school puts into the mentors and students is paying off? The answer is a definite yes. In a qualitative measurable score among the students' satisfaction with the program is high, as is with the mentor teams who believe that mentor work with students makes great sense, and the same is the case amongst the parent representatives. For us teachers, there is no doubt that that knowing the students better has a beneficial effect; for example, when communicating with other adults about them in team and grade meetings. Furthermore - although tutoring cannot take all the credit - we are happy to generally observe in recent years, we have almost no dropouts, we find that our students do better and are happier, and that our talent enrichment has improved. And, in recent years the school has been among the nation's best in terms of grade point average.