

POTTSTOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL MENTOR TRAINING

In an effort to best equip Mentors working within the Pottstown Middle School, Mentors should follow this process to become involved with the mentoring program:

BECOMING A MENTOR

STEP 1: Fill out Mentor Survey (*online*)

STEP 2: Complete a Child Abuse Clearance Form, State Police Background Check & FBI Fingerprinting (*per PA Law*) – give to David Charles

STEP 3: Attend Training (*initial training to start; additional trainings as needed*)

STEP 4: Shadow a Current Mentor (*3 times*)

STEP 5: Commit to a Mentor Relationship for the School Year

STEP 6: Accountability to a Mentor Peer (*as more mentors join the team, mentors will help keep one another accountable through signing in, communicating through Planning Center and connecting with other mentors within their mentor time slots*)

SESSION 1: WHAT DOES A MENTOR VISIT LOOK LIKE

SESSION 2: UNDERSTANDING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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OPEN NOTES

THIS SECTION IS FOR ADDITIONAL NOTES, QUESTIONS & ANSWERS, ETC.

****RESOURCE PAGE****

SESSION 1:

**WHAT DOES A
MENTOR VISIT LOOK
LIKE**

WHEN YOU ARRIVE...

WHAT MENTORING LOOKS LIKE...

SESSION 2:

UNDERSTANDING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

PART A: MIDDLE SCHOOL STATS & TRAITS

Middle school years are the most _____ in a student's life...
even more than the years between birth & age 2

NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL STATISTICS:

- 43% of all runaways are between the ages of _____
- Juvenile crime in America peaks at age _____
- The 2nd leading killer of middle school students is _____
- The most assaulted person in the public school system today is the _____

POTTSTOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL STATISTICS:

- 60% of PMS Students worry about crime and violence in our school
- 75% of PMS Students feel that students are often teased or picked on
- 70% of PMS Student feel teachers work hard to make sure students stay in school
- 100% of students in Pottstown School District receive free breakfast & lunch
- 70% of Pottstown School District students are low income

TRAITS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS:

1. If they're _____, they'll act up.
 - a. HIGH SCHOOL: Tune you out
 - b. MIDDLE SCHOOL: Get _____, be loud, active & sometimes obnoxious
2. There are certain days of the year when they _____ you
 - a. **Example:** just before holidays or summer break – the _____ is too much for them
 - b. Don't plan any thought provoking discussions for these times
3. They desperately want to _____.
4. They desire to be a _____ of what is happening.
5. This is the most common stage of life to develop _____ with parents & _____ everything they've ever known

PART B:

5 MAJOR DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. PHYSICAL & SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

- **MOST MAJOR CHANGE IN A MIDDLE SCHOOLER'S LIFE...** *puberty!*
- Uncomfortable/awkwardness with their bodies
- Prime age for _____
- First time they're being told to look, act, and be a certain way...
 - o First time _____ come into play
- Attempting to have normalized (*non-sexual*) friendships with people of the opposite sex, while hormonal increase brings first-time _____ to people of the opposite sex
- **For girls:** First menstruation cycle (*happening as early as age 11*)
- **For guys:** sexual development/tension
- **BIG ISSUE:** for some students, puberty happens later than others... this means some of the sexual changes don't happen as early.
 - o When not discussed, this can lead students to believe that something is wrong with them
 - o Increased teasing can also lead to convincing students of the need for relationships too early
 - **RESULTS:**
 - Loads of differently meaningless relationships – feelings of worthlessness
 - Exploration of sexual desire before being ready – feelings of guilt, shame
 - Experimentation with homosexual/bi-sexual relationships, gender confusion, role confusion, continuation of abusive/unhealthy relationships because it “feels” good

2. COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- **DID YOU KNOW...** your brain isn't fully developed until you are in your MID-20s!
- Frontal lobe – responsible for all logical decision-making – is the last to develop, and isn't fully functional until you're about 21-22.
- Middle school students tend to be mostly concrete, just starting to emerge into the world of abstract thought
 - o Have a hard time thinking beyond _____
 - o Tend to believe what they're _____
- **BIG ISSUE** – you have mostly concrete thinkers, and a range of those exploring abstract thinking within the same age range!
 - o Need to speak to them with clarity, repetition and patience

3. EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- *LITERALLY*... can't control their emotions.
 - o Young middle school students are less emotional than older middle school students
- Emotions cause confusion because they don't know how to control them AND culture feeds them different information regarding their emotions:
 - o Guys – _____, don't share, emotions make you weak, etc....
 - o Girls – _____, over share, use your emotions as a means to an end (manipulate) to get what you want
- Are often confused about why people don't _____ them
- Tend to read emotions _____ and lack understanding of others
- Fear the unknown – which is why most of them like knowing “what's next”
- Emotional tension of between wanting _____ and needing the _____ of parents
- First time _____ opinions affect emotions
- Start to feel invincible
 - o Puberty activates an adrenal gland in the brain which is responsible for adrenaline and feelings of invincibility
 - These two hormones, combined with the need to impress others and a lack of common sense can lead to a lot of different choices

4. RELATIONAL (SOCIAL) DEVELOPMENT

- Abstract thinking allows for relationships to be established _____ than before...
 - o Children: friendship by _____ (*play with who's closest*)
 - o Adolescence: friendship by _____ (*play/hang out with who shares interests*)
- Tend to form friendships based on _____ – who has a common interest
- Tend to _____ friendships or avoid people because they feel like they will be defined by their affiliation with others.
- Self-Perception begins to form here
 - o Beginning stages of understanding that they have _____ with other people
- Girls & Guys tend to form friendships differently and for different reasons:
 - o Girls by _____; guys by _____
 - Teenage girls use approximately _____ words a day!
 - Teenage guys use approximately _____.

5. SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

- Time of "_____"
- o They have a concluded, "worked-out" worldview from childhood that they can explain
- o In Middle School, it starts to be challenged; however, they're not able to think abstractly to find conclusions quickly
- o **RESULT:** Causes _____.
 - What they've always known, they are now trying to believe for themselves – HEALTHY process

PART C:
SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

- 1. Remember their _____.**
 - a. It's a big deal to them because it's the only thing that's theirs... learn it, know it, and say it in conversation.
 - b. When they feel " _____ " they'll listen to what you have to say

- 2. You have to know what's _____ on in their world.**
 - a. Starting to question all they've believed as _____.
 - b. Loudest voice in a middle school student's life is _____
 - i. What they hear themselves say becomes the _____ to where they're going in their future
 - ii. **Talk at a rate of 150-200 wpm; Think at a rate of 2500-3000 wpm**
 - c. Their emotions are a _____.
 - i. They'll do ridiculous things and when you ask, "why did you do that?" they will answer: " _____."
 1. And truthfully... they don't.
 - ii. They have all the passion, energy and strength to do something, but no _____ to help them choose IF they should.
 1. They need a LOT of grace.
 - d. Need for _____ peaks during these years
 - e. Middle school guys are intrigued by the _____
 - f. Middle school girls are _____ and _____

- 3. Understand that no matter what tough/confident _____ they put up on the outside, they deal with major _____ on the inside.**
 - a. Middle School students live in a constant state of insecurity
 - i. ENCOURAGEMENT is HUGE to them

- 4. Life change happens best in _____ not _____.**
 - a. Small groups & one-on-one conversations are going to be the key to positive relationship with middle school

- 5. In those "circles," you often have to _____ the win.**
 - a. You may not always feel like you've had a meaningful discussion with a middle school student... but if you got them to talk, even about the highlight of their week, it was successful!
 - b. We want growth; we want depth; but we need to remember that there will be days with _____ ... and that's OK!

- i. Have a goal, but redefine the _____ while you're in the conversation, based on what your students/mentees can handle
- ii. Always assume the best going in and _____ they'll rise to the occasion

6. Help them know what it is to feel “_____” and continue to set that standard

- a. Watch for the signs:
 - i. **Guys** – picking on one another verbally (*during a game, put downs, etc.*)
 - ii. **Girls** – forming cliques
- b. **FIGHT THOSE THINGS** by showing them a better way... remember, they have a hard time thinking about how their actions affect others.

7. Remember, it takes a lot of _____ to earn their trust.

- a. You have to earn the right to speak into their lives; just being “an adult” isn't enough.

PART D: FINDING A SEAT IN THE LUNCH ROOM – HOW TO START CONVERSATIONS

We probably all remember that moment...

You have your lunch tray or lunch box...

You walk into the middle school cafeteria...

*You scan the room, hoping that someone will invite you to join them
before you have to ask that dreaded question...*

“CAN I SIT WITH YOU??”

Here’s the truth: even as an adult, approaching a middle school student you don’t know can feel intimidating... *and that’s OK!* We want to equip you to push through the awkwardness, and start the conversation. So here are 10 Tips to Start Talking:

10 TIPS TO START TALKING

1. Know that it’s _____ to feel intimidated... even for extroverts!
 - a. You’re not weird, but students can smell fear, so prepare yourself for the intimidation, take a deep breath and then remind yourself that it will be ok!

2. Be _____
 - a. Students always know when adults are being phony. You don’t have to be anyone other than yourself – *even if you don’t know the latest fads, newest media, “coolest” slang, or even all of the marvel characters!*
 - b. Just be you, and they’ll respect that you are being yourself.

3. _____ yourself
 - a. Keep it simple

ex. “Hi, my name is _____ and I’m a leader/pastor (**say who you are**) in the local area. I’m working with “Created for Greatness”... *can I sit with you guys?”*

4. Ask their _____ and _____ it
 - a. Say their name back to them as soon as they tell you
 - This will ensure you’re pronouncing it correctly, help you remember, and subconsciously form a bond

- b. Use their name in conversation.
- c. Work hard to remember names – it's the only thing they really own
- d. If you have to, quiz yourself in front of them, so that they can correct you if you're wrong (*it's ok if you mess up; they'll enjoy correcting you*)
- e. **If they give you a fake name...** go with it. Their classmates will make it obvious it's wrong, and it's ok if they're "having fun" with you... **how you respond matters!**

5. Find _____ ground
- a. Students LOVE to talk about themselves, so find something common you can talk about
 - b. Common doesn't have to mean something you both enjoy – it can simply be something that you comment on to get them talking.
 - Make sure it's appropriate to Middle School-aged students

Possible examples:

- *I really like your shoes, where did you get them?*
- *Have you seen the new _____ movie? (make sure it's appropriate)*
- *What's the weirdest thing you've learned today?*
- *Your makeup looks great – do you do it yourself?*

6. Ask _____ questions... avoid giving answers
- a. As the conversation starts, the goal is for them to trust you enough to talk to you... so allow the "common ground" question to lead to more questions about them.
 - b. Ask questions that let them talk about themselves – students love to hear their own voices, share their thoughts, and "teach" adults stuff... so don't be afraid to be honest about what you don't know and let them "teach" you

7. Don't be afraid of _____ – sometimes people need to think a moment before answering...
- a. Don't keep talking when it's silent; it communicates that you don't actually want their answers.

8. Embrace the _____
- a. Not every conversation will be amazing... it may start slow, kids may seem disengaged, and they may act like they don't like you... IT'S OK!
 - b. Keep asking questions – *without being obnoxious* – until you find common ground

9. Stick to your _____ – *figuratively and literally*
- a. If you have a heart for students, you'll want to connect with them all... but start small, connect with a few (*your lunchroom table; your mentor group; etc.*), and build relationship with them well.
 - Once you build relationship with them, you'll naturally be able to connect with others
10. HAVE _____... enjoy the _____
- a. As much as Middle Schoolers can be intimidating, they're also just human – *like you and me!*
 - Be normal, give it time, and talk to them like people... it will literally change their world!
 - b. It will take _____ to really build relationship; so don't rush it... enjoy the process of getting to know them and _____ the right to speak into their lives
 - You don't have the right just because you're older, smarter, or a mentor/teacher... you **earn the right** by giving them your time.

PART E:
10 THINGS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS NEED, BUT WILL NEVER TELL YOU

1. I need to _____ like you really _____ to be with me
 - a. Students can tell if you really want to be there or not
2. I need _____, probably more than I care to admit
 - a. Self-esteem issues are SO big during these years
3. I need you to _____ my _____
 - a. It's the only thing they own
 - b. It's important to them when their _____ remember their names!
4. I need you ask me about my HOPES, _____, FAMILY and MY _____
 - a. Ask me questions so I can hear my own voice
 - b. I need interaction with those older/wiser than me
 - c. It's about having great interaction
5. I need sprinklings of _____, but not too much. We are educated way beyond our _____ of obedience.
6. I need you to _____ me to stay in the game... of school, growth... **and** of life.
7. When I mess up, I need you to not _____ me.
8. I need you to _____ me to be a part of _____ life
 - a. Make memories with me
9. I need you NOT to always have an _____
 - a. **SMALL GROUPS:** Students know if you really care about what they're saying, or if you're distracted while you're with them.
 - b. **ONE-ON-ONE:** Students know when you're just spending time or when you have an agenda to talk about their "life issues"
 - i. _____, don't just try to be the answer. Ask questions about their responses to show you're actively listening
10. I need you to give me _____ hugs and tell me that you _____ me
 - a. Remember, culture is NOT teaching them what healthy friendships, relationships or mentorships look like... **we should be!**

SESSION 3:

BUILDING SAFE RELATIONSHIPS WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

PART A: MANDATED REPORTING

Information from <https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-state-laws.cfm?state=Pennsylvania&group=4>

WHO IS REQUIRED TO REPORT?

- The following adults:
 - **6) A clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization;**
 - **7) An individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, is a person responsible for the child's welfare or has direct contact with children;**

WHEN IS A REPORT REQUIRED?

- Any person may make an oral or written report of suspected child abuse if that person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse.

WHO SHOULD BE INFORMED and IN WHAT ORDER?

- School Administrator
 - ***Should be reported within the same day & in person if possible***
- Child Line (PA Dept. of Welfare)
 - Call: 1800-932-0313
 - Visit: <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>
- County Child & Family Services – 610-327-1588

REMEMBER...

- It is NOT your job to assess if abuse is happening... it's your job to report.
 - The student's safety is our #1 concern
- ***Be upfront with students*** – you CANNOT keep confidences about:
 - Harm to themselves or others
 - Abuse of any kind

PART B: APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES (MENTOR-MENTEE)

HONORING AUTHORITY

It's important that while mentoring students, you are on the same team as the teachers and administration of the Pottstown Middle School.

Therefore, modeling how to honor authority is key! Here are some tips on how to do this with Middle School students:

1. Use **calm & kind phrases** to remind students who are being disrespectful in their discussion of teachers that it is inappropriate.
2. **Never** verbally agree with a student who is bad-mouthing a teacher.
3. Ask questions about **why they feel the way they do** about a certain teacher/authority figure.
4. If they disagree with a teacher's methods, decisions, etc., ask questions about **what they would do differently** and how it would affect other parts of the situation.
 - a. **REMEMBER...** *they don't have the brain function of complete logic yet; asking good questions will help them think beyond themselves and feel as though they are being heard... even if their solution is not a good one!*
5. If necessary, it is OK to let a student know that you cannot talk with them about teachers if they continue to use inappropriate talk about them

SOCIAL MEDIA/TEXTING

Social Media/Texting are great ways to connect with students in today's culture; however, in order to protect both Mentor & Mentee, and to encourage healthy relationships, we recommend the following boundaries:

1. We ask that mentors **do not initiate** social media/texting relationships (*friending, following, messaging, etc.*)
2. Mentors should **avoid private messaging/texting** with students – **ALWAYS** add another mentor to the conversation.
 - a. Group texting is always preferred!
3. Conversations should not happen on social media apps that delete conversations, such as Snap Chat.
4. Remember that students are highly influential during this time of life, and they desire to please... be wise about what you post on your own social media – **they will follow you!**

What you do in moderation gives those you lead permission to do in excess

VISITING

Currently visits are happening on-site at Pottstown Middle School. In an effort to help the program be successful, relationships to be built, students to be mentored, protect both Mentor & Mentee, and to encourage healthy relationships, we recommend the following boundaries:

1. Make sure that you **sign in at the main office** anytime you visit.
 - a. Sign into the specific book for "Created for Greatness"
2. **Be faithful** to the times you committed to visit
 - a. *Consistency matters* when building relationships with students
3. Mentoring may happen in group settings or one-on-one; however, all mentoring should happen in **public locations**
 - a. If a private conversation is needed, use the guidance office
4. **Avoid physical interventions**
 - a. If a fight breaks out, mentors have the available options:
 - i. Contact the closest school employee
 - ii. Diffuse the situation through talking
 1. Use phrases like:
 - a. Make the BEST decision for you
 - b. Let's breathe and talk
 - i. Remember... students have a lot of passion but lack the logic to decide if they should stop – HELP GIVE LOGIC
 - iii. Stand between the students fighting to block the fight; **but do NOT engage them physically in ANY way**

PART C: DISCUSSIONS ABOUT FAITH

This is a unique opportunity to help a generation of students find purpose and meaning beyond themselves and their situations, during their middle school years. Many of the mentors within this program are people of faith, who are inspired to love these students because of their own faith. We encourage each mentor to be true to their own beliefs; however, we also ask that mentors are respectful of religious differences and not use the mentoring program as an avenue to proselytize. **The goal of this program** is to mentor students in the areas where they have sought for mentorship and genuinely care for each student without an ulterior motive.

If students ask you questions, you are free and encouraged to give honest answers. Be yourself, but avoid coming with an agenda other than serving and encouraging students. Relationship begets relationship.

If you are asked **WHY** you are at the school, here are some possible responses we'd encourage you to use:

- *"I'm serving as part of Created for Greatness and we're here to build meaningful relationships and restore our community."*
- *"I'm here with Created for Greatness so that kids in the school can have more safe adults to help them."*
- *"I'm part of Created for Greatness, and I'm here because I believe that you are important, and we want to make sure you have all the support you need at school and in life."*

If you are asked **WHO** you are or **WHAT** you do, please answer **HONESTLY**.

If you are asked about **YOUR FAITH**, please answer **HONESTLY** without weirdness or proselytizing.

- This means you CAN share what you believe and why you believe it; but do not push your beliefs on others.
- **Instead, give room for students to ask more questions, and feel free to answer them.**

SESSION 4:

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social Emotional Learning- SEL

Pottstown School District uses the Second Step program to help teach the students social and emotional skills. These are worked on throughout the year. We want mentors to have a basic sense of what these skills are so we can understand and reinforce these crucial concepts.

There are 4 key units:

1. Mindsets and Goals
2. Values and Friendships
3. Thoughts, Emotions, and Decisions
4. Serious Peer Conflicts

1) Mindsets and Goals:

The importance of being **socially connected**- students need to have people they can talk to and get help from.

Growth Mindset (vs. fixed mindset)- students learn that their brains are malleable, changeable. They aren't stuck. They can learn, grow, and get smarter with 1. Good strategies 2. Help from others and 3. Hard work.

If/Then Plans- Students learn to **plan ahead** for tough situations. For example: *"If my friends are being mean to someone THEN I will respond by speaking up."*

2) Values and Friendships:

Students **identify their values**- what matters to you most. Examples could be hard work, kindness, honesty.

They learn that **our values affect decisions and actions**.

This unit also addresses **social media** use and it's specific challenges. They ask *"how should your values affect your social media behavior?"*

Students learn about identifying positive and negative **friendships**.

3) Thoughts, Emotions, and Decisions:

Students learn to notice and **recognize their thoughts and emotions without judgment** and THEN **use their values to decide if they want to act on them.**

Emotions are what you FEEL. Thoughts are what you say to yourself in your head. Neither necessarily tell us what is true or helpful.

Students learn strategies for **calming down** when they have negative and strong emotions and thoughts.

4) Serious Peer Conflicts:

Students learn to look at situations from the **perspective of others.**

Conflicts happen- the curriculum talks about how to **identify, avoid, deescalate, and resolve conflicts on their own.**

Some conflicts can be resolved between peers. **Some conflicts need adult help.** Students learn how to tell the difference.

Students talk about **taking responsibility for their actions and making amends.**

The topics of Bullying and Harassment are addressed.

Bullying- when one person keeps being mean to someone on purpose. The person being bullied has been unable to make it stop. It's one sided and unfair.

Gender harassment is when boys or girls are bothered, teased, or bullied because they act differently from most boys or girls, or because they may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

Sexual harassment is when someone bothers someone else with words, actions, or pictures of a sexual nature.

Good Bystander behavior is addressed- what to do when you witness bullying. Speak up, support those being affected, talk to an adult.

OPEN NOTES

NEXT STEPS

You've made it through the training... and now the real fun begins! Thank you for being willing to connect with students at Pottstown Middle School. Here are your next steps:

1. Complete your Child Abuse Clearance & Criminal Background Checks

- *If you have not completed these, please do so ASAP and get them to David Charles.*
- *PA law prohibits mentors from interacting with students until these forms are completed.*

2. Fill out the Mentor Availability Form

- *Fill this out to let us know your availability to mentor*
- *If you already filled this out, please check your availability with Carrie tonight before you leave*

3. Join the Mentor Facebook Group

- *Use this group to interact with other mentors, build community, and share stories & support for one another*

4. Download the Planning Center App or visit www.planningcenteronline.com

- *Planning Center is our scheduling tool for Middle School Mentors. You will need to familiarize yourself with this tool as we move forward into the school year*

ADDITIONAL NEXT STEPS

1. Join us at the Pottstown Middle School Teacher In-Service

- **DATE:** Wednesday, Aug. 21
- **TIME:** 12:30pm
- **WHAT:** connect with teachers, walk through the school and see where you'll be mentoring

2. Attend Additional Trainings

- Throughout the school year, we'll provide additional training to continue equipping you as a mentor
- Our next training topic:
 - **DIVERSITY TRAINING** (racial & socio-economic reconciliation)
 - **Dates & Times:** TBD

****RESOURCE PAGE****

Here are some resources we recommend as you continue to grow in your knowledge of middle school students, working within the public school system, being a mentor & working within diverse communities.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- *Middle School Ministry*, by Mark Oestreicher
- *Mentoring Matters*, www.mentoring.org

DIVERSITY

- *White Awake*, by Daniel Hill
- *The Myth of Equality*, by Ken Wytmsa
- *In a Silent Way*, by Mary Jo Betzel
- *Between the World and Me*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *The New Jim Crow*, by Michelle Alexander
- *Bridges Out of Poverty*, by Ruby K. Payne
- *King Me*, by Marianne Modica
- *Race Among Friends*, Marianne Modica
- *The 13th*, documentary on Netflix

MULTIPLE TOPICS ON FAITH & CULTURE

- Center for Parent & Youth Understanding – www.cpyu.org
- *Almost Christian*, by Kenda Creasy Dean