



The Role of Mentors in Reaching Higher

Reaching Higher is a youth leadership program that helps young men and women make positive life choices. Our eight-session curriculum promotes academic achievement, social competence, and connections with supportive adults and peers. It is a program that teaches kids how to lead a life by *design*, rather than *circumstance*. Students gain stronger sense of self; a stronger belief in their strengths and abilities, and the capacity to set and achieve their goals.

The classes are led by certified Reaching Higher instructors who are passionate about kids and skilled as facilitators. In addition, each class also has a group of adult mentors that volunteer their time to help these young men and women grow. Mentors play a critical role in the class, and provide a direct line of communication with each student.

Who Makes A Great Mentor?

Great mentors come in all shapes and sizes! Men, women, young, old, working, retired – doesn't matter. The common thread these people have is a burning desire to help kids and a commitment to show up strong. Our mentors are screened carefully to make sure that the students have the best experience. First, each mentor must apply and pass a **Central Registry Clearance** through the state of Michigan. Next, each mentor meets with the instructor to discuss the content of the program, and determine if it would be a mutually beneficial fit.

Where Do You Find Your Mentors?

Our mentors are typically respected members of the community where a program is hosted. For example, many of our Mentors hear about Reaching Higher through a Civic organization such as Rotary or Kiwanis; some are retired school teachers, others are involved in various youth assistance programs or religious institutions. All of our mentors have a love for children, a heart to serve, and a desire to help strengthen our youth.

What are the Responsibilities of a Mentor?

The role of a mentor is to be an attentive listener and encourager. Our instructors and mentors must always portray a positive, inspiring and uplifting attitude. Mentors are not counselors or therapists, and are not there to "fix" or counsel the students. It is imperative to understand the difference. Only the school counselors are equipped and authorized to counsel these young men and women. We ask that our mentors serve as loving listeners who recognize the student's inner strengths and abilities and use words of encouragement to lift them up.

Mentors are assigned a small group of students, typically 4-5 per mentor that they connect with each week. This gives the students a personal touch, and demonstrates our sincere interest in each of them. Mentors also facilitate small group discussions, and help the instructors with some administrative tasks in the class.

How Are Mentors Trained?

Before a scheduled class begins, the Lead Instructor will call to order a meeting of the Mentors. This gives the volunteer mentors an opportunity to meet one another (there are typically 5 mentors working in each classroom) and discuss the specifics objectives of the class.

Each mentor is provided a 14-page Guidebook that provides Session Titles, Learning Objectives, and the mechanics of each Session. Mentors are given the tools they need to feel fully prepared when they walk into a classroom. In addition, the instructional team (consisting of instructors & mentors) meet weekly for 30 minutes before class to plan the session, and for 30 minutes afterward to debrief the session and plan for the following week. Instructors are always available during the week for phone consultations with mentors if needed.