



PEER GROUP CONNECTION-HIGH SCHOOL

Equipping older students to help 9th graders make a successful transition into high school

Peer Group Connection-High School (PGC-HS) is an evidence-based and school-based program that supports and eases students' transition from middle to high school. This program taps into the power of older students to create a nurturing environment for incoming 9th graders. Research findings indicate that students who participate in PGC-HS attend school more often than non-participants, are on-track to graduate on time more so than non-participants, and exhibit a higher grade point average (GPA) than non-participants. A 4-year longitudinal, randomized-control study conducted by Rutgers University with funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found, among other major results, that PGC-HS improves the graduation rates of student participants by nine percentage points and cuts by half the number of male students who would otherwise drop out. PGC-HS has been recognized by the National Dropout Prevention Center as a Model Program demonstrating *Strong Evidence of Effectiveness*, its highest effectiveness rating.

OVERVIEW

PGC-HS includes a year-long, credit-bearing, leadership course for high school juniors and/or seniors that meets daily and is taught by school faculty. Through their leadership course, these juniors and/or seniors become trained peer leaders who meet once per week with 9th graders in outreach sessions designed to strengthen relationships among students across grades.

- PGC-HS's launch begins with the assembly of a **Stakeholder Team** of administrators, faculty, parents, and community members who receive the training, tools, and resources necessary to implement and sustain PGC-HS effectively year after year.
- Carefully selected faculty members participate in an 11-day intensive **train-the-trainer course** over a 1½-year period to learn how to run the program and teach the daily leadership course.
- As part of their regular school schedule, carefully selected juniors and/or seniors are trained in the **daily leadership development class** to become peer leaders and serve as positive role models, discussion leaders, and mentors for 9th graders.
- These peer-leaders work in pairs to co-lead groups of 10-14 ninth graders in **outreach sessions** once each week in which the 9th graders participate in engaging, hands-on activities and simulations in supportive environments that enable them to practice essential academic, social, and emotional skills, such as critical thinking, goal setting, decision-making, time management, teamwork, and communication.
- During the second half of the school year, 9th graders utilize their newly acquired skills to plan and execute a **community service project**, while continuing to participate in weekly outreach sessions.
- PGC-HS also includes a **parent involvement component**. Peer leaders organize and facilitate Family Night events for 9th graders and their parents/guardians.
- Beginning in year two, 10th grade students who participated in PGC-HS as 9th graders the previous year participate in **booster activities** led by the junior and/or senior peer leaders. The booster component reinforces the learning from 9th grade outreach sessions.

Over time, PGC-HS can have a significant impact on all schools – whether they are located in urban, suburban, or rural communities – at a cost of only a few dollars per student.

For more information about CSS and *PGC-HS*, please contact Dr. Margo Ross at mross@supportiveschools.org.

You can also visit our website at www.supportiveschools.org.