



## Building Better Relationships

*AmeriCorps members play key roles in mentoring middle and high school students*

Some AmeriCorps members are fulfilling their program requirements by mentoring up to 10 students for 20 minutes each week for an extended time. School-based mentoring works best when it is focused on goals such as increasing connectedness, improving youth self-esteem, and simply encouraging the student to grow personally and academically. What is the role of the mentor, and how does s/he build trust with students? Below, are a few tips for good mentoring followed by resource links for more information.



### Role of the Mentor

Mentors are friends, not parents or teachers. They are nonjudgmental, listen intently, offer encouragement and assistance, and help the student set goals. When times are tough for the student and he needs to vent, the mentor who listens well helps the student see that you are there to understand, reassure, and to offer help or ideas; never to criticize.

Mentors let the student control the direction of conversations and give them a voice and choice in deciding what to do during your time together. Allow students to get to know you; don't push for more information. Share stories about your own life. Above all, keep what she shares confidential (unless she plans to hurt herself or someone else).

Mentors have fun with students but are reliable, and always show up at the designated time and place. Mentors are also responsible for the relationship; they take the initiative to contact the student. They recognize that many students are shy about relationships and don't take it personally if the student does not return phone calls or messages.

### Tips for Building Trust

- Don't ask for too much information too soon; allow your mentee to offer personal information when she's ready
- Ask your mentee's opinion
- Show your mentee you trust her; give her responsibility for a project
- It's OK to be uncertain about how to handle something by saying, "Great question. Let me think about it and call you back tomorrow." Don't hesitate to ask school staff for their advice.

## Mentoring Resources

Corporation for National & Community Service Resource Center:

<http://nationalserviceresources.org/service-activities/mentoring>

Education Northwest School-Based Mentoring Resources:

<http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/647>

## National Days of Service

*All Members must participate in one!*

### National Volunteer

Week: April 10-16

[www.gysd.org](http://www.gysd.org)

### National & Global Youth Service Days: April 15-17

[www.handsonnetwork.org/nationalprograms/](http://www.handsonnetwork.org/nationalprograms/)

Earth Day: April 22

<http://www.earthday.net>

Join Hands Day: May 7

<http://joinhandsday.org/>

National Trails Day:

June 4

<http://www.backcountryattitude.com/national-trails-day.html>

National Get Outdoors

Day: June 11

<http://www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org/>

## 12 Ways to Say, "You're Great!"

1. Great idea.
2. You did a great job.
3. I knew you could do it.
4. Keep trying—you'll get it.
5. Exactly right!
6. Nice going.
7. Way to go!
8. Wonderful!
9. I know what you mean.
10. I hear what you're saying.
11. That was beautiful.
12. EXCELLENT!

# Ashland Tutoring Program is Up and Running

*AmeriCorps Member Christina Vik serves at Ashland Middle School*

AmeriCorps member Christina Vik is using a three-pronged approach to getting tutoring/mentoring efforts off to a good start at Ashland Middle School this year. She tutors students herself during the school day and in an after-school program; she's started a peer-to-peer tutoring program with 6<sup>th</sup> Grade students; and she is organizing students from nearby Northland College to tutor students several times a week. All of this has been created since Christina started her AmeriCorps service in September.



"They haven't been able to get a lot of volunteers here in the past, but things are changing," Christina said. At first, teachers weren't sure why Christina was in the school. It took three weeks for her to get her first student to tutor, but her available hours quickly filled up once teachers became aware of her and began referring students. Now, students have started

coming to Christina for help themselves, she said. "Some students were embarrassed to be working with a tutor at first, but the longer I work with students, the more comfortable they become."

The peer-to-peer tutoring program started incidentally. A teacher asked Christina if she'd be willing to supervise a 6<sup>th</sup> Grade student who wanted to help classmates. Christina is always present in the room when the student works with others. She's been impressed by the young girl's tutoring abilities. "The other students respond very well to her. She's like a friend helping friends," Christina said.

Ashland Middle School students may be from the city, outlying rural areas, or the nearby Bad River Indian Reservation, but have one thing in common. "They respond best to consistency," she said. "It's important that they know you'll be there at the same time and place for them."

Some students are struggling with more than academic issues and Christina has found herself acting as mentor to them. "They have questions about my life and want to know things like what college is like. Relationships are evolving," she said.

Christina's efforts are evolving, too. She plans to meet with school staff – including a brand-new principal --this month to keep teachers updated and excited about partnerships. She would also like to invite students from nearby Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College to volunteer in the after-school program.

"I really didn't know what to expect when I started," she said. "There are always lots of changes, but the point is to keep is, to keep moving ahead and helping more kids."

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## Grant Opportunity

*American Association of School Librarians Innovative Reading Grant*

Supports the planning and implementation of programs for children (Grades K-9) that encourage reading, especially for struggling readers. Maximum award: \$2,500. Eligibility: reading programs specifically designed for children in the school library setting. The program must encourage innovative ways to motivate and involve children in reading. Applicant must be a member of AASL. Deadline: February 7, 2011.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslawards/innovativereadinggrant/aaslreading.cfm>

**Register Now!**

## *Beyond Random Acts of Partnership: Building the Climate for Student Success Conference*

**March 23, 2011  
Hilton City Center  
Milwaukee**

*Register as an AmeriCorps  
Member for no fee. Bring a  
team from your school!*

<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/index.html>

## **Regional Meetings**

For AmeriCorps Members:

- **March 3, Madison**
- **March 8, Edgar**
- **March 15, Hayward**

Plan to attend one. More information coming soon!

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