WISCONSIN OFFICE OF Children's Mental Health

Showcasing Solutions

TUTOR-MENTORS' LIVES CHANGED BY ROOT 2 RISE

The Problem

When a job change moved Denise Hanson to Behavioral Coach with an office on the first floor of Madison West High School, she saw dozens of students who were not finding joy in the school day. "These kids didn't want to go to class and generally felt powerless," she said. " I wrestled with what they needed to change their outlook towards school – how education through a side door could impact them."

Giving these kids an opportunity to mentor younger children was Hanson's vision. "I knew in my bones that the ones who have the least amount of power need power," she said. A City of Madison grant for $3,500 in 2017 set Root 2 Rise in motion and placed seven trained Tutor-Mentors in a Madison elementary school.



Root 2 Rise Tutor-Mentors build skills and confidence in their role with the younger children.

The Solution

Root 2 Rise trains, coaches, and compensates high school students to lead in elementary classrooms. Under the supervision of elementary school teachers, these Tutor-Mentors lead small-group instruction, provide one-on-one work with students who need additional support, and assist their Partner Teacher. All of this frees the Partner Teacher to allocate resources elsewhere.

"Many of our Tutor-Mentors face obstacles that can make traditional school pathways challenging," said Hanson, Founder and Executive Director of Root 2 Rise. "95% qualify as low-income, 97% are students of color, and most enter the program chronically absent with a GPA below 2.0. In Root 2 Rise they build confidence, purpose, and real-world skills – things they often haven't experienced before."

Partner high schools identify potential Tutor-Mentors. The students sign a contract with Root 2 Rise agreeing to a set of ethics, attendance, dress code, and to not use their cell phones in the classroom. They commit to one semester and are paid a stipend of $750 at the end if they meet the contract terms. All Tutor-Mentors meet as a group with Root 2 Rise staff four times per semester to share experiences.

Other program costs include a $150 honorarium for the elementary Partner Teachers who oversee the Tutor-Mentors, make two positive phone calls to the Tutor-Mentor's family, and complete two surveys. Another honorarium is paid to the high school and elementary school coordinators who handle scheduling and coordination with Root 2 Rise.

The Results

Tutor-Mentor results are promising:

- Their sense of belonging in their school was rated as 4.7 on a 5-point scale.
- They had a 20 percentage point increase in motivation to attend school.
- 80% became more academically engaged.
- Of those completing the program, 100% graduated on time.

The program is helping the teacher pipeline. At the beginning of program, 4% of Tutor-Mentors expressed an interest in teaching, whereas at the end, 37% said they would consider being a teacher.

Since the program's start in 2017, 480 high school students have been Tutor-Mentors and logged 43,200 hours of classroom service. They have served 9,600 elementary students in 14 public and charter schools.

Many Tutor-Mentors sign up for a second semester. "They initially sign up for the money and stay for the love the younger children express for them," Hanson said.

Root 2 Rise is a Madison-based nonprofit that creates cross-age mentoring opportunities by placing trained high school Tutor-Mentors in elementary classrooms. Learn more at https://www.root2rise.org/.