

**UTILIZING HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT LEADERS TO
POSITIVELY IMPACT
ELEMENTARY STUDENTS**



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FOREWORD

Under the direction of the Board of Control and Representative Council, **the Iowa High School Athletic Association requested information from all member schools regarding the ways they may utilize high school student-leaders, or mentors, as positive influences on elementary students.** The Athletic Association **received nearly one hundred responses to our request for information about such mentoring programs.** According to the responses we have received, the ways in which high school student-leaders are utilized as mentors varies greatly from one school to another. **All mentoring programs seem to be very positive experiences for the elementary students involved, and the high school students involved, and the teachers involved.**

Most schools sponsoring a mentoring program do not require the high school mentors to attend formal training or classroom instruction. Students in these programs simply meet with the elementary teachers involved and discuss expectations. Some programs, because they are rather sophisticated and require a daily commitment from the high school students, do require formal training. In the majority of cases, this training is provided by counselors and other high school or elementary staff members.

The time commitment required of high school mentors varies greatly from school to school. Some schools provide release time for their high school student-leaders to visit elementary schools on a weekly or monthly basis. Other schools require student-leaders to visit the elementary schools during a study hall. While most schools rely on intrinsic rewards to motivate high school student-leaders who mentor elementary students, some provide class credit for high school students working with elementary students on a regular basis.

The following is a summary of the list of ideas schools have submitted on how high school student leaders can be utilized to positively influence elementary students.

MENTORING IDEAS

“After School Tutoring” - High school student-leaders volunteer time after school, as their schedules permit, to **work with upper elementary students on homework, social skills, learning through the use of games or computers, etc.** This meeting occurs in the elementary school library and allows the elementary students at least one hour a week to do something fun at school with their mentor.

“Big Brothers” and “Big Sisters” - High school student-leaders meet on a regular

basis with elementary students whom the elementary teachers feel need assistance and a positive role model. These meetings usually occur once a week during the high school student's study hall. The high school student-leaders **assist the younger students with things such as social skills, coping skills, reading, math, communicating, etc.**

"Big Friends"/"Little Friends" - Elementary students who need a "Big Friend" are chosen by the elementary principal, guidance counselor, and teachers. High school student-leaders, who are positive role models, are chosen by the high school teachers and guidance counselors. The high school student-leaders are provided a brief training session to help them develop listening and helping skills. They meet with their "Little Friend" once a week at a time arranged with the high school administration and the elementary teachers involved. **The time may be used to play games, read together, work on school subjects, talk, eat lunch together, etc.**

"Computer Mentoring" - High school student-leaders who are taking advanced word processing classes **assist elementary teachers in teaching students computer skills.**

"Conflict Managers" - High school student-leaders are **trained in conflict management and utilized to resolve disputes between elementary students.** This can work especially well if the high school students are playground supervisors.

"D.A.R.E. Helpers" - High school student-leaders **go into DARE classrooms with the police officer in charge of the class to be role models for the younger students.** They also attend DARE graduation to assist in handing out diplomas.

"Elementary Carnival" - High school student-leaders assist with the elementary carnival that is held as a fund raiser. **They assist elementary students organize various activities and help them run the activities throughout the carnival.** In some cases, the high school students assist the younger children, or disabled children, participate in the activities at the carnival.

"Elementary Students Support High School Students Too" - The week before major contests in speech, music, drama, or athletics the **elementary students draw pictures and/or write letters which are sent to their favorite high school participant.** Elementary teachers help make sure every high school participant receives at least one item in their "mailbag." The high school students get their "mailbag" the day of the big contest.

“Family Living” - High school **students in Family Living class get practice working with younger children by going into lower elementary classrooms** for an entire morning or afternoon. The high school students plan and organize all activities during Family Living class. During the time they are working with the elementary students, they are responsible for all activities, including snack time.

“Friends” - High school student-leaders pair up with one or two elementary students as a “friend.” They **do something fun together every other week during the school year**. Activities include such things as picnics, going to the park, going to high school contests, going to lunch, going on bike rides, participating in recreational activities, etc.

“Happy Bear” - High school student-leaders are trained as Peer Helpers. As part of their training, some students choose to be **trained to assist with the facilitation of the “Happy Bear” program** which teaches elementary students about good and bad touches. This is a great experience for the high school students and makes an extremely positive impact on the younger students.

“I Made a Mistake” - A program that can be very effective, if the right high school student is selected, is to **have a student who has broken the school’s code of conduct visit with elementary students about his or her decision to break the code of conduct**. Emphasis can be placed on the negative consequences of that decision, the positive things that would have happened if the student had not broken the code of conduct, and urging the younger students not to make a similar decision. This can be especially meaningful during Red Ribbon Week.

“Iowa Basic Skills Test” - High school student-leaders **assist elementary teachers with the administration of the Iowa Basic Skills Test**. This creates a very positive testing environment and emphasizes to the younger students that academics are important.

“Keeping Kids Safe” - **High school student leaders visit with elementary students about the importance of safety**. Farm safety, lawn mower safety, the importance of wearing seat belts, and personal safety are all issues that are addressed. By addressing each safety issue in a different class session, it is a great way to maintain a long-term connection between the high school students and elementary students.

“Math Mentoring” - High school student-leaders who are taking advanced math classes **assist upper elementary teachers in teaching students how to use calculators and do higher level math functions**.

“Pen Pals” - High school student-leaders and upper elementary students **exchange letters, read mutual books, watch movies together, and have several pizza parties and other get-togethers during the year.**

“Pep Band” - As a way to build spirit, **the pep band plays at least one song at each high school athletic contest in which the elementary students can participate,**ie. the song “YMCA.” The week prior to the song being performed at the athletic contest, high school pep band and vocal members go to the elementary school to teach students the song in an assembly.

“Reading Day” - **Elementary students and high school student-leaders are paired together for an hour, or an entire morning, of reading to each other.** High school and elementary students take turns reading and listening to each other. When done on a warm spring day the students spread out across the football field and read to each other. The elementary students get to pick their favorite books and the high school students pick their favorite children’s books too.

“Red Ribbon Week Volunteers” - Selected high school student-leaders go into elementary classrooms during Red Ribbon Week to **talk about the advantages of being substance free and hand out red ribbons to the students and teachers.**

“Resistance Skills Leaders”- High school student-leaders are given special training in how to **teach upper elementary or middle school students to resist peer pressure which might lead to their use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.** The high school students use this training by visiting the younger students’ classrooms to discuss peer pressure and the importance of making healthy choices.

“S.A.D.D. Chapter Presentations” - The high school SADD Chapter gives **presentations to elementary students during Red Ribbon Week about the dangers of riding with drunk drivers.** They also give ideas to students on how they can get out of situations when the person they are riding with seems to be drunk.

“Say No to Drugs” - High school **student-leaders who have made the commitment to be alcohol, tobacco, and drug free sign pledge cards stating that fact. These cards are then displayed at the elementary school** for all students to see during Red Ribbon Week. Several of these high school students also visit with the elementary students about choosing not to use.

“Shadow Day” - **Elementary and middle school students visit the high school and “shadow” a high school student-leader** throughout the morning. They stay

for lunch, **then the high school student “shadows” the younger student in his or her classroom** during the afternoon.

“Special Visitors” - **On special days at the elementary school, elementary students can invite high school students to attend an assembly with them or to attend school with them** for part of a day. Some special days are visitor day, citizenship day, May day, reading day, etc.

“Speech and Drama Presentations” - High school **speech students go into the elementary schools to practice their story telling techniques.** High school **drama students go into the elementary schools to present one-act plays or give the younger students a “sneak peek” at a play** that will be performed for the entire school or community in the near future. This is a great way to get younger students excited about speech and drama activities. It also allows the older students to practice in a different setting than they are accustomed to.

“Sports Officials” - **High school student-leaders are utilized as officials for a variety of youth sport activities.** High school students act as the officials for basketball, flag football, wrestling, track and field, as well as little league baseball and softball contests. It is a great experience for both the younger and older students, and the adults who are present.

“Sportsmanship Talks” - High school student-athletes and cheerleaders go into the elementary schools to **discuss good sportsmanship, proper National Anthem etiquette, and the appropriate way fans should support their team.** Examples of good, and poor, sportsmanship are discussed. The athletes also talk about the positive impact cheering has on their athletic performance.

“Student Newspaper and Yearbook Involvement” - High school student-leaders who are involved in student newspaper and yearbook publications **work with upper elementary students to involve them in writing stories and taking pictures regarding activities that are taking place in the elementary school.** This allows older and younger students to work together and for younger students to become interested in high school activities. Some of these stories and pictures appear in the high school publications.

“Student-Run Athletic & Activity Programs” - High school student-leaders **supervise elementary recreational activities on weekends throughout the winter and during lunch hours on school days.** Elementary students can choose to participate in a variety of activities such as basketball, volleyball, cooking, arts and crafts, music, drama, etc.

“Support at State” - When high school teams qualify for the state tournament, the **elementary students make posters to be hung on the lockers of the athletes on the tournament team. The teams show their appreciation by having the bus drive to each elementary building before leaving for the state tournament.** The coach and athletes talk to the younger students about the commitment they have made and how that commitment has helped them become successful. They also talk about how important the elementary students’ support has been throughout the year.

“Teaching Aides” - High school student-leaders **help elementary teachers with various classroom activities.** These include designing and decorating bulletin boards, reading to students, assisting with various subject areas, helping to supervise students on field trips, assisting with playground and lunchroom supervision, and helping with bus duty at the end of the day.

“Teaching Assistants” - High school student-leaders **assist in teaching elementary students various subjects.** Foreign language students help teach foreign language, art students help teach art, music students help teach music, athletes help teach physical education, and students in various classes help teach the subject they have the greatest interest in.

“Understanding Sports” - High school **athletes from different sports teams visit elementary classrooms to teach them about the equipment they use in their sport, some of the basic rules of the sport, and to talk about how to be a good sport.** This is also a great time to demonstrate a few specific sport skills and to have high school athletes talk about the importance of doing well in school, not giving up, listening to parents, teachers, and coaches, and not using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

“Using High School Student’s Expertise” - Elementary teachers request high school students’ assistance with various units that are being taught. Examples of ways high school students might be of assistance would be during a unit on Mexico, **high school Spanish students teach Spanish to the elementary students, having high school students help Hispanic students learn English, and having high school English students proofread elementary students’ reports.**

“Work Study Experience” - High school student-leaders are allowed to take independent work study programs. Part of the work study program is an **experience working as a teacher’s aide in an elementary classroom. Also, students who are interested in clerical office work are allowed to work in the elementary office.**

CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH SCHOOL MENTORS

It seems appropriate at this point to emphasize that **high school student-leaders are not just those students who participate in National Honor Society, band, chorus, drama, athletics, or any other school activity or club.** High school student-leaders are any students who have the ability to lead, or make a positive impression upon, other students. Any student who has the desire and is willing to make a commitment to be a positive role model, both in and out of school, for younger students should be considered for a mentoring relationship. Webster's Dictionary defines leadership in this way: "Leadership - to direct, as by going before, or along with." **Students who are willing to make the commitments to be positive role models are truly student-leaders, regardless of their background, socioeconomic status, academic abilities, etc.**

As part of the Iowa High School Athletic Association's efforts to share ideas with our member schools about how high school student-leaders might be utilized to make a positive impact on elementary students, **we have surveyed elementary principals and teachers from our 32 Board of Control and Representative Council members' school districts.** Through these surveys we have been able to obtain input as to what skills and qualities teachers and administrators believe high school students should possess in order to effectively interact with elementary students. Using the results of those surveys, we have **compiled a list of characteristics elementary teachers and principals believe high school students wishing to be mentors should have.** This list may be useful to administrators, counselors, and teachers wishing to begin mentoring programs.

LIST OF CHARACTERISTICS FOR HIGH SCHOOL MENTORS

- * **Caring students** who are responsible and have the desire to make a commitment.
- * **Good communication skills**, including listening skills.
- * **Patience** to work with students who may not grasp ideas quickly.
- * **Positive attitude**, enthusiasm, and a willingness to share part of themselves with younger students.
- * **Students who exhibit good citizenship and moral character**, in and out of school.

CONCEPTS HIGH SCHOOL MENTORS NEED TO UNDERSTAND

The survey of elementary principals and teachers also indicated they felt there were **some issues that needed to be understood by the high school student-leaders prior to visiting an elementary classroom.** Some of the concepts that the elementary principals and teachers felt high school students need to review, discuss, and/or receive instruction in are listed below.

- * **Accepting responsibility** for meeting at scheduled times, treating the younger students with respect, and letting the elementary teacher know if a meeting cannot be kept.
- * **Appropriate language and behavior** that should be exhibited with elementary students.
- * An understanding of **basic child development** for the age group they will be working with, ie. What concepts are the children able to understand, what is normal behavior for children that age, how long is their attention span, etc.
- * **Behavior** - the impact high school students' behavior, in and out of school, has on the elementary students.
- * **Behavior management techniques** and how to handle possible discipline problems.
- * **Confidentiality** - when to keep it and when not to.
- * **Constructive criticism** - how to give and receive it.
- * **Development of a list of appropriate, fun activities**, such as books to read, games to play, movies to watch, music to listen to, etc.
- * **Emergency procedures**, especially if high school students will be used as playground supervisors, recreational activity supervisors, etc.
- * **Positive reinforcement** - its importance and basic tips for using it to keep students on task.
- * Their purpose in visiting the classroom, or with individual students, and what the **elementary teachers' expectations** are.
- * **Ways to help younger students discover answers** to questions without actually providing the answers.
- * **Which topics are appropriate** for them to discuss with the elementary students?
- * **Whom to visit with if they feel personal information that has been shared with them needs to be passed on to an adult.**

“THE EYES THAT ARE UPON YOU”

There are little eyes upon you, and they're watching night and day;
There are little ears that quickly take in, every word you say.
There are little hands all eager to do, anything you do;
And a little boy or girl who's dreaming of the day they'll be like you.

You're that little child's idol, you're the wisest of the wise;
In their little minds about you, no suspicions ever rise.
They believe in you devoutly, hold that all you say and do;
They will say and do, in your way, when they're grown up like you.

There's a wide-eyed little boy or girl who believes you're always right;
And their eyes are always open and they're watching day and night.
You are setting an example every day, in all you do;
For that little child who's waiting to grow up just like you.

Author Unknown (Adapted)