Implementing LINK Crew: A Freshman Mentoring Program

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LINK Crew

Link Crew in a Minute

What is Link Crew?
What Is LINK Crew?

- LINK is known all over the USA!
  (over 2000 high schools)
- Junior/Senior Freshmen Mentoring Program
- Students helping students succeed
- Helping freshmen discover what it takes to be successful in high school
Phase 1 - Preparation

- Link Crew Interviews & Recruitment
  - Positive role models for the freshmen
    - Academically, Athletically, Morally
- Select LINK Crew leaders
- May Development Day ("May Day")
  - Mandatory meeting for new leaders
  - Get-to-Know-You & Team Building activities
- Notify 8th grade parents of orientation date
Phase 2 - Orientation

- 2 days of **training** before orientation
- 8/10- Training (8am-noon)
- 8/11- Training in the AM....
  - Team building & Get-to-Know-You activities that leaders will execute with their own freshmen group

Orientation in the PM (2:30-5pm)
Phase 2 - Orientation (cont.)

- Orientation in the PM (2:30-5pm)
  - Week of training: Leaders will have a printed crew roster
  - Freshmen pick up their name tags from tables
  - Leaders will execute the trained activities with their own freshmen group in separate classrooms

- Result: Waubonsie Valley Link Crew’s Class of 2018 Welcome
Phase 3 - Long-term Connections

- In Previous Years: LINK Crew students visited rotating Core classes (English, Math, Science, Social Studies) once a month with 15-20 minute “Link-Up” activities (Academic & Social Follow-ups)

- Sample lessons:
  - Academic Follow Up #1 - Using Your Resources - lesson that reviews the people and places ninth graders can connect with in order to be successful
  - What Every Freshmen Should Know
  - Getting Involved
  - Homecoming Do’s and Don’ts
  - Academic Follow Up #2 - Perspectives - lesson that allows freshmen to explore how different perspectives can co-exist

Phase 3 - Long-term Connections

- Stranded - Making Smart Choices
- Academic Follow Up # 3 - Achieving Excellence - Shaping and Managing Time
- How to Prepare for Final Exams
  - Cocoa ‘N Cram - study session in the cafeteria or library in which LINK leaders help students prepare for final exams
2015-2016 School Year: Freshmen lunch advisory 1\textsuperscript{st} semester

- Replaces visiting CORE classes
- During the first 20 minutes of lunch each week, leaders deliver lessons to their same freshmen group
  - Tighter bond: Freshmen and leader(s) get to know each other better by name, interests, etc.
Additional LINK Crew activities

- Middle School visits (Gregory, Fischer, Still Middle Schools)
- LINK Crew Leadership Conferences
- LINK on the Lanes - team bowling as a “thank you” for a great year
Interested? How to Start...

- Attend the 3-Day training Coordinators experience to initiate into LINK Crew program if your school is brand new to LINK.
  - Program provides coordinator instruction manuals, videos, audio CDs, step-by-step instructions on how to implement LINK Crew throughout the year.
Commitment by your Administration

- Administrative Support Means:
  - **Financial Support** - Establish a program budget which includes: supplies, on-going training, stipend or other compensation
    - $10 per incoming student is a good place to start
  - **Program support**
    - Make school facilities available for training and orientation (specifically: classrooms & big gym)
    - Provide access to current date on incoming students
    - Agree to a yearly transition review meeting
  - **Public Support**
    - Access to their communication: Newletters, email, ConnectEd, Twitter
Gaining Administrative Support

Example #1

If your administrator matches these adjectives:
1. Personality: Extrovert
2. Leadership Style: Hands On
3. Motivation: Reputation of School

Then your strategies are:
1. Meet with them in person immediately upon return.
2. Prepare a detailed report of your experience and plans with opportunity for them to contribute.
3. Speak about how program will improve school reputation within community.

Example #2

If your administrator matches these adjectives:
1. Personality: Introvert
2. Leadership Style: Big Picture Thinker
3. Motivation: Statistical Results

Then your strategies are:
1. Contact via Email to schedule a meeting.
2. Prepare brief targeted plan of program overview.
3. Emphasize academic and discipline support structure with evaluation plan; show plan to keep data.

Your Strategies as Coordinator

1.
2.
3.

From the Link Crew Coordinator Handbook, p. 16.
(the boomerang project, 2009)
Staff Support

Sample Staff Meeting Agenda (1st year):

- Link Concept and Vision
- Sample Staff activity
- Communicate ways Link Crew supports: Students & Staff
- Explain recommendations (who you are looking for, the process)
- Hand out recommendation forms
- Questions/Answer
- Get help with recommendations from Staff, Coaches, Guidance Counselors
- Collect recommendation forms
- Thank them for their support
Link to our 2015-2016 LINK Application

http://tinyurl.com/nfdq2ye
Why do applicants want to be LINK leaders?

Sample answers:

- “My link leader Calvin was really cool and made the orientation fun for me. He really did help me get ready for high school freshman year.”

- “I personally didn’t do so well my freshmen year when it came to grades. I slacked my first semester a lot. The positive is that there's so many teachers out there willing to help you and go that extra mile if you are willing as well. Not only teachers but I also noticed that there where so upper class men that were willing to help. I think my personal experience would help me in being a better LINK leader because I'm able to share MY OWN experience as to how I personally didn’t think it was such a big deal to not do homework one day, before you know it all those missing assignments add up and you're stuck in a hole that you dug yourself into. I’ve learned that high school is such a big part/deal in life. Yea it could be hard at times, but you also need to learn to enjoy it.”

- “On the first day I was so frustrated that I could not find my class, and the bell was about to ring, when I saw a Link Leader. I went up and asked them for helped. She walked me to my class and we became friends. She was such a role model and she is the reason why I want to join Link Leaders as well”

- “Being a part of a team takes dedication and hard work. As a baseball player I feel like I work hard to be a positive influence for my team by being respectful and loyal to my coaches and teammates. As a ballplayer, you need to be encouraging and helpful to your teammates, just like a LINK leader needs to be encouraging and helpful to the incoming freshmen students.”
Questions?