Nurturing Student-Mentor Relationships

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Teaching communication skills, tracking interactions, and supporting students' advocacy and discovery process.

The Secret: lay strong foundations

Initiating Student-Mentor Relationships

PART 1: Students need to communicate clearly about what their project entails.

WHAT WE DID:

Students wrote project descriptions which included a paragraph about what type of help they thought they would want from their mentor. This set up clear expectations early on, making conflict and disappointment less likely.

Establishing Student-Mentor Relationships

PART 2: Students need to spend time reading and considering various mentors.

WHAT WE DID:

Students read through the profiles of possible mentors and thoughtfully completed a graphic organizer explaining who their top three choices were before they settled on someone.

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Building Student-Mentor Relationships

PART 3: Teachers need to model and provide feedback on drafts of initial student-to-mentor request communications.

WHAT WE DID:

I gave students a slideshow containing a list of everything they needed to make sure they covered in their initial post to their mentor and links to example letters for us to talk about in class.

Maintaining Student-Mentor Relationships

PART 4: Teachers need to set clear expectations about frequency and quality of students' communication with their mentors and track this.

WHAT WE DID:

I kept a Google Sheet listing each student's name, their mentor's name, and when the student had posted during each week.

I color-coded each box to show the quality of the communication as measured against a rubric my students and I created.

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Supporting Student-Mentor Relationships

PART 5: Teachers need to communicate with mentors as well. Students can see this, so it's a good model for interactions.

WHAT WE DID:

I have a letter specifying my expectations and the College Board's guidelines about mentorship.

I post this in each student's project.

I make it visible to both the student and the mentor, so students can use my letter as a model later.

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Students may need support and models in three areas:

1. What to communicate - the content of their posts
2. When to communicate - the timing of their posts
3. How to communicate - the phrasing and structure of their posts

What do students need to communicate?

Post types to model:

Introductory post

Quick update

Request for support or feedback

Information and timelines / expectations

ALSO - formatting and layout such as formal address and signature, how to paragraph or chunk a post, and when to drop the honorific in addressing their mentor