



Leveraging Technology to Power School- Based Mentoring

AT A GLANCE

Organization

Kansas City Public Schools

Reach

350 - 400 students across 12 schools in the first year

Challenge

Find software to easily onboard new volunteers and manage data to make Kansas City Public Schools' mentoring goals a possibility.

Solution

Innovative Mentoring Software

Kansas City Public Schools & Innovative Mentoring Software

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Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) has their sights set on enrolling 350-400 students across 12 schools in the first year of their newly launched Success Mentors program. This ambitious effort is a direct response to chronic student absenteeism and what Kansas City radio station KCUR calls a “mentoring gap” that leaves 2 out of 3 students without a positive adult role model in an already socio-economically disadvantaged community. Assistant Superintendent Dr. Derald Davis



KCPS Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Derald Davis, addresses a crowd of mentors, students, and parents as the school district kicked off their Success Mentors Program. Davis chose the mentor-friendly features of Innovative Mentoring Software to help fuel their growth.

and his team understand that without hope for a better future, students may be blind to opportunities that surround them – something Dr. Davis and his team are working hard to change.

Success Mentors is a groundbreaking program launched by the Obama administration in 2015 in response to the new

data collected by the Department of Education’s Civil Rights Data Collection that uncovered startling student absenteeism rates: 6.5 million students nationwide. The Success Mentors initiative was launched with 10 pilot school districts in 2015. In 2016, the Obama administration extended the invitation to include 30 school districts nationwide. The program is designed

to pair chronically absent students with a trained mentor, who acts as a caring adult, advocate, and motivator and who has consistent, scheduled contact with the student necessary to keep them on track.

Setting Ambitious but Attainable Goals

Dr. Davis admits it’s an ambitious but attainable goal for a first-year launch, but his plans don’t stop there. KCPS intends to roll out the initiative district wide – reaching 36 schools – within 3 years. “There’s no school district in the nation aspiring to have 50 percent of its students in a mentorship program,” said Dr. Davis in an interview with local news station KSHB. But that’s exactly what Davis and his team intend to do.

To achieve goals like this, Dr. Davis knew he needed not only the support of community and business leaders, but also a proven software partner that could offer powerful, flexible tools to streamline volunteer signup and onboarding and allow them to communicate easily with mentors, track their

matches, and measure and report outcomes. And just as important, they needed timely access to a responsive, seasoned software support team that understood their needs.

Leveraging Technology to Power Rapid Growth

That is just what Dr. Davis and his team found in Innovative Mentoring Software, a cloud-based client management system designed for tracking all of a non-profit’s programs with powerful volunteer onboarding and client matching capabilities. Innovative Mentoring is a division of Minneapolis-based Emergent software. (Learn more or request a personal demo here.)

The KCPS team didn’t lose any time getting the product off the ground. KCPS understood the benefit of having tools that would streamline and automate tasks that would otherwise require significant human effort and worked quickly and efficiently with the Innovative Mentoring team to configure a solution tailored to their needs. Within two weeks of selecting Innovative Mentoring as the

solution they needed to power their ambitious goals, end users were trained, and they were live and using the software.

Streamlining Volunteer Onboarding

Now volunteers are able to enroll in the program using an online application powered by Innovative Mentoring. The application is seamlessly embedded on KCPS’s website and allows mentors to specify interests, availability and other details that the KPCS team use to match them with the most suitable mentee. The application feeds directly to their Innovative Mentoring database, freeing up time and resources from data entry that is best entered by the participant anyway.

In addition, an online reference form that integrates with the database allows staff to collect valuable insights about their volunteers that they can use to confirm an appropriate fit for the program. Integrated background checks through Verified Volunteers is another key to a streamlined onboarding process – a new product feature KCPS piloted. Background checks are

automatically initiated, and the results are fed directly into the database, ensuring the safety of their student participants. Once volunteers pass the background check, they are automatically eligible to be matched to a student based on their school preference, and potential matches are presented in priority order

50% OF STUDENTS

KCPS aspires to have 50% of its students in a mentorship program within 3 years.

based on matching student and volunteer interests.

Once the volunteer is enrolled in the program, mentors are given access to an online portal where they can see pertinent details about their match, journal match activities and log their



volunteer hours, which feeds into the Innovative Mentoring database and can be used to tell the story of the powerful work their volunteers are doing. Putting the tools in volunteer's hands frees staff up from menial tasks and gives them valuable data and insights into their matches and outcomes.

Focusing on What Matters

By automating the volunteer onboarding process, the KCPS team can ensure the quality of their program and safety of their students while focusing their talents and energy on their top priorities: the success of their students and volunteers and responding to the evolving needs of a growing program. According to Sherenna Clinton, Coordinator of Mentoring Services, "Innovative Mentoring was the key that unlocked the door to streamlining the various components we have in place for anyone interested in becoming a mentor. While we are able to track the completion of each step in the process for a potential mentor, we're also



Mentor Monica Landess with her mentee.

able to pull individual and cohort data at a moment's notice for any given values ranging from a particular school site to preferred interests to community affiliations. In essence, the software allows for a much more seamless way to manage our growing program, remain connected to our mentors and strengthen the relationship to encourage retention."

Forging a National Model

This groundbreaking, innovative work not only benefits KCPS students and the greater Kansas City community – offering hope for a brighter tomorrow – but creates a model that schools nationwide can emulate to combat absenteeism and empower youth.

