

CONNECTING STUDENTS & SHARING IDEAS

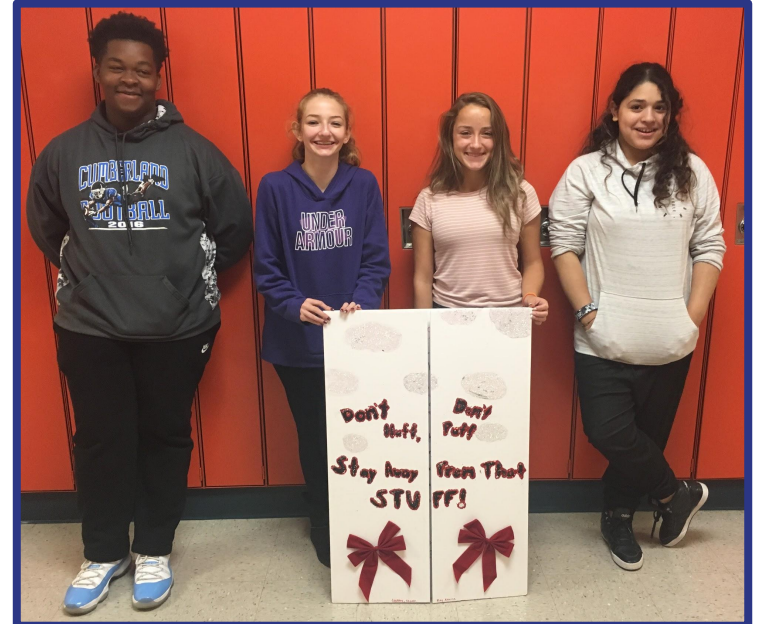
Learn how two schools gave students the chance to connect, problem solve, and build relationships, and how you can do the same.

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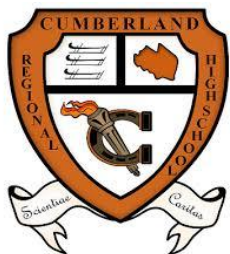
THE IDEA

Building on opportunities for educators to connect with one another and talk about their peer mentoring programs, two schools, South Anchorage High School in Alaska and Cumberland Regional High School in New Jersey, decided to bring their students together in conversation about their experiences as peer mentors. This toolkit provides an outline of their process and may be used by districts who are interested in connecting students across spaces.

Thank you to Jessica Williams and Amy Habberstad in Anchorage and Jaime MacEwen and Matthew Lawrence-Evans in New Jersey for bringing these students together in conversation!



ABOUT THE DISTRICTS



Cumberland Regional High School District

Location: Rural northwest section of Cumberland County, New Jersey serving an area of approximately 162 square miles

Comprehensive high school serving students grades 9 through 12.

of Students: 1,200

Demographics:

- 48% minority students
- 47% are enrolled in FRPL
- 78% of students in the graduating class applied & got accepted to a 2 or 4-year college or university.



Anchorage School District

Location: Anchorage Alaska

- 97th largest in U.S.
- Almost 50,000 students
- Over 90 schools
- 36% economically disadvantaged
- 56% non-white race/ethnicity

of Students: 1,400

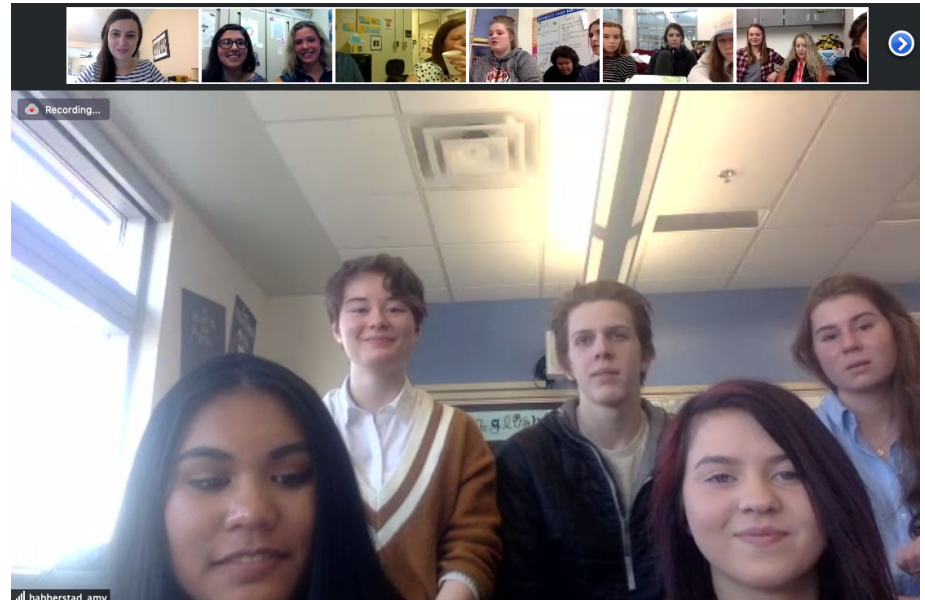
Demographics

- 34% minority students
- 15% economically disadvantaged
- 50% participation in AP classes

GOALS OF CONNECTING STUDENTS

The purpose of bringing students together is to:

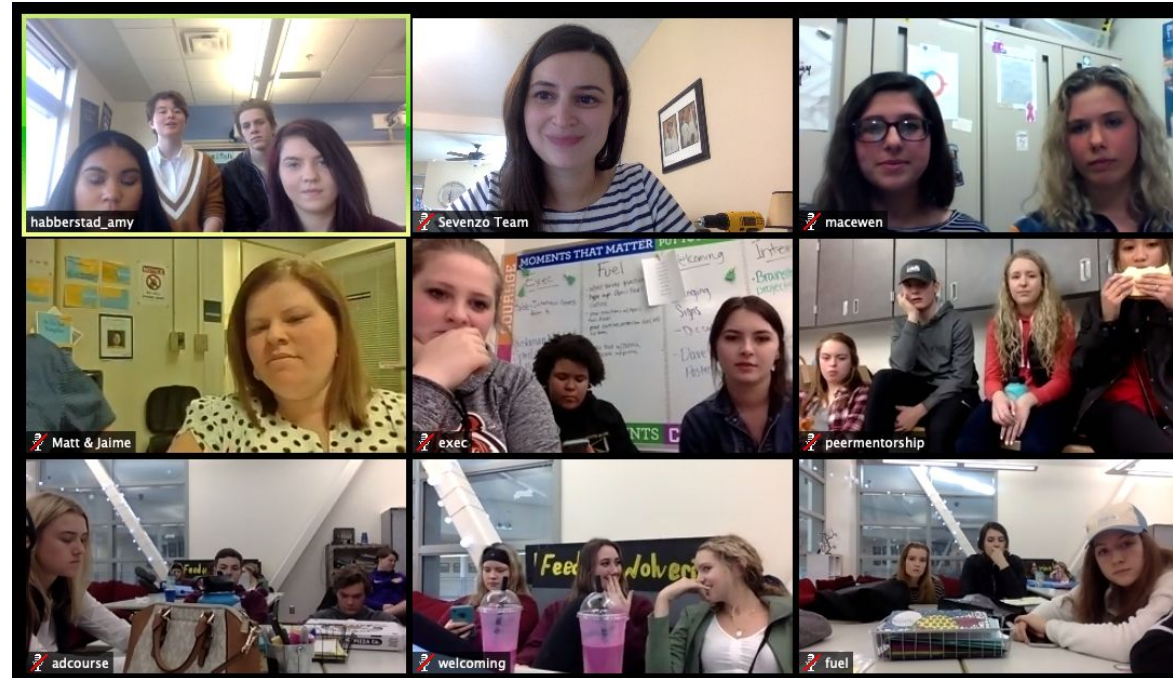
- Allow students with a shared interest in peer mentoring the opportunity to get to know each other
- Learn from one another about what makes a peer mentoring program successful and sustainable (from program design to mentor support)
- Learn what impact participation in peer mentoring programs has had on students
- Provide students with ongoing facilitated opportunities to connect, learn, and share ideas with peers across the country



HOW TO GET STARTED

Here's an outline of steps we took to make student chats a success:

- 1) Find a partner school with a similar student program. For these chats, students were all peer mentors. This helped shape their discussion questions.
- 2) Confirm a tool that will facilitate chats. Zoom and Google Hangout are both free and easy to use.
- 3) Get a date on the calendar that works for both districts to connect. We recommend scheduling an hour for each chat.
- 4) Confirm a space that's quiet and conducive to conversation among students.



PLANNING TIMELINE

To run a successful student chat, we followed the timeline below, allowing time to prepare students and manage logistics.

Timeline	Activity	School-Based Next-Steps
6 weeks before first chat	Planning call with involved educators to talk about goals and potential dates for a first chat	Invite students from each school to brainstorm topics & questions
3 weeks before first chat	Planning call with educators and student leads to discuss questions and chat format	Students confirm questions and topic of 1st chat
First Student Chat Takes Place		
1 week after 1st chat	Planning call with educators to discuss what went well and confirm schedule logistics for 2nd chat	Students confirm questions and topic of 2nd chat
Second Student Chat Takes Place		
1 week after 2nd	Planning emails shared among educators to confirm topic ideas and questions and confirm date and time for 2nd chat	Students confirm questions and topic of 3rd chat
Third Student Chat Takes Place		
1 week after 3rd chat	Connect with educators to reflect on the chat series experience and consider options for additional chat topics	

CHAT STRUCTURE

Below are the steps we take before each chat once a topic and logistics are set. Use this as a guide to help you get started!

1. Brainstorm potential questions with your students. What are they interested in discussing?
2. Consider the structure of the time. Typically, chats run as whole group discussion, and students from each district take turns asking questions. Consider if there might be an advantage to using virtual break-out rooms for your topic to allow smaller groups of students to connect and discuss.

Use this space to begin brainstorming chat topics and when you might host your first chat.

CHAT QUESTIONS

Sample Chat Questions for the Peer Mentoring topic to spark ideas!

1. What do you do to develop as a peer mentor? Thinking about personal mentor growth (e.g., as a peer mentor developing public speaking abilities)
2. How might we prepare for diversity between who we are and the students we work with as mentors? Thinking about how students come together from completely different background, ideologies and different things' not everyone understands the importance of understanding diversity among others
3. How can we strengthen our mentor team? Thinking about teamwork as a big part of mentoring and the struggle that occurs when you don't have the right team

Use this space to begin brainstorming questions that might be engaging for your students:

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

"Chatting with other students was a great experience. We were able to both receive and give out advice throughout the webinar. It's really a good idea to talk to similar programs, especially if you are just starting out." --Natalia Paraoan, South Anchorage High School mentor

"Being able to compare problems and solutions between programs was a great opportunity. Each school has its own set of conflicts, and discussing our resolutions made us better mentors." Mason Wayt, South Anchorage High School mentor

"The webinars gave us a semi-formal opportunity to improve our public speaking skills, while also exchanging our methods of mentoring. I thought the feedback we received was a real confidence booster to our class. We got to hear how far we have come." Bela Clopton, South Anchorage High School mentor

"It was definitely an eye opener that there are programs with similar goals all over, and that each program has a different approach and procedures to reach that similar goal. I was very excited to talk about my experience and just as excited to hear about others experiences, compare similarities and differences, and see what they took from it and how they'll use what they've learned from mentoring in the future." Dana Fidler, Cumberland Regional High School mentor

INSPIRED? PASS IT ON!

Reflect and Share What Works

REFLECT | What might the benefits be of hosting a student chat? What topic is of interest to your students?

SHARE YOUR STORY AND INSPIRE OTHERS | Come back to sevenzo.org to tell our community how you brought this practice to life. How did you adapt it for your class?

GIVE FEEDBACK ON THIS PRACTICE | Send us a message at hi@sevenzo.org with your feedback so we can make the toolkit even better!