

Fostering student achievement

By DK McDONALD The Daily News | Posted: Tuesday, December 16, 2014 11:52 pm

BULLHEAD CITY — Mohave High School seniors are mentoring incoming freshmen in a program designed to ease the transition of students from middle school to high school and prepare them for a successful academic career.

Leaders Engaging, Growing and Inspiring Together works in conjunction with Arizona GEAR UP, a college access program aimed at students from low-income communities statewide. GEAR UP focuses on success early in students' academic lives, starting in the seventh grade. Working with an entire grade level at a school, GEAR UP cultivates the motivation, knowledge and skills needed to succeed along the pathway to college. LEGIT was designed for direct interaction with individual students.

“LEGIT puts high school seniors in a mentoring role to incoming freshmen,” said Amber Parker, GEAR UP coordinator. “The mentors meet with their freshmen classes once a month and work on activities that align with advisory lesson plans to meet required proficiencies.”

“Mentors help freshmen understand what is going on,” said MHS senior and LEGIT mentor Raquel Mac Donald. “The goal is to help the freshmen do as well as possible academically through their high school career so they can take those lessons forward and succeed in life.”

“It really helps to know I’ll have help all the way through high school,” said MHS freshman Kaitlyn Moss. “I want to become a pediatrician, so a program that focuses on helping me get to college is great. LEGIT mentors are here for us and we can go to them any time to get our questions answered, get help with finals, or just about anything else we need.”

LEGIT is good for both incoming freshmen and the mentoring seniors, Parker said.



MAKING CONNECTIONS:

LEGIT, a new program at Mohave and River Valley High Schools, puts high school seniors in a mentoring role to incoming freshmen. “The best thing about being a mentor is that you form close relationships that have direct consequences on someone’s future success,” said LEGIT mentor Emily Stahlman. LEGIT works in conjunction with Arizona GEAR UP, a college access program aimed at students from low-income communities statewide. “I like getting to meet new people through LEGIT,” said MHS freshman Andy Berg. “But the best part of LEGIT is that it will help me get ready for college.”

“Being a mentor is learning to be a leader,” she said. “The freshmen get academic support and the mentors learn communication and leadership skills.”

LEGIT mentor Michael Prince became involved with the program after hearing about it from a friend.

“In the beginning it was more overwhelming than I expected,” he said. “The best part is getting to know the kids. Once they get to know you, it is easier. There are still challenges in getting them to talk, to open up, but we’re all learning.”

Though the program is young, coordinators are excited about the work students are doing.

“It’s the first year for LEGIT and our mentors are already exceeding expectations,” said Parker. “Before the year started we met with the curriculum director and picked topics to build lesson plans around. Our biggest challenge is finding lesson plan activities that encourage students to participate while meeting curriculum proficiencies, but the seniors are really taking ownership of the program. For example, LEGIT mentors worked on Orientation this year and designed a low-ropes course for incoming freshmen — all we had to do was stay out of their way.”

“The best thing about being a mentor is that you form close relationships that have direct consequences on someone’s future success,” said LEGIT mentor Emily Stahlman. “I enjoy getting to help people. As a freshman I didn’t have anything like this and I think it really would have helped.”