

PGC-HS

PEER GROUP CONNECTION-
HIGH SCHOOL

2023



CENTER FOR
SUPPORTIVE
SCHOOLS



DESIGNATED

SElect
Program

*Equipping older students to help 9th graders
make a successful transition to high school.*

04 About CSS

06 The PGC Model

12 Evidence & Impact



IN THIS

ISSUE

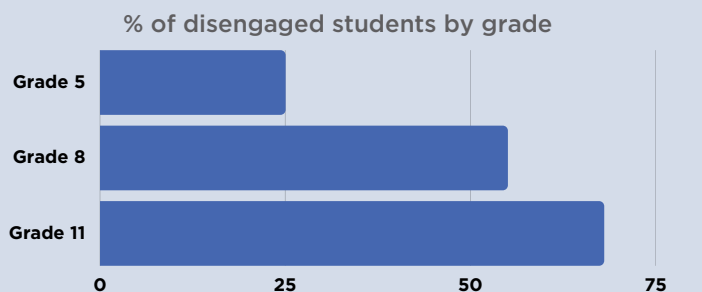


14 The PGC Curriculum

21 Youth Testimonials

TOGETHER, LET'S TURN AROUND THE DISENGAGEMENT CRISIS

The longer students stay in school, the less engaged they become.



Among students who drop out of high school:

47%

report being bored
and disengaged

69%

were not motivated
or inspired to work
hard

Among students who had dropped out of school,
just 41% had someone to talk to in school about personal
problems; 62% said their school needed to do more
to help students with problems outside of class.

PROVEN RESULTS, NO MATTER THE ZIP CODE

CSS's work directly addresses disengagement from school whether in urban, suburban, rural, economically disadvantaged, or more affluent communities.

CSS's work has been rigorously evaluated by research organizations, universities, and independent evaluators. Research findings indicate that, compared with non-participants, students who participate in CSS programs are more connected to school and to their peers, attend school more often, are more on-track to graduate on time, and exhibit a higher grade point average (GPA).

And we do this at the cost of only a few dollars per student.

CSS helps schools become places where all students can thrive.

We help leverage the resources in schools to create more caring and vibrant learning communities by:



Developing all
students into leaders



Empowering teachers
to collaborate with
each other and with
students



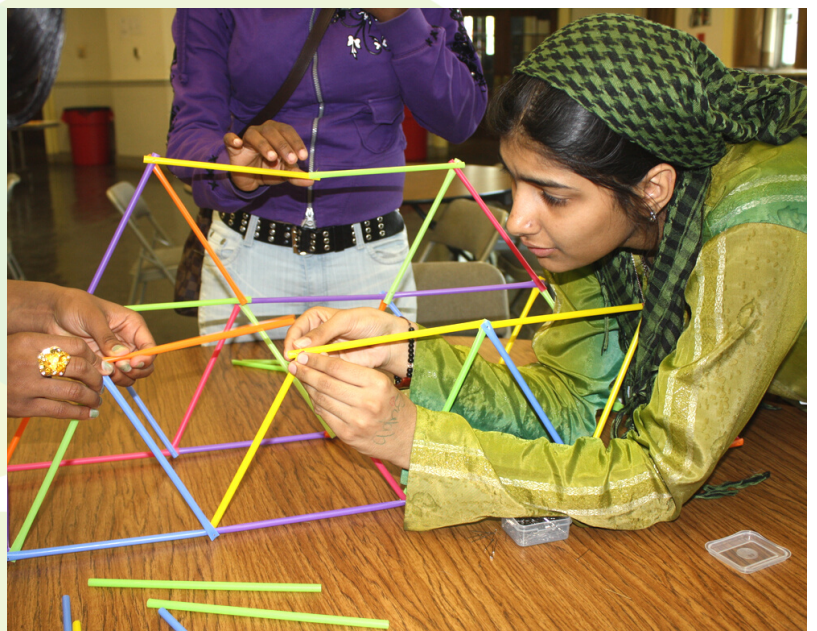
Engaging entire
school communities
to improve how
learning happens


Partner with CSS

Together, we can nourish meaningful connections and open student-focused dialogue among all members of your school community.

For over 40 years, the Center for Supportive Schools has provided schools with solutions that enable and inspire students to become more engaged learners; develop positive social-emotional and healthy behaviors; and navigate pivotal transitions.

With you as part of our international network of schools, CSS gets closer to achieving its vision that one day, all children will thrive in schools that graduate them prepared for the rigors of college and a life filled with meaningful work, active citizenship, and personal fulfillment.





CSS is among the national leaders in developing resources within schools and communities. CSS brings out the leadership in everyone, and has proven methods for building skills and effectiveness. There is no organization that I admire more, or trust more, than CSS when it comes to working with the social-emotional needs of schools, parents, and youth.”

Dr. Maurice Elias

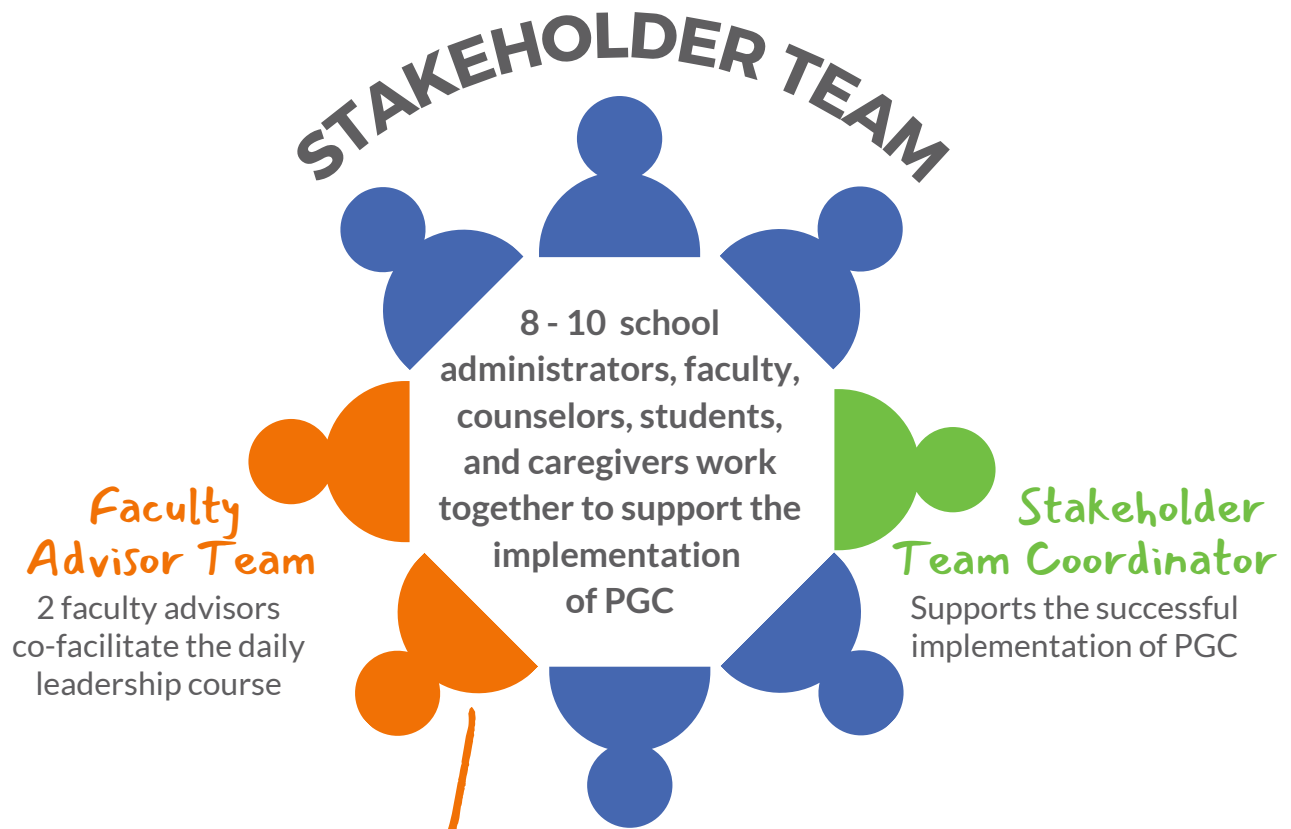
Director, Rutgers Social-Emotional
and Character Development Lab



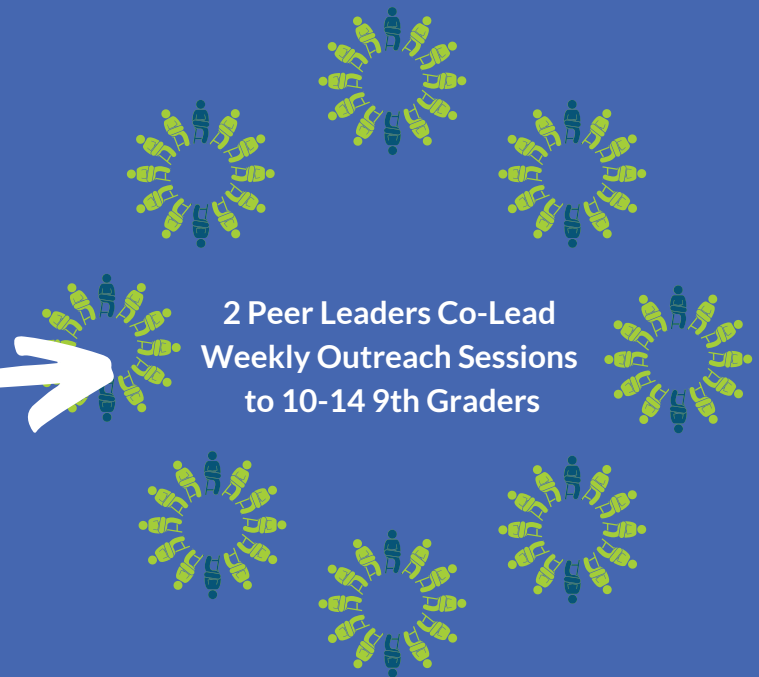
A MODEL THAT WORKS A CLOSER LOOK AT PGC

PGC AT-A-GLANCE

Program Model



**DAILY LEADERSHIP COURSE
CO-LED BY FACULTY ADVISORS**



**WEEKLY OUTREACH CLASSES
CO-LED BY PEER LEADERS**

**“PGC is the single
most transformational
initiative we have
implemented in
our school.**

The training facilitated by CSS for this program was the best training I have been to as an educator. Not only did I learn, practice, and internalize several of the skills needed to make the program successful, but I also found that it relit my passion to walk into the everyday world as a principal faces for the sake of empowering students.”

Matthew Mazzaroppi

District Superintendent, Bronx, NY

Former Principal, Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies



HOW PGC WORKS

Equipping older students to help 9th graders make a successful transition to high school.

Peer Group Connection-High School (PGC-HS) is an evidence-based and school-based program that supports and eases students' transition from middle to high school. This program taps into the power of older students to create a nurturing environment for incoming 9th graders.

PGC-HS includes a year-long, credit-bearing, leadership course for high school juniors and/or seniors that meets daily and is taught by school faculty. Through their leadership course, these juniors and/or seniors become trained peer leaders who meet once per week with 9th graders in outreach sessions designed to strengthen relationships among students across grades.

HOW PGC WORKS

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

PGC-HS's launch begins with the assembly of a **Stakeholder Team of administrators, faculty, parents, and community members** who **receive the training, tools, and resources** necessary to implement and sustain PGC-HS effectively year after year.

Carefully selected faculty members participate in an **11-day intensive train-the-trainer course** over a 1½-year period to learn how to run the program and teach the daily leadership course.

As part of their regular school schedule, carefully selected **juniors and/or seniors are trained in the daily leadership development class to become peer leaders** and serve as positive role models, discussion leaders, and mentors for 9th graders.



These **peer-leaders work in pairs to co-lead groups of 10-14 ninth graders in outreach sessions once each week** in which the 9th graders participate in **engaging, hands-on activities and simulations in supportive environments** that enable them to practice essential **academic, social, and emotional skills**, such as critical thinking, goal setting, decision-making, time management, teamwork, and communication.

During the second half of the school year, 9th graders utilize their newly acquired skills to plan and execute a **community service project**, while continuing to participate in weekly outreach sessions.

PGC-HS also includes a **parent and caregiver involvement** component. Peer leaders organize and facilitate Family Night events for 9th graders and their parents/guardians.

Beginning in year two, 10th grade students who participated in PGC-HS as 9th graders the previous year participate in booster activities led by the junior and/or senior peer leaders. The booster component reinforces the learning from 9th grade outreach sessions.

Peers are the greatest influence in an adolescent's life. **As a PGC peer leader**, I was able to help my peers deal with the challenges of high school.

That experience ignited my passion for education.

As a PGC advisor, I love watching my PGC students support their peers and seeing the incredible impact the PGC experience can have on young people.”

Jada Davis

PGC Peer Leader Alumna
Baltimore's Academy of College and Career Exploration

Current PGC Faculty Advisor & Classroom Teacher
The SEED School, Washington, D.C.

EVIDENCE-BASED. RELATIONSHIP-DRIVEN.

Through comprehensive evaluations, PGC peer leaders and outreach participants, when compared to non-program participants, were found to be/have:



Greater school engagement and peer connectedness



Higher rates of attendance

(while enrolled and after program completion)



Reduced likelihood of a suspension or disciplinary referral



Higher rates of high school completion



Stronger decision-making skills

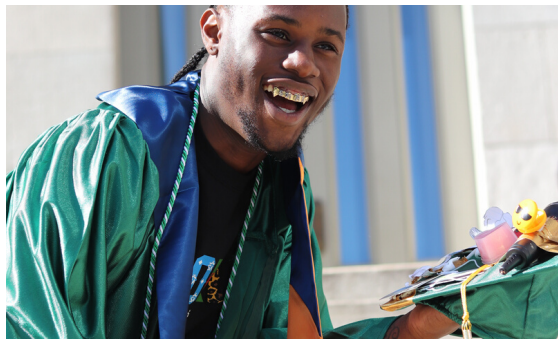


Less likely to report engaging in vaginal sex



Higher educational expectations and GPAs

THE EVIDENCE IN EVIDENCE-BASED



High School Graduation

Recognized by the National Dropout Prevention Center as a Model Program demonstrating “Strong Evidence of Effectiveness,” its highest effectiveness rating.



Attendance & Performance

Peer Group Connection-High School has been widely researched across various school districts and by various research bodies, and has proven to have a significant impact on attendance, graduation rates, student engagement, and academic outcomes.

Click on the following links to read more about PGC's outcomes:

- [Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness](#)
- [AT&T Aspire Evaluation of PGC](#)
- [PGC in the Journal of Educational Research](#)

Social Emotional Learning



Designated by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as a SElect program in CASEL’s Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs, its highest program rating. The CASEL Program Guide is designed to help educators and school administrators select an evidence-based SEL program that best meets the needs of their community. [Click here to learn more.](#)



Pregnancy Prevention

Designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Population Affairs (OPA) as an effective innovative approach for teen pregnancy prevention. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Identified by the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evidence Review (TPPER) as a highly effective program. The TPPER is a systematic review of programs designed to reduce teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and associated sexual risk behaviors. It is a joint effort of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), the Family and Youth Services Bureau, and the Office of Population Affairs within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Read about [PGC in the Journal of School Health](#)

The PGC Curriculum

The evidence-based PGC-HS curriculum is made up of two volumes: the Advisor Handbook and the Outreach Handbook. School teams receive in-depth training on how to use the curriculum to support successful program implementation.



The **PGC-HS Advisor Handbook** serves as the instructors' manual to the Peer Group Connection-High School course for credit for older students. The 15-unit Handbook provides important guidelines for program fidelity as well as curriculum utilized exclusively for the peer leadership class.

The **PGC-HS Outreach Handbook** serves as the curriculum for outreach sessions, which are conducted by older peer leaders. During their own leadership class, peer leaders experience this content with their faculty advisors, and lead it with their peer groups during the weekly outreach sessions.



A Peek into the Curriculum

Outreach Handbook

All PGC outreach sessions are aligned to these program objectives:



Connectedness

Increase students' sense of connectedness and attachment to school



Communication

Improve students' skills in communicating effectively with peers and adults



Social Emotional Learning

Increase students' skills in help-seeking, goal-setting, and decision-making



Positive School Experiences

Support/improve students' positive school-related behavior



High School Completion

Increase students' motivation to complete high school and post-secondary education



Post-Secondary Preparation

Improve students' preparedness for college and/or the world of work

A Closer Look Into The *Outreach Handbook*

Outreach Title	Outreach Learning Objectives
<p>Outreach 1. 9th Grade Orientation: An Introduction to PGC-HS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn what Peer Group Connection-High School (PGC-HS) is all about • Gain clarity about what we can expect from the PGC experience • Be introduced to one another and to peer leaders within our small Peer Groups
<p>Outreach 2. Activity Day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know each other better • Learn more about how PGC will work • Establish group ground rules, together
<p>Outreach 3. Question Bags</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know one another better • Discover new information that supports a better, clearer high school experience • Think about ways they can be successful this year, socially, emotionally, and academically
<p>Outreach 4. Pieces of Me</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select and share game cards to describe personality traits and preferences that help define who they are • Gain insight to each other's personalities to better understand what to expect from each other • Take time to get to know one another to build acceptance and strengthen their team
<p>Outreach 5. Two Facts and a Fiction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a game of rhythm and concentration to help reinforce learning and pronouncing each other's names • Share facts about ourselves • Learn new things about our peers
<p>Outreach 6. Showing Up as I Am: Knowledge, Action, Power</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore what it means to show up fully and comfortably as unique individuals • Make the connection between being able to show up as an authentic self and feeling able to be present at and engage fully in school
<p>Outreach 7. Creating a Caring Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience how what they say and do contributes to how others feel • Explore how certain choices in behavior can contribute to the creation of a more caring community
<p>Outreach 8. I Am...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express our stories and honor the stories of others • Appreciate and acknowledge others within our group through listening closely • Embrace the opportunity to examine the views we hold about ourselves and others

A Closer Look Into The *Outreach Handbook*

Outreach Title	Outreach Learning Objectives
<p>Outreach 9. Safety First</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore different types of safety, both physical and emotional • Consider different perspectives about how safe we feel in different scenarios • Consider how safety might differ for different members of our group • Examine the importance of safety in our lives
<p>Outreach 10. Me as a Tree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore our identities using trees as inspiration • Reflect on who we are, how we are supported, and what our dreams are • Learn more about one another by sharing aspects of ourselves
<p>Outreach 11. My Toughest Class Right Now – Part 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define for ourselves what “doing well” in a class could look like • Discover and celebrate the skills, actions, and traits we bring as learners • Affirm our capability and worth as people and as learners
<p>Outreach 12. My Toughest Class Right Now – Part 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about what skills, actions, and traits are the strengths we bring to our tough classes • Share stories about the toughest classes we are taking right now • Determine strategies to help navigate tough classes
<p>Outreach 13. Identity Stories</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore what it has been like, so far, to live with some of the identities that help to make us who we are • Articulate and share aspects of our identities • Come to better understand each other
<p>Outreach 14. Goals to Goals-Part 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore a simple strategy for setting goals in a fun way • Consider how identifying simple actions in support of our goals can help us reach them
<p>Outreach 15. Goals to Goals-Part 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about goals we have right now • Practice a strategy for setting goals • Think about the value of setting and sharing small goals in our lives
<p>Outreach 16. Ripple Effects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine how our decisions and actions affect both ourselves and others • Explore how considering the impact we’ll have on others can help us to make decisions
<p>Outreach 17. Pass the Problem</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect anonymous input to support problems we are facing • Think about different ways we can look at facing an issue • Consider how our diverse ways of thinking are a strength when it comes to supporting each other with challenges

A Closer Look Into The *Outreach Handbook*

Outreach Title	Outreach Learning Objectives
<p>Outreach 18. The Power of We</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the importance of communication and collaboration when working as a team toward a specific goal • Think about how group strategizing can strengthen the power youth groups hold • Build trust as a group
<p>Outreach 19. Pockets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know each other better by sharing stories about our everyday objects • Consider ways in which we are similar to and unique from one another
<p>Outreach 20. Decisions, Decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider why people may react differently to a given scenario • Learn a new way to approach decision-making • Think about how relying on a structured approach could help with thinking through the decisions we make
<p>Outreach 21. Clear Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about 3 specific communication skills: negotiation, refusal, and real talk • Explore the ways in which these communication strategies can help us make good decisions and build healthy relationships
<p>Outreach 22. Pressure Zone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice modeling effective communication skills • Better understand how effective communication can help us make healthy decisions, even when we're in difficult situations
<p>Outreach 23. Think Before You Click</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply the skills we've built so far around decision-making to technology-based scenarios • Consider how thinking through the many possible consequences of our actions can affect the decisions we make • Continue to build decision-making skills so we can positively impact the choices we make with technology
<p>Outreach 24. If I Could...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover new things that we have in common • Have fun while imagining how our futures might play out
<p>Outreach 25. Looking Back</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the year in PGC • Say farewell in two different ways • Think about what we will take with us from this experience

A Closer Look Into The *Outreach Handbook*

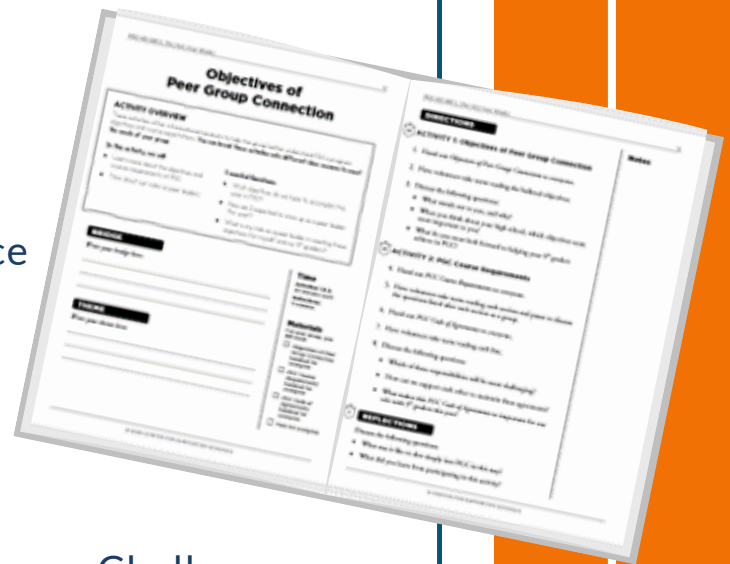
Outreach Title	Outreach Learning Objectives
Ritual Outreach Appreciation Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in a ritual that will occur many times throughout the year to celebrate and express appreciation for 2 members of our group each time • Share our appreciation for one another and for our peer group
Special Outreach Faculty Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This special outreach creates an opportunity for faculty and staff to learn about PGC-HS and experience part of an outreach that focuses on creating a caring community in the school.
Special Outreach Family Night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This 2 ½-hour special outreach for students and their family members is ideally held at about the midpoint of the course and aims to help adults and teens understand each other's experiences and perspectives, improve their communication, and support 9th graders' transition into high school.
Special Outreach Activity Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the peer leaders' mid-program retreat, this special outreach reenergizes outreach groups midway through PGC, with different design options that meet the needs of each school.
Special Outreach Service - Option 1: Day of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This special outreach, held as a series of 3 outreach sessions half-way into the course, enables students to prepare for and engage in a Day of Service.
Special Outreach Service - Option 2: Showing Up for Next Year's 9th Graders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This special outreach, held as a series of 3 outreach sessions 3/4 of the way into the course, enables current 9th graders to reflect on experiences this year in order to create welcoming messages for next year's 9th grade class.

A Peek into the Curriculum

Advisor Handbook

Guiding the **Peer Leadership Class** and program fidelity are these 15 units:

1. Peer Leader Selection Process
2. Establishing 9th Grade Outreach Groups
3. Coursework and Assessment
4. Peer Leaders' 3-Day Retreat
5. The First Four Weeks
6. Check-ins
7. Preparing for Outreach
8. Debriefing the Outreach Experience
9. Energizers
10. Teambuilders
11. Skillbuilders
12. Structures for Group Dialogue & Group Challenges
13. Preparing to Conduct Special Outreaches
14. Mid-Program Retreat
15. Closure Activities



WHAT YOUTH

Have to Say



Youth Testimonials

Direct quotes from peer leaders

PGC shows students they are not alone. It doesn't let kids fall through the cracks - all students have a story to tell and we all have the capacity to lead and change lives. With the spread of PGC, we can change even more lives.

PGC has taught me how to become more of a role model for people in the school and out of school.

PGC has helped me the most because it taught me how to open up to others and trust.

PGC has helped me realize that teachers [and] students around the school care, and that's what really matters.

As a senior in high school, I had the opportunity to participate in Peer Group Connection (PGC). Looking back, this program was one of the most enriching experiences of my life, and it continues to positively influence my leadership style and relationships twelve years later... PGC provided me with skills and experiences I have carried throughout my life. I learned the importance of active listening, empathy, and effective communication, which have proven invaluable in both personal and professional relationships. The program also taught me the value of taking ownership of my actions and decisions and the consequences of those actions on others.

PEER GROUP CONNECTION



WE LOVE TO CONNECT!

If you are interested in learning more about partnering with CSS to bring one of our evidence-based programs, professional development series, or custom initiatives to your school, please reach out today!

EMAIL US TO SCHEDULE
A FREE CALL



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