

# PGC-MS

PEER GROUP CONNECTION-  
MIDDLE SCHOOL

2023



CENTER FOR  
SUPPORTIVE  
SCHOOLS

*Equipping older students to help 6th graders  
make a successful transition to middle school.*





**04 About CSS**

**06 The PGC Model**

**12 Evidence & Impact**



IN THIS

ISSUE

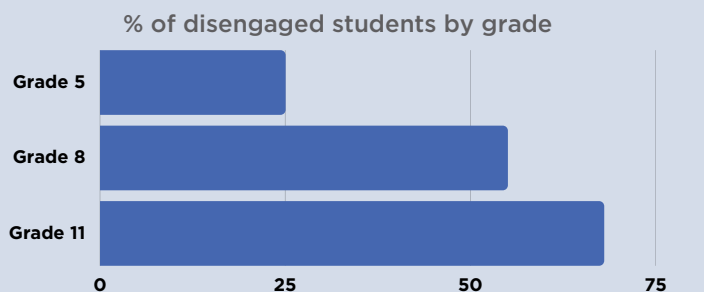


**14 The PGC Curriculum**

**20 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

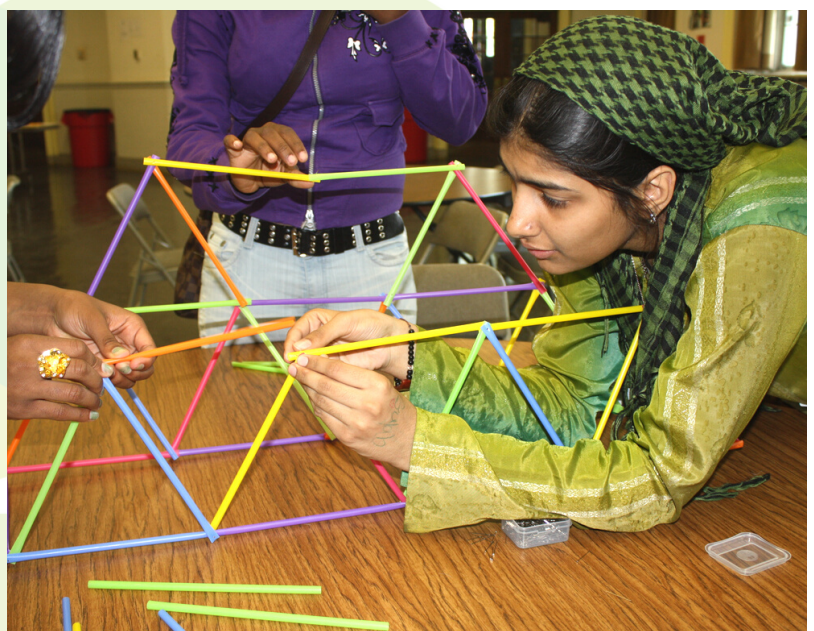



# Partner with CSS

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





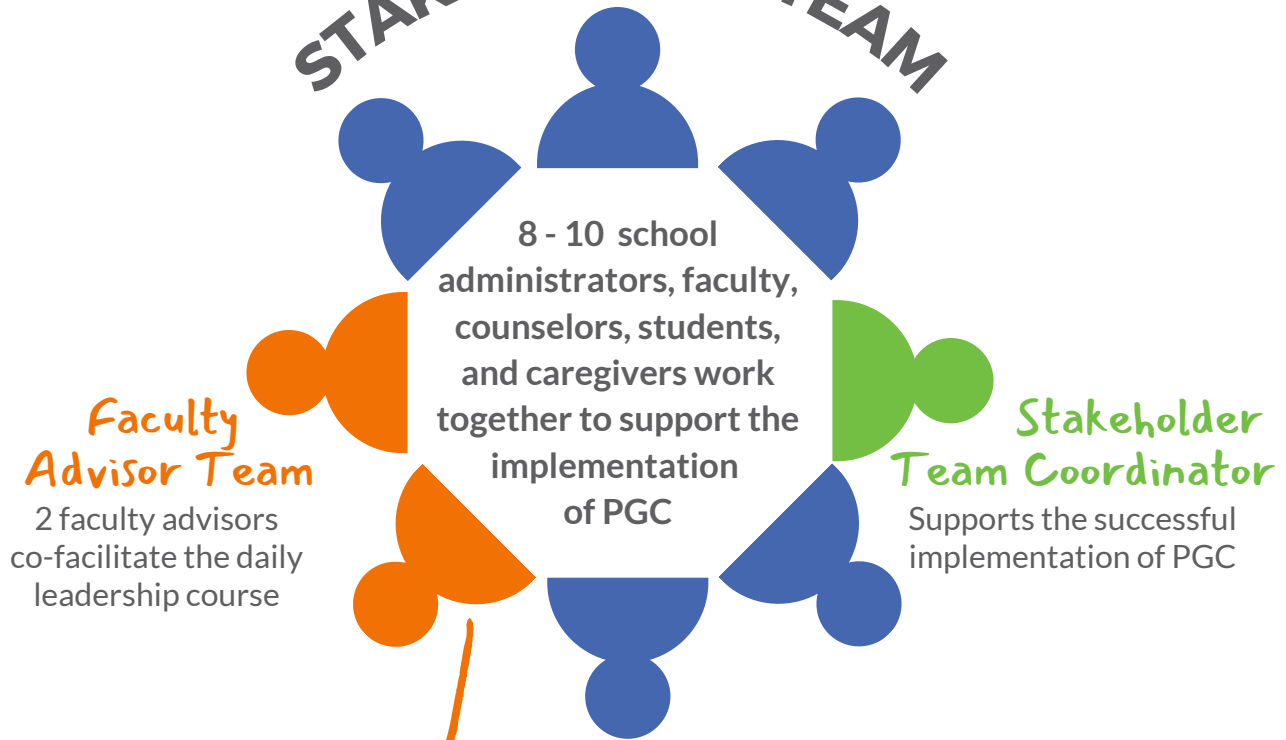
# A MODEL THAT WORKS A CLOSER LOOK AT PGC



# PGC AT-A-GLANCE

## Program Model

### STAKEHOLDER TEAM



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



**OUTREACH CLASSES  
CO-LED BY PEER LEADERS  
THREE TIMES MONTHLY**

**“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 6th graders make a successful transition to middle school.*

Peer Group Connection-Middle School (PGC-MS) is a school-based program that supports and eases students' transition into middle school. This program taps into the power of older students to create a nurturing environment for incoming 6th graders.

PGC-MS is closely modeled from PGC-HS, which is evidence-based and nationally recognized for its efficacy.

PGC-MS includes a year-long, credit-bearing, leadership course for 8th graders that meets daily and is taught by school faculty. Through their leadership course, these 8th graders become trained peer leaders who meet three times per month with 6th graders in outreach sessions designed to strengthen relationships among students across grades.



# HOW PGC WORKS

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PGC-MS'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-MS 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 8th graders are trained in the daily leadership development class to become peer leaders and serve as positive role models, discussion leaders, and mentors for 6th graders.

These **peer leaders work in triads to co-lead groups of 10-14 sixth graders in outreach sessions** three times per month in which the 6th 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.

PGC-MS also includes a **parent and caregiver involvement** component. Peer leaders organize and facilitate Family Night events for 6th graders and their parents/caregivers.

*"Peer Group Connection has made a tremendous impact on our school culture and climate."*



The presence of Peer Leaders and the peer mentor program in our middle school has helped to minimize and nearly eliminate instances of harassment, intimidation, and bullying. The transition into middle school was met with ease by our 5th graders, who are now able to look to the 8th graders for support.

*"Peer Group Connection has been the catalyst in our quest to be bully and stigma free."*

**Tracey Marinelli**

Superintendent of Schools

Little Falls School District

# 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**



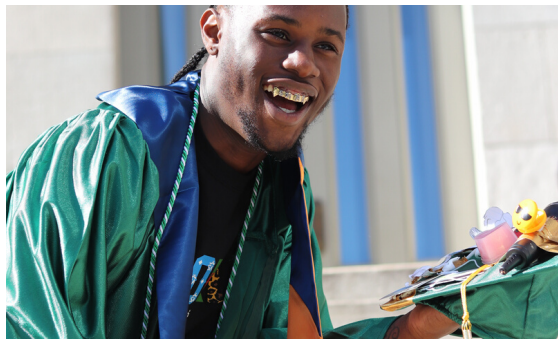
**Less likely to report engaging in vaginal sex**



**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-MS 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-MS Advisor Handbook** serves as the instructors' manual to the Peer Group Connection-Middle 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-MS 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 outreach sessions.



# A Peek into the Curriculum

## *Outreach Handbook*

All PGC-MS outreach sessions are aligned to these program objectives:



**Self-Awareness and Self-Acceptance**



**Communication Skills**



**Connectedness**



**Decision-Making Skills**



**Help-Seeking Skills**



**Achievement Orientation, Motivation, and Skills**



**Collaboration/Teamwork**



# A Closer Look Into The *Outreach Handbook*

Outreach Title	Outreach Description
Outreach 1. Orientation to PGC-MS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach explains what PGC is all about and what 6th graders can expect as participants.</li> </ul>
Outreach 2. Activity Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach helps 6th graders become familiar with PGC, the peer leaders, and each other.</li> </ul>
Outreach 3. True Colors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach helps 6th graders learn new things about each other that may be hidden under the surface, and thus help the group build positive relationships.</li> </ul>
Outreach 4. Similarity and Diversity Wheel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach uses a question structure to help group members discover some things everyone has in common as well as things that make each person unique.</li> </ul>
Outreach 5. 9 Styles of Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach is about the many different ways that everyone can be a leader – more ways than you might think!</li> </ul>
Outreach 6. What Would You Do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach is about exploring how to step up and help when other people are being bullied.</li> </ul>
Outreach 7. “I Am...”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach offers written and oral expression, listening, and reflection to explore and embrace our personal histories and stories. As we learn about ourselves and others, find connections, and demonstrate appreciation, we will also confront beliefs, feelings, and judgments we may hold about ourselves and others.</li> </ul>
Outreach 8. Communication Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach engages 6th graders in 2 fun games that help them to think about verbal and nonverbal communication in their daily lives.</li> </ul>

# A Closer Look Into The *Outreach Handbook*

Outreach Title	Outreach Learning Objectives
Outreach 9. Group Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach uses storytelling to uncover connections among group members, strengthen existing connections, and show what makes the group, as a whole, special.</li> </ul>
Outreach 10. Knowledge, Action, Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach is about the many ways that 6th graders can use knowledge and action to be powerful every day, particularly when it comes to setting and accomplishing their own goals.</li> </ul>
Outreach 11. Learning Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach offers scarf juggling to help students think about the elements of a learning environment that can help them thrive.</li> </ul>
Outreach 12. Priority Wheel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach is about how the hours in each day can be balanced between things we have to do and other things that are important to us.</li> </ul>
Outreach 13. Boundary Breaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach creates time to strengthen the relationships among members of the group through getting to know others in the group even better.</li> </ul>
Outreach 14. From Random to Organized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach is about the importance of being organized in your everyday life.</li> </ul>
Outreach 15. The Truth about Multitasking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach explores whether a person can really do more than one thing at once and do it all well!</li> </ul>
Outreach 16. Yes! And...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach is about learning how to be a flexible member of a team –at the same time as staying tuned in to your own sense of what works best for you.</li> </ul>
Outreach 17. Stepping Back to Spring Ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This outreach is about the importance of taking time to reflect on your experiences, including PGC.</li> </ul>

# A Closer Look Into The *Outreach Handbook*

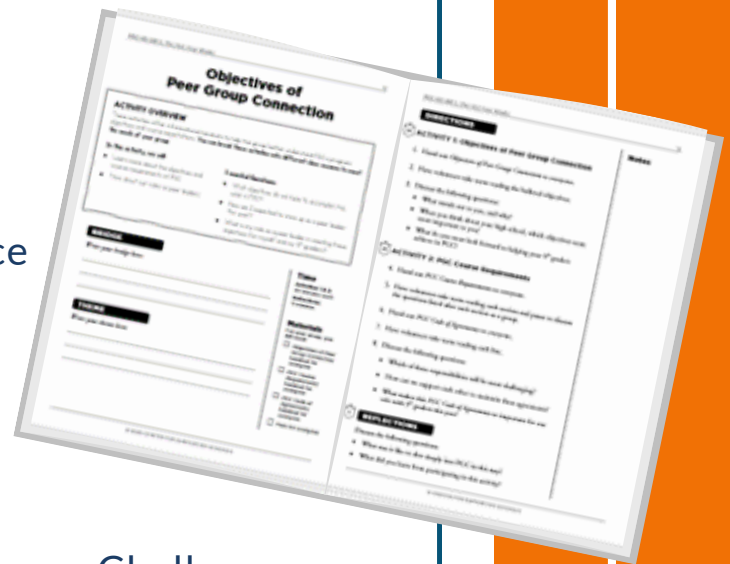
Outreach Title	Outreach Learning Objectives
<p>Outreach 18. Welcoming Next Year's 6th Graders to Our School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This outreach offers current 6th graders the opportunity to help next year's 6th graders feel supported and welcomed when they enter school in the fall.</li> </ul>
<p>Outreach 19. Introducing My 12th Grade Self</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This outreach supports 6th graders in thinking about their long-term goals by envisioning the person they would each like to be when they graduate high school.</li> </ul>
<p>Outreach 20. Lend a Hand, Leave a Footprint</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This outreach helps the group to celebrate its individual members as well as the time they have spent together as a PGC peer group.</li> </ul>
<p>Ritual Outreach 1: Appreciation Day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This outreach will be repeated approximately 5 times throughout the year. Each time it happens, 2 members of the group will be celebrated by the whole group! Every member of the group will be celebrated by the time the PGC year ends.</li> </ul>
<p>Ritual Outreach 2: Warm Welcome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This outreach is used only by any specific outreach group that gains a new 6th grade member somewhere in the middle of the year. At only 5 minutes long, this outreach takes place at the beginning of a regular outreach session, after which the regularly scheduled outreach continues (though in a slightly shortened format).</li> </ul>
<p>Ritual Outreach 3: Fond Farewell</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This outreach is used only by any specific outreach group that is going to lose a 6th grade member somewhere in the middle of the year. At only 5 minutes long, this outreach takes place partly at the beginning of a regular outreach session, and partly at the very end of the outreach session. The outreach that has been scheduled for that day will still take place, though in a slightly shortened format.</li> </ul>
<p>Special Outreach Family Night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a very special evening outreach, to which peer leaders invite their 6th grade peer groups, the parents/guardians of their 6th graders, and their own parents/guardians, as well. Together, the group focuses on understanding and improving adult-child communication.</li> </ul>

# 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 6th Grade Outreach Groups
3. Coursework and Assessment
4. Peer Leaders' 2-Day Retreat
5. The First Five 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 PGC-MS 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 realize that teachers [and] students around the school care, and that's what really matters.*

PGC has helped me become a leader and has given me a voice to speak to the sixth graders, and it has helped me build my confidence and my self-esteem.

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

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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