



## MAINE CTE *PROMISING PRACTICES* MINI CASE STUDY

Skowhegan Career and Technical Education Center

Skowhegan ME

Director: Dave Keaton

### **PROMISING PRACTICE: Mentoring 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**

During the 2007–08 school year, Skowhegan CTE Center and Skowhegan Middle School collaborated on two programs designed to help 8<sup>th</sup> graders make a better transition to high school:

- 1) A mentoring program for at risk 8<sup>th</sup> graders
- 2) A career-focused four day summer program to help students making the transition from middle school to high school to think about their future career options

#### **Mentoring program**

The mentors were members of the CTE center's student leadership group — two students from each of the ten CTE program areas. The twenty students were each matched up with an eighth grade student identified as "at risk" for academic and/or social reasons by teachers and administrators. "These were students that the adults felt could really benefit from an older student role model who could encourage them." The mentors met with the twenty 8<sup>th</sup> graders many times throughout the year and did a variety of activities including the following:

- ✓ Spent time together at the CTE center for a morning or afternoon
- ✓ Tutored/helped with school work
- ✓ Had lunch together

Keaton said that before each time that they met with the 8<sup>th</sup> graders, the student services coordinator, Ann Thiboutot, met with the student leaders and asked them to discuss questions like "What it was like for you when you were in middle school?" and "When you were down, what would you have liked an older student to come to talk to you about?" Keaton said that the mentors enjoyed the experience — "Most came back and said they wished someone had done that for them."

Most of these students will be participating in the summer program as well.

#### **Summer transition program**

This four day summer transition program for rising 9<sup>th</sup> graders will provide an opportunity with a career focus. Students will have an opportunity to do some initial career training and learn about a myriad of career options related to four career clusters through a closer look at Health Occupations, Carpentry, Outdoor Resources, and Digital Graphic Arts.

Some of the goals of the program are to give students "a light at the end of the tunnel — early," to help them see the relevance of sticking with the academics in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade if they want to reach their career goal, and to give some initial CTE training in the four CTE programs represented in this Summer Career Exploration Program. The leadership team members helped to recruit students, along with CTE program instructors. "We're such a missing element in the early years of high school."

Keaton said that both programs grew out of staff discussions at the end of the previous year, when CTE staff felt they could be doing more to help get students career focused earlier on and could help with the difficult transition to high school that many students face.

#### **What difference is it making?**

Since this was the first year of both programs, it is too early to tell if either made a difference in terms of helping students to stay in school or interesting students in career and technical education. But Dave Keaton says the leadership team mentors felt really good about the program — "makes them think how they can help; they think about how they were like that and they feel they can make a difference." Keaton said that they would try to continue the program next year.

Mini Case Studies were developed by PCG-CRM as part of a contract with the Maine Department of Education and the Maine Administrators of Career and Technical Education (MACTE).

© 2008 PCG's Center for Resource Management with permission to use locally.



Surveys of the students involved in the programs were filled out at the end of the summer program. Overall, students are thrilled. "I wish I could have done this every summer during Middle School." "I really want to take a CTE program (especially Outdoor Resources)." "This program was really cool!"

*For more information, contact Dave Keaton at 207-474-2151 or email him at [dkeaton@msad54.org](mailto:dkeaton@msad54.org)*

Mini Case Studies were developed by PCG-CRM as part of a contract with the Maine Department of Education and the Maine Administrators of Career and Technical Education (MACTE).  
© 2008 PCG's Center for Resource Management with permission to use locally.

