

## **Summer Bridge Activities for ASPIRE's Community Based Organizations**

### **Opening**

Hi, I'm Meghan Ferns the Assistant Program Director at Oregon Mentors. I am here today in partnership with the Oregon Student Access Commission, also called OSAC for short. This podcast was written for ASPIRE Coordinators in community-based organizations, and the topic is summertime programming.

### **Introduction**

In 2007, a major study titled "Making a Difference in Schools" was released. The study focused on the Big Brothers Big Sisters School-based Mentoring Program. Data showed clear evidence of youth gaining skills at the end of a school year, and then losing many of those skills over the summer. The summertime dip was not immediately resolved at the beginning of the next school year, and instead, kids and mentors had to meet for several months in the new school year to rebuild their relationships in order for the youth to regain lost skills.

Subsequently, a best practice in the field of mentoring is to promote summertime programming. For ASPIRE volunteers and teens, bridging the summer gap with program support is a good way to direct your busy high school students to these important activities to maintain their skills.

### **Body**

Let's talk about some ways that you might promote summertime interactions between volunteers and teens:

If you actively pair volunteers with students, consider encouraging them to build a summer activity plan. This plan can be written down in a simple document detailing the approved sites where matches plan to meet, and the purpose for each activity. For example, an ASPIRE volunteer, Gena, and her mentee, Melia, might tour a community college on June 29<sup>th</sup> and then meet at the site every third Wednesday of the month at 4pm throughout the summer to research colleges, work on applications, and begin the scholarship process.

Aside from planned work sessions and potential drop-in hours, summer is an excellent time to address other goals. For example:

- consider building enthusiasm for college and ASPIRE participation by hosting a special event, like a panel presentation that focuses on different post-high school pathways or jobs for interested teens.

- Or, explore local business or community partners that may provide natural locations for field trips or information sessions.
- Or, consider spending some time over the summer building an incentive strategy to help boost teen participation in your school-year program
- Finally, consider scheduling a summer-end celebration in August. This could be a great way to signal to volunteers and students to change gears and start preparing for the upcoming year.

If students have a difficult time with transportation during the summer, consider how you can reach out to them rather than having them come to you. For example, ask interested students to fill out three self-addressed envelopes and, before the school year is over, get your ASPIRE volunteers to help you fill these envelopes with monthly packets of worksheets, applications, or other assorted materials that the student can work on during summer vacation.

Many students lose focus and determination throughout the summer. If you've seen this happen, consider another activity to provide students tools to self-motivate. For example, at the beginning of a school year, ask students to write a short, one-page motivational letter about their life goals and aspirations. These letters can be a great way to have students lay out a life plan, and they can be saved and mailed back to teens during the summer as a motivational tool.

Our final tip is to make sure you spend extra time publicizing any summertime programming, and offer extra reminders to ASPIRE students and volunteers as the day draws near. An email or Facebook reminder is always helpful.

### Conclusion

Creating summertime programming with ASPIRE is possible, but it does take a little bit of leg work and creativity. If you've found a strategy that works, please share it with OSAC and your ASPIRE Coordinator colleagues.

### Closing

This podcast is brought to you through the partnership of Oregon Mentors and the Oregon Student Access Commission. For more information about mentoring and mentoring opportunities in Oregon, visit [oregonmentors.org](http://oregonmentors.org). For more podcast topics and information on access to post-secondary education, please visit [www.OregonStudentAid.gov](http://www.OregonStudentAid.gov). From all of us here at Oregon Mentors and the Oregon Student Access Commission, this is Meghan Ferns. We look forward to helping you again soon.