



Welcome Packet Overview

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Welcome to Affinity Mentoring!



Affinity Mentoring is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that partners with local businesses, organizations, and schools to match students in K-8th grade with a caring adult role model to journey alongside them one hour a week (current school partners in 2021-2022 include Burton Elementary, Burton Middle School, Southwest Community Campus School Godfrey-Lee Early Childhood Center, and Lee Middle School).

We work towards the mutual liberation of all community members and believe that youth are already leaders and community members, but need equitable access and platforms to use their voice. Affinity's mentoring model provides individual, one hour per week mentoring with trained, safe, supportive adults to support the growth of leadership and social-emotional skills, as well as math and literacy skills.

Our mission is to facilitate equitable growth in academics, social emotional skills, and self-esteem through mutually beneficial mentoring relationships. We believe in cultivating a brave space that amplifies the voices of young agents of change in a diverse and inclusive community.

Our vision is to be a leading nonprofit for fostering belonging alongside young people, families, and community.

Additionally, we hold basic values that EVERY person and student we interact with is a cherished leader and community member, we believe EVERY students' voice matters, and we believe EVERYONE should be invited to be a part of and build spaces of belonging.

- [Black Lives Matter Support Statement](#)
- [Asian American Pacific Islander Support Statement](#)
- [Indigenous Peoples Support Statement](#)
- Staff Highlight: [Mentor Boss Lady](#) / [Angela's Story](#)
- [Loving Day Support Statement](#)

Want to learn more? Check out our most recent [Annual Report](#), and here what the community thinks of our work in our first [Community Listening Project](#).

Our Mentoring Model

Why do we use this mentoring model? Doesn't that take away from the regular school day?



2018 Nonprofit Pitch Award
Women in Successful Enterprises (WISE)



2019 Nonprofit of the Year
Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce



2020 Mentor Organization of the Year
Grand Rapids Young Professionals

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Though they are important, students need more than skills in math and literacy to be able to succeed in school. Studies continue to show how critical Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is to educational success. With new testing, increased class sizes, and reduced resources, we need a community of support to meet student needs.

- SEL competence shows benefits such as: improved test scores, grades, and attendance positive social behaviors and relationships with peers and adults (*Durlak et al., 2011; Farrington et al., 2012; Sklad et al., 2012*)
- SEL has been found to: improve achievement increase attitudes toward school reduce depression and stress (*Durlak et al., 2011*)
- Kindergartners stronger in SEL are more likely to: graduate high school earn a college degree obtain stable employment in young adulthood (*Jones, Greenberg & Crowley, 2015*)

Equity-Based Barrier Reduction Work

We regularly say that every youth needs 5-7 safe adults they can talk to and trust for healthy development and growth, but simply introducing a student and adult is not the same as fostering relationship building. That is why we have built a mentoring program that focuses on equity-based barrier reduction work to help address the myriad barriers that keep youth from building trusting, adult relationships.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs teaches us that we must first ensure family's basic needs are met - which we do through partnerships, referrals and regular communication with other organizations. Next, we reduce barriers to the relationship building process such as a lack of transportation or supervision for meetings, language barriers, or even having access to spaces where students can safely meet diverse, new adults. Lastly, we focus on providing in-depth and regular training to all mentors to enhance the mentoring relationship, and are working hard to recruit diverse mentors so that students can more readily see themselves reflected in healthy adults. When you invest in students and families at Affinity Mentoring, you invest in a holistic and comprehensive program that puts equity at the core.

What Does Mentoring Actually Look Like?



Honestly, it's hard to truly understand just how amazing mentoring can be in words only. Check out our videos, photos and blogs to truly see how amazing this program is!

- [Stories and Videos about Affinity Mentoring](#) and the work that we do.
- [Mentoring from the perspective of the mentee.](#)
- Mentoring from the perspective of families: [Blog](#) / [Video](#)

COVID-19 + Virtual Mentoring

The threat of COVID-19 is real and dangerous in our community, but we wouldn't think of letting that stop mentoring relationships!

Another Virtual thing? Is [Virtual Mentoring](#) really worth it? Madeline, a long-time mentor with Affinity, made the transition with us to virtual and here's what she had to say about her first session:

"Just finished up my first virtual mentoring session and I just want to give a huge shout out to Affinity Mentoring for making it happen during this pandemic! My mentee and I have been together since she was in kindergarten and I cannot believe she is now a big 5th grader! We used this first meeting to simply catch up, and in all of my year with her, this was the first time we were able to dig deeper into our backgrounds. We took advantage of the virtual meeting from home and shared baby pictures, stories about our upbringing, where we live, our favorite areas in our house, and a lot more things that brought us joy....she told me how excited she was to see me and how much she misses doing homework and reading with me....during this pandemic I've been so focused on other things that mentoring wasn't even in my top three [priorities]. I needed this reminder of how important being a mentor is to her. That I am truly making an impact and just how proud I am of her. She is truly family to me."

[Mentees](#), young and old, also seem to think that continuing mentoring relationships during a pandemic is a top priority!

Check out what [Virtual Mentoring at the GLPS Early Childhood Center](#) looks like this year, and how even our littlest and most energetic mentees are engaging virtually.

Student Referrals

How does it work?

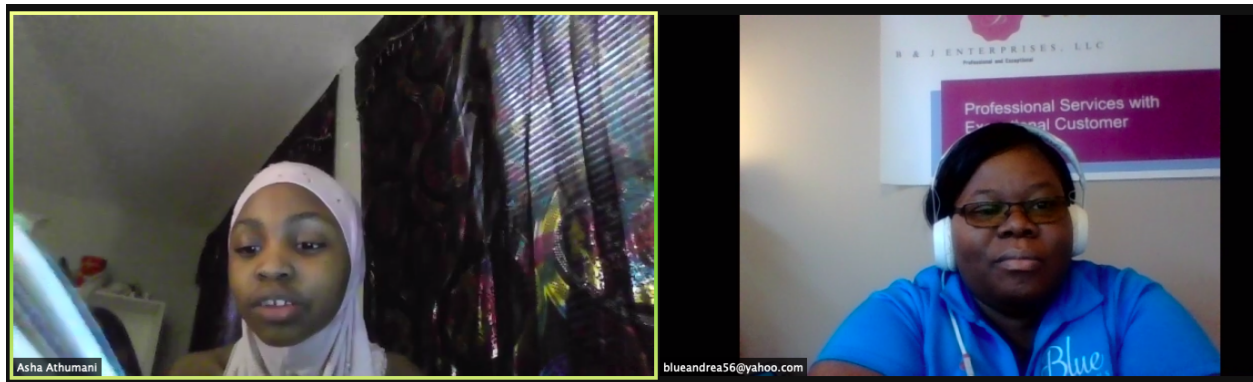


Parents, teachers, school staff, and school partners can refer a student for mentoring. Meanwhile, Affinity staff recruit, vet, and train excellent and safe mentors from our community (19% of mentors live in mentoring service areas, 700% increase in mentors of color since 2016 - view more stats in our [Annual Report](#))

Site Coordinators are extremely careful in matching students with mentors, getting background information, likes and dislikes, future career goals, and personality types all before determining who could be the best match. Because of this and the impressive time and energy that Site Coordinators put into facilitating these relationships, we have incredibly high retention rates - 94% of mentor matches successfully complete the full year and 65% of mentor matches have been together for two or more years. This means [relationships can last long after](#) students graduate out of the Affinity Programming.

School Partnerships

I work in a school that is partnering with Affinity; what does that mean for me?



We at Affinity work incredibly hard to make sure that our programming is a benefit and a relief, not an additional burden, on teachers and school staff. We are here to support you, support students, and support families!

Each school works alongside by providing:

- A physical space in the building called a “Mentor Center” that mentoring can take place in (whether hybrid school or in person school is taking place)
 - Don’t worry! We know you do not have lots of resources to spare. We bring in as much of our own equipment, furniture, books and materials as possible
- Teachers and school staff fill out a recommendation form for help Affinity staff identify students who would benefit from mentoring the most
- Site Coordinators work with teachers and staff to make sure all mentors and students abide by all school rules and procedures, and facilitate students coming to the Mentor Center to meet with their mentor as smoothly as possible
- Schools agree to sign MOU’s and Data Sharing Agreements with Affinity Mentoring so that we can ensure that our work is data driven, successful, and sustainable; parents are also aware of this and give permissions as well
- Mentoring is most successful when mentors and Site Coordinators are a part of a learning team, and teachers and staff share information on how the mentoring time could be best spent to support the student
- See what [Kevin Polston](#), Former Superintendent of Godfrey-Lee Public Schools, and [Jen Schotte](#), President of the Grand Rapids Public Schools school board have to say about mentoring!

Community Partnerships

Affinity partners with over 30 local businesses and nonprofit organizations in a variety of ways.



BoldSOCKS



Gordon Food Service



Greater Grand Rapids Chapter of Jack and Jill of America

The best, most innovative, and equitable work for students, schools, and families takes place when the whole community partners together. That is why we have clear models for businesses and organizations to participate in mentoring at Affinity through a [variety of avenues](#).

Even as our community together fights a world pandemic that continues to take the largest toll on already disenfranchised communities, our [corporate partners use their resources and creativity to advance equity](#). Local organizations understand that preparing for a collectively successful future means investing equitably in youth today. That is why some of our [most dedicated partners](#) even pay their staff to participate in weekly mentoring, recognizing the long-term investment they are making.

Lastly, we cannot fulfill our mission and vision without listening to all of our community members. Therefore, we launched a new [Community Listening Survey](#) as a step in creating a regular cycle of public feedback on our work, and giving power to the community to speak into where we will direct our resources and which projects we will prioritize.

Learn more about how you can partner with Affinity at affinitymentoring.org/partners/. Listen directly to community partners like [Guillermo Cisneros](#) from the West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, [Tiffany Young](#) from Kawasaki Motors Corp., and [Rich Wolowski](#), Gordon Food Service North America President and CEO, talk about why they choose to support students and families through Affinity.

Meet the Team



KEYLA ARAUJO
ECC Site Coordinator



ANGELA REYNA
Lee MS Site Coordinator



ROCIO MORENO
Program Director and Burton
Site Coordinator



MONICA ZAVALA
SWCC Site Coordinator



HOLLY HETHERINGTON
Office Coordinator



RACHEL HUMPHREYS
Development Director



CASSANDRA KIGER
Executive Director

Who will be our site coordinator?

[Meet Angela](#), the new Godfrey-Lee Middle School Site Coordinator!

[Keyla](#) is already the [Site Coordinator](#) at the [ECC](#), and will also be leading the Godfrey-Lee Elementary School site.

[Rocio](#) is our [Site Coordinator](#) at our Burton sites, and has been around Affinity the longest, developing programming and building relationships. She has recently been promoted to Program Director and we are thrilled to see her in this new leadership role.

[Monica](#) has been a long-time activist, organizer, and leader in the local Southwest community, and is our [SWCC Site Coordinator](#).

Check out our team's bios at affinitymentoring.org/about/the-team/.

Current Locations



Goei Center Admin
Headquarters



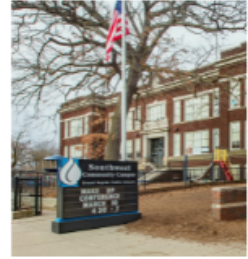
Burton Elementary and
Middle School



Early Childhood Center
(ECC)



Lee Middle School



Southwest Community
Campus (SWCC)

Administrative Office - Goei Center

818 Butterworth St SW | Grand Rapids, MI 49504

616.209.8435 | info@affinitymentoring.org | affinitymentoring.org

facebook.com/AffinityMentoring | linkedin.com/company/affinity-mentoring |

instagram.com/affinity.mentoring/

Burton Elementary + Middle School

Grand Rapids Public Schools

2133 Buchanan Ave SW | Grand Rapids, MI 49507

616.819.2262 | burton@affinitymentoring.org

Godfrey-Lee Early Childhood Center

Godfrey-Lee Public Schools

961 Joosten St SW | Wyoming, MI 49509

616.241.4722 x 1336 | glecc@affinitymentoring.org

Lee Middle School

Godfrey-Lee Public Schools

616.209.8435 | 1335 Lee St SW | Wyoming, MI 49509

glpsmiddle@affinitymentoring.org

Southwest Community Campus

Grand Rapids Public Schools

801 Oakland Ave SW | Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616.819.6799 | swcc@affinitymentoring.org

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