

Amherst Regional Public Schools

Amherst, Massachusetts



Entrepreneurs: Sherry Balzano and
Nunia Mafi (not pictured)

ARHS instituted a new program this year entitled Senior Year Options Program. This program has allowed all seniors regardless of their post-graduate plans to partake in an experiential learning program. Students attend a seminar focusing on topics to prepare them for the transition to the “real world” and also engage in a sixty-hour practical learning experience in the Amherst regional community.

SUPPORTING EDUCATION, INSPIRING CAREERS

In 2006-07, CS² Entrepreneurs at Amherst Regional High School developed and managed several programs designed for high school youth who were under-prepared or in jeopardy of not graduating. Their strategies dynamically engaged and directly empowered youth while providing academic enrichment, career and social supports, and alternative educational environments, resulting in student gains.

Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) Leadership Seminar

A CS² Entrepreneur facilitated a second-year course to empower student leaders of color – through scholarship, leadership, and action – to investigate why the achievement gap persists. Fifteen students enrolled in this three-semester, small learning-community seminar. In addition, she advised MSAN students who developed action plans designed to close the gap at Amherst Regional High School.

The Entrepreneur also advised six student representatives and joined them in presenting their action-research approaches at the *National Minority Student Achievement Network Conference* in Green Bay, Wisconsin. She participated in workshops and focus groups about closing the achievement gap with advisors from MSAN member schools around the nation. She also designed a pilot mentoring program that teamed up 15 Crocker Farm Elementary School students of color with 15 students of color enrolled in the MSAN course at the high school.

STRIVE Peer-to-peer Mentoring Program

Academic proficiency and youth development are goals of the STRIVE Program. This year, CS² supported 60 partnerships – a total of 120 students – in a year long, peer-to-peer mentoring program specifically for students of color. The STRIVE Program was redesigned with a new curriculum, and leadership was provided for bimonthly mentor meetings. In addition, fifteen 11th-graders were selected to serve as mentors for fifteen 8th-graders for the next three years.

Prep Academy

The second CS² Entrepreneur taught a class for 9th-grade females who needed additional support to make a successful academic transition from middle school to high school. She served as liaison between students, teachers, and parents and helped students improve their communication, organizational, and study skills.

Senior Year Options Program

New in 2006-07, this program gave students a variety of choices for learning outside the classroom setting and a weekly seminar to improve skills in communication, financial planning, applying to college, and securing a job.

After-school Homework Club

Geared towards youth in jeopardy of academic failure, the club engaged 20 students after school, four days a week. CS², three paraprofessionals, and four professionals provided support. Funding was secured to keep the school library open as an additional resource for students.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

CS² builds community support for the success of youth, particularly those facing multiple barriers. By involving a range of partners – for example, neighborhood groups, social service agencies, local businesses and institutions – the Entrepreneurs help close the gap regarding important resources for students.

Internships

CS² placed and supported over 75 students over three trimesters in community-based internships. The Entrepreneur taught a weekly seminar that included digital portfolios as a course requirement, incorporating technology into the experience.

UMASS Black Student Union Mentoring Program

This year, CS² continued to foster a new partnership between the Amherst site and the Black Student Union (BSU) at UMASS Amherst, recruiting 20 mentors of color from BSU to work with students at Amherst Regional High School (ARHS) next school year.

Amherst College TEACH Program

A new partnership was formed between Amherst Regional High School and the Amherst College TEACH program for one-to-one academic tutoring sessions for ARHS students. The Entrepreneur participated in community service events, monthly TEACH meetings, and led three mentor orientations.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

Grants

An Entrepreneur worked with a MSAN student to secure a \$2,000 Amherst Area Educational Alliance (AAEA) Grant that will bring the Anti-Defamation League's anti-bias training to Amherst Regional High School in fall 2007. In addition, the Amherst CS² site was awarded a \$2,000 Amherst Educational Foundation Community Grant to bring a group of eight high-school students of color to the annual MSAN *National Student Leadership Conference* in Arlington, Virginia in October 2007.

Canes Closet

CS² Entrepreneurs solicited donations from the staff at all Amherst regional schools and opened Canes Closet, a room where students on free and reduced lunch stopped in and "shopped" for new or slightly used clothing. Addressing daily concerns such as adequate food, shelter, and clothing is paramount to creating a healthy learning environment where all young people can academically succeed.

Results Data (2006-07)

- β Member of CS² network since 1996
- β 1 school involved in CS²: Amherst Regional High School
- β 2 Entrepreneurs
- β 4,500+ students participated in CS² programming
- β \$9,235 public and private funds secured
- β \$6,950 in-kind donations secured