

THE ARTHUR PROJECT

The Arthur Project uses clinically focused mentors and the science of relationship-based learning to support students in maintaining their mental health as they navigate the many demands of middle school life.

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OVERVIEW

The Arthur Project utilizes graduate social work students to provide structured, holistic support to youth throughout middle school. The therapeutic mentoring model was designed to provide greater access to wide-ranging support for middle school students by connecting them with clinicians-in-training who serve as their mentors for the duration of middle school. This process is facilitated by weekly meetings between mentors and individual students where the focus is on healing, growth, and exploration.



Core to The Arthur Project is a focus on the power of effective relationships with caring adults informed by best practices in youth development, mentoring, and mental health. By pairing them with healing-centered, trauma-informed, culturally responsive mentors, the model helps middle school students recognize their value in the community and the world during a formative time in their lives. Adolescent development research indicates that middle school is a crucial time for school engagement and that ninth-grade status is the single-best predictor of whether a student will complete their secondary education. In support, The Arthur Project seeks to strengthen the crucial transition from middle school to high school.

The Arthur Project currently works in three middle schools in New York City, but the model is designed to be scalable so that more young people have access to services that support mental health. The Arthur Project uses its experience and expertise to consult with schools that want to adopt its model. The ultimate goal for the model is to prepare more youth for lifelong success beginning with the developmental window that opens in middle school. [▶ The Arthur Project: Youth Mentoring Redefined](#) [▶ The Arthur Project Theory of Change](#)

What Makes This Model Innovative?



Whole-Child Focus

Students experience mentorship that is designed to be comprehensive in its support of all areas of their lives, from school and general well-being to career exploration and finance.



Affirmation of Self & Others

Students feel like they matter in the world because of the support of mentors who help them discuss and process their experiences as their identities develop.



Connection & Community

Students develop deep relationships with mentors who are embedded in the school they attend. Mentors also support students outside of school through whole family advocacy.

DESIGN

Goals

The Arthur Project seeks to equip students with the mindsets and skills they need to set and achieve goals once they exit the program, so that they have the opportunity to thrive. The model believes that as young people grow into their greatest potential, they benefit from an empowering relationship with a well-trained mentor.

Self-Determination	Students develop the ability to make decisions based on their own needs, values, and goals without undue influence from others.
Self-Actualization	As part of their personal growth, students gain more clarity about their own potential and value in the world.
Self-Advocacy	Students have the awareness and the ability to express their needs and take action on their own behalf in challenging situations.
Self-Confidence	Related to the development of self-esteem, students develop greater belief and trust in their ability to handle different situations in life.

Experience

Supported by a therapeutic mentoring framework, The Arthur Project provides a holistic approach to mentoring that focuses not only on academic engagement but also on social-emotional wellness and mental health. [Therapeutic Mentoring Practice Guidelines](#) Students who participate in The Arthur Project meet individually with their mentors 1–2 times per week during the school day to develop the skills and mindsets they need to succeed in school and in life. Students may also interact with mentors during optional activities that take place after school, on the weekends, and during the summer.

The Arthur Project mentors dedicate significant time to building a connection of trust and empathy with students. Over time, students find that mentoring sessions are a space where they can discuss and process the many issues that can converge during the middle school years. By working with well-trained mentors individually, in small groups, and during community and family activities at this unique and critical juncture in life, students receive uncommon support in preparation for high school and beyond.

Individual Therapeutic Mentoring

Individual therapeutic mentoring is the heart of the The Arthur Project program. Being a therapeutic program means that The Arthur Project is deliberate in its focus on supporting student health and healing during early adolescence. It does this by assigning students to mentors who are graduate students of social work. Students work with mentors for one hour per week during the school day using a multidimensional framework to guide personal development and goal setting. The five dimensions within the framework are: (1) school and career; (2) health and wellness; (3) family, friends, and relationships; (4) finance; and (5) community and culture.

During their year together, students work with mentors to build a network of relationships that can support their general well-being and help them accomplish their goals. This focus is based on research that indicates that many students who would benefit from help are the least likely to ask for assistance. Developing these help-seeking skills increases student self-efficacy as they tap into collective wisdom of relationships to support their own personal development and academic growth. Specific focus is also placed on social and interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, and other skills that will help to prepare students for high school and beyond.

Small Group Work

After school, students engage in small group work that is determined by their needs, interests, strengths, and capabilities. Mentors design these sessions for 8–10 students with the goal of creating a space for healthy peer-to-peer socialization and opportunities for healing and exploration. Although these group sessions are designed around the needs and interests of students in the program, they are open to all students in partner middle schools.

Community-Based Activities

Almost every Saturday during the school year, students and mentors venture into the larger community to participate in carefully curated activities that help the students work toward their goals, develop essential life skills, and access opportunities they might not otherwise experience. Activities range from museum visits and cultural events to civic engagement and recreational activities. All Saturday activities are free of charge to families.

Supporting Structures

The Arthur Project can be integrated into any school but requires shifts in adult roles and community partnerships.



SCHOOL COMMUNITY & CULTURE

Schools partnering with The Arthur Project must be committed to student mental health.

The intensive nature of the mentoring program designed by The Arthur Project requires schools to make an earnest commitment to the mental health of students as part of their overall development. Schools adopting the model must be willing to prioritize student well-being in key aspects of how it functions as an organization.



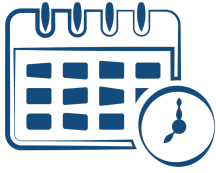
ADULT ROLES, HIRING, & LEARNING

Using graduate students as mentors is the key component for any school that adopts The Arthur Project model.

Mentors in an Arthur Project program must have the skills and mindsets to build a therapeutic rapport with students, family, and community. To accomplish this, The Arthur Project establishes partnerships with graduate schools of social work to recruit mentors as part of unpaid practicum internships. As intern mentors they receive on-the-ground therapeutic, cultural, and antiracist training, theory-to-practice support and supervision, along with crisis training at the beginning of the school year and as the year goes on. This training and supervision helps mentors support students' academic engagement, social-emotional wellness, and mental health.

On a weekly basis, mentors collaborate closely with The Arthur Project team and the school staff to ensure that each mentee stays on track with their individual goals. To help them be effective, mentors also have weekly individual supervision meetings with a licensed social worker and participate in monthly professional development seminars focused on specific clinical techniques, modalities, and theories. In total, mentors receive more than 100 hours of training and the structured nature of The Arthur Project's professional development programming ensures that

mentors are equipped to support young people as they develop critical life skills, build confidence, and work through their individual growth plans.



SCHEDULE & USE OF TIME

Schools must dedicate one hour per week for students to work with their mentors during the school day.

Although other activities are optional, the one requirement to participate in The Arthur Project is for students to meet with their mentor for at least one hour per week. These sessions take place during the school day, at times that are the least disruptive in each student's class schedule.



FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Arthur Project mentors and staff engage families and caregivers through education advocacy.

The Arthur Project recognizes that true impact in a student's life can be made only when their family is also supported. In addition to supporting students, the program provides support to their caregivers through Whole Family Academic Advocacy. Mentees and caregivers receive individual and group support to achieve individual and family goals, with a focus on supporting students' academic engagement and developing social networks. Mentors also partner with parents and guardians in support of their students' academic goals.

Partnerships with both corporate and nonprofit organizations are also vital to being able to offer the comprehensive programming that characterizes The Arthur Project. Beyond funding, partners like cultural institutions can also offer in-kind support that allows students to experience the richness of their local community.



SPACE & FACILITIES

Schools must provide spaces for mentors to meet with students along with a place for the program staff to work.

To give mentors and mentees the privacy they need during their sessions, schools typically need to have two classrooms available for use by The Arthur Project during the school day. In addition to this, the program staff - licensed social workers, employed by The Arthur Project - need to have a dedicated office space for their use.



Schools must commit some funding to support an Arthur Project program.

The Arthur Project recognizes that schools in historically underfunded communities cannot afford to support the full cost of a comprehensive mentoring program. The organization works with each school individually to

BUDGET & OPERATIONS

determine a feasible financial arrangement, while also working with schools to identify available funding sources both inside and outside of the school community.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Schools are required to share data to help The Arthur Project better serve students.

To ensure continuous improvement, schools adopting The Arthur Project must prioritize program evaluation and stakeholder input. Partner schools are required to give access to academic data about the students enrolled in the program (with parental consent). This data includes attendance, grades, state test scores, and disciplinary records. This emphasis on continuous improvement is essential to The Arthur Project's commitment to serving its stakeholders by understanding their needs and challenges as part of decision-making processes.

IMPLEMENTATION

Supports Offered

[The Arthur Project](#) offers the following supports to help you implement their approach.

Consultation

Free, Cost Associated



The Arthur Project provides consulting services to any school or community organization interested in adopting its model.

[Express Interest](#)

Partnerships (NYC only)

Cost Associated



The Arthur Project offers partnerships to schools and community organizations in New York City. Schools in NYC that become partners receive The Arthur Project full mentorship model, including two licensed social workers and an education advocate, along with a team of graduate social work mentors.

[Express Interest](#)

Reach

3

Title I Middle
Schools

636

Students
Served

500

Mentoring
Hours per
Student
Annually

100%

Students of
Color

Impact

After joining The Arthur Project ([The Arthur Project Evaluation](#)), students report that:

- They stick to their goals – more than 90% achieved their goals in 2022.
- They feel that they are looked up to by others.
- They have found their voice and can identify their strengths.
- They believe they have the ability to do most things if they try and they don't give up easily.
- They have better relationships with peers and family members.
- They are happier in school, attend school more often, and report better grades.
- They matter to their mentor and to their community.

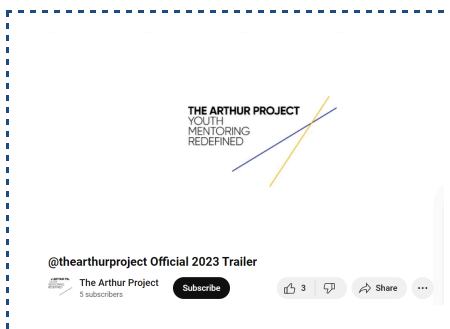
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RESOURCES



THE ARTHUR PROJECT
YOUTH MENTORING
REDEFINED

@thearthurproject Official 2023 Trailer

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The Arthur Project Theory of Change

The Arthur Project
Theory of Change
K. Miner-Romanoff
DRAFT

Refining youth mentoring to expand the power of relationships toward healing, social and racial justice.

Mission: To create a replicable model that professionalizes traditional mentoring by using clinically focused mentors to work intensively with youth throughout middle school. Through the science of relationship-based learning, we foster a profound sense of mattering that expands opportunities in the lives of children and families.

The Purpose of Logic Models: The best logic models have an intentional theory of change that permeates all programmatic elements. Alignment between and among needs, theory, research, goals, inputs, activities and measurement tools should be explicitly illustrated as a guide for all stakeholders. When developed accurately, logic models support intentionality regarding program decisions and can lead to greater outcomes. Participants and stakeholders are more confident about the pathway of the program, and if they deviate from the course, they do so purposely.



Children's
Behavioral
Health Initiative
CBHI

Therapeutic Mentoring Practice Guidelines

[The Arthur Project: Youth Mentoring Redefined](#)

A video describing the work of The Arthur Project.

[The Arthur Project Theory of Change](#)

A document explaining how The Arthur Project engages in changemaking.

[Therapeutic Mentoring Practice Guidelines](#)

A document that explains various aspects of therapeutic mentoring.



The Arthur Project Program Evaluation Report

Evaluating The Arthur Project Program 2022-2023 School Year

Karen Miner-Romanoff, J.D., Ph.D.*

There is no external funding for this report.

[The Arthur Project](#)

The website for The Arthur Project.

[The Arthur Project Evaluation](#)

A report evaluating the impact of The Arthur Project.