

El Diario La Prensa  
March 3, 2009

## **iMentor, Mentoring of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

New York – The latest technologies have overrun our society and given us indispensable tools.

This is how iMentor saw it, when they decided to apply advanced technologies to mentoring.

iMentor celebrates its tenth anniversary this year and since its founding by John Griffin – beginning with only 49 students in a high school in the South Bronx—has sought to show that even the busiest people can dedicate a portion of their time to support high school students, and that this program can be sustained even in the most underserved neighborhoods.

The formula is not complicated: the schools that desire to participate in the program apply to iMentor and integrate iMentor as part of their curriculum. Once implemented, the high school students are matched—thanks to a data processing program—with a mentor, taking into consideration the mentor’s professional career and the student’s aspirations.

This mentor will be paired with student during the school year: every week both mentor and student commit to maintain a correspondence via email—using the high school’s computer lab—where any questions or concerns regarding their school work, their future or any related topics are addressed; all to give "support to the students of New York," says Meredith Maier, Program Coordinator. In addition, they are required to participate in a monthly activity that lasts about two hours.

There are multiple activities throughout the year to help students broaden their horizons with movie nights, visits to Manhattan, sporting events, and college/career workshops.

iMentor aims to work with specific communities which are underserved for various reasons. In fact, 93% of the beneficiaries live below the poverty level, 98% never had the opportunity to have a mentor, 70% of their parents were not born in the United States, and less than the 15% of their parents have graduated from college with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

iMentor currently works with 14 high schools in New York City, with over 1,000 matched mentors and students, and nearly 24% of the students are Latino.

The Results: 94% of participating students graduate high school and 87% continue on to college. In addition: 89% of teachers say their students have improved their social and personal skills, 87% of mentors believe their participation has given the students a

positive view on life and school, and 89% of teachers say their students have an increased understanding of education.

This is the case of Yaritza del Carmen Pérez, a Dominican, 16-year-old high school student, and a current participant of the program. She recognizes that iMentor is "something new and interesting". In her first meeting with her mentor, Mali Locke, who is African-American, she had to overcome her shyness, but now realizes that Mali, "is a very nice person, she understands me, and she is very sweet."

"My mom does not understand a lot of what I want to do, and Mali helps me. She is someone who is successful, who supports me—someone that understands and guides me." The fact is that her mentor has become a true support system. So much so that Yaritza is sure that in the future, when she has reached her professional goals, she will participate again in the program – this time not as a student, but as a mentor.