

Application Section I: Community Connectors Program Description

1. The target population is students grades 5-12. Identify the grade level or levels at each school that your program will be targeting. Programs may serve students in one or more grade levels.

This application sets forth a proposal for a new mentoring program at **Virtual Schoolhouse**, an Ohio charter school. The program will target students in grades 5-12.

2. Provide the number of youth in each grade level and at each school your program proposes to serve.

**VIRTUAL SCHOOLHOUSE
ENROLLMENT**

Grade 5	17
Grade 6	15
Grade 7	29
Grade 8	30
Grade 9	71
Grade 10	62
Grade 11	46
Grade 12	39
Total	309

3. Select one: Which of the following best describes the proposed project? Select one.
 - A. Totally new program developed by this organization
 - B. Replication of an existing model in use by others
 - Please provide the name of this model.
 - C. Expansion of an existing program within the applicant organization
 - D. Extension of an existing program to a new setting

Virtual Schoolhouse is a public charter school that serves at risk students by providing additional supports and special education services. Virtual Schoolhouse seeks to (A) create a new mentoring program.

4. Please describe your project. How will it address each of the five Community Connectors core principles and what outcomes will you use to measure success.

The District: Virtual Schoolhouse (VSH) is an independent Ohio charter school in the Glenville neighborhood of Cleveland. It is organized as a 501c3 organization. The school serves special education students and students who are at risk of dropping out. Over 60% of the student body qualifies for special education. VSH is a brick and mortar school; it is not an e-school. The "Virtual" part of its name refers to the complement of online resources that make up part of its curriculum, and give the flexibility to serve students in a number of settings. Students may be serviced off-site pursuant to their IEP (Individual Education Plan.) The K-12 school has 402 students, 309 currently in grades 5-12. Of those, 123 students in grades 5-12 are currently educated off-site, at a specialized service centers or at home. All

students have face-to-face teacher support. 100% of all VSH students are eligible for free lunch. The 4-year graduation rate in 2013-14 was 29.4%. The 5-year graduation rate in 2013-14 was 43.5%. VSH is its own district; its charter allows it to serve students throughout Ohio. The school occupies a large building with plenty of space to accommodate a school-based mentoring program. Currently the school has no mentoring program. VSH is seeking to fully develop a program to serve 75 students in grades 5-12.

The Faith-Based Partner: The **Christ Ministries** is our faith-based partner. Christ Ministries has applied for 501c3 status from the IRS, but has not yet received its letter of determination. Pastor M. L. Rodgers is the founder of Christ Ministries. Christ Ministries operates the Minority Student Success Initiative, whose mission is to empower young people to make positive life choices that enable them to maximize their potential, overcome obstacles and develop an attitude of respect and expectations of success. Christ Ministries and MSSSI partners with schools to provide mentoring services to urban youth and seeks to orchestrate a mentoring program at VSH. Pastor Rodgers will provide oversight for the mentoring program at VSH.

The Non Profit Partner: Non profit, **Tree of Knowledge** is a third party provider of educational support to public and private school students who are academically at-risk or physically challenged. VSH contracts with Tree of Knowledge to coordinate educational services to VSH's students who are educated at home, *pursuant to their IEP*. In other words, Tree of Knowledge sends teachers and therapists to students' homes, when the student cannot participate in a traditional classroom setting. VSH's In-home students study the same curriculum as any other VSH student, with a teacher, but at their own pace and in their own setting. Tree of Knowledge uses a case-managed team approach to its provision of services. Tree of Knowledge's role in the Community Connectors partnership will be as a liaison for Christ Ministries to reach out to VSH's In-home students. Tree of Knowledge will also provide mentor training to the program, as it relates to mentoring VSH's In-home students.

The Corporate Partner: Our business partner is **Learning Concepts, LLC**. Learning Concepts has a contract with VSH's board of directors to provide specific management services to the school, including financial management and special education services and compliance management. Learning Concepts maintains an office at VSH, and will contribute mentor training as it relates to special needs students. Half of VSH's special needs population has determinations of "emotional disturbance" or "cognitive disability". Learning Concepts will also provide back of the house support for the program.

The Nature of the Collaboration: With funds provided by the Community Connectors grant, VSH will develop a mentoring program; Christ Ministries and MSSSI will administer the program under the supervision of VSH administrators. VSH will refer students and provide office space and activity space for the program. Christ Ministries and MSSSI have a comprehensive program format and written policies and procedures for all aspects of a mentoring program. Tree of Knowledge will help MSSSI implement the program, as it relates to the VSH students who are placed at home, pursuant to their IEP. Tree of Knowledge will also provide specialized mentor training for mentors who serve VSH students placed at home. Learning Concepts will provide sensitivity training to mentors who service VSH students with disabilities. Learning Concepts will also provide back of the house support for the program.

5. **How VSH Mentoring Program Will address Core Principles:** Overall, the program provides the structure for a mentor and mentee to take the time to get to know one another and develop a relationship that engenders a sense of self worth and a hope for a positive future. Planned activities are the platform on which relationships will organically develop. Rules, guidelines and supportive professional staff compose the structure that allows for a safe environment for the student to grow and learn. Mentors who are accepted into the program undertake to take the lead in supporting a young person through an ongoing, one-to-one relationship, serve as a positive role model and friend, build the relationship by planning and participating in activities together, strive for mutual respect, build self esteem and motivation through positive reinforcement, and help set goals and work toward accomplishing them.

Extensive training of both the mentor and mentee supports program goals. The program calls for the following commitments: mentoring match meetings are to take place for at least two hours per week; matches agree to communicate at least one time per week outside of their meetings; both mentors and mentees commit to the program for at least one year; and both mentors and mentees commit to participate in program trainings. These expectations, among others, are set forth in writing and are reviewed and signed by the participants. The agreement also sets forth procedures for dealing with items such as rescheduling, parent/guardian approvals, and consequences for failing to meet program expectations.

The program will be a mixture of planned group activities and one-on-one activities. The mentor's reliability is critical for a relationship to develop. Weekly communication between meetings is expected and will offer time for follow-up and scheduling the next week's meeting. Together, matches will set goals within the context of their activities, make inroads toward their goals and meet again the next week to forge ahead. Together they will engage in activities such as participation in community service, designed to convey a sense of individual responsibility and accomplishment. In these contexts they will have opportunities to think critically and make decisions. They will succeed together and they will have losses or setbacks together. The mentor will model sportsmanship and resilience, respect for self and others and will reinforce positive efforts. Over time, mutual esteem will build, improving the young person's confidence and driving home the capacity for life-long learning, thereby instilling hopefulness in the student.

Successful Outcomes at VSH: Regular school attendance is a challenge at VSH. A successful mentoring program is expected to promote student engagement and school attendance. Therefore, expected outcomes in the short term are improved student attendance and reduced tardiness. Improved behavior is also an expected outcome and will be measured by the reduced number of major violations resulting in suspensions from school. Better attendance, improved timeliness and better behavior will result in better academic preparation for the challenges of high school. Long term measurable outcomes will be seen in increased student retention rates and increased graduation rates.

6. Please describe the specific activities your program will conduct.

Implementing a new mentoring program at Virtual Schoolhouse

This collaboration will implement a mentoring program serving 75 students in grades 5-12 at VSH. VSH provides education to students who have difficulty in school for whatever reason. The school uses a complement of online curriculum resources which allows VSH to bring schooling to the place where the student will learn best. All VSH students in all VSH placements are supported by teachers, face-to-face. There are 309 students in grades 5-12. About 123 of those are educated off-site, at home, or one-on-one or in small groups at two different contracted learning centers. (One of these centers is Tree of Knowledge, a partner in this collaboration.) While the mentoring program will benefit for all VSH students who participate, off-site students can feel isolated and a mentoring program will be a lifeline for them.

Mentors may have more than one mentee at a time in the course of the year, but will still be required to give each mentee 2 hours of individual attention per week. Mentors will be paid a stipend. VSH will recruit and refer students. MSSl will conduct student orientations and perform intake interviews and a host of other procedures designed to convey program expectations and ensure that they are met. MSSl will conduct mentor orientations and interviews, reference and background checks on mentor candidates. MSSl will provide documentation and follow-up procedures, with a comprehensive program guide for all participants, including parent/guardians. MSSl will provide a mandatory initial mentor training, plus at least 2 more trainings during the school year. Informal mentor training in smaller groups will also take place as needed. Learning Concepts and Tree of Knowledge will also participate in trainings, and will bring specialized expertise in dealing with students in small groups or on a case by case basis. *Mentee* (student) trainings will also take place. VSH will provide office space for MSSl. MSSl will plan program events and prepare all materials for participants. Learning Concepts will effect

modifications to its special education tracking software to accommodate mentors logging in their time. VSH will schedule time and space for mentors to meet with students at the school building. VSH will encourage student and parent/guardian participation and will participate in monthly meetings.

VSH Program Activities

VSH and MSSl will decide upon program activities that will meet the needs of its students. Meetings can take place at school or off site. The program has written guidelines for activities. There will be an expectation of weekly mentoring meetings of at least 2 hours, with weekly communication between meetings. MSSl anticipates opportunities for service learning, art, dance, drama activities, sports and field trips. More mundane activities, like playing catch or preparing a meal will be suggested as well. Something as simple as learning how to tie a necktie or how to play chess serves the Community Connectors core principles in quiet, meaningful ways. The program is about spending time together, not necessarily money. MSSl will engage speakers or visitors to the program. Student IEP placements will be respected; that is, students who cannot safely participate in groups will be serviced appropriately. MSSl will plan group activities and provide transportation. MSSl owns two large vans that can transport 29 people, including drivers.

7. Discuss how the program will utilize best practices to ensure program success. Are there successful mentor programs after which you will model your program? Please name the program and describe what makes it successful.

The underlying success of the mentoring programs is in the consistent time and positive attention a mentor gives to a mentee. Every aspect of the program must support that. It is critical that all participants understand what is expected of them. MSSl has a comprehensive program manual that will be distributed to all participants. The manual includes policies on inquiries, recruitment, mentor and mentee eligibility and screening, training, matching, match support and supervision, recognition of participants, record keeping, confidentiality, transportation, overnight visit and out of town travel policy, mandatory report of abuse and child neglect, use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco and firearms, unacceptable behavior, match closure, and program evaluation. All participants, including mentees also review and sign written acknowledgements of what is expected of them. Expectations are stressed in training sessions as well. In the event that a participant fails to live up to expectations, the program manual and training and documents set forth consequences, where appropriate.

Mentor training is critical to the program's success. Best practices also include the recruitment and personal interview process in engaging quality mentors, regular training, maintaining detailed documentation, and persistent follow-up with program participants. Maintaining open and honest communication at all levels is also key.

8. Describe your organization's previous experience with this type of program OR a program of a similar scale, including previous evaluations, size and duration of previously implemented programs, goals, and outcomes.

VSH has never had a full scale mentoring program, but VSH team members, Principal Michael Anderson and Assistant Principal Ray Southard each have worked together for 10 years in youth mentoring programs in Lorain County. Christ Ministries and MSSl director, Pastor M. L. Rodgers was affiliated was Cuyahoga Community College's Minority Male Initiative, a program that mentors minority male college students. He continues to assist Tri-C students with career plans. Rodgers has served as a mentor, church leader and coach. He opened

Christ Ministries and MSSl in 2014 and has served 125 young people in mentoring programs and related capacities. The partners anticipate that the MSSl model will integrate well into the VSH's existing programming and procedures.

9. What will make this collaboration successful? What will the indicator(s) of success be for this collaboration?

Just as devoting time and attention to a mentorship relationship yields success, so too, this collaboration will work if the participants schedule the time and devote themselves to working together meaningfully. Clear communication is the key to coordination. VSH will provide office space for the program at VSH, which will facilitate communication and coordination of services. Learning Concepts also maintains an office at VSH, as it provides certain managerial services to the school.

Application Section II: Program Management

9. Leadership Team: The leadership team should be comprised of no less than one member of each partnering organization. Please provide a brief bio of each leadership team member, including a brief description of the team member's passion for the program and interest in working with young people. Bios should also include:

- Name and title
- Responsibilities for this grant project. (Percent of time should be included in the budget document.)
- Qualifications
- Prior relevant experience

Virtual Schoolhouse Team Members will be Michael Anderson, VSH principal and Ray Southard, VSH assistant principal for middle school. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Southard have been involved in mentoring programs together for the last 5 years under the auspices of Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Catholic Charities, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Workforce Investment Act and Urban Youth Empowerment Program. Both men are trusted role models for the students at VSH. Together they will oversee the mentoring program and serve as liaisons where necessary. These responsibilities will require 6 hours per week, in total. Mr. Anderson holds a masters degree in education. He has held various positions in the field of education and has been with VSH for 10 years. Mr. Southard has been with VSH for 4 years. He directs the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, a program of the US Department of Education at VSH.

Christ Ministries and MSSl Team Member will be Pastor M. L. Rodgers. Rodgers believes that many urban youth lack meaningful guidance and nurturing relationships, resulting in students who are disengaged at school, truant, violent and generally lacking self confidence. His ministries' mission is to empower students to make positive life choices that enable them to maximize their personal potential, overcome obstacles and develop an attitude of respect and expectations of success. Rodgers was active the Minority Male Initiative at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) and maintains ties with that program and its director, Dr. Terry Echols. Pastor Rodgers has been conducting urban outreach under the auspices of Christ Ministries for about a year, providing over 125 students with mentors, an after school arts program as well as donations of school supplies and clothing. He networks widely to find qualified adult mentors in the community. He a licensed pastor, ordained by Centering Place Global Covenant Ministries. He is licensed by Centering Place, Christ Kingdom Ministries and Higher Grounds Always Abounding Assemblies. Rodgers will spend 40 hours per week on the program.

Tree of Knowledge Team Member will be Executive Director, Mordechai Salfer. Dr. Salfer is a clinical psychologist and the founder of Tree of Knowledge.

Learning Concepts Team Member will be Vivian Garfunkel. Ms. Garfunkel is the Director of Special Education for Learning Concepts and maintains an office at Virtual Schoolhouse. She has a wealth of experience in the field of special education instruction and administration. Ms. Garfunkel has been with Learning Concepts for 10 years.

10. A timeline of all major activities must be provided. Assessment, planning and initial training must be completed by September 7, 2015. Services must begin by September 7, 2015.

DATE	Program Activity
May 28, 2015	Last day of school Recruitment and interviews of mentors
August 2, 2015	Recruit mentees upon enrollment
August 17, 2015	School starts 2015-16 In-school mentee recruitment Orientations for Mentors and Mentees
August 27, 2015	Mentor training session
August 30, 2015	Mentee training session
Sept 7, 2015	Matches begin to meet
November 19, 2015	Mentor training session
February 24, 2015	Mentor training session
May 29, 2016	Last day of school

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11. Describe the implementation process for reaching the following milestones:

- a. Screening, orientation, supporting, and monitoring process for mentors and other personnel working directly with youth;
- b. Identification and intake process for mentees;
- c. The means by which you will involve families of youth in your program; ongoing training of mentors throughout the life of the program, including topics and frequency;
- d. Assessing fiscal accountability and faithful implementation of project plans; and
- e. Any other critical information you would want the Community Connectors team to know.

- a. **Screening mentors:** Mentors will complete a written application, provide 3 personal references and have a personal interview with the program director. References will be checked. There will be documentation of every step in the process. Eligibility requirements include that the candidate be at least 21, agree to a one-year commitment with a minimum of 8 hours per month spent with the mentee and weekly communication, agree to participate in training, complete a written application, consent to background check of driving record and criminal history (including state criminal history, child abuse registry and sex offender registry for all states of adult residency). Mentors must also maintain a current driver's license and insurance.

Orientation, support and monitoring & ongoing training for mentors: Inquiring mentors will participate in a one hour orientation session to provide detailed information about the program. They may then submit an application to complete the screening procedure. Upon acceptance to the program, mentors will participate in an initial training session, which will cover basic program guidelines, safety issues, communication/relationship building skill, sex abuse prevention and sensitivity training. Topics presented at in-service training session (2 of them) will be determined based on feedback by program participants.

Program staff will be available by phone, text or email throughout the course of the school year for consultation and advice in managing the mentoring relationship. Informal training may be scheduled, as needed. Mentors will be strongly encouraged to reach out to program staff for assistance with any mentoring issue. The programs rely on open communication by all participants. Monthly meetings will be conducted for each "case" and mentors will be expected to participate.

b. Intake of mentees: Mentees will be recruited by email and school website announcement. Recruitment will also take place at enrollment. Referrals will be sought from teachers and other school adults. The administration and special education department will identify students who would especially benefit from the program. An orientation will introduce the program, and applications can be submitted following orientation. The application process includes a written application and interview. The program director will be looking at the whole child, his/her likes and dislikes, talents and challenges. Also important will be family dynamic, health of the child and family members, friendships and the like. Once admitted to the program, the mentee will be required to review and sign an agreement which sets forth expectations for participation in the program such as making a one-year commitment to meet with a mentor for at least 8 hours per month plus weekly communication, obtaining parent/guardian permission for all meetings, timeliness, communicating with program staff and attending mentee training sessions.

c. Involving Families: VSH actively creates opportunities for parent volunteer opportunities, and a mentoring program will expand these opportunities. Additionally, the MSSI mentoring program manual sets forth expectations for parent/guardian involvement at orientation, application and interview

procedures, as well as guidelines for obtaining permission from parents/guardians and keeping them “in the loop.”

d. Fiscal Accountability: VSH is subject to fiscal review by the Ohio Auditor of State and regulatory compliance review by the Ohio Department of Education. In addition, it is subject to audit by its charter school sponsoring agency, Lake Erie West. The school has a written policy for the purchase of supplies, materials and equipment. That policy has been reviewed and approved at audit.

Faithful implementation: The VSH staff, Anderson and Southard have been working together in mentoring programs for 10 years and have a network of contacts in the community. They have vetted and selected Christ Ministries/MSSI to implement a mentoring program at the school and have a memorandum of understanding with MSSI which will be implemented upon funding of the program. VSH will provide the setting and oversight for the program.

12. Describe how each applicant partner plans to contribute to the overall program plan including, but not limited to, time contribution, personnel contribution, monetary contribution, shared responsibilities, use of facilities, etc. Complete the Roles and Responsibilities worksheet attachment.

See Roles & Responsibilities worksheet.

Application Section III: Evaluation Plan

13. The evaluation plan is intended to provide lead organizations with a framework that will ensure the program is on track to positively impact the lives of students and identify needs for additional support when challenges arise. Each evaluation plan must list the scope of work and describe the following:

- a. Plans for keeping records of mentor contact hours, unduplicated count of students served each month, mentor training hours, etc. for ongoing reporting;
- b. Gathering of data to measure progress of program towards meeting the selected goals;
- c. Projected indicators of success; and
- d. Anticipated barriers to successful evaluation including data collection and measurement of progress toward outcomes.

a. Gathering data and keeping records of mentor contact hours:

Learning Concepts and VSH have a proprietary software program, called the Tracker which is used by all VSH service providers to record all IEP mandated services. Learning Concepts will create a module on the Tracker that will keep records of mentor contact and training hours and unduplicated count of students served each month. VSH participants will be trained to enter data into the Tracker at the time of service. Alternatively, MSSI will provide documentation to participants to track meetings on a “hard copy”, which can be turned in to program staff for input into the Tracker system. The Tracker will also be able to track mentor training hours.

b. Gathering data to measure progress toward program goals

School attendance and behavior records will integrate with the data collected on the Tracker, so that staff will be able to track program attendance, school attendance and behavior incidents in a single report.

The program calls for monthly meetings to review from feedback from mentors and staff. Written match evaluations will be completed twice a year. Evaluations will ask involved adults for assessment of the mentee’s self esteem, academic performance, peer and parent relationships, moods, alcohol and substance abuse and sexual

activity. Red flags that come up in these evaluations will be referred to additional resources for support. Virtual Schoolhouse is particularly equipped to provide intervention services on such items, as it maintains a comprehensive special education department, with in-house service providers and contracted specialists in various fields.

c. Projected indicators of success:

VSH will look at program attendance, school attendance and tardiness over the course of one school year. The program anticipates that all students who regularly participate in the mentoring program will show improved attendance and timeliness at school. Improved behavior is also expected, as evidenced by a reduction in suspensions for serious violations. For students who participate erratically the program will have a smaller impact on their school attendance record and their behavior record.

d. Anticipated barriers to data collection and progress measurement:

Learning Concepts' Tracker makes easy work of data collection and can be made to include the mentoring program. Learning Concepts relies on the Tracker to maintain special education regulatory compliance for VSH and the mentoring program will be added to it. Mentors will be able to record hours at time of service. Progress measurement will be based upon program attendance and school attendance, as well as disciplinary incidents. School data is maintained as a matter of course by the school; program attendance data and communication with program staff might be inhibited by difficulty reaching participants, empty/insincere feedback and/or unreasonable expectations of the program. Monthly meetings will take place as well. Poor attendance at the meetings may become an impediment to evaluation.

14. Applicants are to complete the program model.

Application Section IV: Sustainability

15. Describe how you plan to maintain the program after the grant funding period. Include a discussion about financial sustainability and sustainability of the partnership commitment. Applicants are not required to include cash as part of their local contributions; however, funding sustainability is critical to the Community Connectors program. Applicants that show the potential for funding sustainability will be given preference in application scoring.

Financial sustainability: VSH is a public charter school. The bulk of its funding comes from state and federal sources. The school will reach out to the philanthropic community to sustain its program. The program will add value to Virtual Schoolhouse, making it more visible in the community, especially if mentors come from within the community. Neighborhood stakeholders will be inclined to invest in an organization that is adding value to one of the poorest neighborhoods in Cleveland, and in Cuyahoga County. In addition, Christ Ministries already partners with a number of local businesses to provide resources to the program. That effort will continue.

Sustaining the partnership: Learning Concepts maintains a VSH board-approved contract with VSH under which Learning Concepts provides financial management, special needs services administration and other back-of-the-house functions. Tree of Knowledge maintains a VSH board-approved contract with VSH under which Tree of Knowledge provides educational services and related therapies to VSH's in home students. VSH anticipates that the Christ Ministries/MSSI program will integrate well into the school culture and will endeavor to ensure that its students have access to a quality mentoring program. VSH and Christ Ministries will implement a memorandum of understanding upon the availability of funding for the program.

Application Section V: Program Budget

16. Complete the budget form attachment and justify each of the budget items by creating a budget justification.

By clicking this box, I (Insert Name) Yocheved Belsky agree, on behalf of this applicant, and any or all identified partners, that this application and all supporting documents contain information approved by a relevant executive board or its equivalent.