

Presbyterian Church of the Master and Compass Program form partnership



When Sheba Aldridge-Coffey attended an Anoka-Hennepin School District, Faith, and Community Partnership and learned the Compass Programs at Bell Center was one of the few schools or programs not to have partnered with a church or community group, she got to work.

Through speaking with other staff at Compass, Aldridge-Coffey, the program's student learning advocate, learned that Presbyterian Church of the Master was very close to the program's Northdale Blvd. location in Coon Rapids.

Aldridge-Coffey called Senior Pastor John Gay and told him about the Anoka-Hennepin School District, Faith, and Community Partnership and the Compass Programs at Bell Center which helps meet the learning and behavior needs of students who are in transition because of change or crisis in their lives. Compass Programs work to maintain students' academic progress while providing support and guidance to help them gain the stability and independence necessary to integrate successfully back into their neighborhood schools. Students stay at Compass anywhere from weeks to months.

Pastor Gay, who is new to the church and community, was interested in both the partnership and the school. After he met with Aldridge-Coffey, Pastor Gay took the idea back to church leaders who liked what they heard and voted to take part in the program.

Recently Pastor Gay and Erik Johnson, director of student ministries, met with Aldridge-Coffey and Laura Hendricks, assistant principal of Compass Programs at Bell Center. The group talked about how church members could help Compass students with donations to the school's food shelf, financial donations for field trips, and academic mentoring; parents with providing child care during conferences; and staff by volunteering to speak with students about their careers. Hendricks spoke of a career fair held at the school in December. The students were excited to speak with professionals and the professionals enjoyed the students' questions and enthusiasm so much they asked to come back for the next event.

Aldridge-Coffey is very happy Presbyterian Church of the Master was responsive to her call for assistance.

"We'll be able to provide more resources for our students and help them to be successful," she said.

Anyone interested in learning more about the Anoka-Hennepin School District, Faith, and Community Partnership can contact Susan Bonte, assistant to Dr. Jinger Gustafson, associate superintendent for middle schools, at 763-506-1008.

Photo caption: As part of the Anoka-Hennepin School District, Faith, and Community Partnership, Compass Assistant Principal Laura Hendricks (left) and student learning advocate Sheba Aldridge-Coffey will work with Erik Johnson, director of student ministries, and Senior Pastor John Gay from Presbyterian Church of the Master.