

TRAILHEAD YOUTH MENTORING

Targeted mentoring support for students who may benefit from a different approach



Pilot Program Proposal | Prepared for School Wellbeing Leaders and Leadership Teams

Why Trailhead Exists

Schools are seeing a growing cohort of students for whom traditional support is not enough or does not connect at all.

These are students who may be disengaging quietly. Students who do not fit neatly into the referral pathways that exist. Students who need something practical, relational and consistent, not another structured program or clinical intervention.

What schools are increasingly seeing:

- Disengagement from school, emotionally and academically
- Challenges with emotional regulation in and out of the classroom
- Low self-confidence and reduced sense of self-worth
- Social withdrawal and difficulty connecting with peers
- Declining attendance and increasing avoidance behaviours
- Students who resist or disengage from traditional support systems

Trailhead Youth Mentoring has been created to provide practical, relationship-based mentoring support for students who may benefit from something different.

Rather than sitting across a table in an office, Trailhead places mentoring where it works best: in real environments, through shared experience, with trusted adults who show up consistently.

This is not a therapeutic program. It is not a behaviour management tool. It is a structured, safe and purposeful mentoring relationship built for the students who need it most.

What Trailhead Youth Mentoring Looks Like

An 8-week pilot program built around one-to-one mentoring, delivered through shared activity in practical, real-world environments.

Program length	8 weeks
Format	One-on-one mentoring
Frequency	Weekly sessions
Delivery day	Fridays
Approach	Tailored to each individual student

What happens in a session?

Each session combines practical activity with purposeful mentoring. The activity is not the end goal. It is the environment where trust, confidence and connection naturally happen.

Sessions may include:

- Coastal walks and outdoor challenges
- Mountain biking and physical activity
- Fishing and patience-building experiences
- Photography and creative problem solving
- Reflection, conversation and goal setting

The activity is the vehicle. The mentoring is the destination. Students are engaged through doing, not through talking in a room.



Who Trailhead Supports

Trailhead is designed for students who may be disengaging, struggling quietly, or not connecting with traditional support systems.

A student who may be suitable for Trailhead:

- Is disengaging from school, socially or academically
- Struggles with emotional regulation and self-management
- Presents with low confidence or a reduced sense of self-worth
- Has become socially withdrawn or isolated from peers
- Does not respond well to traditional counselling or structured support
- Lacks consistent access to positive adult role models
- Would benefit from a practical, relationship-based approach

An important note on scope

Trailhead is not designed to replace therapeutic or crisis intervention services. It is intended to complement existing school support systems, providing consistent, practical mentoring for students who may not be accessing other forms of support.

If you are unsure whether a student is suitable, we welcome a conversation before any formal referral is made. A brief discussion can help clarify fit and expectations.

What Schools May Expect to See

Trailhead is not a quick fix. It is a structured 8-week relationship built over time. Schools may begin to see changes during the program and beyond it.

-> Improved Engagement Greater willingness to attend and participate in school	O Emotional Regulation Better self-management and reduced reactive behaviours	^ Increased Confidence Stronger self-belief and willingness to take on challenges
<> Communication Skills Improved ability to express thoughts and navigate relationships	+ Stronger Attendance Reduced avoidance and increased consistency	* Self-Worth A more positive internal narrative and sense of identity
~ Trusted Connections A reliable relationship with a consistent, positive adult	# Resilience Greater capacity to manage setbacks and challenges	

Progress is not always linear and individual outcomes will vary. What Trailhead consistently offers is a structured, safe relationship with a trusted adult, delivered with purpose and care over time.

Meet Neill Higgins



Neill brings more than 15 years of frontline experience with young people, across emergency services, residential care, youth work and community sport.

He is calm, consistent and credible. Someone young people respond to because he has genuinely earned that trust.

Role Senior Firefighter, 15+ years service

Youth Work Senior youth worker, residential care and DCP experience

Crisis Crisis intervention and complex case experience

Community 15 years coaching junior basketball

Connection Deep ties to the local community and young people

Neill is not a clinician. He is a mentor. His value to young people comes from consistency, credibility and a genuine investment in their development.

Safety, Boundaries and Student Wellbeing

Trailhead is committed to operating to the highest standards of student safety, professional practice and child safeguarding.

Every aspect of program delivery is structured to ensure students, families and schools can trust that their young people are safe, well-supported and in accountable hands.

Working With Children	All mentors hold current Working With Children clearances as required.
Child-Safe Practices	All program delivery follows established child-safe frameworks and professional conduct standards.
Risk Management	Session environments are assessed prior to delivery. All activities are age-appropriate and risk-managed.
Parent and Guardian	Informed consent is obtained prior to participation. Families are kept informed throughout the program.
Professional Boundaries	Clear boundaries are maintained between mentors and students at all times. No private contact outside structured sessions.
Session Accountability	Sessions are logged, documented and available to the school on request.
School Communication	Regular progress updates are provided to the nominated school contact throughout the 8-week program.

Any safeguarding concerns arising during the program are handled in accordance with mandatory reporting obligations and will be communicated to the school immediately.

Pilot Program Proposal

A small, safe and practical pilot to support selected students, designed to make it easy for schools to say yes.

Student intake	2 students initially
Program length	8 weeks
Session frequency	Weekly, one session per student
Delivery day	Fridays
Format	One-on-one mentoring
School communication	Fortnightly updates to nominated school contact
Progress reporting	End-of-program summary provided to the school

The pilot has been kept small deliberately. Two students over eight weeks allows for meaningful delivery, genuine relationship building and honest outcomes, without overextending the school or the program.

If the pilot demonstrates value, a broader partnership can be explored at the conclusion of the 8 weeks.

This pilot is designed to be low-risk, low-administration and genuinely useful.

Building Positive Experiences

Students who complete the program may be recognised through a special culminating experience via Spencer Gulf Adventures.

Program completion is not simply the end of eight sessions. It is an achievement, one that reflects consistency, participation and genuine personal growth. Trailhead recognises this with purpose.

* Recognition Acknowledging real effort, consistency and follow-through	^ Confidence A memorable experience that reinforces positive identity	O Connection A shared experience that deepens the mentoring relationship	> Momentum A positive anchor students can carry forward beyond the program
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Spencer Gulf Adventures provides access to meaningful outdoor experiences in the local environment. Completion activities are selected to complement the student's journey throughout the program and to mark the transition from participant to achiever.

This is not a reward for good behaviour. It is the final chapter of a story a student has written themselves.

Let's Start a Conversation

We welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss whether there are students within your school community who may benefit from participating in a Trailhead Youth Mentoring pilot.

There is no obligation and no complex process. A brief initial conversation is all that is needed to understand whether there may be a fit and to answer any questions your leadership team may have.

Contact

Name	Neill Higgins
Program	Trailhead Youth Mentoring
Phone	[Phone number]
Email	[Email address]
Website	[Website address]

We look forward to hearing from you.

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