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HLC High School ASPIRE Students Participate in OSU E-Mentoring Program

Ask young children what they want to be when they grow up and you'll most likely hear prototypical responses: an astronaut, a doctor, the president, or a teacher. Children are encouraged to be excited about these dreams. However, as we grow up, life becomes increasingly complex as natural interests and passions clash with the reality of applications, financial responsibilities, and relationships. We quickly realize the constraints of realizing some of our dreams, whether they are college degrees, a skilled trade, or an entry level job. Haugland Learning Center (HLC) strongly supports the post-secondary goals of our students, and has teamed up with The Ohio State University's Nisonger Center to provide crucial tools and life skills to our students so they can explore their ambitions while planning their future path.

Founded in 1966, The Ohio State University Nisonger Center (<http://nisonger.osu.edu/>), is part of The Ohio State University Medical Center and Office of Health Sciences. The Nisonger Center strives to improve the lives of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families through interdisciplinary research, education and clinical services. Part of a network of 67 University Centers of Excellence that aim to study the safety and effectiveness of psychotropic medication, the Nisonger Center focuses on autism spectrum disorders and attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder. Further research at the Nisonger Center is exploring the nature of curiosity in relation to the learning processes in people with IDD.

One innovative program the Nisonger Center is promoting is the E-Mentoring Program. The development of a mentor/ mentee relationship is the core of the E-Mentoring Program. HLC High School ASPIRE students have been matched with undergrads from The Ohio State University, who have college and work experience, to participate this year. Students and mentors communicate via Gaggie e-mail accounts and monthly, in-person 'Mentor Mingles' while the students complete an online curriculum designed to think about life beyond high school. Activities built into the program allow each student to take personality and career assessments, such as the Myers-Briggs, VARK, and Princeton Review, and explore career and college choices. Additionally, students create a 'Transition Portfolio,' which includes the results of their assessments and research, as well as a cover letter and resume. Students receive valuable support and guidance while learning more about their goals and how to plan for success, and mentors are given an opportunity to practice selfless leadership meant to prepare a new generation of academic and career-driven citizens.

The collaboration between Haugland Learning Center and The Ohio State University Nisonger Center presents a unique and exceptional educational experience to our students and families. This partnership addresses key learning opportunities and brings to light the tools necessary to help HLC students grow, now and into the future. Through this model, students are encouraged to work with persistence and diligence to bring their dreams into reality. For additional information, visit <http://nisonger.osu.edu/transition/ementoring.htm>.