Middle-schoolers ‘Thinking Big’

Thanks to Todd Trustees

They’re barely teenagers, but the 30 seventh- and eighth-graders from Mace’s Lane Middle School in Dorchester County are thinking about college. Statistically, they may not be the best candidates, but the George B. Todd Fund, Salisbury University and Dorchester County think children are more than numbers.

In a mentoring program sponsored by the Todd Fund, these youngsters spend an afternoon each week of the school year with their college friends. Their goal is both to improve their classroom performance and to think big about their lives.

The work of these college students, along with a campus visit and other special program materials, is funded by two grants totaling nearly $50,000 by the Todd Fund.

After only one semester the program is already showing results. The Mace’s Lane Middle School students “have met positive people who assure them that they have the ability to handle life after middle school.”

The fact that these people are ‘cool’ college kids makes them even more influential than many adults that try to pass on the same message,” said one Mace’s Lane teacher who is guiding the college students in their work with the children.

The 15 college students involved are all studying to become teachers. Under the guidance of SU faculty coordinator Dr. Amy Meekins and cooperating teachers from the middle school, they are honing their skills and learning to build relationships with children who are being challenged not only by the traumas of adolescence, but also by backgrounds where college is rarely part of the landscape.

“The project has given them the achievable dream of going to college someday,” said one of their teachers.

A highlight of the first semester was reading the book, Think Big, by Dr. Ben Carson, renowned, African-American neurosurgeon. In April the students visited Carson at his office at Johns Hopkins University Hospital.

Students from Mace’s Lane Middle School were treated to a campus tour by their SU mentors when they visited as part of the mentoring program, funded by the George B. Todd Fund.