



## Pittsburg USD 250 kicks off YouthFriends MentorMail program

Pittsburg USD 250 recently kicked off its semester-long email-based mentoring project using MentorMail technology from YouthFriends Kansas. The project pairs adult mentors with Pittsburg Middle School students who are keen to learn more about certain careers.

Students and mentors exchange e-mails weekly as part of Deb Polen's Advanced Computer Applications class at Pittsburg Middle School. Polen serves as moderator of the MentorMail e-mail system, allowing her to check messages for appropriate content.

"MentorMail gives the kids a chance to expand on their opportunities to learn how to communicate properly through technology," Polen said. "This gives them a more broad way of getting out there in the real world and honing those communication skills."

MentorMail has a number of features that help Polen oversee the project.

"It's easy to operate, it's very straightforward, and there's not much that leaves you guessing as to what needs to be done," Polen said.

Polen said this is the first time a MentorMail project has been integrated into an existing Pittsburg class. The structured environment has helped make for a successful program.

"Once a week during warm-up time, that's when they check their MentorMail and respond or send out e-mails," Polen said. "And I know the kids love it. They're just wanting to do it every day."

Joe Bournonville, YouthFriends Pittsburg coordinator and former Pittsburg Middle School principal, introduced Polen to the program and helped by recruiting adult mentors.

The mentors had a chance to meet with their student mentees at a kick-off event. They participated in a number of ice-breaker activities and got to know one another so they can converse via MentorMail as friends.

MentorMail is a service of YouthFriends Kansas, a statewide initiative that provides a comprehensive framework for implementing school-based mentoring. For more information, visit [www.youthfriends.org](http://www.youthfriends.org) or call (800) 563-0472.

### PHOTO CAPTION:

Blake Benson, president of the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce, works with his Pittsburg Middle School mentee on a word-search puzzle during a recent meeting to kick off this semester's YouthFriends MentorMail project.