Group Mentoring: A Strategy for Attaining Positive Youth Development

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Introduction

A key component to personal development is for youth to have positive, on-going relationships with adults.

These experiences can:

• Create a naturally-occurring atmosphere where youth can identify and bond with adults;

• Allow adults to play a role in creating an environment that fosters engagement in learning;

• Provide opportunities for youth to develop new skills in and out of school.
Goals for the Day/Objectives

• Understanding the Role of Mentoring as a Youth-Adult Relationship
• Capacity-building strategies for Mentoring
• Best practices for effective programming
Positive Youth Development: What are the Necessary Resources?

• Affirming relationships
• Positive peers
• Opportunities for skill development
• Services (within schools/communities)
• Support & support systems
• CARING ADULTS
Background

• According to the America’s Promise Voices Study (2005), one in four youth indicated not having enough caring adults (parents, coaches, teachers, etc.) in their lives.

• Mentoring interventions have provided evidence in promoting academic success (Nunez, et al., 2013; Rhodes, 2008).
Background

- Mentoring approaches should meet the needs of both youth and adults, while assuring safety and positive outcomes (Mentor, 2015).

- Attracting and engaging appropriate target audiences whose skills and motivations best match the goals and structure of the program is key (Mentor, 2015)
Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships

Source:
QUESTION

How would you classify mentoring?

- Adult- Centered Leadership
- Adult-Led Collaboration
- Youth-Adult Partnership
- Youth-Led Collaboration
- Youth-Centered Leadership
Types of Mentoring Models

- One-on-One
- Group
- Team mentoring
- Peer mentoring
- Online mentoring
- Site-based
- Community based
The Program
Reading Writing & Rewards
Purpose and Goals

The goals of this project were to:

1. Determine the impact of a group mentoring program on the academic progress of elementary school students.

2. Examine how participation in a group mentoring program impacts students’ attitudes toward school.

3. Assess the benefits youth receive from interacting with positive adult mentors.
The Issues at Hand...

• Limited flexibility

• Limited number of adults serving as mentors

• Few Resources

• Community Partners with vested interests

• Youth in need of adult support
Methodology

Selection of Participants

Youth Participants

- A purposive sample of fourth and fifth grade students
- Identified by school officials (i.e., teachers, administration)
- About 75% were academically at-risk
- Parental permission required to participate
Methodology

Selection of Participants

Adult Participants (Mentors)

• A total of 32 mentors participated over the course of three (3) years
• Screening — Public School Background checks
• Attending orientation and training
• Asked to commit for 1 year; about 30% were involved all three years
Methodology

Instrumentation
• Surveys
• Focus group
• Semi-structured interviews with school personnel
Gender
35 female
44 male

Race/Ethnicity
46 Black
23 White
1 American Indian
9 Other
14 Hispanic

Maximum Number of students = 79
First time serving as mentors

N = 32 mentors
Age Range of Mentors

Number of mentors = 32

- 30 and Under: 19
- 31-39: 2
- 40-49: 3
- 50 and over: 6
Number of hours mentors volunteer with RWR per month

![Bar chart showing the number of mentors volunteering for different hours per month.](chart.png)

- **5-9 hours**
- **1-4 hours**
- **less than 1 hour**
Number of hours mentors volunteer for other community events/programs per month

- 20+ hours
- 10-19 hours
- 5-9 hours
- 1-4 hours
- Less than 1 hour
- None

# of mentors

- 0
- 5
- 10
- 15
- 20
Youth Responses – Focus Group

• “Being smart is cool” (male student)
• “….loved the mentors!” (all students agreed)
• “This program helped me like school” (male student)
• “The men took time off to work with us...they were like fathers.” (male student)
• “I like reading...it helps me imagine things.” (female student)
• “I can learn about what I want to be.” (male student)
Themes generated from youth focus group discussion

- increased interest in school
- Affinity towards reading
- Relationship with mentors
- Value of the future/careers
- Desire to become better students
Student Test Scores 2012-13

MAP scores 2012-13

Fall 2012  Winter 2012  Spring 2013
Motivation for Adult Mentors

• “I want to help students understand and value the importance of reading and writing and be there to support the students in their educational pursuits.”
• “It’s important to give back to the community and help close the achievement gap.”
• “This is a way for me to spend time with kids in need.”
• “I believe in helping students to reach higher goals.”
• “I benefited from caring adults as a youth.”
Common Themes from Mentor Responses

• Opportunity to influence youth
• Community engagement
• Educational value
• Sense of Pride
Summary of Group Mentoring Project

• Amount of books read increased

• 50% of students increased their reading - from 1 book per month to 1 book per week

• Mentors formed relationships that extended beyond the literacy program

• Teachers reported improved behavior of participants
Benchmarks Achieved Through Group Mentoring

• Minimum frequency of at least twice per month
• Process in initiating the mentor-mentee relationship
• Monitoring
• Support
• Closure
Benefits of the group mentoring model included:

• Less reliance on a significant number of mentors
• Students interacting with several positive adults during the program
• Mentors connecting with/getting to know a number of youth
• Students increased program participation
• Encouraged positive peer interactions (healthy competition)
• Although youth perceptions of academics (reading, writing) remained average at best, participating in the mentoring program aided youth in becoming more positive towards school
Group Mentoring Benefits

• May increase the retention rate of quality mentors
• Youth can help recognize top mentors
• Ideal for episodic volunteers who are looking to give back
• Minimize paperwork
• Useful for targeting specific groups (youth at academic risk, youth with incarcerated parents)
• Minimize transportation issues
• Promotes instrumental relationship (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010)
Conclusion

- Mentors indicated a comfort level with the group mentoring approach

- Adults were inspired to serve as mentors primarily through intrinsic motivation
  - A desire to give back what was given to them
  - Committed to helping youth reach their goals
  - Obligation to the community service
Promising Practices and Best Strategies

• Offer adequate training for mentors
• Offer orientation for mentees and parents
• Consider group mentoring as part of a larger more comprehensive program
• Acknowledge exceptional mentors and mentees
• Don’t disqualify mentors based on 1-on-1 match credentials; Same rules for 1-on-1 mentoring may not apply – college students or transient (Episodic) volunteers may work out fine in this capacity
• Consider groups in need and not just individual youth
• Make instructional relations a part of the process
• Aim for Youth-Adult Partnerships, but be content with a positive relationship
Recommendations

• Continue to enhance mentoring programs by:
  • Being creative in the recruitment of mentors and mentees
  • Provide opportunities that are suitable for mentors

• Generate more evidence on ways to intentionally develop intimate, closer bonds that are found in one-on-one relationships.

• Cost benefit analysis of group mentoring programs must be more closely examined