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Peaceable Schools Mentoring: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

Peaceable Schools, a project of the Department of Education at BYU, is an organization that seeks to help schools make data-based decisions regarding school-wide and individual interventions for their students. Mentoring has caught the eye of Peaceable Schools because research is still in its infancy and the popularity of implementing mentoring programs is growing steadily. One of Peaceable Schools' current research questions is "What are the effects of mentoring on the social and emotional behaviors of students at-risk for emotional and behavioral disorders?" To respond to this question, Peaceable Schools has partnered with Grandview Elementary to pilot a mentoring program from February to May 2006 where mentors meet with students for about one hour each week during school. In order to individualize the interventions, mentors collaborate with the teachers and then help students make and work toward achieving personal goals. Generally, the length of mentoring programs is positively correlated with positive outcomes, thus this pilot program is a precursor to a more extensive thesis study that will begin during the next school year at the same elementary.

Participants

Students:

- 11 Students
- Ages ranging from 7-12
- Mean age is 8.5
- Grades 1-6
- 7 Boys, 4 Girls

Mentors:

- 11 Community Volunteers
- 6 Retired/Semi-Retired
- 2 Employed
- 3 University Students
- 2 Men, 9 Women

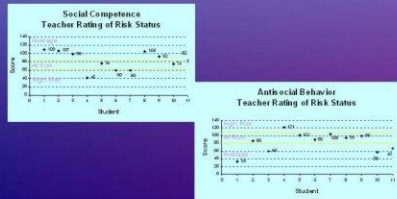
Data Collection

How?

- School Social Behavior Scales (SSBS) pre- and posttest
- Home & Community Behavior Scales (H&CBS) pre- and post-test
- Weekly Behavior Evaluation
- Evaluations designed around the results of the pre-testing and individualized to each child
- Overall Program Evaluations, post-test

Who?

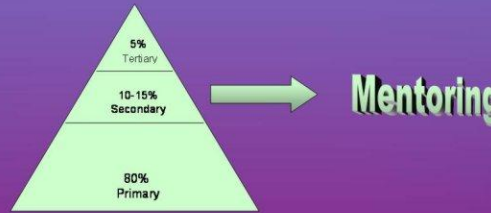
- Teachers, Parents, Students, and Mentors



Positive Behavior Support (PBS) and Mentoring

Need for PBS:

- Punitive reactions to problem behavior often result in only short-term behavior change and also may reinforce antisocial behavior by creating authoritarian environments
- Positive Behavior Support is a three-tiered, positive, preventative teaching model
 - Primary or Universal: uses school wide approaches that provide sufficient support for 80% of the students
 - Secondary or Individualized: targets students at-risk for emotional, behavioral, or academic problems and assists about 10-15% of the students
 - Tertiary or Comprehensive: focuses on students with significant and well-established needs which comprises about 5% of the students



Mentoring:

- Secondary intervention for students at-risk for emotional and behavioral disorders
- Definition: One-on-one, consistent relationship between an adult and student
- Facilitates resiliency in at-risk children through developing a positive relationship with an adult role model
- Positive outcomes may include: improved peer and parental relationships, academic achievement, self-concept, and behavior
- Inconsistent, prematurely terminated mentoring relationships may have detrimental effects on students' self-concept

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Mentoring Research

Best Practices of Mentoring:

- Length: At Least One Year
- Consistent Meetings
- Develop Positive, Supportive Relationship
- Screening
- Well Organized Orientation and Training
- On-Going Training
- Support and Supervision for the Mentors

Training & Supervision

Initial Training:

- Define the role and expectations of being a mentor. Give suggestions on how to work with the children

On-Going Training:

- Mentors meet monthly to share successes and discuss opportunities for growth
- Provides an important support system to foster a positive mentoring experience
- Principal shows his support for the program by being available to consult and participating in training meetings

Supervision:

- Mentors keep a weekly log and journal of their activities with the students
- Mentors meet with the students in public areas of the school to allow for easy supervision.

Mentoring Process

Selection and Matching:

- Children selected by school team
- Parents selected by school team
- Mentors and students matched by the principal through his personal knowledge of both the students and mentors
- Mentors met with the students' teachers and determined the best time for them to meet with the students
- The students pulled out of class for one hour once a week to be with their mentor

Goals:

- The first few meetings begin developing a positive relationship
- After a few weeks, the dyad should make goals individualized to the child's needs
- Activities are planned throughout to assist the student in reaching his or her goals and to continue strengthening the relationship
- The mentor should be a positive role model and friend

Desired Outcomes

- Students meet their individualized goals such as being sensitive to the feelings of others or participating appropriately in class monitored by weekly data collection
- Development of a positive relationship between the mentors and students resulting in positive behavior change
- Perceived positive experiences for the mentors encouraging continued participation and assistance in recruiting more volunteers
- Thoughtful feedback to improve the research design in preparation for next year's more extensive study

