School-based Mentoring: A Nurturing Approach to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Students At-Risk

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Mentoring Background and Student Needs
“I need not remind you that the cities of America are in trouble…the problems will largely continue until many more people get at the root. That root, I believe, lies in two places: in our schools and in our homes.”

Gordon B. Hinckley
1998 U. S. Conference of Mayors
• Due to changes in family systems and shifting social norms, more children at risk
  – Receiving less parental support than in the past
    (Jekielek, Moore, & Hair, 2002; Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005)
  – Discouraged from forming natural mentoring relationships with clergy, neighbors or other adults
    (Rhodes, 2005).
High-Risk & At-Risk Students

Includes those at risk for Emotional and Behavior Disorder (EBD)

High-Risk Students: 1-5%

At-Risk Students: 5-10%

General Population: 80-90%
Students with Emotional and Behavior Disorders (EBD)

Low family income, large family size, poor child-rearing techniques & parental criminality linked to juvenile delinquency

(Howard, Dryden, & Johnson 1999)

Strained family relationships, family conflict, poor communication skills contribute to rates of depression among children

(Merrell, 2001)
EBD Students experience…

- Fewer positive outcomes
- More frequent removal from class
- Less academic instruction than any other group of students with disabilities
- Years of academic failure and peer rejection before evaluations and diagnoses are begun

(Lane, Gresham, & O'Shaugnessy, 2002; Jolivette, Stitchter, Nelson, Scott, & Liaupsin, 2000)
EBD Continued…

Teachers report
- Students with EBD among least desirable to have in class
- They are not prepared to address needs of EBD students

Outcomes
- More than 50% drop out of school

(Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Soodak, Podell & Lehman, 1998; Cheney & Barringer, 1995)
Foundations of Mentoring

- Homers Odyssey
- Extended families
- Heroic legends
- Sports
- Business
- President Bush $450 million
Rationale

• For healthy development children need positive relationships with adults (Scales, 2003)

• Children may be discouraged from forming natural relationships with clergy, neighbors, and other adults (Rhodes, 2005)

• Studies of resilience among youth from at-risk backgrounds alerted scholars to protective functions that can be fulfilled by relationships with non-parental adults (Werner, 1995)
What is a Mentor?

- Greater wisdom or experience
- Offers guidance or instruction intended to facilitate growth and development

“There is an emotional bond between mentor and mentee, a hallmark of which is a sense of trust”

(Freedman 1992)
Benefits of Mentoring

- Self esteem
- Attitudes toward school
- Peer and parental relationships
- Relationships with teachers and administrators
- Academic achievement
- Behavioral improvements

(Hancock, 2003; Rhodes et al, 2005; Keating et al 2002)
Advantages of School-based Mentoring

- Less costly
- Identify more children
- School resources, staff, administration
- More convenient
- Time commitment
- Safety
- Community support

Dubois & Karcher (2005)
Goal

“The goal of true mentoring is the development of the youth—not necessarily the solution of specific problems” (Ambrose, 1998)
BYU Mentoring Research
Setting

Elementary School in Central Utah
  - 532 Students
  - Over 50% free or reduced lunch
  - Ethnicity
    75% Caucasian
    21% Hispanic
    2% African American
    2% Other

Student Support
  - Principal
  - .50 Advocate
  - .25 Psychologist
Student Selection

Systematic Screening For Behavior Disorders (SSBD) (Walker & Severson 1992)

- Screens All Students
- Internalizing & Externalizing
Student Participants - replace photo

- N = 17
  - 76 % male
- Ethnicity:
  - 70% Caucasian
  - 24% Hispanic
  - 6% African American
- Age:
  - Range 6-11yrs., $M = 8.5$yrs
- Free or Reduced Lunch = 81%
- SSBD results:
  - Critical Events: range 1–6, $M = 2.73$
  - Adaptive: range 25-44, $M = 33.67$
  - Maladaptive: range 14-45, $M = 29.60$
Mentor Recruitment

Sources

- Principal and staff, PTA, volunteers
- Businesses
- Community groups
- Church out-reach programs
- Retirement communities
- Word of Mouth
Mentor Expectations

- Time commitment
- Reliability and consistency
- Optimism
- Honesty
- Supportive acceptance
- Avoid preaching or lecturing
- Good example
- Training
Matching Process

• Collaborative
  – School principal
  – Mentoring coordinator
• Gender
• Application/interview
• Similarity of interests
• Personality
• Needs and experience
Typical Mentoring Session

- Call to school ensure attendance
- Sign in at office
- 10 min check in
- Work on goals academic/social activities
- Review progress
- Plan future visit
- Entry in mentoring journal
Measures of Outcome

Qualitative Data
- Log and Journal
- Social Validity

Quantitative Data
- Social Competence
- Anti-social Behavior
- Academics
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Goal/Progress</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample 1</td>
<td>Very Cooperative</td>
<td>Gave her a “Believe” star and talked about setting goals. Filled out “Let’s Get To Know You Better This Year” sheet.</td>
<td>Set two goals: (1) Be nicer to her sister and (2) Listen better in school. Will check on goals next week.</td>
<td>(Mary) was very willing to open up and address some concerns she has, especially when her step sister visits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample 2</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>We worked on spelling words and handwriting. We read some, too.</td>
<td>Set a goal of improving handwriting and spelling</td>
<td>He did great writing. He really tried to do his best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample 3</td>
<td>Quiet. Happy to see me</td>
<td>Reviewed numbers. Punched out valentines. Read a book and talked about how to make friends, how to always remember to do your best.</td>
<td>Worked on writing numbers correctly. She is remembering not to reverse her numbers.</td>
<td>She remembered we were going to read a book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Analysis of Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic-related</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games, puzzles, etc.</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Top 3 Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversations</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading activities</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total # of visits: 233
Mean visits per student: 14.24 over 5 months
Measures

School Social Behavior Scale (SSBS-2)

- Teacher Rating
- Social Competence
- Antisocial Behavior

Home and Community Social Behavior Scale (HCSBS)

- Parent Rating
- Social Competence
- Antisocial Behavior
Social Competence

Social Competence Total T-Scores

SSBS: Pre - 44.00, Post - 49.75
HCSBS: Pre - 49.27, Post - 52.82
Antisocial Behavior

Anti-Social Behavior Total T-Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T-Score</th>
<th>SSBS</th>
<th>HCSBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>58.94</td>
<td>48.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>53.00</td>
<td>47.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recap of Quantitative Results

- Increased Social Competence
- Decreased Anti-social Behavior
- Improved Academics
Social Validity Surveys

- All participants
- End of program
- Satisfaction
- Suggestions
Student Survey

100% responded that they would like to be in the mentoring program again.

71% noted help with academics as the most important part of having a mentor.

What did you like about having a mentor?

“A friend”
“She’s nice, knows about me and cares”
“Someone to trust”
“We talk, she listens”
Teacher Survey

100% noted positive changes for those students who were mentored.

“I wish more of my students could benefit from it”

“Self-confidence has dramatically increased this school year”

“I love that Martin truly looked forward to this time, as was shown by the big smile on his face each time she appeared at our door. This is worth more than completing 100 assignments on time!!”
Mentor Survey

69% would like to participate again.
40% would like more information on student needs.
36% wanted more contact with the teacher.

“They have touched my life for good”
“I like feeling that I can make a difference in a child’s life”
“It is very rewarding to help a child set goals and achieve them”
“I like seeing them become more self confident”
Parent Survey

83% said they would like their child to participate in the program again.

“He appears to feel better about himself”
“It helps them cope with problems and be better students!”
“We love the program!”
“Boost in self-confidence”
Common Difficulties

- Issues
  - Mentor sporadic or drops out
  - Teacher/academic schedule
  - Students behavior extreme

- How to address
  - Training
  - Monitoring/supervision
  - Ongoing support
Limitations

- Data from just one school
- No control group
- Small number of participants
- Brief intervention
Updated Mentoring Program

- Addressing limitations
- Replicating the evaluation
- Extending the program to 7 schools
- Developing and refining mentoring materials
New Implementation

• Department of Safe and Drug-Free Schools Grant
• 5 Elementary Schools, 2 Secondary Schools
• Ultimate Goal
  – 100 Mentor Matches
• Future Goal
  – District-wide Program
Partners

- School district (school staff, retired teachers, bus drivers)
- Brigham Young University (training materials and evaluation)
- Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- Community Groups (Police, Retirement Centers, Chamber of Commerce)
- Faith Based Groups
POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT INITIATIVE

http://education.byu.edu/pbsi/

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