



Research Brief

Mentoring for Low-Performing Students

Question: What makes an effective mentoring program for low-performing students?

Summary of Findings:

Schools must provide students with the tools and skills they need for success in high school and beyond. Yet many students do not have the needed background and/or experiences, and require additional support to assure success. Mentoring programs have long been in existence, both in and outside of school. Their primary purpose is "...to help young people achieve their potential and discover their strengths" (*Mentoring*).

Benefits of mentoring

According to Jekielek, Moore, Hair and Scarpua (2002), students who were the most disadvantaged and/or considered at risk reaped the most benefit from mentoring, while those with good grades and attendance had fewer benefits. The longer the mentoring relationship, the better the outcome. A minimum of one school year is recommended to achieve results. One study found that when mentoring occurred over a three to six month period, there was no improvement in academics, social relationships or substance use. Shorter mentoring relationships were found to generate less confidence about their academic work among mentees (Jekielek, et. al).

Research identified the benefits of a mentoring program on students. They include:

- better attendance
- a more positive attitude towards school with a stronger sense of belonging
- less self-initiated drug and alcohol use
- more trustful relationships with their parents and other adults
- higher sense of self-worth
- a better chance of attending a post-secondary school

(Cuomo, M. & Parasharami, P., 2003; Dubois, D. L. & Silverthorn, N, 2005; High School Principals' Partnership. High School Mentoring Programs; Jekielek, et. al; National Mentoring Institute., 2005; Natural Mentoring; School based mentoring).

Characteristics of successful mentors

A poll conducted by the National Institute on Mentoring (2005) found that 17.6 million students could benefit from mentoring but that only 2.5 million were in a mentoring relationship. It also reported that people aged 18-24, 34-54 and Baby Boomers, those born between 1946-1966, as well as those with higher education, were most likely to volunteer to be a mentor. However, those who were 65 and older and/or were unemployed were least likely to volunteer. Another study found that those who were motivated intrinsically were more likely to become and continue being a mentor (*Strategies for recruiting and retaining volunteers*). Another study found that students responded best to mentors who demonstrated emotional support, showed respect to the students, were regularly available and dependable, were supportive of their needs and interests and showed encouragement of their activities (Jekielek, et. al.; *Spanning the gender gap*).

Components of a strong mentoring program

Successful mentoring programs do the following:

- Establish goals for the program.
- Determine how the program will be structured.
- Identify an implementation timeline.



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- Determine who will supervise the program. The more supervision and support there is for the mentor and mentee, the more successful the program.
- Provide clarity about the time commitment for mentors and obtain long-term commitment.
- Explore and secure financial support. It tends to run about \$1000 per student annually.
- Plan and implement on-going training and support for mentors.
- Assess the program and adjust as appropriate.

Types of mentoring programs

- *One on One:* Student works with a mentor regularly once a week immediately before or after school.
- *Study Period:* One staff person works with no more than 4 students during Study Hall or an equivalent period on school work, personal issues, etc.
- *Hands-on Career Mentoring:* Student works with a professional on a regular basis in a career of interest.
- *College Alumni Program:* Students are connected with alumni from a college and they work together regularly in different areas such as test taking skills, college admission, financial planning, personal budgeting, investing, etc.
- *Brown Bag Lunches:* A mentor eats lunch with a mentee on a regular basis.
- *Senior Year Experience:* A high school senior assists a teacher in the classroom 2-5 times a week. The teacher meets weekly with the mentee to plan activities and monthly with the program's coordinator. The mentee keeps a journal about the work, activities, etc. and writes regular self-reflections.

Online Resources:

- Cuomo, M. & Parasharami, P. (2003, August). *Mentoring USA enhances self-esteem development for immigrant youth*. Retrieved online from http://www.educationupdate.com/archives/2003/aug03/issue/metro_mentoring.html
A description of several programs for ELL learners in NYC is explained in this piece.
- Dreis, J., & Rehage, L. (2008, October). Recasting the senior year. *The Educational Digest*, 74, 2. P. 34-8.
Several programs that can reshape students' senior year, including a mentoring program, are described in this article.
- Dubois, D. L. & Silverthorn, N. (2005). *Natural mentoring relationships and adolescent health: Evidence from a national study*. Retrieved online from http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_393.pdf
This is an extensive yet concise synopsis of a study done on natural mentoring relationships.
- *High School Principals' Partnership. High School Mentoring Programs.*
<http://www.principalspartnership.com/mentoring.pdf>
An overview of the different types of mentoring programs for high school students is provided in this piece.
- Jekielek, S. M., Moore, K., Hair, E. C., & Scarpua, H. J. (2002). *Mentoring: A promising strategy for youth development*.
This is a synthesis of research on the effects of mentoring programs for youth.
<http://www.childtrends.org/Files/MentoringBrief2002.pdf>
- *Mentoring immigrant youth.* (n.d). Retrieved online from http://www.mentoring.org/access_research/immigrant/
Brief descriptions of the needs of immigrant youth and some practical suggestions are provided in this article.
- Mentoring. (n.d.) *What is mentoring?* Retrieved online from



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http://www.mentoring.org/mentors/about_mentoring/

A brief definition of what mentoring is has been provided in this piece.

- *Movement City's men up.* (n.d.). Retrieved online from <http://www.changemakers.net/en-us/node/4239>
This is a brief description of a program for males aged 14-18 in a very poor area of Massachusetts “to participate in variety of creative arts-based programming that they use to bring the community together. And while the skills the learn and the work they produce offers significant benefit to their peers and the community at-large, we work with individual participants to build on their interests and offer them the support to walk down their own creative paths. Men Up provides an often neglected outlet for young men to explore and question their roles as men in our community.”
- NAACP. (2007). *A plan for success*. Retrieved online from http://www.naACP.org/advocacy/education/PlanforSuccess_0.pdf
“(this report) suggests high school reform focused on closing the achievement gap between students of color and their white peers and youth from low-income neighborhoods and students from more affluent areas.”
- *National Mentoring Institute.* (2005). *Mentoring in America, 2005*. Retrieved online from http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_523.pdf
An extensive description of the results of a poll done on mentoring, its effectiveness and next steps is provided in this report.
- *Natural mentors* (n.d.) Retrieved online from http://www.mentoring.org/access_research/natural/
This article provides a succinct description of what a natural mentor is and their role in the student's life.
- *School based mentoring.* (n.d.) Retrieved online from http://www.mentoring.org/access_research/school_based/
A succinct article that describes mentoring in schools is given in this selection.
- *Spanning the gender gap.* (n.d.). Retrieved online from http://www.mentoring.org/access_research/spanning/
This is a short piece on the differences between mentoring males and females.
- *Strategies for recruiting and retaining volunteers.* (n.d.). Retrieved online from http://www.mentoring.org/access_research/strategies/
Considerations for recruiting volunteer mentors are clearly laid out in this article.
- University of Michigan News Service. (2001, April). *Mentors find teaching science can be life transforming*. Retrieved online from <http://www.umich.edu/news/index.html?Releases/2001/Apr01/r041701b>
This article briefly describes a program called Reach Out, where college students volunteer to work with elementary through high school students on different aspects of science.

Examples of Mentoring Programs

- ACE
<http://www.acementor.org/506>
For students who are interested in the building and its allied trades
- Amherst Regional High School, MA



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https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/cce/partnerships/amherst_public/amherst_hs

- Auburn College, AL
<http://www.cadc.auburn.edu/soa/index.php/news/2007/10/19/mentoring-program/>
- Financial Women's Association, NY
<http://www.fwa.org/aboutus/edfund.htm>
Describes a program at Murry Bertraum High School for Business Careers
- Greenwich High School, CT
<http://www.greenwichschools.org/page.cfm?p=5522>
- List of mentoring programs in MA
<http://www.massmentors.org/about/programs.pdf>
- MASS mentoring
http://www.massmentors.org/In/corporations_1_1.aspx
Describes program at North Quincy High School, MA
- North Quincy High School, MA
http://www.quincypublicschools.com/schools/northquincy/main_page.shtml#partners
- Rochester Community Schools, NY
<http://www.rochester.k12.mi.us/index.aspx?folder=22000>
- Snowden International High School, MA
http://tigernet.princeton.edu/~paa223/CommunityService_Frame.htm
- Vermont mentoring partnerships
<http://www.vtmentoring.org/rbfs.shtml>
A list of mentoring programs in the Rutland area

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