Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Programs in the School Setting for Grades 7-12

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Summary of Findings

Criteria for peer-to-peer mentoring programs in the school are based on findings from tutoring programs and peer-mediated interventions, as well as from information existing mentoring programs.

Research indicates that the potential for a more effective peer-to-peer mentorship program should include:

- Peer involvement in the program implementation and planning
- Matches should be made as early as possible during the school year
- Consistency of matching between mentor and mentee is important
- More positive results
- Social activities should be utilized vs. academic assistance only
- Commitment of mentors for the entire school year
- Mentor training is needed prior to matching with a student
- Support for mentors and consistent communication is vital
- Building trust and support with parents/guardians and community members
- Continuing to keep open communication with key stakeholders of the program (i.e., parents/guardians, administration, school staff)
- Provide specific training
- Mentors allow the mentees to take some leadership by making decisions for their mentoring experience
- Diverse groups of students from all different cultures, backgrounds, and academic and social skill levels can benefit from both a mentor or being mentored
- Utilize the peers’ strengths in mentor matches
- Provide opportunities for youth to interact with other youth

School-Based Mentoring Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big Brothers/Big SistersSchool-Based Mentoring Program (BBBS)</th>
<th>Elementary, Middle &amp; High School Students</th>
<th>High School Peer Mentor or Adult Mentor</th>
<th>Relationship development and academic support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open to all students</td>
<td>High School Peer Mentor or Adult Mentor</td>
<td>Consistency of mentor/mentee meetings is encouraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a significant difference of support to high school mentors vs. adults</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Not enough data to distinguish the “amount” of time required for positive outcomes</td>
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<td>Adult mentor vs. high school mentor</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Limitations of the Program

- School connectedness
- Increase of academic performance and attitudes towards self, adults & future

Strengths of the Program

- School mentorship program
- Activities are designed for classroom or small group instruction
- Programs planning and start-up take 6 months

Limitations

- The program findings suggest that this would be a beneficial peer-to-peer mentoring program.
- The current program should include a higher-profile program to build more mentor relationships.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Mentoring effectiveness has been proven when certain conditions or program implementation procedures are followed. A philosophy encouraging certain standards is suggested in order to increase the likelihood of gaining greater goals. This philosophy involves monitoring, screening, and limiting the number of mentors, matching students based on some similar characteristic, training for mentors, supervision of the program, support for the mentor and parents/guardian, regular meetings between the mentor and mentee, and extended mentoring contact or duration (Dapp & Block, 2004). Although there are many promising findings related to mentoring in and of itself, unfortunately there are limited peer-reviewed findings for school-based peer-to-peer mentoring programs. Findings to date suggest school-based mentoring can be a positive intervention for the student population, but continued research is needed to confirm these findings.

The recommendations for administration at United South Central School District 2134 is to incorporate a Big Brothers/Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring program.

The program findings suggest that this would be a beneficial peer-to-peer mentoring program. This collaboration may allow for additional supervision, expertise, financial assistance, and communication within the community itself.

Limitations

- Although there are many positives that accrue for high school students who mentor, there are some challenges which need to be considered in this type of program implementation.
- High school mentors (vs. adult mentors) may not be as consistent in meeting with their mentee or in maintaining the relationship for a second year (Hererra, et al., 2008).
- A program’s success in mentoring varies with the diversity in the amount of mentor support, structure and training provided to the mentors themselves (Karcher, 2009).
- Costs associated with mentoring programs in the school system also need to be considered. Although the school system is utilizing students as mentors, that does not suggest that there is no cost to the program implementation (Karcher, 2009).

Acknowledgements

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References

A complete literature review is available upon request.