GUIDE TO KEY MENTORING RESEARCH: EVALUATIONS, REPORTS, AND SYNTHESES

As youth mentoring programs have flourished throughout the nation, there has been increasing interest in how program evaluations and research into effective practices can be translated by mentoring program staff into improved services to youth. Funding agencies and policymakers are consistently requiring programs to follow evidence-based best practices when designing and implementing programs and to compare their impacts to those found in other studies. However, this trend toward research-derived programming requires that mentoring staff have the time, tools, and skills to locate mentoring research, interpret the results, and apply relevant findings to the design of their programs.

This training supplement is designed to give Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OS-DFS) mentoring programs a brief introduction to many of the research reports and program evaluations that make up the core of what we know about youth mentoring. The findings from these evaluations and various data analyses may provide new directions or approaches for your mentoring program. They may provide ideas on how to best make the case about your program's success. Or they may simply prove useful when making the case about mentoring to a prospective funder, partner, or volunteer.

The research discussed in this guide is divided into two categories: primary research (direct evaluations of mentoring programs) and research syntheses (collections or additional analysis of mentoring program evaluations). For each research report or study we have provided a summary of the methodology and findings, as well as information on how you can obtain a copy for your program. The reports referenced here are only a starting point—we encourage OSDFS grantees to explore additional research that can inform their programs, especially in related areas such as education, volunteer management, and youth development.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters

Author(s): Joseph P. Tierney and Jean Baldwin Grossman, with Nancy L. Resch
Publisher: Public/Private Ventures
Date: 1995, revised in 2000

About the study: A dozen years later, this research report remains one of the cornerstones of youth mentoring research. In fact, many of the "best practices" used in mentoring programs today are the result of the eight years Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) spent researching Big Brothers Big Sisters. The Impact Study is one of several research reports derived from P/PV's research of BBBS, but it is by far the most frequently cited because it deals with the data everyone is most interested in: the outcomes.

For this study P/PV studied 959 youth, ages 10–16, who applied for a mentor at eight BBBS agencies around the country. Roughly half were matched with a volunteer, with the others forming a control group to compare results against. The researchers did a pre-post analysis consisting of interviews and other self-reported data examining the impact of the mentoring services in six areas:

- Anti-social activities

- Academic performance, attitudes, and behaviors

- Relationships with family

- Relationships with friends

- Self-concept

- Social and cultural enrichment

Findings: The findings from this study are perhaps the most widely quoted in the field. Participants:

- Were 46 percent less likely to initiate drug use

- Were 26 percent less likely to initiate alcohol use (that number reaches 50 percent for the girls in the programs)

- Were 33 percent less likely to hit someone

- Skipped half as many days of school

- Showed modest gains in GPA (3 percent gain over control group)

- Reported improved parent and peer relationships (this was especially true among boys)

Participants showed no substantial changes in perceptions of self-worth and self-confidence, participation in social and cultural activities, or participation in other educational activities, such as homework completion and college planning.

Since their original publication, these statistics have been used as some of the strongest evidence that mentoring is effective. But perhaps more important than these outcomes is the study's investigation into the programmatic context that produced them. To their credit, P/PV illustrated that anyone hoping to achieve similar results needs to build similar program structures to those found at the BBBS agencies. Specifically, the Impact Study recommends that programs implement a one-to-one model where matches are made in a structured way based on common interests and other factors. It also recommends that programs provide rigorous screening, training, and match support for mentors, and frequent contact with youth and parents as the match progresses.

Other P/PV studies would further explore the program and relationship characteristics that define successful mentoring, but this study was a tipping point in the creation of mentoring best practices. The question shifted from "can this be successful?" to "how do we ensure good results?"

How to get a copy: The full text version of the research report (along with several other publications investigating the BBBS model) can be downloaded from the P/PV Web site at: http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/111_publication.pdf.

Building Relationships With Youth in Program Settings

Author(s): Kristine V. Morrow and Melanie B. Styles
Publisher: Public/Private Ventures
Date: 1995

About the study: Another critical piece of research from the P/PV examination of BBBS, this study focused on 82 matches from eight BBBS sites (four of which were also participants in the Impact Study). The matches, which had been meeting from four to 18 months, were studied over a nine-month period. Participant interviews and surveys were the main forms of data collection.

Findings: This study had major implications for how we now define the role of a mentor. P/PV found that the approaches mentors took in working with their mentee could be easily divided into two categories: developmental (with the mentor providing broad emotional support and building the relationship around youth goals) and prescriptive (in which the mentor attempted to address specific behaviors through targeted activities or even brought their *own* goals to the match). The results for these two groups were remarkably different.

Youth reported being much more satisfied with the developmental relationships. They felt closer to their mentors and were more likely to seek out their support and advice. Since other research has demonstrated that mentoring outcomes are closely tied to relationship quality, this study provides valuable insight into the styles of mentoring that produce

close, supportive relationships. Developmental mentors spent more time building trust with the youth, gave the youth a prominent role in setting goals and deciding activities, regularly engaged in activities that were simply "fun," and listened more while judging less. Prescriptive mentors were less likely to do these things and their youth reported far less match satisfaction.

A surprising 22 of the 28 prescriptive matches had significant problems or closed outright over the course of the study, while 50 of the 54 developmental matches continued to develop.

These findings do not mean that mentoring relationships should not spend time addressing specific behaviors, nor does it mean that youth are in the driver's seat regarding activities and other aspects of their participation. But it does mean that mentoring programs must create matches that put the relationship, the bond between adult and youth, first and purposeful activities second. The positive impacts of mentoring start with the friendship and role modeling a mentor provides, a theme that is further explored in Dr. Jean Rhodes' model of mentoring (see page 13). Keeping mentoring matches grounded in close friendship and broad personal development is one of the mentoring field's big challenges as it is increasingly viewed as a means of addressing serious educational and health-related youth issues.

How to get a copy: The full text version can be downloaded from the P/PV Web site at: http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/41_publication.pdf.

School-Based Mentoring: A Closer Look

Author(s): Carla Herrera
Publisher: Public/Private Ventures
Date: 2004

About the study: This excellent bit of P/PV research focused on the program practices and outcomes of a school-based mentoring model. The study consisted of surveys of youth, mentors, teachers, and case managers from three BBBS school-based mentoring programs. Youth participants and teachers were surveyed at the beginning and end of the 1999–2000 school year—the other groups only at the end of the year. A total of 212 youth participants, grades 3–5, participated in the surveys.

Findings: This study had many significant findings in the areas of program structure, relationships, and youth outcomes.

- There were several positive impacts, especially for matches that had lasted nine months or longer: improvements in peer relations, social skills, classroom behavior, and school attitude, combined with a reduction in fighting and other disciplinary incidents.

- Youth in matches that had met six months or less typically got *worse* in all these areas.

- The study did not show any improvement in attendance, grades, parent-youth relationships, or relationships with other adults.

- Youth who felt their mentors took their preferences into account (in other words, a developmental approach) were more likely to show improvement in their behaviors and attitudes.

- Somewhat surprisingly for school-based services, the matches spent most of their time on social activities. Eighty-five percent of mentors reported spending time on social activities while only half the mentors said they spent any time on direct educational activities, such as homework help. This implies that school-based mentoring has the potential for providing non-academic support even though matches are meeting in the school environment.

- Seventy-five percent of mentors said that there were often other youth around

when they met with their mentee. On the one hand, this may imply that a group mentoring model might prove beneficial in settings where there is little private space for matches to meet. However, it could also indicate that school-based matches may have a hard time building closeness or discussing personal issues in an environment with other youth close by.

- In fact, only 20 percent of the mentors in this study reported feeling "very close" to their mentee. This number fell far short of the percentage indicated by mentors in a P/PV study of community-based programs, 45 percent of whom reported feeling "very close" to their mentee.[1] About two-thirds of the mentors in this study felt "somewhat close" to their mentee. Only 11 percent chose "not very" or "not at all."

- The youth, however, had much higher perceptions of relationship closeness. Seventy-five percent said they felt "very close" to their mentors. Teachers' and case managers' reports of match closeness matched the youth's perceptions more than the mentors, indicating that these relationships were indeed finding meaningful levels of personal connection.

- The race and gender of matches did not have an impact on relationship closeness, however, staff and teacher support of mentors did correlate with increased relationship closeness and higher levels of positive emotional engagement with the mentee.

- There were several meaningful comments by mentors regarding the structure of school-based mentoring programs. Specifically, mentors wanted convenient meeting spaces, access to school resources, structured communication with teachers, more feedback and dialogue with parents, and clearer definition of the roles and communication patterns between the mentor, the school, and the program itself.

These findings show that school-based mentoring has the potential to impact many areas of school connectedness and relationship development. They also illustrate the importance of a developmental framework that can lead to match closeness, as well as the need for schools to better define how services are delivered on site and how the volunteer will interact with teachers, case managers, parents, and other adults in the students' lives.

How to get a copy: The full text version can be downloaded from the P/PV Web site at: http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/180_publication.pdf.

An Evaluation of the Long-Term Impacts of the Sponsor-A-Scholar Program on Student Performance—Final Report to the Commonwealth Fund

Author(s): Amy W. Johnson
Publisher: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
Date: 1998

About the study: The Sponsor-A-Scholar program in Philadelphia offers an innovative and ambitious approach to school-based mentoring:

- Mentors serve youth for five years, from 9th grade through the first year after high school

- Students who complete the program are provided with $6,000 in financial assistance for college expenses (as a supplement to other financial aid)

- The program provides a wide variety of other academic enrichment services, such as tutoring, college exploration opportunities, and assistance applying for available financial aid.

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[1] Herrera, et al., 2000. See page 6 for a discussion of this study.

The overarching goal of the program is to increase the college attendance of participating youth, helping them overcome many of the financial and personal obstacles that keep so many young people from entering or completing higher education. The services combine traditional school-based mentoring relationships with specific activities and other practical youth supports. SAS may serve as a model for other school-based mentoring programs that wish to expand the scope of their goals and the supplemental services they provide.

The evaluation of SAS examined its impact on 434 students from 1994–97. It examined grade point average (during high school), the rate of college acceptance and attendance within one to two years of high school completion, and the rate at which students remained enrolled in college, among other data related to how services were delivered. SAS participants' outcomes were compared to a control group of non-mentored youth.

Findings: The SAS program was able to demonstrate some academic successes, mostly by preventing participants from regressing in several academic areas compared to the control group. SAS participants' grades had decreased some by the end of grades 10 and 11, but around 50 percent less than the control group. These higher grades no doubt helped many participants qualify for college acceptance or financial aid.

The program also demonstrated success in improving college attendance. Eighty-five percent of the SAS participants attended college the year after graduation (64 percent for the control group) and 73 percent were still in college two years after high school graduation (57 percent for the control group). They also sought more academic assistance once in college.

Obviously, the financial aid SAS provided is a considerable factor. But 50 percent of the SAS students said that it was the support of their mentor that was primarily responsible for their higher education success, not the financial support.

The SAS model and evaluation results hint at an emerging theme in mentoring: providing a volunteer mentor to coordinate or supplement a transitional service. This approach is growing in popularity for programs targeting youth aging out of foster care and juvenile offenders re-entering communities after incarceration. Clearly there are opportunities for school-based programs to address transitions between K–12 settings (from middle to high school, for example) and into the post-high school world. There is also tremendous potential for school-to-work transitional mentoring, building on existing apprenticeship models and other career development services for youth. Future research may refine strategies and best practices for these models.

How to get a copy: The full text of the original evaluation report can be ordered for a fee from Mathematica (http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/). It may also be retrieved (often free of charge) through the full-text document delivery services of your local public library. Ask your library's reference staff how to access full-text electronic documents. An excellent summary of the evaluation can be downloaded from the Harvard Family Research Project Web site at: http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/after-school/mott/sas.pdf.

These findings are also discussed extensively in *Contemporary Issues in Mentoring*, available from the P/PV Web site at: http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/37_publication.pdf.

YouthFriends: Outcomes from a School-Based Mentoring Program

Author(s): Sharon G. Portwood, Penny M. Ayers, Kelly E. Kinnison, Robert G. Waris, and Daniel L. Wise
Publisher: Journal of Primary Prevention, Vol. 26, No. 2
Date: March 2005

About the study: YouthFriends serves K–12 youth in school settings across Kansas, Missouri, and Michigan. This study examined the impact of services on the attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs of 102 students grades 4–12. Sixty-five percent were in grades 4–6. The researchers focused on four

primary objectives of the program: 1) improving values, attitudes, and behaviors about substance abuse; 2) improving attitudes and behaviors about school; 3) improving school connectedness; and 4) improving participants' attitudes about themselves, their futures, and the adults in their lives. The study featured an experimental design with a control group of 106 similar students.

Findings: The YouthFriends evaluation found higher levels of school connectedness in mentored youth. It found no real impact on substance abuse attitudes or behaviors (not surprising, given the large number of participants in elementary school). Boys participating in the program showed significant improvements in self-esteem.

The program had the most benefit for participants whose baseline scores in the areas studied were lowest to begin with. Those students showed substantial gains in community connectedness and goal setting.

Unfortunately, the evaluation did not show an impact on the overall grades of participants. However, students who entered the program with a 2.00 GPA or lower *did* show statistically significant improvement in their grades compared to similar youth in the control group. Overall, the YouthFriends model seemed to have the biggest impact on the youth who needed improvement the most.

In addition to these results, the YouthFriends study is also significant in that it speaks to some of the difficulties in evaluating school-based mentoring programs. The researchers found that it was very difficult to measure the *amount* of mentoring that was happening. Mentoring sites collected data differently or sparingly, resulting in the researchers being unable to shed light on the amount ("dosage") or style of mentoring that was leading to these outcomes. The other evaluation obstacle was the small sample size. Two hundred eight total study subjects sounds like a lot, but data sets of that size make it very difficult to run many types of statistical analysis that would demonstrate meaningful impacts or illuminate keys to success. School-based programs may conduct more useful evaluations by partnering with other school-based programs for larger-scale joint evaluations with increased sample sizes.

How to get a copy: The full text of the journal article can be ordered for a fee through the publisher (http://springerlink.metapress.com/content/1573-6547/). It may also be retrieved (often free of charge) through the full-text document delivery services of your local public library. Ask your library's reference staff how to access full-text electronic documents.

Mentoring School-Age Children: Relationship Development in Community-Based and School-Based Programs

Author(s): Carla Herrera, Cynthia L. Sipe, and Wendy S. McClanahan, (with Amy J.A. Arbreton and Sarah K. Pepper)
Publisher: Public/Private Ventures
Date: 2000

About the study: This P/PV study connected the worlds of school- and community-based mentoring in innovative ways by examining the similarities and differences between the two models. P/PV surveyed 1,101 mentors in 98 programs, eventually focusing on 669 one-to-one matches. The survey was designed to investigate relationship characteristics and quality. Further analysis determined benchmarks for successful relationships and examined the impact of school and community models on mentoring relationships and outcomes.

Findings: This wonderful piece of research is filled with meaningful numbers and conclusions about how mentoring is best delivered across settings. Overall, the data say less about the differences between the models and more about what quality mentoring looks like regardless of where it is delivered. Among the meaningful findings:

- More evidence for the developmental approach—mentors who engaged in social activities and let the youth have a voice in setting goals and making decisions had closer relationships than those who did not.

This was true in both school- and community-based programs.

- The second largest predictor of relationship closeness was common interests between the mentor and mentee.

- Other prominent factors in match closeness were the frequency and duration of match meetings. But as mentioned above, what matches *did* when they met was the most critical factor.

- Mentors who received six or more hours of pre-match training reported the closest and most supportive relationships with their mentees.

- One interesting aspect of the study examined the "dosage" issue discussed previously. The study found that community-based programs provided about twice as much contact between the mentor and mentee. However, analysis of program characteristics revealed that community programs cost about twice as much to operate as school-based programs. School-based programs may be less expensive, but they tend to provide less actual mentoring. Further analysis of the financial aspects of mentoring programs can be found in the discussion of "The Cost of Mentoring" later in this guide.

How to get a copy: A full text version can be downloaded from the P/PV Web site at: http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/34_publication.pdf.

The Test of Time: Predictors and Effects of Duration in Youth Mentoring Programs

Author(s): Jean B. Grossman and Jean E. Rhodes
Publisher: American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 30, No. 2
Date: April 2002

About the study: This study made a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge about mentoring by fully exploring the impact of match duration on mentoring outcomes. Esteemed researchers Dr. Jean Grossman and Dr. Jean Rhodes studied 1,138 youth in eight BBBS agencies. The study, which also featured a control group of youth, focused on the youth's parent relations, school attitudes and feelings of scholastic competence, grades and attendance, and feelings of self-worth. The researchers also examined the relationship between the quality and duration of the mentoring matches.

Findings: The study showed a strong relationship between relationship length and quality of outcomes. Youth who had been matched for 12 months or longer showed significant improvements in self-worth, feelings of social acceptance, feelings of scholastic competence, improved parent relations, with decreases in drug and alcohol use.

Conversely, youth whose matches had terminated before three months (for a wide variety of reasons) showed significant *regressions* in self-worth and feelings of scholastic competence. They actually wound up worse in these areas than youth in the control group. This finding highlights the critical nature of the early months in mentoring relationships and places heightened importance on the match support services programs provide.

Overall, youth whose matches did not last six months showed no positive impacts. They did, however, show an *increase* in alcohol use.

There were several factors that influenced these results:

- Youth from abusive backgrounds were more likely to have their matches dissolve. This may indicate a need for more formal training tailored to the background and needs of specific youth and perhaps increased access to other youth services through strategic partnerships.

- Matches serving older youth (13–16) were more likely to terminate than matches serving younger (10–12).

- Married volunteers were much more likely to terminate, perhaps indicating that family needs limited mentors' flexibility and availability for meeting times.

- When looking at the factors that predicted match duration, relationship quality was by far the biggest influence—no surprise in light of much of the other research covered in this guide.

The impact of this research can be seen in the OSDFS grants themselves: applicants were required to provide services over 12 months, not the usual nine of a school year. They were also required to provide plans for transitioning middle school participants to high school programs. School-based programs of all types can enhance mentoring outcomes by exploring new and creative ways of keeping matches together over multiple school years and across school settings.

How to get a copy: The full text of the journal article can be ordered for a fee through the publisher (http://www.springerlink.com/content/1573-2770/). It may also be retrieved (often free of charge) through the full-text document delivery services of your local public library. Ask your library's reference staff how to access full-text electronic documents.

"The Cost of Mentoring" *in Contemporary Issues in Mentoring*

Author(s): Douglas L. Fountain and Amy Arbreton (Jean Grossman, Editor)
Publisher: Public/Private Ventures
Date: 1999

About the study: This chapter of P/PV's *Contemporary Issues in Mentoring* considers an important issue for mentoring programs: cost. From policymakers to program coordinators, everyone in the mentoring field wants to know how much an effective mentoring program costs to implement and what resources are needed (and from what sources) to make mentoring sustainable.

This study examined the budgets, staffing, and other characteristics of 52 sample programs from around the country. The programs had a wide range of budgets (from $500 to $6 million/year) with an average program budget of $324,000/year.

Findings: Perhaps the most significant conclusion of the study is that actually calculating the total cost of a mentoring effort is exceedingly difficult. Mentoring programs make use of many types of support, from volunteer hours to donated goods and services, which complicate determining true operating costs. The discussion of the research findings explores these nuances, particularly around calculating the cost of volunteer staff time (the study found that the average program has one FTE volunteer staff person for every 25 youth served).

The researchers did, however, find several key pieces of information about the cost of mentoring:

- The average program in the study served 291 youth at a cost of $1,114 per youth per year.

- When one factors in in-kind goods and services, the *true cost* of mentoring is $2,289 per youth per year. Programs on average receive one dollar in-kind for every dollar in their actual budget.

- Surprisingly, the cost per youth does not decrease as more youth are served. In fact, the researchers found that very large programs may be more expensive because of the additional infrastructure and staffing required to deliver services.

- Corporate donations were by far the largest financial contributor to large-scale mentoring programs. Individual donations were the primary funding source for the smallest programs. United Way funding and fundraising events were the most prevalent sources of funding for local programs as a whole.

While these findings provide a framework for funding programs at the local level, coming years may see an increase in cost-benefit analysis of mentoring programs, comparing the money spent on them to the impact they have on society. Such compari-

sons of mentoring's impact to the initial costs will have tremendous implications for how future efforts are funded and evaluated.

How to get a copy: The full text version of *Contemporary Issues in Mentoring*, which features several other chapters that will be informative for OSDFS grantees, can be downloaded from the P/PV Web site at: http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/37_publication.pdf.

RESEARCH SYNTHESES

Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-Analytic Review

Author(s): David L. DuBois, Bruce E. Holloway, Jeffrey C. Valentine, and Harris Cooper
Publisher: American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 30, No. 2
Date: April 2002

Type of analysis: As with the BBBS Impact Study, this meta-analysis by Dr. David DuBois and colleagues had major ramifications for mentoring programs in the United States. Instead of looking at the practices of one program or one model, this research looked at the methods and results of many programs and attempted to examine the effectiveness of mentoring at more of a macro level.

The meta-analysis began with a literature review that identified and codified existing scientifically valid program evaluations. The researchers narrowed the field to evaluations of one-to-one mentoring programs that offered pre-post data or a control group. The programs also had to serve mentees 19 or younger for inclusion in the analysis (likely leaving out many programs that offered services transitioning youth into careers or higher education). In all, the researchers identified 55 separate research reports containing 575 instances of reported effect sizes (i.e., changes

in the youth served). The researchers also examined characteristics of the various program models, the youth they served, and their mentoring relationships. All these data were then categorized, aggregated, reorganized, and generally subjected to a seemingly endless assortment of data analysis procedures—with rather surprising results.

Findings: Overall, the news on the impact of mentoring was good: the authors concluded that formal mentoring programs *could* reproduce the positive benefits that natural mentoring relationships had been known to provide. However, the meta-analysis also showed that while these programs were, overall, having a positive impact, the impact itself was rather small. The effect size for mentoring (1.8, for those who like data) was far short of the effect sizes reported for other psychological, educational, behavioral, and mental health treatments for youth. In fact, the authors indicated that it may be exceedingly difficult to say that mentoring "works" across the board because of the many specific program and participant factors that moderate impact and outcomes.

Needless to say, this news was somewhat unsettling for the mentoring community. This was not a study of one program's specific model. This was an analysis of a wide cross section of mentoring programs that reached the broad conclusion that mentoring, as currently provided, was not fostering huge changes for the nation's youth compared to other interventions. An effect size of that stature might spell trouble in any future cost-benefit analyses that might be performed. But those who dug a little deeper into the meta-analysis found the road map for changing all that.

The real value in the DuBois study is in those moderators of impact—the personal traits, program structures, and relationship characteristics that improved outcomes. When one looks at those moderators, a much brighter picture of youth mentoring emerges:

- The programs in the study that provided ongoing training for mentors, offered matches structured activities, set firm requirements around frequency of mentor-mentee contact, offered mentor support services, or found ways to increase parent involvement showed a greater impact. All these factors were strong predictors of higher outcomes for youth.

- The programs where youth felt most positive about their relationships also had higher effect sizes.

- The impact of mentoring seemed to be greatest for youth who were most at-risk. There was evidence that mentoring helps those who need it most.

Viewed through this lens, the meta-analysis is actually a call for program quality. The below-average impact was produced not by inherent problems with mentoring as a strategy, but by the number of programs not following what are now considered "best practices" for delivering services. Restricted to programs that followed a structure based on today's body of research, the analysis might have painted a much rosier picture. But by including a wide variety of programs, both good and not-so-good, the analysis offered a realistic portrait of how mentoring was being delivered, while also illuminating a set of program features that could lead to improved outcomes.

The practice of youth mentoring has come a long way in the last decade. It will be interesting to examine overall impact sizes in future meta-analyses. With an ever-increasing body of knowledge about youth mentoring, and the translation of that knowledge into the services at the program site level, one would expect that future "big picture" analyses of mentoring outcomes would find improved results.

In the end, the meta-analysis offered as many questions as answers: how do individual children's circumstances affect outcomes? Does mentoring have a lasting impact after matches end? As comprehensive as this analysis was, it only represented the tip of a very large iceberg of questions.

How to get a copy: The full text of the journal article can be ordered for a fee through the publisher (http://www.springerlink.com/content/1573-2770/). It may also be retrieved (often free of charge) through the full-text document delivery services of your local public library. Ask your library's reference staff how to access full-text electronic documents.

Mentoring Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis

Author(s): Kristin A. Moore, Susan Jekielek, and Elizabeth C. Hair
Publisher: Child Trends
Date: 2002

Type of analysis: This collection of research findings offers an excellent starting point for those running mentoring programs. This synthesis examined experimental, quasi-experimental, and non-experimental evaluations of 10 programs in an attempt to gauge the scope of mentoring's impact. Several of the programs mentioned elsewhere in this guide, such as BBBS and Sponsor-A-Scholar, are included here. Unlike the DuBois meta-analysis, data were not aggregated or further analyzed, but the synthesis did organize demonstrated outcomes into meaningful categories. It examined youth outcomes related to educational achievement, health and safety, social-emotional development, and feelings of self-sufficiency. It also examined the program practices associated with these outcomes, as well as the characteristics that shaped long-lasting and high-quality mentoring relationships.

Findings: The synthesis found several compelling outcomes in most of the areas examined. Among the highlights:

- *Educational achievement.* There was evidence that mentoring led to fewer absences, better school attitudes and behavior, and increased college attendance. There was little evidence of impact on grades.

- *Safety and health.* Mentoring did appear to decrease drug and alcohol use, especially for minority participants.

- *Social-emotional development.* There was evidence that mentoring improves parent and peer relations. It also improves attitudes about adults in general and the desire to help others. The researchers hypothesized that these improvements in relationships with parents, peers, and the community as a whole in turn lead to improvements in the youth's self-esteem and sense of self-worth. The idea that relationships with others mediate the outcomes of mentoring is further explored in Dr. Jean Rhodes's model of youth mentoring (see page 13).

- *Program characteristics.* The synthesis found many of the common program structures discussed previously in this guide to be critical to mentoring outcomes (thorough screening and matching, pre-match and ongoing training, mentor support, etc.). Family and parent involvement in mentoring, or at least increased contact between mentor and parent, also seemed to be tied to improved outcomes.

- *Relationship characteristics.* The synthesis found evidence for a developmental mentoring approach, high rates of interaction between mentor and mentee (lots of "dosage"), and use of shared interests between mentor and mentee as a critical, if not primary, factor in making matches.

What really makes this synthesis valuable for mentoring programs is not necessarily the content (all of which is available in the original evaluation reports) but how it is presented. The publication features excellent tables that break down information about these findings into easy-to-relate-to categories. For each outcome, charts provide clear answers to whether "mentoring works," "does not work," or has "mixed reviews." The charts related to program characteristics feature caveats and tips for implementation in other programs. It even includes all the details about the 10 programs and their original evaluations in easy-to-read tables. Because of the ease of finding meaningful data and conclusions, this synthesis is an excellent resource for tasks like proposal writing and developing presentations. It is

a handy, easily referenced collection of mentoring research.

How to get a copy. The full text of this research synthesis can be downloaded from the Child Trends Web site at: http://www.childtrends.org/files/MentoringSynthesisFINAL2.6.02Jan.pdf.

Understanding and Facilitating the Youth Mentoring Movement

Author(s): Jean E. Rhodes and David L. DuBois
Publisher: Social Policy Report, Vol. 20, No. 3
Date: 2006

Type of analysis: This recent journal article offers a clear, concise overview of current mentoring concepts, research, and practice. It combines a review of "what we know" about mentoring with policy analysis and a discussion about the expansion of youth mentoring. The policy elements are not directly related to this guide, but the summary of mentoring research findings is very comprehensive.

Findings: The discussion of research findings covers the full range of program practices and mentoring models, but a few of the key, research-derived findings presented include:

- **Relationship closeness.** Research indicates that the impact of mentoring hinges on this factor.

- **Mentoring approaches**. Mentors must provide a role model of relevant skills (and not negative ones). There is strong evidence that a youth-centered (developmental) approach seems to work best. However, matches do need structured activities and meaningful goals. Successful mentoring relationships cannot be *entirely* unstructured and friendship-based.

- **Consistency and duration of meetings.** Regular, stable meetings for one year are most likely to produce results. There is also strong evidence that programs should do

everything they can to keep matches from terminating prior to six months.

- *Coordination with other services and supports.* There is evidence that improved interaction and coordination of mentoring activities with parents, teachers, counselors, case workers, and other adults in the mentee's life can enhance mentoring outcomes.

This article nicely summarizes many of the key concepts discussed in this guide. Practitioners interested in public policy and funding decisions related to mentoring will likely enjoy the discussion of how this body of knowledge on mentoring influences (or should) the expansion of youth mentoring in the United States and its use as a strategy to address serious youth and societal needs.

How to get a copy: The full text of this research report can be downloaded from the Society for Research in Child Development Web site at: http://www.srcd.org/documents/publications/spr/spr20-3.pdf.

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This initial tour through key mentoring research provides compelling evidence that youth mentoring, done properly, can be a powerful, positive influence on our nation's youth, especially for some of its most disadvantaged. We encourage all programs to continue to contribute to this body of knowledge by conducting rigorous evaluations of their services and outcomes and by sharing those results with others. Conducting these evaluations not only adds to the research base, it provides the most compelling evidence to funders, policymakers, partners, volunteers, and other stakeholders that *your* program is effective and worthy of support.

The next training supplement in this series will highlight several existing program evaluation instruments that OSDFS mentoring programs might use to enhance their own research into their models' effectiveness.

OSDFS grantees should also note that they can access many of the research reports mentioned here through the Mentoring Resource Center (MRC) Lending Library and that the reference staff of the MRC is available to help them identify and interpret research that can improve their programs.


The Definitive Guide to Current Mentoring Research:
The Handbook of Youth Mentoring

The Handbook of Youth Mentoring, published in 2005, is by far the most comprehensive and detailed collection of research about mentoring available. Edited by Dr. David DuBois and Dr. Michael Karcher, the *Handbook* covers the full spectrum of mentoring theories, models, and outcomes. Over 36 chapters, leading researchers examine characteristics of mentoring relationships, the efficacy of specific program types (peer, group, one-to-one, etc.) and settings (school-based, faith-based, worksite, etc.). There are also sections addressing the impact of mentoring on specific youth populations (juvenile offenders, pregnant and parenting adolescents, youth with disabilities, etc.) and on policy issues, such as cost-benefit analyses.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the *Handbook* is the inclusion of research from other fields in the discussion of just about every topic covered. The authors go beyond examining just mentoring program evaluations. They put those evaluations in the context of what we know about other types of youth work, other educational services, and other clinical and psychological interventions. As a result, a much clearer picture emerges about how mentoring works—and more important, how it works with other youth supports. For practitioners looking for a realistic, scientific, comprehensive, and evidence-based review of youth mentoring, this resource is a must.

A small number of copies of *The Handbook of Youth Mentoring* are available from the MRC Lending Library (http://www.edmentoring.org/lending_library.html). Programs can purchase copies through the publisher, Sage Publications, at: http://www.sagepub.com/book.aspx?pid=10596.

Jean Rhodes's Model of Youth Mentoring
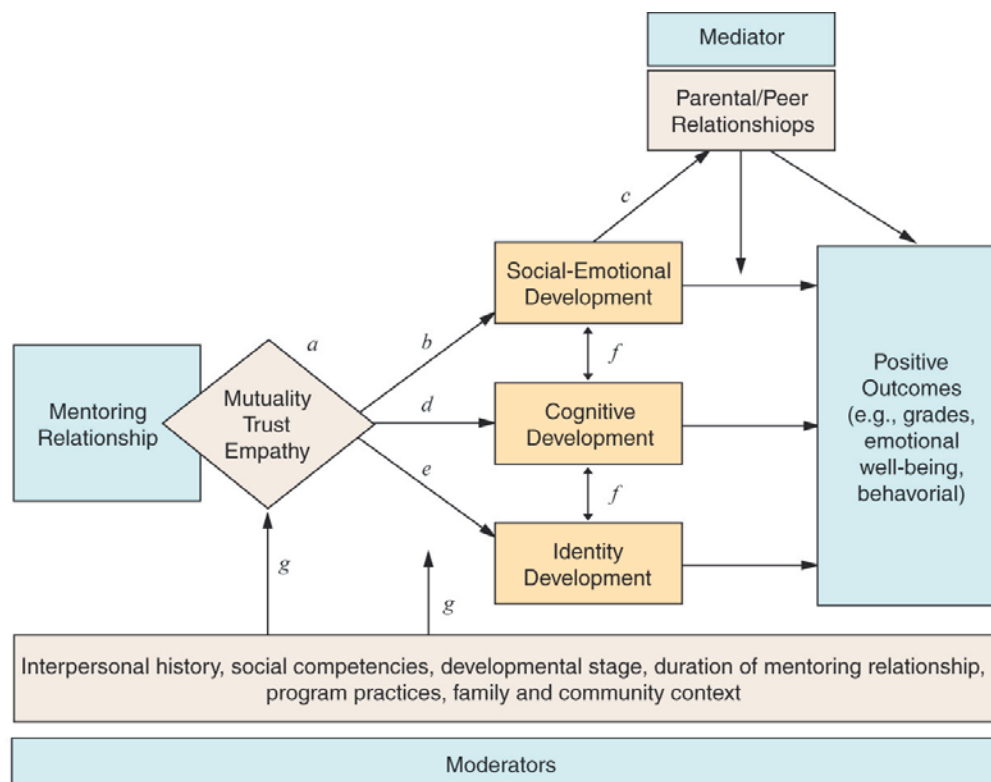
Source: Rhodes, J.E. (2005). A model of youth mentoring. In D.L. DuBois & M.J. Karcher (Eds.) *Handbook of Youth Mentoring* (p. 32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dr. Jean Rhodes's model of mentoring offers a wonderful framework for understanding how the work of a mentor, all those little interactions and conversations, translate into meaningful changes in the lives and personalities of mentees. Her model is discussed at length in her excellent book *Stand by Me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today's Youth* (a small number of copies of which are available from the MRC Lending Library). But there are two interesting aspects of the model that highlight some of the concepts discussed in this guide:

1) The entire model hinges on the development of mutuality, trust, and empathy that the mentoring relationship creates. That development is moderated by a whole host of other factors, such as personal history, length of the match, and the youth's family and community environment. But the reality is that programs need to develop close, trusting, valued matches in order to make this model work and achieve their desired outcomes.

2) The outcomes from a mentoring relationship—whether improved grades, increased self-esteem, or declines in risky behavior—are mediated by the youth's parent and peer relationships. The youth may develop in the three areas Rhodes identifies (social-emotional, cognitive, and identity) but those improvements may not translate directly into positive outcomes unless those relationships with others improve as well. Thus, mentoring can be viewed as something other than a direct intervention—it's not a straight line from relationship to outcome. The mentor may develop the young person in several ways, but how that newly developed young person in turn interacts with the world around him or her is what determines the ultimate outcomes.

Programs should take the time to examine Rhodes's model and think about its implications for their own programming. They may find an increased emphasis on parent involvement or social activities is in order. Or they may be better able to explain to funders or partners exactly how their program is having an impact on the youth they serve.

Other models that may be of interest to OSDFS mentoring grantees include:

❖ The proposed model of how youth mentoring can effectively work in conjunction with other youth services found in the chapter "Integration of Mentoring With Other Programs and Services" found in the *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*, pp. 314–333.

❖ The model of how mentors interact with parents, caseworkers, other youth service providers, and the policies and procedures of mentoring programs themselves developed by Dr. Tom Keller. His model examines the role of all these elements to create a more holistic model of mentoring. This model is discussed at length in the journal article:

Keller, Thomas E. (2005). A systematic model of the youth mentoring intervention. *Journal of Primary Prevention, 26*(2), 169–188.