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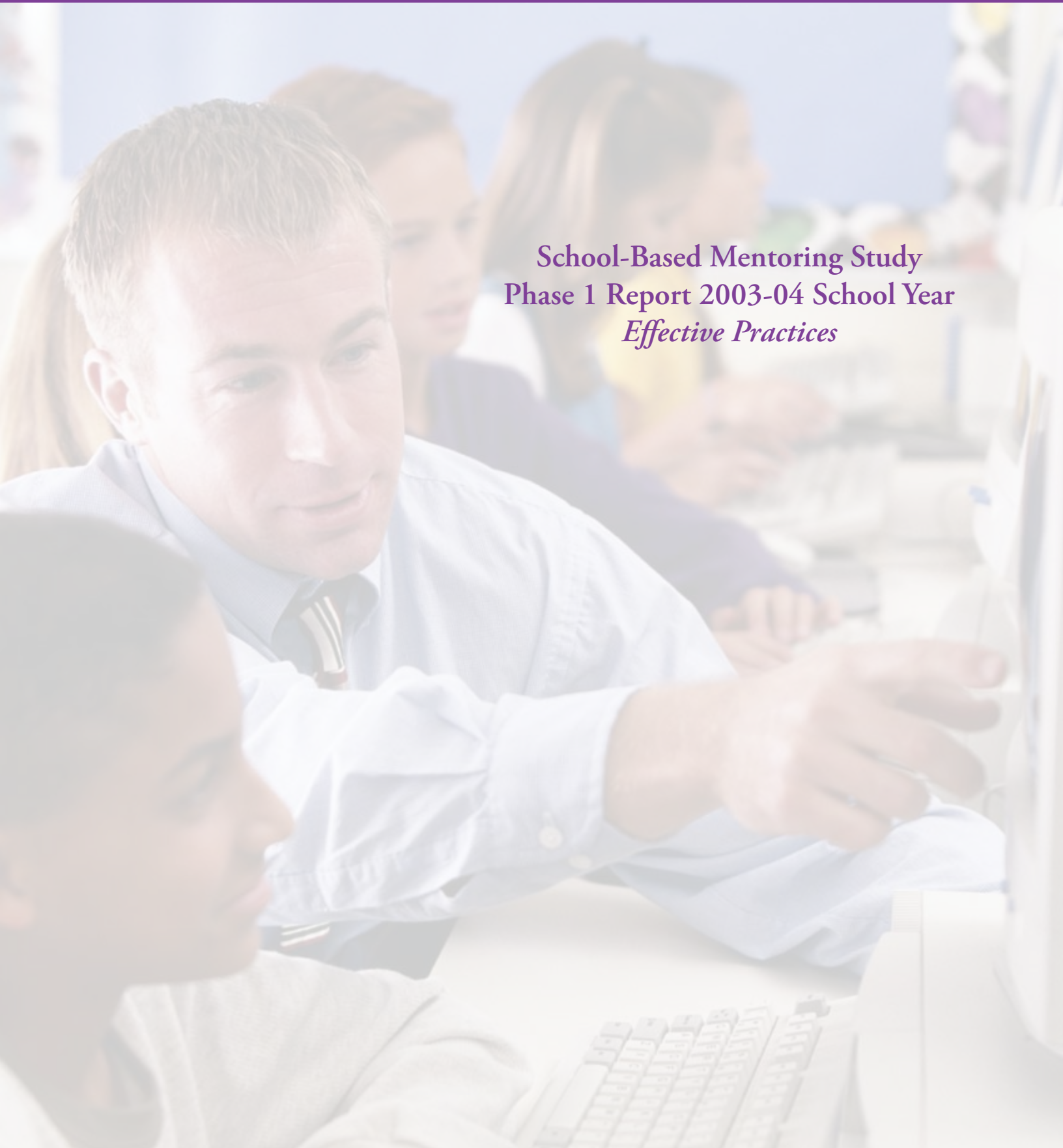
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School-Based Mentoring Study
Phase 1 Report 2003-04 School Year
Effective Practices





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We are pleased to provide you with the report on Effective Practices from the Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring Study, Phase I Report: 2003-04 School Year.

This report was made possible by a grant from **The Atlantic Philanthropies**.

In addition, eight BBBS agencies worked tirelessly to make the SBM matches and collect the research data:

- **BBBS of Colorado, Inc.**, Denver, Colo.
- **BBBS of Northwest Georgia Mountains, Inc.**, Dalton, Ga.
- **BBBS of Eastern Maine**, Ellsworth, Maine
- **BBBS of Eastern Missouri, Inc.**, St. Louis, Mo.
- **BBBS of Greater Cleveland**, Cleveland, Ohio
- **BBBS Association of Central Ohio**, Columbus, Ohio
- **BBBS of The Bridge**, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
- **BBBS of Island & Jefferson Counties**, Oak Harbor, Wash.

This report was developed from data collected in Phase I of the School-Based Mentoring (SBM) Research Project. It is designed to assist you in increasing the quality of your SBM programs to better serve the youth, volunteers, and the schools with which you work.

The effective practices presented in this report rest on the foundations of the BBBS Service Delivery Model. No findings are contrary to the SDM; rather, they give more specifics to the elements included in the Service Delivery Model. We encourage you to review the Service Delivery Model's SBM essential practices in Partnership Development, Customer Service, Enrollment and Matching, and Match Support/Relationship Development.

The intended audiences for this report are BBBS agencies and boards. It is not intended for an external audience. In the next few months, we will be releasing another report based on the data collected in Phase I, aimed at school personnel, foundations, policy makers, and other vested BBBS partners. We will also be releasing a full research report on Phase I for those in the evaluation/research fields and others interested in the full report.

The report is also available for download on the BBBS Agencies web site (agencies.bbbsa.org). Go to Program and Agency Development, then click on Research and Evaluation/SBM Effective Practices Report. In addition to this report, other research reports are available in this section of the web page, specifically the Research Guide for SBM Programs, which provides additional information regarding effective practices in SBM. Please share this report and information on how to access it, to all your program staff.

We encourage every agency to thoroughly read through this report and implement the recommendations. The Phase I and Phase II reports will become enormously powerful tools for you to build and strengthen your partnerships with school districts and schools. We look forward to working with you during the coming months to develop strategies for leveraging these reports with partners and supporters in the very best way.





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The Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring Study is being conducted during the 27-month period of September 2003 through December 2005.

Phase I of the study was conducted by the BBBS Mentoring Programs Department under the leadership of **Keoki Hansen**, Director of Research and Evaluation.

Phase I, which is covered in this report, evaluated SBM program practices at eight BBBS agencies during the 2003-04 school year. Phase II covers the two school semesters during 2004-05 and the first semester of the 2005-06 school year at the same eight sites and an additional two sites.

Phase II, conducted by **Public/Private Ventures (P/PV)**, will evaluate impacts on randomly selected mentored youth compared to non-mentored youth in a control group. The scope of the study parallels the BBBS Impact Study of Community-Based Mentoring conducted by P/PV in the 1990s, the largest and most influential study to date in the field of mentoring.

This Phase I report presents the findings and recommendations related to best practices for SBM programs.

Following are the Key Findings and Key Recommendations of the study.

Key Finding #1: Programs that encourage activities with a social/emotional focus (discussing thoughts and feelings, enjoying recreation together) are more likely to have matches with greater academic impact, higher quality and longer duration compared to programs that focus on academic/tutoring activities. These social/emotional activities are the heart of the BBBS model which focuses on building strong relationships. (See Findings 1-4 and 6.)

Key Recommendation: All programs should include a social/emotional component, such as board games, arts and crafts, and casual discussion, even when there is a tutoring focus.

Key Finding #2: High school student Bigs were found to be as effective as college and corporate volunteers in positively impacting report card grades. (See Finding 10.) Also, corporate Bigs were more likely to continue into the following school year than matches with high school or college Bigs.

Key Recommendation: Agencies are encouraged to utilize high school volunteers and to seek out corporate volunteers in particular because their matches tend to be longer in length.

Key Finding #3: The amounts of time matches spend together (how often and how long), influences the impacts of the match. (See Findings 13-15.)

Key Recommendation: Programs should be designed to optimize the number of times matches meet and the length of time they spend together.

Key Finding #4: The school environment and involvement by teachers and principals contribute to the strength of mentoring relationships and match impacts. (See Findings 17-18.)

Key Recommendation: A high priority should be given to consistent and thorough communication with the teachers, counselors and principals, and to ensuring a safe and comfortable environment in which matches can meet.

These findings and recommendations will be incorporated into the School-Based Mentoring section of the BBBS Service Delivery Model to influence the operation of SBM in the future.

The recommendations are interpretations of the analyses of practices and are by their nature subjective. Others may develop different conclusions from the data. Nevertheless, these recommendations are based on examining the data in light of best practices identified in the youth development field, particularly in terms of mentoring.

Development Of The Study

Over the past few years, Big Brothers Big Sisters has seen tremendous national growth in both the number of school-based mentoring (SBM) programs in BBBS agencies, and in the number of volunteers and youth engaged in school-based mentoring.

BBBS school-based matches increased from 27,000 in 1999 to 100,000 in 2003, an increase of 270%. This compares with an increase in community-based matches (CBM) from 92,000 to 105,000 – a 14% increase – during the same period. The new enterprise of school-based mentoring is an important growth area for BBBS, and one that creates a need to understand the role of new types of partnerships, volunteer sources, programming, and clients, both volunteer and youth.

Moreover, to continue to demonstrate its effectiveness, BBBS needs to understand how SBM programs can promote positive youth outcomes. Involvement in CBM has been linked with a reduction in initiation of



drug and alcohol use, school truancy and aggressive behaviors. Namely, matched youth were less likely to engage in these risk behaviors than youth in the control group who did not participate in the mentoring program. A rigorous evaluation of this caliber utilizing a control group has not yet been conducted with youth in SBM programs. BBBS began this research study to address this gap. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors associated with successful SBM programs and to examine the impacts for youth participating in these programs.

As noted earlier, the study has two phases. Phase I is an intensive formative program evaluation that examines associations between SBM programmatic variables and preliminary outcome variables including, Program Outcome-Based Evaluation (POE), Match Relationship Quality, and Match Length. The eight participating agencies (BBBS of Colorado; BBBS of Northwest Georgia Mountains; BBBS of Eastern Maine; BBBS of Eastern Missouri; BBBS of Greater Cleveland; BBBS Association of Central Ohio; BBBS of The Bridge; BBBS of Island & Jefferson Counties) were carefully selected and differed in agency size, number of SBM matches, and geographical area. Each site had an established SBM program and used at least two different types of volunteer-rich populations in their program.

Phase II of this study examines associations between program participation and youth development outcomes. This phase employs an experimental design that uses control and treatment groups to examine school achievement, behavior and attitudes, relationships with parents and peers, and risk factors related to future engagement in risk behavior (e.g., substance and tobacco use and delinquent behavior). Included in Phase II are the same pilot sites used in Phase I, plus two additional sites, BBBS of North Texas and BBBS of Northeastern Arizona.

The findings from this Phase I report address the following questions:

- **What** – What kind of activities between Bigs and Littles promote positive outcomes?
- **Who** – Is there an age for the Littles that seems to be more appropriate to involve them in a SBM program?
- **Type Of Volunteer** – How does volunteer type (high school student, college student, corporate volunteer), affect the quality of the match relationship and its ability to yield impacts for youth?

- **When** – Do variations in factors (e.g., when the match meets, for how many months, or how frequently) influence positive outcomes?
- **How** – In what ways does the partnership between the local BBBS and the school influence the programs' impact on participants?

Also, concluding the report are findings from other research studies related to best practices for mentoring programs.

Findings And Recommendations For Program Practices

The information presented below was gathered using the following:

- **POE (Program Outcome-Based Evaluation)** – Completed by the teachers and volunteers at the end of the school year.
- **Relationship Quality Survey** – Completed by youth and volunteers at the end of the school year.
- **Positive Youth Development Setting Survey** – Measures the quality of the setting in which the program is taking place and was completed by the volunteers and youth.
- **Report Cards** – The first quarter and last quarter report cards were collected from the 2003-04 school year.
- **Agency reports** of school quality (1-7) and school support (1-3)

The data was collected during the 2003-04 school year, and approximately 500 matches were involved in the project.

Question 1. WHAT

What kinds of match activities between Bigs and Littles promote positive outcomes?

ACTIVITIES

As part of the study, volunteers completed an activity log in which they recorded the time their meeting started and ended, activities they participated in, and the amount of time spent engaging in each activity. They also indicated whether or not they interacted with other matches during their activities.

The first activity they were most likely to engage in

when they met was working on homework/tutoring (34%), followed by playing games (20%; e.g., Monopoly), and talking or "hanging out" (16%). Matches were most likely to interact with other matches when they were talking/hanging out, doing arts and crafts, and playing games. They were least likely to interact with other matches when they were doing homework/tutoring or reading.

Finding 1: Matches whose first activity when they met was academic (i.e., homework, tutoring and reading) had shorter match lengths than matches whose first activity was social (i.e., games, physical activity, arts and crafts, and talking/hanging out) (5.3 months compared to 6.4 months).

Finding 2: Matches whose first activity when they meet each week was social/emotional were less likely to prematurely close than those whose first activity was academic (14% compared to 30%).

Recommendation: To keep youth engaged, SBM programs need to be designed so that they involve matches in more than just academic activities. Planned social activities should be built into match meetings even when there is an academic focus to the match.



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PROGRAM FOCUS

Agencies reported whether each individual program had an educational or a social/emotional focus. An educational focus describes programs in which matches concentrate mostly on improving academic competencies and volunteers typically tutor the youth. A social/emotional focus describes programs in which the matches emphasize building relationships through playing games, talking, engaging in arts and crafts, and do not usually spend time on tutoring.

Finding 3: Littles in programs with a social/emotional focus had greater improvements in grades from the first to fourth quarters of the school year, in language (.34 increase compared to a .06 decrease on a 4 point scale), math (.18 vs. -.27) and overall grades (.22 vs. -.04) compared to Littles in programs with an educational focus.

Finding 4: Programs with a social/emotional focus had fewer suspended youth than programs with an educational focus (decrease of .25 days compared to and increase of .47 days). Both findings 3 and 4 held after controlling or accounting for the Little's initial risk status and academic achievement level. Therefore, it is unlikely that failing or challenging children were given more educationally focused mentoring.

Finding 5: Teachers reported higher POE scores (i.e., how many of the 21 POE domains reflected improvement) for Littles in programs with an educational focus than those with a social/emotional focus in the following outcomes: confidence, use of school resources, school performance, attitudes toward school, school preparation, classroom participation and classroom behavior. One possible explanation for the ratings by the teachers is stereotype bias; that is, when the BBBS program is academically focused, teachers expect to see greater changes in the youth's school performance. If teachers see that the match is just playing games and having fun, they may not expect to see those changes. Because these findings contradict findings using actual grades as the outcomes measure, the teachers' scores may be an indication of a teacher's perceptions of how an academic program should affect youth. However, though the findings from POE and the report card grades show different results when comparing the different program foci, there is a significant positive correlation between the change in report card grades for quarter one to quarter four and teachers' responses on POE regarding school performance for the all the matches. Therefore, the teachers are reporting changes in POE that are also evident in the report card grades, but appear to be more likely to report more change in programs with an educational focus.

Finding 6: Volunteers in programs with a social/emotional focus reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction than volunteers in programs with an educational focus. Social/emotional focused programs appear to be more likely to engage the volunteers.

Recommendation: SBM programs with an academic focus should include a stronger explicit social/emotional component. That is, these programs need to structure fun activities (e.g., games and physical events, hangout time) into the program along with the academic activities.

Recommendation: The importance of socio-emotional activities on academic improvement should be stressed to school partners and volunteers.

Recommendation: Local BBBS agencies (with assistance from BBBSA) should provide volunteers with curriculum that includes detailed descriptions of socio-emotional activities (e.g., games, physical activities) that matches can engage in together.

INTERACTION WITH OTHER MATCHES

For each school program, agencies recorded whether or not, in general, matches interacted with each other during their meetings.

Finding 7: Youth reported having a stronger relationship with mentors in programs where matches generally did not interact with other matches. However, volunteers reported higher levels of satisfaction with the match relationship in programs where there was more interaction with other matches. Thus, from the youth's perspective the match relationship is stronger when the matches are generally one-on-one whereas volunteers report greater satisfaction when they interacted with other matches.

Recommendation: SBM programs should provide sufficient time for individual matches to develop strong positive one-on-one relationships, by giving matches time to engage alone in social/emotional activities and limiting the number of group activities. However, given the importance of volunteer satisfaction and the role that interacting with colleagues may play in their satisfaction, program staff may want to host some group activities.



Question 2. WHO

What ages of Littles should SBM serve?

AGE OF YOUTH

In this study, 62% of Littles were in elementary school, followed by 31% in middle school and 7% in high school.

Finding 8: Compared to volunteers matched with elementary students, volunteers matched with middle school students reported feeling less satisfied with their relationships and less close with their Littles. They also rated the mentor experience as less satisfying. Additionally, older youth reported being less emotionally engaged with their mentors than younger youth.

Finding 9: Teachers did not report lower levels of improvement in POE surveys with middle school Littles. In addition, no differences were found in report card grade improvements for middle compared to elementary school Littles.

The findings indicate that mentoring older youth may be more difficult for volunteers, but may be equally effective. This will be examined more thoroughly in the impact study. Youth in early adolescence (sixth grade and older) are beginning to experience major developmental changes that are associated with a decrease in involvement in many positive outcomes. These changes make middle school an exciting but challenging time not only for youth but also for adults who interact with them. Thus, it is not surprising that volunteers reported more dissatisfaction and found mentoring middle school youth more difficult than elementary youth.

Yet, given the developmental changes these youth are experiencing, positive adult mentors are a critical support for those youth. Although mentoring may be more challenging with older youth, SBM programs are needed and appear to be effective for both elementary and middle school youth as indicated by teacher's rating of POE outcomes and report card grades.

Recommendation: BBBS agencies need to provide focused preparation and training to prepare volunteers for the challenges of mentoring middle school youth.

Question 3. TYPES OF VOLUNTEERS

Are different types of volunteers able to promote different outcomes?

Three major groups of volunteers participated in this research project: high school students (47%), college

students (26%), and corporate volunteers (11%). The other 16% were categorized as "other." Across the entire BBBS organization approximately 44% of Bigs in SBM programs are high school students, 18% are in college, 16% are corporate volunteers, 3% are seniors, and 19% are from other sources or the general community.

Finding 10: Littles with high school Bigs showed more improvements over the school year in grades according to report cards than Littles with corporate or college-age Bigs. Littles with high school Bigs experienced greater increases in math (an increase of .10 compared to a decrease of -.36) and social studies (.22 vs. -.42) grades than Littles with corporate Bigs. Similarly, compared to Littles with college student Bigs, Littles with high school Bigs experienced greater increases in their science (.25 vs. -.48), social studies (.22 vs. -.05) and overall grade-point (.16 vs. -.04) average from quarter one to quarter four of the school year of SBM involvement. High school student Bigs spent more time at each meeting with their Littles compared to college and corporate volunteers.

Nevertheless, teachers tended to rate Littles with high school Bigs as having less improvement in several areas of the POE outcomes (i.e., confidence, use of school resources, school performance, attitude toward school, classroom participation and classroom behavior) than Littles with corporate Bigs. This difference between the lower POE rating by teachers for matches with high school Bigs may be due in part to a teacher bias; that is, teachers may have had higher expectations for youth matched with adults. Teachers' expectations may be lower for high school students' ability to influence youth positively in social/emotional developmental outcomes and academics compared to adults' ability. However, as noted above, the report card data indicates that high school Bigs had a positive influence on their Littles academically.

Additionally, we found that 64.2% of high school matches in social/emotional focused programs continued onto the following school year compared to only 18.5% of high school matches in educationally focused programs. This was a significant difference between the two programs. However, we found no differences for match retention for college or corporate volunteers as a function of activity type or program focus.

Recommendation: Though data on the impact of school-based mentoring as compared to receiving no mentoring at all (e.g., compared to a control group) is not yet available, findings from Phase I indicate that matches with high school mentors may yield as many positive outcomes as matches with older mentors.

BBBS agencies that do not utilize high school students as school-based Bigs should begin to recruit high school students. A note of caution should be considered: programs employing high school Bigs may be well advised to employ a social/emotional focus to the program.

Recommendation: BBBS agencies should clearly articulate the positive influence that high school Bigs can have on their Littles to school personnel.

Finding 11: Corporate Bigs had matches that were more likely to continue into the following school year than other types of volunteers. Also, relative to college-age Bigs, Corporate Bigs had matches with lower premature closure rates.

Corporate volunteers had the highest match retention rate, with 73% of the matches continuing the following school year, compared to 56% of high school matches and 33% of college matches. High school matches had the lowest premature closure rate, 17.9% compared to 22% for corporate matches and 31% for college matches. In both cases, college student matches were the weakest; that is, they were least likely to continue into the following school year and more likely to close prematurely. However, a higher percentage of the Littles matched with



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college students received free and reduced lunch than Littles matched with high school or corporate Bigs (see appendix A for youth demographics). Therefore, the higher level of transience among low income families may be a factor that contributed to the higher number of premature closures among college matches.

Recommendation: Programs that do not currently utilize corporate volunteers as Bigs should do so.

Recommendation: Programs intending to use college students as Bigs need to address the importance of commitment in their orientation and ongoing training. Colleges are good sources of volunteers. However, extra effort and support may be required on the part of BBBS staff to increase the quality of mentorship that the college students provide as well as their retention rate.

Question 4. WHEN

Do variations in factors such as when the match meets, for how many months, or how frequently influence positive outcomes?

TIME OF DAY

Each agency was asked to indicate whether matches met during or after school. Forty-eight percent meet during the school day and 52 percent meet after school.

Finding 12: Agencies reported more support from the school and higher quality relationships with the school staff in SBM programs where matches met during the school day compared to programs where matches met after school.

Whether the matches met during school or after school did not influence the quality of the mentoring relationship as reported by both youth and volunteers. Also unaffected by during/after school meeting time were the length of match, teachers' POE scores, and report card grades.

Recommendation: After-school SBM programs should have a clear component that emphasizes ways to develop strong relationships with the school staff. For example, BBBS staff may want to meet with school faculty on a regular basis. This will allow the SBM program staff to link their program activities with what is being addressed during school.

MINUTES OF ACTIVITIES

Finding 13: Match length, measured in months, was longer for those matches that met for more than 45 minutes at each meeting compared to matches that

met less than 45 minutes (6.2 months compared to 5.3 months).

Recommendation: Because match length is a key contributor to long-term positive outcomes for youth, whenever possible, programs should be designed so that the duration of match meetings is more than 45 minutes long, in order to allow enough time for a relationship to develop.

FREQUENCY OF MATCH MEETINGS

Two frequency categories were examined: matches that met weekly and matches that met twice a month.

Finding 14: Although matches that met twice a month tended to have longer meetings over time, matches that met weekly spent significantly more time together during the school year than matches that met twice a month.

Finding 15: Volunteers reported feeling closer to their Littles in programs in which the matches met weekly compared to volunteers who met twice a month. No difference was found between these groups in youth reports of relationship quality.

Recommendation: SBM program structure should be designed, if possible, so that matches meet weekly for more than 45 minutes in order to allow enough time for a relationship to develop.

MATCH LENGTH

Most matches participating in this study were in their first year and only matches lasting more than 3 months completed the end-of-year surveys. Given that the variance of match lengths was quite limited, few if any significant differences were expected between matches with relatively long and short matches. However, a couple differences did emerge.

Finding 16: Relative to youth in matches lasting less than 6 months, those in longer matches received greater benefits in two areas. First, teachers reported improvements in peer relationships for youth in longer matches. Second, youth in longer matches reported that their relationship had a more youth development focus.

Recommendation: Program adjustments should be made to increase match duration. This recommendation is strongly supported by the research of Grossman and Rhodes (2002) who found that matches within CBM programs greater than six-months yielded positive outcomes for Littles.



There are several strategies that help lengthen match duration. First, program staff can be explicit in their expectation of volunteers that the match will last more than one school year. Second, program staff can recruit high school juniors and college freshman and sophomores instead of high school or college seniors. Third, program staff can involve Littles earlier, starting no later than the fourth grade for elementary schools and in seventh grade in middle schools. Program staff can host training for volunteers to increase the likelihood that their experience will be a satisfying one that they wish to continue.

Question 5. HOW

In what ways does the partnership with the school affect positive outcomes?

COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOL FACULTY

Several structured interviews were conducted with school staff about the partnership between the local BBBS and the school. These interviews provide insight into strategies that increase the success of the partnership to collaborate on behalf of youth involved. As such, the findings are implicit in the recommendations presented.

Recommendation: Communicate well with all involved partners.

- Before approaching a school to partner, align the SBM program goals with the school's mission, goals and issues they are dealing with (i.e. how will the program help the school address the requirements of policies such as No Child Left Behind).
- Communicate clear, written guidelines for school, agency, volunteers and youth in the beginning of the school year, as the program is being negotiated.

PRINCIPALS

- Involve principals in the beginning of the school year during negotiations and then again at the end of the school year with recognition.
- During the school year, keep the principal updated on the program (such as a list of participants), but do not place excessive demands on his or her time. The program's goal should be to keep them as supportive advocates who are aware of the program's successes but not engaged in the day-to-day details of running the program.
- Recognize and acknowledge principals during agency events.
- At the end of the year provide the principal with a summary report of your evaluation.

TEACHERS

- Provide teachers with details about how the pro-

gram aligns with the school's goals and how it can help them to achieve these goals (e.g., by reducing behavioral problems). For example, make a program presentation at a teacher's meeting and place quarterly program progress information in their mailboxes.

- Clear expectations are needed at the beginning of the school year. For example, provide teachers with a copy of POE and let them know you will ask them to complete it at the end of the year.
- Provide teachers with quarterly feedback on the progress of the match. Also provide them with a way to communicate any concerns or feedback that they would like to share with program staff.
- Provide teachers with a method to communicate with mentors (i.e., folders the teachers can leave for mentors to pick up when they visit their Little).
- Provide teachers with end-of-year summary evaluations.

SCHOOL SUPPORT

Program support within the school could provide a strong foundation for the program to flourish. Therefore, we asked each local BBBS agency to rate the support the program received from each of their schools. A three point scales was used with 1 = "little support," 2 = "some support" and 3 = "a lot of support."

Finding 17: School support was linked to the SBM program's effectiveness. Compared to programs for which BBBS staff rated school support as low, highly supported programs were more effective, as rated by teachers, volunteers, and youth. The areas in which teachers rated Littles as making relatively bigger gains were: use of school resources, school performance, attitude toward school, school preparation, classroom participation, classroom behavior and peer relationships. In addition, schools that were rated as providing high support had matches that lasted longer, were less likely to close prematurely and were more likely to continue meeting the following school year than schools that were rated as showing little support for the program.

Recommendation: An assessment should be used to measure the anticipated level of support from the school for the program before initiating a SBM program at that school.

Recommendation: In current programs where school support has been reported as low, a plan should be developed and implemented which encourages school administration and faculty to increase their level of support for the program.

QUALITY OF THE PROGRAM'S ENVIRONMENT

Creating an appropriate developmental setting for SBM programs is essential to establishing a successful and effective program. To examine this setting, we employed an adapted form of the Positive Youth Development Setting Survey (Borden & Perkins, 2003). The survey assesses the eight features of positive developmental settings linked to effective positive youth development programs and both the volunteers and youth completed the survey. These features were identified through a thorough review of the youth development literature in a book sponsored by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). The eight features of settings that promote positive youth development are: (1) physical and psychological safety; (2) appropriate structure; (3) supportive relationships; (4) opportunities to belong; (5) positive social norms; (6) support; (7) opportunities for positive development and skill building; and (8) integration of family, school, and community efforts.

Finding 18: Features of a positive developmental setting correlate with positive outcomes. Seven of the eight features (i.e., 1 through 7) rated by volunteers were more likely to foster youth-centered matches and matches



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with positive emotional engagement. In addition, four of the eight features (i.e., appropriate structure; opportunities to belong; positive social norms; and opportunities for positive development and skill building) were associated with positive match relationship satisfaction. That is, youth being mentoring in more developmentally appropriate settings were more satisfied with their mentoring relationship than mentored youth in less appropriate settings.

Match length increased as program scores in appropriate structure increased. Additionally, teachers reported more improvements in school performance and classroom participation for youth in programs rated high in support. Volunteers rated their match closer and mentoring experience greater in programs that scored higher in physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, opportunities to belong, supportive relationships and opportunities for positive development and skill building.

Recommendation: The structure of the SBM programs should align with the features of a positive developmental setting as outlined by Eccles and Gootman (2002). Several strategies are presented below that SBM programs can utilize to ensure their programs are addressing as many features of a positive youth development setting as possible.

Make sure that youth feel safe

- Establish an anti-bullying atmosphere
- Encourage an atmosphere where Littles can participate in activities without fear of being teased or criticized

Have appropriate structures

- Establish guidelines and rules that are clearly stated and understood by matches
- Enforce rules fairly and consistently

Encourage supportive relationships and opportunities to belong

- Youth should feel supported by BBBS staff in addition to their mentor
- Provide some opportunities for youth to form positive relationships with other peers in the program

Create an atmosphere of positive social norms

- Encourage an atmosphere where kindness is encouraged and positively reinforced
- Provide a setting where there are high expectations of respect toward all including those who are different

Create opportunities for efficacy and positive development

- Provide Littles with opportunities to help plan activities and make decisions about the program's rules
- Provide activity choices to matches; one size does not fit all

Create opportunities for skill building

- Have activities and team-building experiences for the matches that provide Littles with opportunities to build their skills (e.g., decision-making skills, cultural competence, communication skills, problem solving skills, and civic responsibility)

Create active learning strategies

- Provide learning opportunities that are interactive, reflective, and engage multiple learning styles
- Encourage youth to try new experiences and regardless of success these experiences should be viewed as part of the learning process

Conclusion

The effective practices data from Phase I of the BBBS School-Based Mentoring Evaluation has yielded several findings that will help BBBS agencies to refine and strengthen their programs. By addressing the Recommendations set forth, BBBS agencies can take clear steps to improve their SBM programs.

In the coming months, further data collected during Phase I will be analyzed and other findings will be disseminated. For example, we will be developing and then piloting a new survey to assist agencies in making better matches. We will also further examine the data collected on SBM activities and types of training volunteers receive. We look forward to sharing more new and helpful information as we move forward to serving one million youth.

Please contact Keoki Hansen at keoki.hansen@bbbs.org for more information on the research design and detailed information on the data analysis performed.



Afterward – Selected Previous Research Findings

Previous research from other studies on mentoring program practices has reached conclusions consistent with the findings of Phase I of this study. Among these findings are the following:

1. Public/Private Ventures found in their study of BBBS in the early 1990s that “developmental” matches (where the Littles help choose match activities and where the volunteer focuses on building a strong relationship, not “fixing” the youth) lasted longer than “prescriptive” matches (in which the Big plays a bigger role in choosing activities and is focused more on their match goals as opposed to building the relationship) (Morrow & Styles, 1995).
2. Herrera, Sipe and McClanahan (2000) examined different factors that influenced relationship quality. They found that stronger relationships were fostered when (1) both mentors and youth decide how they spend their time; (2) mentors and youth had similar interests; (3) matches focused on both social and academic activities; and (4) pre- and post-match training and support was provided. In addition, they found that matches that spend more time together and meet more often have higher quality relationships.
3. Research studies (Grossman & Johnson, 1998; Sipe, 1996) have found that consistency and dependability are two of the most important factors in building a mentoring relationship. Without these two factors, a trusting mentoring relationship is unlikely to develop, and hence the benefits of such a relationship are unlikely to occur.
4. Sipe (1996) found that successful mentoring relationships have volunteers who utilize the match coordinators’ expertise and seek help and guidance from the BBBS professional staff when they are experiencing difficulties in the relationship.
5. Sipe (1996) also reported that successful matches are more likely when volunteers understand that it takes a while for a relationship to form, and that initially the relationship may be fairly one-sided, with the youth being unresponsive and silent for some time.
6. Successful volunteers also realize that having fun is a very important part of the relationship. Sipe (1996) reports that relationships perceived as more “fun” are more successful and are more likely to be impactful on the youth.

Appendix A

Volunteer Demographics

Twenty-nine percent of the high school volunteers were male and 71% were female; the majority (82%) was white, with 6% African American and 4% Asian. Thirty-three percent of the college volunteers were male, with 67% female. They were a little more ethnically diverse than the high school students: 70% were white, 13% were African American, and 13% were Asian. Forty-one percent of the corporate volunteers were males and 59% female. The majority (76%) were white, with 13% African American, 7% Hispanic, and 4% Asian.

Youth Demographics

YOUTH MATCHED WITH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Thirty-nine percent of the youth matched with high school students were boys, with 61% girls. Seventy-eight percent of the youth were white, with 8% African American and 6% Hispanic. The average age was 10 years old, and about 26% of the youth received free or reduced school lunches. About 40% of the youth lived in a single parent home and 50% lived in two parent homes, the other 10% lived in a variety of different settings (other relative, foster, group home, or unknown).

YOUTH MATCHED WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS

The percentage of boys matched with college volunteers was a little higher than with high school students, 41%, with 59% girls. The race of the youth was different from the high school, 23% were white and 64% were African American, with 7% Hispanic and 5% multiracial. The average age was 11 years old and 51% of the youth received free or reduced lunch. About 41% of the youth lived in a single parent home, 29% lived in a two parent home, 4% with a relative other than a parent, and 24% did not report their living situation.

YOUTH MATCHED WITH CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS

Fifty-eight percent of the matched youth were boys, a much higher percentage than both the youth matched with high school or college students and 42% were girls. Twenty-three percent of the youth were white, 35% African American and 30% Hispanic (the highest Hispanic percentage of the volunteer groups). The average age was 11 years old and only 9% reported received free or reduced lunch (23 did not report). Sixty one percent lived in a single parent home and 31% lived with two parents, 3% lived in foster care, and about 5% didn’t report.

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