

The BBBS School-Based Mentoring Impact Study:

Findings and Implications for
Policy and Practice



Collected Training Supplements

and Materials from the MRC

Web Seminar on School-Based

Mentoring Research

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MRC Web Seminar on School-Based Mentoring Research

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*An mp3 audio recording of the presentation can be downloaded from the MRC Web site at <http://www.edmentoring.org/seminar3.html>

Introduction

Recent years have seen tremendous growth in school-based mentoring, as educators and youth development practitioners try and find new settings to reach youth through mentoring relationships. But unlike community-based mentoring, which has a significant body of research into its best practices, little is known about school-based mentoring programs in terms of program practices and potential youth outcomes. Thankfully, Public/Private Ventures, the leading researchers on youth mentoring topics, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the largest provider of school-based matches, have undertaken a new research project designed to identify best practices for offering mentoring in school settings and the potential for positive impacts on youth participants.

This Web Seminar featured the preliminary results from this new impact study. Carla Herrera, the lead researcher for the impact study, presented initial findings and discussed many of the surprising things P/PV learned about how school-based mentoring works best. Subsequent P/PV reports will likely detail the nuances of how these mentoring programs operated, and the specific relationship characteristics that lead to positive outcomes for young people. But this initial report of research findings provides the mentoring field with its best opportunity to date to learn about effective practices and the many program characteristics that distinguish school-based mentoring from other models.

This document collects the transcript and slides from the presentation with the supplemental reading materials provided to participants. The audio from the presentation can be downloaded in mp3 format on the Mentoring Resource Center Web site at: <http://www.edmentoring.org/seminar3.html>.

Presentation Transcript

The BBBS School-Based Mentoring Impact Study: Findings and Implications for Policy and Practice

Moderators: Patti MacRae & Amy Cannata, Mentoring Resource Center

Presenter: Carla Herrera, Senior Policy Researcher, Public/Private Ventures

MacRae: At this time, I'm very pleased to introduce our speaker, Dr. Carla Herrera, Senior Policy Researcher at Public/Private Ventures. Dr. Herrera has extensive experience and expertise in mentoring, publishing five Public/Private Ventures reports on school-based, community-based, and group mentoring over the past eight years. Most recently, she directed the Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring Impact Study, which is the subject of this seminar. She's also currently writing a book with Dr. Michael Karcher on school-based mentoring.

Dr. Herrera received her PhD in development psychology from the University of Michigan in 1998 and her BA from Stanford University. Prior to working at P/PV, Dr. Herrera published several studies on children's cognitive and social development, and we're very excited to have her here.

Welcome, Carla!

Dr. Herrera: Thank you, Patti. Good afternoon, everyone.

As Patti said, I'm a Senior Policy Researcher at Public/Private Ventures, a nonprofit research organization based in Philadelphia. At P/PV, I've been conducting research on different forms of mentoring for almost 10 years now, and most recently I directed the BBBS School-Based Mentoring Impact Study. This was the first large-scale random assignment impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring.

I'm really excited to be online with you today. This study, as Patti said, was just released last week. So it's been a very exciting time for us at P/PV to see our results finally get out there. Today, I'm going to tell you a little bit about the study and share with you my thoughts on where the field

of school-based mentoring is headed. First, I'll give you a little bit of background on the history of the impact study, and then I'll summarize our findings, discuss our recommendations for programs, and close with my final take on things.

First is to give you some history. When I started at P/PV back in 1998, we had just finished publishing our BBBS Community-Based Mentoring Impact Study a few years earlier. At that time, school-based mentoring was still relatively new. Shortly after I arrived at P/PV, I conducted my first study of school-based mentoring. For any of you who have read the report, it was called *School-Based Mentoring: A First Look Into the Potential*, and you could probably tell I was very impressed with these programs. They seemed to be reaching youth who community-based programs might not have reached, and I saw a lot of hope in the approach in that it could give kids a reason to like school and try harder in that context. Reports from teachers and parents really concurred they felt the program was really making a difference in their children's lives.

Over the years, I've watched the field grow, and I've been amazed at how quickly the mentoring field has made school-based mentoring its own. Currently, MENTOR estimates that close to 870,000 adults are mentors to children in schools. This number has surpassed the number of adults mentoring children in community-based mentoring programs. Big Brothers Big Sisters alone is serving about 126,000 children in its school-based mentoring programs, yet very little research has been done to figure out if the approach really works.

The study I'm going to tell you about today answers that question. It is, again, the first national random assignment impact study of school-based mentoring. In the evaluation world,

the random assignment study is really the gold standard for answering the question of benefits. So the impacts I'll discuss are as solid as the evaluation world gets when it comes to measuring benefits.

The study was funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies, the William T. Grant Foundation, and Phillip Morris, U.S.A. It was conducted by P/PV in close partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, and as is true of all big random assignment studies, it was a huge undertaking that took several years for its completion, as all of you BBBS agencies know. Most of you out there can also really appreciate how complicated these school-based programs are. They have layers of schools, programs within schools, school liaisons, teachers, transferring children, children matched multiple times. All of these factors made data collection and analyses very complicated, and I'll do my best to make sense of some of these complicated analyses for you.

Let's turn to **slide one**. This study was designed to answer four broad questions—what do these programs look like, in what ways does BBBS school-based mentoring benefit you, what kind of programs and matches yield the strongest benefits, and what is the cost of these programs?

Turn to **slide two**. The study is actually part two in a two-piece study. The first piece was an implementation study conducted by Keoki Hansen at Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. P/PV's evaluation is a random assignment impact study involving 10 BBBS agencies nationwide, 71 participating schools, and 1,139 youths in fourth through ninth grade. At the beginning of the study, half of these youths were chosen randomly to be a part of the treatment group, our group of Littles, which would be available for matching through the BBBS program, and half were assigned to a control group, or their non-mentored peers, which would not be allowed to participate in the program until the end of data collection. Assigning children to these groups randomly—that is, not based on any child characteristic, how much the parent wanted them in the program, anything, totally randomly—helps to ensure that the only way that these two groups differ is in the Littles' school-based mentoring program involvement.

So by comparing the progress made by these two groups over time, we could assess exactly how program participation affected several outcomes of interest above and beyond what we have seen in the course of youth's normal development without the program. That is what you see in the control group.

To answer questions about outcomes, we relied on surveys administered to youths and their teachers. This was an important addition to the study. Our community-based mentoring study only used youth reports, which has been raised as an important weakness in that design. We also collected several other surveys and other forms of data, but only the teacher and youth surveys included our outcome measures. I won't be discussing any of those other surveys today.

We started planning the study in late 2003 and started data collection in fall 2004. The study has three timed points. The first was the baseline, before any child had received any mentoring, in the fall of 2004. The second, the first follow-up, was in the spring of that same school year, spring 2005, and the third, the second follow-up, was in late fall of the second school year. That's fall of 2005.

You can turn to **slide three** now. I like to think of the findings from this study as divided into three chunks of findings—findings about the programs, findings about the impacts and findings about how characteristics of the mentoring experience are related to impact. The finding on—the findings that we list on this slide, slide three, will most likely be the least interesting to you. But after I walk you through them, I'll tell you why I think they're important.

First, counter to concerns that school-based mentoring is really just a glorified tutoring program, which is a big concern out there, BBBS school-based mentoring is really not a tutoring program. Only 11 percent of the programs involved in our study focus primarily on academic activities, and only 9 percent of mentors cited academic improvement as the central goal of their match meetings. In addition, Littles were more likely than control youths to report having a significant non-parental adult in their lives who filled the role consistent with what BBBS wants

their mentors to provide youths; for example, someone the child could trust, rely on, and look up to.

Yet, BBBS school-based mentoring is very different from community-based mentoring in some important ways. Although most school-based mentoring volunteers are focused on relationship development, they don't have as much time to build the kind of intense, long-lasting relationships that are more commonly seen in community-based mentoring. They meet less frequently, and each meeting is shorter. In fact, in our study, only about 20 percent of the volunteers said that they felt very close to their Littles compared to 45 percent of community-based mentors in another national study.

Surprisingly, the cost for community-based mentoring and school-based mentoring are quite comparable. Both are about \$1,000 per match per year. We expected that school-based mentoring would be much less expensive, and in fact, my previous work had really suggested that it was. Yet, this cost is still fairly reasonable, and it's really in line with what we estimated over 10 years ago for Big Brothers Big Sisters of America community-based mentoring programs.

Programs are also quite diverse in their structure and their focus. Matches in school-based mentoring programs meet at different times of the school day, different locations throughout the school. They engage in a wide range of activities, and the structure of their meetings differs. Some meet in one big room with other matches present; others meet on their own at scattered times during the school day. I believe that this diversity is the program's response to the distinct needs of different schools. As I'm sure most of you are aware, every school has its own personality and needs. My impression is that individual programs are shaping themselves in response to the needs of the communities and schools they are working with. That's why the field is so diverse.

I think the flexibility of school-based mentoring is one of its strengths and one of the things that makes it so attractive to schools, but it also means that school-based mentoring programs are not yet being guided by a clear template that shows them how to shape themselves in a

way that is most likely to lead to youth benefits. My hope is that in another five years or so, the field will smooth out and have more consistency across programs based on best practices that I hope the study will help to shape.

Programs are serving many youth with risk factors. Eighty percent of participating youth receive free or reduced-price lunch and/or were living in a single-parent family, and we examined four areas of risk—academic performance, school behavior, relationships, and youth-reported misconduct. Seventy-seven percent of students had problems in one or more of these areas. In other words, these programs are reaching some of the youth that you really are trying to reach.

Programs are involving volunteers who differ from those in community-based mentoring. About half of the volunteers were in high school, and almost one-fifth were in college, groups which do not typically volunteer in community-based mentoring programs.

Finally, my last bullet on this slide, mentor training and program support should be strengthened in these programs. Nearly one-third of mentors said that they had never received training, and 12 percent said that they never communicated with BBBS or school staff over the course of the school year.

Aside from the last finding on this slide that has very clear implications for your work, you may be wondering why the other findings on this slide are of import to you or your funders or your partners. I think part of their value is in helping to set your school-based mentoring program apart from other types of in-school or afterschool programs, and even from your own community-based mentoring programs. Most funders, for example, are after a bottom line: "I want to use my dollars to give kids the best mentoring experience possible." If we know that community-based mentoring does wonderful things for kids and it yields relationships that are stronger than school-based mentoring relationships and the programs cost the same, why not just put all my money into community-based mentoring? I would argue that school-based mentoring benefits the field in part by enabling mentoring to reach volunteers and youth who would otherwise not be reached by a community-based mentoring model.

So the question isn't really which one is better, but instead what combination of these approaches can help your program reach the youth who could benefit from mentoring and which specific children might benefit even more from a school-based mentoring approach. I believe that although their underlying goal is very similar, community-based mentoring and school-based mentoring are very different interventions and probably achieve their impacts through very different mechanisms. They may even work best for different types of youths.

This is an important selling point for your programs that we discuss a lot in the conclusions to the report. The fact that school-based mentoring offers youth something beyond tutoring is another one. Costs, unfortunately, should no longer be used as a selling point, unless, of course, your cost figures for school-based mentoring are well below ours and/or below your community-based mentoring figures.

The diversity across programs issue, as you can tell from my discussion, is a big one for me. I believe that to make progress and improve, programs will need to really think more consciously about why their programs and matches are set up as they are set up. Are they set up in this way because you've made a conscious decision based on experience or tried and true best practices that this is what is best for your mentees, or is it out of convenience or simply because the school wants it that way and insists that it be that way? Working with schools is incredibly difficult, and part of what allows your entrance into a school is that you can be flexible and responsive to their needs, but you will need to think strategically about which components of your program you can be flexible with and which ones you can't, hopefully using research like this report to back up your decision.

The next slide, **slide number four**, shows why training and support are so crucial. I used two indices of match success—one is mentor reports of relationship closeness with their mentee, and the other is whether or not the mentor decided to carry over that match into the following school year. Mentors who reported very close relationships with their mentee indicated that they received more individual pre-match and post-

match training. They had more communication with school staff. They indicated higher levels of BBBS program quality and staff support. They indicated that BBBS and school staff were more helpful, and they indicated that they had more adequate access to school resources and space. Those mentors who carried their match over into the following school year had more group training, more individual pre-match and post-match training, again, reporting higher levels of program quality and staff support, more helpfulness of BBBS staff, and again, more adequate access to school resources and space.

The fact that offering sufficient training and support to your mentors is important isn't really big news to any of you, I'm sure. What you should notice, however, in this slide is that the school support also matters in terms of both match length and quality. So anything you can do to ensure that your schools communicate with your mentors, show their appreciation, and provide them with space, activity possibilities, and whatever else mentors need to make a match work is incredibly helpful.

Well, I'll turn to impacts now. We assessed impacts at two time points—at the end of the first school year, and in the middle of the second school year. By the end of the first school year, Littles received an average of five months of mentoring, which is typical of school-based mentoring programs, as you know, because they require some start-up time at the beginning of the school year, and the programs usually end a little before the end of the school year. Youths are also added into the program as the year progresses.

So go to **slide five**, if you haven't already gone there. After the first school year, Littles fared significantly better on a range of teacher-reported academic attitudes, performance, and behaviors compared to non-mentored youths. Littles fared significantly better than controls in teacher-reported overall academic performance, their reports of written and oral language performance and science performance, the quality of the class work they were turning in, and the number of assignments they were completing, teacher-reported skipping school as well as youth-reported skipping school, teacher reports of youths engaging in serious school misconduct. This includes

principal's office visits, fighting, and suspension, as well as scholastic efficacy or youth reports of their confidence in their own academic abilities.

We did not find benefits in any of the out-of-school areas we examined, including drug and alcohol use, misconduct outside school, and parent-child relationship quality, all areas which our past work suggests are improved through involvement in community-based mentoring.

These benefits were also modest in size—that is, the sheer size of the differences between Littles and their non-mentored peers in these areas are fairly small. But the size of the effects is almost identical to those found in our community-based mentoring impact study from 1995. So as not to undermine the significance of these findings, I want to stay on this slide for just a minute. Let me say that these findings are very impressive, much more than we had expected. Remember, these youth had only gotten about five months of school-based mentoring. Many of these outcomes are academic performance measures reported by teachers, not just by the youths themselves. Remember, some feel that this was a weakness in our community-based mentoring study. A couple of our measures were also cross-validated; that is, we asked similar questions of both teachers and youths, and both said independently that the youth had improved. For example, both said kids were skipping school less, and the Littles said that they felt they were doing better at school, and the teacher's scores reflected that. So we felt very positive about the results.

The findings are exactly what you want to see in an impact study—clear, consistent findings that make sense and echo what practitioners and teachers experience on the ground, and they are exactly what you would want to take to a potential school partner. These are the outcomes that matter to teachers and administrators, and these will be your strongest selling point for your program. The findings are definitely our clearest, our strongest, and our most easily interpretable findings, and they're comparable in rigor to our 1995 community-based mentoring findings. They very clearly state that school-based mentoring the first year of involvement benefits kids in measurable ways. I don't want you to lose sight of that as I turn to our next set of findings.

The findings I'll discuss from here on out are much more complex and subject to issues with methodology, program participation, et cetera. Please keep this in mind. Most program evaluations, including our 1995 community-based mentoring impact study do not include follow-up assessments to see whether youth continue to benefit past the typical dosage of the program. Our study did take that extra step.

Let's move to **slide six**. Our second set of impact findings come in late fall of the second school year. At this time, most of the impacts we measured in the first school year were no longer detectible. We found impacts in two areas—skipping school and youths' confidence that they would attend and finish college. We believe there were two reasons we were unable to find strong impacts in the second school year. The first is program participation. About half of the Littles in the study did not receive any mentoring in the second school year, and those Littles who stopped their program participation retained none of their positive impacts into that second school year. The second is timing. Our second follow-up was fairly early in the school year, which gave students very little time to reconnect with their mentor after the summer break, which, for most youth, consisted of no match meetings.

These two factors, low program participation in year two and our timing only a few months after the summer break, make our lack of strong second-year impact a lot more understandable, but they also suggest several aspects of the program that we feel will need to be improved to ensure that youth receive more consistent, long-lasting impact. I'll turn to those a little bit later.

So here we were in the middle of the impact study. We've got gorgeous first-year findings, the envy of most impact studies out there, and we understood at least some potential reasons we didn't see much in year two. But putting aside the methodological issues and the low participation in year two, did anyone benefit in year two, and as a broader question, which youth got the most out of the program? These questions seem so simple, but it took a year of hardcore analyses to even begin to answer them.

Let's turn to the next slide, **slide seven**. The first question we wanted to answer was this—do youths with certain demographic characteristics or academic risk factors get more out of the program than others? Although we didn't find any strong evidence to support this one way or the other, we found some small hints that some groups may benefit a bit more than others. But again, these are not particularly strong findings, and in fact, we don't even table them in the actual report. We include them only in one of our appendices at the end of the report. But here they are. Girls appeared to get a little more out of the program than boys. Minority students seemed to get a little more out of the program than white students, and high academic performers got a little more out of the program than low academic performers in year one, but this switched in year two such that low academic performers got more out of the program in the second school year than high academic performers.

As I said, these are really hints. They're not clear findings, but I do want to stress here these findings do not suggest that you shouldn't serve boys or white students or low academic performers. Instead, you might want to consider how you can strengthen your program for those youths getting left out of their involvement and how you might inadvertently be providing stronger services for some groups. For example, programs may be focusing on things that girls enjoy doing while neglecting activities or formats that might really engage boys.

Let's turn to **slide eight**. It's important to stress that all of the impact findings I've talked about thus far, even that last slide, the subgroup analyses, are based on rigorous analyses using the strength of random assignment. That is, the treatment and control groups remained intact. In the evaluation world, to rely on the rigor of random assignment, these groups must always stay intact. I can explain this in more detail later if any of you are interested. Once you start looking at subgroups of treatments, for example, those youths who receive more or less mentoring, your analyses do not hold up to the rigor of random assignment. The results I'm going to talk about now, that is, analyses linking mentoring experience with the program benefits, they do not share the same level of rigor as our impact analyses.

We couldn't randomly assign kids to have longer or shorter matches or to have weaker or stronger relationships with their mentors. Kids who have different types of mentoring experiences probably differ from each other in a lot of ways in addition to their mentoring experiences, and it may be these other characteristics that lead to the differences we see in their outcomes.

Keeping these limitations in mind, our study did suggest three match and program characteristics that seem to be linked with bigger impacts and stronger matches. First, longer matches are associated with stronger impacts. This really coincides with work that Jean Grossman and Jean Rhodes did with the community-based mentoring data that suggest very similar findings. Analyses from the first school year are fairly clear in this respect. Having a longer lasting match in year one is associated with better outcomes. Results from the second school year were less clear, though they still support this suggestion. Youth who continued to receive mentoring in the second school year were doing slightly better than those whose match experience ended in the first school year.

Second, relationship quality may work with match length to determine strength of benefits. This gets very complicated, so please jot a note down—if you don't understand this and ask me to discuss this more at the end of the presentation if I lose you along the way, because it's an important one to understand but it does get a little complicated. Those youth who reported the highest quality relationships received bigger benefits than those who experienced weaker relationships. Importantly, we also found that those Littles who had weaker-quality relationships that only lasted one school year—that is, they didn't have any mentoring in the second school year of the study—they fared slightly worse than their peers in the control group, who were never matched with a mentor on a number of outcomes.

Again, it's possible that these associations aren't due to mentoring but are due to characteristics about a child that lead him or her to have a shorter lasting and weaker-quality relationship. In fact, youth who would go on to have weaker-quality matches did differ at baseline on a number of measures from those who would go on to

have strong matches. My sense is that both factors are at play here. Littles who ended up doing worse than their peers did so both because they were a different type of child and because being involved in a relationship that doesn't go well and ends may actually cause setbacks in youth. Regardless, these findings do hint at the importance of improving length and quality of school-based mentoring relationships.

Third, summer meetings appear to be an important way to do this. How to deal with the summer break is a very neglected topic in school-based mentoring. Most programs don't encourage, and many don't even allow, any kind of contact between matches over the summer break. Our findings suggest that programs should start considering how to integrate the summer into their school-based mentoring programs, even using very simple strategies like allowing written communication between matches, providing mentors with ideas for letter or phone activities, or holding one or two inexpensive summer events to get matches together. If any of you are interested in discussing more about this, please let me know.

In our study, only about 21 percent of mentors communicated with their Littles at least biweekly over the summer. This typically occurred through letters or e-mail or an agency-sponsored event. It was much more frequently seen in those five agencies that encouraged summer communication. The other five agencies did not.

Matches that communicated over the summer were more likely to carry over into the following school year, and they lasted significantly longer after the end of the summer than those that did not communicate. Those Littles who had summer contact with their mentors also reported stronger relationships with their mentors in year two, regardless of how close they felt to their mentor prior to the summer. In other words, they showed bigger growth in relationship quality from spring to the next winter than those kids who did not have summer contact.

Let's turn to **slide nine**. Based on these findings, here are a few of our recommendations:

- 1) **Increase match length.**
- 2) **Bridge the summer gap.**

- 3) **Choose supportive schools and foster those relationships.**

- 4) **Provide volunteers with sufficient levels of support and training.**

- 5) **Strengthen relationship quality.**

These recommendations lead us to the following conclusions, essentially our bottom line. We believe that these programmatic improvements will be crucial as the field moves forward, but if these changes are implemented well and consistently across programs, our first-year findings suggest that BBBS school-based mentoring has strong potential to improve the lives of participating students.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America has given the field an excellent start on implementing these recommendations. They pulled together a task force to design their own guidelines around these findings. They designed a toolkit based on these guidelines and held a series of workshops around the country to help guide their agencies on where to go with these findings. Their work is really the perfect example of how to take research and turn it into practice. I think they've done a really fantastic job thus far.

However, and that's a big however, although BBBS' work is a great start, the real work will ultimately be done by agencies like yourselves trying to make sense of these findings and implement them. As you can tell, the findings are complicated, but I do think there are some next steps that you can take as you try to refine your programs. I'll take a few minutes before closing to give you my take on how to use these findings and my sense of where the broader field is headed. Those of you who attended the BBBSA National Conference will have heard some of these points last month.

I see the school-based mentoring field as being at a major turning point. Either it can go along with more of the same, which our first-year findings suggest is already pretty good. Agencies can certainly take the path of least resistance and continue running their programs as they are running them now, maybe with a couple of small changes here or there, or they can do the really hard work that will be required to create

a program of sustainable, clear, consistent, solid impacts for youth. My hope is that programs will choose this tougher path.

I think these next few years will be crucial in creating a gold standard for school-based mentoring, and I hope agencies will find the support they need to lead this movement. In other words, I hope the study encourages funders to support and reward quality, not just numbers. Without that backing, I worry that agencies will have a hard time making the tough decisions that will lead to long-term improvements.

For those agencies that do decide to take up this challenge and refine not just their own programs but also the larger field of school-based mentoring, I have some advice for you. Our figuring out that what you really need is longer, stronger, and more continuous matches isn't any brilliant insight that programs didn't already know. We just gave you some numbers to back the system up. The much more important question that needs to be answered is how, how do you make this happen?

Your first step in answering this question is to allow yourself to ask and find the answers to some other really tough questions. For example, if match length is crucial, what do you do with the volunteer who can only mentor for one semester? What do you do with a second-semester fifth grader, who will transition next year but really needs you now? How do you take an already stretched budget and create a summer program out of thin air? If it will take an extra month to make stronger matches from the get-go, do you take that time, even though it could cut matches short by a month? What do you do with a school that you know is unsupportive but is your best shot at reaching the kids in your community who need you the most?

These questions raise an important point. Although all of the recommendations I've outlined today and in the report in general are important, and in theory are all constructive, very positive things to do, on the ground some may actually work against others. For example, starting earlier in the year leaves you less time to make matches that have a stronger chance of surviving, and growth, an outcome that all of you are

pressed to constantly achieve, may in some ways make it more difficult for you to make and sustain higher quality matches. These aren't questions or issues that I can resolve. You will need to find the answers that work for your agency.

Don't be afraid to ask these questions of your staff and share your experiences and learnings with other agencies. You are all really fortunate that you have access to Amy and Patti and Michael, people who have a wealth of knowledge about how to make mentoring work on the ground. Rely on them for help. If you are a BBBS agency, rely on the national office to help you understand how to use these findings. BBBS is a wonderful organization that is truly dedicated to helping you move forward with these findings. In other words, don't try to take these findings and run with them without guidance. They are very complex, and you have a lot of resources that can help you make sense of them and figure out how they relate to your specific program.

I would also urge you to read, or at least skim and keep handy, P/PV's full report. It is a very long report, but every chapter is packed with findings that can give you insights into your program and help you answer some of the tough questions I outlined earlier.

You also have the task of using these findings to help your program. My advice is to not only focus on the positives—that is, the first-year impacts. Do as BBBSA has done and what P/PV tried to do in the report. Talk about both the positives and the places where there's room for growth. Call on your partners to help you make these improvements, and use the report to make them understand why. A lot of thought went into the executive summary, which you all have, and the full report. All the language you need is there for you. I strongly urge you to use this language. Use this report in whatever way you can to help your agencies, but try to be honest and upfront about the full picture of findings.

My hope is that people don't lose sight of either of our two key findings. First, the program is making a real difference in children's lives, and second, to sustain these impacts, programs will have to build on their strengths and continue to improve. I sincerely hope our report helps you do that.

We can open it up to questions.

MacRae: Hi, everybody, and thank you very much, Carla. That was—that was amazing, as usual. I just want to let the audience know that I heard Carla talk about this report several weeks ago at a special summer institute, and I realized then and I'm realizing again now that we could actually have a whole seminar on any one of those last questions that Carla just posed for the group. So we've got a lot of meat here that we can delve into, and Carla, I really want to thank you for your participation and for being involved with this.

I'm sure that there are some questions out there, and if anyone would like to jump in—it looks like we don't have any on the e-mail, but we do have a few that were generated earlier. But let me just see if anybody has any questions right off the bat.

Cannata: It looks like we do have one question from Dan Hogan, and Dan wants to know actually two things. Did this study consider the types of activities that school-based matches engaged in—for example, academic versus social and developmental—and how these activities affected outcomes. So the types of activities, Carla, that matches engaged in and how those affected outcomes, can you talk a little more about that?

Dr. Herrera: We did consider the types of activities but not in this particular report. So we didn't look at how activity type related to outcomes in the full report for the impact study. But I can say that we're doing some follow-up work with our high school mentors, the mentors who were attending high school at the time of our study, and some really quick analyses—these are—these are not even hot off the presses. These are still—we're in the midst of working on these, but those analyses suggest that high school mentors end up having much stronger impacts when they focus on those more social development types of activities than when they focus on academic activities. Those are, again, we haven't really solidified those yet, but we're seeing a lot of hints in the data that that really is going to make a difference.

Cannata: OK, and the other question that Dan had has to do with the summer months, and he said that their school-based mentoring program transitions to more of a community-based mentoring approach over the summer, and then back to a school-based mentoring approach in the fall for that – to make sure they have that 12-month continuity for matches. They have some concerns regarding increased liability issues that come with a community-based mentoring approach, i.e., what they're doing in the summer, and he wants to know if there's a reason why this approach might be inadvisable, and I think that means the community-based approach.

Dr. Herrera: I actually really like the community-based approach, but only if you have adequate screening to go along with it. So if your matches have already been screened for a community-based mentoring approach, I think it's an excellent idea to have them continue through the summer. We actually had one program in the study in Show Low, Arizona, that continued their completely supervised match meetings over the summer. Now, this doesn't work for every community or every program, particularly if you've got a huge one. But they did that, and it worked really well for them.

Now, the concerns with liability, that's a really big one out there. Several of our agencies—it kind of split evenly between those that were really open to summer communication and those that were not, and the ones that were not were really concerned with this liability issue. They were also concerned with how their schools would respond to summer meetings. They had heard—they had heard feedback from schools that they just weren't really open to that—again, probably because of the liability issue. But some of the programs had kind of gotten around that by, for example, screening letters. So they would have a mentor or a child send a letter to the agency for screening before it went on.

I have a feeling that a lot of matches—and our data suggest that to some extent a lot of matches are going to communicate anyway, and so you might want to prepare yourselves for that regardless. I think screening a school-based mentoring match for a community-based mentoring setup is probably the smartest way to go.

Cannata: Thanks, Carla, and I just wanted to see if there was anyone else on the line that has maybe tackled this issue and come up with either an idea to kind of reduce liability or has decided, you know, we just can't do it with our current structure. Does anybody have examples or comments about the issue of summer meetings and liability?

OK, well, if you think of examples that you want to share with the group, let us know. At this time, we have looked at all the questions that were e-mailed in. You can still e-mail us questions if you'd like to. Otherwise, we're going to go ahead and open the floor to questions via phone. So if you have a question, please state your name, where you're from and your question for Carla.

Participant 1: Bill, from Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters. As I understand it, the study was done fourth through ninth grade, and my question's kind of a combination on why that occurred. I've been matched for the last three years with a child from the first grade through the third grade, and many of the things that they need to see are during those years, and I wondered why that was omitted. So you may have—and whatever thoughts—other thoughts you may have on that because there are a lot of people who would rather have younger children to begin with.

Dr. Herrera: That's a really good question, Bill. We did not make—we structured our age group around a few things. We didn't go any lower than fourth grade mostly because our instruments, our survey instruments wouldn't have been appropriate for them. There are questions we ask and the way we ask these questions that under fourth grade really wouldn't have comprehended them. This is a really important issue for BBBS now because they are trying to figure out how do you assess outcomes for children that are that young.

My suggestion is to plan to use teacher reports, though using teacher reports brings up a lot of other issues. We consciously over-sampled; that is, we got more matches within the older age ranges because we wanted to be able to compare the outcomes of this study with the out-

comes from the community-based study. But the sample is a little bit wobbly in that it isn't—it isn't a perfect representation of what's really out there. What's really out there is mostly elementary school kids are being served, fewer middle school kids and then hardly any high school kids. We included this one program that served a group of ninth graders who were at risk of dropping out just because I thought for policy this group was a really significant one to include, but it's very small. I hope that answers your question, Bill.

Participant 1: Yes, just one comment on how to do the evaluation, just from my own experience. The best source at that age is probably going to be two people, the teacher, and that means we need to be well integrated with the teacher, and the Big themselves because I can think of several examples of where I could have said, yes, it's helping, or no, it isn't. So just for whatever it's worth.

Dr. Herrera: That is a good point, and teachers, I think, they're not just a good source because they really do have a unique perspective on the child, particularly at school where we're seeing most of these outcomes, but because the field sees them as kind of an unbiased observer. So the Big will really give you a great perspective, but in selling your outcomes outside, I think the teacher is a great one to go to. But they're hard—they're hard to get surveys from, as all of you know. We had a really tough time with our teachers as well. But it's an excellent idea.

MacRae: Carla, this is Patti, and I actually had a follow-up on the age thing as well. Did you notice any differences in outcomes between the ages that you did survey? For example, were fourth-graders doing better than sixth-graders?

Dr. Herrera: You know, we looked at middle school versus elementary school, and when we first ran through these, I thought the middle school kids looked like they were doing just a tiny bit better, but it kind of depends on which outcomes. It gets a little fuzzy. So in general, we didn't find

differences between these two age groups, but it's very important to note that our high school volunteers were matched predominantly with elementary school Littles, and our adult volunteers were launched predominantly with middle school Littles, and so it could be that these two different age groups do get something different out of the program, but that may have been masked by the fact that we were looking really at adult versus high school volunteers rather than the age group of the child, if that makes sense. They weren't independent, in other words.

MacRae: OK, and what about the benefits for the high school mentors?

Dr. Herrera: We have seen a lot of benefits for the high school mentors. It looks in general as though the high school volunteers are benefiting a lot more than the adult volunteers, at least from their own self-report. This isn't anything like an outcome study, but from their own self-report, it looks like the high school Bigs are getting more in terms of their interpersonal growth, their social skills, their wanting to go into a field of child development, their—you know, lots of different areas. So they are getting a lot from the program, but it's unclear to us yet. We're still in the midst of analyses to what extent they differ in their ability to actually have impacts on youths from the adults.

Cannata: I actually have a question, Carla, and it relates to some of the findings that you had around supportive schools. Do you have any examples of what we should look for in our school partners or any more information about those partnerships that may—you know, info about what made them successful?

Dr. Herrera: I can tell you what to look for in unsupportive schools. I could give you an example of a school that I saw when I was (INAUDI-BLE), and I know all of you probably have about 10 examples of those, each of you. But I think schools that have a very clear idea and are not willing to be flexible in exactly what they want the

masses to do, they're typically going to push you toward academic activities, and as Dan asked earlier, those may not be the best thing for your matches to engage in.

So a school that I visited, for example, the school liaison had been running her own program for several years. She saw this as her program. She led all of the activities. The BBBS staff person just kind of sat by the wayside and listened. She was—she was very clear that she wanted only academics done. She had folders given by the teachers at the end of each day, and the matches had to complete all of their homework before they engaged in any sort of activities. It was just very much a school program. Now, you want schools to adopt your program, but you also want them to hear your wisdom on what actually works for these matches. Hopefully, this report will give you some support for that. But you also just want them to really show day-to-day appreciation for your mentors, as all of you know. It's really important for them.

Participant 2: Hi, Carla. This is Rosario from Los Angeles. Thank you for your presentation. As a follow-up to the question that you just had right now, you said that for high school students there have been stronger impacts in matches where the activity is socialization and relationship building as opposed to academics. Is that—I didn't see that in the executive summary, and I think it's—that would be very helpful for us to share with school administrators we're presenting the program to who feel strongly—and actually school administrators and parents also, who feel more strongly about the activities being more academic based, homework assistance as opposed to allowing the relationship to develop through, you know, playing basketball or playing checkers or something like that.

Dr. Herrera: Absolutely, and you know, the reason you don't see it there is because these are still—we're still in the midst of these, and we've only seen that pattern so far for the high school volunteers, and we're working on a report about the high school volunteers right now. But what you should go to for a really good resource for

this is Keoki Hansen's first implementation report from this study.¹ She talked about activities a lot. The other person is Michael Karcher, who I'm doing some work with currently. He's done a lot of work on academic activities versus social activities, and he finds that mentors are more satisfied when they participate in more social versus academic activities, and I think he also finds links down the road with impacts. So you should definitely get in touch with him. I can give you my email address as well, and I can send you some materials from his work. He's done a lot of work in activities, and again, Keoki Hansen as well. Her implementation report is a great example of where you can find support for that.

Participant 3: Well, my name is Jerry. I'm calling from Appleton, and I had a question—or just a thought. When I was looking at the research and the outcomes, I was really shocked to see that for the out-of-school areas that were examined, that there weren't a lot of benefits seen in that. When we have matches get together in the school base, often times they'll not necessarily focus on academics and things like that, and you would think that maybe the self-esteem would've been impacted or other areas outside of just the academic focused outcomes. So I guess I was—that's just a comment that I had, that I was really surprised to see that some of those areas weren't impacted that were not related to school necessarily.

Dr. Herrera: I'm actually—I'm with you there, but what I think is going on, if you think about what these kids got from mentoring, they were in a mentoring relationship for five months. They probably met, at most, once a week. They probably have spring break, Christmas break, you know. So at most, they met, on average, about 20 times. My sense is these findings are—something is different—something different is going on to make these findings than what made, for example, the community-based mentoring findings that rely on more internal changes. A change in self-esteem is really changing that child and

how they see themselves and how they see the world and how they see other relationships.

I think these findings in this first year—it's not to undermine them, I think they're really impressive and powerful, but I think they're more superficial. I think kids are improving their attendance because they come to school more because they have a friend there. I think they're completing more homework because they're getting encouragement to do that and they have a mentor there who can check up on them. I just think they're much more—they're much more of a first pass of what you see when mentoring is going to work.

I believe that if those matches stay together longer, our community-based mentoring results, for example, they stayed together on average about 12 months of a—of a hardcore community-based mentoring match. If these matches stayed together that long, you might see some of those deeper, kind of broader effects come about. Does that make sense to you?

Participant 3: Yes, thank you.

Dr. Herrera: I think that's what's going on. Take a look again in our conclusions in the—in the full report, and I talk a little bit more about mechanisms. I really believe something beautiful is going on. I was shocked to see it, too. The one I was really hurt not to see was social relationships with peers. I had seen that before, and one of the ways that I believe school-based mentoring works is by having your peers see you get attention from someone that's really neat and cool and interesting, and I had found that in a previous study of mine, and other people have seen it as well. So I was surprised not to see that one working. But what's interesting is this first quick pass at the high school volunteers. Again, this may never come out because we're still in the midst of it. It looks like maybe the high school volunteers may have affected that outcome. But again, that's still ongoing.

Participant 4: Yes, hi. This is Elaine from Snohomish County, Washington State Big Brothers

¹This report is available on the MRC Web site at: <http://www.edmentoring.org/>

Big Sisters. I was wondering if you could give me some idea of the average length of training hours with the 10 programs, and what training was more effective than others?

Dr. Herrera: You know, we haven't looked at training in as much detail as I wish we would have, and people really reported varying levels, and there were three different categories we looked at. We looked at group training before the match was made, individual pre-match training, and individual post-match training, and I don't have the averages off the top of my head. I can check up on it and send it to you. But we haven't looked to see which one looks most effective. You can see some hints, perhaps, in that—in the PowerPoint slides, but again, those are just going to tell you, well, more is better, and it's not going to tell you exactly what to do in those trainings.

One thing we were very disappointed with is the low reports of training that we got. We really expected to see more training across the board, and again, 30 percent, close to 30 percent said they had never been trained. Part of what I think may be going on with training is that agencies work really hard to make training not seem like a chore, and in fact, not even seem like training. So some of these mentors probably didn't even know they were getting training when they were getting it. You know, they may be meeting with a BBBS staff after every match meeting and not understand that that's part of training. So they may not have reported that. So even the averages we have may be a little bit misleading and under-reporting from what really happened on the ground. I wish I could give you a better answer on that one.

Participant 1: Yes, Bill again. On a couple of issues that were mentioned—the question within the school, I think through training, or more important, match support with the case worker. If we get the adult to make the teacher part of their regular basis for communicating, I think the effect of the administration will go away because the teacher knows that it's more than academics and that, in fact, the support of social issues improves the academics. So we've seen where

that happens too because the teacher's the one who knows, so if you—and you use your case worker, I think that's more important than training, from my own three years' experience.

Dr. Herrera: I think communication with the teacher is very important. It gets a little bit tricky when you get to middle school, and I don't know if your program is totally elementary school, but it does get a little bit tricky there. But there have been really—it's kind of few and far between, so I don't say that this is common, but there have been some programs I've looked at where the mentor actually attends parent teacher conferences for the child, that they really have a tight connection with that teacher, and I think those can be really powerful matches. I think that's a great suggestion.

Cannata: Other questions for Carla? Any comments or ideas that kind of spurred as you listened to this information?

OK, well, unless we have any other questions, we're going to go ahead and finish up the call. Patti has a few announcements, and if you do think of some other questions later on, again, feel free to e-mail Patti, and she'll get those out to Carla right away. So I'm going to turn it back over to Patti.

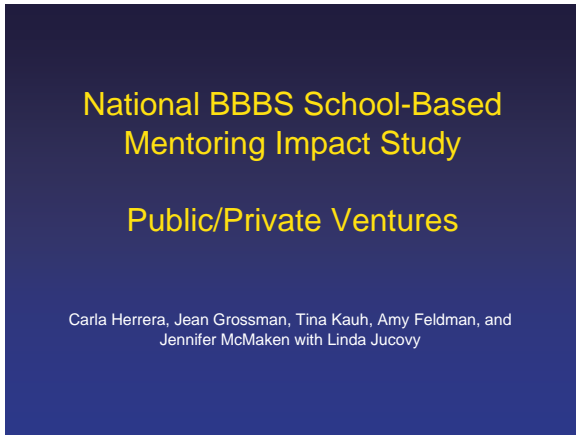
MacRae: Thanks, Amy, and thanks everybody for the interesting questions. That was—that was pretty fun. It's a lot to ponder, and I know that I keep getting new questions in my mind. So as Amy said, if you do have any additional questions, you can e-mail them to—either to my e-mail, which I'll send out when we send out the evaluation, or you can just always send the question to mentorcenter@nwrel.org that we gave you earlier, and as Carla mentioned, she's happy to also answer your questions. Again, if there's no more questions, I'd like to thank Carla one more time. Thank you very much, Carla.

Dr. Herrera: You're very welcome!

Presentation Slides

The BBBS School-Based Mentoring Impact Study: Findings and Implications for Policy and Practice

Title slide

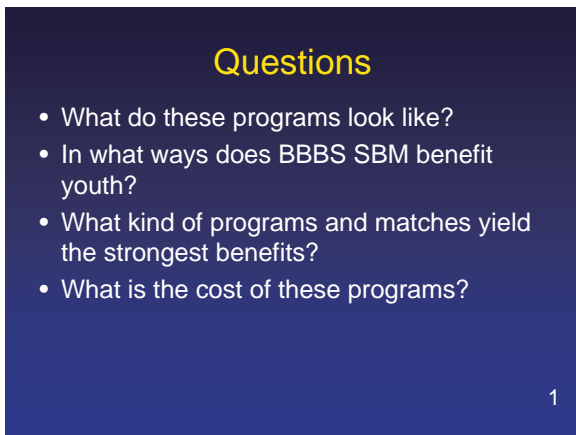


National BBBS School-Based Mentoring Impact Study

Public/Private Ventures

Carla Herrera, Jean Grossman, Tina Kauh, Amy Feldman, and Jennifer McMaken with Linda Jucovy

Slide 1

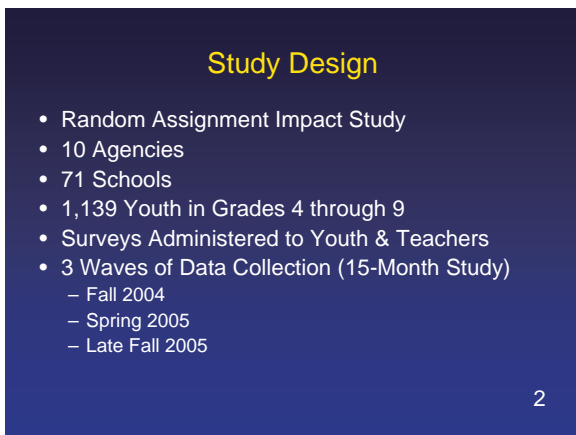


Questions

- What do these programs look like?
- In what ways does BBBS SBM benefit youth?
- What kind of programs and matches yield the strongest benefits?
- What is the cost of these programs?

1

Slide 2



Study Design

- Random Assignment Impact Study
- 10 Agencies
- 71 Schools
- 1,139 Youth in Grades 4 through 9
- Surveys Administered to Youth & Teachers
- 3 Waves of Data Collection (15-Month Study)
 - Fall 2004
 - Spring 2005
 - Late Fall 2005

2

Slide 3

Findings: The Program

- BBBS SBM is not:
 - a tutoring program.
 - a CBM program placed inside a school.
- CBM and SBM costs are very similar.
- Programs are very diverse.
- Youth have many risk factors.
- Volunteers differ from those in CBM.
- Training and support could be strengthened.

3

Slide 4

Training and Support

Relationship closeness Linked with	Carryover of match Linked with
Individual pre-match training; •Individual post-match training; •Communication with school staff; •BBBS program quality; •BBBS staff support; •Helpfulness of BBBS staff; •Helpfulness of school staff; and •School resources and space.	•Group training; •Individual pre-match training; •Individual post-match training; •BBBS program quality; •BBBS staff support; •Helpfulness of BBBS staff; and •School resources and space.

4

Slide 5

Findings: Impacts in Year One

Little's fared significantly better than controls in:

- Overall academic performance
 - Written and oral language
 - Science
- Quality of class work
- Number of assignments completed
- Absence without an excuse/Starting to skip school
- Engaging in serious school misconduct
- Scholastic efficacy

5

Slide 6

Findings: Impacts in Year Two

- Littles were less likely to skip school and were more confident they would attend and complete college.
- Other impacts were not sustained.
- Two reasons for the lack of strong Year 2 impacts:
 - Low participation in Year Two
 - Timing of Year 2 Follow-Up

6

Slide 7

Findings: Youth Characteristics and Program Impacts

- HINTS that certain groups benefited more than others
 - Girls (both years)
 - Minorities (both years)
 - High academic performers (in year 1; low in year 2)

7

Slide 8

Findings: Mentoring Experiences and Program Impacts

- Longer matches are linked with stronger impacts.
- Relationship quality may work with match length to determine strength of benefits.
- Summer meetings may lengthen and strengthen relationships.

8

Slide 9

Recommendations

- Increase Match Length.
- Bridge the Summer Gap.
- Choose Supportive Schools and Foster those Relationships.
- Provide Volunteers with Sufficient Levels of Support and Training.
- Strengthen Relationship Quality.

9

This slide presentation, and an mp3 file of the audio, can be downloaded from the MRC Web site at: <http://www.edmentoring.org/seminar3.html>

Supplemental Reading and Additional School-Based Mentoring Resources

The recent impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters in-school mentoring programs marks a critical point in the history of mentoring research. For the first time, we have results derived from a large-scale, experimentally-designed, multi-site evaluation—results that both build on an existing foundation of research while charting new directions for future study. To supplement the Web Seminar with Carla Herrera, Senior Policy

Researcher at Public/Private Ventures, it may be useful to revisit some of the existing research on school-based mentoring and the potential impact on grades and academic performance through mentoring relationships. A familiarity with existing findings can provide perspective and context for the new BBBS outcomes, and the resources listed here can help mentoring programs quickly learn about prior research.

FROM THE MENTORING RESOURCE CENTER

Many of the technical assistance publications developed by the Mentoring Resource Center (MRC) contain summaries or explanations of previous school-based mentoring research:

Making the Grade: A Guide to Incorporating Academic Achievement into Mentoring Programs and Relationships—The opening section of this guide offers a summary of research findings that are aligned with the goals and objectives of the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools Mentoring Grants, as well as extensive references and additional reading lists.

http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/making_the_grade.pdf

Guide to Key Mentoring Research: Evaluations, Reports, and Syntheses—This research summary offers a detailed look at many of the cornerstone pieces of mentoring research on both school- and community-based models. It serves as an excellent starting point for those who wish to compare and contrast outcomes and relationships in these two program settings.

http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ws2_supplement1.pdf

Presentation Materials from Web Seminar #2: Research on Mentoring Relationships and Activities—This seminar featured presentations on original school-based mentoring research by two of the best-known researchers in the country: Dr. Tom Keller of Portland State University and Dr. Michael Karcher from the University of Texas-San Antonio. Both presentations are available as a downloadable mp3 file, along with accompanying slides and handouts.

<http://www.edmentoring.org/seminar2.html>

Fact Sheet 1: Promoting Academic Achievement through Your Mentoring Program—This fact sheet offers a shorter summary of the research findings found in *Making the Grade* while also exploring the importance of taking a developmental approach to mentoring youth in a school setting.

<http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet1.pdf>

Fact Sheet 2: Keeping Mentoring Relationships Going Through the Summer Months—Recent research from the BBBS study highlights the need for match contact over the summer months and this fact sheet explores research into “summer learning loss” and strategies to mitigate its impact on positive mentoring outcomes.

<http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet2.pdf>

Fact Sheet 7: Peer Mentoring and Academic Success—This fact sheet examines research on effective strategies within a peer-mentoring model, also including recommendations for operating a peer model in school settings.

<http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet7.pdf>

FROM PUBLIC/ PRIVATE VENTURES

Public/Private Ventures has been leading the mentoring research field for over 20 years, conducting some of the most rigorous and insightful studies of both community and school-based mentoring models. Obviously, their new School-Based Mentoring Impact Study represents a fresh perspective on the school-based model, but their previous work examining and codifying best practices still has tremendous value for programs and can help illustrate the relevance of new findings. The following research reports can all be downloaded, free of charge, from the P/PV site at:

http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/publications.asp?search_id=7.

School-Based Mentoring: A Closer Look, by Carla Herrera. December 2004.

Mentoring School-Age Children: Relationship Development in Community-Based and School-Based Programs, by Carla Herrera, Cynthia L. Sipe, and Wendy S. McClanahan, with Amy J.A. Arbretton and Sarah K. Pepper. April 2000.

School-Based Mentoring: A First Look Into Its Potential, by Carla Herrera. September 1999.

Mentoring School-Age Children: A Classification of Programs, by Cynthia L. Sipe and Anne E. Roder. March 1999.

OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE ONLINE

In addition to P/PV's excellent online resources, there are also many other studies, evaluation reports, and research summaries on school-based mentoring that may be useful in relation to the new impact study:

National Mentoring Partnership's Research Corner: School-Based Mentoring, by Jean Rhodes. An excellent summary of the advantages and disadvantages of a school-based model, as well as the meaningful youth outcomes from several prominent studies. Available at:

http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/research_corner/school_based_mentoring.php?pid=all

Mentoring Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis, by Susan Jekielek, Kristin A. Moore, and Elizabeth C. Hair. (2002). Child Trends. This research summary examines the effectiveness of youth mentoring programs on academic achievement, in addition to many other desired youth outcomes.

<http://www.childtrends.org/files/MentoringSynthesisFINAL2.6.02Jan.pdf>

Study of Mentoring in the SMILE Learning Environment: Background Information on the Study's Design, by Dr. Michael Karcher. These online research findings explore how school-based mentoring program coordinators can recruit better mentors and facilitate more sustained mentoring relationships with mentees in grades 5 through 12. Available at:

<http://www.michaelkarcher.com/survey/index.php>

SAMHSA Model Programs: Across Ages. This program profile summarizes the model and youth outcomes from the Across Ages program designed by the Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University. Across Ages has been implemented successfully in both school and community settings. Available at:

<http://www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov/pdfs/model/AcrossAges.pdf>

Mentoring Programs: A Framework to Inform Program Development, Research, and Evaluation, by M. Karcher, G. Kuperminc, S. Portwood, C. Sipe, & A. Taylor. (2006). *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34, 709–725. This paper presents a conceptual framework for mentoring and mentoring relationships and applies it to different settings and goals, including schools and programs with an academic focus. Available at:

http://www.michaelkarcher.com/survey/pdf/Karcher_ProgramFrameworkJCP06.pdf

NOTES:



Mentoring Resource Center
c/o EMT Associates
771 Oak Avenue Parkway, Suite 2
Folsom, CA 95630

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Fax: 916-983-6693
E-mail: edmentoring@emt.org
Web: www.edmentoring.org