

The beneficial effects of peer mentoring relationships

[Education](#)



Imagine yourself, all alone and entering a new environment. You're entering a classroom with unfamiliar faces and routines that are far from your routine. At times you find yourself filled with anxiety from the many unknowns. There are teachers there to help you and attempt to ease your frustrations from the adjustments, but the teacher to student ratio time is limited and again you find yourself helpless and lost. What you truly need is someone who can give more one on one time, someone who can assist you in adjusting to the new routines and schedules of the school or classroom as well as provide you with information and peer expectations.

In the journal article "Intervention in School and Clinic" mentors are described as someone who serves as the first friend whom a new student might look to for guidance and understanding. (Barton-Arwood et al. 2000 p. 36). Although some may find the logistics of peer mentoring difficult and feel the experience isn't worth all the effort being placed into it, but when a mentoring program is up and working well in a school environment, it allows individuals to build relationships between peers, decreases drop out rates and it establishes appropriate values into those being mentored to fit the mold of society's.

Qualitative Arguments Many believe that a peer mentoring program, although has been reported as positive towards academics and social interactions are only utilized in controlled situations that are unlike the outside environment of the real world (Rhodes, 2002, p. 62), which calls into question whether or not a peer mentoring program is actually beneficial because they can not be used into real life situations. This is far from the case though.

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Believing that a mentoring program isn't actually beneficial because they take place in a controlled situation is like believing the only things that happen in reality are those of chaos. According to the journal "Intervention in School and Clinic", peer mentoring programs will result in the capabilities of students to hold relationships throughout life more naturally and without experimental manipulation (Barton-Arwood, ect. 2000, p. 40).

Just because the mentoring activities seemed to be administered in a controlled setting, does not mean that the path a mentoring relationship will go will all be the same. The mentor and the mentee have control and make the most out of the experience and has many life- long benefits. Another argument that many may have about mentoring programs is regarding the logistics, whether or not the energy that is placed into starting a program is truly worth it. In other words, so many have ended up failing in the long run, so is there a point for trying?

In the book "Caring for Kids in Communities" there are several steps to help make a mentoring program work; that you have defined, regular, set aside times within the daily school schedule when a mentoring should and will occur to help ensure mentor-mentee contacts; that there are appropriate screening of the mentors, so that you have people willing and wanting to be there and that you prevent unsuccessful and problematic situations; also that you train the mentors, that they are prepared to handle situations and know how to help those they are mentoring (Ellis, ect. 2001, p. 11).

By following such outlines in hopes of achieving success, you will set up a mentoring program that provides lasting results in the life of the mentee as

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well as the mentor. Social Skills Acquired Mentoring and the social skills acquired are a foundation for social interactions and are necessary for future social development. These social skills are acquired by as a result from a mentoring relationship by both the mentor and the mentee.

In a high school mentoring situation, both students are unaware of the world outside of them, all they know is their some term from that one guys theory. Students in a mentoring relationship are analyzed in the journal "Intervention in School and Clinic", resulting that those in a mentoring relationship relationships will develop longer and lasting friendships with others because of the foundation of trust and respect they have gained through the mentoring relationship (Barton-Arwood, ect. 200, p. 38).

Foundation of trust, respect, security are all aspects of social skills that children must learn in relationships. For many they are some of the hardest skills to learn and acquire, but those participating in a mentoring relationship will acquire them and will help them throughout their lives. Both the mentor and the mentee have experienced a deeply trusting relationship, something many adolescents go throughout their development never experiencing, which will help them establish and maintain lasting friendships.

Both the mentor and the mentee benefit from the relationship they share. According to Goodland in "Mentoring and Tutoring by Students" the mentees benefit by learning and practicing new skills with a trusted friend, having multiple examples of appropriate behaviors from mentors, experiencing multiple interactions with individuals of different backgrounds and learning and practicing the expected norms of the environment (Goodland, 1998, p.

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196). All of these are benefits that will encourage and strengthen the character of the individual in later years.

Having a trusted friend, something so few adolescents seem to have in their lives, someone who will show them examples of appropriate behavior are just some of the basic benefits of a peer relationship on the mentee. Also according to Goodland, the mentors benefit as well from the relationship together. They improve their self esteem by molding appropriate skills and knowledge in another peer, increases their opportunity to interact with peers different than themselves, master social competence and they are providing a public service commitment that forms a bond with their school environment (Goodland, 1998, p. 96).

Having someone to care for, to know depends on you, gives adolescents something to feel accomplished by, something so few have the chance to feel while they feel they are making a difference in the world around them, which is essential to an adolescents feelings of self worth in development.

Reaching School Improvement Goals Many aims of a peer mentoring program is to help students with their transition to high school. One of the most detrimental results of students making the transition to high school, is the nations drop out rate, which has reached record highs among all schools in the nation.

The newspaper article " Programs Gives Students head start on High School", Baltimore, Maryland is the subject as their average drop-out rate for incoming freshman was 4. 4% (Kiehl, 2002, 1B). School Improvement plans target reducing the drop out rates and many schools have started mentoring

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programs to do just that. " Many of the kids are lost in middle school and they go through high school and it's very easy for them to become disenfranchised," Eugene Whiting (Kiehl, 2002, 1B).

This " disenfranchised" can be solved by students feeling like they can do what is required of them in high school and feeling welcomed through a peer mentoring program. In Baltimore Maryland, a program was started called " Cubs to Panthers", a peer mentoring program. They have paired up incoming freshman in groups with upperclassman on the first day of school. Here they meet their peer mentor and form a bond from the beginning with them. Kiehl (2002, p. 1B), mentions that these peer mentors give the freshman something to turn to for help, someone who serves as an alternative to teachers.

Freshman often times feel overwhelmed with the situation about them as they enter high school, with the new setting, new people, new environment and new routines to get used to, many find it overbearing. It is the first semester of their high school year, that students are found reaching out for help. Kiehl (2002, p. 1B) quotes Yolanda Clark, " We notice that a large percentage of ninth graders fail their first semester and often their first year because they are just not used to high school work, it is at this time, more than ever that they need someone there.

Having someone to turn to, someone that students have met and can help them adjust to the change is so vast a advantage to them as they begin their high school career, in which the advantage will decrease the drop out rate of those at risk. Building Social Values A peer mentoring relationship is a tool

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that will reinforce and build appropriate values into the mentee that fit the mold of society's. Everyone needs someone that they look up to, with values they try to align theirs with. A peer mentor is that as well, someone that students can look to for guidance.

During the high school years and adolescence years, so many things are being thrown towards you and hitting in so many different directions and many students don't have somewhere to look for guidance in making decisions. In the article " Peer Mentoring the solution to stop youth violence" it describes the relationship of a mentoring pair and the benefits from it. The mentee will start to confide in their mentor as their relationship builds. Many of the problems they are facing can be sought after through the peer mentor(Ottawa, 2001, pg.).

Students often time don't know where to turn and find themselves either taking their own lives, or in rare cases, other's lives as well through violence. Using a positive role model, such as peer mentoring is one thing schools are trying to do to end school violence In Canada a program called Youth Assisting Youth (YAY) had been using the idea of a positive role modeling as the solution for stopping youth violence. For the past 25 years peer mentors have been helping instill the right kind of values in " at risk" kids in Toronto Canada.

Children are being referred because the have experienced social, behavioral, emotional or cultural difficulties. Through the program youth are " given the tools to make a difference in the lives of children and most importantly realize that they have the power to change the world around them" (Ottawa,

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2001, pg. 1). The program has proven itself to build the self esteem of fragile children and has been successful of keeping young people out of the juvenile justice system.

Another study conducted by the University of Alberta's Population Research Laboratories Encouraging Directions about the custodial youth justice programs in 1998 reported that community based programs, especially those which specified involving peers, have higher rates of success than an other approaches to juvenile crime. (Ottawa, 2001, p. 1). A mentoring program, in whatever sense is being used lowers the violence in adolescents as they have a peer to look up to for what is society's mold of values, someone that can help them realize what is right and wrong through their example.

Conclusion The benefits of peer mentoring are needed for the future of public schools. A mentoring program will allow individuals to build relationships between peers that are a foundation for social interactions and are necessary for future social development, it will allow schools to achieve their goals such as reducing the drop out rates and it is a tool that will reinforce and build appropriate values the fit the mold of society's. The destruction of schools is occurring and there is a solution that needs to be found; peer mentoring.