School-Based Mentoring

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Abstract

Mentoring is an increasingly popular way of providing guidance and support to young people in need. Youth mentoring has become a popular intervention that is implemented in a variety of settings. While almost any child can benefit from mentoring, often the focus is on those who are considered at-risk and in need of an adult, someone other than a family member, to provide support and guidance through stressful and challenging times. The development, structure, outcome, and implications of the different types of models will be reviewed and discussed as well as the impact of intergenerational programs on immigrant and at-risk students will be a focus of this research. The way in which a school counselor can support and encourage the existence of youth mentoring programs with students from elementary through high school will be explored. An Adlerian perspective on the benefits of Intergenerational Programs will be reviewed.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 2
Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 4
Youth Mentoring Programs ............................................................................................................ 6
  Benefits of Mentoring .................................................................................................................. 7
Mentoring At-Risk Youth .................................................................................................................. 12
Mentoring Immigrant Youth ........................................................................................................... 13
Challenges and Limitations in School Based Mentoring (SBM) ..................................................... 16
Intergenerational Programs and Mentoring .................................................................................... 18
  LISTEN Mentoring Program ........................................................................................................ 19
  Big Brothers Big Sisters School Based Mentoring Program ....................................................... 21
Adlerian Theory and School Based Mentoring ............................................................................. 24
Implications for School Counselors ............................................................................................... 25
  Critical Considerations: .............................................................................................................. 27
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................... 28
References ....................................................................................................................................... 30
School-Based Mentoring

Introduction

Over the last ten years, mentoring has seen unprecedented growth. This includes an increase in school-based mentoring (SBM) programs, which is a newer form of mentoring. A national poll conducted by MENTOR (2006) estimated that close to 870,000 adults are mentoring children in schools (Karcher, & Herrera, 2006). The National Mentoring Partnership defines mentoring as a “structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee” (MENTOR, 2010). Mentoring can be divided into two broad categories: Community-based programs and school-based programs. Community-based mentoring began over 100 years ago and continues to be successful. School-based mentoring, initiated more recently, is increasing in popularity and continues to grow (Hancock, 2003). School-based mentoring programs grew from recognition in the 1980’s that some children needed extra support to succeed in school (Portwood & Ayers, 2005). Since this recognition, many schools have begun to implement mentoring into the school day. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2008) has noted that constructive relationships, in which a child feels valued, are essential for the development of the child’s sense of security, self-esteem, academic performance, and ability to interact with others.

More recently, during the past decade, mentoring has increased as an intervention strategy that young people have access to for adult support and guidance throughout their development. Most research on mentoring and mentoring interactions has come from studies on community-based mentoring (Karcher, Herrera, & Hanson, 2010). Little has been reported on the use or effectiveness of those participating in school-based mentoring programs. Despite the
lack of evidence and research, school-based mentoring programs are an obvious setting for the implementation of cross-age peer mentoring (Karcher, 2008); therefore, it is not surprising that school-based mentoring programs are the fastest growing form of mentoring (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). The focus of my review is on school-based mentoring programs; specifically children and adolescents with a focus on mentoring at-risk students.

In the United States, approximately 5,000 mentoring programs have been widely implemented; the aim of which is to cultivate a relationship that will foster positive development and well-being of target youth (Lee, Park, & Alcazar-Bejerano, 2015). In an effort to increase students’ success, schools and communities have begun to develop school-based mentoring programs (SBMP) to foster positive outcomes for children and adolescents (Gordon, Downey, & Bangert, 2013). School connectedness, in particular, has been repeatedly identified as an important protective factor.

Research suggests that the most successful mentoring relationships are forged through collaborative interactions that help develop a shared purpose (Karcher, & Nakkula, 2010). In a review of research, Randolph and Johnson (2008) found that the primary benefits for students who participate in SBMPs are increased connectedness to school (King, Vidourck, Davis, & McClellan, 2002), as well as increased connectedness in the family (King, Vidourck, Davis, McClellan, 2002) and in the community (Portwood, Ayers, Kinmson, Waris, & Wise, 2005). It has been shown to be positively associated with school retention, emotional health and well-being, and negatively associated with adolescents’ involvement in risk-taking behaviors (Bond, Butler, Thomas, Carlin, Glover, Bowes, & Patton, 2007).

Research conducted by MENTOR (2009), there are certain elements that help create effective and successful mentoring programs. The *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*
(2009) provides six evidence-based standards for practice that incorporate the latest research and best-available practice wisdom (MENTOR, 2009). The six standards include: recruitment, screening, training, matching, monitoring and support; and closure.

Research has identified associations between school connectedness and a number of adolescent outcomes, including positive links with academic motivation and achievement (Wentzel, Battle, Russell, & Looney, 2010). Longitudinal research has shown that students’ connectedness to school is related to reduced risk taking later in adolescence (Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan, & Shochet, 2013). Research indicates that additional advantages of SBMPs include: reduced program costs, increased supervision available for mentors and mentees, increased safety for mentees, increased advocacy for students, increased academic focus, and increased opportunities to reach higher-risk children and families (Rhodes, 2002b).

Youth Mentoring Programs

Numerous studies have examined mentoring relationships and programs and their consequences for youth development. In a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of young adults, DuBois and Silverthorn (2005) found that those who reported having had a mentoring relationship during adolescence exhibited significantly better outcomes within the domains of education and work (high-school completion, college attendance, employment), mental health (self-esteem, life satisfaction), problem behavior, (gang membership, fighting, risk taking), and health (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). However, the magnitude of these associations was fairly small with the reduction in risk for negative outcomes.

Similar findings have emerged in other evaluations of mentoring programs. A meta-analysis of 55 mentoring program evaluations (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002) found benefits of participation in the areas of emotional/psychological well-being, involvement
in problems or high-risk behavior, and academic outcomes. The few studies that collected follow-up assessments of mentoring programs suggested an eroding of benefits after youth left programs and relationships with mentors ended (Rhodes, & DuBois, 2008).

Findings in evaluations of individual mentoring programs has overall been mixed. Research indicates that, although mentoring relationships can indeed promote positive development among young people, these benefits are modest in size. For mentoring to fully realize its promise as a safe and effective intervention for young persons, programs will need to be informed by an understanding of the processes that creates effective programs (Rhodes, & DuBois, 2008). Research continues to show that mentoring is beneficial and a cost effective approach for at-risk students.

**Benefits of Mentoring**

Mentoring has seen remarkable publicity and popularity in recent years. This can be attributed to its common-sense appeal with young people in need of supportive relationships with adults to foster their development and to recent evidence supporting the social and academic benefits of mentoring (Tierney & Grossman, 1995). For many youth, their most meaningful and longest lasting mentoring relationship are with members of their extended family (Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, & Behrendt, 2005). These relationships help students succeed in all aspects of life.

Youth development experts now agree that mentoring is a critical element in any child’s social, emotional and cognitive development. Without doubt, young people who have the benefit of caring adult mentors navigate the path to adulthood more successfully (MENTOR, 2006). A positive and enduring mentoring relationship can impact the self-worth, self-esteem, and social competence of youth (Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002).
Quality mentoring can increase school engagement, connectedness, motivation, attendance, and academic competencies (Klem, & Connell, 2004). Research finds that resilient youth with those who successfully transition from risk-filled backgrounds to the adult world of work and good citizenship are consistently distinguished by the presence of a caring adult in their lives (Cavell, DuBois, Karcher, Keller, & Rhodes, 2009). Young people who lack a strong relationship with a caring adult while growing up are much more vulnerable to a host of difficulties, ranging from academic failure to involvement in serious risk behaviors.

Studies published by Public/Private Ventures on the school-based mentoring model indicate benefits of school-based mentoring. Both studies yielded promising findings about school-based mentoring (Herrera, 1999). Involving new groups of volunteers means that school-based programs are reaching people who otherwise might not have become mentors (Curtis, & Hansen, 1999). School-based mentors are more likely to be ethnic minorities than mentors in community-based programs, and are more likely to fall into older (50 or older) and younger (21 or under) age groups, due, in part, to fewer transportation requirements for mentors in site-based programs.

When school staff instead of parents usually refer youth to SBM programs, the studies suggest that these programs may be reaching underserved groups of youth who often have academic, social or behavioral problems (Curtis, & Hansen, 1999; Herrera, 1999). Another finding indicates that youth may benefit both academically and socially from school-based mentoring programs with a decrease in grade retention and tardiness, as well as improvements in attendance, grades and classroom participation (Hansen, 2001). Studies also suggest that benefits only accrue after relationships have had a chance to develop (Lee & Crammond, 1999). Lee and Crammond found that only youth matched for more than one year increased in their
levels of aspiration. Another study by Slicker and Palmer (1993), youth who met with their school-based mentors at least three times a week had lower dropout rates than you who were never matched with a mentor or matches terminated prematurely. These findings on the length of relationships and frequency of meetings have important implications for the potential benefits of SBM programs (Herrera, 1999).

School connectedness has a significant impact on adolescent outcomes, including reducing risk-taking behavior (Champan, Buckley, Sheehan, & Shochet, 2013). According to Adlerian theory, “social embeddedness”, refers to a sense that human beings are inherently social creatures and that each person must have a sense of community or social connectedness to live a fulfilled life (Ziomek-Daigle, McMahon, & Paisley, 2008). It has also been identified as an important protective factor associated with school retention and emotional health and well-being.

Connectedness is defined as the “outward expression of positive feelings and the seeking of support from people and places” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). It involves active (e.g., parents, siblings, friends, teachers, and peers) and places (e.g., school and neighborhood) (Karcher, 2012). An intervention to improve school connectedness, mentoring can reach a broad range of children (Portwood, & Ayers, 2005). This helps by providing social bonding experiences and a sense of belonging while helping students develop stronger relationships to self and others (Karcher, 2005). Connectedness is not restricted to relationships and can apply to institutions, such as school, and has the capacity to further develop a student’s social network (Karcher, Holcomb, & Zambrano, 2008). A mentoring program called Wiz Kidz, located within a Canadian urban elementary school collected data on school connectedness to school, peers, and teachers.
The Search Institute identified 40 developmental assets that promote positive youth development. One such asset, adult relationships (support from adults other than a parent), was designated as being vital for school-aged children as a means of connectedness (Frels, Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante, Garza, Nelson, Nichter, & Leggett, 2013). The 40 assets are grouped into two main types: external and internal assets. The external assets are the good qualities of life young people get from the world around them. The internal assets are the traits, behaviors, and values that help kids make positive choices and be better prepared for challenging situations (Probst, 2006). In studies of six racial/ethnic groups of students (white, Asian, American, African American, Latino, Native American, and multiracial), research has found that the more of the forty assets youth have, the more protected they are from various forms of health risk and the more they exhibit positive signs of thriving (Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Roehlkepartain, 1999).

Search Institute’s research on developmental assets (2003) adds to the growing evidence that comprehensive, asset-based approaches to education and youth development have tremendous potential to contribute to the academic success of students from all backgrounds and in a wide range of communities (Search Institute, 2003). The assets focus on evolving strengths of young people, not their deficits through building relationships and promoting practice and environments that emphasize the developmental assets (Probst, 2006). Positive relationships with adults and good intellectual functioning have been shown to predict resilience in the face of potentially damaging circumstances (Masten, & Coatsworth, 1998). In addition, research has shown over the years that developmental risks can be reduced or that developmental trajectories can potentially be altered to favor positive development.
The Developmental Assets are based on the Positive Youth Development Model, a strengths-based approach that views youth as “at-promise” rather than “at-risk” (Scales, Sesma Jr., & Bolstrom, 2004). The Assets were derived from a comprehensive synthesis of more than 800 studies on adolescent development, prevention, risk reduction, protective factors, and resilience (Scales, & Leffert, 1999). The comparison of the Developmental Assets and the ASCA National Standards highlights both the pros and cons of using the Developmental Assets in school counseling programs based on the ASCA National Model. While the Developmental Assets can serve as a potentially productive programming component for the ASCA domains of personal/social and academic development, the assets fall short in the area of career development.

Miller (2006) identifies five areas of human growth that are essential to success. These five areas include: Intellectual growth, social growth, emotional growth, moral growth, and physical growth. A youth who lacks skills in any of these five areas is at risk of family problems, school failure, and difficulties on the job and in the community (Miller, 2006). School counselors can help to increase developmental assets by linking students’ developmental contexts (family, school, community, and peer group) and promoting positive school climates (Scales, 2005). School counselors also can develop asset-specific interventions, such as increasing school engagement through service learning and mentoring programs, and systemic interventions, such as advocating for flexible scheduling and authentic student assessments to increase achievement motivation. School counselors can collaborate with community agencies and access resources to expand school and community-wide after-school programs (Scales, 2005). Furthermore, school counselors also can develop asset-specific interventions, such as increasing school engagement through service learning and mentoring programs, and systemic
interventions, such as advocating for flexible scheduling and authentic student assessments to increase achievement motivation.

Beyond giving adolescents a positive social outlet, there are certain factors that predict positive outcomes for mentored youth. These factors include: strong mentoring relationship, frequency/duration, meaningful and structured activities, similar interests between mentor and mentee, pre-math orientation and training, ongoing support, monitoring of program implementation, and parental support (Portwood & Ayers, 2005). The school context can afford easier access to training, support, and supervision, all of which would decrease costs (Herrera, & Karcher, 2014). Relying on teacher rather than parent referrals, programs have opportunities to proactively seek to engage youth who are not typically targeted by more traditional community-based programs.

**Mentoring At-Risk Youth**

Mentoring programs for at-risk youth are growing at a rapid pace across the United States. Programs may differ in their curricula, but most emphasize the relationship between the youth and a caring adult. Half of our youth population (17.6 million kids) is considered to be “at-risk” or “high-risk” (Gurr, 2011). Mentoring programs for at-risk youth seek to minimize risk factors (e.g., low bonding to family, school, community; early and persistent behavior problems; academic failure; alienation and rebelliousness; peer rejection; association with delinquent peers) and maximize protective factors (Britner, Balcazar, Blechman, Blinn-Pike, & Larose, 2006).

According to Gurr, at-risk youth are those considered to be someone who is economically disadvantaged with the strong potential to get into trouble (Gurr, 2011). Gurr describes at-risk youth as kids who are experiencing difficulties, such as: drug and alcohol abuse, child of a
substance abuser, victim of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, dropped out of school, became pregnant, committed a violent or delinquent act, experienced mental health problems, attempted suicide, and experience chronic school failure (Gurr, 2011). As adults, they have a disproportionately high incidence of divorce, chronic unemployment, physical and psychiatric problems, substance abuse, demands on the welfare system, and further criminal activity (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989).

Research supports the implementation of mentoring programs as potentially successful approaches to meeting the individual needs of at-risk students (Lampley & Johnson, 2010). Researchers in this area also found that students achieved better grades, established obtainable goals, and enhanced self-esteem when partnering with caring, supportive adults (Smink, 2000). Several studies suggest that although school-based mentoring may help recruit the most “at-risk” youth, these youth may not benefit the most from mentoring. Studies hint that those youth who are most at-risk academically or socially may receive fewer benefits from school-based mentoring participation (Herrera et al., 2007; Schwartz, Rhodes, Chan, & Herrera, 2011). Youth with very serious needs may benefit from more intensive services than a 1-hour-a-week program can provide (Herrera & Karcher, 2014). The evidence to date suggests that it may be those youth who can get the most out of the program.

**Mentoring Immigrant Youth**

The United States is one of the largest immigrant-receiving countries with over 1 million immigrants obtaining legal permanent status each year (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2009). Tremendous diversity exists among the arriving immigrants with respect to their demographic characteristics and migration backgrounds (Birman, & Morland, 2014). Immigrant children represent one quarter of the population in the American public school system (Rhodes,
2016). Poor neighborhoods and often dangerous school can corrode hopes. The vast majority learn English, but it is the English of video games and the neighborhood, not that of standardized tests. The lucky ones have often benefited from caring mentors, supportive teachers and savvy parents (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova., 2010). When they arrive, most are full of optimism and a respect for education.

Data on the adjustment of immigrants in resettlement are somewhat contradictory. On one hand, research suggests that immigrant youth are at higher risk for psychological and behavioral problems including anxiety disorders, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and conduct and eating disorders (Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005). After arrival in the United States, many immigrants reside in high-poverty areas, where they are vulnerable to crime, and experience difficulties adjusting to underfunded schools (Jaycox, Stein, Kataoka, Wong, Fink, Escudero, Zaragoza, 2002). As a result, many immigrant children are thought to have serious mental health and social-emotional adjustment needs (Birman, & Morland, 2014).

Another side of research has documented the “immigrant paradox,” which suggests that immigrants are more resilient than their U.S.-born counterparts. Studies have found that immigrants are healthier and perform better in schools (Harris, 1999). Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, and Milburn (2009) suggested that parents strike an implicit “immigrant bargain” with their children, justifying their own sacrifices with the reward of their children succeeding in school.

Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, and Taylor (2006) discuss three aspects of mentoring programs: context (site based versus field based), goals (instrumental and developmental), and multiple structures that mentoring programs can take. Field-based mentoring refers to programs in which a sponsoring agency coordinates and supports mentor-
mentee matches and typically interact at mutually convenient times and locations. This type of mentoring offers the greatest freedom for mentors and mentees to discover shared interests and to explore a range of educational and recreational opportunities. Approximately 45% of mentoring programs are site-based, and 70% of site-based programs are found in schools (Sipe & Roder, 1999). Site-based programs situated in schools addressing immigrant students’ struggles with language, academics, and understanding peer norms and pressures may be helpful for newer arrivals (Birman & Morland, 2014). Site-based programs are often held in specific mentoring sites, including schools, community agencies, youth development centers, religious contexts, and hospitals and clinics.

Many different mentoring structures, described by Karcher et al. (2006) may be useful for immigrant youth, including individual, group, cross-age, or other forms of mentoring. Beyond the well-known one-on-one, adult-with-youth structure, programs have begun to develop innovative mentoring models that take advantage of the availability of special populations of mentors (e.g. elders, peers) and/or technology. These structures include cross-age peer mentoring, intergenerational mentoring, e-mentoring, and group mentoring (Karcher et al., 2006). Programs that involve slightly older youth as peer mentors can help immigrants feel connected to others. These peers may be U.S. born or immigrants who are farther along in their acculturation process. Being known on a personal level to school peers can help immigrant youth to develop a sense of school belonging, which has been noted as an important factor linked to positive psychological adjustment for immigrant and refugee youth (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007).

Program goals may complicate research on the effectiveness of different mentoring programs. Hamilton and Hamilton (1990) proposed an initial typology of mentoring relationship
goals that has guided subsequent research on types of mentoring content. The two approaches, developmental and instrumental reflect the means by which mentoring occurs across different structures and contexts of mentoring (Sipe & Roder, 1999). Birman and Morland (2014) describe challenges and questions to consider when mentoring immigrant youth.

**Challenges and Limitations in School Based Mentoring (SBM)**

Advocates claim that mentoring can be a key determinant in altering the life course of youth at risk for negative life outcomes (Lakind, Eddy, & Zell, 2014). Studies of long-term benefits are few and the combination of modest effects and wide variability suggest that mentoring youth is a challenging endeavor (Lakind et al., 2014). Volunteers often prefer structured interactions for which they do not have to plan a set of activities (Herrera, 1999). Many potential volunteers do not want to make a long-term commitment, while others dislike the logistical burden of meeting a child at different places in the community. Recruiting and retaining mentors is a key limitation to the creation of effective mentoring relationships (Wandersman et al., 2006). Often the need for mentors outweighs the supply and the relationships end within a few months (Rhodes, 2002b). Another important, but often neglected factor, that may mitigate against a durable relationship is that mentors may have minimal experience interacting with youth, and may be unprepared for the challenges they will inevitably face (Lakind et al., 2014). Such challenges may be magnified when partnering mentors with youth living in high risk circumstances.

Potential mentors might be reluctant to partner with children with significant challenges and lack the training and skills to navigate these potentially complicated relationships and provide youth with the appropriate acceptance and support they need to thrive (Smith, 2004). Although youth with more serious needs are more easily accessible in schools, school-based
mentors may be unprepared for the challenges of working with these youth (Herrera & Karcher, 2014). Volunteers may not feel they have additional time to commit for training or supervision. Mentors working in schools are likely to be much more constrained in the range of activities they can engage in and must successfully negotiate a complex system (the school) in their efforts to develop strong mentoring relationships (Herrera & Karcher, 2014). Providing support to mentors working in schools may be a challenging factor, but one which needs attention and time dedicated in helping to make these programs successful.

Although mentors may be attracted to the typically less intensive time commitment, the school’s 9-month calendar and segmented blocks of relatively brief time (e.g., 1 hour) for meetings may “water down” much of the relational intensity that is the cornerstone of effective matches in the community (Herrera, Sipe, McClanahan, Arbreton, & Pepper, 2000). Also, structural barriers including summer break and youth mobility may decrease the likelihood that such long-term relationships will be achieved in SBM programs (Herrera & Karcher, 2014).

- Poverty: many children of immigrants have parents with lower educational backgrounds and arrive with high levels of poverty, known risk factors for a host of poor outcomes.
- Separations: 75% of immigrant children experience a parental separation, ranging from two to ten years. Such separations are very disruptive, as are parental reunifications since many children have re-attached to substitute parents.
- Language acquisition: It takes five to seven years of good, solid, consistent, high quality language instruction to gain the full grasp needed to write, take multiple choice tests, and learn sophisticated concepts
Anxiety: With many children having undocumented parents, the recognition that their parents could be deported at any moment brings feelings of anxiety, instability, and fear.

How do you address the acculturation gap between parents and youth?

What is being done to serve the unique needs of newly arrived immigrants?

What is being done to serve the unique needs of those who have lived in the country longer?

How are traumatic experiences being addressed?

Despite a lack of research on the effectiveness of mentoring programs with immigrant and refugee youth, a one-size fits all approach does not work, and providers need a range of tools and approaches to address the varying levels of need. Further, specific heritage, generational status, and acculturation level should be taken into consideration in order to better understand youths’ needs and program effectiveness (Birman, & Morland, 2014).

**Intergenerational Programs and Mentoring**

New initiatives continue to emerge throughout the country that aim to connect different generations in various settings to foster connection, communication, education, and support for one another. The main purpose of intergenerational programming is to bring together different generations to collaborate on purposeful activities, while supporting and nurturing each other in meaningful ways (Herrmann, Sipsas-Herrmann, Stafford, & Herrmann, 2005). As defined by the International Consortium for Intergenerational Programs, “intergenerational programs are social vehicles that create purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations.” These types of environments are described as stimulating, age-integrated settings that provide care and ongoing interactions for children and senior adults (Rosebrook &

There is a growing recognition that these efforts to facilitate meaningful intergenerational engagement will enhance the quality of people’s lives, strengthen communities, and contribute to needed societal-level change (Kaplan, 2001). Senior adults make valuable contributions to the lives of children. In exchange, children bring enthusiasm, energy, and support into the lives of seniors (Kaplan, 2001). Intergenerational programs have been developed in a wide variety of settings: schools, community organizations, hospitals, and places of worship.

The nation’s first intergenerational school located in Cleveland, Ohio, is called The Fairhill Center. The school opened in August of 2000 as a charter school. Initially, an emphasis of the school was to support grandparents who were raising children, but since then has evolved to nurturing the relationships between different generations with a focus on learning (Sullivan, 2002).

**LISTEN Mentoring Program**

One mentoring program created for at-risk middle school students is titled, LISTEN (Linking Individual Students to Educational Needs). The LISTEN mentoring program was a district-sponsored, school-based program targeting at-risk middle school students identified by the school system. The focus of the program was to support students with school performance and related issues. Data was collected from the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 academic years to determine the effects of students in grades six through eight. The study that examined the effects of the program was limited to the two year period. The main focus of the study was designed to determine if partnering at-risk students with caring, supportive adults had a relationship to the
students’ academic success (Lampley & Johnson, 2010). Academic records of students identified for the program were analyzed for academic indicators (grade point average, attendance, and discipline).

LISTEN was created in 2003 specifically targeting at-risk, middle school students. It was designed to partner an adult with a student to provide additional support with academic success outside of the regular classroom setting. Mentors were classroom teachers, school counselors, administrators, custodians, librarians, teaching assistants, retired teachers, and other school employees. The program, although unique, was patterned after other successful programs that served at-risk youth. By placing emphasis on study habits, interpersonal relationships, problem solving techniques, communication skills, and by encouraging positive behaviors (Lampley & Johnson, 2010). The primary goal of the program was to establish relationships between identified at-risk youth and caring adults.

The study collected data of 54 participating students during the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years. It investigated the changes from the first year to the second year of the 54 LISTEN students demonstrate in regards to their grade point average, discipline referrals, and attendance rates (Lampley & Johnson, 2010). Participants had to meet one or more of the following criteria for the study: 1) have failed one or more school years, 2) obtained ten or more discipline referrals in one school year, 3) had 10 or more unexcused absences in one school year. The participants ranged in age from 11-15 years. Over 64% percent of the students were boys. The data was compiled at the end of the second academic year and each area (grade point average, discipline referrals, and attendance) was measured to compare differences between pre-intervention and post-intervention data.
In the area of GPA, fifty-one of the 54 students improved their grades from pre to post intervention data. In the 2003-2004 school year, the mean GPA was 1.46 and increased to a mean GPA of 2.13 in the 2004-2005 school year. Differences in discipline referrals were also evaluated. The findings concluded that the number of referrals dropped from the first to second year. The mean number of referrals in the 2003-2004 school year was 35.09 and dropped to a mean of 19.35 in the 2004-2005 school year. Lastly, differences in the area of attendance were analyzed. The results indicated that the mean number of absences during the 2003-2004 school year was 37.48 with that number dropping to a mean of 27.22 during the 2004-2005 school year (Lampley & Johnson, 2010).

Overall, the school-based support provided by the LISTEN mentoring program provided at-risk students with a positive role model to whom they could turn for advice and direction. Based on the findings of this particular study, it was determined that a mentoring relationship with a caring adults seems to positively impact the academic success of at-risk students (Lampley & Johnson, 2010). Mentoring, as a method of sharing real-life experiences and knowledge, has been shown to be an effective intervention strategy for at-risk middle school students.

**Big Brothers Big Sisters School Based Mentoring Program**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of American (BBBSA) is the largest youth mentoring organization in the United States. This organization provides one-to-one mentoring relationships between children and adults. An impact study was conducted of Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring Program by Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, McMaken, and Jucovy (2011). This large-scale random assignment impact study tested the ways the Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring program provides benefits to its youth participants.
by following them for one and a half years. The study provides insight into how mentoring in the school setting may help children succeed in this context and the role that volunteer mentors might play in the lives of young people as part of their school experience.

Participants in the study included youth who were in grades fourth through ninth at the start of the study in September of 2004. Youth attended 71 schools that had school-based mentoring programs run by 1 of 10 Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies. All programs had to meet the following criteria: in existence and operating for at least four years, served at least 150 youth (boys and girls), recruited from at least two different types of volunteer populations, and demonstrated strong relationships with school partners (Herrera et al., 2011). Overall, the agencies chosen, on average, were larger than the average Big Brothers Big Sisters agency, and they tended to have more experience with school-based mentoring and more supportive schools (Herrera et al., 2011).

Participating youth were referred to the program by school staff. Baseline surveys for younger youth were administered in small groups. Teacher surveys were self-administered and middle and high school students with multiple teachers had one of their teachers assigned. Once the surveys were complete, students were randomly assigned to either a treatment group (referred to as “Littles”) who were eligible to be matched with a mentor or the control group (referred to as non-mentored peers) were placed on agency waiting lists until the end of the study (Herrera et al., 2011). The agencies were responsible for recruiting and training mentors. Mentors typically were recruited from local businesses, high schools, and in some cases, from colleges. Match meetings occurred in many different places on the school campus. Most programs allowed matches to choose how they spent their time (Herrera et al., 2011). All programs in the study
had some degree of structure (i.e., the activities from which matches could choose were outlined by the program) and in some cases the activities were determined by the school.

Outcome measures fell into three broad categories: school-related performance and attitudes, problem behaviors, and social and personal well-being. School-related performance and attitudes was broken down into two categories: classroom effort and self-perception of academic abilities. Problem behaviors consisted of the categories: unexcused absences, substance use, and misconduct outside of school. Social and personal well-being consisted of: social acceptance, teacher relationship quality, parent relationship quality, global self-worth, presence of a special adult, stressful life events, and extracurricular activities (Herrera et al., 2011). An impact analyses was completed at the 9 and 15 month mark (9 and 15 months after the start of the study).

Results indicated at 9-months indicated that participation in the Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring program led to improvements in two youth outcomes by the end of the first school year. Specifically, teachers reported significantly better overall academic performance and the Littles themselves reported more positive perceptions of their own academic work. Additionally, Littles were more likely than their non-mentored peers to report having a “special adult” in their lives (Herrera et al., 2011). The impact analyses at the 15-month assessment revealed no significant differences between Littles and their non-mentored peers on any of the 11 outcomes measures tested. Littles, however, continued to be more likely than their non-mentored peers to report having a special adult in their lives.

Overall, the findings concluded that within the first year of school-based mentoring, the Littles, relative to their non-mentored peers experienced modest academic benefits. Teachers reported small gains in academic performance, while youth reported similar improvements in
perceptions of their own academic abilities. Littles were also more likely to identify having a “special adult” in their lives suggesting that school-based mentoring is one way to increase the number of meaningful adult relationships in children’s lives (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Academic impacts did not persist into the second school year after about half of the matches had ended.

Additionally, there was no evidence at either assessment that school-based mentoring had significant effects on youth’s classroom effort, problem behaviors, or other indicators of their social and personal well-being (Herrera et al., 2011). Despite the fact that the overall impacts were limited, there were still indicators of improvement in key areas of school success. This type of intervention has the potential to be extremely valuable in schools and worth exploring.

**Adlerian Theory and School Based Mentoring**

A fundamental construct in Adlerian theory is that of personal goals. Adler stated it this way: “Without the sense of a goal individual activity would cease to have any meaning.” School counselors have long used Adlerian principles in their work as counselors in schools, and these principles have guided both the content and the process of counseling interventions with students (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2008). The Adlerian approach has been used with children and adolescents to help them understand their personal abilities, strengths, interests, and values (Cobia, & Henderson, 2007). At the core of Individual Psychology theory is the premium placed on striving toward desirable outcomes.

Adler explained his concept of social interest, otherwise translated as community feeling, as the eminent outcome for personal and social life success (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1979). This core tenet aligns with contemporary narratives in education wherein school practitioners are charged with providing value-added interventions that will likely yield socially eager learning and behavior outcomes (Rubin, Stuart, & Zanutto, 2004). There is a growing body of research
supporting Individual Psychology-based approaches aimed at improving cognitive, behavioral, and affective functioning in children and adolescents (Bringman, Lemberger, & Moore, 2012). Using evidence based programs increases the chances of showing impact in these areas (Sperry, 2009). An individual’s goals are intrinsically and inevitably social in the sense that they always have symbolic meaning about an individual’s relationship with other humans (Ferguson, 2003).

**Adlerian Theory**

According to Dreikurs (1990) a misbehaved child is a discouraged child. Youth and adolescents that engage in at-risk behaviors affecting their success in school often are said to be discouraged. The school environment provides an ideal place for mentors to assist youth and help them feel a sense of community, belonging, and ultimately success.

**Implications for School Counselors**

Recent studies provide some guidance as to how school-based mentoring programs and initiatives to support natural mentoring ties in schools might shape themselves in their efforts to help youth the most. Research suggests that SBM programs simply run better in supportive schools. School buy-in should be assessed prior to collaborating and should be secured at all levels (Herrera, & Karcher, 2014). Programs must clearly state their goals and weigh the benefits of being able to provide high quality services to identified youth.

Recommendations and guiding questions for practice are listed below (Herrera, & Karcher, 2014):

- Develop key school partnerships to ensure the resources and support are available to implement a successful SBM program
- Identify appropriate places in the school for mentoring to take place
• Provide training and support to teachers, staff, and administration regarding best practices and benefits of school-based mentoring

• Training for mentors should help provide an understanding of the school context, school rules, and how to manage (and benefit from) the input of peers; how the youth’s age could affect his or her expectations about the mentor’s role; and what kind of support they should or should not expect from school staff

• Structure programs to allow enough time for mentoring relationships to grow and develop, keeping in mind that at least one school year may be needed for strong, effective relationships to be formed (Cavell & Henrie, 2010)

• Consider how the age or needs of the youth targeted may be best served by the program. Program-made matches may be particularly useful for boys in elementary and middle schools that have few male teachers

• Consider whether youth needs are best met by programmatically created mentoring relationships or naturally occurring school-based relationships

• Consider ways to match mentors with mentees that capitalize on the shared meeting locations of the school as well as their chemistry and shared interests

According to Adlerian theory, numerous factors exist that may invite people to become discouraged. Societally, such as poverty, famine, crime, and various forms of discrimination are examples in which people must respond by having the ability to problem solve. Those who lack this ability may become easily discouraged. Another belief is that mentors demonstrate more social interest. Social interest reflects and identification with humanity, a feeling of community, and a belonging to life (Manaster, & Corsini, 1982). Future research may attempt to determine if short-term challenges contribute to long-term gains in connectedness, social interest, or other
indicators of positive youth development. When developing or researching a school based mentoring program, listed below are elements to consider.

**Critical Considerations:**

- Considering the evidence that many SBM programs may be best equipped to service “medium” risk youth, what risk backgrounds are likely to be optimal for the youth served by the program?

- Does the program integrate developmentally specific program elements that are likely to yield the strongest matches, such as having matches in elementary school meet in the presence of peer or having older high-school-aged mentees provide input into the nature and purpose of their mentoring relationship?

- How can the program be designed and implemented to avoid evoking perceptions of stigma regarding mentoring as a program for misbehaving youth, or youth with mental health or academic needs? What changes could the program implement to lessen such stigma?

- What strategies can your program use to avoid potential negative effects of the academic calendar and take advantage of opportunities that are presented by this calendar (e.g., end-of-year math closure activities or celebrations)

- Given the challenges and costs involved in coordinating summer activities, is the program better off focusing on supporting matches that are limited to the school year? Do the likely benefits of a summer program outweigh the costs of the program?
Conclusion

Much remains to be done to understand the complexities of mentor relationships and to determine the circumstances under which mentoring programs make a difference in the lives of youth. At this stage, we can safely say that mentoring is, by and large, a modestly effective intervention for youth who are already coping relatively well under difficult circumstances (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008).

Millions of young people are currently growing up without the guidance and support from parents or others that is needed to prepare them to become well-adjusted and contributing members of society (Cavell, DuBois, Karcher, Keller, & Rhodes, 2009). Mentoring the next generation of youth is critical to the future health and prosperity of our nation.

School-based mentoring tends to deliver better outcomes when mentoring relationships are longer (Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2012) and the mentor-mentee contacts are frequent and consistent (Deutsch, & Spencer, 2009). These investments must be made carefully and strategically (Cavell, DuBois, Karcher, Keller, & Rhodes, 2009). Making progress in addressing this need will require substantial commitments of time and resources at all levels from individuals to communities to government.

Research indicates that programs offering safe environments, encouragement and support, empowering activities, and specific guidelines for appropriate behavior contribute to an increased self-esteem. School-based programs can enhance student self-esteem by focusing on academic achievement, and school, peer, and family connectedness (King, Vidourek, Davis, & McClellan, 2002). Developing a further understanding how both natural and program-driven mentoring works in the school setting, under what circumstances, and whether and for whom it
may lead to stigmatization is important in the development of school-based mentoring programs (Herrera & Karcher, 2014).

Additionally, a deeper understanding of mentoring relationships, combined with high-quality programs, enriched settings, and a better integration of research and practice, will better position mentoring programs to harness the full potential in youth mentoring (Rhodes, & Lowe, 2006).
References


