

# Pathways to Improving Practice

## Research-based Resources on College Access

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## Improving College Access through Mentoring

In recent years, mentoring programs have gained immense popularity as a means of assisting low-income, first generation and underrepresented students to succeed in postsecondary education. Research on college programs indicates that **“the single most important feature of those that purported to be successful with individual students was a close, caring relationship with a knowledgeable adult who monitors the student’s progress”** (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics 2001). Research also shows that underrepresented youth are most significantly impacted by mentoring relationships (Jekielek 2002). Outreach programs and schools who utilize this proven activity to increase the access of underrepresented students in higher education provide support for preparing students for college.

### Lasting Benefits

With the increasing popularity of mentoring programs the essential question remains, do mentoring programs make a significant contribution to the lives of the students? Research shows that well planned and well executed programs can have profound effects, particularly on at-risk youth (Jekielek 2002).

<b>EDUCATIONAL</b>	<b>HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>	<b>SOCIAL</b>
Students in mentoring programs are more likely to attend and graduate from college. They are less likely to skip classes, and tend to have a better attitude towards school and teachers.	Youth in mentoring programs are less likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol. They are also less likely to be violent or be arrested. Minimizing destructive behavior provides students with a greater likelihood to attend college	Students in mentoring programs maintain better relationships with parents, teachers, and peers. Mentoring also provides support that students do not always receive in the home, particularly when focusing on going to college.

### Best Practices

With the wide variety of programs and models, it is imperative to determine what makes a quality mentoring program. Successful programs all contained one key similarity- *strong relationships between the mentor and mentee*. Research shows that in order to build these relationships certain key factors must be present. (Herrera 2000) When these features are not present, mentoring has the little or possibly negative impacts on the mentee.

<b>STRUCTURE AND SUPERVISION</b>	<b>LONG-TERM COMMITMENT</b>	<b>PRE/POST MENTOR TRAINING</b>
Programs that provide structure and supervision in both the matching process and after the relationship is formed showed considerable more success.	Mentoring relationships that last over a year foster strong relationships that benefit youth, whereas mentoring that last less than six months tended to do harm.	Mentors that receive pre and post-match training tended to build stronger relationships with their mentees.

### Useful Resources

- **The National Mentoring Center:** This collaboration between Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) provides a wealth of resources including research publications, frequently asked questions, and training information. <http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/>
- **The National Mentoring Partnership:** This website provides tools and tips to create a mentoring program, ideas for improving mentoring, and lists of mentoring partnerships on the state and private levels. <http://www.mentoring.org/>
- U.S. Department of Education, Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. (1998). *Yes, You Can: Establishing Mentoring Programs to Prepare Youth for College*. November 1998. U.S. Department of Education, Partnership for Family Involvement in Education.: A comprehensive guide to starting your own mentoring program. This report is available at <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/YesYouCan/>.
- Grossman, J.B. & Johnson, A. (2002) *Contemporary Issues in Mentoring*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.: A recent study examining a range of current issues in mentoring. This report can be found at <http://www.ppv.org/pdf/files/mentoring.pdf>.

## Types of Programs

A number of models for mentoring exist. These different models allow mentors and mentees to choose the program that is most suited to their interests, abilities, and needs.

<b>Models of Mentoring</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Outreach Programs-</b> Outreach programs are programs that help underserved students prepare for, access and succeed in postsecondary education. These programs specifically target students that have been traditionally underrepresented. Outreach programs typically focus on college access and retention.	Outreach programs are particularly successful because of the students they target. Underrepresented students, particularly minorities, tend to react strongly to mentoring and are more likely to achieve positive outcomes from mentoring relationships. Outreach programs are also successful because they have a sharp focus on academics.	<b>GEAR UP</b> is a federal program designed to increase the number of low-income students attending and succeeding in college. Students enter the program in middle school and are followed through high school. The program focuses on academics and postsecondary preparation. <a href="http://www.ed.gov/gearup/">http://www.ed.gov/gearup/</a>
<b>Community-Based Programs-</b> Community based programs are the traditional approach to mentoring and have been in practice for over 90 years. Most community-based programs allow the mentor and mentee to choose their activities.	These programs typically spend the greatest amount of time with their students. They are also more likely to share personal interests and partake in more social activities. These factors tend to have a greater impact on mentee's social behavior	<b>Big Brothers, Big Sisters</b> is the oldest and most famous mentoring program in the country. They maintain over 750,000 active one-on-one matches between adults and youths. <a href="http://www.bbbsa.org/">http://www.bbbsa.org/</a>
<b>School-Based Programs-</b> School based mentoring programs are programs that are run directly by the school system. Typically takes place at the school during or immediately after school hours. Although most focus on academics, they can also take the form of sports or clubs.	They are focused on academics and preparing students for college. They are more able to attract mentors with limited time and resources. They provide a location that is safe and programs that are well supervised. The cost of school base programs, per child, is also lower.	<b>The Norwalk Mentor Program</b> is the oldest and largest school-based mentoring program in the country. Mentors meet with students weekly on campus throughout the year but often extend mentoring through the summer and additional years. <a href="http://www.norwalkmentorprogram.faithweb.com/">http://www.norwalkmentorprogram.faithweb.com/</a>
<b>Career Mentoring-</b> Career mentoring aims to promote career development, typically in a specified area of interest. It strives to give students occupational focus and employable skills. Usually a collaboration of businesses and the mentoring program.	They often offer students work experience and/or internships. Career mentoring gives employees the chance to give back to the communities they work in. There is a greater emphasis on future employment than preparing students for higher education.	<b>The Hospital Youth Mentoring Program</b> is comprised of 15 programs that partners at-risk youth with hospital staff. Mentors and mentees meet in and out of the hospital. Students participate in career exploration and development activities. <a href="http://www.mentor.jhmi.edu/program/toc.html">http://www.mentor.jhmi.edu/program/toc.html</a>
<b>E-Mentoring Programs-</b> E-Mentoring is the newest and least studied model of mentoring. In this model, mentors and mentees communicate electronically via email and telephone.	Fosters relationships between students and professionals that may not have been possible due to constraints of time and distance. Creates diverse perspectives through national and international pairings.	<b>International Telemotor Program</b> facilitates electronic relationships between students and professionals. Mentors must be employed by a sponsor company. <a href="http://www.telemotor.org/">http://www.telemotor.org/</a>

## Useful References

- Stern, D., Finkelstein, N., Stone, J.R., III Latting, J., and Dornsife, C. (1994) *Research on School-to-Work Programs in the United States* (MDS-771). Berkeley: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California.
- Jekielek, Susan, Moore, Kristin A., & Hair, Elizabeth C. (2002). *Mentoring Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis*. Washington, D.C. Child Trends.
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