

Peer Mentoring

In the

Middle School

“When you’re down and troubled and you need a helping hand... it’s nice to know, you’ve got a friend?” James Taylor

What happens when a classmate reaches out to help another classmate become more organized and succeed on a daily basis? An assistant principal and a seventh grade teacher in a suburban middle school set out to discover what they could about this process in the 2004-2005 school year.

Teams at the school, with encouragement from administration, developed research based “crisis plans.” “Emergency preparedness of public schools to respond to a variety of crises such as fire, tornado, terror attack, and other emergencies in precise procedures known to all staff and students are in place. Schools need similar “crisis” plans to guide their response when students are not meeting the primary function of a school: learning.” (Dufour, 2004)

Met life fellows Aimee Holleb and Susan Williams (TNLI) studied a crisis plan that involves volunteer team mentors in a middle school. Measuring the effect of year long relationships among teen age middle school students is a difficult task. Middle

school students are changing so rapidly physically, mentally, and emotionally, that many times the friends they entered school with become mere acquaintances by the end of the year. It seems inevitable that a relationship based on need and willingness to help, blessed by the teachers involved, and academic and persistent in nature, will have some rocky moments during the year.

In this case, teachers believed that student mentors could make a difference in the lives of their mentees. The researchers hoped to produce more positive attitudes, better grades, better self esteem, greater confidence, and better organizational and managerial skills.

Focusing on four pairs of students and using interviews, surveys and photographs, the researchers hoped to show improvement. What they found was that one student drastically changed when he was shown a method to become a better student. The others all stated that they were happy to have a mentor, and that the mentor really helped them, however, their grades did not show significant improvement. Researchers decided to keep the plan and improve it next year to strengthen the academic involvement of the tutors to include more precise content teaching with direction from teachers.

Possibly the most important outcome uncovered through this research was one which had not even been articulated as a reason to create peer mentor relationships. It came from a student who was viewed as “withdrawn” and “at risk” academically and socially by her teachers. In addition to gaining a mentor in the program, she claimed that she found a “best friend” through her mentor relationship.

In the 2005-6 year the team will provide more training for peer tutors. They will utilize the tutors to reteach certain concepts. Teachers will provide released items from SOL tests and formative assessments for tutors to use for specific peer tutoring in addition to organizational help, and homework assistance.

TNLI STUDY

**What happens when peer mentors
support students who are
academically at-risk?**

Aimee Holleb and Susan Williams

Lakeside Middle School

2005

Introduction, Background, and Rationale

Lakeside Middle School is located in the City of Fairmont and is part of a large suburban school division. It meets the needs of students in both the City of Fairmont and in the surrounding county. The City of Fairmont School Board oversees the building facility, citywide initiatives, and unique advocacy opportunities that support student learning. The school system employs the staff, curriculum leadership, and instructional vision consistent across the 26 middle schools in the county.

Lakeside Middle School serves about 1000 students in the seventh and eighth grade. Approximately 16% of the students have limited English proficiency. Fewer than 20% receive free or reduced fees. About 7% of students are in the school-based Honors program. Ethnically, the school is approximately 51% Caucasian, 9% Black, 12% Hispanic, and 23% Asian. Approximately 5% come from other ethnic backgrounds such as American Indian. About 14% of the population is served through the program for students with disabilities.

This middle school offers a variety of unique programs:

- Teams-During the 2004-2005 school year, 4 seventh grade interdisciplinary teams and 3 eighth grade interdisciplinary teams support the needs of all students. Each team consists of a common math, English, social studies, and science teacher. One team in the seventh grade and one team in the eighth grade share teachers and students who are English Speakers of Other Languages, while the other teams share teachers and students who are in programs for students with learning disabilities and/or emotional disabilities. Each team has a guidance counselor who supports students, staff, and families. Teachers share a common team planning period to focus on the needs of individual students on the team and build relationships with their families. These teams are led by a teacher-leader who serves on the Middle School Council that meets monthly with elective department representatives and school administrators to discuss school needs.
- PLC Time-Each core teacher is a member of a grade-level content professional learning community. They share a common planning period and meet to discuss

Final May 8, 2005

SW and AH: Lakeside Middle School

- student learning, assessment, lesson planning, and content. These are led by a teacher-leader facilitator, some of whom serve as department chairpersons who meet once a month as part of the Instructional Council.
- “TA Time”-TA time allows 30 minutes within the school day for learning support. Reforming the way this time is used is part of the vision for academic improvement at Lakeside Middle School.
 - Passport-Each student at Lakeside Middle School is given a school assignment notebook, with the passport page located at the front. The passport is a behavior modification tool used to hold students accountable for behavior and work habits. Students may earn back points lost for infractions of expectations. At the end of each quarter, students attend a school-wide celebration commending them on their successful maintenance of points on their passports. Additionally, all students are able to earn “Eagle Feathers” and Citizenship Points that can be redeemed for prizes at the end of each quarter. They earn these based on random acts of kindness, support of school programs, and at the discretion of school staff who want to recognize students.
 - Block Scheduling-During the 2004-2005 school year, a four-day block-scheduling model has been implemented. On Mondays, students attend all seven classes (math, English, social studies, science, PE/Health, and two electives) and lunch/ta period. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, students attend periods 1, 3, 5/6, and 7. On Wednesdays and Fridays, students attend periods 2, 4, 5/6, and 8. Seventh graders typically have lunch/ta during period 5 while period 6 is one of their classes, while eighth graders typically have class during period 5 and lunch/ta during period 6.
 - Technology Integration-Computer labs do not exist in Lakeside Middle School as separate places where students use technology. Rather, each interdisciplinary team has a wireless laptop cart of 16 computers to bring technology into classrooms. Additionally, the English, science, and electives departments each have a cart.
 - “Exploratory Wheel”-All seventh grade students take 4, nine-week courses as one elective class. The courses include: introduction to foreign language, art, technology tools, and health.
 - Honors/GT Courses-All students have the opportunity to take honors science, social studies, and math courses in both the seventh and eighth grade. Additionally, they have opportunities to take GT English in the seventh and eighth grade.

Final May 8, 2005

SW and AH: Lakeside Middle School

- High School Courses-Students in the eighth grade have opportunities to take Algebra I Honors and/or French I, German I, and/or Spanish I for which they earn high school credit.
- After-School Clubs and Activities-Students have opportunities to participate in after-school clubs and activities on Mondays for one hour and Wednesdays for one hour and fifteen minutes. More than 25 clubs and activities are sponsored by faculty including those such as: newspaper, yearbook, PE boot camp, art club, guitar club, math team, young scientists discovery club, German club, step team, family and consumer science club, D.A.R.E. (Drug Awareness Resistance Education), G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Educational and Training) and special olympics.
- Intramurals-During February of 2005, an additional late bus day was added on Thursdays to provide students the opportunity to participate in a two-hour intramural opportunity.
- Big Brothers and Big Sisters Program-During the fall of 2004, more than twenty students began being supported with mentors through this nation-wide mentoring program. Mentors are honor society students at the local university.
- Warm Individuals Nurture Growth in Students (W.I.N.G.S.) Mentoring Program-During the Fall of 2004, more than 50 students began being supported by staff members who serve as warm individuals nurturing growth in students.

Context

We studied the impact of one team's new "crisis plan." The Leopard Team is one that supports seventh grade students in the general education population and those in the program for English Speakers of Other Languages. The team's motto is: "If you can't find it, you can't do it, if you can't do it, you can't turn it in, if you can't turn it in, it can't be graded." While other teams employed teacher assistance and even additional teacher instruction, the Leopard team's plan has a unique component which consists of pairing students who are at-risk with peer mentors who give support during Teacher Advisory time, a thirty minute period that backs up to the students' lunch period. Over time, TA changed from a 30 minute formal "Teacher Advisory" period to a more informal

opportunity for students to work on homework, participate in silent sustained reading, make up missed tests and quizzes, and request assistance from teachers of core content.

- We decided to focus on the impact of “TA-time” pairings of peer mentors with students who are academically at-risk .

Literature Review

In Whatever It Takes, How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn, Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, and Karhanek (2004), state that schools must “create a school-wide system of interventions that provide(s) all students with additional time and support when they experience initial difficulty in their learning” (7). The authors go on to suggest that intervention plans should be based upon interventions rather than remediation, should be systematic, should be timely, and should be directive. They hold that, “a school truly committed to the concept of learning for each student will stop subjecting students to a haphazard, random, de facto education lottery program when they struggle academically. It will stop leaving the critical question “How will we respond when a student is not learning?” to the discretion of each teacher. It will instead develop consistent, systematic procedures that ensure which student is guaranteed additional time and support when needed. In fact, until the staff of a school begins to respond to students communally rather than as individuals, the school will never become a Professional Learning Community” (33).

W. James Popham's (2005) “Students' Attitudes Count” published in Educational Leadership contends that “student affect-that is, students' attitudes, interests, and values-should be enormously important to educators because affective dispositions are powerful predictors of students' subsequent behavior” (84).

Additionally, the author suggests “most self-report affective inventories ask respondents to indicate agreement or disagreement with a series of statements related to the affective dimension being measured. Some students' responses, of course, are likely

to be more positive than their true sentiments, whereas some students' responses are apt to be more negative. When we calculate the average response of a student group, however, these too-positive and too-negative responses tend to cancel each other out, thus providing a sufficiently accurate indication of the group's affect. For that reason such assessments can accurately measure the affective status of student groups, but cannot accurately measure the affective status of individual students" (84).

According to (Jackson and Davis, (1989), "middle schools in every context, need to both strengthen their academic core, and establish caring, supportive environments that value the young people that they serve" (3). Jackson and Davis go on to say that "understanding the intellectual, social, physical, emotional and psychological, and moral characteristics of the early adolescent can provide the foundation for a vision of learning and teaching in the middle grades" (4). Their report suggests that educators must understand the five important areas of adolescent growth: intellectual, social, physical, emotional/ psychological, and moral. Social status is very important to adolescents. "Young adolescent learners" write Jackson and Davis, "have an intense need to belong and be accepted by their peers while finding their own place in the world" (9). They suggest that one of the keys to meeting this social need is for teachers to "provide opportunities for the social interaction necessary to navigate this phase of life, both with peers and adults, so that young people can be influenced positively at a time when they can be deeply affected by those around them" (12). It also explains that teachers can help the social development of students by "maintain(ing) clear expectations for social interaction" and "foster(ing) classroom and team identity" (14).

In speaking of the emotional and psychological development of students, Jackson and Davis hold that,

“for the middle school student, daily life is an emotional roller coaster marked by unpredictable mood swings (often due to hormonal imbalances) and changing best friends. At no other stage of development are young people more likely to encounter differences between themselves and their peers. This, coupled with the intense physiological changes common to early adolescence, makes most students this age vulnerable and self-conscious, both mentally and physically” (16). Their report suggests that teachers must, “create peer editing, tutoring, and mentoring activities,” to support the unique emotional and psychological development of adolescents (17). Additionally, they suggest that teachers should, “teach students about goal setting and conflict resolution” (17).

With regard to moral development Jackson and Davis write that “Embracing idealism-having a desire to make the world a better place-and wanting to be socially useful is how one might characterize the young adolescent’s moral development.... Young people have a profound ability to feel compassion and concern, and to act boldly on moral grounds” (18-19). Also, morally it suggests, “with their new sense of the larger world around them, young adolescent learners are idealistic and want to have an impact on making the world a better place” (9).

According to Jackson and Davis, teachers of adolescents should consider learning styles and understanding student diversity. “In mixed schools, students of diverse background and identities can benefit greatly from explicit support from teachers and from programmatic structures that bring peer groups together in positive ways” (35). They suggest that bringing students of diverse backgrounds together

to discuss, among other things, social issues and homework, helps all students achieve at high levels (35).

Jackson and Davis (1989) advocate supporting multiple intelligences in the classroom and they note that students with interpersonal intelligence that “thrive on small-group work and notice and react to the moods of their friends and classmates”. “Clubs, committees, after school programs, social events cooperative learning...peer teaching, tutoring, and mentoring” (39) are venues for supporting the growth of interpersonal skills.

There are many materials and resources for parents who wish to effectively support the needs of their adolescent child. One such publication which is supported by the U.S. Department of Education and is available on their website (<http://www.ed.gov/print/parents/academic/help/adolescence/partx2.html>) suggests that parents should help their child get organized: “Young teens respond to these changes in varying ways, but many of them daydream, forget things, lose things and seem unaware of time. It’s not unusual for a middle schooler to complete a homework assignment but forget to turn it in. Some schools help students develop organizational skills. Others leave the task to parents.”

Brain research suggests unique development of the brain during the period of adolescence. As reported in Time Magazine, “What Makes Teens Tick,” by Claudia Wallis (2004),

“the very last part of the brain to be pruned and shaped to its adult dimensions is the prefrontal cortex, home of the so-called executive functions-planning, setting priorities, organizing thoughts, suppressing impulses, weighing the consequences of

one's actions. In other words, the final part of the brain to grow up is the part capable of deciding, I'll finish my homework and take out the garbage and then I'll IM my friends about seeing a movie" (61).

Karen D. Wood (2004), explains that

"As is true of all students, ADHD students often respond positively to loss of praise and encouragement-they want to succeed. Most are aware they have a problem, but they often do not understand it themselves. Over time, these students can begin losing faith in their abilities and may become behavior problems. Called self-efficacy, it is the belief in one's ability to organize for and undertake a task successfully. Self-efficacy develops as a result of feedback and interactions at school, home, and the community, as well as the degree to which students feel they have autonomy and control over life situations. Self-efficacy determines the degree to which a student is sufficiently motivated to stay on task and complete an activity or assignment" (52). Wood goes on to say that students with ADHD typically experience a diminished sense of self-efficacy but are extremely responsive to positive reinforcement and support when they are engaged in experiences in which they can experience success.

Jon Lounsbury and Gordon Vars (2003) explain that

"throughout their middle school years, young people seek increasing independence from adults. Making the transition from a heavily dependent child to a fully independent adult is difficult even under the best of circumstances. Adults who work with young know that the best way to avoid outright rebellion is to gradually reduce restrictions, negotiate honestly, and be prepared for some lapses as young people assume more responsibility...Understanding teachers and parents offer young people many

choices, non judgmentally guide them towards reasonable choices, and help them learn from the consequence of choices that prove unwise.”(11)

David L. Stader, (2001) writes that a "life world and a systems world are both essential to school organization.” Stader highlights the work of Jurgen Habermas (1987) who proposed the following:

“The systems world consists of the management designs, policies, rules, and schedules that provide a framework for students and teachers to engage in the practice of teaching and learning. When the systems world dominates, the rules, policies, and bureaucracy become a means to an end and stifle the life world. A dominant systems world destroys the fabric of the school culture resulting in fractured relationships, dysfunction, alienation, isolation, and, far too often, violence.”

Schaller (2000) holds that "The life world communicates a powerful message. The life world determines and perpetuates how students and teachers interact with peers and one another. It is important to note that student perceptions of the school environment are more important in determining student behavior than the perceptions of teachers, administrators, or policy makers” (Schaller, 2000). He suggests three programs to improve the life world of a school: a school-based character education program, peer mentoring, and peer conflict mediation.

Beverly Pringle, Leslie M. Anderson, Michael C. Rubenstein, and Alexander W. Russo (1990) identify the following outcomes of peer mentoring: (1) Improvement in academic achievement

(2) improved attendance, fewer disciplinary referrals, and improved attitudes toward school. Particular improvement was found among learners who were assisted with daily assignments, and encouraged to develop efficient organizational and study skills.

Lucinda M. Wilson & Deborah A. Corpus (2001) focus on social learning, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. They write that “sense of self influences the choice of activity, how much effort one is willing to expend, and how persistent one will be in accomplishing a task” (1). They found that “extrinsically caused behavior actually undermines motivation in the long run and demonstrates that “a student’s internal or intrinsic sense of self and belief in working hard to achieve a goal are the determining factors in whether or not he will succeed.” They highlight “goal orientation and the idea that motivation is determined jointly by the expectation that the effort will lead to the goal (self-efficacy) and that the goal is worth attaining” (1).

Jonathan Mooney and David Cole (2000) attended Brown University in a special program for "slow" learners. They wrote a book entitled Learning Outside the Lines that discusses the unusual learner.

"One of the great unrecognized dramas of childhood has been the struggle throughout history, sometimes spectacularly successful (Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Albert Einstein) and other times dismally unsuccessful, of the unusual learner to find his best place in life. What has gone unrecognized for centuries is that this unusual learner is not stupid, neither is he bad. Indeed, he may be gifted" (16).

They advocate teaching kids organizational skills: “marking your territory (putting your name, phone number, email address all over all your things so they can be returned when

you lose them), finding it a home, personalizing it, making it essential, avoiding notebook crossover, making time to declutter, and watching out for transitions" (97).

Following these lines of research, our focus was on ways in which peer mentoring might help struggling students by raising their self-esteem, supporting the growth of organizational skills, and improving achievement.

Method and Tools:

Eighteen students who were struggling academically, as identified by teachers, were paired with academically successful students in the Fall of 2004. They were immediately placed on the Leopard team's "Crisis and Celebration Plan." A letter was sent home to parents informing them that a peer mentoring relationship was being established. Each student met with the counselor about ways the student can become more successful, and each student was paired with a student who was academically successful. The focus of the mentoring was to help these new seventh graders who, for the first time, were expected to maintain and organize materials for seven different courses throughout a school week. "Mentors" were instructed to help support their "mentees" by first supporting the task of organization. This includes teaching about binder organization, binder check, locker clean out/organization, and assistance with assignments. Mentors were oriented by their science teacher. Teachers told mentees that their mentor would support them first in developing organization skills and then with content.

Parents received the "Tips for Parents" advice article, a letter about the program (Appendix E and F), and were asked to give permission to have their children participate. They were informed that the counselor would be involved in monitoring student progress.

All mentors and mentees turned in evaluation sheets of the program each week to their TA teachers and set goals for the upcoming week. An appreciation party was given for mentors at the end of the year and "Lion of the Month" certificates were presented to celebrate success.

In order to determine attitude changes, interviews were conducted with eight of the participants, four mentor and mentee partnerships by the assistant principal. Surveys were completed weekly by participants and grades were analyzed each interim and reporting period.

Student Mentees Background Information:

Mentee #1

WJ is a student who entered Lakeside Middle School in November. He was in the general education program. His mother indicated a history of poor motivation in school.

Mentee #2

LC is a student who receives services through the ESOL B2 Literature course, a course which takes the place of an elective class, but does not replace the English 7 course all seventh grade students are expected to take.

Mentee #3

PA also receives services through the ESOL B1 Literature and Language class and through the ESOL B1 US History Course, which replaces the typical US History 7 course all 7th grade students are expected to take.

Mentee #4

MT is a student in the general education program who has been at Lakeside Middle School since the beginning of the school year. His elementary school records note that he is sensitive and disorganized. He has an adult staff member mentor at Lakeside Middle School.

Data Analysis/Interpretation:

Analysis of Data Source #1: Interviews (Appendix A): One of the most interesting parts of the interviews was that all students spoke positively about the peer mentoring relationships. Their comments revealed a theme that overall they see the program as something that is helpful. They all seem to value the connection between organization and academic success. Most commented that they acknowledge the methods of being an organized person and see the rewards of being able to retrieve materials easily as a result of having an organized school binder. There seemed to be a genuine buy-in to the program by both the mentors and the mentees. Most mentees identified the element of wanting to be more independent with the task of organization and their prediction that in the next school year, they will not necessarily need a mentor supporting their effectiveness in organization. There seemed to be a general giving and receiving spirit discussed. Lastly, there was a general sense of “friendship” revealed in the interviews between the mentors and mentees. Mentee #3 PA even noted that Mentor #3 TL was a “best friend” as a result of this program.

Analysis of Data Source #2: Student Surveys (Appendix B and Appendix C): When mentors and mentees rated their agreement/disagreement with statements about the peer tutoring program, a very different picture was painted about the experience as compared to the interviews. In general, there seems to be disparity in mentors feeling like their mentees appreciated them, yet the mentees felt they made their feelings of appreciation well known to mentors. The mentees, in general, seemed to like being helped but did not like their weaknesses being addressed. This program puts the problem out front and

forces them to deal with it. It does not come easy for them and seems to be so easy for their mentors that it is hard for them to express gratitude. Mentee #1 WJ and Mentor #1 MT had different perceptions about the effectiveness of the program as indicated on their surveys. While Mentor #1 MT did not seem to feel that Mentee #1 WJ's attitude was improving, grades were improving, buy-in was improving, or appreciation was growing, Mentee #1 WJ revealed that he felt just the opposite on these items. Mentee #2 LC and his mentor also had a very different perception of the personal relationship piece of their partnership. Mentor #2 HA did not note the feeling of appreciation, while Mentee #2 LC felt that appreciation was shown. Mentee #4 MT and Mentor #4 GM were the only pair who had similar ratings throughout the 10 reactions to statements. There seemed to be a theme that their relationship was not always "positive."

Analysis of Data Source #3: Report Cards: In looking at the grade report cards of all students, no trends were noted that give conclusive reason to make strong arguments for or against the mentoring relationships. Mentee #1 WJ's grades went down in both English and history, but maintained in math and science. Mentee #2 LC's grades went up then down in English, stayed the same then improved in math, stayed the same then improved in history, and went down then up in science. Mentee #3 PA's grades went down then maintained in English, remained the same in math, and went down each quarter in history and science. Lastly, Mentee #4 MT's grades went up then down in English and history and went up then remained the same in math and science.

Analysis of Data Source #4: Photographs of Binders: Photographs were taken of student binders as a way to observe the outcome of the organizational work of mentors/mentees at the end of a TA session in March. Mentee #1 WJ's binder was a disappointment. It is interesting to note that Mentee #1 WJ begged to stop having a mentor because he said he could keep his binder organized himself. He lost his agenda book twice in the same week. He left his science paper laying on the table when he left class on 4/20/05. His mother had to be called to buy him a new binder. When he brought it in, he had not put anything in the new binder. He wanted his mentor to do it. When he made a D in English 3rd quarter, he tried to blame his mentor for not making him do the paper which caused his grade to drop. Mentee #1 WJ was told that he could stop having a mentor if he made all A's B's and C's since he has great potential to be strong academically speaking. Yet his difficulty with organization and attitude seemed to persist despite the mentoring relationship. In fact, due to concerns about his negative attitude, a "Contract for Change" behavior modification report was implemented and sent home each week in attempts to support a change in his poor attitude

. Mentee #2 LC's binder was by far the most improved of all the students in this study. He went from a student who never knew what to do in TA and would just sit, to one who ALWAYS had a paper in front of him and was busy during TA-the model TA student. He places the papers back in his binder and does not leave them or lose them. His grades have gradually improved. He usually works on math and his grade in math has improved dramatically.

Mentee #3 PA's binder noted difficulties in organization. The rings on this binder were broken. They cannot be repaired and the binder needs to be replaced. Again, there

may be an economic issue here: the zipper pouch looks old and broken. Yet the binder contains pens and pencils, which Mentee #3 AP never had before beginning the mentoring program. The binder may be old, as it had handwriting on it which did not belong to Mentee #3 AP. One of the rings was broken-a new binder and pouch are needed.

Mentee #4 MT acquired a pouch for his supplies and began keeping a neat binder. Mentee #4 MT had dividers and some papers were in their correct places. The binder was so neat and organized that the teachers noted that it seemed that Mentee #4 MT was afraid to put any papers in it for fear of “messing up” the organization. This seemed to be true when a textbook filled with worksheets was found in Mentee #4 MT’s belongings. Additionally, an important document, a class registration for the 8th grade, was found in his notebook and had been due 3 weeks prior to the taking of the photographs. It did not seem that Mentee #4 MT was learning from Mentor #4 GM. Papers were not filed. Mentee #4 MT developed a poor attitude over the year, consistent with recommendations made by his former 6th grade teacher. His behavior warranted meetings with the assistant principal over the three quarters. Yet, despite the apparent lack of success with the mentoring, it is to be noted that he and his mentor developed a strong friendship with each other. Mentee #4 MT calls upon Mentor #4 GM when help is needed with organization.

Findings Section:

- By focusing on organization skills, mentees learn that being organized is an on-going commitment to the goal. Systematic ways are established by people who tend to be more successful with organization and these ways can be explicitly taught to those for whom such procedures are not routines. Students understand the connection between organization and preparedness for learning.
- Our data makes it clear that students want to be successful with organization, however a discrepancy between the students' feelings of confidence as a result of partnership and grade reports and photographs of the progress. In both interviews and surveys, students seemed much more positive about the successfulness of the program. Yet this impact was not seen in grade reports or consistently in photographs of binders.
- In conclusion, teaching organizational skills is necessary but not sufficient to insure academic success and growth in self esteem.
- Findings reveal that mentors need training in effective tutoring methods to include academic concepts and deficiencies of mentees as gathered by teachers from formative and summative assessments in order to improve academic performance of mentees.
- Feedback from teachers to mentors and mentees will be of value to the partnerships.
- Research indicates that it is good to mix cultures, however in this study, a confrontational relationship resulted from the pairing of a mideastern boy with a girl. His culture dictates the male as the authority figure so he may have responded better and identified more with a male mentor.

Policy Recommendations:

The following recommendations can be made as a result of the data collection analysis, and literature review conducted by this research team:

- Mentor and mentee relationships should continue as a way to offer individualized support for students who are struggling academically. Students respond to this

- type of support, which clearly differs from the support which can be offered by a teacher, parent, or adult mentor in a school. Adolescents specifically respond positively to this social opportunity to focus on academics.
- Mentors should have clear training about the expectations of their roles. This training should focus on a clear purpose for the goals of the relationships: 1) Help mentee help himself with binder organization to gain more independence in this task 2) Oversee mentees assignment notebook entries to help mentee help himself in writing down assignments 3) Offer academic support for concepts in core classes which are not understood by mentee.
 - Mentors and mentees should have clear training about ways to maintain a positive relationship as they work together. With this, training should also focus upon ensuring that the mentee does “more work” than the mentor in terms of the work towards successful organization.
 - Mentors and mentees should reflect on their work together every two weeks with the TA teacher to self-assess their progress with organization, academic support, and grade improvement.
 - Cultural background should be taken into consideration when assigning mentors as indicated in the Mideastern young man paired with a girl where his society dictates that only men are the authority figures. He may have responded better to a male mentor. Mentees should be made well aware of the sacrifices of time their mentors are giving to help them. Mentees should be taught some ways to show appreciation.
 - Mentees should write letters of appreciation to their mentors
 - Mentors and mentees should be recognized with certificates at end of the year team awards assembly for participation in the program.
 - Mentors should be provided with several get-togethers over the year to share successful strategies and receive congratulations, praise, and appreciation from teachers.
 - Binders, supplies, and other materials to support successful organization should be provided for students who need financial aid.
 - Ideas from Learning Outside the Lines should be used in planning and implementation of organization techniques for students

- Check off sheets for mentors to use for organization with their mentees should be used on a daily basis to ensure focus on goals and accountability for accomplishments during each TA time when mentors and mentees work together
- Determine which teams worked best and ask mentors how they brought about change. How were their methods more effective?

References

- DuFour, Richard and Robert Eaker. Professional Learning Communities at Work, Best Practices For Enhancing Student Achievement. ASCD. Alexandria, Virginia. 1998.
- DuFour, Richard and Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, Gayle Karhanek. Whatever It Takes, How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn. National Educational Service. Alexandria, Virginia. 2004.
- Jackson, Anthony W. and Gayle A. Davis. Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century. Teachers College Press. New York. 1989.
- Lounsbury, John H. and Gordon F. Vars. "The Future of Middle Level Education: Optimistic and Pessimistic Views." Middle School Journal. National Middle School Association. November 2003. Vol. 35. No. 2. Pgs 6-14.
- Mooney, Jonathan and David Cole, Learning Outside the Lines. Simon and Shuster, New York: 2000.
- Paulu, Nancy. Helping Your Child Through Early Adolescence. Department of Education. (<http://www.ed.gov/print/parents/academic/help/adolescence>)
- Popham, James W. "Students' Attitudes Count." Educational Leadership. February 2005. 84-85.
- Slader, David L. "Lifeworld and System: Promoting Respect" NCA Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement Journal of School Improvement, Volume 2, Issue 2, Fall 2001. http://www.ncacasi.org/jsi/2001v2i2/lifeworld_systems
- Turning Points Transforming Middle Schools "At the Turning Point: The Young Adolescent Learner." (www.turningpts.org)
- Wallis, Claudia. "What Makes Teens Tick." Time. May 10, 2004. Vol. 163, No. 19. Pgs 56-65.
- Wilson, Lucinda M. & Deborah A. Corpus, "The Effects of Reward Systems on Academic Performance." Middle School Journal, September 2001. http://www.nmsa.org/research/res_articles_sept2001.htm

Wood, Karen D. "Meeting the Literacy Needs of Students with ADHD in the Middle School Classroom." Middle School Journal. National Middle School Association. January 2004. Vol. 35. No. 3. Pgs. 50-55.

Appendix A:

Interview with Students Format

- 1) Tell me about the peer mentoring program you're participating in during TA class.
- 2) What's good about the program?
- 3) What's bad about the program?
- 4) Other teams don't have the program. What would you say to them?
- 5) What else should I know about the program?

Appendix B:

Mentor Weekly Questionnaire:

Date: _____

TA Teacher: _____

Name of **Mentor**: _____

Name of Mentee: _____

Please evaluate using 1-4 1=Strongly disagree 4=Strongly agree

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My mentee seems to like me to help him or her. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. My mentee is becoming more independent and needs me less. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. My mentee is learning from me so he or she can function better on his or her own. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. My mentee's attitude has improved. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. My mentee says his or her grades have improved. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. My mentee helps make it easy for me to help. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. My mentee asks for my help when I forget. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. I like helping my mentee. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. I feel appreciated by my mentee. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. My mentee thanks me and understands that I could be doing something for myself instead of helping him or her. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Comment here with a few sentences about what was accomplished this week and your goals for next week:

Any great ideas or recommendations?

Appendix C:

Mentee Weekly Questionnaire:

Date: _____

TA Teacher: _____

Name of **Mentee**: _____

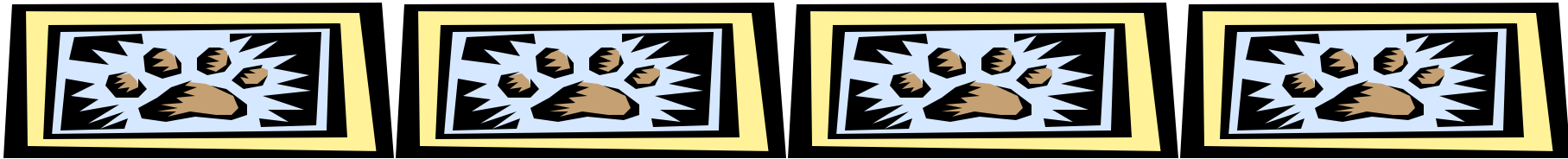
Name of Mentor: _____

Please evaluate using 0-4 0=Strongly disagree 4=Strongly agree

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My mentor seems to like helping me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. I am becoming more independent and need my mentor less. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. I am learning from my mentor so I can function better on my own. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. My attitude has improved. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. My grades have improved. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. I try to help make it easy for my mentor to help me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. I ask my mentor for help when he or she forgets. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. I like being helped by my mentor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. I appreciate my mentor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. I thank my mentor and understand that he or she could be doing something for herself or himself instead of helping me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Comment here with a few sentences about the impact of this program on your education this week:

Any great ideas or recommendations?



The Pride of the _____ A ward

is presented to

Tom Jones

For Outstanding Achievement as a part of
our TEAM during February 2005



Appendix E:

Helpful Hints for Parents at Home



Everyone is busy. Statistics show that parents spend an average of about 8 minutes a day engaging in conversation and interaction with a high school student. If that is all the time we can find, we need to make that time count.

Here are some tips.



Have a basket of school supplies which stays in the same place near the desk (ha) bed of your seventh grader. Include scotch tape, glue sticks, colored tabs, colored pencils, markers, small pencil sharpener, sharpened pencils, stickies, scissors, extra notebook paper, construction paper, colored paper. Don't forget to replenish.



If you can get your middle school child to sit at a desk or kitchen table where you can watch them for a certain amount of time each day, you get an A+.



Help your child use a calendar to plan for nightly homework and long term projects. In the days of blocking, it is very confusing what assignment is due the next day. Chart out a week of classes so you can actually see which class is due on which day. Put the name of the class, not just second or third period. Encourage your seventh grader to do assignments each night rather than listening to: "I don't have that class tomorrow."



Make a copy of project instructions in case the 1st ones get "lost". You may want to keep a copy somewhere away from the study area for yourself.



Access fcps.blackboard.com with your student in front of a computer. Print out the week's work and put it in a folder by subject. If your computer does not work or you do not have one, use the public library.

Final May 8, 2005

SW and AH: Lakeside Middle School



Speaking of public libraries, they are a great place to “bond” with your child. Kids love books or magazines or newspapers. Take them there and share some library time. It is also a good place for them to do research, study, or do homework.



If you can make this study time a set time during the day that you keep like an appointment, your child can also set it like an appointment and work their friends, sports, and social activities around it.



If you can enforce a study ritual at this age, you may be able to continue it into high school years. If this discipline is not established now, it will be very difficult to enforce as your child gets older.



Find a book your child can read in his or her spare time, that you can discuss.



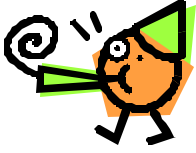
Find out what major topic in each subject your child is studying that week. If he or she says “nothing”, look in their lab books, textbooks, and agenda to find out for yourself. Find out something you know about the topic and surprise your child with a conversation about what they are studying.



Keep up with current events and bring them into conversations around home. The Kennedy clan found a clipping from a newspaper on a bulletin board in their home each day. They were expected to discuss that article at dinner that night. (Of course, they had butlers, cooks, and maids, and their mother’s job for the day was to find the article-but you get the point.) You can come up with your own way of accomplishing the same thing. (ex. “What is happening with Mt. St. Helens?” -Science “Where is it?” -Geography “What happened in the past? What date?” -History “How do you abbreviate Saint” “What needs to be capitalized?” “Why?” -English “How many miles is the mountain from Seattle?” -Math)



Go to museums, aquariums, and the zoo.



Celebrate success.



Discover a place your Lion team member wants to go. Plan a trip there for having a week or month of working hard at your study plan.



Remember that school is school and life is life. School is just a part of life. Don't forget to live and love each other.

Appendix F:



_____ Team Mail

Dear Parents and/or Guardians of _____.

As you know, the Lion's Team has implemented a peer mentoring program during TA class. Ms. H., assistant principal, and Mrs. W, _____ Team science teacher, have been selected by Fairfax County Public Schools to conduct teacher-research about the program to determine its effectiveness as part of the Teacher Network Leadership Institute (<http://www.teachersnetwork.org>).

To help in our research, we would like to interview _____ about this program. The interview will allow us to collect data to be analyzed in our project. Since there is a chance that our results could be anonymously published on a web site or in an educational journal by the Teacher Network Leadership Institute, we need your permission to conduct such interviews. Please know that all student names will be changed. In fact, our school name/school system may also be anonymous.

We appreciate, in advance, your consideration of this request. To indicate that we have your permission to interview your child, please sign below and return this to Mrs. W by _____. Feel free to contact Ms. H, assistant principal, at 703-866-6666 if you have any questions or concerns.

I, _____, give my permission for Mrs. W or Ms. H to interview my child
(printed parent name)

_____ for their Teacher Network Research Institute project.
(printed student name,)

Parent Signature/Date

Student Signature/Date

RETURN TO MRS. W BY _____

Appendix G and H:

Checklist for Success

	YES	NO: Comments:
1. (1) 3- ring binder with name clearly visible		
2. Dividers for each subject-clearly labeled		
3. Papers are filed correctly behind the dividers Hold upside down and if <u>anything</u> falls out- check NO		
4. Supply Pocket for supplies		
5. 2 pencils sharpened		
6. Small pencil sharpener		
7. 2 Ball point pens		
8. 1 Colored pen for correcting		
9. Highlighter		
10. Assignment book with name clearly shown, in good condition, not folded or mutilated, all assignments entered for the week		

Contract for Change:

Dates _____	Regular Day	Block Day	Block Day	Comment:
1. Enters classroom and starts class appropriately				
2. Raises hand for <u>appropriate</u> questions				
3. Organizes binder				
4. Completes HW				
5. Interacts with peers appropriately. Talks only when working with partners or in groups.				
6. Responds promptly to teacher requests- no arguing				
7. Asks for permission to talk with teacher <u>in private</u> if feels the need for discussion				
8. Displays evidence that time has been spent studying <u>outside of class</u> for tests and quizzes				
9. Has needed supplies: pencils (sharpened), spiral, lab books, pens, highlighters, zipper pouch in binder				

