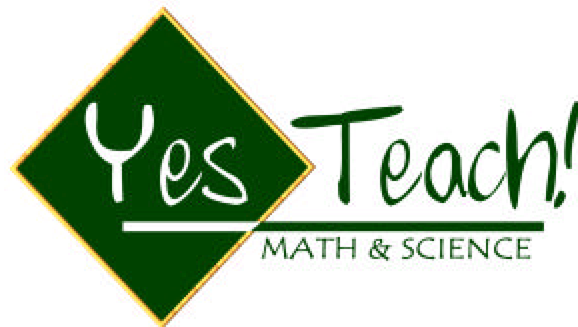

Mentor-Teacher-Community Toolkit
Resources for Math, Science & Reading

National Research Kit

Developed for the Florida Independent College Fund
and
The Independent Colleges & Universities of Florida

by

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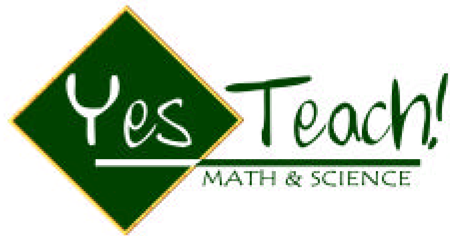


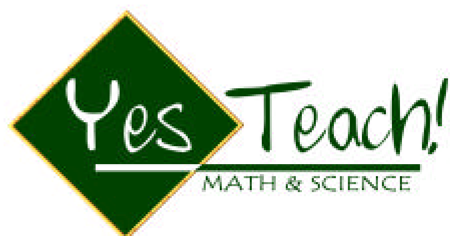
MENTOR-TEACHER-COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

RESOURCES FOR MATH, SCIENCE & READING

NATIONAL RESEARCH KIT

In support of the YesTeach! Math & Science – Mentor-Teacher-Community (MTC) Toolkit and Evaluation service agreement, Caliber Associates is pleased to present the National Research Kit. Caliber shares the commitment of the Florida Independent College Fund (FICF) to recruit, prepare, place and support new math and science teachers throughout Florida. Moreover, the Caliber shares the YesTeach! belief that mentors, teachers and community members that support and coach students are an invaluable untapped resource. The purpose of the National Research Kit is to add value to FICF's investment in Florida's future via equipping these agents of education to assist at-risk children and youth. In fulfillment of the aforementioned agreement (product #2), the National Research Kit provides an overview of mentoring research and summarizes selected research findings. The literature review also includes a synopsis of the extant body of mentoring research and recommendations to determine what works, what doesn't work, and what's promising.

The MTC Toolkit project is sponsored by the FICF. The Toolkit was prepared by Dr. Jeanette Hercik, Dr. Jackie Booth, Dr. Stephanie VanDeventer, Mr. Richard Lewis, and Ms. Tara Croan. All opinions are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the sponsoring organization. Questions and comments should be directed to Dr. Jeanette Hercik at jhercik@caliber.com.



MENTORING MATTERS: A SUMMARY OF MENTORING RESEARCH

In general, the research literature supports mentoring as a promising approach for enhancing youth development. At least since the ancient Greeks, societies have used formal and informal mentoring relationships to develop the capacities of their youth (Freedman, 1992). Traditionally, these relationships developed informally or through connections between the youth's family and their mentors. In more recent times, however, concerns have been expressed that youth in modern societies are less connected to adults than their predecessors, as youth spend less time in apprenticeship roles and less time with adults. Thus, the concept of structured mentoring programs has grown in popularity as one approach to reconnecting youth and adults, preventing problematic youth behavior, and promoting positive youth development. This concept has been bolstered by research finding that one of the most consistent differences in the environments of resilient at-risk youth and at-risk youth showing less positive outcomes is the presence of a caring adult, whether a parent, teacher, spiritual leader, or community member (e.g., Conger & Conger, 2002; Luthar, 2003; Wolkow & Ferguson, 2001). The aforementioned research findings indicate that mentoring holds tremendous potential to connect youth to positive, caring adults in their community, who could promote a sense of trust in youth, model appropriate behavior, and keep youth involved in mainstream institutions including schools.

Despite consistent research findings that a caring adult can promote the positive development of youth who are at-risk, it is not necessarily the case that volunteer mentoring programs would have similar effects on youth outcomes. "Natural" mentoring relationships, which form through the spontaneous, mutual admiration and trust of an adult and a youth, may be very different from "Volunteer" mentoring relationships, that form through relationships pre-arranged by mentoring program staff. Thus, evaluation research conducted over the past decade is critical to understanding whether this concept of promoting mentoring relationships through structured programs was, in fact, effective. Generally, the extant body of research has provided even more support for the concept of volunteer mentoring, suggesting that mentoring programs – when well-designed and well-implemented – do indeed have the potential to promote positive outcomes for youth (Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Grossman & Johnson, 1999; Jekielek, Moore, & Hair, 2002; Sipe, 1999; Tierney & Grossman, 1995). This research is discussed in greater detail below.

Evaluations of Mentoring Programs

Many studies of individual mentoring programs have been conducted to date. Dubois et al. (2002) conducted a recent meta-analysis of mentoring programs and found 55 evaluations meeting their criteria for inclusion. As evidenced by the growing number of literature reviews on this topic, the research literature on mentoring programs is large and increasing. A number of these studies have found positive effects of mentoring programs for youth's academic outcomes, interpersonal relationships, and involvement in delinquent behavior. These effects have been found across a range of developmental domains. For instance, studies have found that mentoring increases positive attitudes towards school and school engagement (LoSciuto, Rajala, Townsend, & Taylor, 1996; Blakeley, Menon, & Jones, 1995), school attendance (Cave & Quint, 1990; LoSciuto et al., 1996; Tierney & Grossman, 1995), and school performance (Tierney & Grossman, 1995; Blakely et al., 1995). A few studies suggest that mentoring programs can increase youth's attachment to and attitudes about their peers, adults, and their families, though the findings in this area are more mixed (LoSciuto et al., 1996; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000; Tierney & Grossman, 1995). Further, studies of mentoring programs in which youth are paired with adults typically find that youth report positive relationships with their mentors (e.g., Herrera et al., 2000). Finally, evaluations of mentoring programs have reported reductions in aggressive behavior (Tierney & Grossman, 1995), behavioral and disciplinary problems in school (Blakely et al., 1995), and misdemeanors and felonies (Blakely et al., 1995). Youth participating in mentoring programs also have been found to have more skills for avoiding drug use (LoSciuto et al., 1996) and to be less likely to initiate alcohol and drug use (Tierney & Grossman, 1995) than comparison samples of youth.

Positive effects of mentoring also have been identified in domains thought to be related to youth's academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, and delinquent behavior. For instance, one study of an intergenerational mentoring program found that mentored youth had more positive attitudes toward helping others than youth who did not receive a mentor (LoSciuto et al., 1996). Likewise, an evaluation of community-based Big Brothers Big Sisters programs found that youth participating in the programs perceived themselves to be more competent in school than a comparison group of youth who were assigned to the programs' waiting lists (Tierney & Grossman, 1995). Thus, mentoring programs have the potential to promote more positive outcomes across a variety of domains of adolescent development, a finding that has led to more public and private funding for mentoring programs.

Still, not all evaluations of mentoring programs have shown positive effects, and not all mentoring programs are equally effective. Mentoring programs vary widely in their design, locale, and target populations. Thus, the question of which mentoring approaches constitute best practices is critical for the development of the MTC Toolkit.

Recent reviews of the empirical evidence have examined mentoring evaluations to determine common characteristics of the most effective mentoring programs. Dubois and his colleagues (2002) conducted the most recent and rigorous of these reviews. In this meta-analysis of 55 studies, Dubois et al. (2002) found that over 90 percent of the studies demonstrated positive effects of mentoring on youth outcomes. The authors also found, however, that the average effect across these studies was small, though statistically significant, and that there were systematic differences between programs that were more effective at promoting positive youth outcomes and programs that were less effective. The key findings of this meta-analysis and other relevant are discussed below, highlighting the implications for the design of mentoring programs nationwide and the state of Florida.

This section focuses on promising program strategies "best practices" for mentoring at-risk students and highlights innovative approaches that can equip college students, teachers and community groups to mentor, teach and coach at-risk elementary and middle school children in math, science and reading. The research to date suggests that mentoring programs are more effective when youth establish closer ties to their mentors. For instance, Grossman and Johnson (1999) found that youth participating in the Big Brother Big Sisters program and the Sponsor-A-Scholar program were more likely to experience positive effects of the program if they had longer lasting relationships, more frequent contact, and reported a higher quality relationship with their mentors. Likewise, Dubois et al. (2002) found that larger effects were found among evaluations of mentoring programs in which youth and mentors had more frequent contact. Finally, Grossman and Rhodes (2002) found that youth who have longer lasting relationships with their mentors (i.e., relationships that have lasted at least a year) have higher levels of perceived self-competence and school engagement, more positive relationships with their parents, and less drug and alcohol use than youth whose relationships were more short-lived (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). This study also suggests low quality mentor-mentee relationships may do more harm than good; children whose mentor relationship lasted less than three months had lower self competence than children with no mentor at all.

Consistent with the findings described above, mentoring research has focused on a number of programmatic features related to the development of the mentor-mentee relationship. The most consistent findings from this research suggest that issuing expectations regarding the frequency of mentor-mentee contact, offering quality mentor training, and providing ongoing support of mentor-mentee relationships are key features of effective mentoring programs (Dubois et al., 2002; Sipe, 1999).

- Clear expectations of regular mentor-mentee contact. Dubois et al. (2002) found that programs that specified the amount of contact they expected between mentors and mentees had more positive effects on youth than those that did not. Likewise, in a review of mentoring research, Sipe (1999) notes that several effective programs have

established regular meeting schedules to encourage pairs to meet consistently over time.

- Quality mentor training. According to Sipe (1999), mentors must be adequately trained to understand their role in the mentor-mentee relationship and must be trained to keep the relationship going even when the mentee is non-responsive. Indeed, research suggests that mentor training must continue throughout the life of the program: both Dubois et al. (2002) and Herrera, Sipe and McClanahan (2000) found that more effective mentoring programs offered ongoing training to their mentors.

- Ongoing support for the mentor-mentee relationship. Sipe (1999) also notes that ongoing support for the mentor-mentee relationship is a critical feature of effective mentoring programs. Those programs in which there is no regular contact by the staff to offer support and troubleshoot with the mentor and mentee report the most failed matches, regardless of the type of mentoring they offer (Sipe, 1999). Staff support is critical for helping mentors and mentees make it through rough patches in their relationships, as often occurs with adult-youth relationships and between mentors and mentees who are from different backgrounds.

Mentor Screening and Mentor-Mentee Matching

The existing evidence offers less clarity about the importance of two other program features designed to enhance the quality of mentor-mentee relationships: mentor screening and mentor-mentee matching. In their discussion of the Juvenile Mentoring Program, Grossman and Garry (1997) note that it is important for programs to screen for and select mentors who are more likely to be successful and more likely to understand that their role as a mentor is one of developing a friendship. Still, Dubois et al. (2002) found no difference in the outcomes for programs that used screening criteria to select mentors and those that did not. Thus, while screening mentors is important to ensure the safety of youth, the evidence is unclear whether screening can be an effective tool for promoting more positive mentor-mentee relationships and developing more positive youth outcomes.

The importance of matching mentors and mentees on interests is also unclear, but the limited research suggests it is not a critical feature of effective programs. Both Grossman and Garry (1997) and Dubois et al. (2002) note no differences in the effectiveness of programs that use matching and those that do not. Likewise, Sipe (1999) states that the mentor's behavior with the youth is more important than the manner in which the mentor-mentee match was made. A great deal of discussion has focused on the importance of same-race and cross-race matching, in particular, as some experts have expressed concerns that youth will be less able to connect with mentors from different racial or

ethnic backgrounds (Ogbu, 1990; Rhodes, Reddy, Grossman, & Lee, 2002). Indeed, many programs refuse to match youth with mentors from a different racial or ethnic background. This restriction often creates waiting lists of youth, as less than a fifth of all mentors are from a racial minority, compared to nearly half of mentees (Rhodes et al., 2002). Still, a considerable share of the completed studies find few consistent differences between same- and cross-race matches in either the quality of mentor-mentee relationships (Herrera et al., 2000; Morrow & Styles, 1995) or youth outcomes (Dubois et al., 2002; Rhodes et al., 2002).

In addition to the emphasis on *program features* related to the quality of mentor-mentee relationships, existing research offers some guidance on the importance of mentoring programs' *activities and goals*. Mentoring programs often supplement mentoring with a variety of other activities and program features, such as tutoring or counseling, and mentoring programs differ widely in their stated goals. For instance, Sipe and Roder (1999) report that in their study of 722 programs across the country, all programs had a stated goal of fostering relationships between mentors and youth, while the next most common goal was improving academics (61 percent of programs). Newer mentoring programs were more likely to have instrumental goals, such as increasing academic outcomes or decreasing substance use, than older programs. Still, these goals do not appear to make a difference for program effectiveness. In their meta-analysis, Dubois et al. (2002) found no relationship between the effectiveness of mentoring programs and their stated goals for their mentors or their youth. Likewise, Dubois et al. (2002) found no differences in the effectiveness of programs that exclusively focused on mentoring and those that paired mentoring with some other activity, such as tutoring. Dubois et al. (2002) also found that programs that offered structured activities were more effective than those without such structure and that programs that included parent involvement were more effective than those that did not. Still, the Dubois et al. (2002) study does not answer the question of whether mentoring programs using specific activities (e.g., school-based training) are effective or how programs incorporating specific activities can increase their effectiveness.

The existing research also suggests that mentoring programs may be more effective for more disadvantaged youth (Grossman & Johnson, 1999). For instance, Dubois et al. (2002) found that children who experienced both environmental risk factors (e.g., single parent family, poverty) and individual risk factors (e.g., behavioral or emotional disturbances) benefit more from mentoring programs than children experiencing individual risk factors alone. Further, Dubois et al. (2002) found that children experiencing environmental stressors alone benefit more than children experiencing individual risk factors alone. Indeed, most mentoring programs are targeted at disadvantaged youth: Sipe and Roder (1999) report that 70 percent of the mentoring programs they surveyed target youth with at least one risk factor.

Less is known about the effectiveness of different mentor populations. In the only review to examine this issue to date, Dubois et al. (2002) found that programs using mentors with experience

in helping roles or professions (e.g., teachers) were more effective than programs that did not use such mentors. Still, little is known about whether programs using particular mentor populations (such as intergenerational mentoring or peer mentoring) are more effective at promoting positive outcomes than others.

In sum, existing evaluations of mentoring programs offer positive indications that mentoring programs can improve the academic achievement and attainment, interpersonal relationships, and behavior of youth. However, not all mentoring programs are equally effective. The current research indicates that programs with clear expectations for mentor-mentee contact, quality mentor training, and staff support for mentor-mentee relationships are more effective than programs lacking these features. The importance of other program features, such as screening and matching, and the effectiveness of programs with specific supplemental activities are less clear. Likewise, relatively little is known about the effectiveness of certain mentor populations (with the exception of those with experience in helping roles or professions), though the evidence is clear that youth from more disadvantaged backgrounds stand the most to gain. Exhibit I-1 presents a short synopsis of mentoring research findings.

Exhibit 1: What Works, What Doesn't Work, What's Promising in Mentoring?

What Works	**What Doesn't Work**	What's Promising
▪ Guidelines for regular mentor-mentee contact ▪ High-quality, ongoing mentor training ▪ Ongoing support for mentoring relationships ▪ Structured activities ▪ Parental involvement ▪ Mentors with experience in helping roles ▪ At-risk mentee populations	▪ Mentor screening ▪ Mentor matching ▪ Program goals ▪ Supplemental activities	▪ School-based settings ▪ Faith-based settings ▪ Group or team mentoring ▪ Peer mentoring ▪ E-mentoring ▪ Specific mentor populations ▪ Specific supplemental activities

Recent trends and research needs

Although a great deal of research exists on mentoring programs, the vast majority of research has been conducted on traditional, one-to-one, mentoring programs, and has focused primarily on community-based programs. At this time, relatively little is known about the effectiveness of, or the best practices in, other types of programs or programs held in other settings. Below we discuss what existing research suggests about the effectiveness of, and best practices

within, two types of mentoring programs of relevance to the MTC Toolkit: school-based programs and group or team mentoring.[1]

School-based mentoring programs

Because many MTC Toolkit users are school-based, the following discusses mentoring programs in school settings. Studies indicate that 30 percent of all mentoring programs are located in schools, and more than three-quarters of all site-based mentoring programs are school-based (Sipe & Roder, 1999; Rhodes, 2002). Still, school-based programs, while not new to the field, have been the subject of far less research than community-based mentoring programs.

School-based mentoring programs are structured differently than community-based programs (Herrera et al., 2000). These programs have access to wider networks of mentees than community-based programs, as they can draw upon all youth in a school, not just those whose families actively seek them out. School-based programs can also access a wider array of mentors, who may feel more comfortable with mentoring in structured environments. Moreover, school-based programs may lead to stronger connections between mentors, teachers and other adults at school, and tend to have a more academic focus. Indeed, in a comparison of school-based and community-based mentoring programs, Herrera et al. (2000) reported that mentors in school-based programs reported more contact with the mentees' teachers and felt more effective in influencing mentees' educational outcomes than mentors in community-based programs. School-based programs also cost less money than community-based programs (Rhodes, 2002), in part because these programs have fewer full-time staff (the program may be run by a school administrator) and receive resources in-kind from the school. In addition, Herrera et al. (2000) found no differences in the training or mentoring support offered by school-based programs.

Although school-based programs may offer greater contact with teachers and other school staff, some concerns have been expressed about whether school-based programs offer mentees less exposure to both their mentors and to experiences outside the schools (Rhodes, 2002). Herrera et al. (2000) report that mentors and mentees in school-based programs spent half the number of hours together per month of those in community-based programs (6 hours vs. 12 hours, respectively). Sipe and Roder (1999) also report that school-based programs tend to be shorter in duration, lasting the length of a typical school year. Perhaps as a result of these differences, Herrera et al. (2000) report that fewer mentors reported feeling very close to their mentees in school-based programs than in community-based programs (though the majority of both groups felt close to their mentees). Moreover, Dubois et al. (2002) found some evidence, albeit limited, that school-based programs are not as effective as community-based programs. Certainly, examples of effective school-based

1 Other approaches such as, faith-based mentoring programs for elementary and secondary school students and peer mentoring have rarely been addressed in the literature and are therefore not discussed here. However, the MTC Toolkit is designed to serve both faith-based programs and peer mentoring programs, given their increasing prevalence.

programs exist (Johnson, 1999; LoSciuto et al., 1996). Thus, it is critical that the field begin to identify, document, and disseminate the most effective practices in school-based mentoring.

Group mentoring and team mentoring

Other approaches that may be taken by MTC Toolkit users include group mentoring and team mentoring (multiple mentors and/or multiple mentees). Similar to school-based mentoring, the majority of the literature on group and team mentoring is speculative or descriptive, offering theoretical reasons why these programs may be more or less effective than community-based programs and descriptions of a limited number of existing programs. The most commonly cited arguments in favor of using a group mentoring approach are that fewer volunteers are needed in these programs than in one-to-one programs and that some mentors and youth may feel more comfortable in a group setting (Herrera, Vang, & Gale, 2002). In addition, group-mentoring programs, like school-based programs, may be able to serve a wider range of mentors and mentees due to less dependence on individual mentor-mentee relationships. In fact, school-based programs and group mentoring are closely linked; Sipe and Roder (1999) report that 65 percent of group mentoring programs are located in schools.

Despite the potential benefits of group mentoring, concerns have been expressed about the development of mentor-mentee relationships in group mentoring programs. Because mentors in these programs must divide their attention among many youth, mentors and mentees may have less individual time to develop a bond. Further, relatively little is known about how mentee-mentee relationships that develop in these programs may supplement or complement the mentor-mentee relationships.

Although relatively little is known about the effectiveness of group mentoring, a recent study of three such programs by Herrera et al. (2002) provides some insight into the characteristics of group mentoring. This study supports the notion that group mentoring programs recruit a broader array of both mentors and mentees. Most mentors interviewed for the study reported that they would probably not have volunteered for a more traditional mentoring program. Likewise, the three programs reported that they were able to recruit youth through more sources than were used by one-to-one programs, including through their peers, teachers, and parents. Still, Herrera et al. (2002) report that mentors in group programs reveal challenges related to mentoring multiple youth, such as spending equal time on group members, addressing attitudes and behavioral issues in a group setting, and choosing engaging, interesting activities for the whole group. Mentors in group settings are also less likely to report close relationships with their mentees than mentors in community-based settings. At the same, the youth reported positive effects of the group mentoring programs, reporting that they got along better with teachers, parents, and friends, and that their mentors helped them get better grades. Those youth who reported more close relationships with their mentors reported more positive effects. These preliminary findings offer both optimistic

assessments and cautions about the potential effects of group mentoring programs. More research, however, is needed to determine the effectiveness and identify best practices of group and team mentoring models. Like school-based programs, promising models of group and team mentoring programs exist (see Herrera et al., 2002). Future efforts must be made to identify the common characteristics of effective programs adopting this approach.

In sum, evaluations of mentoring programs have indicated that mentoring can be a promising approach to promoting youth development and offer information about best practices in traditional one-to-one, community-based mentoring programs. Still, mentoring programs differ in their design, with some programs operating within schools using group or team mentoring approaches. There is strength in this diversity, as different youth likely benefit from different mentoring approaches, just as different learners benefit from different teaching methods. Moreover, these additional approaches may complement traditional mentoring programs, which have not been able to meet the demand for mentors (Herrera et al., 2002). This diversity, coupled with the limited research on less traditional mentoring approaches, demands the support of a MTC Toolkit that can help translate existing information on research into practice, communicate the findings on best practices and innovative mentoring approaches, and provide resources for mentors, teachers, and community members.

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