DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTEER MENTOR PROGRAM MANUAL

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by
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Abstract

A volunteer mentor program manual was developed for the use of Vanier Collegiate, targeting high school students as volunteers to work with elementary aged children.

Research on mentor programming indicated that organized and structured programming, similar to Big Brothers/Big Sisters’ model, is more likely to achieve successful outcomes. The manual closely followed the recommendations in order to emulate this success and to minimize any potential harm to youth receiving services.
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Development of Volunteer Mentor Program Manual

This report consists of an examination and development of a manual for a high school volunteer mentor program at Vanier Collegiate of the Holy Trinity Catholic School Division (HTCSD), Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. This project occurred from September, 2009 to January, 2010. It is anticipated that this manual will enhance the existing mentor program at Vanier Collegiate, and will also allow other high schools who may be interested in developing their own mentor program, to utilize the manual as a guideline. This project will further facilitate professional growth in my own program coordination duties with Mental Health and Addictions Services in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

Development of the Project

In my position as Program Coordinator for Mental Health and Addictions Services (MHAS), I began working with mentorship programming in 2003. Since that time my job duties have evolved and in my current position I am responsible for all mentorship services offered through MHAS. Although mentorship programming offered through MHAS is very similar to the Big Brothers Big Sisters volunteer model, the mentorship programming that is offered through MHAS is a paid service.

As the demand for mentorship services continues to grow in Moose Jaw, I decided to develop a volunteer mentor program manual, targeting high school students to work on a volunteer basis with elementary school aged children in need of a same sex positive role model. By utilizing best practices methods, incorporating the Elements of Effective Practice (“Elements of Effective Practice”, 2009), the manual was developed to include two main components: (a) the necessary training tools so that high school personnel would
be able to recruit, train, supervise, and set up matches within their school division, and (b) evaluative methods to monitor areas of improvement for the program.

**Objectives**

My objectives for this project were:

1. to create a volunteer mentorship manual that could be used as a template for other high schools wishing to develop their own program.
2. to develop a manual that was clear, concise and easy to use,
3. to enhance overall service delivery in my position at Mental Health and Addictions Services by applying best practices in mentor program development,
4. to learn methods of manual development,
5. to interview individuals to obtain information in the public domain for inclusion in the development of the manual,
6. to interview personnel of the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program, as the model to turn to in volunteer mentor programming, to gain a better understanding of their processes and procedures,
7. to work collaboratively with Vanier school personnel to learn about and understand their volunteer mentor program,
8. to educate local stakeholders in mentor programming about the importance of adhering to the recommended guidelines based on best practices literature regarding the development of mentor programming,
9. to improve my research skills, and
10. to meet the growing demand for mentor services by expanding volunteer mentorship programming within the community of Moose Jaw through the development of a
framework to develop volunteer mentor programming

Context

My current position at Mental Health and Addictions Services (MHAS) is Program Coordinator, Community Outreach Services. Within this position, I supervise several service providers who mentor high needs children and youth within the community of Moose Jaw. A partnership has been made in the delivery of this service with Prairie South Public School Division (PSSD), Holy Trinity Catholic School Division (HTCSD), the Ministry of Social Services (MSS), and MHAS in Five Hills Health Region (FHHR). Representatives from these agencies sit on an interagency intake committee. The purpose of the committee is to review referrals, make recommendations for acceptance or to suggest referrals to other appropriate services within the community. Once the decision has been made to accept a youth into the mentoring program, it is my responsibility to match the youth with a service provider based on gender, interests and needs of the child.

During the course of my duties as Program Coordinator, I noticed the increased demand for mentor services. In order to meet the ongoing need, in the fall of 2005 I decided to start a volunteer mentorship program, targeting local high schools for prospective volunteers to work with elementary school children within their own school divisions. I worked with local high schools for two years and discovered that Vanier Collegiate, in particular, embraced the project. Because of other duties within my job, I was no longer able to continue with the project; however personnel at Vanier Collegiate decided to continue with the program on their own.

Because I continue to see the demand for mentors increase within the community, and because of my belief in the value of mentorship, particularly for at-risk children and
youth, I wanted to make strides to meet the demand through increased mentorship programming. My intention was to equip Vanier Collegiate, and any other high school wishing to embark in a mentorship program, with the necessary tools to develop their own high quality program utilizing best practices based on research in this area. This research project would not only allow high schools to develop their own volunteer mentor programming, but would also enhance my own practice as Program Coordinator at MHAS.

In meetings with staff of Vanier Collegiate, I have been able to learn more about how their volunteer mentor programming has evolved and how it operates today. After I discontinued my involvement with the school a few years ago, school personnel embraced the idea of volunteer mentoring and continued with the program, using some of the foundations I had provided, but also developing some of their own ideas. The program continued to adhere to the structure in place, incorporating elements specific to the needs of Vanier and the school division. In early discussions with staff, it became evident that the program could benefit from additional resources. In particular, staff identified the areas of mentor training and evaluation methods as gaps in current programming. The manual that was developed includes these two areas and now meets best practice guidelines.

In researching mentor programming, I found the effects of mentoring on youth can and does yield benefits. Programs that are well structured and organized have the potential to produce measurable gains (Rhodes, 2002a; Freedman 1993). These gains are achieved slowly over time with the emphasis being on relationship development between mentor and mentee. The research cautions that mentor programs that do not adhere to the strict
guidelines similar to Big Brothers Big Sisters programming have the potential to not only be unhelpful to youth but may also cause further damage (Rhodes, 2002a). One of the primary purposes of the current research project was to develop mentor programming that follows the recommended guidelines based on best practices research in order to prevent harm from occurring.

According to the Elements of Effective Practice (2009), the rationale in developing structured programming is that it ensures that measures are in place to: (a) provide recruitment and screening methods to hire appropriate mentors, (b) receive a long term commitment from both mentors and mentees, (c) provide ongoing training to mentors, (d) have a process of matching, (e) provide monitoring and support to the match, and (f) develop closure and evaluation procedures. The mentor program manual that has been developed includes all of the best practice recommendations, along with training supplemental material to deliver programming.

**Origins of the Mentoring Movement**

**What is Mentoring?**

The term mentoring “has generally been used in the human services field to describe a relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated, younger protégé—a relationship in which the adult provides ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the protégé” (Rhodes, 2002a, p.3). Volunteer mentoring generally involves relationships between youth and adults who offer assistance in meeting the youth’s academic, social, career, and/or personal goals (Rhodes, 2002a) with “teaching, socializing, and role modeling [being] central aspects of the mentoring relationship” (Buckley & Zimmerman, 2003, p.2).
Rhodes (2002a) discussed and highlighted the essence of what makes mentoring work, identifying three important ways in which mentors can positively influence their mentees:

1. “By enhancing social skills and emotional well being,
2. by improving cognitive skills through dialogue and listening, and
3. by serving as a role model and advocate” (Rhodes, p. 35).

Mentoring has become a popular intervention method in working with youth.

**History of the Mentoring Movement**

In 1904, Ernest Coulter, a young New York City newspaper man recognized a void in young people’s lives. Coulter left his career in journalism to work in New York’s first children’s court; here, he witnessed more and more boys come through his courtroom. As Walker and Freedman (1996) recounted, Coulter was “appalled by the harsh juvenile justice and social welfare systems he encountered…[and] appealed for help to his friends at the Men’s Club of the Central Presbyterian Church of New York” (p. 75). Coulter approached the businessmen, pleading for their help and is quoted as saying, “There is only one possible way to save the youngster, to have some earnest, true man volunteer to be his big brother, to look after him, help him to do right, make the little chap feel that there is at least one human being in this great city, who cares whether he lives or dies” (Buckley and Zimmerman, 2003, p. 65). As a result of Coulter’s impassioned speech, he was successful in getting volunteers to sign up marking the beginning of the Big Brothers Movement; hence the mentoring movement was born. By 1916, Big Brothers had spread to 96 cities across the country (“Big Brothers Big Sisters of America”, 2008).

At around the same time, another charitable organization, Ladies of Charity, were befriending girls who had come through the New York Children’s Court. That group
would later become Catholic Big Sisters. Both groups worked independently until 1977, when big Brothers of America and Big Sisters International decided to join forces, becoming Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBS). In 1998 Big Brothers Big Sisters International was founded (“Big Brothers Big Sisters of America”, 2008).

In 2004, BBBS celebrated 100 years of service to youth, and currently operates in all 50 American states and in 12 countries around the world (“Big Brothers Big Sisters of America”, 2008). There are 138 BBBS agencies in over 1000 communities across Canada that provide direct service to over 27,000 children and youth (“Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada”, n.d.)

Over the last several decades, the loss of adult supports has continued to grow as many youth are not able to find older, supportive adults beyond their own household (Rhodes, 2002a). Many factors, which include shifting marital patterns, loss of community cohesiveness, and the increase of women in the workforce have all contributed to the loss of adult supports (Rhodes, 2002a). Rhodes (2002a) pointed out that manufacturing jobs that once offered families economic stability, have given way to low-paying service jobs and unemployment. Further, “the expansion of professional human services over the past thirty years has stifled the growth of informal mentoring relationships” (p. 11).

It is evident today that the need for providing mentors in the lives of at-risk youth has not diminished. Walker and Freedman (1996) stated that “almost 100 years later, the circumstances that so outraged Coulter…and launched the Big Brothers Big Sisters movement are dramatically worse” (p. 76). In Moose Jaw, the ongoing need is evident by the continual stream of referrals and community members’ increasing demand for mentors. The local chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters, which has only recently become
operational again in Moose Jaw, along with a variety of other mentor programs, tries to keep up with the increasing demand for mentors.

Relevance to Social Work Field

A move away from family and community began to take place during the industrial revolution (Rice & Prince, 2000). The natural system of mentoring began to fade as families and communities were taken further away from the home environment, leaving a gap in the teaching and mentoring of youth into adulthood. As a result, social policies were formed to take the place of what family and community formerly provided, shifting the responsibility to the State:

Governments in Canada, especially municipalities but also the provinces, began intervening, more and more in the social sphere. After Confederation, as people left the farm for work opportunities in the growing towns and cities, they found that their lifestyles changed. (Rice & Prince, 2000, p. 37)

Communities and families that once cared for one another were discovering new roles and responsibilities in the changing workplace. Rice and Prince (2000) indicated that, “As people were separated from their family and community by the process of industrialization they found it more difficult to meet their needs. There was growing cultural disorganization, secularization, and individualism” (p. 38). Rice and Prince (2000) pointed out:

As industrialization transformed Canadian society, old structures and processes were found inadequate. Citizens encouraged the provinces to take major responsibility for certain groups of people: the aged, the sick, children, and people with mental disabilities. The provinces provided an ever-expanding range of institutions, tuberculosis hospitals, homes for the aged and infirm, child welfare services, and other specialized programs. (pp. 38-39)

The move from families and communities providing support for one another, was slowly shifting to one in which the State provided professional intervention:
from the colonial era to the end of the 1930’s, social policy emerged and changed along many dimensions…the sponsorship of social care and control began shifting from the private and charitable sector to the state sector, and public bodies took on responsibility for child welfare, public health, education and, the income needs of injured workers, single mothers, soldiers, and seniors. (Rice and Prince, 2000, pp. 51-52)

These early social policies paved the way for current social policies on youth initiatives. The first years of the 20th century gave way “to the newly emergent social work profession…as these early social workers replaced the approach of personal relationship with technical expertise in the form of casework” (Freedman, 1993, p. 8). It is this shift in history that marked the beginning of formal mentoring relationships, replacing what was once provided naturally by the family and community.

Social policies have been developed to take the place of what family and community provided, and the field of Social Work has been instrumental in filling the void of natural mentoring systems. Although the implementation of mentor programming through social programming is well intentioned, it is also essential to follow best practice recommendations in order to deliver programming that yields positive outcomes.

Rhodes and DuBois (2006), in their social policy report, Low Fidelity: Understanding and Facilitating the Youth Mentoring Movement, reviewed what is known about mentor relationships and programming. They concluded that mentoring relationships are most likely to promote positive outcomes and avoid harm when they are close, consistent, and enduring. Further, they recommended better alignment of research and practice in the area of youth mentoring. It is important therefore, that policy makers, in designing and carrying out mentor programming, heed the advice in the research to increase the positive effects that mentoring can have on at-risk youth, rather than poorly implemented or funded programs which can have detrimental effects on youth.
Effects of Mentor Programming

Dr. Jean Rhodes, a professor at the University of Massachusetts is renowned for her research on mentoring. Rhodes (2002a) stated that although there has been considerable literature in recent decades supporting the idea of mentoring, not all of the literature on mentoring is based on scientific research. She is supportive of the work of Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), a Philadelphia based national research organization. P/PV is a non-profit corporation that designs, manages, and evaluates social policy initiatives aimed at helping young people whose lack of preparation for the workforce hampers their chances for productive lives. P/PV’s work is supported by funds from both the public and private sector (Freedman, 1993). P/PV produced the first-ever nationwide impact study of a mentoring program, examining several agencies of the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization, demonstrating that mentoring can have significant and positive impacts on the lives of children (“Big Brothers Big Sisters of America”, 2008).

Rhodes (2002) stated that much of her own work is anchored in P/PV’s ongoing research of mentoring, in particular their 1995 national evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, claiming that this study is “the largest, strongest, and the most influential evaluation of mentoring to date” (Rhodes, p. 2). This research remains one of the cornerstones of youth mentoring research. Many of the best practices used in mentoring programs today are the result of P/PV’s research in the area of mentoring, particularly their research of the BBBS (Grossman & Tierney, 2000).

In the September 2000 re-issue of the original 1995 P/PV study on BBBS, Gary Walker, President of P/PV reminded us that the study did not show that mentoring, as a generic idea, is effective. It was the structured mentor programming model that BBBS
continues to follow today that is the contributing factor to its overall success. He cautioned that the easy attractiveness of mentoring “belies the effort and structure that makes it work. Neither warm-hearted volunteer nor well-intended professionals in schools can make it uniformly effective without tending to the lessons that Big Brothers Big Sisters has learned” (Tierney & Grossman, 2000, Forward).

Freedman (1993) warned of the danger of implementing mentor programs without structure, arguing that simply pairing adults to kids, without adequate infrastructure, may create a sense of action, but is likely to accomplish little and may even backfire. If a relationship engenders hurt or reinforces negative stereotypes, it is worse than no mentoring at all.

Rhodes and Dubois (2006) indicated that there is a need for careful evaluation of mentoring programming, and that it will be critically important for policymakers to make decisions concerning “dosage and duration” (p. 13). They indicated that “policies that demand greater adherence to evidence-based practice and the use of rigorous evaluations are needed to ensure quality receives as much attention as does quantity as the practice of youth mentoring continues to expand” (p. 15).

**Literature Review**

A literature review shows that the mentor relationship can be a contributing factor in the positive growth and development of at-risk youth. However, it is important to note that “although many existing mentoring relationships are having a significant and positive impact on the lives of children and adolescents, other mentoring relationships have little or no impact at all, and some even bear a negative influence on it” (Wandersman et al, 2006, p. 782). Although mentor programming has grown and increased since the development
of the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization in the early 1900’s, some have achieved successful outcomes, while others have failed to do so. This can largely be attributed to variations in how mentor programming is delivered (Rhodes, 2002b). Rhodes (2002b) concluded that not all approaches to mentoring are equal in their impact to youth; that the challenge is to distinguish between effective and ineffective relationships and understand the contexts that give rise to each other.

This section will be an examination of both traditional one-to-one mentoring, which include pairing a responsible caring adult with a youth, and school-based mentoring, pairing high school students with youth. The benefits and the limitations of both types of mentoring will be explained and recommendations will be offered.

**Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Public/Private Ventures Study**

Today, the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is well known for its one-to-one mentoring for children and youth. The 1995 impact study (re-issued in 2000) of Big Brothers Big Sisters by Public/Private Ventures remains the most influential evaluation of volunteer mentoring to date (Tierney & Grossman, 2000).

The P/PV study looked at a total of 959 boys and girls, between the ages of 10 to 16 years with 93% between 10 and 14 years, selected from BBBS agencies in Phoenix, Arizona; Wichita, Kansas; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Rochester, New York; Columbus, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Houston and San Antonio, Texas (Tierney & Grossman, 2000). The aim of the research was to determine whether a one-to-one mentoring experience made a tangible difference in the lives of the young people involved.
The researchers chose six broad areas in which they hypothesized what effects the mentoring process might have on participants. The six areas included: antisocial activities; academic performance; attitudes and behaviors; relationships with family; relationships with friends; self concept; and social and cultural enrichment. Just over 60% were boys, and more than half were minority group members. Almost all of the youth lived with one parent, usually the mother, while the rest lived with a guardian or family members. Control participants were put on a BBBS waiting list for 18 months and experimental youth were matched with a BBBS volunteer for an average of 12 months, meeting about three times per month lasting about four hours each visit.

Both groups were re-interviewed 18 months later. At follow-up, youth who were matched with mentors reported lower levels of substance use and initiation, less physical aggression, more positive parent and peer relationships, and higher scholastic competence, attendance, and grades than control youth (Tierney and Grossman, 2000).

The study found that:

1. 46% of youth were less likely to initiate drug use during the study period (p. iii)
2. 27% were less likely to initiate alcohol use during the study period (p. iii)
3. 32% were less likely to hit someone (p. 30)
4. 52% were less likely to skip a day of school; 37% decrease in skipped classes (p. 30)
5. 37% decrease in lying to parents (p. 30)
6. there were no statistically significant improvements in the areas of self-concept or in number of social and cultural activities participated in (p. iii).

Rhodes (2002a) indicated that although these findings are encouraging, caution should be used in generalizing them to other mentoring programs. BBBS affiliates tend to
carefully screen, train, and support their volunteers, and maintain a degree of quality control. BBBS programs require a one year commitment of their volunteers, to whom they provide training and ongoing supervision. Unfortunately, this level of training and support is not available in many of the mentoring programs that have emerged in recent years (Rhodes, 2002a).

Contributions to the successful outcomes of BBBS programming were attributed to the kind of relationship developed, in that: (a) they had a high level of contact, meeting approximately three times a month for four hours per meeting, and (b) the role of the mentor was to be a friend, not a teacher or preacher (Tierney & Grossman, 2000). Although it has been discovered that participation in BBBS programming reduced substance use, began to improve academic performance, behavior and attitudes and also improved peer and family relationships, the “BBBS approach does not target those aspects of life, nor directly address them. It simply provides a caring, adult friend” (Tierney & Grossman, 2000, p. 2).

The P/PV research performed on BBBS programming indicates that well organized, structured programming results in positive outcomes for youth and that the success of their programming can be attributed to the organization’s (a) selection and screening process, (b) establishment of longer term matches, (c) orientation and training of its volunteers, and (d) ongoing support.

Freedman (1992) offered support for BBBS’ programming and indicated that “through responsible practice, sufficient resources, and realistic expectations, movements like mentoring can be sustained and constructive additions to the landscape, joining a tradition carried on by sturdy efforts like those of Big Brothers Big Sisters” (p. 70).
Limitations of Mentoring

Grossman and Rhodes (2002) analyzed youth mentoring relationships and examined the predictors and effects of duration in youth mentoring relationships. The goal of their study “was to test the hypothesis that the effects of mentoring relationships grow stronger over time, and that relatively short matches can lead to negative outcomes” (Grossman & Rhodes, p. 213). They found a strong relationship between length of the relationship and quality of the outcomes of the match and stressed the following:

1. Short term mentor/mentee matches (3 months or less) can have detrimental effects on youth.
2. Matches that lasted a year or more reported improvements in academic, psychosocial, and behavioral outcomes; additionally, youth in a relationship for more than one year reported the largest number of improvements.
3. Older adolescents (13-16 years) tended to have shorter relationships than younger adolescents (10–12 years).
4. Mentees from abusive backgrounds were more likely to have their matches dissolve, which could indicate a need for more formal training for mentors tailored to the needs of specific youth.
5. Married volunteers aged 26-30 years were at greatest risk for early termination, perhaps due to family needs affecting mentors’ flexibility and availability (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

In summary, Grossman and Rhodes (2002) stressed the importance of longer mentor/mentee relationships, especially considering that many of the youth who are referred to mentor programs often come from single-parent homes, and many have
experienced failed or disappointing relationships with adults in the past. They emphasized the need for careful screening and training of mentors, and also for sufficient resources to support not only the development of mentor programming, but the ongoing management of mentoring programs.

While Grossman and Rhodes (2002) indicated confidence in the generalizability of their findings, they cautioned that the data was obtained from the BBBS, which is a well organized and structured program. Ideally, in order to replicate the study with other mentor programs, it should be done with similar programming, and not with short term or less formal mentoring programs.

**Successful Mentor Programming**

If uncertainty exists about how mentor relationships affect youth, why are mentoring programs continuing to grow in number? The literature indicates that the mentor relationship can and does provide a very special human relationship (Rhodes, 2002a) highlighting that “kind and accepting mentors can provide the nurturance, approval, and support that are incorporated into adolescents’ positive self images (Rhodes, 2002a, p. 59). Although there is evidence that not all mentor programming is beneficial to youth, and in some cases can be harmful, the research has also been able to identify that in structured, well-run programming such as the BBBS, positive outcomes of the mentor matches have been observed. Rhodes (2002a) indicated that “a small but growing number of well executed studies are converging to suggest that mentoring programs can have positive emotional, behavioral, and academic effects” (p. 17).

Rhodes referred to a meta-analysis of evaluations of mentor programs by DuBois (in Rhodes, 2002a, p. 22), indicating that the effect size of program benefits is attributed to
wide variations in program quality. They discovered that programs with stronger effects had practices that included: (a) training for mentors, (b) structured activities for mentors and youth, (c) frequent contact, (d) support and involvement of parents, and (e) monitoring overall program implementation.

Rhodes (2002a) indicated that well organized and structured programming is essential to maximize the benefits of the mentoring relationship and to reduce any possible harmful effects. She praised the potential that exists within mentoring relationships, but also offered a strong word of caution that “vulnerable children would be better left alone than paired with mentors who do not recognize and honor the enormous responsibility they have been given” (Rhodes, 2002a, p. 3). Other researchers on mentoring (Dondero, 1997; Duriak, 2006; and Sipes, 1998) echo Rhodes’ findings.

Sipes (1998 as cited in Rhodes, 2002a) concisely summed up the recommendations for the development of a successful mentor program and found three elements that are essential to the success of any mentor program: (a) screening, (b) orientation and training, and (c) support and supervision. Sipes reiterated what has been discovered in the literature review supporting the organization and structure of BBBS in the delivery of their mentor programming.

**School Based Mentoring**

Research has shown that providing at-risk youth with adult support through a well supervised, frequent contact, long-term mentoring relationship can improve grades and family relationships, and help prevent initiation of drugs and alcohol use (Tierney & Grossman, 2000). As a result of this success, programs across the United States of America and Canada have begun looking at different and unique ways to expand mentor
programming to reach more youth. School-based mentoring (SBM) is one of the most promising and rapidly expanding approaches (Herrera, 1999).

Through BBBS In-School Mentoring Programs, a caring and responsible adult over 19 years of age, is asked to volunteer one hour per week to spend with a child in the school setting. Today, the BBBS has established SBM as part of its programming and it “is one of the fastest growing forms of mentoring in the U.S.” (Herrera et al., 2008, p. ii). Recently, SBM programs have begun matching youth with high school student volunteers. In 2001 BBBS began using these volunteers in their programming, having close to 50,000 high school youth volunteers across the United States of America. In both types of SBM, the underlying goal is the same – to provide youth with an adult or high school aged friend who can offer guidance, friendship and support (Herrera, 2004).

School Based Mentoring is similar to traditional mentoring in many aspects, however some of the differences include:

**How mentors and youth are matched.** There is more of a range in criteria for matching youth with high school mentors, compared to traditional one-to-one mentoring.

**The length of meetings.** Herrera’s study discovered that the majority of mentors spent half an hour to one hour with their mentees every week, considerably lower than traditional mentoring, and further that the matches lacked some consistency.

**Kinds of activities performed.** While there was concern that SBM matches may spend more time doing academic related activities rather than focus on other recreational activities, it was discovered that most mentors did in fact spend their time in social activities, with only a third reported attending school activities.
**Duration of relationship.** Because SBM runs the length of a school year, there were indications that with longer relationships, youth may have been able to make more progress (Herrera, 2004).

Herrera et al., (2008) conducted a large scale impact study of BBBS, assessing the impacts and describing the structure of the programs and the support provided to the match. The evaluation addressed questions specific to high school mentors, which included: (a) How do matches with high school mentors differ from those with adult volunteers? (b) How do the mentees and their mentors benefit from the match? (c) What are the characteristics of the BBBS mentoring programs using high school mentors? and, (d) Are practices within these programs associated with match success? (Herrera et al, 2008).

The findings indicated that SBM is similar to traditional volunteer mentoring in many aspects, both in its strengths and its limitations (Herrera et al, 2008). The report suggested that high school aged volunteers brought many strengths to the mentoring relationship:

1. High school aged volunteers appear to be an active group of volunteers who bring extensive exposure to and experience with children,

2. they involved their mentees in decision-making more often than adults,

3. they engaged in academic activities with their mentees less often,

4. relationships lasted at least as long as those of adults and their relationships appeared to be fairly strong (Herrera et al, 2008).

A few additional cautions were identified specific to high school mentors: (a) high school volunteers were less consistent, missing more meetings than adults, particularly high school seniors, and were less likely than adult mentors to carry over their match into
the subsequent school year, and (b) impacts for the mentees were weaker than those of mentees matched with adults (Herrera et al, 2008).

Based on their findings, Herrera et al., (2008) concluded that although there are challenges in using high school student volunteers as mentors, there are also many benefits. As in traditional volunteer mentor programming the research indicates that carefully structured programming increases the benefits yielded. Herrera et al., (2008) suggested that “carefully outlining the parameters of high school mentoring programs could improve their ability to benefit youth,” (p. iv) and further “that young volunteers may need very different types of support, training and structure to be successful in their matches” (p. iv).

With regard to specifically school based mentoring, the analysis conducted by Herrera et al., (2008) suggested that younger volunteers require support, training and structure to be successful in their matches, making the following recommendations for strengthening SBM program practices when using high school volunteers:

1. Use high school mentors’ natural strengths. High school students focused more on improving relationships than on academics.

2. Training for high school students should include a central focus on the importance of consistency.

3. Provide matches with opportunities to interact with other youth, however this type of meeting structure may require significant supervision to ensure that the high school volunteers focus attention on their mentees as opposed to their own peers.

4. Provide significant communication with and support for high school student volunteers
5. Provide a minimum of two hours of training, per-match and ongoing.

6. Try to involve high school student volunteers before their senior year to ensure carry over to a subsequent school year.

7. If providing high school students with class credit, consider providing credit only after two semesters of service or carry over to subsequent school year, in order to ensure duration of match.

8. Consider mixing adult and high school programs to draw on each others’ natural strengths (Herrera et al, p. 27-28).

The findings suggested that, as in traditional mentoring services, SBM offers a valuable resource to youth. Additional considerations are suggested in the literature for high school youth who mentor, however once in place, by expanding mentor services to include high school students creating an additional resource to draw from, SBM offers an alternative to traditional mentoring. The suggestions for increased support and monitoring of high school volunteer mentors have been recognized and are addressed in the mentor program manual developed in this project.

**Elements of Effective Practice**

While there are many websites and information praising the effectiveness of mentor programming, as cautioned earlier by Rhodes (2002a), many of the claims are not based on solid research in the field. In 1990, The National Mentoring Working Group, convened by United Way of America and MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership developed a checklist for creating an effective mentoring program, entitled the Elements of Effective Practice (Buckley and Zimmermann, 2003, p. 55). They suggested that adherence to the recommendations “will ensure that mentoring relationships thrive and
endure” [and further includes] “measures that any mentoring program in any setting can implement” (“Elements of Effective Practice”, 2009, p. 2).


Part I includes:

**Recruitment.**

*Standard.* Recruit appropriate mentors and mentees by realistically describing the program’s aims and expected outcomes.

*Justification.* Mentors’ unfilled expectations can contribute to an earlier-than-expected ending of mentoring relationship. Thus, it is important for programs to realistically describe both the rewards and challenges of mentoring when recruiting mentors.

**Screening.**

*Standard.* Screen prospective mentors to determine whether they have the time, commitment and personal qualities to be an effective mentor.

*Justification.* Screening practices, including face-to-face interviews, reference and background checks are recommended as guidelines across a wide range of mentoring programs. These checks provide a concrete method for mentoring programs to enhance the likelihood that the mentee will be protected and safe with his or her mentor.
Training.

**Standard.** Train prospective mentors in the basic knowledge and skills needed to build an effective mentoring relationship.

**Justification.** Mentor training is a vital component of any successful mentoring program and is particularly important because it has documented implications for mentors’ perceptions about the mentor-mentee relationships.

Matching.

**Standard.** Match mentors and mentees along dimensions likely to increase the odds that mentoring relationships will endure.

**Justification.** Matching mentors and mentees based on similarities such as age, gender, race and ethnicity, as well as mutual interests, is frequently recommended.

Monitoring and Support.

**Standard.** Monitor mentoring relationship milestones and support mentors with ongoing advice, problem-solving support and training opportunities for the duration of the relationship.

**Justification.** Research indicates that matches that are monitored and supported are more satisfying and successful, which, in turn, leads to more positive youth outcomes.

Closure.

**Standard.** Facilitate bringing the match to closure in a way that affirms the contributions of both the mentor and the mentee and offers both individuals the opportunity to assess the experience.

**Justification.** Research findings suggest that matches that end prematurely can result
in negative outcomes for mentees. Thus, standards regarding closure are designed to prevent potentially avoidable, premature closures. (http://www.mentoring.org, retrieved October 21, 2009).

These best practice standards were used as the template for the mentor program manual developed.

**BBBS Operating Standards**

Big Brothers Big Sisters programming has been in existence for over 100 years, and “maintains one of the highest levels of name recognition of any organization in America” (Freedman, 1993, p. 34). According to Freedman (1993), BBBS has helped give mentoring “legitimacy as a role that could be engineered through social programs” (p. 34). They developed operating standards and procedures which are reinforced nationally and adhered to by individual BBBS agencies in both Canada and the U.S. The operating standards are closely aligned with best practice recommendations. While each agency can interpret program requirements, the following elements identified by Tierney and Grossman (2000) must be present in BBBS programming:

1. Stringent screening of all volunteers is required to protect the youth and to screen out applicants who may not follow through, who may pose a safety risk and who are unlikely to form a relationship with the youth.

2. An orientation to all volunteers that explains program requirements and rules. Although more intensive training is not one of the essential requirements, many agencies also provide additional training and is recommended by BBBS office. Additional training that is offered includes developmental stages of youth,
communication and limit-setting skills, tips on relationship building, and recommendations on the best way to interact with the mentee.

3. Recommendations that agencies make matches based on each volunteer’s ability to help meet the needs of a specific youth.

4. An emphasis on supervision in order to facilitate effective matches. The national requirements of BBBS include monthly telephone contact during the first year of the contract with both volunteer and youth and/or parent. In addition to the telephone contact, the mentee must be contacted directly at least four times during the first year. Once the first year has concluded, supervision requirements are reduced to quarterly contact. Case managers support the match by providing guidance as needed.

BBBS’ success and longevity can be attributed to its well structured programming and alignment with best practice recommendations. It continues to be the model to refer to in mentor programming.

Methodology

The research methodology focused on: (a) reviewing the literature on mentor program manual development, utilizing best practice methods; and (b) interviewing individuals and obtaining information as available in the public domain.

A review of the literature indicated measurable successes in both traditional (pairing adults with children) and school based (pairing high school youth with children) mentor programming, with slight variations in the delivery of school based mentor programming. In a review of the best practice recommendations on mentor programming and mentor manual development, the Elements of Effective Practice, 3rd Edition (“Elements of Effective Practice”, 2009) provided a template for the development of the mentor program.
The mentor program manual that was developed for use by Vanier Collegiate incorporates the Elements of Effective Practice (2009) and also takes into consideration recommendations for, specifically, school based mentor programming.

During the course of the project, meetings and interviews were held with Holy Trinity Catholic School Division staff who are involved with their internal mentor program. In order for Vanier’s mentor program to meet best practice guidelines, a thorough examination of their program procedure was necessary. I met with Vanier staff to review the proposed changes, making amendments as necessary to reflect their practice, and to fill voids in programming. Initial meetings focused on programming offered at the time, and any gaps in program delivery that they wanted to address. Although Vanier’s mentor program met some of the criteria as suggested by best practice methods, I believed it could benefit from a training package for the mentors and a method for evaluating the program.

I interviewed four members of the community to obtain information available in the public domain for inclusion in the mentor program manual’s training section. These interviews provided me with information and helped to increase my understanding of: (a) Big Brothers Big Sisters programming, (b) community recreation activities offered, (c) the 40 Developmental Assets (Saito, 2001), and (d) resources on the developmental stages of youth.

I held subsequent meetings with Vanier Collegiate Chaplain to: (a) review their forms for use, (b) gain a better understanding of their practice and (c) make the recommended changes. Many of the forms utilized were borrowed from Big Brothers of Regina and amended, choosing information that was pertinent to their specific programming needs and now includes Vanier letterhead.
I conducted research in the areas of additional Training and Evaluation methods for the manual. I chose supplementary training material which included: (a) an orientation outline, (b) Developmental Stages of Youth, (c) 40 Developmental Assets (Saito, 2001), (d) Safety Program, (e) Building Relationships, (f) Communication, and (g) Community activities. The inclusion of this material is in accordance with the Elements of Effective Practice (2009), providing new mentors with the necessary foundation to help them in the delivery of their service to youth.

Evaluation methods for the mentor program were taken from Search Institute’s program tool kit (Saito, 2001). Search Institute is an independent, nonprofit organization located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, whose mission is to advance the well-being of children and youth by generating knowledge and promoting its application (Saito, 2001). The tool kit included surveys, focus group questions and interview questions, which were designed to gather information from mentees, mentors and others who are involved in the mentor program. It also provided guidelines and printable forms to help analyze and report the findings from the evaluations. The evaluation methods provided were intended to gather basic information that does not require a professional evaluator or researcher to perform. The methods were not intended to result in a rigorous scientifically controlled study (Saito, 2001). Saito (2001) also noted:

> to be aware that [the] surveys and questions are not pre- to post-program tools (that is, they should not be used to measure changes over time); there is no provision for a comparison or control group and there are no discussions of sophisticated statistically analyses in [the] tool kit. (p. 1)

I chose the survey format, rather than the interview format, as the evaluation method for Vanier’s mentor program for ease of delivery. As the interview format included primarily open ended questions, this format would be more time intensive. The survey
format, on the other hand, is relatively simple to administer and to score, having primarily
closed ended questions, with only a few open ended questions. Surveys are now available
for both mentor and mentee to complete at the end of the school year, or at closure of the
mentor relationship if occurring sooner.

The mentor program manual created now meets all best practice guidelines and is
specific to the needs of Vanier Collegiate.

**Findings**

I developed a manual (see Appendix B) that will help Vanier Collegiate to deliver a
volunteer mentor program based on best practice literature in the area of mentor
programming. The manual looked at a number of areas such as: (a) development of an
orientation to new mentors, (b) offering additional training, and (c) providing evaluation
forms for both mentors and mentees to complete for ongoing program evaluation. I
developed the program manual following the Elements of Effective Practice (2009) which
outlines the necessary elements of effective mentor programming based on best practice
recommendations in the area of mentor programming.

The original program, while having some basic forms, did not meet many of the best
practice recommendations as outlined in the Elements of Effective Practice, 3rd Edition.
(“Elements of Effective Practice”, 2009). The original program lacked: (a) an Orientation
session to new mentors, (b) additional training for mentors, (c) a method of evaluation.
The manual I developed is now equipped with a well developed training section and
evaluation forms for both mentor and mentee to complete at the end of each school year.

Below is a comparative checklist of the best practices recommendations from the
Elements of Effective Practice (2009) and how the mentor program manual I developed
addresses the gaps, including recommendations for inclusion. The mentor program manual I developed for use by Vanier Collegiate and HTCSDF follows the Elements of Effective Practice (2009) and is divided into the following sections:

1. Statement of Purpose and Long Range Plan

The Vanier Mentorship Program gives students in middle years the opportunity to be mentored by a Vanier high school student. In order for Vanier students to participate as mentors, they will be asked to submit a clear Criminal Record Check, they must hold a valid driver’s license, and attend mentorship training provided at Vanier Collegiate. Young students and mentors will be matched according to their common interests by a team of staff from both Vanier and the young student’s elementary school.

While in the program, mentors will be asked to spend 1-2 hours per week with the mentored student, participating in community activities identified as of interest to both parties. Funding for the activities is provided by Holy Trinity Catholic School division at a set amount, and is currently set at a maximum of $40.00 per month. Mentors will be asked to be involved only in community social activities (not academic) with the student outside of the home. As such, mentors will be asked not to tutor the students with whom they are working.

In order for a child to participate as a mentee, the school division team, the mentor, the child and his/her parent(s) will be required to attend a meeting at Vanier Collegiate for the purpose of setting goals, sharing information, and giving the opportunity for the mentor and student to be introduced. In order to achieve a good match between the mentor and the mentored student, some discrete sharing of background information is required.
Matches will be established early in the fall and run throughout the school year. High school mentors will be asked to provide a commitment to the program for the duration of the school year, with many of the matches running for two years if the high school student is in Grade 11. The aim of the program is to approach students in Grade 11 to allow the match to progress for two years. Although the match ends in June of each year, if possible, students will be asked to continue their involvement over the summer months.

2. Recruitment

Because of the school’s relatively small size, and the tight knit community nature of the school, recruitment is not generally an issue. The school’s on-site Chaplain utilizes her understanding of the students to recruit appropriate mentors. As she has developed relationships with many of the students, she has a unique knowledge of their strengths, abilities and willingness/ability to commit to the program. While some of the students apply to be a mentor, many others are simply approached, determining their interest in becoming a mentor. Grade 11 or 12 students are sought out and as new students become better known by school personnel, they are kept in mind as future prospective mentors.

3. Screening

Screening requirements are fairly stringent, adhering to the Elements of Effective Practice (2009). Each student who may become a mentor must complete an application form, face-to-face interview, provide references, and submit a clear Criminal Record Check before being matched with an elementary school aged youth.

4. Training

The Vanier Mentorship Program did not have a training program for their mentors and this was identified as a gap. This section was one of the primary areas of focus for the
project, and was expanded to include: (a) Developmental stages of youth, (b) 40 Developmental Assets (Saito, 2001), (c) Safety Program, (d) Building Relationships, and (e) Communication. The 2009-2010 school year was the first year Vanier held a group orientation. Vanier staff and I attended and delivered a section of the orientation to the 15 students. The orientation session provided a general overview of Vanier’s program, expectation of the mentors and their reporting requirements. The newly developed program manual has been enhanced and now includes sections on both Orientation and Training based on best practice recommendations.

5. Matching

Following a matching procedure similar to Big Brothers Big Sisters, utilizing a pre-designed checklist of activities, the Vanier Mentorship Program requires that both prospective mentors and mentees each complete an interest inventory prior to the matching process. In the fall of 2009, a meeting was held with Vanier’s selection committee, and the three staff members to review the completed interest inventory sheets, determining the best possible matches based on similar interests. The interest inventory was adapted from Big Brothers Big Sisters and includes information on current interests as well as a range of activities that both the mentor and mentee would like to try. Included in the inventory are sporting activities, both as participant or observer, artistic activities, musical interests, along with a multitude of other activities and interests to choose from.

6. Monitoring and Support

Because of the relatively small school setting, Vanier staff are able to meet regularly with the mentors about the progress of their match. Vanier’s Chaplain will meet with all of the mentors in person on a monthly basis throughout the school year. The student
mentors will be asked to report at the end of each month, providing a summary of their activities and to submit their monthly expenses. In this way school personnel are able to monitor how the match is progressing and how often they are meeting. Student mentors will also be encouraged to see the school Chaplain on an as-needed basis, if other pressing issues arise that they are concerned about. The Chaplain’s office is located close to the main doors of the school, allowing students easy access to her as they arrive and leave school, or gather in the common area that is located directly outside of her door. Because of this regular contact and the Chaplain’s access and availability to the mentors, she is also able to provide ongoing support as required by the mentors. It is this close monitoring and supervision that assists in preventing early termination of the match.

On the other end of the match, the Behaviour Consultant for HTCSD, will remain in regular contact with the mentees, explaining to the mentors that he is the support and connection to the mentees and parent(s). Further support has also been provided by way of additional web-based information, located in the newly developed Orientation section of the Program Manual.

7. Closure and Evaluation

Vanier staff identified closure and evaluation methods as an area they would like more information on for inclusion in their program. Closure includes reward and recognition of volunteer mentors and suggestions of closure activities are included in the Manual. An evaluation form for both mentor and mentee is included in the manual for use of the program at the end of each school year. The evaluation is not intended for pre and post measures, but is to be used for evaluating mentor/mentee relationships.
8. Elements of Effective Practice, 3rd Edition

As a reference, the manual includes a copy of the Elements of Effective Practice (2009), in its entirety, where each standard is identified, along with detailed benchmarks. The manual template includes all areas of best practice recommendations, as identified in the Elements of Effective Practice (2009).

The completed manual has been provided to Vanier Collegiate in hard copy format. Additionally, the entire Manual, along with all supporting information and forms has been provided to Vanier in electronic format so school personnel can update and make changes as necessary.

Discussion of Findings

Research has identified that measurable gains have been achieved in youth involved in mentor programming that is well developed and structured. Mentor programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters are more likely to achieve successful outcomes in their mentorship relationships due to their well structured programming (Freedman, 1993; Rhodes, 2003). The mentor program manual developed for use by Vanier Collegiate meets best practice guidelines and offers programming similar to the Big Brothers Big Sisters successful model.

Thorough screening methods are in place to reduce potential risks to youth, and to ensure that best efforts are made to recruit individuals who possess the necessary background and experience in working with youth, and who are committed to mentoring. A process of matching is in place and, to the best of the program’s ability, matches up mentor and mentee based on similar interests.
Orientation is provided to all new high school mentors in order to educate them about the program’s policies and procedures, reporting requirements and safety program. Additional training as identified by the program will be offered regularly and includes, but is not limited to: (a) Developmental stages of youth, (b) 40 Developmental Assets (Saito, 2001), (c) Safety Program, (d) Building Relationships, and (e) Communication.

A system of monitoring and support ensures that mentors feel supported throughout the duration of the match, having clearly identified staff personnel to contact in the case of emergency or for general questions of support. To reduce the risk of harm to mentees, a method of closure has been developed so matches do not end abruptly. A method of evaluation is now included to monitor effectiveness of programming.

All of the necessary forms, procedures and guidelines are included in the manual, along with additional resources. With all of these elements now included in the mentor program manual, Vanier Collegiate is equipped to deliver volunteer mentor programming that meets all of the Elements of Effective Practice (2009).

**Conclusion**

A significant amount of work has been done in the area of mentor research since P/PV’s 1995 hallmark study on BBBS programming. Today, considerable best practices literature is available from some of the foremost researchers and authorities on mentor program development (Rhodes, 2002).

Youth mentoring, despite all of its positive attributes, is not a cure-all for youth problems. It is unrealistic to expect that a single mentoring relationship, or other relationship, could make up for the multiple challenges that may face any given young person (Freedman, 1993).
Based on the recommendations in the literature, in order to maximize benefits to youth receiving mentoring services, it is essential to have well developed and structured mentor programming in place. Programs such as BBBS, who have infrastructure in place, providing a system of (a) support and monitoring, (b) recruitment and screening, (c) orientation and training, (d) matching, and (e) closure and evaluation, are more likely to produce measurable gains in youth. The literature consistently identified that though their research, Public/Private Ventures “provides the first scientifically credible evidence that Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) programs have many positive and socially important effects on the lives of its young participants” (Tierney and Grossman, 2000, p. 2). Their well-organized, well-structured programming is the key to their success.

The purpose of this research practicum report was to provide an existing volunteer mentor program with the necessary infrastructure to enhance program delivery. The Vanier volunteer mentor program is now equipped with the tools to provide a program that meets best practice guidelines. By providing a program that is well organized, emulating the BBBS model, the risks to youth are minimized and benefits are increased.

Freedman (1993) sums it up best when referring to mentor programming, “Perhaps the most basic lesson is simply that there is no substitute for infrastructure. Without it, all that remains is fervor. And fervor alone is not only evanescent and insufficient, but potentially treacherous” (p. 60).
References


Increasing the quality and quantity of mentoring programs. *Journal of Community Psychology, 34, (6).*
Appendix A

Definition of Terms

Mentoring. “The term has generally been used in the human services field to describe a relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated, younger protégé—a relationship in which the adult provides ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the protégé” (Rhodes, 2002a, p. 3).

Mentee. “The mentee or protégé is the young person paired with the mentor. The protégé is the junior person in the mentoring relationship…most mentees tend to be at risk, high risk, or living in high-risk environments” (Beck, 1994, p. 8).

Mentoring Program. A formal or structured mentoring program strives to match older volunteers with younger participants for the specific purpose of building a relationship of trust and respect (North, Shark & Strother, 2002).

Types of Mentoring. Mentoring can take a variety of forms including traditional mentoring (one adult to one young person); group mentoring (one adult to up to four young people); team mentoring (several adults working with small groups of young people); peer mentoring (youth mentoring other youth); and e-mentoring (mentoring via e-mail and the Internet) (Rhodes, 2002a).

Locations of Mentoring. Mentoring can take place in a variety of settings including the workplace, in a school setting, at a faith-based organization, at a juvenile corrections facility, in a community setting and in the ‘virtual community’ where e-mentoring takes place (Rhodes, 2002a).
**School-Based Mentoring.** School Based Mentoring Programs “ask volunteers from the community to develop relationships with students by meeting regularly with them at their school. Meetings typically take place for about an hour a week during or after school, focus on a range of social and academic activities and continue for approximately one school year” (Herrera, Kauh, Cooney, Grossman, & McMaken, 2008, p. ii).

**At-Risk.** “The term ‘at-risk’ is generally used to describe youth who come from single-parent homes who show signs of emotional or behavioral problems, and who lack the support to navigate developmental tasks successfully. 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” (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002, p. 717).
Appendix B

VANIER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM  
OPERATIONS MANUAL

Table of Contents

1. Statement of Purpose and Long Range Plan
2. Recruitment
3. Screening
4. Orientation and Training
5. Matching
6. Monitoring and Support
7. Closure and Evaluation
8. Elements of Effective Practice, 3rd Edition

This operations manual follows the guidelines as suggested by the elements of Effective Practice, 3rd Edition.  