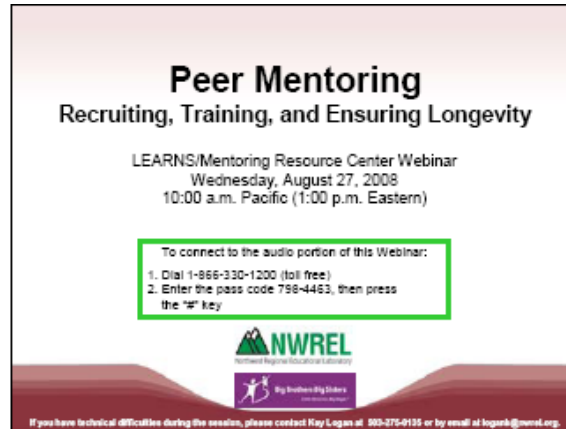


Peer Mentoring: Recruiting, Training, and Ensuring Longevity
Transcript of Webinar Presentation, August 27, 2008



Garringer: I want to welcome everybody to the Web seminar entitled “Peer Mentoring: Recruiting, Training and Ensuring Longevity.” I’m Mike Garringer here at the Mentoring Resource Center offices in Portland, Oregon. The MRC is the training and technical assistance provider for those of you who are Department of Education grantees. I’m joined here today by Erich Stiefvater from the LEARNS Project. Erich will be handling the WebEx controls today. LEARNS is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service to provide training and technical assistance to its grantees working in tutoring, mentoring, out-of-school time and other youth development areas. We’re also joined today by our presenter, Tina Christensen, who is at her offices at the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Rochester in New York State. I’ll be formally introducing Tina and in just a minute.



We have at least 100 participants here today, so a big group. Almost all of you are from two major kinds of programs: U.S. Department of Education mentoring grantees, and programs and individuals sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Regardless of how you came to the world of mentoring, welcome to this training, and I hope that we can provide you with some valuable information today.

The main presentation today should take about an hour and we will also include some time for Q&A at the end of Tina’s talk. If we’re unable to get to your question during today’s session, please know that you can give us a call or send us an e-mail for some one-on-one

assistance. And any questions we don't get to today will be answered in writing and sent out to all of you after the event..

So now let's go ahead with our presentation. As many of you know, cross-age peer mentoring is an increasingly popular way of supporting young people in a variety of academic, developmental and social areas. And while we know a great deal about adult/youth mentoring, research in best practices are still emerging when it comes to a cross-age peer mentoring model.

That's why we are so lucky to have our presenter, Tina Christensen, here with us today. Tina is the Director of Programs at the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Rochester, an agency that operates one of the most successful peer mentoring programs in the country. She oversees programming in an eight-county region of upstate New York, serving over 700 youth annually. She's been in the mentoring field for eight years and is responsible for grant writing, staff management and program oversight. Tina was responsible for the creation of their peer mentoring program and she's currently working with the national Big Brothers Big Sisters office to develop a demonstration project for peer mentoring.

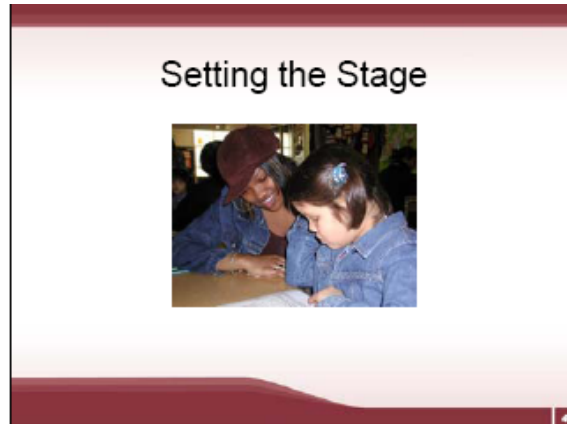
Before I turn things over to Tina, I just want to take a minute to gauge the level of experience that all of you have running a peer mentoring program. As you can see, Erich opened up a poll here on the right hand side of WebEx. So please click the option that applies to your program and we'll see how experienced all of you are in the world of peer mentoring.

Poll Conducted in WebEx. Participants were asked:

How long have you been recruiting and training peer mentors?

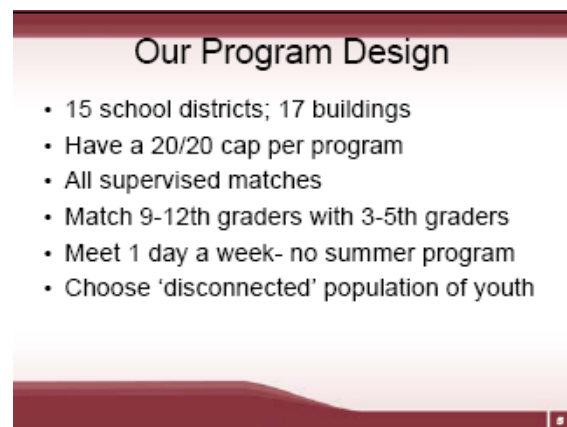
- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 3 years
- 4 to 6 years
- 7 to 10 years
- More than 10 years

Now, let's go ahead and take a look at the results of our poll. It looks like we have a lot of folks that are less than a year into peer mentoring or between one and three years, so kind of a new group to the world of peer mentoring. I think Tina's presentation today will have plenty of useful information for all of you, regardless of your level of experience. For those of you just getting started, Tina's going to cover some of the core concepts and some of the most important aspects of running a peer mentoring program. So without further ado, go ahead and take it away, Tina.



Christensen. Thank you, Michael. I appreciate very much the invitation to be here today. I have worked in the mentoring field for a number of years and just have a real passion for mentoring. As Michael said, peer mentoring has really been my baby. It was the introduction I had to this field and it is the area that I really have found a tremendous amount of growth in our agency. I hope I can assist you today with some tools that will help with your programs. And I really would love to see this model grow across the nation. It really is a model that I embrace.

So I see by the survey, as Michael said, that a lot of you are fairly new to peer mentoring. So welcome, you'll find it to be a lot of fun. I plan to discuss areas of peer mentoring that are likely to be staples in your program but I'll try to give you some additional support that will help you ensure the life of your program beyond the time of your grant.

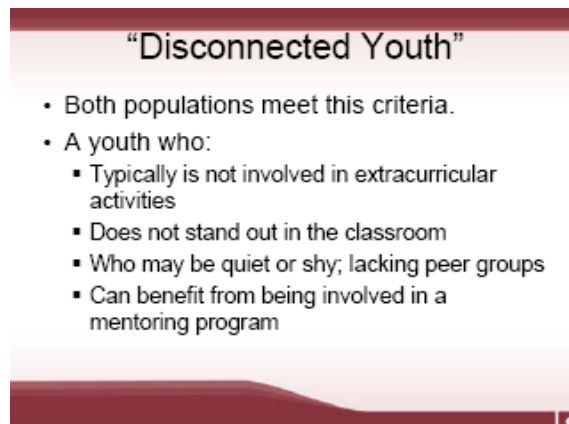


So let's first look on slide five at the model that we're using. We've had this model for over eight years and the project design is now implemented in 15 schools. We began with four schools and one staff to oversee those programs, and now it's grown to 15. Through this program we serve over 600 youth annually. We have one district that has two programs running at the same time. So on that day of the week in two areas of that building, we have two programs going on. And in our Rochester city program we have two new programs. We expect that is going to be the largest growth that we see over the next few years. We're going to launch a brand new project in a small rural community this year and that is going to be part of that project that Mike talked about with Big Brothers Big Sisters national.

Our programs are all supervised. We cap our programs at 20 matches, so about 40 youth in the program in the room at one time and they're supervised by our staff. We chose to supervise the program due to the risk. We can't do background checks on a minor, as you know, as we do an adult mentor. So we chose to remove as much risk as possible and supervise the program. We typically recruit tenth and eleventh graders in the first or second year of our program when we start and then we add ninth graders later. We don't match a twelfth grader for the first time. We'll keep a twelfth grader that's been in the program matched if they come in at tenth or eleventh grade and stay into their senior year. But we won't take them as a new match in twelfth grade. It just does not ensure that longevity. It doesn't allow the match retention that we'd like to see.

Our programs meet one day a week for about an hour and a half after school, and we do not meet in the summer. However, the schools do get together over the summertime for large field trips. We tried to run the programs during the summertime in the first few years and just did not find it successful. We had a very low number of students that were coming on a regular basis.

As you see by our definition of the kids that we're using, we chose a very different population of high school students than most programs do. We began this pilot program in 1999 specifically excluding what would have been the traditional mentor for most people. The four schools that we were working with wanted to meet the needs of a population of kids that were not being served, a disconnected population.



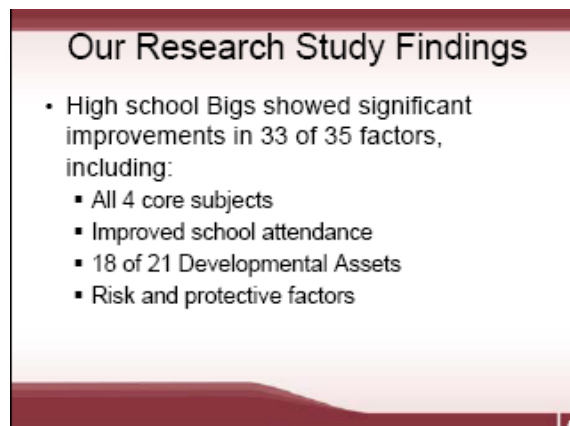
The next slide looks at a definition of "disconnected." These students are not the high achievers. They're also not students who need intervention. They're not the kids who are receiving services from the school, both extracurricular and intervention services. But they're youth that, when given a spotlight, have really proven to be incredibly effective mentors. We found we were able to change the pattern of behaviors in these mentors that would have led them to a higher risk. This group has really been very successful for us.



As you see in slide seven, there's a real benefit to this population. You are able to measure both mentors and mentees and you can have significant outcomes on both. And you'll be able to get funding from grants and foundations to serve both, so you can count both groups of youth as being served in that funding source.

We've also found this population to provide a longer match length. Many of you are familiar with an impact study that's coming out from Big Brothers Big Sisters on peer mentoring programs. We expect that the results of that are going to be released this Fall. The study shows, among others things, that their match retention rate was only about five months. This was terribly disappointing for us. We came to understand it was likely because of their use of the high achievers as mentors.

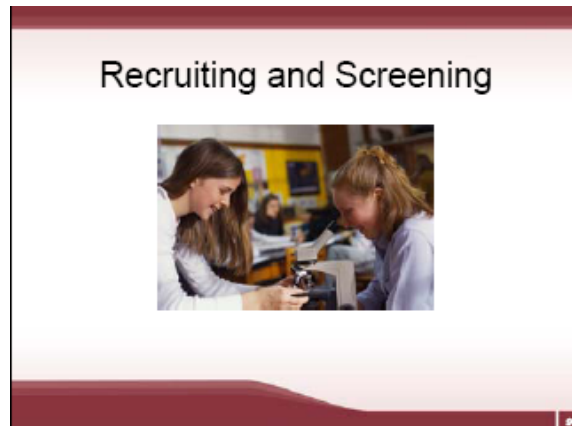
Our research that we conducted shows a very different result using a disconnected student. We did a three-year long research study on the original pilot program and we used a control group. Our researcher, who we had hired for this project, asked that we also measure the high school student using the same tools that we were using for our mentees. We did, reluctantly, knowing that it was going to be twice as much data that we were collecting. The results were just phenomenal. On the next slide you'll see that our high school students had a significant result in all four of these areas measured.



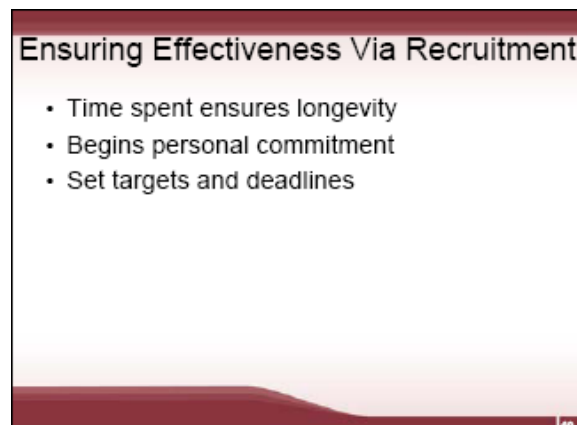
We were especially surprised at the risk and protective factors. Risk factors are things that kids can become involved in that increase the likelihood that they're going to engage in

risky behaviors. And protective factors are the circumstances that promote healthy behaviors. The youth that we were specifically targeting as mentors, the disconnected, had much higher risk factors and much lower protective factors. At the end of the third year we surveyed the whole school. We did the survey and we added a question and asked if they were involved in the mentoring program. We got back the exact number of results for the kids who were in the program that we anticipated.

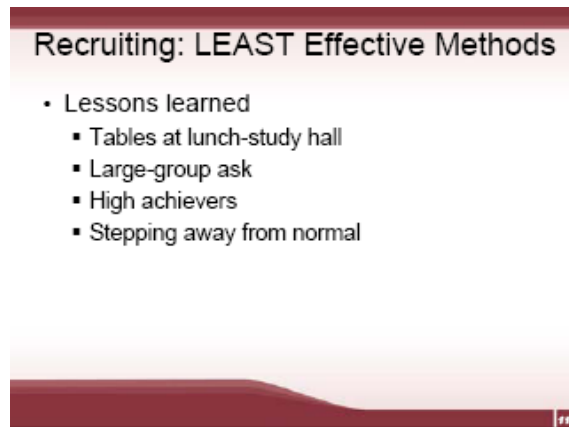
And what we find was that the kids that we had involved in the program had improved in 33 of the 35 factors, so just a phenomenal result. It was at that time too that we popped ourselves on the forehead and recognized that we should have anticipated this. We chose them specifically, we asked them to be mentors, we trained them. We spent nearly every week providing individual support to them, and in a lot of ways our staff person mentored them. In that time before their mentees got to the program, had conversations with them about how their mentoring relationships were. We really should have noticed that there was going to be a significant change in this population. That research for us was so phenomenal that we were able to use that for future funding, and it has allowed all of the growth that we have had in our program.



So let's look at the recruitment and screening of high school mentors. On slide ten, on the topic of recruitment, we can see an effective recruitment plan ensures the right mentor is in the room and that will help to ensure the longevity of that mentor. A good plan will keep you on target and ensure that the project gets off the ground in a timely manner each year.



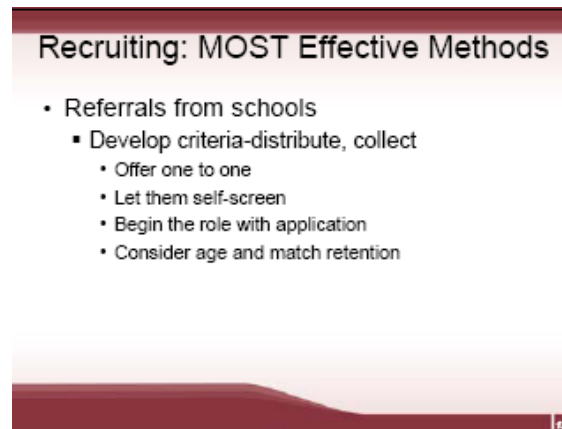
We learned a number of tough lessons over the years of recruitment, and the next slide talks about those lessons and what we found really did not work for recruiting.



As in any mentoring program, even in peer mentoring programs, sometimes the challenge is finding a mentor. The methods here are some that we have tried. We have done table and room recruitment and they have been unsuccessful for a few reasons. This is where you may set up at a lunch or go into a study hall and ask a large group if they'd like to become involved in your program. We tend to get a lot of enthusiasm from this but really no follow-through. We also found that a group would come and sign up together, so they would sign up as a group and they would come to program as a group and they would mentor as a group. We never really saw them have one-to-one relationships with their mentors. And what we also found too was that when one of them quit, we lost the whole group.

We also found it ineffective to go after the high achiever. As I talked about the research that is coming up from the national organization, it completely reinforces what we have found. These students are incredibly good mentors but they're far too busy. They mean well, they want to be there, but with sports and theater and often jobs, they can't meet that one year commitment to their mentee. During the interview process they assure that they will be able to find the time, but at the point where the mentoring programs are up and running, we see their participation drop off - very good hearted, very well meaning but just not able to make adequate commitment. They start off very strong but we often lose them after the holidays.

Lastly, every time that we strayed from what was the fundamental model of our project, we failed. We came to understand that in all aspects of the program, what the core elements were that made us succeed. What were the things that we knew made the program work very well? We were able to determine what those aspects were, we could adjust the program and other elements to meet the school, to meet the population of the area of the region that we're working with, even the times that buses and schedules - all of those factors. But if we stayed with the core pieces, the project was very successful.



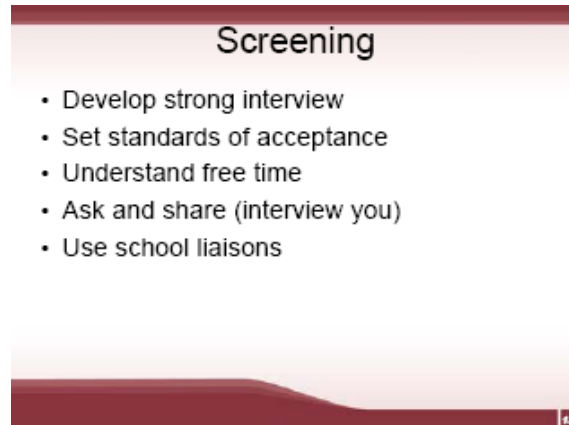
Slide 12 covers the model that we found to be almost foolproof. We began with our criteria. For us, it was that disconnected population, but you can develop your own criteria of students that you want to have in your program. Look at the programs that you have now. What students have been really successful for you? Define their successes as your criteria. And then we took our criteria to our liaisons – and I’ll continue to talk throughout this process about our school liaisons. That is our key relationship with the school. That is our point person in making the program work. And they vary from school district to school district to us who that person is. But our school liaisons are the ones that do the foot work at the school programs.

So in the recruitment model, our liaisons take the criteria and they get it out to the teachers, to the counselors, they do it through e-mail or through their mailboxes. They then get a list of all the students that the school is recommending to be involved in the program. And the liaison brings each student, one-by-one, and our staff offers the program to each one. This one-to-one ask has really been crucial.

The student begins their first step of commitment to the program with that individual ask. And with our disconnected population, they often turn around in the room and say, “Are you talking to somebody else because you can’t be talking about me.” They are very, very interested in hearing more about the program at that point. We give them a synopsis of what the program is going to be like, what their role is and the instructions for them to return their paperwork.

The paperwork that we give is an application and a cover letter for parents to be able to contact the school or our staff if they have any questions about the program. It’s also the permission that we get signed so that we can meet individually with that future mentor and they bring that back to the liaison. This is the beginning of the screening process for them because if they can’t remember to bring the paperwork back, they’re not likely to be the students that are going to be at your program on a weekly basis.

Your recruitment will continue into your screening process, so let’s look at the next slide.



Our first screening is our interview and for us, it's been an adaptation of the adult interview. We took very little out. We probably added more questions in regards to their school life, the time they're able to commit to this program, their grades, when they anticipate graduation, those kind of questions. We still ask a lot of the sensitive questions that a lot of you are asking of your adult mentors. And we glean information very similar to what we would be getting from the adults.

So with that information, know what you can't accept. We don't, as I said, accept somebody who's involved in a lot of extra-curricular activities. We know it will interfere. We also don't accept someone that we know would be challenged by handling the behaviors of their mentee, so we look for that high school student who's going to be able to handle that role. I recommend that you use this time to really help the students understand what they're committing to and what they can expect from the program. Encourage them to ask questions about the activities, about your policies, ask as much as they'd like to learn about the program. It is, again, another part of that screening phase.

The last screening that we have is with the school. Parents sign a release for their child to be in the program, and it covers all the releases that are needed, such as taking pictures and transportation and medical emergencies. The release also allows us to speak to the school and to get school records that we use for our data collection, but it also allows that open communication with school personnel. We ask the liaison to look at the school records. We don't look at them ourselves. The liaison looks at the records to assure this student is going to be someone we're looking for in a mentor. This gets easier for liaisons in the second and third year, when have begun to know what kids are really successful in the program.

School Partnerships



I cannot express how much the role of the liaison and school administration is key to the future of your project. I want to talk now about how you can support that relationship. We are nearing ten years with several schools and that wouldn't have happened without a school champion. So let's look at the next slide and the importance of these relationships.

Developing a strong relationship with your school is key to the success.

Getting buy in from all levels ensures the program's future beyond the grant.

These next slides will help to provide a basic support to the development of that strong relationship. We'll look at a lot of the small steps that you can take that glean a very large buy-in from the school community.

Developing Strong School Relations

- Keys to success:
 - School champions
 - Ground work (never too late)
 - MOU, roles and timelines
 - Open communication

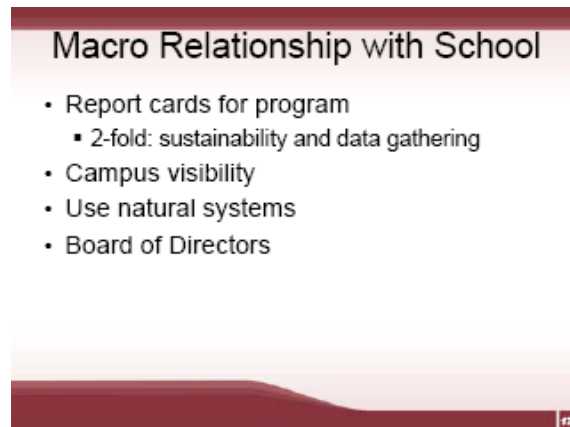
So let's first look at the relationship within the building. School champions are the key to our success. This person moves mountains to see our program work. They understand the key school relationships that we need to develop. They understand building norms. They help us to bridge communication breakdowns. They help us get to students when we aren't seeing someone coming to the program. They're just absolutely essential in our programs working. We have twice left schools where we were not able to make a program work because we lost, or we never had, a champion there. We tried for three years in both of these schools but we just slowly saw the deterioration of the program and recognized it was time for the relationship to end. It was not a fruitful one for either one of the parties involved.

So work to establish some real good groundwork with your schools - MOUs, roles, timelines. I've provided you handouts for you to use (*see handouts at <http://www.edmentoring.org/seminar7.html>*) The first one is the Roles document. This document helps to establish the key efforts that you need from everyone in order for the program to function and who's responsible for them. Those efforts are defined by our staff and by their school staff. This document is helpful for school personnel to see what they really need to be doing and working on. This document also appears very overwhelming for some. I recommend that you use your school liaisons from other schools that you're working with to support new ones.

We use this document when we go in for the first time in establishing a new program and it helps the administration define who the person is that's going to be our school liaison and helps to begin to establish what roles take place. But in looking at it, the school liaison who's handed this paper often gets very overwhelmed by the number of tasks that are on there. So I recommend that you give them another person that they can talk to in another school who's been doing your program. And that person can help to define how much work it actually is.

Okay, let's look at the MOU. MOUs are important beyond the reasons of contractual matters of liability insurance or audits that you have done within your organization and contracts. But our MOU, especially in our Department of Education grant, was crucial. Our Department of Education grant paid for the liaison position and paid for busing throughout the time that we had it. Those are typically an in-kind donation in our programs from the school district, but because the ED grant allowed us to do that, we were able to provide stipends for both of those. We recognized, though, that in the end of the first year if we wanted to keep these programs going beyond the length of Department of Education grant, we really needed to look at that sustainability piece and the in-kind donation of that coming from the school district.

So we did, in the second year, put the language into our MOU that we were looking for that to become an in-kind donation from the school district, and having that in the MOU allowed that conversation to remain open throughout the time of the grant and led them to the path of being able to do that. I can say that we're successfully sustaining all of our Department of Education schools, and we've done that through these in-kind donations that have been given in all the districts that we began with those grants.

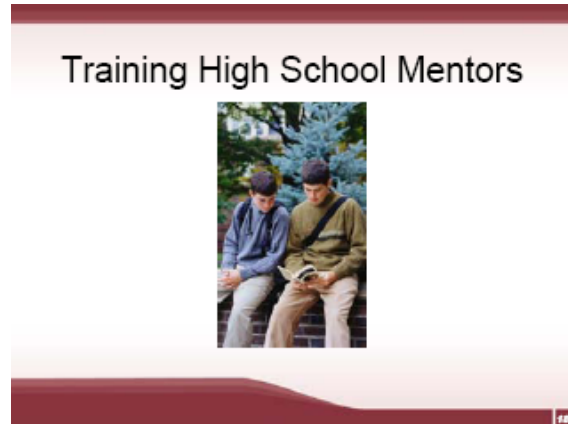


So now looking at slide 17, the relationship with the school district, I highly recommend that you use your program “report card” – the outcomes you achieve. We use it in two ways. The outcomes that you’re reporting are related to the needs of the school. Provide that report card to your school, show them the effect your program has had.

Also, our program relies on teachers to fill out a rating form, and they fill these out pre and post. So two times a year they’re filing them out on several students within their buildings. For our high school students we measure their progress in the four core classes. So we have at least four teachers filling them out on about 20 students. And so sometimes they’re very difficult for us to get returned. So we provide that report card with a thank-you to each one of the teachers who have filed out these rating forms. And they get to see what the effort they have made in filling out has had on the impact of the overall project and they can see what impact the program has had on the school. It’s been very useful for us in getting back few more forms than we had in previous years.

I also recommend that you use every opportunity to promote the program on campus—art, service projects—be as visible as possible on that campus. We’ve planted trees for Arbor Day. We’ve planted gardens, the students have made murals. Many of the projects that take place during the program as a large group project often are posted throughout the school. We also use natural systems to promote the program that the school already has in place. One of them is during National Mentoring Month on the morning announcements, we thank our high school mentors. Their names are read off and thanked for participating in the program. We use the school newsletter whenever we can get articles or pictures in there and we try to get in the yearbook as the high school students as a club in the yearbook.

One of my favorites is the senior awards ceremonies. Our mentees present their graduating mentors a rose and a certificate at that awards ceremony. It is just incredibly sweet. And there it’s two-fold. You’re hitting the community, the parents and the people who attend the school but also the district administration. It really is a wonderful thing to do. I also recommend that you make presentations to your Board and bring your matches. It’s a great impact. We had a school district last year who, after the Board presentation, decided that they were going to add into their budget additional support to our program based on the presentation that was made.



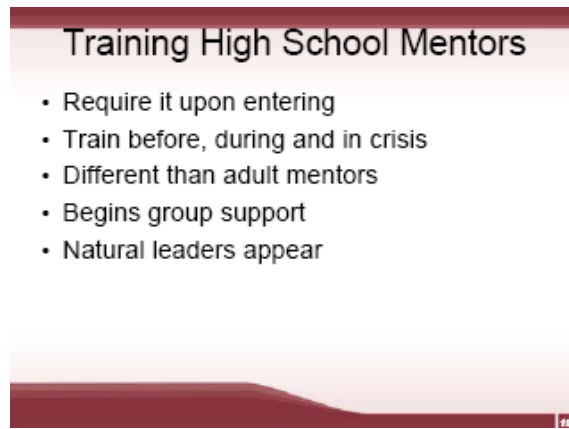
Before I get to the training content, I just wanted to get a sense of how all of you are currently running your peer programs and how you are handling training. I believe we have a poll at this point.

Poll on Peer Mentor Training conducted on WebEx. The following questions were asked:

1. On which of the following topics do you provide training to your peer mentors?
 - Role of a mentor
 - Program ground rules
 - Developmental characteristics of mentees
 - Communication skills
 - Confidentiality
 - Providing academic help (e.g., tutoring)
 - Staff roles and contacts
 - Handling difficult circumstances
2. At what points do you provide training to your peer mentors?
 - Pre-match
 - Scheduled ongoing training
 - Individualized, one-on-one training as needed
3. About how many total hours of training do you provide your peer mentors?
 - 0 to 1
 - 2 to 4
 - 5 or more

Garringer: Let's go ahead and take a look at our results of our poll. It looks like many of you are covering the common training areas. Most of you are doing pre-match training, a little bit of individualized training and it looks like many of you are doing a good amount of training, which is a very good thing. I think there's some new research coming out soon that shows that the volume of training is a real key consideration in working with peer mentors. Tina?

Christensen: I agree, too, Michael. One of the pieces that's going to be shown in that research that's coming out is that pre-match training, as much of that can be done ensures more quality matches, they found through that research.

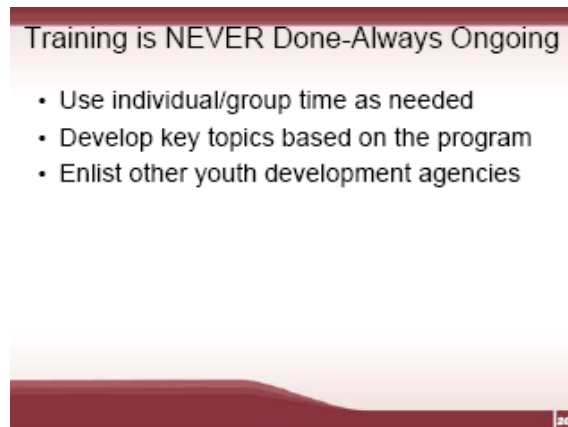


So let's look at the training that we have been doing. We require all mentors to come to training before they're matched, so we do pre-match training. And we also do a post-match session. The requirement to come to trainings is set up during the recruitment phase. Students are given information about the training at their interview. We train before, a few weeks after the match meeting, and then throughout the year as it's needed.

Our peer mentoring training is different than our adult mentoring. We adapted the model from our community-based program and made adjustments in some key areas. Our high school mentors, as you know, have less life experience and they do not necessarily have the right filters at all times. As all of you may have experienced at different times with your mentors, some of their filters and the conversations that they have with their mentees are not always appropriate. And they're not as likely to integrate the information into practical application. So being able to take that and immediately use it with a situation we have found needs additional support.

We also use this training time to build a bond among the members of the group. They begin to rely on one another in the group for their match. They seek support, create a team and they help one another to keep the program policies in place. As I said, we're choosing that disconnected population that are coming in without a lot of peer support. And this becomes one of the strongest peer support networks that they have through high school.

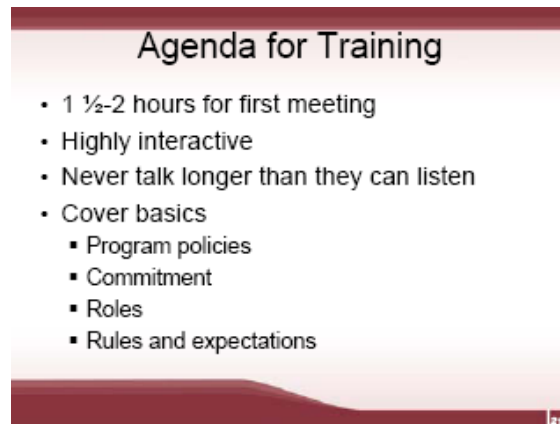
You'll also see natural leaders emerge in your training and you'll use those leaders during your activities. They're the people that you're going to come to rely on to support you with some of the processes that take place during your programs. You'll also get a lot of insight during your training about the challenges you'll face with personalities in the program. It's also helpful to have a second person in the room to be able to start to glean that information. It's difficult in facilitating and also catching all of those group things that are happening.



So looking at slide 20, we understand the ongoing nature of training. Our training is continuous, it's really never done. We do it individually and we do it as needed for specific issues. We've had a couple of times where we needed to discuss a specific issue. We had a group where one school was not setting appropriate boundaries for their mentees, all of them across the board. Our staff, of course, everyone was extremely frustrated with what took place on a weekly basis. So we set a specific time to cover those issues and provide ways that they could support one another in setting boundaries.

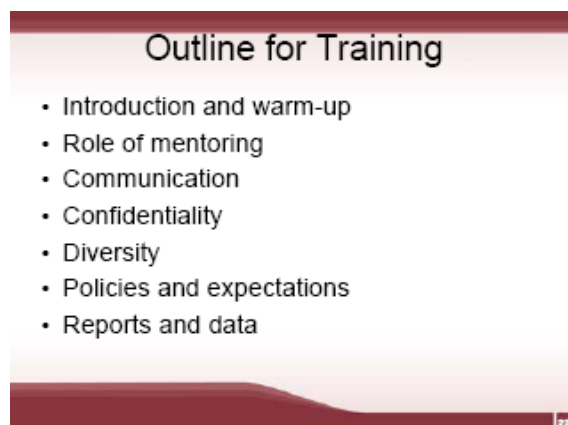
You also may need to train based on an issue that is school-wide. Your mentors may not be able to support their mentees in this topic. They might not be able to discuss an issue that is happening in the community or happening in the school that everyone is aware of. But when the mentee brings it up with the mentor, the mentor isn't exactly sure what they should be saying or how they should respond to it. We had this particular issue and we found it to be a great relief to our mentors when we discussed it. I strongly suggest that you bring in your school personnel into that training. We brought in the high school counselor to that training. She was able to support it in ways beyond our staff was able to.

Lastly, use other agencies. You have a cache of human service organizations with great youth development training around you. Enlist all of them. We have what we call a "Big Day" in one of our counties, and that's where all of the schools in that county that are in our peer mentoring program come together. They're released from their school day. They spend a whole day in workshops with other human service organizations providing leadership skills, different trainings and supports to those kids. It is a great success. It's a wonderful event in that community. Training provides the peer mentor the boundaries they seek to define their role.



So let's look at the agenda on the next slide. Training is after school for about two hours. We made it highly interactive. I have a great team, one of which breathes experiential education. We made all of our trainings interactive. The participants are up and moving around or participating in most of the training. I warn you never to make it too long. I went to a training once where the keynote speaker said, "My job is to talk, your job is to listen, let me know when you've finished first." It was a light bulb for me for the high school mentoring program. They've been in classes all day, so if your training is longer than two hours, break it up into two trainings if you need to.

Another important aspect that we have added to our training is what we call "mentor money". So we've developed these small mentor bucks that they get paid for their participation. And at the end of the training they're able to buy items. These are all promotional materials that you have around your offices that promote your agencies. And it's great to have the mentors using those in the school and wearing them or using them throughout the school year to promote the program. We have a lot of props, tools and games, and we really feel like this approach integrates the material so much better with the population.



Slide 21 gets into the outline of our training agenda. Your agenda should be basic for your first training: defining the role, assisting with communication, covering much needed topics about risk, discussing differences, covering your policies and then talking about the reports that they're going to need to complete for you.



Our training modules begin on this next slide. Our first module is the role of the mentor and it can be delivered in many different ways. As Mike talked about, you'll be getting materials that will help you assist in this training role. We use art, building materials, collages, any media that you choose. And this exercise will help them to understand their role. You're able to stress some really essential elements of mentoring, while reinforcing some of the elements that you want left at the door. So in this exercise we often give a large newsprint to a group, breaking up the whole population into smaller groups, and they'll draw or build a mentor. The mentor will give you elements that they believe make a good mentor, based on their own experiences. And you can add to them, stress the ones that you need to stress or play down the ones that really are not essential.

The next thing we do is talk about our mission. And we break up our mission into individual words and we do a mission jumble. And they put it all together and spell out our mission. It helps them to understand why they're there. This is the time you can share your outcomes, let them know why they're one of the people that are key to your success as an agency and the success of the young person that they're going to be mentoring. Let them know what the time that they're going to spend with their mentee is going to do and how it's going to impact the relationship.



On the next slide we talk about communication. We spend an awful lot of time on communication because it has so many elements of training within it. We use the peanut

butter and jelly exercise from NWREL. If any of you are familiar with it, this exercise has the participants assist you in making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for the first time. And you, of course, follow the instructions precisely. So if they say, “Put the peanut butter on the bread,” you're going to take the peanut butter with your hand and spread it across the whole loaf of bread in its plastic wrapper. You get the idea. It really helps to have them understand communication and how they communicate things. You can clean the mess up while you're talking and be able to cover all the rest of the topics that you want to get to. It's highly interactive and it really charges this population in understanding their communication.

We talk about age and child development. We remind them what it's like to be the age of their mentees. We cover open communication and body language. We also talk about appropriate conversations, or what we call big conversations. What are those things that you should be talking about with a high school student privately and not necessarily to the program. We also cover disclosures and confidentiality and how to handle them. We provide them with a scenario and a script, however we're the ones who are going to be taking on that mandated role and making that hotline report.

We spend a lot of time talking about the conversations that they may have with their mentees that they're going to have to share with the school or with ourselves. And we talk about how to handle those conversations or the ones that, if you leave program and come back and say, “Gee, I'm sure this is something that we need to discuss further.”



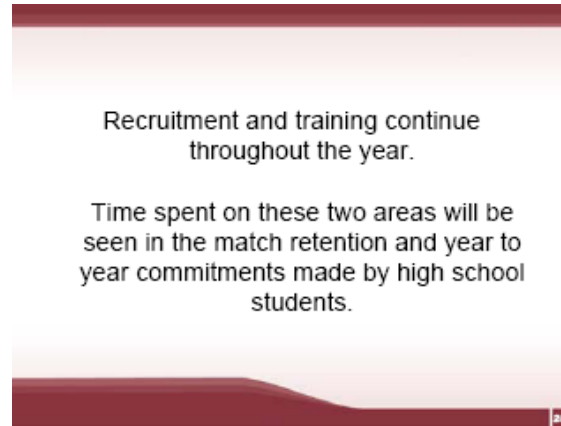
The next slide covers diversity. And there's a number of topics that you can use to cover diversity, but let's look at the ones that we're using. We use the “cross the line” activity. This exercise physically moves students across the room to accentuate similarities and differences and discuss their feelings about those differences. As Mike said earlier, we cover an eight-county region. We have a very large city in Rochester. We have a small city. We have several suburban schools and we also have a large population of very rural school districts where some of the graduating classes are around 50 students. So we aim to tailor our diversity training based on those different populations. What we would train in our city school programs is very different than one of the rural school districts. Mostly here you want to help the mentor with their filters. It's important to help them understand and have empathy and be able to get a picture of the youth they're going to be matched with.



On slide 26, this is where we discuss the “meat” of the programs: program policies, the day-to-day agenda and the norms for the program. For instance, we have norms around getting youth to the restrooms, to the bus, and we discuss all of these. We also talk about the role that our staff takes and help to define what the mentor is required to do and what our staff does. This material is typically in our handbook and, sadly, is the least interactive part of our program. But we cover the policies and we talk about the agreement that the high school mentor has signed to be in the program. And we wrap up here. It’s usually about all that they can absorb.



The next slide talks about the additional topics that you can use for training. Sometimes we go back and delve into child development a little bit deeper. We discuss discipline. We also might talk about how the high school student can know their “buttons”. I recommend that you use feedback about your training from your mentors. Use a survey to get information about how the training went, but also engage a student who’s been in your program for the second year to come back to the training and give you feedback about what they felt was directly applicable to their role. And you can work with your evolved students to take them into a little bit higher level of leadership skills. And I list, again, some of the human service organizations around you that train on leadership.




We have thoroughly enjoyed working with our school-based program. They've grown for us over the years and have increased our annual match count tremendously. We've been able to develop strong programs based on focusing on these key elements: strong recruiting and training. As a result, we have a match retention rate for our peer program now at 11 months. I am extremely proud of what our team has done to achieve that. And they've also set a goal this year to increase that match retention rate to one year.

I've included some resources on the next slide for you to use. These books have been extremely helpful for us in developing our training manual. The teamwork resource has been extremely helpful for us in developing mentor training and also for program activities. We also use this source for staff development and the products for the matches.

Resources

- Books
 - *Ongoing Training for Mentors* (U.S. Department of Education)
 - *Training New Mentors* (National Mentoring Center)
 - *201 Icebreakers*
- Web
 - Teamwork & Teamplay, www.teamworkandteampay.com
- Study results
 - Evaluation Research-Rob Lillis, rlillis@rochester.rr.com



29

Contact Information

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(800) 547-6339 x-135
www.nwrel.org/mentoring

LEARNS
(800) 361-7890
<http://nationalserviceresources.org/learns/learns>

30

And lastly, the research I spoke about earlier is available through our researcher, Rob Lillis, and he'd gladly give you a copy of that for your use. I thank you for allowing me to present today. I want to extend my support to you in any way that it can be. And my contact information is here, as are the hosts for your events.

So Mike, we wanted to open this up for questions?

Garringer: Yes, thanks, Tina. That was very, very helpful. You covered a lot of content there and I'm sure folks have many questions for you. As you can all see, Erich has opened up the Q&A panel on the right hand side of your screen.

So we'll give everybody a few minutes here to type in your questions. We'll just take them in the order that we get them. I'm going to read them to Tina in case any of you out there are just following along on the slides or are unable to see the questions from other folks.

While everyone's typing in what you're curious about here, I just want to remind folks once again that we do have many handouts from this that we're going to be sending out after the fact. Tina, there was one handout that we didn't get to, and that was the High School Agreement. That's what, I believe the mentors sign to kind of define their roles and responsibilities. Would you like to talk about that just a little bit?

Christensen: That is a piece that we provide during the training. It outlines the expectations we have for the mentors. They get a copy of it, we get a signed copy. It helps to sometimes bring that back around when there's challenging times with the mentor relationship to remind them of the policies that we have in the program.

Garringer: Yes, I would think that reminding young people of all the expectations is a good way of getting what you need from them. Thanks for explaining that, Tina.

So it looks like we have some questions rolling in here, so let's go ahead and take a few.

Question: Do you create only same-sex matches and is this an issue at all?

Christensen: We do cross-gender matches in our school-based programs. We don't do them in our community-based programs. But because we have such a higher population of females that volunteer to be in the school-based programs, we have been doing cross-gender matches. We typically do not do the opposite way, a big brother with a little sister, because we get a smaller rate of big brothers that come in and they are matched very quickly with a little brother.

Question: Regarding transportation, you mentioned that grant money initially covered the transportation, that the school later took this on as an in-kind donation. What did the transportation involve, bringing mentors to the high school or do the mentees go to the high school? How exactly does that work?

Christensen: It involved both. Our transportation typically gets the high school mentor to the elementary building. In 80 percent of our programs, the after-school activity takes place at the elementary building and then we provide transportation home after the program ends. In some programs, we have piggy-backed on their 21st Century transportation or late bus. But typically the time that we want to spend is not fitting into a schedule with the buses, so we have an additional bus that is just for the mentor and mentee.

Question: How did this work in a school district with many elementary schools, like a situation where you have one high school perhaps and many, many feeder schools that go into that?

Christensen: I'll answer that in two different ways. We have that in one of our rural areas where we have one high school with three elementary buildings. And we typically break up the number of program slots that go to each one of those elementary buildings. And then in our city school districts, we match one elementary with one high school. So we have multiple elementary buildings and multiple high school buildings. And we connect the two that are physically - their location is close to one another - for those programs.

Question: *How do you arrange the first initial meeting between the mentor and the mentee, and what's the structure behind that first meeting?*

We do a number of activities during what we call our match meeting because it's a large group that are coming together and then meeting as individual matches. And we set up a number of activities that they do that allow - for the first three weeks actually - allow that relationship to develop and grow. And some of those activities are as simple as interviewing each other. Some of them are activities that allow the two to work together to create a project. Anything to develop that initial relationship over the first three or four weeks.

Garringer: You know, I'll just add here that the Search Institute actually has a very nice resource called - I believe it's called *Mentoring for Meaningful Results*. And that has a number of worksheets in it that mentors and mentees can kind of fill out together. So the mentor would answer a series of questions. The mentee would answer a series of questions and they kind of compare their answers. And it's designed for adults working with youth, but think it could easily be adapted for peer mentors as well.

Question: *Is there a specific tool that you use to measure developmental assets and/or risk and protective factors?*

Christensen: The risk and protective factors survey is one that we use school-wide. And we don't do it individually with our programs, we measure that result against the rest of the school, which helps us to get between results, we think, in using a control group. So that tool is one that is out there and available for people to use. Our asset survey is one that our national organization has developed for us and we measure on 21 developmental assets. And that this a tool that the teachers fill out and it measures the change in those assets and each individual participant. As I said, we do it pre and post.

Garringer: You know I think that's one of the struggles for programs is finding validated evaluation instruments that they can just kind of take and use. And I just want to throw this out there for all the participants. If you're looking for a specific tool that measures, say, self-esteem or feelings of school connectedness, so ahead and give the MRC a call or send me an e-mail. There's a couple of good resources out there that really list all the available evaluation tools for folks, so feel free to contact us.

Christensen: Mike, if I could add too that we have a self-efficacy tool that we have been using that I would be willing to share with people afterwards too.

Question: Your training outline was great but it seems like it would be hard to fit all that in during one two-hour session, so do you break these up into multiple sessions or how do you structure that?

We have been able to fit most of the materials within that, but there are times when we have a group, a particular group that is going through the process slower and we'll add an additional day the following week to follow up on the rest of those materials.

Question: Are the mentors formally evaluated or only informally evaluated through the teacher report cards. If they are evaluated through the report cards, are the results shared with the mentor?

We do a school-wide report card. We don't break it down between the high school and the elementary. However, we do break down the report card to the individual school. So we don't give one that is for the whole agency to an individual school, we give their individual one. And we do provide an overall result to our high school students. So they'll see 56 percent of the kids involved in the program improve their grades. We don't provide individual results of their particular mentee to them.

Question: What are some interactive activities that can be used for diversity training? I know you mentioned the cross the line exercise. Maybe you could explain a little bit more about how that works, and then if there's anything else that you use to get at those differences between the youth and your program.

Christensen: The crossing the line activity puts the whole group on one side of the room, with the facilitator having a drawn line down the middle of the room. The facilitator asks the group questions about different traits or individual characteristics, and if that is your particular one, you would cross over that line. And it allows people to be able to look at differences and similarities and be able to process their feelings about being the one or two people in a group of 40 that crossed that line, and how people felt about that difference or, being the only individuals on that side, it's very, very good to do with high school students. I recommend you tailor the questions directly to that population.

A couple of the other tools that we have been using have come out of our backgrounds in social work, and some have really come from our local college institutions that are training social workers in diversity. And those tools are ones that ask a lot of questions that are value-laden questions, and allow the participant to keep their own answers to themselves but evaluate what their feelings were on those different situations. It's a very personal exercise that is done and one that we reflect back on the information that's given to us. So reach out to your local social work institutions. I think colleges near you could be able to provide you some supports in those areas

Question: Do you have any information about peer mentoring in which middle school students mentor kindergarten through third grade students?

Christensen: We do not. We have been approached a number of times about having the middle school student being mentored by the high school student. We just find a tremendous amount of risk in that possibility so we have steered away from that. We developed specifically a program for our middle school population that is an after school activity that's involving adult mentors. So for our students, they can become involved as a mentee in middle school with an adult and then move into high school as a mentor, keeping that consistency along the way. I'm not personally familiar with any information about a middle school mentor.

Garringer: I do know there are a few guidebooks out there on programs that are- I've seen ones that are for- within an elementary school, the sixth graders, fifth graders, the older elementary students kind of helping the kids a few grades younger. And I know that those programs mostly focus on group projects, group activities and some one-on-one kind of tutoring. I don't know how much they get into the youth actually helping the younger kids work through problems and discussing issues. I think that's probably a little too much to ask of a middle school student or a sixth grader. But there are some resources out there, so if you want to e-mail me after this I'd be happy to let you know what those are.

Question: *Who are your typical school liaisons? Are they paid by your program? Are they strictly volunteer? What advice would you have to programs that don't have a Big Brothers/Big Sisters agency working in a school, if it was a school itself that wanted to just implement this. Who do you recommend serves as a liaison or a site coordinator?*

Our liaisons vary tremendously. The most successful are the people who have a real understanding and really know who the kids are in the schools. Those have been school counselors, school social worker, parent liaison. We have some school districts that the assistant principals are our liaisons. It really varies, who the school administrators choose, and it's dependent upon who has the time and the affordability for the position, which is an in-kind donation for the school that they're able to find some stipend or support for. We have been designated often in schools as a club. So club facilitators within school districts are provided a stipend to be able to run that club.

Question: *Do you have any information on the success rates of peer-to-peer matches versus adult-to-youth matches?*

Christensen: Yes, the information, as Mike said earlier, is coming out from the Public Private Ventures study that was done last year. It is not going to be flattering for the peer program, sadly - very, very sadly to me. It was a study that was done using a number of different models and not one specific one. As Mike talked about, we are working with our national organization to look at what are the peer mentoring programs that really work. I know too that Michael Karcher has done a tremendous amount of work in the peer mentoring studies, the research on that, and would be able to have some information about that you could use to support grants.

Garringer: Yes, and Dr. Karcher wrote — for the National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) — a brief piece for their “Research in Action” series on cross-age peer mentoring. And in there he discusses that there is a little bit of research out there that shows

that peer mentors can be at least as effective, if not maybe a little bit more effective, than adult-to-youth mentors. And I think some of that has to do with the closeness in age, there's a little bit more of identification. But I think a lot of it really has to do with what the matches are allowed to do in the school setting. I think sometimes peer matches get a little bit more freedom in terms of their access to school resources and things like that. So I don't think it's black and white that adults are better in the schools or peer mentoring is better in the schools. I think it's kind of there's a whole host of program factors: how well the matches are supervised, what they're encouraged to do, the mission and the whole tenor of the program. And I know that this new Big Brothers Big Sisters study, when it comes out, is really going to point to the things that Tina mentioned today: recruiting the right kids in the first place, giving them the proper context and training before they're matched. And so I think the research that is coming out may not be flattering right off the bat for the peer-to-peer model, but it's definitely highlighting the program practices that will lead to greater success. So it's valuable research anyway.

Christensen: If I could just piggy-back on that just with one more thing, we have found that the kids that are involved in our school-based program as mentees are typically kids that would not become involved in a community-based match, just based on the parent support that's needed in a community-based match. This program is very simple and it just requires the parent permission and for us to set up the transportation in that after school timeframe. So very little parent involvement and kids that we typically would not be serving.

Question: Will copies of the interactive training activities you mentioned be made available?

Garringer: Yes, some of them. Most of what Tina talked about today are available in handbooks from either the National Mentoring Center from the Mentoring Resource Center. And when we go ahead and send out the final handouts and slides and everything from today, we'll be sure to include as many of those as we have the permission and ability to put out.

I also wanted to mention that we have a guidebook on cross-age peer mentoring coming out by the end of September and that has two big lists in it of resources that are available to people. One is a listing of books that have training content, training activities that you can use with peer mentors. The other is a listing of books that are available that have activity ideas for your matches to do together. We will let you know when that is available.

Question: How do you decide which kids are served with an adult mentor or which kids might benefit more from having a peer mentor?

That has been a challenge for our staff many times. We have kids that are in an area that are referred twice to the program, because we have a staff person doing school and a staff person doing community programming. It isn't until they get into the database that we recognize that we have a child who could be matched in both places. So we had to put some systems in place so that wouldn't happen and the staff are now talking to one another more about referrals. But typically, the school-based matches that we have, we look at

Peer Mentoring: Recruiting, Training, and Ensuring Longevity
Transcript of Webinar Presentation, August 27, 2008

developmental criteria and at what the parents are looking for, based on the application. Parents will provide information about what they would like to have, their interest in the program and their interest and hopes in getting the mentor. So that helps to screen for which type of mentor would work best, and the developmental capacities of the little helps us to screen. And the third thing is life experiences, things that have happened in that home or in the situations around the school, that child, the needs that they have both emotionally and perhaps physically help to determine whether they would be more appropriate to be matched with an adult mentor.

Garringer: Thank you, Tina. It looks like that's about all the time we've got today. So let's go ahead and wrap things up. First of all, I want to thank Tina. You were wonderful today. Thank you for all the helpful advice and insights. And as I mentioned, if you have questions for Tina or our staff, we're going to be going through the list of ones we didn't get to her in person today and we'll be sending out those questions and answers after the event. As I mentioned earlier, we're also going to be sending out an evaluation shortly along with those handouts. A recorded version of this should be available soon and we'll let everybody know via e-mail when that is up and ready. And I also just want to remind those of you that are Department of Ed grantees that the MRC is here to help you with anything related to setting up or improving the peer mentoring program. So if you've got questions or other needs, be sure to be in contact with us. And the LEARNS Project is available to provide that same support to those of you who are working with Corporation for National and Community Service programs.

I want to thank all of you for participating and sending in your great questions. And I wish you best of luck with your cross-age peer mentoring programs as you move forward. So have a good day, everybody, and best of luck. Thanks.