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The Impact of Mentor Programs for at Risk Youth: Leadership Through Service

By

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Richmond, Virginia
May, 1998
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"People who grew up in difficult circumstances and yet are successful have one thing in common: at a critical juncture in their early adolescence, they had a positive relationship with a caring adult."

-President Clinton

It is becoming more and more common for children to be raised by single parents or by ulterior guardians in today's society. Children need role models who can help fill the gap of parents or older siblings. Role models are viable for support or to answer questions these children may have about life. Effective mentors can enlighten children about the importance of education and hard work. This evolution does not happen overnight. In fact, success takes much energy and effort. It is also important to understand that some youth cannot be reached. Mentoring is not fail-safe. At times, it can be frustrating and discouraging for both the mentors and for the youth. It is the success stories, however, that keep people involved. To see their children graduate from high school and go to college or find a respectable job, serves as the impetus for this movement.

In a course on leading change in the Jepson School, one of the requirements of the course challenged my group to initiate an immediate change on campus. The purpose of this component of the course was to allow us to apply change theories to a practical experience. The focus of our project matched students at the University of Richmond
with children in downtown Richmond. This focus evolved into the Jepson Mentor
Program for at risk youth.

The youth were already part of an after school program run by several All Souls
Presbyterian Church women, mostly retired teachers. Every Monday after school, the
children would complete their homework with their assistance. This program was
successful in that it provided tutoring for these children and an outlet to do something
constructive after school. It did not, however, emphasize mentoring. The environment
was not conducive to listening to the children’s problems and providing support outside
of their schoolwork. With little experience in the development and implementation of
mentor programs, it was obvious that contact with established mentor programs would be
critical for success.

This project explores and analyzes existing mentor programs for at risk children
by examining their strengths and weaknesses, and analyzing how they impact children in
the long run. Another focus of this project establishes a mentoring program that
incorporates the findings and best practices from successful mentoring programs.
Program guidelines and procedures will be incorporated in a manual that can be used to
help ensure the program’s survival for years to come. It will serve to instruct future
Richmond students who are interested in leading this community service.
Methodology

"The need for youth mentors is great. Today more than one of four children is born in a single-parent household, and for African-American children the rate is two out of three households. The result is that too few young people receive adequate caring, guidance and support from adults."

-Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

The focus of this project is at risk inner-city Richmond youth. More specifically, its purpose is to develop and implement a mentor program that pairs University of Richmond students with A.K. Norell Elementary children in the fifth grade (approximately 10-12 children every week). This project sets out to answer these following questions:

1. What are the issues that surround at risk youth?
2. Do mentor programs make a positive difference for at risk youth? If so, in what ways?
3. What are the factors that generate negative outcomes in mentor programs? In other words, why are not all mentor programs successful?
4. What are the pitfalls involved in designing a mentor program?

The information answering the aforementioned questions has been used to produce a mentor manual to provide structure and organization for Jepson Mentors to ensure longevity and easy transition from year to year. This project has built the foundation from existing programs in order to allow an expedient transition from a strictly tutor-oriented program to a successful, well-established mentor program.
An action research based project is the most efficient and logical method that provides the information necessary to establish the mentor program. Whyte defines action research as "a strategy for using scientific methods to solve practical problems in a way that contribute to general social science theory" (127). A more specific aspect of action research is participatory action research (PAR). PAR "is a way of learning how to explain a particular social world by working with the people who live in it to construct, test, and improve theories about it so they can better control it" (Whyte 131). Using PAR the researcher is directly involved with the subjects which allow him or her to observe from direct experiences.

Elden and Levin developed a model of PAR which rests on ‘insiders’ (local participants) and ‘outsiders’ (the professional researchers) collaborating in cocreating ‘local theory’ that the participants test out by acting on it. The results can be fed back to improve the participants' own ‘theory’ and can further generate more general (scientific) theory (Whyte 130).

PAR is contrary to passive research in that it involves practitioners “in the research process from the initial design of the project through data gathering and analysis to final conclusions and actions arising out of research” (Whyte 7). In other words, a researcher does not simply pick up someone else’s data and provide explanations or interpretations based on this research. One actually determines what he or she wants to study and goes through the process of gathering the information and making his or her own conclusions.

This method of research provides several advantages because it suggests specific insights that allow new understandings and possibilities that the participants discover in
creating better explanations about their social world. The entire experience can be "liberating when participants learn how to create new possibilities for action" (Whyte 131). This method of research produces a dynamic process whose product is always growing stronger with every change.

On the other hand, PAR does have limitations. Margulies and Raia assert that one of the reasons for these hindrances is "the lack of skill and knowledge in social science research" that many researchers are not trained to employ. Because this type of research requires that the people who are responsible for the implementation of the recommended changes to be involved very early in the development of the research project, they can sometimes overlook seemingly obvious glitches in the program.

My main objective is to help solve a practical program. This issue concerns whether at risk youth who have effective mentors can avoid the pressures and temptations that other children with the same predisposition face. Margulies and Raia suggest four components of action research.

1. **Problem awareness** - The purpose of research is to find a solution to a perceived or experienced problem. This particular project is attempting to determine whether mentor programs make a positive difference for at risk children. If they do, then it is important to examine how specifically. If they do not, it is important to observe the obstacles that blocked this success.

2. **Development of models and hypothesis** - This step involves developing a tentative explanation of the problem and determining the relationship between two or more variables. An underlying assumption is that if mentors are available on a weekly
basis to these children, then they will avoid the temptations and pressures that face at-risk youth.

3. **Data gathering, is hypothesis-oriented**- The collected data should provide an “empirical base for the testing relationships described by hypotheses” (Margulies and Raia 69). The collected data stems from observations at the site, interviews with mentors, the youth, mentor program representatives, school officials, and literature reviews.

4. **Use of research results**- The results serve multiple purposes. Most importantly, they are used to develop a guide for setting up and maintaining the Jepson Mentor’s Program. The results also provide answers to the research questions.

The components of the Jepson Mentors Manual are divided into several parts beginning with the history of the All Souls after-school program. The manual also provides guidelines for mentors to follow in order to keep a safe and trusting relationship with his or her child. A few examples include what the expected behavior of the mentor is and what the appropriate attire is for the volunteers. The manual can also be used as a resource for mentors who need support or answers when his or her child confronts the mentor with a family problem. The most important aspect of the manual is the contract that will be signed by the mentor that describes his or her commitment to the child for the duration of the program.

It is important to understand that the research obtained from this project cannot possibly answer the multitude of questions that stem from the relationship between at-risk youth and mentors. Therefore, a limitation of this project is that several questions
concerning the impact of mentoring programs can only be answered over time; the results are not immediate

Literature Review

“One-on-one mentoring of youth has proven to be a low-cost, high-yield solution that pays off.”

-Lynn Martin, former U.S. Secretary of Labor

Most of the following literature supports the theory that children, with effective mentoring, are more likely to stay in school and continue their education than to be susceptible to joining gangs or becoming pregnant or using drugs. It is important to remember while reading through this section that mentor programs differ in their purpose and in their service recipients. This research serves as a foundation to evolve a strictly tutor-based program into a mentor program for the All Souls children. This section is divided into several sections: Why mentoring works, The need for mentoring, Research on mentoring, Problems associated with mentoring, Taking the next step.

Why mentoring works

A common belief about mentoring is that it will impart self-esteem, improve SAT scores, break the cycle of welfare dependency, and generally reaffirm the principle that everyone can make it with the help of a mentor. The act of mentoring is not a mysterious phenomena that needs magic to work. In its simplest form, mentoring consists of a few hours a week and the dedication and follow-through to impact youth. It also takes the willingness to give and take from both sides.
There is a sense of urgency in mentoring. Everyday a potential mentor fails to work with a child, the easier it is for the child to become a statistic. In *The Kindness of Strangers*, Marc Freedman states that “Increasingly, they [inner-city children] are growing up alone and forgotten. Nowhere is this condition more troubling than in the case of inner-city youth, who confront far greater stress than their contemporaries of higher social and economic status” (xii).

Mentoring is not expensive. It is portrayed as a cheap and easy route to success. It serves as a “low-cost, high-yield solution” (Freedman 20). In most circumstances, mentoring is a volunteer action where people donate their time and energy instead of their checkbook. Mentoring is hard work. Cynthia Forest observes that those who expect to waltz in and transform lives will be in for a shock, adding that this enterprise is often an endurance test: “You have to be the type of person that’s not going to be discouraged. You want to throw in the towel so often, especially when you feel like you’re not getting through” (Freedman 76).

The need for mentoring

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the nation’s oldest, largest and best known mentoring organization suggests that mentoring offers the positive solution to fight against crime, abuse, and other negative trends in society. A national study on the impact of having a mentor for a single year concluded that:

- first time drug use was reduced by 46% (70% in minority population)
- school absenteeism was lowered by 52%.
- violent behavior was curbed by 33%
• children did better in school and related better to family and friends (Public Private Ventures)

Research on mentoring

Research on mentoring is somewhat limited as far as longitudinal studies are concerned. More short term products, however, have been evaluated and published. Emmy E. Werner of the University of California, Davis produced a 30 year longitudinal study of 500 children on a sugar plantation on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. The conclusions showed that:

"young people who survived this environment, characterized by persistent poverty and high incidences both of alcoholism and mental illness among parents, were able to draw on the support of neighborhood mentors, frequently unrelated adults. With the help of these support networks the resilient children developed a sense of meaning in their lives and a belief that they could control their fate. Research on resilient children has shown repeatedly that if a parent is incapacitated or unavailable, other significant people in a young child’s life can play an enabling role” (Freedman 63).

Although this is an isolated case study, it is consistent with many other studies performed on the presence of mentors with at risk youth.

The Rutter Study, conducted by Sir Michael Rutter of the University of London, suggests that children in dysfunctional settings who have one good relationship are at lower risk of psychiatric disorder. Furthermore, he asserts that “good relationships outside the family can have a protective effect similar to that which apparently stems from within the immediate family” (Freedman 62). Although a mentor does not replace the real family member, Rutter suggests that the support offered can provide guidance for children to resist the negative components that they face everyday
Terry Williams and William Kornblum follow life histories of 900 teenagers in New York, Cleveland, Louisville, and Meridian, Mississippi in their book, *Growing Up Poor*. They suggest that the common denominator among those who make it is the presence of caring adults: “The probabilities that teenagers will end up on the corner or in a stable job are conditioned by a great many features of life in their communities. Of these, we believe the most significant is the presence or absence of adult mentors” (Kornblum and Williams 108). In other words, they feel strongly that the company of a mentor can provide support and encouragement for these youth to overcome their predisposition and their environment.

As Flaxman and Ascher state after reviewing programs for the Ford Foundation, the mentoring field is severely lacking in institutional infrastructure. It was their experience “with the high rate of discontinued program telephone numbers, changed addresses, and no answers after a number of calls all testifies to fluidity of the mentoring programs in New York” (Flaxman and Ascher 10). Without an established organization that has worked out the kinks, mentor programs will not survive.

**Problems associated with mentoring**

There are mentor programs throughout the United States where success is not the case. Instead of evolving relationships and enlightenment of the youth, negative consequences such as more frustration and discouragement occur. Reasons include missing infrastructure, misconceived notions about the outcomes, and no follow-through. Richard Morris, a mentor in Milwaukee’s One-on-One program, asserts “If I just lend this young person a little bit of the wonderfulness that I have in my brain, that they’re automatically going to respond and be terrific. And the reality is that it is absolutely not
true” (Freedman 83). Morris’ comments echoes the sentiment of many mentors who have become discouraged by the process. The sobering reality in Milwaukee’s One-on-One program is that most children in the program did not show an improvement in grades during the program year, although it was one of the primary objectives.

**Taking the next step**

Despite much of the challenging aspects of mentoring, there are steps that can be taken to reduce poor results. Through their study on the relationship between youth and mentors, Styles and Morrow found that “mentors who do not respect young people’s needs for privacy are often quick to delineate their partners” (iii). Mentors must be patient and respect their children’s reserved nature. Youth appear to place “a high premium on having these particular boundaries respected” (Styles and Morrow iii). Mentors must be realistic and expect that for their relationship with the child will take a great deal of time and energy in order to develop.

Another mentor program that is not reaping successful benefits is Baltimore’s Project RAISE. Students in this program remained far below average for Baltimore County in academic performance and at risk of dropping out of school. Forty percent of the students flunked the 9th grade. Although this project only works with high school students, it still illustrates the struggle for mentor programs to work. Buzzy Hettleman, Director of RAISE, suggests that mentoring is “simply not enough for many young people living in poverty”; he adds that it is also very difficult to find members who will make a one year commitment to meet young people who are at risk on a twice-a-month basis (Freedman 83). Most of these children have been let down throughout their lives. Their hurt can lead to anger and to the reinforcement of prejudices.
As previously mentioned, one of the major downfalls of mentor programs is their missing infrastructure. Freedman asserts that “while absence of resources is perhaps most conspicuous, also commonly missing are operational experience, knowledge regarding effective practice, and an appreciation- more by those outside than inside programs- of how hard it is to put mentoring into action” (Freedman 86). Programs are struggling to implement publicized models, and actual practices are uneven. Most surely missing is follow-up.

Another difficulty exists in the great gulfs between the two worlds of the mentors and youth. In order to form a connection, they must bridge distance. One mentor commented that “We mentors represent such as a foreign life to them...I know she hears what I say, she remembers things, and she attempts to ask questions...but the connection is limited” (Freedman 79). Another reason for this perceived gap is the challenge that exists in contacting youth living in poverty. Many do not have telephones, much less an answering machine.
"Mentoring not only provides a conduit for action but a way to think about acting; rather than take on the overwhelming weight of urban issues, mentors are afforded the opportunity to connect with a single individual."

-Marc Freedman, author of *The Kindness of Strangers*

This section on findings and analysis presents and analyzes the material gathered from those who were interviewed throughout this process. Church members of the All Souls Presbyterian Church and University of Richmond students who tutor the children, and Nannette Bailey, the executive director of Carver Promise, a Richmond-based mentoring program, have all answered a series of questions that will help guide the direction of the Jepson Mentors program.

Nannette Bailey has been with the Carver Promise mentor program as the executive director for the past two years. She was asked a series of questions about her program, mentoring in general, and the development of a Jepson Mentors manual. In order to have a clearer understanding as to Carver Promise's history, Ms. Bailey was asked to talk about her program:

**How did Carver Promise come into place?**

- The program started in 1991 by two men, Paul Kling and John Roush, who wanted to provide at risk children in Richmond with a mentor. Kling and Roush looked at schools in the city of Richmond where the students scored below Virginia’s average for standardized tests and the majority of families were below the poverty line. The
Carver Elementary School fit these requirements and has been the subject of this program's help since 1991

- The program has 320 children in the second, seventh, and tenth grades who have been adopted by mentors in this program.
- Carver Promise is inclusive in that an entire class is selected and the children have the opportunity to participate.

This question was asked in order to target the impetus for this program. Many of its components are similar to the structure of the Jepson Mentors program so it is pertinent to illustrate how it has evolved in the past seven years

What makes a successful program work?

- Having college students as mentors who interact with the children on a weekly basis.
- The mentors must have high energy levels and must be able to connect with their child.
- Collaborating with universities such as the University of Richmond and Virginia Commonwealth University has provided resourceful links to workshops on how to apply to college or how to take the SATs.

Generally speaking, college students who mentor have an easier time relating to the children than adults in the community who work. When asked what makes a successful mentoring program work, Ms. Bailey asserted that “Having college students as mentors has been rewarding for all parties.” The ability to take advantages of what outside organizations have to offer enhances the likelihood of a successful program because the strengths of the particular organization can be utilized with little resistance.
The Jepson Mentors program will tap into the same resources in order to ensure longevity and success.

What has been the greatest challenge in developing a mentor program?

- Getting parents involved and willing to assist has been difficult. A series of parent support group meetings were provided where transportation and free lunches were offered. Only five to ten parents were present every week and very few came consistently.

- The number of children in the program has been increasing every year. Thus, the needs of the program increase simultaneously. The staff do not have the capacity or the resources to compensate for these changes. Because we deal with second, seventh, and tenth graders respectively, it is difficult to focus on their different needs. Furthermore, it is hard to find mentors who want to work with older participants.

- As for the children, it has been a challenge just to get them to believe in themselves. The children have trouble trusting their mentors due to the high turnover rates.

Most of the parents with children in the Carver Promise program are struggling to make ends meet. There is a high percentage of parents who are raising their children single-handedly. Thus, one reason for the poor showings at support group meetings could be attributed to their lack of time or interest. Having three different age classes means have three different objectives. The children have different needs in second grade than in tenth grade. The turnover rate for college students is at least every four years if not sooner. Many students, such is the case at the University of Richmond, mentor for class projects or to fulfill scholarship requirements. After that obligation has been
fulfilled, the college students tend to pull out just as they are making a connection with their children.

The Jepson Mentors program only focuses on a single grade that has already been selected in compliance with A.K. Norrell members and All Souls members. The benefits in this case are that the focus is on only one objective as opposed to multiple ones. The Jepson Mentors program targets students at the University of Richmond who are willing to make commitments beyond a semester. Members of the Jepson School of Leadership are prime candidates for many reasons. First of all, the Jepson school emphasizes a strong civic effort where it is almost standard for students to do community service on a weekly basis. Secondly, Jepson students have made community service a part of their lifestyles. They try to help out as much as they can and in many different contexts. Finally, Jepson students are in-tune to the needs of the city of Richmond because they have worked closely with many organizations that cater to these needs.

What is absolutely necessary to have in the Jepson Mentors Manual?

- Rules, regulations, procedures, expectations for time and commitment are basics that must be included in your manual.

- The manual should give a brief history of the program and what it has to offer to the perspective mentor.

- A schedule and calendar that has information on activities and upcoming events.

- The manual should offer tips and advice on how to be safe and in dealing with the family. It should also provide pertinent phone numbers, including after-five numbers, and addresses.
We thought since we have taught our entire lives, we can at least handle a few children at a time.

- The purpose of the initial program was to help the children succeed. I read the newspaper everyday and sometimes I see a heart-warming story about a child who, with the help of a tutor or mentor, made it big. I want to, one day, see one of our youth have a story about him or her. This, will make me proud of what I am doing.

The All Souls tutoring program experienced a rough introduction. It took many years of persuading the church members that this program was a necessity. Mrs. Thompson felt that it was more important to simply have a program that was available to the children at A.K. Norrell, even though each tutor worked with more than one child, because the children were without other options.

What is presently going well with this program?

- The kids are making progress and we are receiving good reports from their parents.
- I can see that the children are eager to get their work done with tutors, especially the University of Richmond students. Of course, some children work more diligently than others.
- The children are migrating to the college students over some of the church members who tutor.

This semester is the first time that college students have been involved with the students from A.K. Norrell. At first, the children were shy and reserved but as we continued to come and work with them they began to let their defenses down. I observed the first few weeks that as soon as the children walked into the room they flocked to the church tutors. It seemed as if those who staggered in were stuck with the University of
Richmond students. Within a few weeks, I noticed that the children started choosing the college students over the church members.

I sensed some tension from a few of the ladies who had been teaching the same children the entire year and now were overlooked in hopes that all the University of Richmond students were not taken by the time they came into the room. I assume that one of the reasons for this is that the college students are not viewed as authority or teacher figures that are baring over them. In stead, we are viewed as fun and interesting people who want to find out what they are interested in doing outside of the classroom.

What are the biggest challenges for the program at this point?

- I hate to say this, but more and more I see those church members who started in the beginning are giving up on their end of the bargain. I wish more dedicated people were involved in keeping this program strong and running.

- It is also disturbing to think that the hard work we have dedicated to the program could all end if the funding from the school is not continued.

After probing a little more about the follow-through of the church members, Mrs. Thompson suggested that the church members see that the college students have taken over which makes it easier to not come every week. The important thing to remember is that this is a collaboration between All Souls and the University of Richmond students. In order for this program to be a success in the future, both entities must combine their efforts and resources for the benefit of the children.

What changes need to be made for the betterment of this program?
• I think in order for this program to really make a difference, it needs to be a half-an-hour longer because the present format of the program puts too much stress on the children to settle down and immediately start their homework.

• I think a structured activity in between the homework or studying will keep the children coming back every week.

• I would like to see the children sing a song for the tutors to show their appreciation of the time you give up every week.

One of the reasons it is difficult to get much accomplished is the children arriving sporadically. Some show right on time but others will filter in up to twenty minutes late. As of right now, the program lacks the structure to bring the children over together in order to insure a full hour with the tutors. [Suggestions about how to remedy this can be found in the recommendations portion of the paper].

Where do you see this program in two years?

• I would like to see the program expanded to be more inclusive. I think we could handle more kids every week.

• I want to see this tutor program evolve into a strong mentoring program. One that is similar to the Carver Promise mentoring program.

• Having a summer mentoring program for these children would continue to build the existing relationships with the church members and college students with these children.

The University of Richmond tutors are an important component to the survival of the program. Without these tutors, the program would most likely put All Souls into a bind. I asked several of the weekly tutors a series of questions about this particular
program and tutoring in general. The answers provided are from different tutors at the University of Richmond. The questions were developed with the help of Daryl Dance, a student at Virginia Commonwealth University, and are as follows:

Why did you decide to become a tutor?

- I have always felt the need to give back to society and I love kids and would like to help them understand their work so that they enjoy school and don’t give up on it when it presents a challenge.

- I decided to become a tutor after Buzz approached me with a proposition to become a tutor for my service learning project. I saw this as a wonderful opportunity to directly influence and get involved with another person, particularly at their ages (fifth grade).

Each individual who is involved in tutoring or mentoring has his or her own reason to do so. The two answers given by these tutors derive from different forces. One is motivated by retribution and the other to fulfill a requirement. All tutors and mentors share a common bond; they want to make a difference in a child’s life.

What do you like and/or dislike about the program?

- I like the structured time used for homework. It gives the students an opportunity to learn from the tutors and to learn more about the subjects they are studying. I dislike the fact that there is no available free time during the tutoring session for the children to engage in recreational activities. They are frequently restless towards the end of the hour and need to release some energy.

- I like the interaction with the kids. I wish there was stuff for them to do when they’re done with their work so they don’t have to just twiddle their thumbs.
When asked what they liked and disliked about the current program, most tutors suggested optional activities would be helpful for the children with their homework completed. Others are unhappy with the structure of the program because the children filter in at different times allowing no consolidation in the process.

Have you worked in other tutorial programs and if so, what were they like?

- I tutor one-on-one in Mary Munford elementary...I work with individual kids in the library on assignments they are struggling with or I help them practice reading. It’s not a homework-oriented program.
- No, this is my first tutorial program with which I have worked.

The frequent tutors at All Souls represent a range of experience in tutoring. Many of the church members who tutor are retired teachers who still want to be in contact with children. The tutors from the University of Richmond have various levels of experience from this being their first time to this being only one of many programs in which they are involved.

How do you motivate the kids to work?

- The key element is to get the kids to focus on either me or their work. If their mind is elsewhere, they can’t be motivated. I encourage them to do their work, but if that doesn’t work, I usually engage in a small conversation with them about their day or about what is going on in my life. I then encourage them to do work.
- I try to encourage them to get it done, they can have more free time at home, they have the time to get help if they need it...

A wonderful component of mentoring and tutoring is that everyone has a different style in interacting with the children. Some put a heavy emphasis on the task-oriented
components and others cater to the relationship aspect of the work. The challenge is to find the perfect match. If this does not happen, one still needs to maintain a level of respect with the child in order to keep him or her motivated.

**What are the most difficult aspects of tutoring?**

- Finding something to do once the work is done that doesn’t distract others. Also, helping when I don’t know what the teacher has said, and when the student just honestly doesn’t understand and doesn’t want to try, but just wants to give up.

- The most difficult aspect of tutoring is keeping the child excited and motivated to do his work. Frequently, I have encountered situations, with Miles, Michael, and Renard, [children involved in the program] where they will stop working because they do not care about the work any longer. They see no point in continuing to work. It is difficult to re-energize them.

Just as much as tutors have different styles in working with children, they face different challenges. It is hard to keep the children motivated and interested in their homework when they have just spent the last seven hours in a classroom.

**Have you ever wanted to quit? If so, why?**

- Not really. The kids are great, and the time really is not that much…it just has conflicted with some other really important activities I’ve had to attend.

- No, I haven’t. I have had slow days, days when I didn’t feel motivated enough to do an effective tutoring job. But, I have never wanted to quit. I believe that I not only would be letting myself down, but I would be destroying the trust that these students have given me.
Every tutor interviewed said they never really wanted to quit. Although the program is held at the end of a long Monday, every Monday, the response the tutors receive from their children is such an reward that it keeps them coming back every week.

What kind of impact do you believe you have on the students, socially, academically?

- I believe that I have a strong social impact on the student. He questions me about what I do when I am not there and he is eager to visit the campus. I also think that I have an academic impact on the students. I have been asked by the students about the content of my classwork and the subjects of my courses. At certain times, I believe that these students look up to me. However, I think that because of the limited access that I have to their overall life and culture, other factors in their family, in their culture, and with their friends impact them more than I do.

- They see that people want to help them, and take time to help them. That might make them feel important, might make them more inclined to work hard and stay in school.

One of the most common answers to this question was that the tutors all believe they are making an impact on their children’s lives. At this point, the relationships between the tutors and the children is mostly academic. Some tutors have broken barriers and become more personable with their child. There is an obvious change in the way the children viewed the tutors at the beginning of the semester as opposed to the present conditions. The children’s eye light up every Monday when they see their favorite tutor waiting for them to work on their homework. As this program evolves into the Jepson Mentors program the relationships will grow even stronger.

What kind of experiences have you had to make you want to stay?

- Just listening to the kids laugh, and interact, and be excited to see the other tutors...
• Every time the students ask "When are we going to campus?", I feel that I have had a considerable impact on them. When the students ask about my life, I feel that I have influenced them to the extent that they may look up to me and what I do. When we were away for a week from spring break and we had to miss a week, we came back and the first thing that one student said was "I thought you guys weren’t coming back." That made me want to stay.

There are different reasons for tutors to stay involved. However, knowing that the children depend on the tutors keeps them all excited about coming back to work with the children every week. The children see working on homework with their favorite tutors is fun. Most of the time, if the children have fun, they do much better on their assignments.

What, if anything, can be done to improve the program?

• I think that the program must shift to focus on every part of the students’ lives, not just their academic efficiency. We should engage in recreational activities with the students and have more contact with the students (more trips during the week).

• A little fun mixed in with the homework.

This All Souls program’s primary focus is helping the children with their homework. Many of the volunteers who are members of the congregation at All Souls have very set methods on how children should learn. These methods are more conservative than those of the younger tutors from the University of Richmond. For example, in one discussion between the two sets of tutors, an All Souls member stated bluntly that she was against rewarding the children who worked hard with fifteen minutes of recreation. Her reasoning was that in the real world not everyone gets rewarded for doing their work well so the children should not expect benefits for simply completing
their work. This is not the mindset of several of the All Souls members and all of the University of Richmond students. They believe that education in today's society is just as much social as academic.

If you could construct a new tutorial program, what would it be like?

- A new tutorial program would interact with the students twice or three times a week. I would interact with the children during one of those times in a non-academic atmosphere. I would get to know the students on personal level. By doing this, I would understand more about the student as a person and how he/she operates as a person and a student.

- Not really sure... some work, some play...

   In order for this program to evolve into a mentoring program, it must incorporate more personal activities outside of academics. One reason for this is that it breaks up the monotony. Children and their tutors get to experience other things outside of sitting at a table in the basement of a church working on homework.

How did it make you feel when you heard about the possible ending of the program?

- It made me feel like these children were being treated unfairly. If these children are given an opportunity and that opportunity is taken away from them because someone doesn’t want to re-fund the program, it has given the children false hopes and promises. The rights and feelings of the students should be considered first.

- Sad, because I think it's a way to reach out to kids and make them understand the importance of school.

   The purpose of this question is to see how the tutors felt about the lack of funding for the program and its potential ending. The program needs funding for the bussing of
the children after it is over on Monday afternoons. Up to this point, A.K. Norrell has had funding to provide the children's transportation. However, the money has depleted and as of the publication of this paper, there is still no word as to the longevity of the program without transportation. Members of All Souls do not want to be liable in case of any accidents occurring while the children are in their cars. Therefore, the dilemma is finding money to keep the program running at least until the end of the year. I have applied for a grant through the Jepson School of Leadership that might help keep the program running until the end of the school year.

I have been in contact with Author Johnson, the transportation coordinator for A.K. Norrell, to find out the specific parameters of bussing costs. If funding does not come through, there are other avenues to explore.

Option One: We can extend the period another thirty minutes and have the parents pick up their children after work. Within these extra thirty minutes we can have planned recreational activities. The challenge with this option is that it forces the parent to leave early from his or her nine to five job in order to pick up the child. Arrangements can be made if the parents want to create a car pool system where they only have to take off work early once a semester.

Option Two: The tutors can take the children home if they are given permission from the parents. The advantage to this option is that it allows time for the tutor and child to get acquainted outside of the church. This could serve as a positive step in the direction of turning this program into one of mentoring. On the other hand, liability concerns will be increased by putting the responsibility on the individual tutors in stead of the A.K. Norell Elementary School.
What do you think will happen to the kids if the program ends?

- That’s one hour when they might not work on their homework, or not get the help they need to keep them on track, and they could easily fall through the cracks or fall behind without anyone noticing or being able to help them.

- If the program ends, not only do I think that the academics of the children will suffer, but I also believe that the students would be losing mentors, people to look up to. We, as tutors, have more than just an academic relationship with the students. We are mentors, even though we may not be considered mentors. We indirectly affect the students.

The children are involved in this program because their teachers or parents have expressed that they are challenged in certain areas of schoolwork or that they are at risk due to their environmental dynamics outside of school. This after-school program provides an opportunity for the children to get free help with their studies.

Most of the comments found in this section relate to tutoring only because the program at this juncture only involves the tutoring of the children. In efforts to make a successful transition from tutoring only to tutoring with a mentoring blend, a field trip is planned for April 25th, 1998. We will bring the children on to campus to give them a taste of what college life is like. They will interact with college students and be able to ask them any questions they want. As this semester has progressed, I have observed the relations between the tutors, the University of Richmond students specifically, have grown. This field trip will serve as the culmination of a successful semester and hopefully a successful future in not only this program but the developing relationships.
All of these concerns that have been illustrated in the interviews with Ms. Bailey, Mrs. Thompson, and the University of Richmond students have all been considered in order to make useful recommendations for the program’s future success. As a result, the Jepson Mentors volunteer manual has been created to ensure a foundation for the program. This and other suggestions are in the following section.
Recommendations

"Millions of kids across the country are starving, but they’re not hungry for a balanced meal. They’re starved for adult attention.

-one Plus one

Revamping the current program

The current program which is set up for the dozen A.K. Norrell children focuses only on the tutorial aspect of mentoring. The children are only allotted one hour a week to work with either an All Souls church member, a University of Richmond student, or another volunteer not affiliated with either group to complete their homework. In order to make an easier transition from a tutoring program to a mentoring program, the current program should be lengthened by thirty minutes. This extra time will be helpful to the program for several reasons. It will allow the program to include another activity above and beyond the homework. The children will still have their usual hour to complete their homework but they will have some time to get to know their tutor on a closer level by participating in a weekly activity such as trivial pursuit or other games that the children have fun with but from which they can learn.

One of the shortfalls of this program at this point is that there is little structure to keep the children in line. They usually stagger in and by the time they all are present, there is only forty-five minutes left to complete their work. In order to utilize the entire hour, a mentor should meet the children at the school and walk over to the church with
them. It is important to strengthen this aspect of the mentor program in order to accomplish the overall goal of developing strong bonds between University of Richmond students and Norrell Elementary students. The church is also liable for the children for that hour. Therefore, they are responsible for making sure the children are escorted home safely by the bus or other means of transportation. The weekly tutors must take a more active role with this portion of the program. If duties are rotated throughout the semester, each tutor should only have one duty every three months.

Mrs. Thompson thought that the biggest challenge for the current program was keeping church members involved. One way to maintain this commitment level is to communicate the accomplishments of the program during church on Sundays. Showing recognition to the individuals who dedicate their time once a week gives them a sense of pride which could possibly keep them involved. One side-effect of these announcements is that they could draw more church members into the program because they can see the positive impact the congregation has on the children.

Concerns with the proposed changes

The two major concerns with the additions to the program are the liability issues involving the church and that the Jepson Mentors Program will overlook the hard work put into developing the original program by the church members in order to take full credit of its success. In order to dispel these concerns, the communication levels need to stay open and clear. Fifteen to twenty minute monthly meetings after the Monday sessions should occur in order for tutors to voice their concerns or to praise what is working well with the program. Interviews with the mentors were conducted in order to gain different perspectives on the All Souls tutoring program. I realize that the mentoring
aspects of the program need to be more clearly defined but with time people will grow accustomed to the evolving program.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the Methodology section I set out to answer four questions:

1. What are the issues that surround at risk youth?
2. Do mentor programs make a positive difference for at risk youth? If so, in what ways?
3. What are the factors that generate negative outcomes in mentor programs? In other words, why are not all mentor programs successful?
4. What are the pitfalls involved in designing a mentor program?

These questions were developed to form the structure and provide direction for this project. The compiled information for these questions was useful in understanding how tutor and mentor programs worked respectively. There was not information, however, on how to build a mentor program from the tutorial-based program that was already established. The project still faces many challenges in the future. It will take many dedicated individuals from All Souls and the University of Richmond for this program to be a success. By success, I am suggesting how the program will keep the children focused on their school work and on continuing their educations in college. This success will take time to see. Therefore, we must be patient and willing to take small steps in the right direction for these children.
The Jepson Mentors Volunteer Manual

Created by Buzz Lambert
Jepson School of Leadership Studies
University of Richmond
“People who grew up in difficult circumstances and yet are successful have one thing in common: at a critical juncture in their early adolescence, they had a positive relationship with a caring adult.”

-President Clinton

Collaborative efforts by students of the University of Richmond and the members of All Souls Presbyterian Church

Buzz Lambert
Manual Organizer
University of Richmond
Manual’s Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to help you, the volunteer, easily adjust to your mentoring experience. This manual will tell you a little bit about how the two programs have recently merged into this partnership. It will also give you a few helpful pointers when you are with your child either on the church grounds or at the University of Richmond. Other components of this manual include a calendar for you to mark your special dates with your child, both tutoring and outside adventures. Most importantly, this manual has a contract in it that must be signed by you and your child that binds both of your commitments. In this contract, you will set goals for yourself and for your child; he or she will do the same. The few hours you spend with your child a week can make an everlasting impact on his or her life. Good luck.

-Buzz Lambert
Program's Background

Mrs. Thompson, a member of All Souls Presbyterian Church, initiated an after-school tutoring program for fifth grade A.K. Norell Elementary children in 1996. As of January 1998, the loyal church members, who involved in this program, have welcomed to their forces several University of Richmond students to aid in the tutoring of the ten to twelve students in the program. Presently, the two groups are working collaboratively to evolve the tutoring program into a mentoring program. What does that mean? It is really quite simple. The tutoring aspect of the new program will remain the same; every Monday afternoon the children will come to All Souls to work on their homework with their partners beyond this, two or three times a month, the children will take field trips to the University of Richmond to experience the lives of college students. It is our hopes that both of these experiences will develop strong and lasting relationships between the children and their mentors and will develop in them:

- A sense of worth and confidence,
- A better understanding of why it is important to stay in school and to eventually go to college,
- Ways to effectively communicate with others.
Suggestions for Volunteers

What you can do:

• Be patient.

• Use language the children understand; try to be on the same level.

• Show your enthusiasm for working with your child.

• Listen carefully.

• Treat the child with respect.

• Keep your promises to the child.

• Ask questions.

• Use common sense.

• Obtain parental permission before you take your child anywhere.

• Be creative and use your imagination.

• Wear respectable attire.

• Make a calendar of the events scheduled for the month.
What you should not do:

- Assume anything.
- Make promises you cannot keep.
- Tolerate disrespectful or rude behavior.
- Set a bad example by cursing or wearing improper attire.
- Be afraid to ask for help.
Contract

You should design your own contract to fit the child’s and your personality. In other words, personalize your “agreement” with the child. Suggestions include:

• Work with the student every week at the tutoring sessions.
• Get to know the parent[s] of your child.
• Stay after the tutoring session at the monthly progress meetings to discuss pertinent information with the other mentors.
• Keep an open mind with the child.
• Be consistent in your care for the child and be responsible.
• Set goals for yourself and your child that you both can accomplish in a timely manner.
• Offer to walk your child over to the church before each tutoring session and walk him or her to the bus at its conclusion.
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Jepson Mentors/All Souls Calendar
Dear Parents,

Greetings. My name is Dennis “Buzz” Lambert and I am one of the four University of Richmond tutors helping your child at the All Souls after-school tutoring program. The reason I am writing to you is to request your permission for your child to travel to the University of Richmond on Saturday, the 25th of April. We will have several recreational activities planned for this afternoon like kickball and a cookout. We will also take your child on a tour of the campus showing them the library, the gymnasium, and the student union. It is our intention to provide transportation for your child departing from and returning to All Souls Presbyterian Church. We will leave All Souls promptly at 11:30 a.m. (please come a little earlier) and will have them back at the same site around 3:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided for your child (we will be grilling hamburgers and hot dogs).

Your child is part of the first group participating in a pilot mentor program that is a branch of the All Souls tutoring program. In addition to the normal after school tutoring, your child will be working with a responsible and caring University of Richmond student in the fall who will bring your child on campus once a month to use the library and the Internet, play sports and meet with other University of Richmond students. Your child will still be involved with the All Souls church members who tutor on those Mondays but your child will also have the opportunity to interact with the University of Richmond students outside of the time spent at All Souls tutoring program. The purpose of this program is to show your child what college life is about and encourage him or her to stay focused on continuing his or her education.

This is a wonderful opportunity for your child to develop an individual relationship with a University of Richmond student. If this program on April 25th goes well, we can continue to enhance the All Souls afternoon tutoring sessions into not only a successful tutor program run by All Souls church members but also an effective mentor program run by the University of Richmond students.

In order for your child to participate in this field trip, I need a permission slip by Monday, April 13th, either sent with your child to the tutoring session or mailed to me at the following address: Buzz Lambert, UFA Box 4061, University of Richmond, Va. 23173 by the same date. It allows me to drive your child to the University of Richmond and back to All Souls Church. If you have any questions pertaining to this particular Saturday or with my program in general, please do not hesitate to call me at 804-662-3847. If I am not at home please leave a message on my voice mail and I will return your call as soon as possible. I look forward to hearing from you and possibly meeting you on that Saturday when you drop off your child. Your child seems to be just as excited about this Saturday in April as we are. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Dennis “Buzz” Lambert

If your child does not have this permission slip signed, he/she cannot attend.

( ) In signing this form I release All Souls Church and the University of Richmond from all liability pertaining to any injuries which my child might sustain during his/her field trip to the University of Richmond campus on April 25th.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: __________

( ) I do not give permission for my child to participate in the field trip to the University of Richmond on April 25th.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: __________
References


