

What Makes A Great Mentoring Program?

***Highlights of USA Study Tour
November 1999***

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Dusseldorp Skills Forum
April 2000***

Introduction

In global terms mentoring is a relatively new concept in Australia. Whilst there are some programs which target young people at risk, most mentoring programs in Australia focus on young people who have by conventional standards already made a successful transition from school, for example mentoring for first year university students or mentoring in the workplace for new employees.

With the development of a pilot program on the Central Coast of NSW (Plan-It Youth) which matches young people at risk of not completing their education with community mentors, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum began exploring the Australian experience in mentoring- searching for other programs of a similar nature, to learn from their experiences.

Lack of information, resources and the relative inexperience in mentoring in Australia led the Forum to examine program practices in other parts of the world with more history/experience in this field. In USA, for example, mentoring has been practised for over 80 years and there are numerous examples of programs which target youth at risk. Many of these programs support large numbers of matches eg the Big Brothers Big Sisters program supports over 75,000 matches. Given this experience and the successes of many of the programs, United States was the focus of the study tour.

The study focused on:

- the target group of mentees
- recruitment of mentors
- funding arrangements
- screening of mentors
- training of mentors
- program evaluation, and
- resources.

The following information on programs visited, highlights points of interest as well as points of difference, in the way programs are established and managed on a daily basis.

Committed Partners for Youth

Address 1591 Williamette St.,
Suite.B
Eugene OR 97401

Contact: Dr Dene Eller

Vision: Working collaboratively with the community to support the development of self-responsible young adults.

Mission: Helping vulnerable youth develop self esteem and hope for their future.

Resources: Seasonal Newsletter
The Mentor Handbook
Recruitment Postcard
Information Brochure
Flyer
Lunch Buddy Brochure
Screening Processes for Volunteers
Mentor and Mentee Applications
Federal Grant Demographics Form
Standards of Ethical Behaviour
Reference Check
Mentoring: Elements of Effective Practice

This group is located within a small shopping centre in Eugene, Oregon and focuses on families in crisis as an alternative to psychological therapy. They usually deal with children

from single parent families and young people who are exposed to substance abuse and /or violence. The young people are referred to the program by the school (their middle school) because of lack of social skills or other issues that come to the attention of the school counsellor.

The program begins with an introductory retreat for a weekend for both mentors and mentees. Throughout the program, the partners are encouraged to go on many outings – not only to teach the social skills but also to encourage the development of the relationship. It aims to teach the values of commitment and support whilst building a “community” around the young person. This “community” is a small team of five mentees and five mentors and operates after school on a voluntary basis. The schools pay a partnership of \$10,000 which support 25 kids each year. This money is accessed by the school through a Federal grant but it is the school’s decision to use the funding this way. A pre and post assessment of the student is carried out by the teacher/ counsellor.

At least one member of the mentee’s family must be involved in the program. This person isn’t necessarily related, but can be a significant other adult. The cost of supporting the family, the student and the mentor is \$2,200 per annum.

Recruitment of mentors is through many different avenues including lots of advertising. Prospective mentors complete a 12 page application form, attend an interview and an information session, then complete 8 hours of mandatory training. This process takes between 3 and 4 weeks. When the mentors are introduced to the students they have an event called a "Jitters Night" where more training is provided for both mentors and students. The students and their mentors create a Values Contract which is an agreement on how the relationship will work.

All the partners meet on a monthly basis with a social psychologist to discuss problems and progress. After 7 months in the program the students graduate and usually continue working with their mentors on a regular basis. During the 7 months the mentor visits the student at

home with the family present, but not involved. The student is not permitted to visit the mentor's house until after graduation.

Evaluation:

Each team of approximately 5 students and their support network has a Team Captain who is responsible for completing a monthly report for the first 7 months of the partnership. This monthly report includes a report from every mentor and mentee within the team.

Outcomes:

The program has assisted hundreds of 7th and 8th grade youths build self esteem and hope for their future. These youths have raised their grades, lowered their absenteeism and improved their outlook for healthy and productive lives.

Networking For Youth

Address: 99 West 10th Avenue,
Suite 340
Eugene OR 97401

Contact: Joe Berney

Email: berney@continent.com

Joe Berney began working with the Superintendent of Schools in Eugene, Oregon to look at some alternative solutions to the funding and programming cuts in youth agencies. Concerned with increasing dropout rates and high-risk behaviour among young people, Civic leaders initiated a community mentoring program, Networking For Youth (NFY) in 1993. As business leaders studied demographic trends, the need to encourage the educational achievement of every single young person in the community was apparent. Working together, School Superintendents and business leaders crafted NFY's strategy to mobilise the community on behalf of young people. They developed a comprehensive mentoring approach which matches working adults with students. NFY created a community support system encouraging young people to investigate job opportunities and make positive life choices.

The dramatic economic changes of the 1980's in Oregon, especially in the timber industries, brought home to the community the tough new realities of dropping out of school. Young people who previously could connect with relatively unskilled, but living-wage jobs were becoming increasingly disconnected and more likely to become dependent on social services. NFY's philosophy is based on the premise that young people who are connected to supportive adults are much more likely to be exposed to work opportunities and job possibilities. At the same time, adults who serve as mentors become more familiar with the challenges facing youth and how the community can make its young people a priority.

NFY demonstrated that youth development *is* economic development. The mentoring initiative focused on 3 components:

- Advancing drop-out prevention throughout the community;
- Connecting young people with a working future; and
- Coordinating resources to achieve the greatest impact in a cost-effective way.

NFY launched the nation's first mentoring consortium, made up of 18 different mentoring initiatives in the Eugene/Springfield and Lane County region. The ultimate goal of the consortium is to provide adult working mentors to every high school youth who would like one.

NFY demonstrated how mentoring can serve as a catalyst for mobilising a community to address complex social and economic issues.

Most important features of a mentoring program:

1. Use “Best Practice” operations and procedures
2. Know when to call professional assistance
3. Networking for Youth - Teaching Youth How to Connect With Others in Their Community.
4. Create Political Change in Your Community, and
5. Be a Youth Advocate in Your Community.

Big Brother Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago

Address: 28 East Jackson Blvd
Suite 1800
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Contact: Frank Zirille

Resources: Promotional Material i.e. T-shirt, Cap and Cooler Bag
Program-based Outcome Evaluation - A casework management approach to measuring outcomes in mentoring programs.
Fund Raising Material
Promotional Flyer
Annual Report
Business Plan
Impact Study
Mentor Application Forms
Newsletter

Mission:

To support young people with an adult role model - interacting with a positive stable relationship to guide the young person towards the following personal life goals:

- Develop a positive self-image;
- Maintain good physical and mental health;
- Develop positive behaviour and attitudes towards others;
- Develop effective social skills;
- Complete school;
- Obtain skilled employment; and
- Become a contributing member of his/her community.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Chicago is part of a national network of mentoring programs in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America program which is currently managing over 75,000 mentoring matches. The Chicago program has grown from 150 matches in 1994 to 650 matches in 1999. The program's success is largely due to tried and tested program practices and national campaigns for recruiting mentors. As in most of the mentoring programs in America, Big Brothers Big Sisters has a major focus on fund raising and holds regular fund raising events which also serve as recruitment drives. The program basically focuses on young people aged 10-14 who come from a single parent family. The child is usually nominated by the parent or the teacher (sometimes the student) and is always voluntary. The student must have the support of the family to be involved.

INTERESTING FEATURES/ ISSUES DISCUSSED

Recruitment Challenge

A contest which rewards mentors who introduce new mentors into the program with sponsored prizes like dinners and weekend getaways.

Red Flags

A mentor with no adult friends.

Gay Mentors

Are permitted in the program provided the information is shared with the parent --not necessarily the student in the early days.

Contract of Responsibilities

Parent, mentor and student must all agree on individual responsibilities in the relationship and sign off on this contract.

Transport

Because of an efficient public transport system, mentors are not permitted to drive students in their vehicles unless under exceptional circumstances.

Monthly Picnics

Includes all matched kids and their mentors, as well as unmatched kids.

Mentors

Need to be a friend without qualification.

Need to be aware that kids in this program are not usually trustful of adults.

Mentors receive no pay and are frequently expected to fund their mentees expenses.

Mentees

75-80% of kids in the program have been referred by their mum. The rest are self-referral or from counselling agencies and schools.

Board

There are six board meetings held each year. There are approximately 30 people on the board including up and coming leaders, workers, attorneys, small business operators and presidents of companies. The board also has a Board Development Committee to ensure the board is made up of the right people who have a strong belief in the program and have the ability to act upon those beliefs.

The board has a sub-committee who has the responsibility of checking the records kept by the program. Every six months, two board members complete a mandatory assessment of 20% of all client files. If any of the files are not up to date or the clients have not been contacted on a regular basis, the Case Manager faces instant dismissal. Follow up contact is the number one priority and case notes must always be kept up to date.

Part of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Chicago pay dues of \$10,000 per annum to the national office to be part of the federation. This includes using the name, PR activities, a national conference, staff training, national campaigns, national standards, and quality of service. To remain a part of the network, each local organisation must comply with the 30 National BBBS Standards (for example, finance, tax status, interviews, and checks).

Insurance

\$12,000-\$13,000 per annum insurance is paid to CHUBB Insurance which includes sexual molestation coverage.

Staff- Mentor Ratios

A Case Manager usually manages 50 first-year relationships. This includes minimum monthly contact with the parent, the child and the mentor. If there are no problems, this usually is about 10 hours per week for the first 3 months. In the second year of the relationship contact is only quarterly.

Case Managers

Must have a minim BA in Behavioural Science and/or experience in Social Work. Interestingly, all Case Managers at BBBS of Chicago have been female except for the Chief Executive Officer.

4. Cabrini Connections and Chicago Tutor Mentor Connection

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Chicago
Illinois 60654

Contact: Dan Bassill
Phone: 312-573-8851
Fax: 312-573-8816
Email: CabriniC@aol.com
Website: www.tutormentorconnection.org

Resources: 7th Edition, Tutor/Mentor Connection Chicago Programs Directory,
August 1999
A Collaborative Study of Chicago's Youth Services Programs :
A Look at 272 Youth Services Programs in the Community
Tutor/Mentor Connection Newsletter, Fall 1999
Cabrini Connections 1998 Annual Report

Cabrini Connections acts as an umbrella organisation for mentoring programs in the Chicago area as well as conducting its own tutoring/mentoring program. Cabrini connections have developed a directory of mentoring programs to serve as a type of *Yellow Pages of Mentoring*. The directory lists every neighbourhood tutor/mentor program alphabetically and also lists references to where more detailed information can be found. It also includes a section of local and national organisations which can be resources for any individual program. Schools, parents, potential volunteers and students; as well as other mentoring programs can use the directory. It is also intended for corporations, professional and civic groups to develop strategies which will deliver these resources into tutor/mentor programs in every neighbourhood where they are needed.

The directory is updated annually and programs listed do not pay any fee to belong. Cabrini Connections. For example, if a young person gets shot in a Chicago neighbourhood the incident will make front-page news. Immediately, Cabrini Connections contacts the media and organises a follow up story about what could have been done to prevent the incident, and calls on businesses in also has done extensive mapping of schools, dropout rates, tutor /mentor programs, and poverty levels. These maps identify where more mentoring programs are needed i.e. in neighbourhoods where poverty is most concentrated and school performance is lowest. Whenever an incident involving a young person occurs in any neighbourhood in Chicago, Cabrini Connections uses its mapping to identify why the problem exists and what could be done to prevent further problems occurring. It specifically targets businesses in the direct area where the incident occurred and puts the responsibility of resolving these issues back onto the local businesses who serve that area that local area to support tutor/mentor programs.

Cabrini Connections also has an extensive media file containing articles on local mentoring programs.

The Chicago Tutor/Mentor Connection:

As well as being an umbrella organisation, Cabrini connections also offers a tutor/mentor program. The program has been running in different formats for approximately 32 years and currently targets students in public housing through local high schools from Years 7-12. Students are usually introduced to the program through word-of-mouth and their commitment involves a minimum 2 hours per week in the evening. Once participating as a mentee, the student is also offered other activities such as homework support, competitions, and activity based groups e.g. films. Volunteers are recruited through word of mouth and through the media from stories run through Cabrini Connections. Students in the tutor/mentor program meet with their mentor (and sometimes without their mentor) at a specific location – currently in a local church hall – previously in the Montgomery Ward office building.

The program coordinator keeps extensive spreadsheet records identifying when mentors and mentees have been in contact. This is a useful tool when reapplying for funding. On top of the 2 hours per week at the mentoring centre, students may also meet their mentors at other places providing they have parental permission. Both volunteers and families receive training on their liabilities and responsibilities.

The centre is open from 4pm-8pm every weekday and occasionally on weekends to serve as a drop-in centre. There are scheduled times twice weekly when mentors are expected to attend with their mentees. The program is staffed by two full-time coordinators and one half-time coordinator to support 100 matches. Coordinators contact mentors weekly and facilitate problem solving.

The program is supported financially by 60 corporations and 350 individuals. Corporation support is from \$1,000 to \$40,000 and individual support ranges from \$25 to \$25,000. All corporations who support TMC are profiled on their website and in the newsletters. No government money is used to support the program. Dan Bassill, the project manager, believes the government is too bureaucratic and often an unreliable and unsustainable source of funds. The local school superintendent has made many public offers to support the program financially, but the offer never seems to come to fruition.

Students in the program are rewarded under a point scheme. For every A grade they gain in their school reports, they are awarded 25 points; and a B grade is awarded 1 point. They can use these points to buy school supplies at the mentoring centre e.g. stationery; and can also accumulate their points to pay for a trip to Great America (fun park) held at the end of every semester. If they choose they can save their points until they graduate at the end of Year 12 and can convert their points into cash towards further training when they leave school. The points are valued based on attendance over the previous two years. So 100% attendance for the last two years is 10c a point, 80% attendance is 8c per point. They can then earn extra

points for performance during the mentoring evenings. TMC also organises college trips for students to look at different campuses and visit different businesses and professions.

At the mentoring centre, students are organised into separate grade groups and after the tutoring session is over many of the students go out for a meal with their mentor (paid for by the mentor). This is often the motivating factor for performance during the session ("immediate reward"). Each grade group has a group discussion once a month to talk about issues that are affecting their performance at school.

5. North-West Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

Address 101 S.W. Main,
Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204-3297

Contact: Kay Davis
Director of The National Mentoring Centre
Ph: (503) 275-0121
E-mail: davisk@nwrel.org

This is a national organisation funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice with the responsibility of providing training and support to new and existing mentoring programs. Established in February 1999 their focus has been on developing training programs for those involved in coordinating or establishing mentoring programs. In November they pulled together approximately 40 of the nation's best practitioners in mentoring programs to test-run the program. I was fortunate enough to be invited to participate.

Topics Covered (I have a copy of the complete program)

- Preparing to Facilitate
- JUMP Starting Your Mentors
- Connecting and Communicating
- Targeted Mentor Recruiting
- Screening Mentors
- Making and Supporting the Match
- Keeping the Relationship Going
- Measuring Outcomes

The organisation holds regular training conferences at nominal cost to programs throughout USA .

6. The Barns Jewish Hospital, St. Louis

(A 1400 bed hospital with a medical centre attached.)

A mentoring program developed for local schools to work with the hospital because of the number of work opportunities within the hospital as well as a need for hospital staff to become interactive with the community. Students at a local high school are mentored by staff at the hospital. The mentoring occurs during school time once per month on the hospital site and other times at the school. Students volunteer to become part of the program, usually because of a desire to work within that industry.

Students become part of the hospital volunteer team and, as well as looking at various jobs within the system, also do some of the voluntary work with duties similar to that of the "Pink Ladies" within the New South Wales' hospital system.

7. Project Youth Connect

(A network of 15 national sites funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention)

Targets students at grade 6 level who have experienced or witnessed violence, or may be at risk of post-traumatic stress. The project is managed by a coordinator who oversees two paid mentor advocates. These mentor advocates are the case managers of the targeted students. The students are referred to mentors through a transition process.

8. Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City

Address: 223 E. 30th Street

New York, NY 10016

Contact: Danielle Brown

Telephone: (212) 686-2042

Fax: (212) 779-1221

E-Mail: danielle@bbbsny.org

This program operates similarly to all other BBBS programs but also offers a range of training programs including:

Certified Mentoring Supervisor :

Offered as a joint venture between Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service and BBBS of NYC. A semester long course of over 30 hours of professional development. The program is geared for Human Service and Social Work professionals, youth counsellors and workers, mentoring program coordinators and other adults who work with youth.

Technical Assistance from the Centre for Training and Family Services:

1. Train the Trainer: A five-hour volunteer training class where participants learn skills to help train volunteers.
2. On-site Customised Volunteer Training
3. Create a Press Kit
4. Liability and Insurance Issues facing Volunteer Programs
5. Fund Raising Techniques - The Latest Trends in Funding.
6. On-line Marketing
7. Utilising the Internet to Conduct Business
8. Strategic Planning for the Millennium

BBBS of NYC also offers the Business - Non-Profit Exchange program which matches volunteers with business expertise to non-profit organisations seeking technical assistance.

Recruitment

Only 12% of applicants end up becoming mentors. Some screen themselves out – some are screened out – and some just don't follow through.

Strategies for recruitment:

- Newspaper advertising – Promote a high profile mentor
- Do presentations for whole staff working through PR or community development. a lunch-bag presentation and then at the end of the presentation you can sign up mentors and ask for other connections from the contact. This is "relationship" networking and works well for Church groups, universities, police, fire, Rotary.
- Students at university get extra credit for becoming mentors.
- Create ambassadors to recruit mentors from various organisations.
- Create a MOU with local organisations.
- Direct mail.