

## Student Mentoring

Question:

1. What does the research say about the short and long term effects of student mentoring (student as mentee and an adult as mentor)? What is the impact of mentoring on student retention, academic achievement, and social-emotional development across all grade levels?
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**Report:**

Following an established REL-NEI Reference Desk research protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive and policy-oriented briefs and articles in this area. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research institutions, several educational research databases, and a general Internet search using Google and other search engines. We also searched for appropriate organizations that may act as resources on this issue. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves, but offer these resources to you for your information only.

Our researchers have found a large number of resources that address mentoring programs for students in grades K-12. We found that many programs are designed for specific purposes or specific populations including, but not limited to: at-risk students, students of specific genders or age groups, minority students, gifted/talented students, students who need literacy support, students at risk of dropping out of school, etc. We also found that although there are a large number of resources describing mentoring programs, research that addresses the effects and impact of student mentoring programs in general is limited. We have included resources in this response that describe the impact of mentoring programs in schools in general.

According to one resource: "Over the last ten years, mentoring has seen unprecedented growth. This has been particularly noticeable in school-based mentoring (SBM)," and "SMB is now the most common form of formal mentoring in the U.S., surpassing traditional community-based mentoring (CBM). Its growth, however, has outpaced the research necessary to determine whether and how the program works (Portwood & Ayers, 2005)" (Karcher, 2007; see resource below). This sentiment was echoed in the other resources found. Foster states that "reliable data about how, why and where mentoring is successful is still being developed" (2001; see resource below). The resources provide some information about the impact of mentoring programs. For example, the Big Brothers Big Sisters SBM program described in Karcher, 2007 found that after one year of involvement in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, "teachers reported that participating youth improved more than their non-mentored peers in several aspects of their school performance and behavior (e.g., overall performance, quality and number of assignments turned in, skipping school, serious school infractions)" (see resource below).

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**1.1. WWC Quick Review of the Report “Impact Evaluation of the U.S. Department of Education’s Student Mentoring Program.”** June 2009; *What Works Clearinghouse Quick Review; Institute of Education Sciences; 1 page.*

Source: Institute of Education Sciences

([http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PDF/quickreviews/schoolbasedmentoring\\_062309.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PDF/quickreviews/schoolbasedmentoring_062309.pdf))

“The study examined the effects of the U.S. Department of Education’s Student Mentoring Program (SMP) on students’ interpersonal relationships, academic outcomes, and delinquent and risk behaviors” (p.1). The program serves fourth through eighth graders and “matches participants with an adult or peer mentor to discuss academics, relationships, and future plans. Mentors meet with students at their schools about once a week for six months...Study authors found that the student mentoring program had no statistically significant effect on the academic and behavioral outcomes they examined once they adjusted their statistical tests for the analysis of multiple outcomes” (p.1). (The full report is available here:

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20094047/pdf/20094047.pdf>.) Although the authors found no statistically significant effect, they did find that “there was some scattered evidence that impacts were heterogeneous across types of students. In particular, impacts on girls were statistically significantly different from impacts on boys for two self-reported scales: Scholastic Efficacy and School Bonding, and Pro-social Behaviors. For boys, the impact on Prosocial Behaviors was negative and statistically significant (i.e., treatment group boys had lower Prosocial Behaviors scores). For girls, the impact on Scholastic Efficacy and School Bonding was positive and statistically significant” (Full Report, p.91).

**1.2. Effectiveness of Mentor Programs.** 2001; Foster, L.; *California Research Bureau- Document Prepared at the Request of Senator Dede Alpert; 48 pages; ERIC Document #ED463511.*

Source: ERIC

([http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/19/f2/40.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/19/f2/40.pdf))

From the ERIC abstract: “There is considerable literature to indicate that mentoring relationships support the healthy development of children and youth by reducing risky behaviors, and the number of mentoring programs has increased dramatically in recent years. This California Research Bureau report examines the research literature evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs during the past 5 years. The report notes that the traditional one-to-one, community-based friendship program that emphasizes building youth-adult relationships and developing personal skills is the most common mentoring model. However, current programs encompass a range of alternative designs. These include programs that provide one mentor for a group of children, online mentoring programs, and programs offered at specific sites such as schools. School-based programs are the most common, and rapidly expanding, type of site-based mentoring. The report includes descriptions of several mentoring models and evaluation findings from a variety of these programs.” The author concludes that, “recent studies reported in the literature provide additional support that mentoring is an effective approach to build upon youth assets and reduce risk behaviors....These studies have primarily been of small programs,” and “most have serious limitations. Reliable data about how, why and where mentoring is successful is still being developed” (p.31).

**1.3. School-Based Mentoring.** 2007; Karcher, M., & Herrera, C.; *MENTOR Research in Action. Issue 6; 32 pages; ERIC Document #ED502227.*

Source: ERIC

([http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/3e/8a/29.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/3e/8a/29.pdf))

“Over the last ten years, mentoring has seen unprecedented growth. This has been particularly noticeable in school-based mentoring (SBM), a relatively new form of mentoring that brings mentors into schools to meet with students...SMB is now the most common form of formal mentoring in the U.S., surpassing traditional community-based mentoring (CBM). Its growth, however, has outpaced the research necessary to determine whether and how the program works (Portwood & Ayers, 2005). Recent studies have begun to outline some of the model’s strengths and challenges. Results from these studies support three main conclusions: 1) SBM is a very different intervention from the traditional CBM model; 2) the approach does benefit participating youth, primarily in peer relationships and other school-related areas; and 3) several practices may be crucial for maximizing youth benefits” (p.5). The authors review findings from “The Big Brothers Big Sisters SMB Impact Study” and the “Communities in Schools (CIS) Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment (SMILE) Impact Study.” After one year of involvement

in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, “teachers reported that participating youth improved more than their non-mentored peers in several aspects of their school performance and behavior (e.g., overall performance, quality and number of assignments turned in, skipping school, serious school infractions)” (p.5). In the CIS SMILE study, the author found that “relative to those youth who were not mentored, youth who were randomly assigned to receive a mentor improved in their self-reported connectedness to peers, self-esteem (global and present-oriented), and social support from friends” (p. 5). The authors conclude that “involving schools can help programs reach large groups of youth who may not otherwise be served, but school-based programs and their matches must adjust to the structure of the school. The available research suggests new and additional mentor training, staff support, and match maintenance efforts, such as summer contacts, will be necessary if SBM is to maximize its potential...Adapting school-based mentoring in ways that better suit the specific needs of boys and girls of different ages will be an important next step in the realization of potential benefits of this rapidly growing approach to promoting positive youth development” (p.15).

### Additional Organizations to Consult

- **Education Commission of the States: Mentoring/Tutoring**

([www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org))

According to the ‘About ECS’ section of the website: “The mission of the Education Commission of the States is to help states develop effective policy and practice for public education by providing data, research, analysis and leadership; and by facilitating collaboration, the exchange of ideas among the states and long-range strategic thinking.” The Education Commission of the States provides a section on their website that includes resources, research and information about Mentoring/Tutoring. For a direct link, click here:

<http://www.ecs.org/html/issue.asp?issueid=82&subissueid=0>

- **MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership**

(<http://www.mentoring.org/>)

From the ‘About Us’ section of the MENTOR website: “MENTOR works with a strong network of state and local *Mentoring Partnerships* to leverage resources and provide the support and tools that mentoring organizations need to effectively serve young people in their communities.” They provide a section on resources and research related to mentoring in general and a section that specifically addresses “school-based mentoring.” For a direct link, click here:

[http://www.mentoring.org/access\\_research/school\\_based/](http://www.mentoring.org/access_research/school_based/)

- **National Mentoring Center**

(<http://educationnorthwest.org/nmc>)

From the National Mentoring Center website: “The National Mentoring Center at Education Northwest is one of the nation’s premier training and technical assistance providers for youth mentoring programs and initiatives. Education Northwest has over 20 years experience providing training, resources, and other services to local mentoring programs and federal, state, and regional agencies.” The National Mentoring Center provides free online forums for mentoring practitioners to share ideas and best practices.

- **Big Brothers Big Sisters of America**

(<http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.diJKKYPLJvH/b.1539751/k.BDB6/Home.htm>)

From the ‘About Us’ section of the website: “Big Brothers Big Sisters is the oldest, largest and most effective youth mentoring organization in the United States...Big Brothers Big Sisters mentors children, ages 6 through 18, in communities across the country.” To read the 2000 impact study of the program, click here:

[http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/111\\_publication.pdf](http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/111_publication.pdf)

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### Key words and search strings used in the search:

“mentor” OR “mentors” OR “mentoring” OR “advisory” AND “students” OR “school-based mentoring” OR “adult mentors for students” OR “role model” OR “mentee” NOT “college” NOT “student teaching”

## **Search databases and websites:**

Institute of Education Science Resources (IES); Regional Educational Laboratory Program (REL); IES Practice Guides; What Works Clearinghouse (WWC); Doing What Works (DWW); Institute of Education Sciences (IES); National Center for Education Research (NCER); National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE); National Center for Special Education (NCSE); National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Other Federally Funded Resources: The Center on Innovation and Improvement; The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality; The National High School Center; Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement; Education Commission of the States;

Additional Resources: Education Development Center; WestEd; American Institutes of Research; The Campbell Collaboration; Center on Education Policy (CEP)

Search Engines and Databases: ERIC

Criteria for inclusion:

When Reference Desk Researchers review resources, they consider, among other things, four factors:

1. **Date of the publication:** The most current information is included unless in the case of nationally known seminal resources
2. **Source and funder of the report/study/brief/article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols;
3. **Methodology:** i.e. Random control trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc. Priority for inclusion is given generally to random control trial study findings; however, the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: Numbers of participants (just a few? Thousands?); Selection (did the participants volunteer in the study, or were they chosen?); Representation (were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?)
4. **Existing knowledge base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is slim or non-existent. In these cases we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, etc.

### **REL Northeast and Islands**

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