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A Pilot Study: The Effects of Mentoring on At-Risk African American, Ninth Grade Male Students

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African American, Ninth Grade Male Students

by

Tira C. Brockman

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
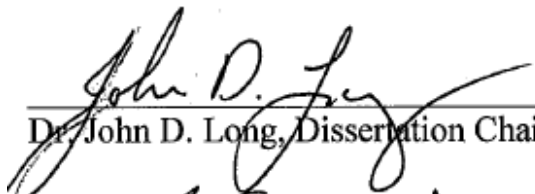
degree of

Doctor of Education

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at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

_____   _____
Dr. John D. Long, Dissertation Chair   9.2.16
                                                                                        Date

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Dr. Graham Weir, Committee Member   9/2/16
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_____   _____
Dr. Beth Kania-Gosche, Committee Member   9-2-16
                                                                                        Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Tira Colleen Brockman

Signature: _____ Date: 9/2/16

Acknowledgements

I give all the honor and glory to my heavenly Father, God, who made this journey possible. I would like to acknowledge my chairperson Dr. John Long for his tireless effort in supporting me through this process. In addition, the members of my committee, Dr. Graham Weir and Dr. Beth Kania-Gosche, who worked diligently to guide and direct me to completion of my dissertation.

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Abstract

A pilot study on the effects of mentoring on ninth-grade at-risk African American males was completed with 25 students. This study was conducted during one calendar school year. The purpose was to use mentoring as an added intervention in support of some struggling students, males in particular, who were at-risk of dropping out of school before graduation. This study was meaningful, because these students were consistently failing, and the school was looking for innovative ways to academically encourage these at-risk students.

The study was conducted at a ninth grade academy directly linked to the high school, in an urban city. This academy facilitated approximately 426 ninth-grade students. Ninety-nine percent of the students received free and reduced lunch.

The overall research question was, does volunteer mentoring affect the educational success of ninth-grade at-risk African American male students? The research methodology was qualitative. The researcher used interviews and surveys to examine the students' expectations of the mentoring program and the results. The mentoring program took place twice a month with four volunteer mentors. The qualitative data conveyed information on 25 African American ninth-grade male students' grades, attendance rates, and number of discipline referrals they received.

The outcomes revealed that the students, parents, and mentors perceived the pilot study of the mentoring program to help keep the students in school. However, the students and the mentors declared that the program was too short and needed more time during the sessions or more sessions. The students considered the mentors to be someone that they could talk to and look up to. The teachers were supportive of the program as an

added intervention and were flexible in allowing the students to participate in the program. In conclusion, data revealed there was not a significant change in the students' attendance, behavior, or grades as a result of the mentoring program. However, research disclosed that mentoring at-risk students does affect the educational success of students.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

This study examined the effects of a volunteer mentoring program on academic outcomes, focused on ninth-grade African American at-risk male students. This mentoring program was a pilot study to determine if implementing a volunteer mentoring program had an effect on this group of students. The specific areas of concern were to improve the students' academic performances (grades), attendance, and decrease the number of discipline referrals received by these students. The volunteer mentoring program was an added intervention to support the targeted group of ninth-grade at-risk male students.

The term at-risk depicted students who had a greater chance of failing or dropping out of school. According to Resnick and Burt (1996), at-risk also identified students who engaged in risky behavior. These risky behaviors and situations included the following: failing academically, entering secondary school on a low reading level, learning disabilities, low test scores, grade retention, discipline problems, homelessness, incarceration, teen pregnancy, serious health issues, domestic violence, unemployment, and underemployment of the parents. The researcher studied an alternative method, mentoring, in addition to regular teaching strategies, intended to support the targeted group of ninth-grade male students, who were struggling in the areas of academic performance, attendance, and discipline, mentioned above. Floyd (1993) described two types of mentoring as natural mentoring and planned mentoring. According to the author, natural mentoring happened organically through friendship, teaching, coaching, and counseling. Planned mentoring occurred through structured programs, in which the

adult and the youth were selected to participate (Floyd, 1993). This pilot study used a

planned mentoring program.

Background of the Researcher

      The researcher was a 45-year-old female educator pursuing her EdD in K-12

Educational Leadership. She had a Bachelor's degree in Health and Physical Education,

a Master's degree in School Guidance and Counseling, and a Master's degree in

Educational Administration. At the time of the study, the researcher was employed as the

principal of a ninth-grade academy in an Illinois School District. She was completing her

third year as an administrator and had worked in an urban school district in the past. The

researcher was impacted by her teachers and coaches, who unofficially served as her

mentors and were instrumental during her developmental years. She attributed her

success to having those mentors encourage her, guide her, and support her during the

early years of her education, and much of what she learned prompted her to implement

the mentoring pilot program in her school. The researcher believed that having those

mentors as an additional support system highly affected her life. She felt compelled to

give back to her community what was first given to her. This is why she returned to the

school district she had attended as a student. Her focus was to create a village of support

that included multiple interventions, in order to support as many students as possible who

may need student support. She wanted to create a culture and climate that was healing

and conducive to learning for all students, regardless of the challenges they faced and/or

brought into the school environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if using mentors, as an added intervention during the course of a school day, contributed to the overall academic success of at-risk ninth-grade African American male students. In addition, this study examined the role that parents, community, and staff played in creating an environment and support system that encouraged and supported students' academic success. After completing this study, the researcher hoped to be able to determine if continuing the mentoring program would have beneficial effects on those ninth-grade African American male at-risk students. This study focused on the possible benefits of using a mentoring program as an added intervention and how greatly or minimally the program affected the educational success of the targeted group of students.

The Rationale for the Study

The researcher was an administrator in a predominantly (99%) African American school district and working to improve the culture and climate of the school with the students and how they conducted themselves. The researcher was searching for ways to contribute to the solution of improving the performances of the students' behaviors, grades, and attendance through interventions. The researched school district was going through a transformation. Interventions were being interjected in the form of a structured support system, instead of using the previous method of isolation through in-school and out-of-school suspensions for inappropriate behaviors and poor attendance and grades. The researcher observed a large of number of suspensions, absences, and academic issues that needed to be addressed. According to the Schott Foundation (2008), the graduation rate of African American males was half of that of their Caucasian counterparts. Dropout

rates were higher in the African American male population, due to lack of educational

success while they were in school.

This academic performance epidemic was confounded by a lack of African

American male role models. Even in a predominantly African American school district,

there was a shortage of African American male figures working in the educational

system. Researchers revealed that 50% of African American children in the United

States lived in a household without a father figure present (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Therefore, the researcher decided to pilot an intervention strategy of volunteer mentoring

with African American male role models from the community, to encourage the ninth-

grade African American male students to hopefully achieve success in the grades,

attendance, and overall behavior.

Researchers suggested that mentoring could increase academic achievement,

student motivation, and self-confidence, thus lowering the risk of dropping out of school

(Koro-Ljungberg & Hayes, 2006). The literature review included with this study

highlighted the relevant research, previous to this writing, on mentoring. The literature

contained little information about the experience of at-risk students in an alternative high

school setting. Studies on mentoring concluded that a mentoring relationship positively

affected the at-risk population when the following was considered: the students'

encounters and connections with stakeholders of the city and their self-awareness

(Narravo, 2004), and "Having a positive and healthy relationship with a mentor not only

affected a young persona's self-concept but also how others perceived him or her"

(Hughes, 2006).

In a review of the literature, Jekielek, Moore, Hair, and Scarupa (2002) determined that when students networked with positive and caring adults who spent time with them encouraging and guiding them to success, they were more likely to have a better attendance rate, be open to assisting others, and possibly improving their connection to their parents/guardians. A noteworthy study conducted was the influence of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America in the mid-1990s (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995). This was one of the first studies to describe exact investigations on the bearing mentoring could have on progressive results for students who had a high risk of dropping out school prior to graduating. This brought attention to educational specialists and consultants of educators to endorse using mentoring programs to support at-risk students (Rhodes & DuBois, 2006). Rhodes and DuBois (2006) stated that it was imperative that schools found systems and programs that created positive interventions and supports, in order to encourage, empower, and motivate at-risk students to become encouraged for educational and overall life success.

Researchers studied the impact that positive mentors and mentoring programs had on at-risk students. As of this writing, mentoring was gaining popularity, especially school-based mentoring programs. Extensive research was conducted showing that "providing youth with consistent adult support through a well-supervised, frequently meeting, long-term mentoring relationship improved grade and family relationships, and helped prevent initiation of drug and alcohol use" (Herrera, 1999, p. 1). DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002) and DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, and Valentine (2011), organized two strategic examinations of programs that mentored school-aged adolescence studies. Both examinations helped to focus on the outcomes of

programs that highlighted mentoring for youth. The 2002 systematic review by DuBois

et al. disclosed moderate results that were a correlation to the program designed to

mentor youth. The study displayed effect sizes of 0.14 to 0.18 (DuBois et al., 2002). The

study by DuBois et al. (2011) conveyed a somewhat greater, but still moderate, effect

size of 0.21 (DuBois et al., 2011). Other researchers referred to the systematic review of

2002 to obtain optimal systems that invoked prime conditions for supporting youth

through mentoring programs (Dappen & Iserhagen, 2005; Karcher, 2005; Randolph &

Johnson, 2008).

This study examined if mentoring affected at-risk students' academics,

attendance, and behavior, but also explored which part of the program interventions had

an impact or assisted in motivating students to acquire academic success. In addition, the

role parents, community, and staff played in creating an environment that was effective,

encouraging, and motivating for at-risk students to achieving academic success was

studied. This study aided in identifying strategies and techniques for implementing

mentoring in schools that had at-risk students attending school in a community of

poverty.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

H1: There will be a difference in the attendance rates of the students who

participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

H2: There will be a difference in the grade point average, of the students who

participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

H3: There will be a difference in the number of discipline referrals, for the

students who participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

RQ1: How does having a relationship with a mentor impact at-risk students' attendance, grades, and behaviors?

RQ2: How do the students who participated in the mentoring program perceive the program?

RQ3: How do the parents of students who participated in the mentoring program perceive the program?

RQ4: How do the mentors who participated in the mentoring program perceive the program?

Limitations of Study

All studies have limitations, including this one. The first of these was that only one school and one grade level was used to sample students. The second was the actual number of students that participated in this study. There were 50 students invited, but only 25 participated in the study. The small sample possibly affected the study results. The third limitation was keeping the students committed to participating and completing the mentoring sessions. There were 25 students who completed all parts of the study. The fourth was the small number of mentors who participated. There were only four mentors used for the study. The fifth limitation was the honesty of the students, the parents, and the mentors during their interviews. It was impossible to know how honestly and completely the study participants answered any given question. The sixth limitation was the relatively short amount of time that was used for collection of study data. This study was conducted during one calendar school year. Because the students involved in this short-term mentoring program left for summer break, it was impossible to continue data collection with this particular group. In addition, a seventh possible limitation

would be the accurate collection of the data, from the Early Warning System (EWS) team.

Other limitations of this study were the accuracy and fidelity of the attendance and referral data inputted into the school's tracking system. This was the key determining factor that might have affected the students' attendance, GPAs, or number of referrals received.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used to clarify the terms that will be used throughout this dissertation.

Academic Success –acquiring a high score or letter grade that depicts accomplishment/achievement in the student's academics (operational definition).

At-Risk Students – Students who have a greater chance of dropping out or failing school (Virginia Department of Education, 2009, p. 1).

Buy-In – "Acceptance of and willingness to actively support and participate in something (such as a propped new plan or policy)" ("Let's Talk", n.d., p. 9).

Classroom Grades –the average of the grades received by the students, in an individual classroom (operational definition).

Discipline Referrals – Forms used to document a violation of a school district's code of conduct, or policies and/or procedures in a school building (Putnam, Luiselli, Handler, & Jefferson, 2003).

Drop out – A student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or the completion of a program of study (Owen, Rosch, Muschkin, Alexander, & Wyant, 2008, p. 1).

Early Warning System – A program that uses readily available academic and behavior data to systematically identify students who are at risk of dropping out of high school. Identified students were matched with interventions to help them get on track for graduation (Sarlo, Robertson, & Sudduth, 2011).

Grade Point Average –

A grade point average is a number representing the average value of the accumulated final grades earned in courses over time. More commonly called a GPA; a student's GPA is calculated by adding up all accumulated final grades and dividing that figure by the number of grades awarded. This calculation results in a mathematical mean — or average — of all final grades. (Hidden curriculum, 2014, p. 1).

Intervention - Change in the instruction that a student receives in order to improve in academic or behavior performance. An intervention must have a set length of time and must be measurable (Marzano, 2003)

Mentor – Someone who cares about the student and will hold them accountable (Hoover, 2005), encouraging them to become more involved with their education and to stay in school, (Penn, 2010).

Parental Involvement – "Participation of parents in regular and meaningful two-way communication involving student academic learning and other school activities" (Parent Involvement, 2004, p. 1)

Socio-economic Status – Combined economic and social position of an individual or family in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

Student Achievement – Student achievement/growth. Growth is the "change in student achievement for an individual student between two or more points in time" (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2001, p. 1). It predicts the individual's ability to be academically successful in the system of education (USDOE, 2001).

Success in the ninth grade – students who earn six or more credits during their ninth-grade year are considered successful according to the participating county's policy manual (Lee County Public Schools Policy Manual, 2009).

Summary

Researchers suggested that at-risk students lacked role models at home and this contributed to the lack of educational success. Researchers identified the need for schools to find systems and programs that created positive interventions, in order to encourage and empower at-risk students to become motivated for educational success. According to the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University (2007), having programs in place could deter at-risk students from dropping out and could improve their academic success (as cited by Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007).

Students with problematic behaviors who struggled academically were at-risk for dropping out of school. These problematic behaviors and situations included failing academically, learning disabilities, low test scores, grade retention, discipline problems, homelessness, incarceration, teen pregnancy, serious health issues, and domestic violence.

Chapter One provided an overview of the need for this research project. A variety of factors adversely affected the lives of at-risk youth. The researcher designed the study to help determine if a mentor could positively impact the academic advancement,

discipline referrals, and attendance rates of at-risk youth. Chapter Two reviews the

existing literature as it related to mentoring and at-risk youth. Some focus was placed

specifically on African American males, since that was the target population in this study.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

Overview

This chapter reviews the existing literature on at-risk youth as well as interventions designed to help them be more successful. The history of school-based interventions for at-risk students goes back for over 100 years. This chapter will look at interventions for at-risk youth from a variety of perspectives. This is followed by sections on Parental Involvement, Intervention Program Examples, Mentoring, at-risk characteristics and African American male students. There were five specific areas that are highlighted in this pilot study of the effects of mentoring ninth-grade African American male students.

Family involvement is often framed as a multidimensional construct consisting of collaboration among relatives and institutions in a variety of school-based and home-based activities that promote academic success of children (Domina, 2005; Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004; Singh et al., 1995; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Parents and caregivers can be encompassed in their offspring's schooling at the educational institute location by volunteering in and outside the classroom, meeting with other parents to plan events, going on class trips, participating in Parent Teacher Association meetings (PTA), or attending school events and meetings (Domina, 2005; Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Although low-income children are more likely to face challenges that affect their academic performance, a commonly cited strategy to develop the scholastic, developmental and communal success of students is their household's educational participation (Carter, 2002; Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Semke, Garbacz, Kwon, Sheridan, & Woods, 2010; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). Students

whose families are involved in their education, regardless of race or Socio Economic

Status (SES), perform better academically, emotionally, and behaviorally (Cheung &

Pomerantz, 2011; El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Gleason & Dynarksi,

2002; Semke et al., 2010; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Wilson, Tanner-Smith, & Lipsey,

2011).

There are a collection of intervention systems for educationally endangered

undergraduates of high school that have been examined. Livingston and Nahimana

(2006) recommended a natural attempt to address hindrances that effect African

American males and the scholastic struggle that prevents them from achieving academic

success. They recommended a system with strategies that would support change in the

students' behaviors which encompassed an appreciation of the common atmosphere in

which the African American males are raised. This intervention would highlight the lack

of income and job opportunities, lack of schooling, the fact that fathers are present in the

homes, the high level of violence that is witnessed, and the fact that one or both parents

are imprisoned. Their philosophy is that there is not one program representation that can

triumph that does not contemplate the entire list of influences that are mentioned above

and in what matter these factors will be neutralized and integrated when applicable.

Livingston and Nahimana (2006) supplied a record of the successes that were

accomplished: educational expansions for educators who are knowledgeable on how to

be socially delicate, additional masculine educators, vocational investigational chances,

masculine experts as advisors, multi-leveled curriculums that will be comprised of

confident and constructive representation for African Americans, and joint ventures with

the public units (e.g., churches, job shadowing, businesses, and government). The

authors' natural method is founded on a philosophy of an all-inclusive or well-rounded scholastic systematic organization.

Mentoring is an increasingly popular approach to dealing with the needs of at-risk students (Dawson, Gray, & Hester, 2004). Researchers proposed that the advisor's devotion, provision, and guidance support educationally endangered students to experience or identify a level of self-worth, address personal issues successfully, and participate in suitable activities (Keating, Tomishima, & Alessandri. 2002, pp. 37, 148). The introduction to events that focused on volunteering, by using a combination of distinct connections as well as a cluster of connections assisted to endorse an improved way of existence (Keating et al., 2002). Mentoring serves to teach at-risk students additional applicable behaviors for; handling complications of situations, fostering an awareness of people and illustrating that there are unknown adolescents who identify with the same personal issues that they are attempting to conquer (Keating et al., 2002).

Researchers proposed that children who are deemed to be at-risk are susceptible to educational and common difficulties considering the intense existence of distinctive circumstances or geological features that calculate potential complications (Stormont, Espinosa, Knipping, & McCathren, 2003). Various safety aspects may undoubtedly bring about more defenselessness in adolescents (Stormont, Espinosa, Knipping, & McCathren, 2002). According to Kelly (2003) there are elements which indicate educational letdown that began with numerous bases; embracing the pupil, the pupil's kinfolk, the institution, and the schoolroom leader. Numerous factors inside individual causes can potentially influence institutional disaster. For every learner, a variety of issues may indorse or deter scholarly accomplishment (Kelly, 2003).

African American males are between the greatest inadequately assisted by the existing scholastic organization. African American males comprise a high school completion ratio of merely 59% nationwide (Superville, 2015). These statistics are obvious with the amount of African Americas joining post-secondary institutions that indicates African American males trailing in the rear at pace of barely 100 for each 166 females (Employee Assistance Professionals, 2003). This remains specifically distressing since guys largely symbolize 60% of the total number of failures (Employee Assistance Professionals, 2003). These discouraging realities could ensure to some degree, an occurrence entitled, "cultural inversion or cultural opposition [which] occurs when members of a minority group adopt behaviors that directly contradict a specific, prominent aspect of the dominant culture; in this case choosing to fail rather than succeed at education" (Griffin, 2002, p. 72). In basic terms, this signifies that the scholars discard the mass benchmark of learning and select to not success instead of transforming (Griffin, 2002, p. 72).

Parental Involvement

Researchers stated that a number of family and home influences were linked to student achievement, including matters connected to parental involvement in their offspring's academic instructions at their residence and at their academic institution, further endorsing the need for parent involvement (Barton & Coley, 2007). Although children who live in an impoverished city are more likely to face issues that may affect their academic performance, a strategy that is often used to is family involvement in the educational process (Carter, 2002; Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Semke et al., 2010; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). Students who have family members involved in their

education, despite their race or SES, performed at a better percentage academically,

emotionally and behaviorally (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011; El Nokali et al., 2010;

Gleason & Dynarksi, 2002; Semke et al., 2010; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Wilson et al.,

2011).

Researchers suggested that parent and community participation in activities that

were related to student learning had a better influence on academic achievement than

more general forms of involvement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). More significantly,

parent participation events ensured an encouraging result pertaining to scholastic success

when the method of participation revolved around specific academic needs (Sheldon &

Epstein, 2004). Furthermore, some researchers proposed that parent involvement

certainly affected the academic performance of secondary students (Tonn, 2005). More

researchers specified that parent involvement had a greater influence on the scholastic

success for elementary-aged pupils than of secondary school students (DuBois et al.,

2002). Differences had been described inside the conclusion of parent association on

student success through demographic categorizes (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003).

Collectively, these cases proposed that the influence of parent involvement on academic

accomplishment varied across circumstances. Boethel (2003) contended, "Relationships

were the foundation of parent involvement in schools" (p. 71). In the previous four

decades teachers and administrators had remained progressively disturbed around the

sum of guardians who became immersed, or un-immersed, within their kids' educational

process (Gibson & Jefferson, 2006; Mapp, Johnson, Strickland, & Meza, 2008). The

appearance of additional guardians in the occupational location, the quick pace of present

philosophy as a complete and declining piece of a clan, have entirely remained details

that certain common specialist indicated to, to clarify an apparently diluted parent

association (Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Mapp et al., 2008). Educationist also understood that

students in city stretches were persuaded by these actualities with considerable or greater

than one grouping within the nation (Jasis & Ordonez-Jasis, 2012; Mapp et al., 2008). To

counteract these trends, educators and researchers have developed intervention programs

for use in the schools.

Intervention Program Examples

There were a variety of programs developed within the USA to aid the backing of

at-risk youth. Some of these programs worked with educators to try to change grading

practices to improve academic success. The next type involved changing the culture of

the school itself. Others helped prepare youth for the challenges of high school. A third

style of intervention targeted the parents of at-risk youth to better prepare them to help

their students. The final type targeted specific youth and their behaviors. Each type will

be discussed in this section of the literature review.

The Extra Help Program was designed to modify the grading plan. No student

failed because students were equipped to revise some academic performances that did not

compare to the simple point value of 70%. If there were unfinished or less than

rudimentary production was recorded a project chart. A different expected completion

time was established for the task. If a pupil did not acquire the expected minimal point

value on an evaluation, the student was required to fulfill a different evaluation through

the school's extra-help program known as the Performance and Achievement System for

Success or PASS (Coleman, 2012).

The Embedded intervention was another system that was used to encourage changes in the culture and climate of the school. This program was an intervention plan that prepared students for high school. The strategy was complete and included additional support to link the benchmarks, prepare students for their first year of high school and further evolutions, and aided the students' growth as individual students. Students maintained an educational journal, promoted distinguished performances, primed for assessments, and contributed to reading ability, mathematical ability, and science teaching throughout the program. They finished an undertaking of combining or two or more academic disciplines, were involved in conferences and discussions, and finalized explorations and studies. This particular school had a "no zeros" policy. They used the letter I (which represented incomplete) in place of D's, F's (which are the two lowest letter grades that can be received) and zeros (T).

School Based Strategies for Reducing Educational Risk (ERIC, 1990) noted that poor and minority students were at-risk because of the lack of parental involvement and the gap that existed between the school and home. Parental involvement was vital to the interventions success. It bridged the gaps from the home to school. Before, at-risk students were prime candidates for being potential dropouts. Having programs in place deferred those at-risk schoolchildren from not completely finishing high school. The National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University (2007) listed risk factors that predicted students moving could possibly be a dropout. This study had several key points that were highlighted:

- The accuracy of dropout predictions increased when combinations of multiple risk factors are considered (Hammond et al., 2007).

- Dropouts were not a homogeneous group. Many sub groups of students were

    identified based on when risk factors emerged, the combination of risk factors

    experienced, and how the factors influenced them (Hammond et al., 2007, p. 2).

- Students who dropped out often cited factors across multiple domains and there

    were complex interactions among risk factors (Hammond et al., 2007, p. 2).

- Dropping out of school was often the result of a long process of disengagement

    that may have begun before the child entered school (Hammond et al., 2007, p. 2).

- Dropping out was often described a process, not an event, with factors that built

    up and compounded over time (Hammond et al., 2007, p. 2).

The overall finding of the dropout prevention study conducted by the Clemson

University and Community in Schools study (2007) found four main categories of

reasons that students cited when they did not completely conclude high school:

individual, loved ones, educational institution, and neighborhood (as cited by Hammond

et al., 2007). In addition, the authors stated that there was no one particular risk factor

that determined if a student was going to drop out of school. This study, conducted by

Clemson University and Community in Schools (2007) identified areas that were possible

risk factors for the at-risk students that caused them to drop out. They identified several

types of issues (as cited by Hammond et al., 2007). The first of these were if students

had learning disabilities. Next was assignment of responsibilities that were adult in

nature. An example of adult like behavior would be; students having to report to school

and class on time without the assistance of others and having to complete tasks or

assignments by a specific deadline. Another factor was participation in high-risk social

behavior. If the student was previously retained or had low academic achievement, he or

she was more likely to be at-risk. Physically being present at school was important; therefore, poor attendance was a factor, according to the study conducted by Clemson University and Communities in Schools (2007). The students had to believe that they could succeed academically to avoid being at-risk. This involved their commitment and academic effort while at school (as cited by Hammond et al., 2007). If the students had discipline referrals, they were often excluded from school, which magnified their academic issues. A variety of outside of school factors also played a role including: low social economic status, little to no expectations from parents, constantly moving, lack of a father in the home, large number of siblings, low educational expectations, previous family members who had dropped out, and no parent support. These factors contributed to students that were endanger of failing to complete high school (Hammond et al., 2007).

Having interventions which addressed these issues or helped the students cope with these issues may have prevented students from dropping out. Once these risk factors were identified, a program or plan needed to exist in position in order to aid scholars. Researchers suggested that the success of the program had a direct correlation to the prevention programs selected. Therefore, one needed to select a program proven beneficial to those in need of support. (Hammond et al., 2007)

According to The Dropout Prevention (2015), instead of waiting for the school calendar school year to expire to assist or support students, all teachers were aware of and checked for dropout risk factors periodically. One way educators become knowledgeable about dropout risk factors was to have conversations about strategies and interventions

that were working with other educators. Collaborating was a strategy and technique that

proved beneficial, in a successful program, when implemented (Hammond et al., 2007).

One school chose four specific sections of enhancement aimed at distinct

importance: number of days present, consequences, completion percentages, and

governmental grants (Palmisano, 2012). This framework was a good place to start a

school reform effort. Involving the community was a key component to the success of

having role models. For example, the mayor, lawyers, mail carriers, teachers, coaches,

bus drivers, and neighbors in the community all made great mentors.

An additional study was conducted by Neild (2009), it concentrated on the

evolution from intermediate school (sixth through eighth grade) to a secondary school

(ninth through 12th grades) and how it placed a great demand on performance in

academics. This was a daunting task for the students who were already struggling

academically. This was a great predictor of the probability of graduation. The ninth

grade can be a difficult transition with the increased amount of peer involvement and

decreased amount of parent guidance (Neild, 2009). For instance, students were making

more decisions that were independent and only asked for permission from their parents

when they themselves deemed it appropriate. Students became more concerned with

engaged activities with their peers as compared with having make decisions that

benefited or was not costly to them. This weighed heavily on struggling students not

properly trained or prepared for high school. They did not focus on their purpose for

being in school and its effect on their future (Neild, 2009). This was usually the result of

a low level of parental involvement. Another concern or struggle that these students

encountered was his or her severed ties from the previous school year. This had an

adverse effect on the students' performance and adaptations. The structure of the school

negatively affected those students who were not properly prepared from high school.

"States were helping districts develop their capacity to maintain and analyze data that

included 'early warning indicator systems' that identified students who fell off track of

graduation" (Neild, 2009, pp. 36-39).

Researchers had found that getting students involved in a specific program that

targeted at-risk students was a tool for dropout prevention. Schools combined

community service with skill-based programs. These programs incorporated activities on

multiple levels and focused on the students who achieved success (Swanson, 1992).

According to Fromboluti (1988), there were two types of programs used as instructional

strategies: continuous and cooperative learning. These types of interventions were

beneficial to supporting students and preventing them from dropping out of high school.

When implementing intervention, everyone must be on board and willing to work as a

team. According to the University of Alberta, at-risk students were considered to be

those students that were not successful socially or academically. Therefore, interventions

that supported a positive culture and climate proved to be beneficial to all who

participated in the program. In addition, it also benefitted those who encountered that

culture and climate. Creating an environment of success for at-risk students took a

collaborative effort. Operating in conjunction with vulnerable scholars was perplexing

nonetheless successful. The entire staff needed to be involved, there needed to be clear,

but high expectations, and clear instructional targets (Druian & Others, 1987). Using

systems that supported and encouraged these students was the key to having these

students become and remain successful. Grossman (2002), recognized "buy in" and a

school wide commitment as key components for establishing essential models that incorporated student success.

According to the *At-Risk Intervention Implementation Guide* (2007), when implementing an intervention program there were procedures and guidelines that needed to take place and be regulated, in order for the program to be successful (as cited in USDOE, 2007). There were several key concepts that were explored, this included such things as those found in the following summary:

- Sharing the content with the and staff affording them an opportunity to review the content

- Gathering information from all stake-holders should be included

- Ensuring that endangered scholars would be the leading emphasis

- The population of the at-risk students should determine the funding

- Student codes should be established to ensure an equal distribution of time

- All students who participate should do so voluntarily.

- There should be policies/guidelines established for selecting the targeted students.

- The demographics of the group should be identified

- The program should have goal in mind, monitor the process and participants and measure and match the results

- The results should be documented

- A need for funding should be determined

- There should be buy-in, with positive results expected (USDOE, 2007, pp. 79-85).

These intervention implementation guidelines were used to coordinate and implement a mentoring program as an intervention and were established to be used when selecting appropriate motivational intervention programs that will support students and prevent dropouts from taking place.

Mentoring

Mentoring began during the era of ancient philosophy with confirmation of established men who conveyed knowledge to male adolescents and male teenagers as scholar apprentices (Frederick, 2001; Randolph & Johnson, 2008). Mentoring, in contemporary expressions, was seen as adults delivering direction, supervision, reassurance, or leadership to an adolescent individual (Randolph & Johnson, 2008). Mentoring systems tried to instill insubordinate youth using predictable ethics, decrease misplaced actions, and direct immature individuals in the direction of a more effective scholarly accomplishment (Frederick, 2001; Randolph & Johnson, 2008). Training by way of mentoring was for the purpose of developing interactive skills and norms (Frederick, 2001; Randolph & Johnson, 2008). Mentoring matured from a customary demand to deliver a course designed with youngsters in mind, who did not obtain an individual to reinforce them in choosing the correct route to take. The first known of these in America was named the Friendly Visitors in 1904. Mentoring structures were simply a single brand of mediation strategies that academic institutions practiced in order to boost educational achievement, for students who were considered endangered of failing scholastically, which struggled with inter-personal interactions, and had undesirable existence effects once school had concluded for the day (Frederick, 2001; Randolph & Johnson, 2008).

Mentoring was uniquely the greatest exhausted methods used for specifically negative troubles with more than 5,000 establishments within America contributing a specific type of tactic (DuBois et al., 2011; National Mentoring Partnership, 2006b). Mentoring was initially interference that showed indication of positively influencing adolescent violent behavior (Tolan & Guerra, 1994). Since vulnerable young children were beyond prone to encounter lack of success while being educated or fail to complete high school, teachers and guardians searched for valuable involvements for institutional connected difficulties which troubled endangered adolescents. Advocates within mentoring organizations theorized that mentoring structures might remain part of the response of many complications. Nunn and Parish (1990) discovered vulnerable youth were known for being late to and absent from school without cause, were considerably under the norm for group academic execution, experienced interactive and punitive struggles, suffered from little to no personal assurance as a student, and preferred unofficial and uncustomary methods to receiving academic instructions.

Research findings suggested that mentoring advanced youths' sensitive and mentally healthy existence, equal affiliation, scholastic approach, and academic records. According to Herrera, DuBois, and Grossman (2013), when students experienced mentoring it changed their attitude about improving their grades. It was also beneficial to their psychological well-being, and created a life-long relationship beyond the program. At the follow-up assessment, findings indicated that youth that were counseled ensured to performing drastically superior to comparable non-mentored youngsters (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013). DuBois (2013) stated that mentoring supported the at-risk students' overall behavior and attendance as well. The effect was an overall positive one.

It aided in building relationships and supporting students to be successful. It possibly changed the students' attitudes and disposition all together.

As of 2006, mentoring programs for youth were common place; there were over 5,000 mentoring platforms in America functioning for a guesstimated three million adolescent individuals (National Mentoring Partnership, 2006b, pp. 389-407). It was obvious that there were multitudes of mentoring programs available. The question was: How does a school know how to select a curriculum that will satisfy the needs of the institution and its students?

Results had rarely provided verification of types of transmuted outcomes upon children that were extensively mentioned as a justification aimed at investing within the guidance through mentoring by way of a medication plan (Rhodes & DuBois, 2006). A close connection with an adult mentor was frequently the second result, instead of the emphasis, of applicable guidance through mentoring networks for youthful individuals (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2010). Mentoring was an effective intervention used to support at-risk students to become successful in every aspect of their developmental years. Personal connections played a part in bridging the gap to establishing or growing a relationship. In addition, when a previous connection did not exist, taking an active interest in a student usually motived the student to invest in the mentoring program and take an active role. The success of the students was affected by full student participation in the program. No program was completely successful with every student. The education profession needed to exhaust all of its efforts and use multiple support systems to benefit students that were at-risk for failing and/or dropping out.

A mentor was commonly defined as a person older than the mentee, who guided

and counseled an individual who wished to insert and contribute within a specific society

(Blackwell, 1989, pp. 8-14). There was a greater emphasis placed on mentoring in

schools (Jekielek et al., 2002). Mentoring was a positive effort that could lead to a

smaller number of students achieving greater intellectual triumph (Rhodes, Grossman &

Resch, 2000, p. 71).

An additional definition of youth mentoring was an "Organized and innocent

relationship that brought youthful individuals jointly with concerned grown individuals

who propose direction, provision, and reassurance designed to develop the capability in

addition to the integrity of the mentee" (National Mentoring Partnership, 2006a, pp. 389-

407). was frequently thought that the advisor had several distinctive experiences or

information which he was adapt to communicate with the mentee, which the mentee´

might not have had access to if he had not encountered the mentor. (National Mentoring

Partnership, 2006a, pp. 389-407).

DuBois and Karcher (2006) created a study on the importance of caring adults

and student achievement. For instance, certain adolescence could have needed an

intimate, thoughtful, upbeat, mature individual to imitate, and a supporter, filled that

position. In different situations, a mentor could have assisted a pupil in conquering

proficiency, for instance a sport trainer or a melody teacher. Mentoring affiliations

occurred within all types circumstances beneath a diversity of parameters. A theoretical

essential difference concerning instinctively occurred mentoring compared to calculate

mentoring interactions was how a mentor was selected. It was very challenging to create

the unintentional conclusions of this category of advising, which was un-adaptable to

investigational influence (DuBois & Karcher, 2006). However, intentional advising was a

normal tradition which was considered thoroughly via investigational operations (Dubois

& Karcher, 2006).

Educational based mentoring constituted the bulk of the mentoring exchanges in

the United States (Portwood & Ayers, 2005), and there were significant variations from

educational and societal constructed mentoring. Educational institution based mentors

naturally indulged in approximately 60 minutes during within one week, with the

mentees, whereas societal based mentors usually engaged in a standard of four hours a

week with mentees (Karcher, 2008). Undertakings in schools were restricted with the

amount of time and the tangible area available. Target distinctions could be discovered

in the trend for educational founded systems that had goals that were more influential

(e.g., refining scores), verses growing objectives (e.g., starting an encouraging

association) (Portwood & Ayers, 2005). Additionally, parallel to societal based

mentoring, the period of affiliation in school based mentoring was usually briefer

(Portwood & Ayers, 2005; Karcher, 2008). In spite of the prevalent existence of

mentoring in educational institutions, curriculum investigations that examined the

greatest traditions for school based mentoring were extremely inadequate. Examinations

of educational institution mentoring information concluded that procedures endorsing

extensive executions of mentoring came before the indication of efficiency of educational

centered mentoring (Karcher, 2008; Portwood & Ayers, 2005).

Regularly, society build mentoring which lasted over a calendar year discovered a

slight but definite result, while brief, school-based mentoring programs had not formed

dependable, with abilities to duplicate, clear effects in random valuable examinations

(DuBois et al., 2002). More imperatively, educational institution based mentoring

formed the bulk of mentoring interactions in the United States. In 2002, DuBois et al.

distributed a meta-analysis combination of discoveries from 55 assessments of adolescent

mentoring procedures were distributed through 1998. Results signified that, on a regular

base, young people that participated in mentoring curriculums profited greatly in five

product areas: mentally, delinquent conduct, common capability, educationally, and

occupation. Outcomes also indicated that there were multiple curriculum attempts which

included bigger successes. These activities incorporated drafting mentors who had

experiences in facilitating positions or careers, undoubtedly communicated opportunities

for the mentored time with the youth, hosted events for the mentors and young people,

supported and involved parents, allowed community settings to be utilized for mentoring,

provided continuous coaching for mentors, and organized supervision of the installation

of the curriculum (DuBois et al., 2002). Another key factor was the degree that

mentoring systems were favorable with young people through numerous realms of

results. The current analysis was constructed on previous research results that mentoring

programs jointly showed indication of improved conclusions for multiple domains of

adolescent maturity. Lastly, and very remarkably this viewpoint, was that the condition

for additional research and thoughtful to diverse hypothetical inspirations on mentored

systems successfulness. While concentrating on this subject, the present study was

notified by an evolving replica of mentoring relationships suggested by Rhodes (2002,

2005).

In an evaluation of an investigational school-based mentoring program literature,

Wheeler, Keller, and DuBois (2010) indicated that "Depending on how findings and

conclusions from the three recent evaluations are interpreted or weighted, arguments

seemingly could be made for or against continued investments in school-based

mentoring" (p. 6). Although Wheeler et al. (2010) expressed hopefulness for mentoring

that takes place in schools, they concluded by saying that, "Effect sizes observed for

SBM [school-based mentoring] were in a range that makes their interpretation subject to

underlying perspectives and priorities" (p.16).

Researchers, Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman (2013) suggested that mentoring

programs establish multiple domains of support for at-risk students, these programs

served the students who were in foster care, incarcerated or had a parent incarcerated.

These studies predicted that they were at-risk of having a low success rate in school

(Herrera et al., 2013).

The researcher discovered that studies suggested mentoring had an affirming

impact on at-risk learners. There were historically African American Greek Public

Service Organizations that mentored at-risk students in low-income cities. This type of

organization often had a better reputation within the community. One of the Greek

Public Service Organizations or Fraternities, have stated their mission was to engage with

young African American males from the city. The participants from these organizations

brought positive African American male figures that did not work in the school setting.

They worked with the schools and they created their own programs that focused on

changing the mindset of the students. Teaching the students life skills, getting them

involved in community service, developing their individuality, their social skills, how to

effectively plan for the future, and how to achieve academic success. These

organizations introduced these students to people and opportunities that they would not

otherwise have. They worked with these students until, and sometimes through, college.

These organizations monitored the behavior of the students closely. They strived to make

a lasting impression on these young students. Mentors served as a confidante and

provided a representative of applicable mature interactions. Mentors helped assist youth

in clear comprehension, articulate, and control their feelings (McDowell, Kim, O'Neil, &

Parke, 2002). The representative also assumed the positive expressive encounters with

mentors could be generalized, facilitating youngsters to relate with additional people

successfully. There was evidence that mentoring relationship became a "corrective

experience" for youth who encountered disappointing interactions with their parents or

other adults (Castonguay, Goldfried, Wiser, Raue, & Hayes, 1996).

One study concluded that youth advancing methods, comprising of mentoring,

resulted in enhanced conduct modifications (in individual competences and interactions,

restraint, and educational accomplishment) and it reduced the number of discipline

referrals (Foster, 2001). Using mentoring as an interference approach was the focus of

Foster's study. Mentoring had many functions and usually had positive results.

However, not all interventions were equally successful. Working in a school

environment allowed Foster (2001, pp. 23-24) to analyze the need for a mentoring

program. The strict guidelines put in place by the school district sometimes hampered

mentoring in a school setting. However, these guidelines did help with ensuring that only

qualified people had the opportunity to serve as mentors. The pilot study was an

opportunity to create new and lasting relationships with positive and extremely qualified

role models for these students. Typically, these students would not have had this

opportunity if it were not for the mentoring program. Foster (2001) further stated:

For example; when I had seen students who participated as a mentee in a school

setting. The teacher decided to mentor the student because that student's behavior

was getting out of control and the discipline measures were not working. The

mentor decided to designate a set amount of time throughout the week. After

some time had passed, the student's behavior began to change to a more positive

manner. Because the mentoring was new to the student, he had to adapt and get

accustom to the mentoring. He did not take the mentoring serious at first, but the

mentor persisted and eventually got some positive results. This mentor created a

positive rapport with this student which demonstrated to him that all adults are not

negative or evil. (pp. 23-24)

Normally, mentoring involved regular encounters with an adolescent and an adult,

who delivered the learned direction, assistance, attentiveness, and devoted during a time

period. Consequential the greatest exercises with mentoring were developing within the

literary articles. Within a milestone analysis of 55 mentoring investigations, DuBois et

al. (2002) conveyed moderate influences fluctuating between 0.11 and 0.21; with impacts

that varied, rendering the amount of exceptional procedures utilized. Several of the

greatest exercises of a triumphant mentoring system were (a) monitored curriculum

application, (b) afforded continuous preparation for the mentors, (c) involved parents, (d)

organized projects to be incorporated by the mentors and mentees, and (e) simplified

anticipations with regular scheduled encounters. DuBois et al. (2002) discovered the

existence of each and every one of the five elements amplified the success of mentoring

systems (pp. 30, 157-197).

Overall, the study suggested (DuBois et al., 2002) that when youth experienced

meaningful and supportive connections with mature adults who are not related to them,

they operate as a method for many entangled changing and interactive process that will

help youth to equally circumvent difficulties and stretch to their complete ability.

DuBois et al. (2002) stated:

> For instance, my basketball coach was my mentor/father figure growing up. He
>
> constantly talked to me about life and what it had to offer. He mentored me on
>
> playing sports, taking my education seriously and interacting with people and how
>
> important it was to always be positive. Growing up in an impoverished family, I
>
> had only one parent; this placed me in the category of being an at-risk student.
>
> My grades were average, but he saw the potential of me doing better and
>
> encouraged me to do so. He gave me pointers on how to monopolize on my
>
> education and how it can be used most advantageous to me. He also, showed me
>
> how having positive role models who cared can make an extreme impact on one
>
> person's life. I did not have the opportunity to partake in a mentoring program,
>
> but I wanted to. As a child, mentoring programs focused on sports or academics.
>
> There were not as many mentoring programs like there is today. In addition the
>
> mentoring programs were not free. This was a disadvantage for the students, like
>
> me, who lived in poverty. (pp. 157-158)

DuBois et al. (2002) stated the students would not have experienced a mentor nor

experienced a variety of opportunities if it were not for this program.

Mentoring programs as intermediation were intended to be a comprehensive

configuration with guidelines and demonstrated usefulness for reinforcing a variety of

youth endings (DuBois et al., 2002, pp. 30, 157-197). For example, instead of

suspending a student for his behavior, that student would have to speak with his mentor

to discuss the purpose and reasoning for the student's misbehavior. In addition, the

mentor would discuss critical thinking skills that would have supported the student in

making better choices that would have resulted in rewards versus consequences. This

type of mentoring system placed in a school setting or an afterschool setting, such as the

community center, was used to introduce or remind the students of their reactions versus

responses to situations. Overall, the program built the confidence of the student(s) and

taught them new and creative mechanisms to use when faced with a difficult situation.

The concept for mentoring was that when supportive adults served as role models and

supported students to evade extreme dangerous endeavors, they made many prosperous

switches to maturity (Rhodes, 2002; Sipe, 1998).

Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, and McMaken (2007) conducted a study on

mentoring programs within schools, which highlighted its benefits to students. There was

confirmation that the school-based mentoring produced several constructive results for

students. Research into school-based mentoring conclusions indicated that these systems

can have the following positive outcomes for students (Herrera et al., 2007):

- Improve educational execution, with substantial improvements in the areas of science and grammatical and verbal communication

- Expand the intensity of class lessons

- Multiply the amount of coursework submitted

- Decrease significant school violation, that results in disciplinary referrals for displaying inappropriate behaviors

- Boost students' insights of academic proficiency

- Reduce purposefully missed classes (Herrera et al., 2007 pp. 3-5)

Herrera et al. (2007), also indicated that youth that participated in educational

institutional based mentoring systems were more prone than un-mentored students to

report that they had an adult not related to them, who they looked up to and talked to

(Herrera et al., 2007). The study indicated that the level where mentors and the mentees

formed a solid bond was prompted by the actions of their encounters with one another.

Langhout, Rhodes, and Osborne (2004), for example, realized that the effects were

extremely hopeful when the young people described feeling assisted, in addition a

structured relationship with their mentors. Deep-rooted mentoring relationships provided

encouraging results for youth with three interactive evolving procedures: common

expressiveness, thinking skills, self-uniqueness awareness. Mentors assisted young

people to intensely comprehend, articulate, and control their feelings (Rhodes et al.,

2000, p. 71).

Researchers supported the insinuation of mentoring systems as possibly

accomplishing tactics that sustained the personal necessitates of at-risk pupils (Johnson,

2008; Lampley & Johnson, 2010). In addition, researchers in this field identified that

students accomplished high grades, instituted reachable targets, and highlighted their

personal awareness once they were connected to considerate, reassuring adults (Clasen &

Clasen, 1997; Flaxman, Schwartz, Weiler, & Lahey, 1998; Smink, 2000). Daloz (2004)

identified that mature mentors supplied at-risk students with a definite and powerful adult

in their circle of influence and constructively affected educational success.

The most normal trait of a mentoring system was an individual to individual connection with a mature adult and an adolescent. According to Lund (2002), the rationale for a mentoring connection was to offer assistance, impart wisdom, discuss occurrences, deliver a setting for complete decisions, and create companionship. Researchers have steadily exposed mentoring as a valuable method to supporting at-risk students (McPartland & Nettles, 1991).

At-Risk Characteristics

Researchers previously found a concrete connection among at-risk youth and low academic accomplishments. At-risk youth had a considerably higher chance of school failure and dropping out (Nunn & Parish, 1990). Mentoring systems looked to offer one option to the answer to the numerous problems facing at-risk students (Nunn & Parish, 1990). Mentors supplied additional, personal helpfulness that at-risk students were lacking. Also, mentors supplied a constructive representation for the youth. These conditions assisted in reducing several threatening educational matters which youth faced. Mentoring was unlikely able to remove every academic danger; nevertheless, it could have reduced a few of them, that may have guided advancement in academic success.

According to the *At-Risk Intervention Implementation Guide* (2007), there were critical factors (otherwise known as predictors), during certain times in the student's academic career that played a crucial part in averting students from not completing high school (Hammond et al., 2007). These predictors manifested themselves through the student's behavior on distinctive plans during their educational path. The parental involvement, expectations, and economic status contributed to the predictors that

determined if a student was prone to failing to complete high school. Students who had

parents that were actively involved had a greater rate of success in attendance, behavior,

and grades. In addition, these students usually stayed on track to graduation (Anderson,

2006).

Drop-out prevention was a noteworthy subject, because the projected cost for

society was billions of dollars when students fail to complete high school (Buckley,

Storino, & Saami, 2003, pp. 18, 177-191; Rouse, 2005). Resources focused on law

breaking deterrence, indicting platforms, governmental support programs, and

joblessness courses (Buckley et al., 2003, pp. 18, 177-191). Strategies had been

developed that could help with drop-out prevention.

At the widest parallel, researchers connected specific kinds of student personality

traits with students who failed to complete high school. For instance: Similar

demographic elements associated with intellectual jeopardy typically are also associated

with the features of students who fail to complete high school. Those features are

comprised of living as a family with a low income, being considered a minority, existing

as a man, only having one parent live in the home, not being fluent in English, having

educational and expressive incapacities and not being the correct age for their grade level.

(Buckley et al., 2003, pp. 18, 177-191).

- Students who took on adult roles, such as parenting or working a substantial

   number of hours, were more likely to drop out. (Buckley et al., 2003, pp. 18,

   177-191).

- Students who had struggled academically – received low or failing grades,

   scored poorly on tests, repeated grades, fail behind on credits required for

graduation – were more likely to drop out. (Buckley et al., 2003, pp. 18, 177-191).

- Lastly, students who displayed indications of being disconnected from their educational institution were probably progressing to dropout. These students had meager rates of attendance, were less expected to participate in additional endeavors, displayed inappropriate behavior, while in the classroom, and did not have a good relationship with educators and associates. (Buckley et al., 2003, pp. 18, 177-191).

Academic details:

- 35% declared that they were deteriorating in school

- 43% declared that their attendance was low or they were too far behind

- 45% said they were ill-prepared for secondary school

- 32% were mandated to redo a grade. (Buckley et al., 2003, p. 10)

- However, 70% believed that they would have graduated if the applied themselves and 66% stated that they would have pushed themselves if the expectations were established higher Overall, students did not complete high school as a conclusion of an extended development of disconnection, instead of only one experience. (Buckley et al., 2003, p. 10)

According to Buckley et al., (2003) students typically defined failing behind in their class work or mounting attendance issues that let to them not attending school. Changeover occurrences emerged to be significant in dropout conclusions. Over one third of every dropout occurrence transpired between ninth and 10th grades (Buckley et al., 2003, p.11). Therefore, the confirmation founded information established that

"academic performance and school engagement mattered equally, and that they were

often, but not always, intertwined" (Buckley et al., 2003, p.12). Students who were

uninvolved in scholastics usually did come or become actively engaged, and educational

ruin was ensued. Also, students who were unsuccessful academically multiple times

were prone to begin retreating and grow to be disconnected from school (Buckley et al.,

2003, p.13). The conversation previously mentioned concentrated on the specific

timeframe and reasons student failed to complete high school. Considerable exploration

was also achieved on aspects that assisted students otherwise endanger of possibly not

completing high school. Actually, certain researchers were encouraging to concentrate on

schools recognizing possible high school failures with current shortfalls, schools should

emphasize instead on constructing shielding dynamics that can recommend in opposition

to difficult conditions.(Buckley et al., 2003, p. 14) Several of these features engrossed on

personal flexibility abilities that support student to create significance out of their

educational experience and endured obstacles, and on interactions among adults and

students which offered the assistance to students who were endangered to dropout.

African American Male Students

African Americans had a concerned overtone with America's public school

system because their fight for excellent education and fairness was vaguely connected to

their struggle for complete citizenship and public movement. The journey for African

Americans in education was damaged in legal fights, hostility, removal, hints of

subservience, and the constant desire to consider enhanced possibilities within and out of

public school systems, such as charter schools (Kunjufu, 2003; Noguera, 2003).

Although various enhancements had been made, several African Americans remained

unsatisfied with the public educational system because it had unsuccessfully produced its

simple assurance – exceptional schooling for every student (Kunjufu, 2003; Noguera,

2003). For example, African American students – provided that met any of the

requirements of graduation, exited high school equal to an eighth grade education parallel

to their Caucasian equivalents (Kunjufu, 2003). In African Americans battle for extreme

excellence in education; African American youth had seen their scholastic viewpoint

darken (Kunjufu, 2003). These young males represented 23% of every educational

interruption and 22% of every termination from school; these are remarkably extreme

statistics considering that they are only comprised of 9% of the total number of students

(Smith, 2005, pp. 18, 52). Fifty-percent of all African American males who registered

for a secondary education retracted and failed to graduate from high school (Gewertz,

2007; Smith, 2005, p. 52). Kunjufu (2003) debated that African American males were

disproportionately positioned in remedial education—affirming that they more likely to

be assigned in remedial education because of predominately white female teachers who

were biased.

Schools' universal message to students was that triumph and lack of success was

an issue of individual preference. The discussion was unclear about both the needed

materials and societal limits that prohibited African American males from triumphing

(Ferguson, 1994). As the No Child Left behind Act continued to be discussed, extreme

risk testing and original forms of previous ideas intended for the greater public was a part

of the conversation. The (NCES) 2002 report presented a raise in student registration in

public educational institutions and African American males continued to fail to improve

on the achievement ladder. In brief, the young African American males were lacking to

flourish in various school systems. Young African American males were classified as the

premier between student who opted out of remaining in school, were educationally

deferred, permanently ejected from school, acquired low test scores, earned low GPAs

and excessive levels of discipline referrals, assignment to special education; and were

less likely to be denoted in gifted education (NCES, 2002; Whitting, 2009). While

adolescent elementary-school age African American males were mentioned, the

information holds very true for middle and high school students. That is, as African

American males continued through the scholastic channel, they materialized as though

they were intellectually unengaged (Ferguson, 1994). They seemed as though they

discovered how to underperform (Ogbu, 2003,) and decline school as a location to mature

their distinguish uniqueness, specifically self-esteem and self-effectiveness (Whitting,

2009). African American males were notable as they thrived in the athletic and the

performing arts businesses, fields they regarded as routes to definite acknowledgement,

admiration, and hefty resources of revenue.

A principal, Kafele (2012), in Newark, New Jersey recommended that educators start

every school day with enquiring challenging interrogations concerning African American

male students:

> "Do I believe in them?
>
> Do I know them?
>
> Do I care about them?
>
> Do I realize who they are?
>
> Do I teach them how to soar?" (Kafele, 2012, p 9).

According to Principal Kafele, it takes the administrators and teachers starting within

themselves, in order to have created the nurturing environment that motivated the African

American male student to excel in education. (Kafele, 2012, p.9). The principal stated,

> I believe that this statement goes along with your demeanor affecting the school's
>
> environment. It creates a warm or cold place, can be motivating or discouraging.
>
> So, starting with prompted questions helps all the staff members get focused and
>
> on one accord. I see this method being beneficial for all students, genders and
>
> races. Sometimes buy-in is hard all at once when they are unsure of the results.
>
> (Kafele, 2012, p 9).

The researcher Azzam (2007, pp. 91-93) categorized plans that school leaders

could apply to help with preventing students from failing to complete high school. They

include integrating experimental learning. Schools need to increase learning engagement

and support students in making the connection from the classroom to the real world.

Varied instructions should be used to accommodate different learning styles. Azzam

(2007), also mentioned that inserting systems like employing extremely experienced

teachers, cutting the number of students in a class, providing individualized instruction to

students, permitting more time to engage with teachers, contacting parents in order to

develop their connection to the school, and guaranteeing that the students are intimately

connected with a minimum of one adult in the school, with whom they expressed that

they believe in and divulge to about school and private concerns. Azzam (2007) also

added that the final recommendation is to incorporate mentoring. The mentoring

relationship can be either formal or informal between the individuals (Rhodes et al.,

2000, p. 71). Since the early 2000s there has been a greater emphasis targeted on

mentoring in educational institutions (Jekielek et al., 2002) in abundance compare to the

past. . Although mentoring has been seen as a positive endeavor that can lead to less

student dropping out of high school and more academic success (Rhodes et al., 2000, p.

71), further research is warranted to explore the effects of mentoring on academic success

for at-risk children.

Conventional schools in the United States were founded on the standards and

principles prevalent in Caucasian, middle class society (Diller, 1999). These standards

and principles conflicted with people from different philosophies, placing a combination

of principles and marginal students, in addition to students who exist in financial distress,

at a handicap (Nieto, 1999). Youngsters had to recognize how to adjust to the philosophy

of their educational institution, and also the educational leaders highlighted their school's

philosophy conflicted with the principles there given emphasis to at their residence

(Coelho, 1998). Hence, educators may have misinterpreted the actions and rationales of

these students when they assessed the students' deeds via their private particular past.

Because of their own misunderstanding and absence of knowledge that concerned the

ethnic heritage of their students, teachers incorrectly characterized these students as

lethargic, unenthusiastic, disorderly, or unscholarly (Ferguson, 1994; Kunjufu, 2003).

Particularly, the behavior of African American males was sometimes seen as extremely

aggressive and unyielding as compared to the greater part of their equivalents and was

highly probable to receive a stricter consequence when obtaining educational

interruptions or educational terminations (Cooper & Jordan, 2002; Downey & Pribesh,

2004; Jackson, 2005; Walker-Dalhouse, 2005). These differences in corrective measures

towards African American students associated with low success rates, segregation from

educational options, sensing dissension, added inappropriate conduct, failure to be in the

correct grade, and not completing high school (Jackson, 2005; Nieto, 1999; Walker-

Dalhouse, 2005). Other research and numerous prevention attempts was dedicated to this

subject, dropout statistics persist to stay disturbingly elevated and a uneven amount of

minority students, specifically African American males, fail to complete high school

(Patterson, Hale, & Stessman, 2008). Since numerous of the conditions that recognized

students as being endangered of failing to complete high school were variables out of the

educator's sphere of influence, the researchers continued to classify and address different

problems that school employees affected and altered.

Summary

These studies highlighted the definition of an at-risk student and the factors that

contributed to a student that defined as at-risk. It identified the risk factors that led to

students who dropped out of school. This review touched on how interventions played a

part in preventing dropouts from taking place. This literature highlighted information

about the benefits of mentors and intervention programs. It discussed how they affected

the African American male student and their educational success. This review also

discussed the types of interventions and how the selection of appropriate interventions

was vital to the success of an identified program. It stated that the educational system

had failed the African American male student. The key components used to support the

at-risk students were, getting parental involvement, community involvement, and a

program that was implanted with fidelity.

Frequently at-risk student needed extra reinforcement for greater odds of

acquiring academic accomplishments. Once educators identified learners who were

straining educationally and generally, they were powerless to devote a scheduled time frame required to support those learners or invent explanations to their struggles. Specialist in the educational realm incline to concur that mentoring endeavors, such as those that occur in an educational setting , were used as tools to that reached at-risk students (Carter, 2004; Coppock, 2005; Daloz, 2004).

These researchers, Carter (2004), Coppock (2005), and Daloz (2004) suggested that dropout prevention needed to take place early in the student's academic career. In addition, when a program was chosen to be implemented, strategies used needed to include parental involvement efforts. In most students' earlier years, parents were more involved. According to the researchers (Carter, 2004; Coppock, 2005; Daloz, 2004) today's parents needed to be reminded of the support that was needed from them, in order to support their child in being successful. They also needed to know that it took all parties involved and a team effort that assisted the student who achieved success.

This chapter included a synopsis of the existing investigation on both at-risk youth and mentoring programs. Consistently it was found that at-risk youth benefitted to some degree from a mentoring program. However, a short-term school based mentoring program was not often the subject of school based mentoring research. In Chapter Three, such a program will be outlined.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

As a result of the review of literature, the researcher found there were a number of investigative reviews on mentoring African American male students (Keating et al., 2002; Smink, 2000). This study sought information about at-risk African American male ninth-grade students, mentoring programs, and the interventions that were put in place. The researcher, who was a school administrator, recognized the need to promote the educational accomplishment of the at-risk students in the secondary institution where she worked. The mentoring program involved a community-based Greek Organization, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. The researcher used mentoring as an intervention, additional to other strategies used at the school, because there was no cost to the school or students, who were of low-income economic status, and the program was easily monitored. Mentoring was new to the students; therefore, they had to get accustomed to both the purpose of the program and their own participation in the program.

The study was designed with three null hypotheses and four research questions. These seven questions guided the design and implementation of the project. The participants in this mixed-method pilot study were all African American male ninth-grade students at the same school for the duration of one calendar school year. The data collected was analyzed either statistically to address the null hypotheses or qualitatively coded to support results for the research questions.

Research Setting

This research took place at an inner city school in the state of Illinois. As of 2014, the district included 11 schools, with an enrollment of just over 6,000 students.

The district had a mobility rate of close to 40% and a graduation rate of nearly 70%. The

district's attendance rate was almost 90%, and the drop-out rate was not quite 10%

(Illinois State Board of Education, 2015, p. 1). This district had a Race/Ethnic

distribution of 0.6% Caucasian, 1% Hispanic, and 98.2% African American. There was a

6% rate of homelessness and 0.7% rate of English Learners. The teachers' ethnicity was

slightly different from the student population and consisted of 1.7% Hispanic, 23.7%

Caucasian, and 73.9% African American (Illinois State Board of Education, 2015, p. 1).

There were 23.1% male teachers and 76.9 female teachers. There was an average of 29

to 1 for the pupil-to-teacher ratio. This district serviced 100% low-income students. This

district overall was comprised of 98% African American, 0.8% Caucasians, and 0.5%

Hispanics. The district served a population of approximately 30,000. (Illinois State

Board of Education, 2015, p. 1)

        According to the district, the overall high school graduation rate was

approximately 80%. There were almost 50% of the citizens living below the poverty

level. This research took place at the Ninth Grade Academy in the 2015 school year

(Study District, 2015). The Ninth Grade Academy was comprised of 424 ninth graders.

There were 218 girls and 206 boys (Study District, 2015). The Ninth Grade Academy

was 99% free-and-reduced lunch, and 90% of the learners were bussed to school from

within and throughout this city. (Illinois State Board of Education, 2015)

        The Ninth Grade Academy was demographically identical to the district high

school and was considered an extension of the high school's main campus. Both the

Ninth Grade Academy and main campus had students who were bused to the school from

within the city, unless the students lived within a mile of the school. Both schools had a

strict school uniform policy and employed security guards; therefore, students had to enter the school through metal detectors. Each had police officers serving as School Resource Officers (SROs). The police officer was in the building daily as a presence to prevent unwanted behavior. The middle schools in the district operated in the same way. However, the elementary schools did not have security guards or SROs. The Ninth Grade Academy utilized the same policies and procedures as the high school and was included in all extracurricular activities and celebrations at the high school. The Ninth Grade Academy was the only building in the district that had only one grade level represented in the building.

Participants

This study examined ninth-grade at-risk students, their parents, and mentors from one school. The participants were identified because they were categorized as being at-risk students. This meant they had some combination of poor attendance, multiple discipline referrals, and/or poor grades. The EWS team selected the students for participation to attempt to increase their odds for triumphing in school. The goal was to get the students motivated to excel in their educational endeavors and to improve their overall behaviors and interactions with others. The researcher attempted to provide a program that would offer a support system for these students and that could benefit them in both the present and future. The students in this study were African American males between 14 and 16 years of age. Most of these students had younger siblings. Some of the students were responsible for taking care of their siblings outside of school.

The students in this study often displayed disrespectful and disruptive behaviors in the classroom, the hallways, and cafeteria. Overall, they seemed unconcerned with the

consequences of their actions and their inappropriate behaviors. They typically could not communicate the rationale for their actions. These students displayed a low effort and interest in working towards excellence or success in the classroom. The majority of these students had failed at least one, or more, classes. Most of these students did not have an attendance issue, unless they had been suspended multiple times. Out the three areas of concern, the typical participant's attendance was the one area that was not an extreme issue, in the view of the school administration.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Null H1: There will be no difference in the attendance rates of the students who participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

Null H2: There will be no difference in the grade point average, of the students who participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

Null H3: There will be no difference in the number of discipline referrals, for the students who participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

RQ1: How does having a relationship with a mentor impact at-risk students' attendance, grades, and behaviors?

RQ2: How do the students who participated in the mentoring program perceive the program?

RQ3: How do the parents of students who participated in the mentoring program perceive the program?

RQ4: How do the mentors who participated in the mentoring program perceive the program?

Methodology Framework

In this study, the researcher investigated whether providing mentors, as an intervention system, increased at-risk students' motivation to succeed educationally. Interviews, surveys, and a comparison of the students' educational success rate, measured by improved attendance, decreased number of discipline referrals and improved grades, were used.

Prior to any actions taking place, the school district granted permission and set forth specific guidelines to follow. These guidelines included ensuring student anonymity, parental permission for each participant, securing participant assent from the students, and background checks for all mentor volunteers. With these guidelines in place, the second step was receiving permission from the parents of the student participants, in order for them to participate in the study. The EWS team members identified potential student participants, based on academic progress, discipline referrals, and attendance. All identified students were invited to an informational meeting during the school day. This meeting introduced the program to the students, and they were invited to join in the program. All students invited were given an assent form and a parental permission form. The EWS team initially identified 50 students as possible participants; however, only 25 ninth-grade students from the Ninth Grade Academy completed the approval process. Either non-participants did not return their assent forms, or their parents did not finish and return their permission forms.

The mentors were all members of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.; Nu Chi Chapter. This historically African American fraternity had community service as its goal. Many of its members continued to participate beyond the traditional undergraduate

college years of fraternity membership. The researcher sent a letter of invitation to the

chapter president to solicit volunteers to serve as mentors. Four men from the fraternity

volunteered. The volunteers completed a district volunteer application and obtained a

cleared criminal background check prior to beginning of the mentoring sessions. The

researcher gave the mentors behavioral guidelines prior to the mentoring sessions.

        The EWS team members were an intricate part of the data collection process.

There were two teachers and one counselor who represented the EWS team members.

These teachers and counselor were essential in conducting the surveys and interviews

with the students and parents. They encouraged the students to elaborate on their

answers when they responded with the statement, 'I don't know.' The counselor also

aided in the study; she assisted with the identification of the students who may need

additional support. She and the two teachers conducted the initial invitation to the

mentoring program. She organized the groups and called a meeting to ask if they would

like or were interested in being involved in the program. The teachers in the building

were receptive to and supported the students by allowing them an opportunity to make up

the day's assignment, if their mentoring session took place during the time of their class.

The teachers were open to the students engaging in the pilot study because they also

recognized the need for additional interventions and were in favor of the program taking

place.

        The EWS team members collected a pre-program survey from the student

participants. This survey provided a baseline for where members of each of this group

were in terms of their knowledge of and attitudes towards mentoring and being mentored.

In addition, this survey allowed the students an opportunity to disclose their thoughts and

feelings about education in general. These surveys were not used in the assignment of

specific mentor/mentee pairings. The researcher created a schedule based on the

availability of the mentors, because the mentors were volunteers who were taking time

away from their own work. The students met with a mentor twice a month for five

months. The same mentor was not always available for each student meeting, but the

majority of the students were with the same mentor throughout the program. Each

mentor used a common curriculum created by the researcher for implementation during

the program. The researcher taught this curriculum to the mentors preceding the

beginning of the pilot study.

Upon the finalization of all mentoring sessions, the students completed a post-

program survey that they returned to the EWS staff members. The researcher examined

findings of the investigations. All the parents were invited to participate in a post-

program interview. However, only approximately half of the parents chose to participate

in that interview. The parents were asked during the interview about mentoring and their

thoughts and feelings about education as a whole. In addition, the mentors participated in

a post-survey interview following the conclusion of the mentoring sessions. This

interview included the recommendations for improvements to for the program. The

results of all the interviews were qualitatively analyzed.

Evaluation of Hypotheses

The researcher applied a *t*-test to measure the difference of means on 25 students'

average daily attendance, grades, and number of discipline referrals received. This

allowed for a comparison from the first semester before treatment to the second semester

after treatment. The null hypotheses anticipated that there would be no difference, or

advancement, in the students' attendance, grades, and number of discipline referrals received.

Evaluation of the Research Questions

The responses to the student interviews and surveys, the parental interviews, and the mentor interviews were transcribed. The researcher read the transcriptions multiple times and coded the responses using open coding, looking for emerging themes. The researcher highlighted key words and phrases on the transcription. The themes were coded based on their similarities and differences. A variety of themes emerged that are addressed in detail in Chapter Four. In addition, the researcher compared the opinions of the participants from the beginning of the pilot study to the end of the pilot study, to reveal if there was a variation in the students' perceptions of the program and to determine if the study had an effect on the students who participated.

Research Question 1

To answer RQ1, the researcher utilized the student responses from the pre-survey. The researcher used descriptive statistics to describe the initial perception of the students to a mentoring program.

Research Question 2

To answer RQ2, the researcher utilized the student comments from the post-survey and the exit interview. The researcher qualitatively coded these comments using open coding.

Research Question 3

To answer RQ3, the researcher utilized the parent comments from the parental interview. The researcher qualitatively coded these comments using open coding.

Research Question 4

   To answer RQ4, the researcher utilized the mentor comments from the mentor

interview. The researcher qualitatively coded these comments using open coding.

Summary

   In an endeavor to tackle the problematic behaviors of students that fit the category

of at-risk students where the researcher served as principal, the researcher conducted a

pilot study to determine if a volunteer mentoring program was a viable intervention to

support those students to become successful in that school setting. This pilot study

supported those students who had struggled in attendance, behavior, and grades.

Members of the EWS team identified students that needed interventions to support them

to succeed. The students were asked to contribute to the volunteer mentoring program.

Those students who returned completed permission forms participated in the study. The

EWS team interviewed willing parents. Both the mentors and the students completed

post-treatment interviews. The researcher recorded and qualitatively coded data from all

the surveys and interviews.

   This chapter highlighted the process of this pilot study, which addressed

mentoring at-risk ninth-grade African American male students as an intervention, to

determine if there was an effect on the students' attendance, behavior, or grades. The

researcher also assessed the perceptions of the parents and the mentors. The next chapter,

Chapter Four, discusses the actual findings of the information collected from the study.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

This pilot study investigated the potential impact of a volunteer mentoring program focused on ninth-grade at-risk African American male students. The mentoring program was a pilot study used to determine if implementing a volunteer mentoring program had an effect on this group of students. The main intent for this was to assess if allocating positive and productive African American male role models from the community, as an intervention strategy, would support these specific students in being successful educationally. The specific areas of concern were to improve the students' academic performance, measured by grade point average (GPA), attendance, and a decrease the number of discipline referrals received. In addition, the researcher gathered and analyzed the perceptions and opinions of the parents and mentors about the use of mentoring as an intervention.

The researcher used the alternative method of intervention, mentoring, in addition to regular teaching strategies, to provide support for the targeted group of ninth-grade African American male students, who were struggling in one or all of the areas mentioned above. There were two types of mentoring: natural mentoring and planned mentoring (Floyd, 1993). Natural mentoring happened organically during comradeship, training, educating, and analyzing. Planned mentoring occurred via organized curriculum by selecting the adults and youth who were able to participate in the program (Freedman, 1993). This pilot study concentrated on the use of planned mentoring.

The researcher did not have direct contact with the students who participated in the study, because she served as their principal and wanted to avoid influencing their

participation. The researcher requested the help of staff members who were a part of the

EWS team. The team attempted to encourage the students to elaborate on their answers,

and if they gave a minimal response, to go into detail when answering a two-part

question. However, not all students went into detail or elaborated on their answers to the

questions. Some of their answers remained simplistic, even though the interviewers tried

to encourage elaboration in the students' part. Listed in Table 1 are the actual responses

of the students. Responses of parents and mentors are included later in Chapter Four.

Pre-survey Responses

The students were asked the following questions prior to beginning the mentoring

session. These were the results of the pre-survey questions.

Table 1

Pre-Survey Questions

	YES	NO	I Don't Know
Do you know what a mentor is?	20	2	3
Have you ever had a mentor?	6	12	7
Would you like to have a mentor?	15	2	9
Do you think you can benefit from having a mentor?	15	0	10
Do you want to be successful educationally?	24	1	0
Is being successful educationally important to you?	25	0	0
Do you think having a mentor will support you in being successful educationally?	21	0	4
Do you consider Teachers, Staff members, and the Administration to be a mentor?	12	7	6
Do you consider yourself successful educationally?	15	5	5

Most of the respondents stated they knew what a mentor was. However, a larger than expected number stated they did not know if they had ever had a mentor. The majority of the students were either willing to participate in a mentoring program or unsure of the benefit. Very few stated they were against participating. The majority of students wanted to be successful academically, although a smaller amount stated they were successful academically.

The researcher strived to answer three null hypotheses and four research questions.

Null Hypotheses

Null H1: There will be no difference in the attendance rates of the students who participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

A review of second semester attendance data compared to first semester attendance revealed an increase in total days absent out of school during the second semester of the mentoring pilot study. This data included absences of all types. Excused absences were from suspensions or documented illness and unexcused absences were from truancy.

Table 2

Absences

Number of Students First Semester	Number of Students Second Semester	Number of Absences
1	0	1-3
5	6	4-7
6	7	8-10
7	5	11-15
4	2	16-20
2	5	More than 20

Table 2 pinpoints the actual number of days the students missed during first semester and second semester. There was a small decrease in the total days absent by the students who became involved in the pilot study. The number of students who were absent decreased by one in the categories of 1 to 3, 4 to 7, and 8 to 10, in the second semester, which was during the pilot study. The number of absences in the 11 to 15 and 16 to 20 categories decreased by two in the second semester. However, the 'over 20 absences' category increased by three in the second semester, which occurred during the pilot study.

Collection of the raw data unexpectedly contributed to the limitations of the study, due to two factors. The first was teacher's failure to record attendance consistently by the hour and day, as required by district policy. Secondly, the attendance declined for some students, due to an increase in second semester truancy. Thirteen students' absence counts remained the same. There were seven students whose absence counts increased. There was one student who absence count improved. Table 3 indicates the result of a *t*-test for differences between the semesters.

Table 3

t-Test of Attendance

Dependent *t*-Test	First Semester Days Absent	Second Semester Days Absent	
	Median =7.84	Median =12.4	
	Standard Deviation = 6.46	Standard Deviation = 9.88	$t(24) = -2.33$ $p = 0.035$

Note: *t*-critical = 2.069; α = 0.05.

The researcher completed a dependent sample *t*-test to determine if the rates of absenteeism of the students were different between the first and second semesters. As shown in Table 3, there was a numerical difference in the number of absences. The *t*-test

value was -2.33, with a *p*-value of 0.035. Due to comparison to the *t*-critical value of

2.069 and α = 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This, therefore, suggests that the

rate of absenteeism among the students was significantly higher during the second

semester compared to the first.

> **Null H2:** There will be no difference in the grade point average, of the students

who participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

A review of the GPA of the participants of the mentoring pilot study displayed a

variety differences in the GPAs from the first semester to the second semester. The first

semester GPAs were a reflection of the students' work prior to the mentoring program.

The second semester GPAs were a reflection of the students' work after participating in

the mentoring pilot study.

The GPAs of the participants of the students ranged from 0.0 to 1.167. All the

GPAs were on a 4.0 grading scale. Table 4 reveals there was some increase in GPAs

from the first semester of the program, there were some decreases, and there were a small

number of GPAs that remained the same in both semesters.

The researcher reviewed the GPAs of the student participants and found the data

displayed a variety of changes that occurred in the students' GPAs. The researcher

anticipated that the pilot program would exhibit a definite impact on the GPA of the

students who participated in the program, by causing some type of increase. The students

invited to this pilot study had at least one D letter grade or one F letter grade, during the

beginning of the 2014- 2015 school year. GPAs were calculated at the end of the

participant's freshman year that ended in May 2015.

Table 4

GPAs First and Second Semester

First Semester GPAs	Second Semester GPAs
1.0	0.8
1.8	1.4
0.6	0.6
0.4	0.4
1.0	0.4
0.6	0.75
0.25	0.6
0.8	1.2
2.0	1.6
1.67	2.2
1.1	0.67
0.6	1.3
0.6	2.4
0.8	0.6
0.6	0.6
0.6	1.4
0.2	0.4
0.8	1.167
0.0	0.0
0.6	0.5
0.6	1.6
1.6	0.8
1.0	0.0
0.8	0.0
0.4	0.6

Table 4

t-Test of GPA's

Dependent *t*-Test	First Semester GPA	Second Semester GPA	
	Median =0.82	Median =0.88	
	Standard Deviation = 0.50	Standard Deviation = 0.63	$t(24) = -0.40$ $p = 0.695$

Note: t-critical = 2.069; α = 0.05.

The researcher completed a dependent sample *t*-test to establish if the GPAs of

the students were altered from the first and second semesters. As shown in Table 5, there

was a numerical difference in the GPAs. The *t*-test was -0.40, with a *p*-value of 0.695.

Due to comparison to the *t*-critical value of 2.069 and α = 0.05, the null hypothesis was

not rejected. This suggests that the GPAs of the students did not improve significantly

from the first semester to the second semester.

Null H3: There will be no difference in the number of discipline referrals, for the

students who participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

The data in Table 6 reflects the discipline referrals for the individual students in

the pilot study.

Table 5

Discipline Referral Data

First Semester	Second Semester
0 referrals; 6 students	0 referrals; 14 students
1 referral; 5 students	1 referral; 5 students
2 referrals; 8 students	2 referrals; 3 students
3 referrals; 3 students	3 referrals; 1 students
4 or more referrals; 2 students	4 or more referrals; 1 students

The discipline referrals received by the students who joined in the pilot study

documented those students' inappropriate behaviors in the classrooms or throughout the

school. One researcher suggested that changing behavior was not instantaneous (Olive,

2015). Hence, even though these students were in a mentoring program designed to

support students in improving their behaviors, the data did not determine if the study had

any type of effect on the students' behaviors.

Five students had zero referrals in both semesters. Five students had at least one

referral in the first semester; eight students had two referrals in the first semester; four

students had three referrals in the first semester; one student had four referrals in the first

semester; and one student had seven referrals in the first semester. When comparing the

second semester to the first semester, there was a slight difference in the number of

referrals received by these students. There were two students who received at least one

referral in the first semester who did not receive a referral in the second semester; five

students received one referral in the second semester; two of those referrals were

decreases and one was an increased number. Four students received two referrals in the

second semester, and one student received three referrals in the second semester, which

was an increase in number by one. Fourteen students' number of referrals decreased by

at least one in the second semester. One student had no referrals in the first semester but

received a referral in the second semester. This information contributed to the decrease

in the limitations of the study, because of the accurate number of referrals reported in the

school's system.

Table 6

t-Test of Discipline Referrals

Dependent *t*-Test	First Semester Referrals	Second Semester Referrals	
	Median =1.76	Median =0.80	
	Standard Deviation = 1.59	Standard Deviation = 1.12	$t(24) = 2.716$ $p = 0.012$

Note: t-critical = 2.069; α = 0.05.

        The researcher completed a dependent sample t-test to verify if the amount of

discipline documentation of the students were different between the first and second

semesters. As shown in Table 5, there was a numerical difference in the number of

referrals. The *t*-test was 2.716, with a *p*-value of 0.012. Due to comparison to the *t*-

critical value of 2.069 and α = 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This suggests that

the number of discipline referrals of the students significantly decreased from the first

semester to the second.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does having a relationship with a mentor impact at-risk students'

attendance, grades, and behaviors?

One of the two teachers who were a part of the EWS Team surveyed the students

who participated in this study. As part of this pilot study, the researcher developed the

survey, and the participation of the students was voluntary. The researcher initially

invited 50 students to participate in this study. Only 25 students returned their consent

forms and completed the pre-study survey. The pre-study survey consisted of nine

questions that each had three possible answers: 'Yes,' meaning they agreed with the

question; 'No,' meaning that they did not agree with the question; and 'Maybe,' meaning

they were not completely sure if they agreed or disagreed with the question. The pre-

study survey did not have any open-ended questions. The questions asked if the students

were familiar with what a mentor was and did, if they had previous interactions with a

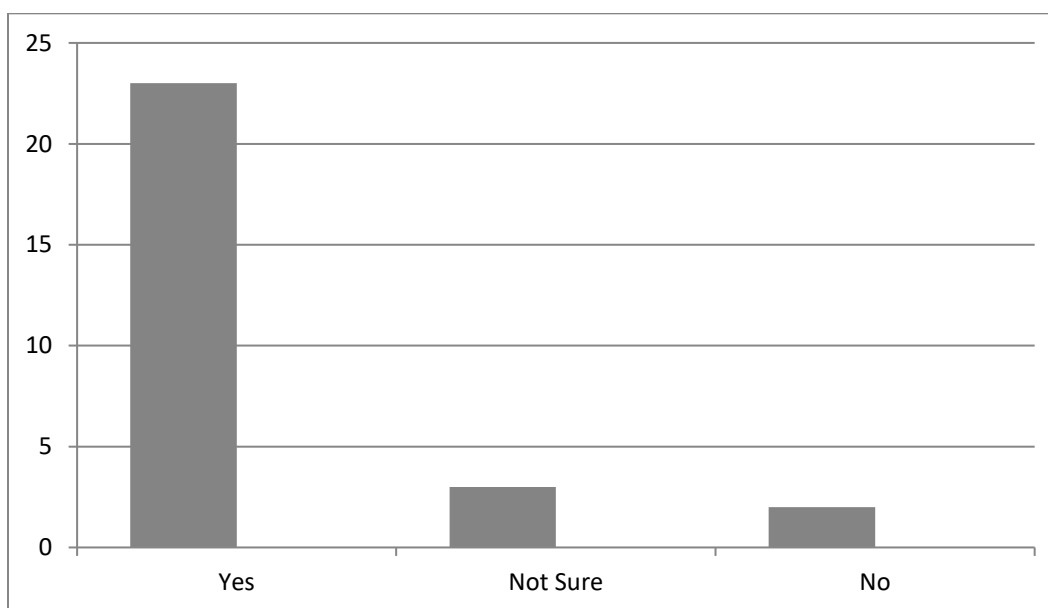mentor, and if they thought mentoring supported them in their educational endeavors.

Figure 1. Do you know what a mentor is?

Figure 1 illustrates the opinions of 25 of the participants who responded to pre-survey question number 1: 'Do you know what a mentor is?' The numerical breakdown was as follows: Eighty two percent, or 20 participants, responded, 'Yes,' they knew what a mentor was. Seven percent, or two participants, responded, 'no,' they did not know what a mentor was. Ten percent, or three participants, responded, 'Not Sure,' they were uncertain what a mentor was.

Twenty one participants stated on question seven that they thought having a mentor would support them in being successful educationally. Even though there were no areas to add a comment, one student wrote, 'Yes, They thought having a mentor would support him in being successful educationally, if you have a good one.' Four of the participants responded that they were not sure if having a mentor would support them in being successful educationally.

A working definition of mentoring was established, along with the purpose of being mentored. The participants expressed that they believed the mentors could have helped them pursue success in their educational endeavors and to make improvements to the existing ones. The mentors' relationships supported the students with guidance through specific tasks, such as goal setting, life skills, organizational skills, and positive interactions and responses. These topics where listed in the mentoring curriculum topics. The mentors discussed the importance of their attendance, the skills they acquired to improve their grades and their behaviors. Hence, all four of the mentors expressed during their individual interviews that they hoped that the relationships built from this mentoring study would influence the students greatly. The mentors believed that this relationship influenced the students' behaviors, actions, and choices, because of the consistency of the

interaction and the continuous positive encouragement. The parents who participated in

the interviews responded in their individual interviews that this type of relationship could

have been an added intervention/resource that supported their children in the choices they

were making and in becoming a better student and young man.

   RQ2: How do the students who participated in the mentoring program perceive

the program?

   Members of the EWS interviewed the students at the completion of the pilot

study, which was also the conclusion of the school year. Based on the answers given in

the surveys, the students recognized the design of the mentoring program was to help

them. One student identified a mentor as, 'Someone to talk to.' Another student

classified a mentor as, 'Someone to look up to.' A different student categorized a mentor

as, 'Someone who was like a big brother.' Another student echoed this sentiment when

he stated, 'A mentor was someone that teaches you a lot.' One of the students expressed

that he believed a mentor was 'somebody who helped you do better in life.' A different

student classified a mentor as, 'Someone who helped in [a] difficult time.' Another

student identified a mentor as, 'Someone who guides you down the right path, going to

college, getting a job instead of being on the corner.' Another stated that he knew what a

mentor was, but did not elaborate on his answer.

   Once the students interacted with the mentors, they were very receptive to the

concept of having someone to talk to about different topics and the topics that focused on

supporting them being successful at school. Several students acknowledged the mentors

as someone to talk to and/or to receive help from, while these ninth-grade males were at

school. The students saw the mentoring as an opportunity for support with their

problems, decision-making skills, and with schoolwork. One student stated, 'As students

enter the ninth grade, they should get paired with a mentor early for success.' This pilot

mentoring program was an intervention/strategy to support struggling students with their

attendance, GPAs, and behavior. It provided the ninth-grade male students with an

opportunity to interact with positive and productive male role models. The overall

perception of the mentoring program was positive by the students. All parties involved

thought it was a good opportunity to support students further while they were in school.

Members of the EWS interviewed the students at the conclusion of the mentoring

program. They asked the students the following questions:

Student Interview Questions

      Student interview question 1: How important is your education to you and why?

      Members of the EWS interviewed the students at the end of the pilot study. They

were questioned about the importance of their education. Twenty-three of the students

emphasized that their education was very important. Two of the students replied that it

was important. The students gave several reasons as to why their education was

important or very important. Those students who stated that their education was very

important listed the following reasons: (a) 'Because I want to be a nurse when I grow

up;' (b) 'It is the thing I need to get a job;' (c) 'You need an education to be successful in

life, and I want to be successful. I don't know what successful means but I think it is [an]

accomplishment. Something you strive for'; (d) 'But, I don't know how much [more]

important it is. Education is [having] somebody teach you how to learn. You begin

learning in the kindergarten. I need someone to sit down and model thins for me. I know

this is important, but [I] don't know how I can get it'; (e) 'Because you can't do anything

without it'; and (f) 'All job applications require you to have an education.'

Two students stated that their education was important versus very important.

They expounded and stated that their education was important because (a) 'It [will] get

you far in life'; and (b) 'It's real important. You need to be successful in life. Education

can make you successful by learning the basic stuff: rules, discipline and stuff like that.'

One student that responded that his education was very important replied to the

second portion of the question with, 'I can hear my mother, in my head saying, 'You

have to get an education in order to succeed in life and have a good life.'

Student interview question 2: What do you need to be successful in school?

Why?

The EWS team asked students another question about what they needed for the

purpose of thriving in school. Several students replied that they required: (a) 'Family,'

(b) 'Friends,' (c) 'Teachers,' (d) 'Parents,' and (e) 'Money.'

Some students replied that having support while they are at school and receiving

continued support once they returned home, was a key factor to them being successful in

school. Other students went on to say that: (a) 'Hands on, show & tell, model[ing], book

review'; (b) 'Grades, respectful behavior, listening skills'; (c) 'I think I need to choose

my classes cuz (sic) teachers have different styles of teaching. I like different styles of

teaching not paper. I need to see it, hear it…with videos and music'; (d) 'Small setting,

reduce distractions, explanation, modeling, and media (books, videos, demonstrations)';

(e) 'Education and good grades, so that when I get grown I can get a good job'; (f)

'Concentration'; and (g) 'Help, help with [my] work. Somebody to show me how to do

my work, let me practice it, [and] go over it and over [it] until I can do it on my own.'

One student responded, 'I don't know what I need to be successful.'

Student interview question 3: Do you know what a mentor is?

Twenty three of the students that responded stated that they knew what a mentor was.

Those students further explained that a mentor was someone who helps you with the

following: (a) 'Difficult stuff. He will talk to you to get you on the right track'; (b) 'Do

better in life. They don't want you to mess up;' (c) 'Teaches you a lot and tries to help

you do better on stuff. Help you to be successful.' (d) 'Difficult times and someone you

can look up to. Teacher[s] can't be mentors because some teacher[s] don't know how to

talk to kids and won't change their way[s] of teaching;' (e) 'To accomplish things'; (f)

'Like a guide'; (g) 'Go down the right path, going to college, getting a job instead of

being on a corner'; (h) 'Someone you can count on, someone you look up to like a

brother'; and (i) 'Like a tutor.' Two students did not elaborate on what a mentor was to

them.

Student interview question 4: Do you think having a mentor can help you be

successful in school? If so, how and why?

One student said, 'Maybe,' however, he did not go into detail as to why he

answered the question maybe. Twenty-four students responded, 'Yes,' and they extended

their answers with why they felt a mentor could help them be successful in school.

Answers included: (a) 'If you need help with stuff, they can help me get it together'; (b)

'They tell you right or wrong, what decisions to make'; (c) 'I need it. He will help me

with my school work'; (d) Because once you learn from a mentor you can take that know

[how] and put [it] into school work and transfer the knowledge'; (e) 'If you explain to

your mentor what is going on in school, they can probably help you with it;' (f) 'A

mentor can help push you to make good grades in school'; (g) 'Because if I have a

mentor I will have my mind on school instead of being on the corner, because the way he

lives, where he went to college, drives a good car and has a good job that will make me

want to do it. The mentor is somebody I can talk to anytime I need and he will

understand me;' and (h) 'Because if you have problem they can help you figure it out,

because they might know how to help you, they can tell you right from wrong, they may

have gone through what you are going through and can help you make a decision.'

Student interview question 5: Would you like to have a mentor on a regular

basis and to explain why or why not?

Two of the students replied, 'No,' they did not need a mentor on a regular basis.

Those two who responded, no, elaborated with, 'Well, I would like to talk to someone if I

need[ed] to, but not all the time' and 'I think I can handle some things. The things I can't

handle, the mentor can help me understand.'

There were six additional comments stated from the 23 students who responded,

'Yes' they would like a mentor on a regular basis: (a) 'To help me with the things that

are going on in school'; (b) 'They can help you do good in school'; (c) 'I am going to

need help on my school work, to keep me out of trouble'; (d) 'If I have a mentor on a

regular basis, he can help me whenever I need help'; (e) 'So I can keep my mind on

positive things instead of the streets'; and (f) 'For additional support.'

 On another note, one student added an additional comment, even though there

was no space provided for the students to leave a comment. The student suggested, 'All

ninth-grade African American male students [should] be paired with a mentor early in

their high school career so that the students are guaranteed success, while they are in high

school.'

Student Post-Survey/Feedback

At the conclusion of the pilot study, the EWS administered a post-survey to the

participants. The students answered the post-survey questions that addressed the

feedback for the program. Although 25 students completed the pre-survey and the

mentoring sessions, only 20 out of the 25 students who participated in the pilot study

completed the post-survey.

Student post-survey question 1: What did you like most about the program?

One student replied, 'I don't know,' to what he liked concerning the program.

Two of the students responded that they felt they were supported. A couple of students

replied that it helped them a lot. One of the students indicated that, 'Talking to someone

other than their teachers or family members, about different stuff, jobs, and careers, and

the opportunity to meet new people,' was what he liked about the program. Some

students explained that they liked it, because they knew that someone was looking out for

them. Other students liked that fact that they were introduced to new opportunities,

concepts, and ideas, and that they talk about important topics.

Student post-survey question 2: Was the mentor helpful?

Nineteen of the students answered, 'Yes.' One student stated, 'Because we could

ask the mentors questions and discuss what was going on with us, in our lives.' One

student replied, 'I don't know, I don't have one.' Four students elaborated: (a) 'Having a

mentor helped;' (b) 'Because it made me think about things in different ways;' (c) 'He

helped me choose some ways to get the career I want;' and (d) 'He helped me to do better.' The other students indicated, in their explanations, that the mentors helped, because it allowed the students to have open dialogue during the mentoring sessions.

Student post-survey question 3: Did you feel supported?

Nineteen of the 20 students who participated in this pilot study post- survey responded, 'Yes,' they felt supported by the mentors. One student responded, 'Not really,' but did not elaborate on why he did not feel supported. Of the 19 students who responded, 'Yes,' six explained why or how in the following quotes, that the mentoring sessions supported the students: (a) 'A lot'; (b) 'Because I took to heart what he said'; (c) 'Because they were explaining to me how to make things easier'; (d) 'Because he was there'; and (e) 'Because he said some stuff.'

Student post-survey question 4: What did you like least about the mentoring program?

Three of the students stated, 'Nothing.' They did not explain their answer in detail. Several students replied: (a) 'I liked it'; (b) 'I liked the program'; and (c) 'I liked everything about the program.' However, they did not elaborate any further, as to why they liked the program. One student responded, 'I feel like the program was too short.' Some of the students indicated there was nothing wrong with the program. Another student pointed out the fact that he did not like the program. He indicated the program was too brief when he said, 'Not being able to talk to the mentors more often.' One student was displeased with the actions of his fellow classmates. He thought that they were being disrespectful to the mentor during the mentoring sessions, by talking and being disruptive.

Student post-survey question 5: What did you think about the length of the program?

Nine of the students replied that the program was too short. Eleven of the students indicated that the duration of the program was sufficient, 'Neither too short or too long;' 'It was OK'; 'It was in the middle.' None of the students elaborated in detail about the duration of the program.

Student post-survey question 6: Did you need additional guidance that you did not receive?

Only one student said, 'Yes,' he needed additional guidance. He went on to say that he could not focus by himself and needed help with that. The other 19 students replied, 'No,' they did not need addition guidance. Most of the students did not go into detail as to why they did not need further guidance. However, two of the students elaborated with: (a) 'I received everything that I needed'; and (b) 'It was good.'

Student post-survey question 7: Did your grades, attendance, and behavior improve?

All 20 students replied, 'Yes,' their grades, attendance, and behavior improved because of the mentor program. However, their answers were their opinion of the results. The data did not consistently show that those areas of concern had indeed improved.

Student post-survey question 8: Would you like to continue to have a mentor throughout high school?

Nineteen out of the 20 students who responded said that they would like to continue to have a mentor throughout high school. Three students indicated the following reasons why they would like to continue being mentored: (a) 'Mentors helped

them focus in and out of school'; (b) 'The mentor was a good support system for him';

and (c) 'I need support, so continuing high school with a mentor would help me

accomplish my goal. He also stated that he would be more successful, as a result of

having a mentor.'

Student post-survey question 9: What was your overall experience of having a

mentor?

The students' response indicated that their overall experiences of having a mentor

was a positive one. One student responded, 'I don't know,' insinuating that he did not

know what his experience was, and he did not elaborate any further with his answer. One

student did not answer the question at all. The students who explained their answers in

detailed described their experiences as follows: (a) 'I feel good about it because it helped

me improve myself'; (b) 'When I got in the program I wasn't on the right tract and now

I'm finishing strong;' (c) 'It helped me accomplish a lot of things'; (d) 'My overall

experience was talking to him while he helped me;' (e) 'It was very fun'; (f) 'It was

cool'; (g) 'It helped'; and (h) 'I liked having someone to talk to.' Due to the one-

dimensional answers, the researcher was not clear if the students were being sarcastic or

serious.

Student post-survey question 10: What would you suggest to improve the

program?

Four of the students did not have any suggestions for improving the mentoring

program. They simply answered, 'No,' to this question. One student stated that every

student should have his own individual mentor. Fifteen of the students responded that

they thought that more students should have been involved. The researcher was unsure if those 15students knew the actual number of students who were involved.

RQ3: How do the parents of students who participated in the mentoring program perceive the program?

There were 25 students who volunteered, with their parents' consent, to engage in the pilot study. All of the parents had the opportunity to participate in the post-program interview conducted by a member of the EWS team. Twenty-five parents consented to their child participating in the pilot program; however, only 11 parents participated in the parent interview, once the program was complete.

Parent Interview Questions

Parent interview question 1: How important is education to you for your child? Why?

Four parents replied that education was, 'Important.' Five parents responded that education was, 'Very important.' One parent stated that education was, 'Extremely important.' All of the parents elaborated further why they felt education was important to them. The one parent who responded that an education was extremely important added, 'We have plans, he has plans and dreams, and his education is a part of all those plans.' The parents who replied that an education was very important added the following: (a) 'Education opens doors for children;' (b) 'He can't get anywhere without a good education;' (c) 'Ain't nothing you can do out here without a good education;' (d) 'I didn't make it all the through school;' and (e) 'I want them to not struggle like I had to.'

Those parents who responded that an education was important added the following: (a) 'I want him to get his education;' (b) 'He needs to get an education so he can make it in this world'; and (c)

'We think it is import for their future. He needs it. They all need it.'

Parent interview question 2: What does your child need to be successful in school? Why?

The parents' responses revolved around three themes: (a) good teaching, (b) Structure and organization, and (c) a support system. The parents responded as follows: (a) 'To have good teachers;' (b) 'Time. It takes him a lot of time to do things. He needs to keep up and needs more time;' (c) 'He needs a lot of help. He tries but is getting older and don't want nobody to know he can't do something. Help with schoolwork, his behavior gets him in trouble. He needs help with that too;' (d) Some structure. He needs to know what is expected of him at all times. Somebody to stay on him;' (e) 'Lots of help. He can get it if someone helps him. He got all F's I think and he is getting too old to keep like this. Help in reading too' (f) 'Good support system. I need to improve myself to help them improve themselves;' (g) 'All around support;' (h) 'Yes, he struggles in school. He says he doesn't understand a lot sometimes. I tell him to keep trying, pay attention and ask questions. He should start doing things to do better;' (i) 'To be pushed. He is lazy. He can do better but has to have fire under him all the time' (j) 'Order. He needs to learn to become more organized. He doesn't do well if he does not know what is expected of him. He needs order;' and (k) 'A well run school.'

Parent interview question 3: Do you know what a mentor is? Please, explain.

All of the parents responded, 'Yes,' they know what a mentor is. Their explanations were listed follows: (a) 'Mentors help people become better. They can be a in a place where people can go to talk to get help from them;' (b) 'They help you. They can help the boys to be better men' (c) 'A person who tells you what is right and can help you do better;' (d) 'A man who can help my son grow to be a man, do better in school, and keep out of trouble;' (e) 'Someone to help you do better;' (f) 'Guide the kids to do better;' (g) 'Someone who helps you;' (h) 'Someone who guides and builds you up;' (i) 'Help you when you have trouble with friends and getting a job;' (j) 'People, who get to know you, check in on you and can help you if you are in trouble;' and (k) 'All resources are great. He has support at home. But we understand that school is a different place and he may need someone who is there to help him become a better student and person.'

Parent interview question 4: Do you think a mentor can help your child be successful in school? If so, how and why?

Five of the parents responded, 'Maybe,' to this question. The other six replied, 'Yes.' One of the parents added, 'He can do well without a mentor, but it couldn't hurt.' The other parents that responded, 'Yes,' went on to say the following: (a) 'Helping them grow is good;' (b) 'A mentor helps if they help him do better in school. If they can make school better for him;' (c) 'All resources are great. He has support at home. But, we understand that school is a different place and he may need someone who is there to help him become a better student or person;' and (d) 'He needs someone to keep up with him. If he has to check in, he does better. He could use someone to lookout for him besides us [while he is] at school.'

Parent interview question 5: Would you like for your child to have a mentor? Why or Why not?

One parent responded, 'If he wants one.' The other parents replied, 'Yes.' They described their reasons why as follows: (a) 'That would be good for him;' (b) 'He is getting older and needs someone to help him make good choices;' (c) 'While at school;' (d) 'He can use any help that is given;' (e) 'Not on the right track. No father figure and a little guidance;' (f) 'If they can help him do better in school;' (g) 'I think a mentor could help him develop confidence in school where he could improve his grades;' and (h) 'He could benefit from the contact and support. Maybe it could improve his communication too.'

RQ4: How do the mentors who participated in the mentoring program perceive the program?

Four volunteer mentors participated in this pilot study. They completed the volunteer application and background checks in order to participate. The mentors were professional men from different occupations, and they donated their time to participate in this pilot mentoring program. The four volunteer mentors rotated the conducting of the mentoring sessions. The mentors also participated in a Mentor Interview, conducted by the researcher to obtain their perceptions of the mentoring program.

All four mentors perceived the program to be positive and want to continue the program. One of the mentors expressed that the majority, but not all, of the students perceived the program as a good thing. This statement was an observation of the students who participated completely and those who did not complete the program.
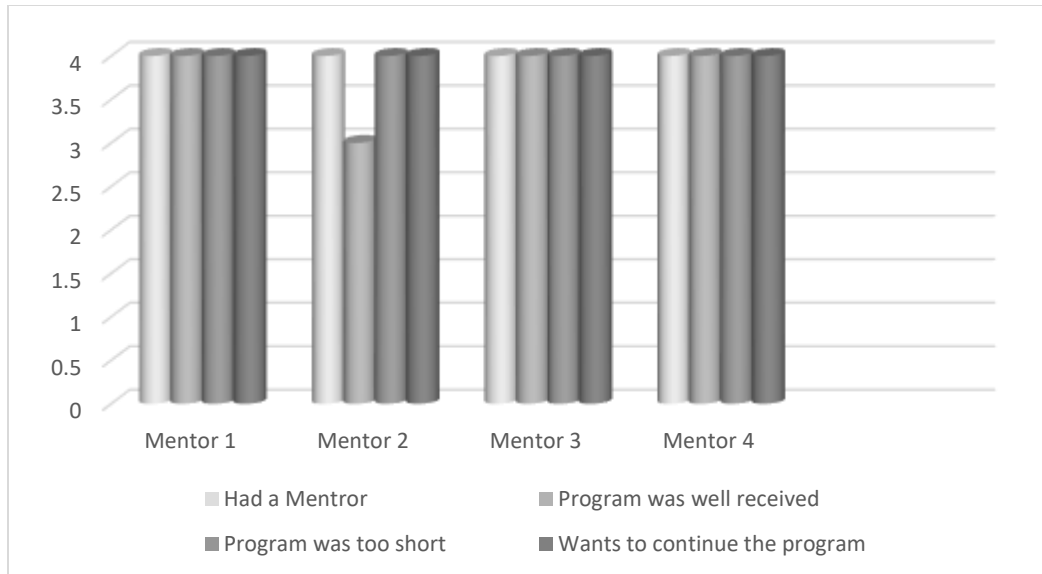
Figure 2. The mentor's perception.

Each of the mentors had a mentor of his own at some point in the early years of

development. One mentor stated, 'Being a mentor is like being a father figure and an

example to kids, which is what I experienced and enabled me to excel and exceed over

the many barriers in life.' The mentors that participated in the program were excited to

have participated in the program. They were eager to give back to the community what

was first given to them, through this mentoring program. They believed the program was

beneficial to the students and well received by many of the students who took part in the

program. One of the mentors mentioned, 'Ninety-nine percent of the mentoring sessions

were well participated by the students.' He also stated that, since it was volunteer

participation on the part of the students, he (the mentor) allowed a disruptive student to

remain in the session, with the hope that something would be said that the student could

use or benefit from during that session, even though he did not participate in the session.'

One of the four mentors stated, 'Even though the program was well organized and

purposeful, it was too short. The sessions needed to take place more often and/or for a

longer period of time.' They looked forward to the next opportunity to work with these

or other students, because of the potentially positive and long-lasting influence that the

pilot study could have possibly had on the students. Another mentor stated, 'Having a

mentor was an eye-opening experience and supplied additional support for the students.'

Three of the mentors documented that the program was well received or was effective

because the students (a) attended the sessions, (b) had open dialogue, and (c)

communicated and connected to the conversations. However, the students needed to be

tracked and measured through evaluations or surveys.

       The following questions were discussed during the interview with the mentors at

the conclusion of the pilot study and school year.

Mentor Interview Questions

       Mentor interview question 1: Describe what it means to be a mentor.

Two of the mentors stated that being a mentor was engaging in the relationships they

built and the other two stated that they shared life experiences. Their answers were in

relationship to work, personal, and professional relationships. The mentors elaborated

further: (a) 'One who has learned life and experiences, work and life in general;' (b)

'Being available, communicate and connected with the mentee. Have the intelligence to

find a common ground. Establish and build relationships but also listen and advise as

needed and need to be non-judgmental;' (c) 'One who is able to express his life

experiences to someone that may assist to progress in life;' and (d) 'To be a mentor is

like being a father figure and an example to many kids to enable them to excel and

exceed over the many barriers in life.'

       Mentor interview question 2: Why did you become a mentor?

All four of the mentors had different reasons for becoming a mentor. Their explanations consisted of:

a) Religious reasons – 'I believe that God made the world where no one is able to make it by themselves. It takes support from other people to get what you need. I credit a lot of people to myself and it meant to extend myself and others.'

b) To give back to the community – 'It's about community. It can't be about self'

c) To make an impact on the youth – 'My military background and doing community services over 20 years had a major impact on the men like me.'

d)   Enjoyed working with the youth – 'I enjoy seeing the results of exposing children to things beyond their imagination.'

Mentor interview question 3: Do you have or have you ever had a mentor?

All of the mentors replied that they did have a mentor of their own for different reasons in different areas:

a)   Spiritual – 'I have had mentors in my personal relationships, professional, and spiritual relationships as a result of regularly attending church and getting involved in different actives.'

b) School (Coaches) – 'Mostly the coaches that I interacted with and played for were my mentors. We continued to remain in contact even after graduation.'

c) The military – 'I had both colleagues and former officers to mentor me during my stint in the military.'

    d) Personal/life – 'I have had many mentors. Sometimes I was being mentored

        and was not aware that I was being mentored until I looked back on the

        situation. That person was always providing me with advice that was

        beneficial to me.'

Mentor interview question 4: Describe your thoughts on the effects of

mentoring.

One of the mentors thought that the effects were unmeasurable and the other three

thought that mentoring was supplying ongoing support to the youth. The mentors

described their thoughts on mentoring below: (a) 'Positive eye opening experience, One

on one connection, and giving support;' (b) 'That you can have someone who can give

you guidance so they can learn from others mistakes in life;' and (c) 'The effect of having

a mentor means having someone to turn to with questions/issues that they may not be

able to approach their parents with.'

Mentor interview question 5: How do you plan to motivate the mentees to make

improvements in school?

One mentor responded, 'Through effective communication,' other responses were

as follows:

    a) By setting goals – 'Setting obtainable goals and benchmarks and milestones to

        indicate that you are on the right track.'

    b) Assisting with decision-making skills – 'By relating the things that they like in

        generation, cultures, and how to use good decision making skills.'

    c) Having personal conversations - 'By getting the mentor to talk then tell me

        what's best for them and by using different techniques to get them to talk.'

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d) Supporting them being responsible – 'By demonstrating responsibility and

showing them that I care about them personally and their future.'

Mentor interview question 6: How will you know if the mentoring is being

affective?

Two of the mentors responded through monitoring and the other two mentors

responded through open communication. They expounded that tracking the following

areas: (a) Student engagement – 'Tracking visibly and evaluation on the mentee and

making the connection to the mentee;' (b) Participation – 'Attendance and participation.

How to track and measure and get them to come back. Monitoring their behaviors and

mannerisms;' and (c) Open dialogue – 'By getting the students to have open dialogue

interactions.'

Mentor interview question 7: How do you know if the mentoring does not have

an effect on the students?

Three of the mentors responded, 'By the lack of engagement.' Other mentors stated:

(a) 'If there is no engagement and no improvement or interaction;' (b) 'If the mentees

doesn't open up or share their values, dreams or ideas;' (c) 'When there are no

interactions, responses or attendance;' and (d) 'When constantly make excuses for their

actions.'

Mentor interview question 8: Would you participate in this mentoring program

again?

All the mentors replied, 'Yes,' they would participate in this mentoring program

again. They went on to say that they enjoyed working with the students, they wanted to

follow those mentees until they graduated, and they felt a true connection with some of the mentees.

Mentoring interview question 9: Do you have suggestions for improvements?

All the mentors suggested having more time with the students. They elaborated: (a) 'There was not enough time during the school year;' (b) 'There needed to be more sessions with the students;' (c) 'There needed to be more time, in the sessions, with the students;' and (d) 'There needed to be more opportunities to interact with the mentee.'

Summary

The objective of Chapter Four was to report the end results of the data collected through the surveys, interviews, and interactions of the mentoring program. The participant perceptions, comments, and observations of changes that occurred from the study, of the students, parents, and mentors were presented. To summarize, students who participated in the pilot study thought that participating in this pilot study could have supported them in multiple ways. They thought it presented them with an opportunity to talk to someone when they needed help in and out of school and with decision-making skills. Overall, the pilot study was well received by the students, according to the responses of the students. The parents were open to their children participating in the pilot study, and it was well received by the parents as well, because it presented an opportunity for additional support for their children. Some parents were less supportive and only thought it could not hurt because it provided additional support to their children while they were at school. The mentors thought that the students enjoyed the program. All the mentors agreed that the program needed to add more mentoring time, either more days or more time during each session.

The goal of the researcher was to use mentoring as an added intervention for these ninth-grade male at-risk students. The research presented a variety of results. There were students whose attendance did not change as a result of the study. However, some students' attendance became worse during the study. The change to the GPAs varied, also. Some improved, some worsened, and some remained the same. The same was true for the number of discipline referrals. The referrals for some students increased in second semester when compared to the first semester. However, there were some students with the same number of referrals. Both the mentors and the students stated that the pilot study needed to take place with a longer timeline. The researcher attempted to show that mentoring was a key element to supporting the at-risk students at the school where she was an administrator, to becoming successful in that educational setting. As an added intervention, this was a creative and additional strategy implemented to support the at-risk students, at the researched school, in being successful during their ninth-grade school year.

Chapter Five provides discussion of the study findings, followed by some observations, recommendations for improving the mentoring process and program, and suggestions for additional research.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

Introduction

Chapter Five provides a summary of the pilot study and the potential outcomes for students following the mentoring of African American, at-risk ninth-grade male students. The chapter highlights the findings and resulting suggestions for the schools. In addition, recommendations and improvements for future study are given.

Overview

This study analyzed the effects of mentoring on at-risk ninth-grade African American male students. Research-based indicators, such as low attendance, multiple discipline referrals, and low or declining grades, compelled the researcher to explore mentoring as an intervention to promote academic improvement by at-risk students. In addition, the pilot study provided information on having a community-based support system to become involved with the students in the schools. Previous research indicated that mentoring exhibited an encouraging impression on at-risk students (Herrera et al., 2013; Rhodes et al., 2000).

The researcher created interview questions for the students, parents, and mentors. The researcher also created a pre-survey and post-survey questions for the students to complete. These questions were basic in nature, because this was a pilot study with the intention of making necessary improvements in support for at-risk students and providing a basis for expanding the mentoring program. The researcher collected data on what a mentor was, what the purpose of mentoring was, and what were the effects of mentoring. The researcher also presented data in charts to give a clear view of the effects of the mentoring that took place. The researcher identified quotes from the students, parents,

and mentors that expressed their thoughts and perceptions on mentoring and education

overall.

Summary of the Results

There were three hypotheses and four research questions used to guide this pilot

study. The three hypotheses helped determine the perceptions of the program, from the

student, parent, and mentor perspective. The research questions were created to

determine the effects or changes that took place, during or possibly resulting from the

study, or whether any changes took place.

Hypotheses

H1: There will be a difference in the attendance rates of the students who

participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

After reviewing the data collected from the students' attendance, it was revealed

that there was an increase in the number of absences in the second semester when

compared to the first semester. The data identified patterns of absence during in the first

semester. One student fell in the range of one to three days absent. Five students missed

four to seven days absent, in the first semester. Six students fell in the range of eight to

10 days absent, in the first semester. Nine students fell in the range of 11 to 15 days

absent in the first semester. Four students fell in the range of 16 to 20 days absent in the

first semester and one student that had more than 20 absences in the first semester.

The second semester had no students in the range of one to three days of absence.

Five students fell in the range of four to seven days absent in the second semester. Seven

students fell in the range of eight to ten days absent in the second semester. Five students

missed 11 to 15 days of school in the second semester. There were only two students

who missed 16 to 20 days of school and five students who missed more than 20 days in the second semester. The *t*-test conducted on this data showed a significant negative difference in attendance, which supported Hypothesis 1 in seeking a difference in attendance. However, the significant difference was an undesired increase in absence.

This result was unexpected as the researcher hoped the addition of a mentoring program would have a positive effect on the attendance rates. The negative difference in attendance with the application of the mentoring program could be independent of the program, with a contribution from other variables not measured in this study. In the researcher's experience, often freshman males begin to become truant in the second semester of their first year. Anecdotally, there was an increase in the number of days recorded as truant in the records of the participants. However, further research is needed to verify if this effect is independent of the mentoring program. A future comparison of the participants in a mentoring program with their peers who qualified for the program, but who chose not to participate, would help establish if there was a contrast between the two groups.

The data used for the analysis of Hypothesis 1 contributed to the limitations of the study. The contribution is due, in part, to the accuracy of the attendance taken by the teachers. In addition, the researcher discovered that attendance reported does not line up with the number of referrals reported into the data system.

H2: There will be a difference in the grade point average, of the students who participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

The researcher reviewed the GPAs of the ninth-grade African American male students. The data displayed a variety of changes that occurred in the students' GPAs.

The researcher expected that the mentoring would positively affect the GPAs of the pupils who participated in the pilot study. The students invited to this pilot study had at least one D letter grade or one F letter grade on their transcripts. The GPAs of the students who participated in this pilot study were low because of the D or F letter grades that they had received. In the 2014-2015 school year, the results of the 25 learners who participated in this mentoring pilot study revealed no consistent pattern, as related to GPA. The students' grades remained the same in some areas, improved in some areas, and declined in some areas. Twenty-two of the students' grades improved at least one letter grade from the first semester to the second semester, in at least one subject area, from the first semester to the second semester. Three student's grades showed no improvement in any of their classes. Twenty-one of the students decreased in at least one subject area from the first semester to the second semester. All 25 students had at least one, if not more, grades that remained the same in at least one subject area. These grades were both passing and failing. The cumulative GPA was not established until the end of the students' freshman year. The highest GPA received out this group of students was 1.8 and the lowest was 0.40. These GPAs were calculated at the end of their freshman year 2015.

A *t*-test was performed on the GPAs of the participants comparing first semester GPA with second semester GPA. The results of the t-test indicated no significant difference, and therefore, no support for Hypothesis 2 in seeking a difference in the grade point average, of the students who participated in the program. The results showed no significant change in the GPAs of the participants. The researcher hoped that the application of a mentoring program would have a positive effect of the GPAs of the

participants. However, the *p*-value of 0.695 did not allow for the rejection of the null hypothesis.

H3: There will be a difference in the number of discipline referrals, for the students who participated in the program, compared with the previous school year.

The discipline referrals received by the students who participated in this pilot study documented those students' inappropriate behaviors. These behaviors were took place prior to the study beginning, and some continued once the study began. According to Olive (2015), changing behavior is not instantaneous or microwaveable. Hence, even though the students were in a mentoring program designed to support students in improving their behaviors, there were still incidents of behavior referrals during the program.

Observably, four students had a zero number of referrals in both semesters. There were 11 students with at least one referral in the first semester, four students with two referrals in the first semester, four students with three referrals in the first semester, one student with four referrals in the first semester, and one student with seven referrals in the first semester. When the second semester was compared to the first semester, there was a slight variation in the number of disciplinary documents generated by these students. There were 13 students who received at least one referral in the first semester who did not receive a referral in the second semester. Two students received one referral in the second semester, four students received two referrals in the second semester, and one student received three referrals in the second semester. In addition to these results, there was one student whose number of referrals remained the same, with one referral. There were 11 students who received at least one referral in the first semester who did not

receive a referral in the second semester. There were four students whose number of

referrals increased by one, in the second semester. Sixteen students' number of referrals

decreased by at least one, in the second semester. There was one student who had no

referrals in the first semester who then received a referral in the second semester.

A *t*-test was conducted on the number of discipline referrals received by the

participants in the study during first semester, compared to the second semester.

The *p*-value of 0.012 allowed for the rejection of the null hypothesis, providing

support for Hypothesis 3 that there would be a difference in the number of discipline

referrals, In addition, the number of discipline referrals was significantly less second

semester, as desired. The decrease in the number of referrals can be accredited, in part, to

the application of the mentoring agenda. One contributing factor could be that the

students were not present at a higher rate second semester, and therefore were not present

as much to get in trouble at school, due to the increased number of absences during the

second semester.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does having a relationship with a mentor impact at-risk students'

attendance, grades, and behaviors?

Members of the EWS surveyed the students who participated in this study. The

survey used during this pilot study was created by the primary investigator and the

participation of the students was voluntary. Initially 50 student scholars were asked if

they were willing to join in this pilot study. Only 25 students returned their consent

forms, parents' permission forms, and replied to the pre-inquiry. The first survey the

students participated in was a pre-survey with nine questions that each had three possible

answers to choose from. The choices were, 'Yes,' meaning they agreed with the question

prompt, 'No,' meaning that they did not agree with the question prompt, and 'Maybe,'

meaning they were not completely sure if they agreed or disagreed with the question

prompt. The pre-survey did not open-ended questions. The questions asked if the

students were familiar with what a mentor was and did, if they had any previous

interactions with a mentor, and if they thought mentoring supported them in their

educational endeavors.

The 25 participants who responded to question number seven from the pre-survey

stated that they thought having a mentor would support them in being successful

educationally. Even though there were no areas on the pre-survey inviting a comment,

one student wrote, 'Yes, if you have a good one.' Three of the participants responded

that they were not sure if having a mentor would support them in being successful

educationally.

A working definition and the purpose of a being mentored were established and.

The participants expressed that they believed that the mentors could have helped them

pursue success in their educational endeavors and to make improvements to the existing

ones. The mentor's relationship supported the students with guidance through specific

tasks, such as goal setting, life skills, organizational skills, and positive interactions and

responses. These topics where listed in the mentoring curriculum topics. The mentors

discussed the importance of the students' attendance, the skills they acquired to improve

their grades, and their behaviors. Hence, all four of the mentors expressed during their

individual interviews that they hoped that the relationships built from the mentoring study

would affect the students greatly.

Student Engagement

The students who participated in the mentoring sessions were identified by the EWS team. The students who volunteered to partake in the pilot study met one of or all three at-risk indicators. The students met in a classroom with other participants and the mentor. The mentoring session took place for one hour, every other week. According to the mentors, the students engaged in dialogue and conversations concerning the items mentioned, in addition to asking many questions, while participating in the mentoring program. They participated in the activities provided by the pre-planned pilot study curriculum.

The EWS team initially identified 50 students for the pilot study, but only 25 chose to participate. The researcher believed all 50 could have benefited from the program. Unfortunately, the characteristics that contributed to putting a student at-risk also contributed to their inability or unwillingness to participate in the program designed to help them overcome these at-risk situations. Lack of parental involvement, for example, likely was a factor in parents not signing consent forms through either their own unwillingness or the student's unwillingness to take the form to the parent for a signature. In a research study of this type, informed consent is a requirement. However, in a typical high school environment the principal could compel students to participate in a program believed to be in their best interest.

RQ2: How do the students who participated in the mentoring program perceive the program?

The students were interviewed once the pilot study concluded, which was at the completion of the school year. From the initial 25 participants, only 20 chose to

participate in the final post-survey. Based on the answers given in the surveys, the

students understood the purpose of the program and initially thought that it could have

helped them. The students identified a mentor as, 'Someone to talk to, someone to look

up to, and someone who is like a big brother.' Once the students interacted with the

mentors, they were open to the concept of having someone to talk to about different

topics. The topics focused on supporting their success at school. The students saw the

mentoring as an opportunity to be supported with their problems, decision-making skills,

and with school work. One student stated, 'As students enter the ninth grade, they should

get paired with a mentor early for success.' The pilot mentoring study was introduced as

an intervention/strategy, to support struggling students with their attendance, overall

GPAs, and behavior. It provided the ninth-grade African American male students with a

chance to network alongside positive and productive African American male role models.

The participants expressed an overall positive perception of the mentoring program. All

parties involved thought it was a good opportunity to support students further, while they

were in school.

Pre-Program Student Survey

The students were asked the following questions prior to beginning the mentoring

session. These were the results of the pre-survey.

Do you know what a mentor is? Twenty students stated, 'Yes.' Two stated,

'No,' and three stated, 'Not sure.'

Have you ever had a mentor? Six students replied, 'Yes.' Fifteen students

answered, 'No,' and four answered, 'Not sure.'

Would you like to have a mentor? Fifteen replied, 'Yes.' Two replied, 'No,' and eight responded that they were 'Not sure.'

Do you think you can benefit from having a mentor? Eighteen replied, 'Yes. 'No one answered, 'No,' and seven answered that they were 'Not sure.'

Do you want to be successful educationally important to you? Twenty four replied, 'Yes.'. One replied, 'No,' and there we no students that responded, 'Not sure.'

Is being successful educationally important to you? All 25 students replied, 'Yes.'

Do you think having a mentoring will support you in being successful educationally? Twenty-one students answered, 'Yes.' None of the students replied, 'No,' and four responded, 'Not sure.'

Do you consider teachers, staff, members or administrators mentors? Fifteen students replied, 'Yes.' One replied, 'No,' and four responded, 'Not sure.'

Do you consider yourself successful educationally? **Fifteen students answered, 'Yes.' Three replied, 'No,' and two responded, 'Not sure.'**

Student Interview

The students were interviewed during the mentoring program. The participants were asked the following questions:

The students were asked to explain why their education was important. Nineteen of the students responded that education was very important and six of the students replied that it was important. The students' reasons for their answers was based on the following: wanting to get a specific career/job, to be successful in life, and because it was instilled in them at an early age.

The students were asked what they needed to be successful in school. Six students replied that they needed a good environment, five answered good grades and behavior, and fourteen students replied that support at school and home was needed. The students went on to say they needed small settings, help with their work, support from family, friends, teachers, parents, and money; they needed to concentrate on the work, and one student indicated that he did not know what he needed to be successful.

The students were asked if they knew what a mentor was. All 25 students responded that they knew what a mentor was. All 25 students answered that the mentor was someone who helped you with difficult stuff, to do better, to be successful, in difficult times, to stay focused, and is like a tutor and someone you can count on.

The students were asked if a having a mentor would help them be successful in school. Twenty-four students stated, 'Yes,' and one said, 'Maybe,' with no elaborations. The students who stated yes explained that they said yes because the mentors were examples to follow, they encouraged the youth, and they provided support to the students.

The students were asked if they would like to have a mentor on a regular basis and to explain why or why not. Two students stated, 'No,' and 23 responded, 'Yes.' Their reasoning was a need for additional support and to remain focused on school. The two who responded, 'No,' said that the mentor could help only when they needed him to. One student added an additional comment. He suggested that all 9th grade students be paired with a mentor early, for success while in high school.

Post-Survey

The students answered the following questions that addressed the post-survey/program feedback:

The students were asked what they liked most about the program. One student replied, 'I don't know,' three students responded that they were 'supported,' and sixteen students indicated, 'Talking to someone different.' They explained that they liked it because someone was looking out for them, they were introduced to new opportunities, and they talked about important topics.

The students were asked if the mentors were helpful. Nineteen students answered, 'Yes,' and one student replied, 'No.' Three students explained that success was because of the support from the mentors. The remaining 16 students indicated that mentoring helped because of the open conversations.

The students were asked if they felt supported. Eighteen of the students responded, 'Yes,' one student replied, 'Not really,' with no explanation, and one student answered, 'Sometimes,' with no explanation. The students who responded yes, elaborated by saying it was because of the discussions and they took to heart what the mentors said to them.

The students were asked what did they like least about the program. One student stated his response was. 'I don't know.' Six students stated that the program was too short. Eleven students replied that they liked the program. Another student indicated he liked everything about it, and some students replied that there was nothing wrong with it. One student was displeased with his fellow classmates, because they were being disrespectful to the mentor.

When asked whether the duration of the program was ok or too short, nine of the students replied that the time was too short. Eleven of the students indicated that the duration of the program was sufficient.

The students were asked if they needed additional guidance that they did not receive. Only one student said, 'Yes'; the remaining 19 students responded, 'No.' The one student who responded with a yes said that he could not focus by himself.

The students were asked if their grades, attendance, and behaviors improved. All 20 students replied, 'Yes,' because they believed their grades would improve because of being mentored. However, this was based on the students' opinions, not numerical results.

The students were asked if they would like to continue to have a mentor throughout high school. All 20 students said that they would like to continue to have a mentor throughout high school. They indicated the following reasons why they would like to continue having a mentor: it helped them focus and it was good support. One student stated, 'I need the support; I will be more successful.'

The students were asked to explain their overall experiences with having a mentor. The students responded that their experiences were good, according to 18 of the students; one student stated that he did not know, and another student did not answer the question.

The students made suggestions for improvements to the program. Four students had no suggestions; one student stated that every student should have a mentor, and 15 students thought that more students should have been involved in the mentoring program.

Evaluation of the Program

The participants completed a post-survey of the program. The survey gathered information from the students who actively engaged in the program. All of the students thought the mentoring program was a great plan. They all answered they knew the definition of a mentor and how mentors could help them. The majority of the students were fully engaged during the course of the pilot study. There were some students who missed sessions with the mentors, because they were absent from school. The parents were receptive to the mentoring program. They saw it as additional support system for their children, while they were at school. One parent stated that her child needed all the help he could get. Other parents saw the mentor as a role model who could teach the young boys how to be men. The mentors thought the program was a good idea and a good plan. However, they all agreed that the program needed more time, either more days or more time during the sessions.

The researcher only had direct contact with the mentors, because of restrictions to control for bias and potential coercion, put in place by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This was due to the researcher also serving as the building principal for the student participants. The researcher believed the teachers who assisted with the data gathering of the surveys and interviews completed the task with the accuracy and consistency needed, in order to ensure total and complete answers. The researcher felt restrained and detached from the process, as a result of having to allow teachers, who were a part of the EWS Team, to conduct the surveys and interviews with the students and parents. That particular strategy allowed the data collectors to obscure the identity of the students and to provide for anonymity and confidentiality, and the control for the

potential that the researcher may unintentionally place undue pressure on the pupils who

volunteered to partake in pilot study. In contrast, the researcher did not believe that the

EWS team members conveyed all of the vital information completely in the interview

setting. In addition, the EWS team members did not take into consideration if the

students had any additional indicators (such as body language) that may have placed

limitations on the students' responses or provided additional information.

The program was well organized, with dates to meet for sessions, a desirable

meeting place, a curriculum to be followed, and the collection of data from the

participants, which would contribute to critical information considered for the necessary

adaptations of the program. The EWS agreed to the organization of the program,

however, due to work schedule constraints, some of the interviews and surveys did not

take place, because time ran out; the school year ended. The researcher, if not limited by

the restrictions, would have completed the collection of all the necessary data. The

researcher, even though it would have been taxing, would have enjoyed conducting the

surveys and interviews. The data collected supported displayed a significant decrease in

students' attendance, no significant change in grades, and a significant change in

behaviors, measured by the number of discipline referrals filed; however changes could

be caused by factors of their the participation in this pilot study.

Program Curriculum

The curriculum of the program consisted of the following topics: goal setting,

study habits, weekly to-do lists, motivational strategies, test-taking and note-taking skills,

and being polite and courteous. The program was designed to meet once a week. Due to

the small number of mentors, the program only met once every other week. The students

were pulled out of their physical education classes. Some students missed one or two

core classes; however, the teachers supported the efforts of the program, because they

knew it served as an intervention for those particular students. The teachers also

supported the program by allowing those students to make up the assignments that they

missed on pilot-study meeting days.

     RQ3: How do the parents of students who participated in the mentoring program

perceive the program?

     The 25 students were supported by 20 parents. All parents were offered the

opportunity to participate in post-program interviews conducted by a member of the EWS

team. Twenty parents completed the pre-program interviews. However, only 11 parents

participated in the parent interview. One parent stated, 'It could sort of help, by helping

them grow, which is good.' The parents of the students perceived the program as an

added support system provided by the school. Ten of the 11 parents were in favor that

the program took place. One parent stated, 'He can if he wants one,' but did not

elaborate further. There were four parents who stated, 'It can't hurt,' when they were

asked if they thought having a mentor would support their children in being successful in

school. These responses came from the interviews that took place. These interviews

were also conducted by the EWS team members who interviewed the students. All 11

parents stated that their children's education was important-to-extremely-important, to

them. All 11 parents also agreed that they knew what a mentor was, and the reason

behind involving a mentor was to assist and encourage the students while they were in

school. One parent stated, 'They can help boys to be become better men.' Another

parent mentioned, 'A man can help him [her son] grow to be a man, do better in school

and remain out of trouble.' In addition, one parent suggested, 'He [her son] could use

someone to look out for him while he was at school, and because he does better when he

has been checked on.'

Parent Engagement

The parent engagement was minimal. There were several parents who gave their

children consent, but that was the extent of their participation. The other parents gave

their consent and participated in the interviews. They were open with their responses and

receptive to the pilot study. However, outside of the interviews, the parents had no other

involvement.

RQ4: How do the mentors who participated in the mentoring program perceive

the program?

There were four volunteer mentors who participated in this pilot study. They

completed the volunteer application and background check, in order to participate in this

study. The four volunteer mentors rotated facilitation of the mentoring sessions. Each

one of the mentors had a mentor of their own at some point in their early years of

development. One mentor stated, 'Being a mentor is like being a father figure and an

example to kids, which is what I experienced and enabled me to excel and exceed over

the many barriers in life.' The mentors who participated in the program were excited to

have participated in the program. They were eager to give back to the community what

was first given to them, through this mentoring program. They believed the program was

beneficial to the students and was well received by many of the participants who took

part in the program. One of the mentors mentioned, 'Ninety nine percent of the

mentoring sessions were well participated by the students.' He also stated that since it

was volunteer participation on the part of the students, he (the mentor) allowed one

student to remain in the session, with the hope that maybe something would be said that

he (the student) could use or have benefited from, during that session, even though he did

not participate in the session.' One of the mentors stated, 'Even though the program was

well organized and purposeful, it was too short. The sessions needed to take place more

often and/or for a longer period of time.' The mentors looked forward to the next

opportunity to work with these or other students, because of the potentially positive and

long-lasting impression the pilot study could have possibly made on the participants.

Another mentor stated, 'Having a mentor is an eye-opening experience and supplies

additional support for the students.' Three of the mentors documented that the program

was well received or was effective because the students: (a) attended the sessions, (b) had

open dialogue, and (c) communicated and connected to the conversations; however, the

students needed to be tracked and measured through evaluations or surveys.

Mentor Interview

The following questions were discussed during the interviews with the mentors,

at the closing of the pilot study and at the end of the school year.

The mentors were asked to describe in their words what is to be a mentor.

Two of the mentors stated mentoring was the relationships that were built, and the other

two said it was shared life experiences. Their answers were in relationship to work,

personal, and professional relationships.

The mentors were asked to explain why they became mentors. All four of the

mentors had different reasons for becoming a mentor. One stated that is was for religious

reasons, another to give back to the community, another to make an impact on the youth, and the last one because he enjoyed working with the youth.

The mentors were asked if they had or had ever been a mentor. They all replied, 'Yes,' for different reasons. One was for spiritual, one was because of school (coaches), another was from the military, and the last one was from a personal relationship.

The mentors were asked to describe what they thought were the effects of mentoring. One thought that the effects were unmeasurable, and the other three thought that it was supplying ongoing support to the youth.

The mentors were asked about their plan to motivate the mentees to making improvements in school? The four mentors included effective communication, by setting goals, assisting with decision making skills, having personal conversations, and supporting them in being responsible.

The mentors were asked how they would know if the mentoring was effective. Two responded through monitoring, and the other two through open communication. They elaborated that tracking the students' engagement and participation and their open dialogue would also be an indication of success.

The mentors were asked how they knew if the mentoring had no effect on the students. Three of them responded, 'By the lack of engagement.' One had an answer that was not understandable.

The mentors were asked if they would participate in a mentoring program like this one again. All the mentors replied, 'Yes.'

The mentors were asked for suggestions for improvements. All the mentors suggested having more time with the students. They elaborated and indicated that there was not enough time; they needed more sessions with the students, they needed more opportunities to interact with mentees, and they would have liked more time with the students.

Mentor Engagement

The mentors who volunteered took time away from their jobs to contribute to this mentoring program. All four of these mentors had or continued to have a mentor in their own lives. They were happy to support the mentoring program, because of the impact that mentoring had on them. In addition, it gave them an opportunity to contribute to the community in a very positive manner. The mentors stated that they were ready, willing, and able to continue with the mentoring program. It did not matter if it was the same students or different ones; they just wanted to be a part of the process. The mentors had confidence that they made connections with some of the participants who actively engaged in the mentoring sessions.

Limitations

The limitation of the information reported was increased, because of the accuracy of the number of referrals reported in the school's system. This lack of reporting accuracy could contribute to inaccurate results in some of the numerical data. A second limitation was the lack of mentoring sessions reported by the mentors. The mentors all reported that the program would have been better with more mentoring sessions. It is possible additional sessions would have changed some of the results. A related limitation was the

one-semester length of the program. A year-long program may have resulted in a

different outcome.

Suggestions for Additional Research

　　　　This study explored the influences that mentoring had on at-risk ninth-grade

African American male students. Because of this pilot study, the researcher's

recommendations for additional studies include: involving the parents, students, mentors,

and teachers beyond the scope of this pilot study. It could possibly be advantageous for

this school district to carry on studying this cohort of students until they complete the

specified requirements of high school in this district. The changes that occur, over time,

may be documented and examined for further results, with regard to the mentoring

program. Because this pilot mentoring program was free, consider adding this mentoring

program as a permanent intervention for this school.

　　　　Parents who were involved in their children's schooling tended to have a strong

influence upon their children's academic accomplishments and success. During the

parent interview, additional or different questions to ask the parents could include: 1)

Why did you choose to support your child in participating in the mentoring program?; 2)

What are ways that you reinforce your offspring's education?; 3) How do you see this

mentoring program supporting your child academically and otherwise?; 4) How can this

mentoring program and the school support your child in being successful in school?; and

5) Are you willing to incorporate strategies from the mentoring program at home?

　　　　The classroom teachers should be incorporated in the process and procedures,

supporting the mentoring program as a continuous reminder of the intervention that has

been put in place for the students. The classroom teachers should be interviewed, as an

additional observer of the students' behaviors and attitudes. Some questions that the

teachers should be asked are as follows: 1) What do you think is the greatest way to help

at-risk students to achieve?; 2) What sort of specialized preparation do you think is

essential in order to prepare teachers to support at-risk students being successful in their

educational process?; 3) Are there any other provisions you need to instruct or support at-

risk students?; 4) Are you afforded an opportunity to plan and collaborate with other

teachers who instruct, or support, at-risk students?; and 5) Are you open to using the

strategies that are incorporated during the mentoring sessions, in your classroom?

The mentors were a very essential part in the success of the program. The mentors

should be paired with a small group outside of the entire group, in order to create a

continuous relationship and rapport building, connecting the mentor and the mentee.

Also the mentors and mentees need to focus specifically on improving the students'

attendance, grades, and positive behavior. Additional time should be added to the

program to allow for more interactions, with the anticipation that the added number of

interactions between the mentors and mentees would have a significant impact of the

areas of improvement. In addition, adding or using different questions in their interviews

could include questions such as: 1) Why do you think providing mentoring, during the

school day can be used an intervention, which may lead to at-risk students being

successful educationally?; 2) Do you know of any other research-based strategies that

may support at-risk students while being mentored?; 3) How will you use the curriculum

and strategies to encourage the students in the program to becoming or achieving more

success educationally?; 4) How much time do you have to contribute to this program?;

and 5) Are you willing and able to continue the mentoring program until this cohort of students completes high school?

The students who participated fully were the solution to the achievement of a plan. The interview questions should incorporate the following questions: 1) Do you feel like you need additional support at school, in order to be successful?; 2) What type of influence do you think having a mentor will have on you?; 3) Would you prefer to have an individual mentor or be placed a group with your peers?; 4) Do you believe that mentoring is needed for the duration of your high school career?; and 5) What type of guidance do you want to receive from this mentoring program?

There were many African American male students in this school who had individual education plan (IEPs), in addition to being at-risk students. Hence, another recommendation for future investigations would be to develop a mentoring program that addresses students who have IEPs or more specifically Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs).

In addition, the researcher suggests the following recommendations for the continuous development of this mentoring program: (a) create a team to operate and oversee the mentoring program, (b) continue to use the African American Greek Fraternities as mentors, (c) obtain in-depth parental and teacher involvement, (d) continue to research strategies and techniques to incorporate for improvements to the mentoring programs, and (e) restart the program every four years with in-coming new freshmen and transfer students.

Personal Reflection

  The main purpose of this pilot study was to find an additional strategy as an interventional support for our ninth-grade African American male students to promote their being successful in the school realm. I wanted our male students to interact and experience positive and continuous encouragement, guidance, and support from a male role model figure that was not an educator. I wanted to present them with an opportunity to make connections they could use in the present and the future. It was my intent to create an association with a positive African American male role models as pool of resources they can identify with.

  As the researcher, I was frustrated during the actual time of the study. The limitations of this study would have been minimized if I had more direct contact with all parties involved. The stipulations from the IRB prevented me from having direct contact with the students and parents. However, I believe that having direct contact with the planning, implementation, and completion of the study could have enabled different results; hence, the participants and parents partaking in and completing all the surveys and interviews. Interacting with the students for the preparation and completion would have afforded me an opportunity to create a different relationship with my students. In addition, open the lines of communication, on a positive note, with the parents of the participants. I believe the intensity and urgency of the need for the program studied in this research was not conveyed completely by the EWS team members, with the distribution of the information to the students and their parents.

  On another note, in order to significantly improve the students' attendance, GPAs, and number of discipline referrals received, the mentors and organizing team needs to

place a priority focus on how to improve in these areas. The curriculum should focus on

techniques to help the students improve in those areas that identified them as at-risk. The

mentoring sessions were general in their overall functioning of how to be successful in

school.

Now that the study is complete I recognize where and how to make improvements

upon re-establishing the mentoring program. I was not able to continue the specific

program at the originally researched school, because I transferred to another school. The

teachers who assisted me in the pilot study were not in a position to continue the

mentoring program. Hence, the mentoring program was suspended for the 2015-2016

school year, with the hopes of having it reestablished in the 2016-2017 school year. It is

my plan to reactive the mentoring program with the same students that participated in the

pilot study, with the permission of the principal, for the purpose of continuing the overall

improvement of our African American male students in our educational setting. Overall,

based on the responses of the students, mentors, and parents, the program was understood

and received. However, it needs to continue with the intentions of the students being

mentored until they graduate from high school.

Conclusion

At-risk students bring a different type of circumstances and situations to the

schools with them each day, than the general student population. These students were

expected to perform on the same level as non-at-risk students. Many schools had a

Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) as an intervention system; however, every

system does not work for every student. Having additional interventions, such as a

mentoring program, to support struggling students can be an added resource for a school and its district.

To conclude, mentoring has proven to be beneficial in supporting students in being successful educationally. The program needs to be well organized. All parties involved need to be highly informed about the program, with an end result in mind. The overall perception of this pilot study was positive. However, the majority of those who participated and contributed to the mentoring program concluded that more time was needed in order for the program to have a greater impact on the students. The parents, students, and mentors perceived this mentoring program as an opportunity to support those students who were struggling. The goal of the researcher was to provide an additional intervention for at-risk ninth-grade male African American students, to educationally support them in success.

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