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MSW Community Project Final Paper:

Developing a Mentor Program for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

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Abstract

Our group worked in conjunction with the Executive Director of StandUp For Kids, the Fulton County Schools Homeless Liaison, and the School Social Worker at Frank McClarin High School to develop a school-based mentor program for unaccompanied homeless youth. The purpose was to provide support and encouragement to improve academic performance among youth, with the overall goal of graduation. We developed The Fulton Effect from the ground up, creating its name, mission statement, goals and objectives, program structure, and policies. We recruited mentors to match with students, as well as coordinated and facilitated bi-weekly meetings. We formed partnerships with local businesses to obtain lunch and monetary donations. We also developed and administered evaluation tools to measure program success. Our experience taught us the importance of utilizing community partnerships skills and understanding elements of successful collaborations in order to build a program that is effective and sustainable.

Keywords: unaccompanied homeless youth, mentoring, fulton effect, community partnerships

Results/Outcomes/Accomplishments

Objectives Met

The ultimate goal of this project was to develop and implement a mentoring program at Frank McClarin High School and coordinate the program for an entire mini-mester in order to provide unaccompanied homeless youth with a positive mentor relationship that encourages them to maintain adequate attendance and grades, as well as to develop important personal goals and life skills, in efforts to achieve high school graduation. Throughout the process of our project, there have been a number of accomplishments. One of the accomplishments was meeting our very first objective, which was establishing the framework of the program. This included creating its name, mission statement, goals and objectives, and meeting structure. In addition, we developed a program manual that outlined the structure of The Fulton Effect, as well as the policies of the program.

As a direct result of establishing the framework, more objectives were met as the participants of the program were chosen. For instance, six mentors were identified, recruited, and trained to participate in the program and were matched with six students who were determined by the School Social Worker. We recruited the mentors by sending out emails to friends, family members, and the StandUp For Kids volunteer base, as well as through face-to-face interaction by guest speaking in a class with BSW students at Georgia State University. With the help of the StandUp For Kids Executive Director, Kelly Fields, we coordinated the mentors' training sessions, whereby all mentors were educated about The Fulton Effect's mission, goals, and objectives; their individual responsibilities; and the unique challenges that students face being unaccompanied homeless youth. Working as a team, we matched the identified mentors and students into pairs based on the input we received through getting to know the mentors and

having a round table discussion with the students, as well as administering “personal snapshot” surveys. The steps associated with the matching process contributed to fostering a supportive, positive, and beneficial mentoring relationship between each of the students and mentors.

Other objectives that we met for our community project include successfully launching the kickoff of the program on February 25th, 2013 and continuing to facilitate bi-weekly meetings. Perhaps the most significant objective we met was the formation of community partnerships for the purpose of obtaining and coordinating monetary, food, and t-shirt donors and sponsors. Regarding donors and sponsors, major accomplishments were made through reaching out to community stakeholders and forming meaningful partnerships. These successes include obtaining and maintaining significant food and monetary donations and sponsorships for the program with the Atlanta/Southeast district of Williams-Sonoma, Kroger on Chamblee Tucker Road in Atlanta, Pizza Hut on Old National Highway in College Park, Global Concessions in Atlanta, and George’s Restaurant and Bar in Virginia Highlands. In addition, we participated in interviews about our program for with local newspapers, *The Signal* and the *South Fulton Neighbor* to gain media awareness of our efforts. Another objective that was met during the program was the creation and administering of evaluation tools to measure program success, as well as utilizing SPSS to analyze results. Overall, it was a successful project, as evidenced by mentor and student participation in bi-weekly meetings since February and the establishment of positive relationships that encourage personal and academic growth among students.

Objectives Not Met

While we met many objectives and accomplished important tasks in our community project, there were two main objectives that were not met. First, in order to have the most effective experience for the students, one of our objectives was to thoughtfully match each

student with one mentor for the entire mini-mester. Half-way through the program, with three mentor meetings and the end-of-the-year celebration still left, one of the mentors was unable to continue to participate in the program due to a job conflict. As a result, this objective to match all students and mentors for the duration of the mini-mester was not met, and we had to make some unforeseen changes. Pertaining to the second objective not met, we planned to measure the students' academic progress through conducting an academic performance evaluation, which is to compare students' grades and attendance from last semester with those from the current semester. However, we were unable to meet this objective as planned and measured the students' academic progress another way, which is explained in more detail below.

Interpretation & Analysis of Results

Analysis of Project Successes

There are many reasons why The Fulton Effect can be labeled as a success and why all of our stated objectives have been and continue to be accomplished. Our first objective of establishing a framework was accomplished by collaborating together over the course of several meetings to create the program name, mission statement, brief description, goal, and marketing materials. The policy manual, with program guidelines and procedures, and survey evaluations were also created to complete the first objective (see Appendix A). As a group, we understood changes might need to occur as the program progressed because it is the first of its kind in South Fulton County and this was our first experience with program development and implementation. For example, we had to make several adjustments to the program manual along the way, and new forms had to be created concerning student warnings when attendance, grade, and/or stipend requirements were not met. In addition, the establishment and monitoring of achievable program goals and objectives was another key part of The Fulton Effect's success.

Another listed objective was creating an overall effective mentoring program. This was achieved by creating a logic model before we began the process. On February 2nd, 2013, Maureen Wilce and Sarah Gill from the Centers for Disease Control presented to our Skills and Techniques II class. They discussed overall steps in the evaluation process and introduced us to logic modeling. Wilce and Gill explained how logic models are visual and graphic representations of a program's description and that they are used to provide a plan of a program by providing a template for charting program operations as they progress (M. Wilce & S. Gill, personal communication, February 2, 2013). Developing The Fulton Effect's logic model set the foundation and served as a guide for several things we would do throughout the project (see Appendix B). For instance, questions asked on the students pre- and post-program evaluations were based on outcomes listed on the logic model prior to The Fulton Effect's launch on February 25th, 2013. Pre-program evaluation forms were handed to and returned by each student at the launch party and post-program evaluation forms were handed to and returned by each student at the fourth mentor meeting on April 8th, 2013. This process was instrumental in gauging our success and determining the overall level of fulfillment of our objective of creating an effective program.

Our group chose to use the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze pre- and post-program evaluations of the students. Through using a Likert scale to format and record responses, students were asked to rate their current knowledge and comfort levels on a series of questions regarding education, employment, life skills and relationship building, and their involvement with The Fulton Effect program. The post-evaluation consisted of an additional five open-ended questions, including what the students believed to be the best part of the mentor program, if their participation with the program helped improve academic

performance, what they learned from their mentor, changes they would make to the program, and three words to describe the program. It must be noted that all six students participated in the pre-evaluation and only five students were able to participate in the post-program evaluation because one student was not at school on April 8th, 2013, the day the evaluation was distributed.

In regards to education, results show an increase of knowledge about the availability of scholarships and grants for college. Approximately 33.3% (N=2) knew nothing about obtaining scholarships and grants on the pre-program evaluation study. However, after being involved in the mentor program, no one reported knowing absolutely nothing; 60% (N=3) know very little and 40% (N=2) now know some information about the availability of scholarships and grants. Increases in students' knowledge about employment occurred and in regards to students' knowledge of how to build a résumé. Before beginning the program, 50% (N=3) knew nothing about how to build a résumé. Results from the post-program evaluation forms confirm 80% (N=4) have more knowledge about the topic and 20% (N=1) now possesses some knowledge about résumé building. Another increase can be seen in regards to students' comfort level with managing a checking or savings account after being a part of The Fulton Effect. Whereas 83.3% (N=5) of students reported being either very or somewhat uncomfortable with maintaining a checking or savings account on the pre-program survey, only 20% (N=1) reported being very uncomfortable, 60% (N=3) are now somewhat comfortable, and 20% (N=1) reported being very comfortable balancing a checking or savings account. More increases were documented on students' comfort levels regarding life skills and relationship building. On the subject of talking openly with other adults only 20% (N=1) reported being very uncomfortable, 40% (N=2) are now somewhat uncomfortable, and 40% (N=2) are now very comfortable talking openly with other adults after participating with The Fulton Effect program, which illustrate a small gain

since the pre-program evaluation when a total of 33.3% (N=2) were very uncomfortable with the subject. All other data showed no significant increase. Many responses had decreased from pre- to post-evaluations, and our group believes this could be explained by students realizing they know less about the defined topics compared to what they originally thought before being introduced to them extensively during mentor meetings.

On the post-program evaluation form, as stated previously, students were asked to answer questions regarding their involvement with the mentor program in order to gain an understanding of the students' perceptions, areas of enjoyment and learning, and critiques about the program. These responses were also collected based on a Likert scale format. A total of 80% (four students) agreed or strongly agreed that meeting with their mentor helped them achieve educational goals, participating helped them do better in school, their mentor helped empower them to graduate high school, and they would participate in the program next year if they had the opportunity. Of the five students, 100% agreed or strongly agreed that meeting with their mentor helped them achieve personal goals, they liked the mentor they were matched with, they wished they could to meet with their mentor more often, and that they had a positive experience participating in the program.

Many shorter-term outcomes identified on The Fulton Effect Logic Model were accomplished, including student mentees attaining knowledge about positive relationships, communication skills, decision-making skills, professional and academic development, and awareness of college application processes. Also, evaluation results indicate knowledge was gained among students regarding the importance of building a successful and sustainable future. Intermediate outcomes that were accomplished include the following: six student mentees were and continue to be mentored on a bi-weekly basis until the end of the semester, positive

relationships have been established between the mentor and student, students that have begun working towards personal and future goals, and all six students have maintained a GPA above the required “C” average. Based on these results, our group believes The Fulton Effect can be deemed a successful program and believe each student has benefitted from being a part of the program.

Analysis of Project Shortcomings/Objectives Not Met

Pertaining to objectives not met, one mentor had to leave the program because she was offered another position at her current place of work that conflicted with meeting times. To overcome this obstacle, our group consulted with our project sponsors and decided that rotating members of our group would act as an interim mentor for the remainder of the semester. Although this was not ideal, we chose the best alternative, and each of us took turns meeting with the student until the semester was over. In many ways, this experience can be viewed as a success, as our group worked quickly and effectively together to respond to the change and keep the program running smoothly. In the end, we were still able to offer the student a supportive and encouraging environment in order for her to succeed. Furthermore, there were some shorter-term, intermediate, and longer-term objectives listed on the program’s logic model that have not yet been accomplished. Officially, The Fulton Effect at McClarin High School does not end until May 20th, 2013. Therefore, we have been unable to evaluate the accomplishments of the shorter-term objectives of GPA and self-esteem increases in such a short amount of time. The intermediate outcome of all students maintaining adequate attendance in school was also something the program was unable to accomplish. There have been a couple of students to not receive stipends due to poor attendance records. This issue has been and continues to be addressed by each mentor discussing with their student reasons for excessive absences and are

teaching them about the importance of attending school in order to graduate.

All of the longer-term outcomes have yet to be accomplished. The sustainability and expansion of The Fulton Effect is a continuous process that group members do plan on achieving as the close of the mini-mester approaches. Obtaining an increased number of mentor and student participants and building a sustainable volunteer base are other outcomes that our group seeks to accomplish on an ongoing basis. As a result, still working to meet these objectives, our group has learned the importance of collaboration and creating partnerships with other schools, social workers, and organizations in South Fulton County. For instance, we were able to gain local media attention in hopes that a number of community members would learn about our efforts and wish to become a part of the program in some fashion (see Appendices C & D).

Relation of Project Outcomes to Literature Review & Community Practice Frameworks

How Outcomes Reinforced Prior Knowledge. Significant connections can be made between our project's outcomes and our initial literature review and community practice frameworks we utilized to inform our actions. Throughout the course of our project, we were able to refer to the evidence base to conceptualize program outcomes and saw clear instances of outcomes reinforcing prior knowledge. The first way project outcomes reinforced prior knowledge obtained from the literature was related to the overall building and implementing of the mentor program during its beginning stages. Mazzoni (2002) mentioned that the first core element of a successful mentor program is having a combination of strong school support and project management, which involves ensuring a school culture that supports mentoring, coupled with strong leadership abilities of those in charge of the program (p. 67). Reaching our outcome of successfully coordinating and facilitating the bi-weekly mentoring meetings definitely reinforces this contention. We realized very quickly how important it is to have school officials

on board in order to reserve a private meeting space, maneuver volunteers through the school premises without causing a disturbance, and sign students out of their regular daily routines. Our experience supports the fact that program coordinators must ensure school officials are aware of and invested in the program. In addition, Smith and Stormont (2011) pointed to the importance of designing the program for a clearly defined target population in order to attend to their specific needs, which is important to be aware of the risk factors, cultural norms, and needs of the selected population so that services are intentional and policies and practice methods are catered to the youth being served (p. 16). The authors' arguments are greatly supported by our project outcomes. Throughout the duration of the project, we frequently found ourselves at a place where we had to pause and truly consider the needs and vulnerabilities of unaccompanied homeless youth. Specifically regarding the implementation phase, our outcomes of writing program policies, successfully matching students with mentors, and launching the meetings truly reinforced the idea that we must keep the target population as first priority in our minds at all times throughout the process so that we can best serve them. Furthermore, Dappen and Iserhagen (2005) state that during the development phase of mentor programs, coordinators should explore the community to determine other potential partners who should be involved (p. 23). Our outcome of successfully forming partnerships with community stakeholders (local restaurants, a t-shirt printing company, etc.) proved to reinforce the fact that forming collaborations with community partners from the very beginning will allow for greater program success. Because we reached out to individuals and businesses in the local community, The Fulton Effect now has a growing network of supporters who are willing to sponsor event necessities.

Our project outcomes also reinforced prior knowledge related to the Community Capacity Development Framework. According to Rothman (2007), this model assumes change is best

accomplished when those who are affected by the problem are empowered to understand the problem and work cooperatively to overcome it (p.12). A major part of our outcome regarding the development of the structure and policies of the program involved having a round table discussion with the youth and administering a “personal snapshot” survey to allow them to express their individual expectations for the program and what they would like to gain out of a mentoring relationship. Having done this, we were able to privilege the voices of the youth by using their thoughts to inform our actions. This reinforced the theoretical underpinnings expressed by Rothman because we found that youth were more likely to be invested in the program, and thus the goals of the program, because they were able to have a say in what it would look like.

Furthermore, our outcomes reinforce knowledge obtained in the literature involving a study conducted to examine the effectiveness of Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring. Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken (2011) set out to determine the impact mentoring has on youths’ school-related attitudes and performance, problem behaviors in and outside school, and social and personal well-being (p. 348). Results indicate that mentored youth showed greater academic gains, had improved perceptions of their academic abilities, and were more likely to report having a relationship with a supportive, caring adult (pp. 356-357). Though we were unable to determine whether there was an actual improvement in academic achievement among the youth in the short time we have implemented the program, we are sure that all youth maintained at least a “C” average throughout their time in the program, which was one of our goals. Also, there were noticeable gains on certain areas between their pre- and post-program evaluations that reinforce the findings from the study. On open-ended questions, youth stated the program helped them to improve academic performance by encouraging them to focus in school

and helping them to develop goals related to education. Overall responses indicated youth felt more empowered toward academic achievement as a result of the program. These new insights are examples of improved perceptions of their academic abilities. In addition, youth mentioned on their evaluations that interacting with their mentor and having healthy conversations about education and their future, as well as talking to someone who listens, were things they found most fulfilling in the program. This is very similar to the finding in the study related to youth being more likely to report having a relationship with a supportive, caring adult, as they emphasize their conversations with their mentors as significant. Overall outcomes presented in the qualitative evaluation analysis reinforce knowledge from the Big Brothers Big Sisters study because we are able to identify strong connections between the results of each.

How Outcomes Build upon/Contribute to Prior Knowledge. In addition to acknowledging instances of our outcomes reinforcing prior knowledge from the literature review and our understanding of community practice models, we are able to identify several ways in which outcomes of our project build upon prior knowledge, thus allowing us to gain a great deal of new insights. One way our outcomes contributed to prior knowledge was regarding the significance of community partnerships in developing and implementing a new program. Our outcome of successfully coordinating and facilitating the bi-weekly meetings, accompanied by the outcome of successfully reaching out to form partnerships with local businesses to sponsor the program, add to our prior knowledge of community partnerships practice because it gave us a firsthand experience to truly grasp that our program would not have operated as efficiently and effectively without the support of our collaborative relationships. Examples of this can be seen in the monetary commitments we obtained by partnering with Kroger and Williams-Sonoma to invest them in the program. Even beyond the partnerships we formed with various community

stakeholders to receive financial assistance for programmatic operations, a lot of collaboration took place during initial stages to develop the structure of our program with indispensable key players. We observed successful mentoring programs at other schools and conducted several informational interviews with program coordinators and school social workers to gain advice and a deeper understanding of running a program to inform our actions. Several of our project outcomes would not have been possible in the absence of the partnerships we formed. This contributes to prior knowledge by allowing us to not only learn how to form successful partnerships in social work practice but truly see how they shape programmatic outcomes.

In addition, our outcomes related to responding to contexts that shape practice for successful program development and implementation build on prior knowledge related to factors influencing success of mentor programs. When conducting our literature review, we found several sources describing steps to creating a successful program and core elements of effective programs. However, we noticed very little information about what to do when unanticipated factors impact the program, such as lack of funding or issues with a participant. We also discovered that very little literature exists on the use of mentor programs as interventions to address the unique situations of unaccompanied homeless youth. Thus, our outcomes that prove our flexibility (such as finding a quick, effective solution when we lost a mentor) contribute to prior knowledge by placing an added emphasis on adaptability and responding to changing practice contexts in order to have a successful program. From a broader perspective, all of our outcomes for the project contribute to the overall lack of available knowledge on this type of program for this population.

Lastly, changes over time regarding initial results from our youth pre-evaluations and those of the post-evaluations point to additional outcomes that build upon prior knowledge. In

addition to focusing on educational aspects impacted by our program, we evaluated youth's gains in knowledge of aspects related to employment and various life skills, as well as comfort with healthy adult relationships. Concerning quantitative measures, we found an overall increase in knowledge of availability of scholarships and grants for college, how to build a résumé, and the maintenance of checking and savings accounts. We also discovered youth reported an increase in comfort around talking openly with other adults. In qualitative responses, youth mentioned that their mentors taught them to build résumés, find out how to take the SAT, apply to college, and conduct job searches. These outcomes contribute to previous knowledge attained in the literature because unlike many studies we found, we did not stop at assessing impacts on factors related to education only, as we went further to examine impacts in other areas. These outcomes illustrate successes of our program that we have not seen in the literature, thus building upon what is already available.

Ethical Issues

Confidentiality

As we prepared for this project and the implementation of The Fulton Effect, we realized we were dealing with a vulnerable group of students who had been through a lot of difficult life circumstances, which needed to be taken into consideration. We knew there was going to be a great deal of intimacy between mentors and students, and safeguarding information disclosed by the students would require proactive measures in the form of structured policies and documentation on our end. According to the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) in Section 1.07 Privacy and Confidentiality, social workers are to respect clients' right to privacy and may only disclose information when appropriate with valid consent from a client. Therefore, in respect to the importance of confidentiality, we created a volunteer agreement form for all of the mentors to

sign, confirming that whatever was discussed between them and their student would stay between the two of them, unless the student discloses information that needs to be relayed to our group or the School Social Workers. The unique situations of the students made them vulnerable, and they have a right to privacy. We wanted to honor that with a signed promise that any information they shared with their mentors would not be shared with anyone else. Furthermore, it was important for us to ensure a private meeting space away from other students so our participants would not have to disclose their involvement in the program and so other students would not overhear sensitive information. The rest of the students at McClarin High School were not informed as to why these specific students got to miss their lunch period or why they would occasionally come to class with new duffle bags (to disguise their receipt of school supplies, food, toiletries, etc).

We also gave each student a release of information form to sign so that the mentors would have access to their grades, attendance, and some brief background information. The students had no problems with signing this document, and it has turned out to be very helpful. We found that the mentors having access to the students' attendance and grades brings about another healthy topic of conversation and allows a certain level of accountability in the relationship. For instance, the mentors are able to ask why they missed school and dig a little deeper into troubles that may be going on outside of school with which they may need guidance. The mentors are able to see their students' grades on a bi-weekly basis, as well, giving them the ability to hold their students responsible for their efforts in school. We believe the release of this information was necessary for the growth of relationship between mentors and students.

Throughout our time with The Fulton Effect, we have not had any difficulty with mentors or students breaching confidentiality. All participants seem to be very respectful of one another

and sensitive to each person's right to privacy. However, there was one incident that we encountered when a young man unexpectedly came into the gym where we meet and was lingering around the tables where meetings were occurring. He was talking to Kedric Sledge, the School Social Worker, during the mentoring time, and we found this to be a risk of jeopardizing confidentiality. The student stood around for quite a while, and the Social Worker did not address the issue. Eventually the young man left on his own, but as a team we were very uncomfortable with this and wanted to make sure it did not happen again. After we left the school that day, we all met as a group to discuss the severity of what happened, whether it should be addressed, and how it should be addressed. We came to an agreement that we should contact the school social worker expressing our concern and give an explanation as to why we believed this was a risk to our assurance of confidentiality for the students. He responded in a very understanding manner and agreed not to let it happen again.

Self-Determination

The ethical issue of self-determination has come up multiple times throughout the course of our project. According to the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) in Section 1.02 Self-Determination, we are to respect and promote clients' right to self-determination and assist in their efforts regarding goal identification and clarification. Our group has discussed this concept at length throughout the project due to our decision to give the students a stipend and it being somewhat of an incentive for the students to come to the meetings. We wrestled with whether or not this incentive would take away from the students' self-determination, and we unanimously decided it would not. Kelly Fields, the Executive Director of StandUp For Kids, helped us to understand that the students' improvements in grades and attendance would be near impossible until their basic needs of food, water, and shelter are met, which is based on Maslow's Hierarchy

of Needs (K. Fields, personal communication, January 29, 2013). These students are in a particularly unique situation, and we have found throughout the length of this program that providing their daily essentials through the stipend has allowed them to focus on school and graduation. In the open-ended post-program evaluation responses, several students mentioned that the stipend helped them with components critical to academic success, such as transportation to school. They seem to have developed much more trusting attitudes and have an understanding that we are there to help them in deeper ways than just improvement in grades and attendance. The students know they are in control of whether they get the stipend and that the outcome is based on the effort they put forth. If they work hard, then they will get the stipend, which gives them a sense of pride and achievement. We still believe this stipend is not taking away from their self-determination, but it is giving them the resources for empowerment to identify, clarify, and achieve their goals.

Power Differentials

The concern of self-determination has been previously addressed when we talk about power differentials within the program. There are power differentials due to the fact that we need specific point people to go to when issues arise or in the case of an emergency. In a program like this where the population being served is at-risk, there needs to be a hierarchy of power for the participants in order to have a clear direction in which to go with a concern. This being said, the power differentiation has not been oppressive or authoritative, but one that has brought a sense of security and safety for all involved. The mentors and students have a relationship where power differentiation can have as much or as little influence as they desire. As a team, we trained our mentors to be on an equal playing field with the students, and so far, the mentors have come to the students from a place of understanding. The goal is to take the student just one step further

than where they are right now, and our mentors grasp this and have been trying to mainly set a foundation of trust with their student. We have given the mentors the responsibility of making sure the student is coming to school and keeping their grades up, which are criteria necessary for the student to receive stipends. We thought this responsibility might bring a possibility for a power differentiation but have noticed our mentors have made it a relational conversation to build trust. This accountability has brought about respect and the feeling that the mentor cares about the student's success. Many of our participants do not have parental figures in their lives to encourage them and show they care about their academic success, so this relationship has helped provide that for the students. As social workers, we realize that one of our greatest professional values is the importance of human relationships. We stand on this principle, being of central importance and a vehicle for change. We strive to engage people as partners in the helping process, such as our mentors and students, because we want to set them up in a situation where the relationship is strengthened “in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the wellbeing” of the students and our community (NASW, 2008). We feel that power differentials have not been a hindrance. Furthermore, the relationships between our group, Kelly Fields, Kedric Sledge, and Sara Smith are not revolved around power but rather roles. There is not a hierarchy within these relationships but instead departments that handle different issues, which has not caused any issues in power differentials.

Privileging Their Voice

Privileging the voice of our students has been a primary goal in all our endeavors throughout the project. We were able to arrange a time to meet with all of the students at once before the program launched to inform them of the program, as well as get their feedback on their expectations and what they want out of a mentoring relationship through a survey and

informal discussion. They had the opportunity to share with us their personal goals and aspirations, so we could gain a better understanding of where they are coming from and where they want to go. Our goal was to give them the opportunity to have the support they are missing on a daily basis and provide a trusting, positive relationship, which has seemed to be the environment we've successfully fostered thus far through mentor meetings. In order for this to continue to be effective and for these students to feel empowered, we have to keep inquiring about their needs and wishes in order to best serve them. This program is for them and the benefits of their futures, so we want to make sure they are getting as much advantage from it as we can offer.

We did experience a rather trying situation that forced us to make difficult decisions. At one point, we had a student who brought back her receipt detailing purchases from the stipend, and it indicated the purchase of a CD, which is outside the parameters of allowed purchases, as only necessities are permissible. As a team, we did not feel that a CD was a valid purchase under the guidelines for the stipend. When we asked the student why she bought the CD, she denied the purchase. She said that she didn't buy one and she did not know how it got on her receipt. This made the situation a little more difficult, placing us in a position to decide whether she was telling the truth and how to handle the next steps. We had to put all personal feelings aside and go by the guidelines we had set for the program. We wanted to make sure that every student was treated equally, and the only way we could do this was to follow the rules that were in place. We decided to give her a warning because, according to the use of the stipend, they are only allowed to purchase necessities such as food, clothing, toiletries, etc. This was a challenging decision, but the participant understood and agreed to not purchase another inappropriate item. This ethical issue relates to privileging the student's voice because we got caught between allowing the

student to make her own adult decisions and abiding by the policies we set in place for our program. In the end, it was very much a learning experience for us to be reminded that while we strive to privilege youth voice, we are also responsible for encouraging the students to be responsible for their actions and to follow the guidelines of our program.

Biases

As a team, we discussed our own biases and values before the program began. We openly discussed the fact that we are all white, educated, and have come from rather privileged backgrounds, and this would require mindfulness as we worked with the students. We did not pretend to relate to where these students are coming from or act as if we know what is best for them. We did, however, try to listen and use the resources we have to meet them where they are. We think that our education and experiences up to this point have given us a firm foundation on how to assess our biases and values, and we have been soundly aware of them throughout this process. The NASW Code of Ethics (2008) states that social workers are to respect the inherent dignity and worth of those we encounter as a core value, treating them in a caring and respectful fashion and being mindful of individual differences and cultural diversity. In providing mentors, we have supplied the students with someone who can assist in reaching their goals while leaving room for them to feel empowered and accomplished, and we further made every attempt possible to keep a growing mindfulness of respect for differences among individuals within the program.

Summary

Throughout the process of developing and implementing The Fulton Effect, from the beginning to where we will leave it for someone else to take over, there have been many valuable lessons learned. We have learned an immeasurable amount about unaccompanied homeless youth and their unique situations related to education, as well as the use of mentoring programs

as a method of intervention to address the issue. We each have developed a new respect for this population and the hindrances they face on a daily basis. Our competence concerning the empowerment of vulnerable populations has grown tremendously. We knew from the beginning that creating and implementing a program would be a complex task, but we were not aware of how much really goes into planning a program until we actually went through the process. Successfully completing this project required a lot of learning on our parts. We taught ourselves several new things along the way, such as how to write a useful program manual, how to transfer best practices from the literature to a new program, and how to collaborate with multiple stakeholders and sponsors to utilize all of our resources. We have also learned that although working with many different stakeholders and community partners can be extremely challenging, it is vital to ensure all goals and objectives are met. The process of initiating and maintaining partnerships for the purpose of fundraising and sponsorships takes much time and preparation, but it is rewarding whenever a relationship is formed.

Furthermore, we believe our biggest takeaway was learning that things are not always going to turn out as originally planned; the process was not always as smooth as we had anticipated. In particular, it is especially the case when working with vulnerable populations. We learned lessons about how to quickly and efficiently respond to changing contexts that shape organizations. There were a couple of circumstances when we did not have the clear solution when the dilemma presented itself, causing us to come together as a team, find a solution, and add any new policies or procedures in response. To that end, the importance of flexibility was a lesson we learned quickly. There was some trial and error, but with every great outcome there must be multiple tests up to its arrival.

Lastly, we learned not only how to utilize structured technological evaluation processes but also recognized the importance of continuous informal evaluation. The informal evaluations, such as verbal communication, assisted us in refining the structure as necessary in order to best meet our participants' needs, therefore allowing the structured evaluations to have more weight in content, since the smaller concerns were addressed along the way. We met as a group on a consistent basis to discuss what was going well, where adjustments should be made, and what we could do better to ensure participants have the best possible experiences in the program. We really cannot stress the importance of constant evaluation to improve our program.

There is always hindsight, and as for our team, there are a few things we would have done differently. We definitely wish we would have spent more time at McClarin High School at the beginning with the School Social Worker or a counselor, getting to know their policies on grades and attendance thoroughly. We see now that brainstorming more to have a more realistic understanding of their processes in relation to our program would have been helpful. We thought we had a grasp on how our policies would integrate with those of the school, but as the program transpired, we realized we were not prepared for how complex some elements would be, especially their attendance policy. Our participating students at McClarin High School have unique situations, and we could have been more prepared as to how they were going to adjust to our program's structure. Next, the mentors are the backbone of this program, and we feel now that we should have really stressed how much we appreciated them throughout the whole process. We had a mentor leave, not that this could have been prevented it because her loss was due to other circumstances, but we think they would feel more needed and be more invested in the program if perhaps we expressed gratitude more often. We have had comments from mentors alluding to the fact that they do not feel as if they are impacting the students. We think consistent

encouragement from our team is necessary for them to feel fulfilled and significant. We realize mentoring can be a long process, and discouragement can arise quickly, so we are now determined to be more prepared to uplift our volunteers and assure they stay motivated. As we move forward, this is a word of wisdom we will pass on to the next program coordinator. On a smaller scale, we would have chosen to not hold our mentor meetings on Mondays. Having our meetings at the beginning of the week did not always allow us enough time to determine if a student was going to be absent or get records from the school on time. Gathering documentation seemed to be rushed on Mondays since everyone was coming back from their weekend break. It felt as if there was not enough time to prepare and communicate needs for the week. Thus, if we had to redo the project, we would hold meetings later in the week to allow for an adjustment period.

Overall, we have gained an immense amount of knowledge and have cultivated several community practice skills from this project. Our greatest lesson learned would have to be our deeper understanding of the importance of community partnerships. We could not have accomplished so many goals without relying on the collaborations we formed, such as providing sponsorship for event necessities (local donors), writing the program policies (school counselors and coordinators at NFI), and gaining media attention (local newspapers and peer writers). Furthermore, our group is extremely appreciative of the support offered to us by our project sponsors, without whom our project would not have been a success, and we cannot thank them enough for providing such an excellent learning opportunity (see Appendix E). It was an outstanding experience that we will all be able to take with us and apply to future endeavors.

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Appendix A
The Fulton Effect Program Manual

Due to the size of this deliverable, it is in a separate Word document. Please see the attachment.

Appendix B
The Fulton Effect Logic Model



Logic Model Builder (LMB) » The Fulton Effect (#15458)

Problem / Goals

Problem Statement

Unaccompanied homeless youth are defined as students who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and who are not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian. Currently in Fulton County Schools there are nearly 1300 students who have been identified as homeless per the McKinney-Vento Act. Of these, 91 have been identified as unaccompanied homeless youth. Under these circumstances they do not receive adequate guidance and support to help ensure they graduate from high school and attain life goals.

Goals

- a. Promote educational stability amongst unaccompanied homeless youth in Fulton County with the outcome of successful high school completion.

Rationale / Assumptions

Rationales

- a. Engaging in a one-to-one mentor experience will provide the encouragement and support necessary for students to reach academic and personal achievements.

Assumptions

- a. Involvement with the Fulton Effect program will result in student mentee GPA increase.
- b. Involvement with the Fulton Effect program will result in student mentee high school completion.

Timeframe / Resources

Timeframe

- Start Date:** February 25, 2013
- End Date:** May 20, 2013

Resources

- a. Georgia State University MSW Students
- b. Sue Levine, Program Coordinator at North Fulton Initiative
- c. Sara Smith, Homeless Liaison for Fulton County Schools
- d. Kedric Sledge, School Social Worker at McClarin High School
- e. Kelly Fields, Executive Director at StandUp for Kids

Activities / Outputs / Outcomes

Activities	Outputs	Shorter-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Longer-Term Outcomes
1. Conduct outreach and training				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Engage with community members who are interested in becoming a mentor. b. Provide training to identified mentors, sponsored by StandUp for Kids. c. Reach out to Sue Levine, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 8 mentors have been identified. b. Program structure has been created based on information attained from Sue Levine. c. 2 training sessions will be held during the week of 2/10/2013 for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Mentors attain knowledge about unaccompanied homeless youth. ii. Student mentees attain knowledge about positive relationships, communication skills, and decision-making skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. 5 student mentees get mentored on a bi-weekly basis until end of semester. ii. Positive relationships built between mentor and student mentee. iii. 5 student mentees maintain adequate attendance in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Fulton Effect transitions into an ongoing, sustainable program at McClarin High School. ii. North Fulton Initiative incorporates Fulton Effect name, mission, goals, and objectives. iii. Additional South Fulton

<p>Program Coordinator at North Fulton Initiative, to attain guidance for the Fulton Effect Program,</p>	<p>identified mentors,</p>	<p>iii. Student mentees gain knowledge about the importance of building a successful and sustainable future.</p>	<p>school.</p> <p>iv. Student mentees begin working towards personal goals and plan for their future,</p> <p>v. Student mentees maintain GPA of "C" average,</p> <p>vi. Student mentees begin taking steps to transition into responsible adults.</p> <p>vii. Increased self-esteem levels among student mentees,</p>	<p>schools adopt and initiate Fulton Effect program.</p> <p>iv. Sustainable volunteer base is established.</p> <p>v. Increased number of student mentees participate in Fulton Effect program.</p> <p>vi. Student mentees, if eligible, graduate from high school.</p>
<p>2. Develop program manual</p>				
<p>a. Provide structure and information for key participants (StandUp for Kids Executive Director, Homeless Liaison, School Social Worker, Program Coordinator).</p> <p>b. Provide structure and information to identified mentors.</p>	<p>a. Roles and responsibilities of key participants are clearly defined,</p> <p>b. Identified mentors have better understanding of their roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>i. Key participants, mentors, and student mentees attain knowledge about Fulton Effect program (mission, goals and objectives),</p>	<p>vi. Student mentees begin taking steps to transition into responsible adults.</p> <p>vii. Increased self-esteem levels among student mentees,</p>	<p>vi. Student mentees, if eligible, graduate from high school.</p>
<p>3. Implement mentoring program</p>				
<p>a. Match student mentees with an identified mentor.</p> <p>b. Encourage mentor and student mentee to form a trusting relationship.</p>	<p>a. Students are engaged in program activities and follow established guidelines of program,</p>	<p>i. Knowledge regarding personal and professional development is gathered among student mentees</p>		
<p>4. Develop and administer evaluation tools</p>				
<p>a. Encourage student mentees to fill out a pre-measurement "get to know you" form.</p> <p>b. Provide post-evaluation forms to student mentees, mentors, and key coordinators.</p>	<p>a. Student mentees and mentors will be matched based on information acquired from "get to know you" form,</p> <p>b. Information regarding strengths and weaknesses of Fulton Effect program are provided,</p>	<p>i. Knowledge about Fulton Effect program strengths and weaknesses is attained.</p> <p>ii. GPA increases, self-esteem increases, overall awareness of college application process increases.</p>		

Appendix C Documentation of Outreach to the Media: *South Fulton Neighbor* Article

Nonprofit provides support, mentorship

by [Nneka Okona](#)

April 10, 2013 09:59 AM | 247 views | 0 | 4 | 4 | 4



Staff / Katherine Frye. From left, Amberleia Henson, Molly Vance, Jennifer Greenlee, and Paula Wilson.

Students at Frank McClarin High School in College Park now have a new resource to help ensure academic success — The Fulton Effect, a mentoring program sponsored by StandUp for Kids.

The program, which has officially launched at Frank McClarin, is a semester long program.

“The Fulton Effect was formed in January of this year and launched on Feb. 25,” said Paula Wilson, one of the coordinators of the program. “It was formed by five Georgia State University Master of Social Work students in conjunction with StandUp for Kids, the Fulton County Schools homeless liaison and a school social worker at Frank McClarin.”

Wilson, along with the other four founding classmates, is required to work in groups and complete a community project, in lieu of a traditional thesis.

The social work program at Georgia State University has a concentration in community partnerships, which is why the students pursued creating a program of this type.

The goal was to “develop and implement a mentoring program specifically targeted at supporting homeless unaccompanied youth” at the high school.

Currently, there are six student and mentor pairs.

“We are in the full-swing of things now and have bi-weekly mentor meetings on Mondays during the students’ lunch times,” said Wilson. “It has been a fast-paced, fun and rewarding experience for all of us.”

Prior to establishment of the program, there was nothing of its type in place.

“We have really built it from the ground up, including creating the program’s structure and policies, coordinating with the high school and our program sponsors, recruiting mentors and reaching out to the local businesses in the community to request lunch donations for meetings,” said Wilson.

Aside from providing the support and encouragement the selected students need, Wilson thinks the establishment of the personal relationship is vital.

“A lot of these youth may not have someone in their lives to ask about how school is going or to teach them about obtaining employment or applying to college, but through additional encouragement, accountability and support, the mentoring relationship provides that,” she said.

Those interested in being mentors for the program must be 25 and older and pass a background check.

Attending a one-day volunteer session with StandUp for Kids is also required, along with committing to bi-weekly meetings for the entire semester.

Wilson said she hopes in fall, the Fulton Effect will expand to two additional schools in the south Fulton area.

Appendix D
Documentation of Outreach to the Media: *The Signal* Article



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Georgia State students impact Fulton county's future

By: [Rashida Wright](#) |

Posted: March 17, 2013



Social work graduate students Paula Wilson, Amberleia Henson, Lauren Jones, Jennifer Greenlee and Molly Vance were presented with a more innovative method toward earning their Master's degrees. The students were asked to complete a semester long community service project by selecting a proposal submitted to GSU from various organizations around the state. Stand Up for Kids, a Fulton County Schools liaison, was selected after the ladies met the staff for an interview. Stand Up for Kids is a national program that helps to stabilize homeless children and teens who are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian.

Using a model similar to an initiative utilized in North Fulton, the graduate students began The Fulton Effect, a program designed to keep the students in school by pairing them with mentors who help teach them life skills and offer them a parent-like figure. If the program is successful, it could be implemented at two other high schools by fall of 2013. According to group member Paula Wilson, The Fulton Effect will be tested at Frank McClarin High School, an alternative school in southwest Fulton. Paula Wilson stated the six students in the program range between the ages of 15 to 17 years of age. Throughout the semester these students will receive a bi-weekly stipend in the form of a Wal-Mart gift card in to cover basic needs like food, clothing and school supplies. These students were also given a chance to describe the type of mentor they would like to have during the project. "Some of the students don't have someone they can come home to ask them how their day went or ask them about their homework. In a way it provides a certain level of accountability", said Wilson. When the students were asked about mentor qualities they were looking for, most said they simply wanted a caring adult. All mentors are volunteers and include retirees, college students and others from local organizations around the metro Atlanta area. They have committed to meeting with the students every other Monday and meet goals like SAT preparedness, interviewing skills and assisting with FAFSA.

Unlike most students their age, these adolescents come to school voluntarily. They also must maintain a C average and adhere to attendance policies in order to remain in the program. Wilson says Stand Up for Kids and The Fulton Effect are looking for ways to create financial sustainability in order to keep the program intact at Frank McClarin High School as well as throughout the county in the future. For more information about the program, ways to donate or to volunteer contact Kelly Fields at kellyf@standupforkids.org.

Appendix E
Thank You Letter to Program Sponsors

April 18, 2013

Sara Smith
Homeless Liaison
Fulton County Schools
554 Parkway Drive
Hapeville, GA 30354

Dear Sara,

We want to thank you for this incredible opportunity we have had working with you to develop and implement The Fulton Effect mentoring program at Frank McClarin High School. The energy and passion you have for helping homeless youth is contagious, and we have come to have a similar sentiment regarding this population and impacting their lives.

The time and attention that you have provided to our group is priceless, including meeting with us on several occasions and giving us a tour of your office building, providing us important information for our project, participating in the mentor meetings, and preparing supplies and materials for us to give the students. We appreciate your patience with us, especially all of our questions, and your helpful input and advice. Thank you for your encouragement and all of the contributions you have made to countless aspects of the program.

Also, we would like to thank you for the learning experience that you have helped provide to our group. We have not only learned valuable lessons about the real challenges that homeless youth face, but we have also learned how to support, encourage, and empower them to make their own decisions and take the steps necessary to succeed and achieve their goals. In regard to developing and implementing the program, we have learned that it takes much time and energy, which requires a lot of patience and flexibility. Most importantly, we have learned how to work better as a team and as community partners to achieve a common goal. This project has taught us so much and has been instrumental in forming our understanding of community partnership practice and preparing us to be great practitioners.

We are truly grateful for all that you have done to make this a wonderful experience.

Sincerely,

Paula, Molly, Jennifer, Amberleia & Lauren
Georgia State University MSW Students