



# Group Mentorship Programs for At-Risk Boys

# District Leadership Forum

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# 1) Executive Overview

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## Key Observations

**Consider partnering with mentorship providers to mitigate administrative burden on district staff.** **District A, District B,** and **District C** launch and operate in-house mentorship programs. District employees (e.g., teachers, counselors) operate mentorship programs at these districts. Other profiled districts partner with mentorship providers external to the district to alleviate employees' responsibilities for the program. Mentorship providers typically recruit and train mentors and select the program's curriculum, though the division of responsibilities between districts and mentorship providers varies by program.

**Launch new mentorship programs with limited scope to ensure manageable workloads for program administrators.** Contacts at several profiled programs emphasize the coordination and planning necessary to launch and operate a mentorship program. Contacts at Program 4 at **District C** suggest administrators of a new mentorship program limit the number of schools in which mentorship occurs as well as the number of students enrolled in the program. This contributes to manageable workloads for program administrators and allows them to ensure the program to supports students before expanding its scope.

**The curriculum of mentorship meetings varies depending on the focus of the mentorship program.** Profiled programs hold meetings that involve activities and/or discussions related to the at-risk behavior of students in the program (e.g., low GPA, risk of dropout). For example, because Program 1 at **District A** focuses on improving student attendance, program administrators ask mentors to set goals and facilitate discussions related to attendance. The mentorship provider Program 6 focuses on increasing high school graduation and college acceptance rates. Accordingly, program meetings include activities related to academic success and the college and financial aid application processes.

**Mentorship programs for at-risk boys do not differ significantly from mentorship programs for at-risk students generally.** Most profiled programs for at-risk boys assign male mentors to students in the program. However, research on the effectiveness of gender-matching mentors and mentees is inconclusive.<sup>1</sup> Program 6, which operates mentorship services for boys, does not gender-match mentors and mentees at two of the districts in which the program operates. Further, contacts at profiled programs state that they operate mentorship programs for boys because they identify more boys that demonstrate at-risk behavior (e.g., low attendance) than girls. Yet contacts at programs for at-risk boys state that the program focuses on addressing at-risk behavior rather than aspects of male identity. Most contacts at programs for at-risk boys suggest the structure and curriculum of the program can serve all at-risk students, not just boys. For example, contacts note that many at-risk students do not maintain meaningful connections at school. Program 4 at **District C** engages boys that participate in the program in relationship-building activities with mentors, which contacts suggest would benefit all at-risk students.

1) Stella, Kanchewa, Jean Rhodes, Sarah Schwartz, and Lauren Olsho, "An Investigation of Same- Versus Cross-Gender Matching for Boys in Formal School-Based Mentorship Programs," *Applied Developmental Science*, 18(1) (January 31, 2014): 31-45. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10888691.2014.876251>.

## 2) Launching a Program

### In-House Programs and Mentorship Providers

#### District Staff Operate In-House Mentorship Programs

**District A**, **District B**, and **District C** created mentorship programs for at-risk students managed entirely by district staff. Administrators of these programs reference research on mentorship programs to establish policies and structure for the program. Profiled districts with in-house programs fund the programs with a combination of district funds and external grants.

Contacts at several profiled programs emphasize that starting a new mentorship program is labor-intensive. Administrators of new mentorship programs must create and manage every aspect of the mentorship program, including attracting new mentors and engaging diverse stakeholders (e.g., school staff, districts staff, families of potential mentees). Some profiled districts launch mentorship programs for only a small subset of at-risk students (e.g., the most at-risk of dropout, the most enthusiastic about mentorship) to ease the implementation process for administrators or the caseload of mentors.

See pages 13-14 of this report for information about how profiled programs define at-risk behavior.

#### District and Characteristics of Enrolled Mentees for Profiled In-House Mentorship Programs

##### Program 1

- **District A**
- Sixth- and ninth-grade at-risk students

##### Program 2

- **District B**
- Fifth- and sixth-grade at-risk boys

##### Program 3

- **District B**
- High school African American boys

##### Program 4

- **District C**
- Ninth-grade at-risk students

#### Consider Partnering with External Mentorship Programs to Ensure Manageable Workloads for District Staff

Schools in **District D**, **District E**, and several districts in central Texas partner with external mentorship providers for mentoring services. In these partnerships, the mentorship provider frequently develops the program's curriculum and recruits and trains mentors. Administrators at some profiled districts enter into these partnerships because they cannot devote staff to manage curriculum development or recruit mentors as effectively as the mentorship provider.

In these partnerships, school staff select students to join the mentorship program and often schedule program meetings to minimize disruption to class attendance. Profiled mentorship providers hold program meetings at school sites.

#### Location and Characteristics of Enrolled Mentees for Profiled Mentorship Providers

##### Program 5

- **District D**
- At-risk boys in middle and high school

##### Program 6

- Three districts in central Texas
- Eleventh-grade at-risk boys

##### Program 7

- **District E**
- High school at-risk students

## Program Development

### Use Existing Research and Resources to Design and Implement Programs that Support Students

Profiled mentorship programs reference research on school-based mentorship to inform program design. For example, contacts at program 6 in central Texas state that research on mentorship inspired them to use the “[near-peer](#)” method of mentor selection, which recommends that mentors be close in age to their mentees.

Administrators at **District A** and **District C** also used existing research and resource on mentorship to develop and implement programs. Administrators at District A launched an in-house mentorship program as part of the [My Brother’s Keeper](#) initiative of the Obama administration. Contacts point specifically to the [Success Mentor Implementation Guide](#), produced through this initiative, as a useful resource. The guide offers strategies to launch and operate mentorship program to address chronic absenteeism.<sup>2</sup> Administrators of the Program 4 group mentorship program at District C consulted with researchers at a higher education institution to implement the program.

### Resources to Guide Implementation of Mentorship Programs



#### Campus Stakeholders

Administrators of the Program 2 at **District B** consulted with coaches, counselors, social workers, teachers, and the school psychologist to design the structure of the mentorship program.



#### Online Resources

To launch the mentorship program, several profiled program administrators consulted the [National Mentoring Partnership](#). The organization offers white papers and videos to implement a mentorship program.



#### Previous Mentorship Models

Program 7 staff evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the organization’s previous mentorship models to ensure identify potential obstacles to implementation.



#### Previous Mentorship Experience

Contacts at several mentorship programs note that they relied on administrators’ experience with other mentorship initiatives to guide implementation of new programs.



### Use Research to Identify the Most At-Risk Students

Program 6 partnered with a local data mining organization to review data on students in central Texas school districts. Among other findings, the data revealed that African American and Latino boys in these districts graduated at lower-than-average rates. This information prompted program administrators to offer mentorship services to students of color focused on timely graduation.

2) My Brother’s Keeper, “Success Mentor Implementation Guide,” 2016. Accessed 5/9/19. <http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2016-17SuccessMentorImplementationGuide.pdf>.

### Limit the Initial Scale of Mentorship Programs to Avoid Overburdening Program Administrators

Profiled programs devote different numbers of staff to launching and operating mentorship programs depending on expected program size and budget. **District C** dedicates five full-time district-level staff to administer mentorship programs. The district also tasks wellness coordinators and school counselors at each school to recruit staff internally, hold professional development, manage mentoring sessions, and discuss ongoing problems with mentors. Due to the smaller size of the profiled programs at **District B** (i.e., Program 2 and Program 3), the administrator of each program splits their time between program management and other responsibilities. Contacts add that counseling staff offer support to administrators of these programs.

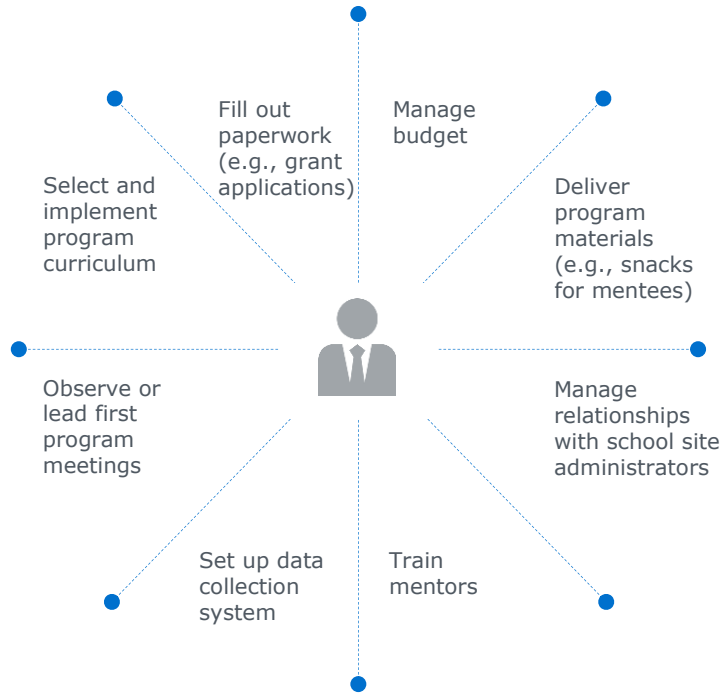
Contacts at District C suggest that districts implement programs with a limited scope (e.g., offer the mentorship program at one or two schools). Limited scale ensures that program administrators do not devote all their time to logistical management across sites and instead focus on the success of students in the program.



#### **In Cases of Large-Scale Program Implementation, Reassign Staff and Standardize Services to Mitigate Administrator Workload**

Beyond limiting the initial scope of programs, contacts note several strategies to ensure manageable workloads of program administrators. Contacts at Program 1 at **District A** note that program administrators initially divided time between program management and other responsibilities, which resulted in insufficient time to develop an effective program. To address this, district administrators reassigned two staff members to support the program, which gave the program administrator time to complete all their responsibilities. Contacts at Program 7 at **District E** state that standardizing mentorship services across school sites eases management and data collection for administrators.

## Common Responsibilities of Mentorship Program Administrators at Profiled Programs



## Mentor Recruitment

Contacts at both Program 4 and Program 1 at **District A** state that some district staff act as a mentor for multiple academic years.

### Recruit Engaged School Staff as Mentors

Program 4 at **District C** predominantly recruits district staff to serve as mentors. Contacts add that they also recruit teachers and other staff members (e.g., guidance counselors) who exhibit willingness to spend time with students outside their typical responsibilities.

At some profiled mentorship programs, program administrators also mentor groups of students. For example, the administrator of Program 3 at **District B** serves as a mentor to two cohorts of high school boys (i.e., 12-15 students). The administrator of Program 2 at District B also serves as a mentor to the ten boys in the program.

Most schools in the Program 1 at **District A** pair an internal staff member with a chronically absent student. One school site uses a group peer-mentoring model through which seniors mentor chronically absent ninth-grade students under the supervision of teachers.

### Staff Recruitment at *District A's* Program 1



#### Recruiting Staff to Mentor Students

The assistant principal at each school site serves as the campus point of contact for program administrators. Program administrators ask assistant principals to recruit staff members as mentors from their school over the summer or beginning of the school year. Assistant principals ask mentors to commit for the entire school year.



#### Recruiting Staff to Lead Peer Mentoring Programs

Assistant principals specifically seek strong teachers who emphasize the importance of school attendance to lead peer mentoring programs. These teachers must lead and coach a group of seniors to mentor younger students.





## Publicize the Mentorship Program and Reach Out to the Local Community to Recruit Mentors Externally

Contacts at Program 7 at **District E** state that mentors typically do not serve as district employees because the schedules of employees often conflict with mentorship sessions. Program administrators instead recruit community members who agree to mentor for a minimum of one semester.

Similar to the Program 7, Program 5 at **District D** asks volunteers from the community to serve as mentors. Contacts state that volunteers typically hear about Program 5's mentorship programs or other events from mentors and mentees involved in the program and contact the organization through their website.

### Example Methods to Recruit Mentors Externally

 Word of Mouth	 Community Bulletin Boards
Contacts at Program 7 report that recommendations and outreach from current mentors and administrators recruits mentors most effectively.	Program administrators post advertisements for mentorship opportunities on community bulletin boards at local businesses (e.g., Starbucks).

## Many Profiled Programs Gender-Match Mentors and Mentees but Effectiveness of the Practice is Uncertain

Administrators of Program 5 at **District D**, Program 2 at **District B**, and Program 1 at **District A** deliberately pair male mentors with male students. Contacts at Program 2 at District B explain that administrators want boys in the program to meet male role models.

However, Program 6 in central Texas uses female mentors for male students in two of the districts they operate. Research is inconclusive on whether gender-matched mentorships lead to greater student success or closer relationships.

## Research on Gender-Matched Mentorship

### Some Effects:



One [study](#) reviews the theoretical basis for why it is valuable for youth to encounter role models of the same gender or ethnicity. The study finds a relationship between the gender of an adolescent and their role model's gender in terms of student outcomes for female students. Specifically, results suggest that female adolescents with a female role model achieve greater success in school. However, the findings suggest role model gender does not correlate with improved outcomes for male adolescents.<sup>3</sup>

### No Effects:



One [study](#) of male youth in two school-based mentorship programs found no differences in outcomes (academic or otherwise) between boys in same- versus cross-gender mentor matches.<sup>4</sup>

## Screen Applicants and Provide Training to Ensure Mentors Meet Qualifications to Interact with Students

At profiled programs with in-house mentorship programs, employment at the school district qualifies school staff to mentor students. Profiled programs that recruit mentors externally review applications and use character or background checks to ensure interested individuals qualify to serve as mentors (e.g., do not maintain national criminal records).

Training for new mentors varies depending on program curriculum and structure. Program administrators at Program 5 in **District D** train mentors to listen to students and exercise caution when they give unsolicited advice. Program 5 typically mandates one or two days of initial training, and schedules trainings on other topics (e.g., mandatory reporting) throughout the academic year. At **District C**, wellness coordinators at each school lead mentor orientation and trainings. The paper [Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring](#) offers best practices and suggestions to screen and train mentors (e.g., conduct reference and criminal background checks on applicants, provide training on ethical and safety issues and approved activities).<sup>5</sup>

3) N.M. Hurd, M.A. Zimmerman, and Y. Xue, "Negative Adult Influences and the Protective Effects of Role Models: A Study of Urban Adolescents," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 38(6) (July 2009): 777-789.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2752426/>.

4) Kanchewa, et al., "An Investigation of Same- Versus Cross-Gender Matching for Boys in Formal School-Based Mentorship Programs," 31-45. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10888691.2014.876251>.

5) National Mentoring Partnership, "Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring," 2015.  
[https://www.mentoring.org/images/uploads/Final\\_Elements\\_Publication\\_Fourth.pdf](https://www.mentoring.org/images/uploads/Final_Elements_Publication_Fourth.pdf).

## Mentor Selection at Program 7

- 1 A program administrator interviews all applicants to ensure they meet qualifications and explain responsibilities of the mentorship role.
- 2 All applicants must submit negative tuberculosis test results and fingerprints to program administrators.
- 3 Administrators encourage new mentors to attend program meetings and observe existing partnerships for between one and two weeks before entering the program. This helps new mentors understand their role and responsibilities.

## Mentee Selection

## Limit the Number of Students in Mentorship Programs to Ensure Enrolled Students Receive Sufficient Support

Administrators of Program 2 at **District B** and Program 7 at **District E** determine the number of students to enroll in the program based on the number of mentors. Contacts at Program 2 and Program 3 at District B state that they establish an upper limit on the number of students enrolled in the program to ensure mentors serve mentees adequately.

The mentorship provider Program 5 at **District D** asks schools they work with to enroll at least twenty students per mentorship group (each group contains four or five mentors).

### In Cases of Limited Program Capacity, Consider Interviewing Potential Mentees to Admit the Most Engaged Students

Program administrators at a mentorship program for girls at **District B**, interview student applicants to ensure only dedicated students participate in the program. Contacts explain that students who prepare for the interview will likely engage with the mentorship program. Additionally, preparing and dressing for an interview develops students' professional skills. While this program enrolls African American girls, Program 3, the program at District B that enrolls African American boys, uses a similar interview process.

## Profiled Programs Rely on Administrators' Appraisals and Observations to Set Mentor-Mentee Ratios

Profiled programs maintain different mentor-mentee ratios. A shortage of external research on the ideal mentor-mentee ratio contributes to the variation in ratios among profiled programs. For example, **page 8** of the [National Mentoring Resource Center Model Review](#) notes that researchers have not determined an optimal group size or mentor-mentee ratio.<sup>6</sup>

Research is more conclusive that group mentorship is effective at supporting at-risk students. For example, a 2011 [meta-analysis](#) of mentorship programs finds that group mentorship programs support students to the same degree as one-to-one

6) Gabriel Kuperminc, "Group Mentoring," *National Mentoring Resource Center*, January 2016. <http://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/images/PDF/GroupMentoringReview.pdf>.

mentorship programs.<sup>7</sup> However, there is a lack of research on the components or qualities of group mentorship programs that most contribute to student success.

Program administrators also limit group size and mentor-mentee ratios to preserve confidentiality within groups. Contacts at Program 3 at **District B** note that they limit the size of groups in part to lower the probability that mentees share confidential issues from group meetings with students outside the program.

## Mentor-Mentee Ratios at Profiled Programs

1:1

- Contacts at Program 7 believe that because the program serves at-risk students, increases to the mentor-mentee ratio would reduce program effectiveness. Program administrators hold group mentorship meetings that contain equal numbers of mentors and mentees.
- Program 1 at **District A** offers one-to-one mentoring at most schools in the district. Contacts express that group mentoring is also effective.

4:1

- Program 4 at **District D** uses groups between eight and ten students per two mentors. Contacts report that their observations of the program lead them to believe groups with a larger mentor-mentee ratio impact students less.

10:1

- Program 2 at **District B** set a mentor-mentee ratio of ten-to-one based on counselor recommendations.

## Enroll Students with At-Risk Behaviors that Administrators Designed Mentorship Programs to Address

Profiled programs review different data on student behavior (e.g., attendance rates, grades) depending on the focus of the mentorship program (e.g., chronic absenteeism, academic performance). Administrators then select students based on student data, counselor or teacher recommendations, or a combination of the two.

Contacts at profiled programs report that they only serve boys because they believe the school enrolls many boys whose needs are not met. For example, teachers or counselor refer many boys to Program 2 at **District B** because they believe access to role models would help these students.

7) David DuBois, Nelson Portillo, Jean Rhodes, Naida Silverthorn and Jeffrey Valentine, "How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, vol. 12(2) (October 20, 2011): 57-91. <https://www.rhodeslab.org/files/DuBoisetalMeta.pdf>.

## Selection of At-Risk Student Populations at Profiled Programs

<b>Based on Academic Risk</b>	Administrators of Program 5 at <b>District D</b> typically select students who struggle academically. Similarly, administrators of Program 6 in central Texas enroll students they believe exhibit the greatest risk of dropping out due to poor academic performance. Administrators of Program 4 at <b>District C</b> recruit students who matriculate to high school with a history of struggling in school as indicated by a system that tracks GPA and attendance.
<b>Based on Academic Risk and Program Fit</b>	Contacts at Program 5 at <b>District B</b> report that they do not enroll boys with the lowest grades. Program administrators and school counselors review attendance, academics, and behavior referrals as part of the selection process, but also select students who they believe would benefit from a male role model. Similarly, contacts at Program 7 at <b>District E</b> note that program administrators want to select students who will engage with the program. As a result, administrators select students with multiple risk factors that they believe will attend the program and form meaningful relationships.
<b>Based on Demographic Characteristics</b>	Program 3 at <b>District B</b> only enrolls African American students and selects students with varying academic performance and rates of attendance. Contacts report that academically successful students in the program serve as a model to academically struggling students and assist them with coursework. Contacts state that they consider all African American students in the district “at-risk” because society exposes all African Americans to negative stereotypes about themselves.

## Reach Out to Potential Mentees and Their Families to Gauge Interest and Familiarize Them with the Program

All profiled programs except Program 5 at **District D** enroll students in mentorship programs on a voluntary basis. Contacts at Program 5 at District D report that schools require some students to attend the first sessions of the mentorship program. However, contacts add that program staff typically inform students that they do not need to attend after several weeks. Contacts explain that program administrators believe the program cannot serve students who do not want to attend meetings.

Program 2 at **District B** and Program 6 in central Texas reach out to family members to familiarize them with the program. Contacts at Program 2 suggest administrators of mentorship programs provide families with information about the program at an early stage and consider meeting with families to review program details.



### Frame Participation in Mentorship Programs to Students as an Opportunity Rather than a Punishment

Sixth- and ninth-grade students at **District A** enroll in Program 1 voluntarily. Contacts report that students want to join the program because they see mentors as a resource to support them as they enter an unfamiliar setting (e.g., middle school, high school). Additionally, program administrators refer to mentors as “attendance champions” to emphasize that mentors invest in students’ success and serve as allies.

## Funding

### Consider Diverse Channels to Raise Funds for Mentorship Programs

Profiled programs rely on multiple grants and revenue streams to fund mentorship services. Contacts suggest administrators of new mentorship programs consider funded initiatives that might apply to a mentorship program even if they do not initially appear connected to mentoring. For example, a grant from an initiative to boost African-American leadership development provided funding to Program 4 at **District D** because administrators successfully argued that the program improves African American students' sense of belonging in the community.

Administrators of Program 7 at **District E** previously relied on local and community funding programs. However, contacts note that organizations that provide these grants fund mentorship programs inconsistently. Program 7 initially received funding from several foundations that asked grant recipients to demonstrate that they would move toward a self-sustaining funding model over time. Because Program 7 could not meet this qualification, the program eventually lost funding from the foundations.

### Sources of Funding at Profiled Programs

#### Private Foundations

Program 6 in central Texas receives most funding from the Susan and Michael Dell Foundation.

#### District or Federal Grants

Program 4 at **District D** received an AmeriCorps grant, which allows the program to employ 20 full-time AmeriCorps members as mentors and administrative support.



#### City or County Funding

Program 1 at **District A** receives funding from the city and the county.

#### Fundraisers

Program 5 at **District D** raise most funding from fundraising events.

### Engage with Local and Low-Cost Learning Opportunities to Limit Program Costs

Difficulties securing funding affect multiple profiled mentorship programs. For example, contacts at Program 3 at **District B** note that the cost to transport students has limited the ability of the program to bring students off-campus (e.g., on field trips).

Program 2 at District B launched with a limited budget. Program administrators primarily engage students in low-cost learning opportunities (e.g., volunteering at senior living facilities, touring the high school). Contacts also suggest program administrators finalize budgets early in the year to plan feasible activities for the program.

## 3) Program Operations

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### Scheduling

#### Schedule Mentorship Meetings to Avoid Removing Students from Core Classes

Most profiled programs meet once per week. The length of program meetings ranges from 30 minutes to 1.25 hours among profiled programs. Program 6 in central Texas also pulls out students at multiple times throughout the day for on-on-one mentoring.

Profiled programs schedule mentorship meetings to ensure they do not always remove students from the same core academic class. For example, program administrators at **District C** frequently ask schools to allow Program 4 to excuse students from physical education classes. Program 3 at **District B** meets during school advisory periods.

Program 1 at **District A** and Program 6 in central Texas operate partially outside class hours (e.g., before or after school, during lunch).

#### Trade-Offs of Scheduling Mentoring Sessions Outside School Hours



##### Benefits:

- Students do not miss class or other in-school academic support to participate in the mentorship program.
- The length of the class block does not limit mentorship sessions.



##### Drawbacks:

- Extracurriculars and student work schedules reduce student attendance.
- Some students do not want to remain at school outside normal hours or miss lunch with friends.

### Curriculum

#### Select Activities and Curriculum that Relate to Program Goals to Improve Student Success

One [study](#) on building effective school-based mentorship programs notes that program curriculum and structure vary based on student population. Similar to how program administrators set program goals and select students based on risk factors present at schools, authors of the study suggest program administrators select curriculum designed to support student improvement in these areas.<sup>8</sup> Other literature reinforces that effective mentorship program curriculum depends on program goals and populations. For example, one [study](#) on mentorship programs for college preparation finds that mentorship programs which include college visits, tutoring, career investigations, and presentations about college preparation during program meetings improve student success.<sup>9</sup> A mentorship program focused on a different at-risk indicator (e.g., chronic absenteeism) is likely to include different content in program meetings.

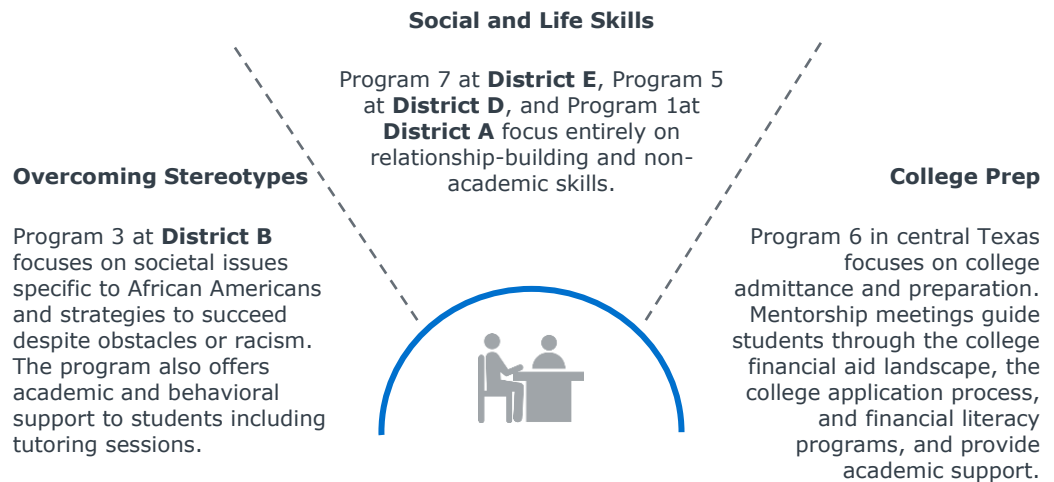
Several administrators of profiled programs include time during weekly meetings for students to check-in with mentors. Contacts at Program 4 at **District C** state that

8) Cindy Ann Smith and Melissa Stormont, "Building an Effective School-Based Mentoring Program." *Intervention in School and Clinic*, vol. 10(10) (2011): 1-8. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.866.3610&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

9) Richard Radcliffe and Beth Bos, "Mentoring Approaches to Create a College-Going Culture for At-Risk Secondary Level Students," *American Secondary Education*, vol. 39(3) (Summer 2011): 86-107. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/23100425?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/23100425?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

these check-ins allow students to discuss important recent life events and set goals related to recent life obstacles.

## Content of Mentorship Meetings at Profiled Programs



### Mentorship Program Content for At-Risk Students Varies Minimally by Gender

Despite differences in curriculum based on program goals, contacts at profiled programs believe the structure and curriculum of the mentorship programs would be effective for at-risk students regardless of gender. Only contacts at Program 2 at **District B** believe they must change curriculum to teach at-risk girls, noting that some program activities are irrelevant for a girl's mentorship group (e.g., tying a tie).




Literature on mentorship programs for at-risk boys of specific racial or ethnic groups does not suggest how mentorship programs for at-risk boys should differ from mentorship programs for at-risk students generally. For example, [Effective Strategies for Mentoring African American Boys](#) focuses on how to structure mentorship programs to combat negative stereotypes and messages about African Americans in American culture more generally.

## Integrate Relationship-Building Activities into Mentorship Program Meetings

All contacts note that building connections between students and mentors is an important component of mentorship programs. Contacts at **District C** state that relationship-building increases student comfort in school, which reduces the risk of drop-out or disengagement.



## Sample Strategies to Build Relationships Between Students and Mentors

<p>Regularly Scheduled Meetings</p> 	<p>Speaker Presentations</p> 	<p>Bonding Activities</p> 
<p>Contacts at <b>District B</b> note that some high schools use mentorship programs called attendance circles. Contacts suggest these meetings built relationship between students and at the school.</p>	<p>Administrators of <b>District B's</b> Program 2 ask school employees to speak or present to students in the program. This builds relationships with school personnel with whom students would not typically interact otherwise.</p>	<p>Program 1 at <b>District A</b> uses card games (e.g., Uno) and service projects to build relationships between students in its peer mentoring program.</p>

## Assessment

### Monitor Multiple Metrics of Student Success to Determine the Effectiveness of Mentorship Programs

Profiled programs track attendance rates and GPAs of students in the program to evaluate its effectiveness.

Contacts at Program 1 at **District A** noted that students enrolled in the program previously noted on surveys that they did not know their mentees. In response, administrators created a database to monitor the frequency of meetings between mentors and mentees. Administrators ask mentors to enter all meetings with mentees in the Electronic Child Study Team database and remind them throughout the year to enter interactions. This database allows administrators to determine whether the program meets its goal of between one and three interactions between each mentor-mentee pairing per week. Program 1 also provides mentors attendance reports for their mentees to ensure mentors know mentees' progress toward goals.

## Methods to Evaluate Effect of Program on Student Success



### Attendance Rate

Profiled programs compare student attendance during or after the mentorship program to attendance before students entered the program, or against students with similar characteristics not enrolled in the program.



### Student and Mentor Surveys

Program 7 and Program 4 at **District C** ask mentors and students to complete surveys to determine whether they view the program as beneficial. Administrators at Program 7 also track the number of students who say they made a friend as part of the program.



### Graduation Rate

Program 7 tracks graduation rates of students in the program. Contacts state that this metric evaluates program effectiveness because the program enrolls students in the years immediately before they graduate.



### Staff and Mentor Observations

In addition to reviewing student grades, program leaders and mentors at Program 5 at **District D** watch how students participate in the program to gauge student success and the effectiveness of mentors.



## Declining Attendance or GPA Among Student Mentees Does Not Equate with Program Ineffectiveness

Contacts at several profiled programs note that mentorship programs can impact students positively despite stagnations or declines in academic performance or attendance rates. Contacts at Program 5 explain that many students in the program face adverse life effects that impact student grades regardless of the effects of mentorship (e.g., a family member going to prison). Contacts at Program 4 at **District C** and Program 1 at **District A** note that among at-risk students, attendance rates tend to decrease as students age. Because of this, a decrease in GPA or student attendance among student mentees does not necessarily support ineffectiveness of the program.

## 4) Research Methodology

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### Project Challenge

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- Which students do mentorship programs serve at contact districts?
- What evidence-based research or data do contact districts consult to create mentorship programs?
- What challenges do contact districts report encountering during the creation of mentorship programs?
- How do contact districts structure mentorship programs (e.g., mentor-mentee ratio, number of meetings per week)?
- How do students enroll in mentorship programs at contact districts?
- How do mentorship programs at contact districts attract mentors?
- In which areas do mentorship programs at contact districts seek to support students (e.g., academic support, behavioral support)?
- What are the goals for mentorship programs at contact districts?
- Which staff oversee mentorship programs at contact districts?
- How do contact districts assess mentorship programs?
- What are structures for programs to mentor at-risk males?
- What content do mentorship programs for at-risk males include?

### Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

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## Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed administrators of mentorship programs for at-risk boys. The Forum interviewed administrators of in-house mentorship programs and administrators of mentorship providers that operate at districts.

### A Guide to Districts Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Approximate Student Enrollment
District A	South	85,000
District B	Mid-Atlantic	100,000+
District C	West	60,000

### A Guide to Mentorship Providers Profiled in this Brief

Organization	Location	Partnering District	Approximate Student Enrollment at District
Program 5	West	District D	100,000+
Program 6	South	Three districts in central Texas	-
Program 7	West	District E	65,000