Mentorship Programs for Middle and High School Students

Considerations for Development and Assessment

District Leadership Forum

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District Leadership Forum

Ellie Miller
Research Associate

Olivia Rios
Research Manager

Daniel Gordon
Senior Research Manager

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Profiled mentorship programs serve a wide variety of grade levels. School A includes the youngest students of profiled mentorship programs. In this model, fifth grade students mentor kindergarten and first grade students. Administrators at **District C & District E** offer a combined mentorship program across two districts to students starting in third grade. Contacts explain that the proximity of the two cities gives administrators the ability to effectively oversee the program jointly. At **School B**, the program director places eighth grade students in mentor groups, and students remain in those groups until graduation. The mentorship program at **School F** serves eleventh grade students with a focus on career development.

Profiled mentorship programs rely on mentors who vary from students to community volunteers, depending on the goals of the mentorship program. Contacts at **School A** explain that the program uses fifth grade student mentors with the goals of addressing behavioral issues (e.g., disruptive behavior) among younger students and developing school connectedness (e.g., stronger feelings of a sense of belonging). Similarly, mentors at **School B** is school affiliates because the program's main goal is to enhance student connection to the school. In contrast, mentors at **District C & District E**, **School F**, and **District D** is community volunteers. Mentor programming coordinators and directors recruit from local spaces (e.g., universities, local businesses).

At four of five profiled schools and districts, the primary goal of mentorship programs is to develop social-emotional skills in students. Contacts in **District D** and **District C & District E** note that mentorship programs do not focus on academic support for students. Mentors and mentees can incorporate academic learning into activities (e.g., educational games), but profiled mentorship programs focus mainly on giving students an additional social-emotional support structure. Mentorship programs at **School B** and **School A** also focus on providing students with a deeper, additional connection to the school. In contrast to these schools and districts, the mentorship programs at **School F** primarily focus on increasing student career readiness.

All profiled schools and districts rely on school personnel (e.g., teachers, counselors) to facilitate successful mentorship programs. Teachers serve as mentors for **School B**'s schools program. Program coordinators use staff meetings and offer extensive support to assure teachers that the mentorship program will not increase their workload which is crucial to teacher buy-in. In **District D**, counselors most often refer students to the mentorship program. Counselors typically have more insight into individual students' home situations (e.g. homelessness, divorce) that can indicate a mentorship program would be particularly impactful. Similarly, counselors work to pair students with a mentor using this information about students and the information gathered about mentors to make the most effective pairs.

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2) Program Structure

Program Design

Mentorship Program Design Varies Widely at Profiled School Districts and Schools

Contacts in all profiled schools and school districts emphasize constructing mentorship programs with the best interest of the students and the district in mind. Programs should address specific district needs (e.g., addressing an upcoming school review, resolving behavioral issues at specific grade levels). For example at **School A**, behavioral issues with kindergarteners and first graders prompted the use of fifth grade mentors. This design provides kindergarteners and first graders with role models, while the program offers fifth graders a role to fulfill in the school. The program occurs every day and fifth grade, student mentors follow a scheduled shift determined by the mentor coordinator. The schedule limits the amount of class time student mentors miss.

Mentorship programming at **School B** and **District D** occurs during the school day to provide students with structure and access to the program. At School B, the whole student body participates in the mentorship program. Students are placed into mentor groups in eighth grade and remain in those groups until graduation. Programming typically focuses on general topics but also includes age-relevant topics such as college preparation for seniors and driving safety for juniors.

School F's mentorship program aims to develop career skills among students. The program is one year in length and introduces students to professionalism and professional development. Mentors serve as career development guides for students and offer job shadowing opportunities.

The mentorship program at **District C & District E** is a combined program across the two school districts, led by one, centralized program director. The two-district program has a long history in the area, and students from both districts participate. Individual coordinators in each district manage the program but all report to the program director. The social-emotional development of students drives the program director and coordinators to focus on pairing compatible mentor and mentee personalities to increase the impact of the program.

Similar to the program in **District C & District E**, **District D's** mentorship program has a long history in the area and an emphasis on the social-emotional development of students. The mentorship program requires a one year commitment from mentors, but the program coordinator encourages mentor/mentee pairs to remain together until the student graduates from high school. The pairing of students is also important in District D. Guidance counselors use initial surveys and knowledge of students to create lasting pairings.

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Mentorship Program Structures at Profiled Schools and School Districts

School or District Title	Length of Program	Students	Mentors	Program Goal
School A	Single academic year, every day during lunch and recess	Kindergarten and first grade students	Fifth grade students	Foster student connection to school, control behavioral issues
District C & District E	One hour a week during the school day, up to nine years	Students matched in 3rd-7th grade	Community members	Provide students with additional support system
School B	22 minutes every Thursday, for four years	Entire student body, 9th grade through 12th grade	Teachers and some school affiliates including administrators and janitorial staff	Foster student connection to school
District D	30 minutes a week, Students opt in and stay in the program until they no longer desire to have a mentor (2-3 years)	Middle school students, 6th-8th grade	Community members	Provide students with additional support system
School F	Single academic year, approximately 2-4 hours per month, from October through May	Eleventh grade students	Local community members	Career development

Mentorship Programming during School Hours Can Optimize Participation and Impact

All mentorship programs occur during the school day at profiled schools and districts. At **School B**, the mentorship program occurs each Thursday for 22 minutes. Contacts explain that school administrators removed three minutes from each class period to create an additional period one day per week for mentorship programming. In **District D**, mentoring occurs during students' lunch. Contacts suggest lunch as an effective time for mentor programming for middle school students. Middle school often serves as a transition period for students which can result in feelings of isolation or a struggle to make friends. The lunchtime slot allows mentors to serve as

Strategically Plan and Slowly Implement Mentorship Program Development

Contacts at **School A** and **School B** both emphasize critically examining all options when developing a mentorship program. Contacts explain the importance of starting small and building to a larger more robust program once it is fully developed. For example, at School B, contacts spent six months speaking with teachers, administrators, and the teachers' union before implementing the program. This time allowed contacts to find a way to incorporate the mentorship program in the school day. This increased the impact the program had on students as it allowed the whole student body to participate.

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a friend and role model for students and can help them become more comfortable. Students self-elect to be in the program or are recommended by counselors, teachers, or parents and may leave the program when they no longer feel they need to have a mentor.

At **School A**, the counselor who developed the mentorship program created a schedule that minimized the amount of time fifth grade students miss class. At the school, there are three fifth grade classes and seven total first grade and kindergarten classes. The counselor divides participating fifth graders (i.e., 50 out of 74 total students) into six groups, two in each class. The groups of eight to ten students rotate daily and act as mentors to all seven first grade and kindergarten classes. Contacts explain that the program does not often provide individualized mentoring but rather uses a group model. This provides the first graders and kindergarteners with positive, student role models and provides the fifth graders with a meaningful role in the school.

Requirements of Student Participation in Profiled Mentorship Programs Vary

All students at **School B** participate in mentorship programming. However, contacts at all other profiled schools and districts emphasize student referral into mentorship programs. At **District D**, students facing more sensitive issues (e.g., divorce, homelessness) are primarily referred to the program by counselors so these students receive extra support. In addition to referrals at **District C & District E**, self-election into the program is highest among middle school students who see their friends with mentors and want the same experience.

Long-Term Commitments from Mentors Facilitate Greater Program Impacts

Contacts at **District C & District E** emphasize the importance of long-term mentorship programs. The program requires mentors to commit to participate for at least one year. However, mentorship directors encourage mentors to stay involved until their mentees graduate high school by using impactful anecdotes and data to show the impact of long-term mentorships. Ideally, the mentorship program facilitates a five to 10 year relationship beginning in third grade. This consistency and longevity provides an opportunity for students to experience a stable and positive relationship outside of the home.

Anecdotally, students who graduated from District C & District E's mentorship program emphasize the importance of the long-term nature of mentor relationships. One at-risk student explained that his mentor served as the only constant in his life. Contacts also note that despite being in a more transient area, they often have only 24 to 25 out of 400 mentors leave the program each year. Students are more likely to drop out of the program than mentors. Contacts contribute this strong retention rate to the desire of the community members to positively impact students and their communities.

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Formal Curriculum in Mentorship Programs Provides Students with Supportive and Structured Environments

The mentorship program at **School B** uses a standardized, formal curriculum developed by the mentorship coordinator to provide structure and support to students. Contacts cite *Mentoring Matters: A Toolkit for Organizing and Operating Student Advisory Programs* to support that a dedicated time and formal curriculum are important to fostering student connection to a school.[1] The program uses a formal universal curriculum throughout the school and mentorship groups. The program coordinator is responsible for developing the curriculum and sharing it with teachers. Contacts explain while variation in age (e.g., discussion driving safety with junior) and teacher comfort level (e.g., discussing suicide) can lead to slight differences in curriculum, groups mostly discuss the topic provided by the program coordinator. *Mentoring Matters* outlines curriculum used in mentorship programs and can be used in group and individual mentorship sessions. The activities and curriculum also range in topics from beginning of the year activities to discussions of problem solving.

Abridged Mentoring Session Activity from *Mentoring Matters*[2]

Hey, Thanks!

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

—John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Objective: To recognize and thank people who have made a difference in our lives, which reinforces positive behaviors.

Materials needed: Paper and pencil

Procedure: Ask these questions allowing enough time for mentees to respond.

- If you had one hour to live, who would you call?
- Why would you call that person?

Go around the group and ask if anyone wanted to share his or her answers. This is a very personal session; therefore, give the opportunity to share but allow mentees a "pass."

Ask mentees to write the answer to the following:

- List 10 things for which you are grateful.
- Describe one of the most beautiful things that you have ever seen.

Go around the group and ask each mentee to share two things for which he or she is grateful.

Closure activity: Have a mentee read the following quote:

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us. —Albert Schweitzer

Ask: Who sparked the flame in your life? Why?

1) Mentoring Matters: A Toolkit for Organizing and Operating Student Advisory Programs, Meriden Public Schools, Date accessed: 3.19.2018, http://www.meridenk12.org/SuperintendentNews/newsView.asp?NewsId=409683&CategoryID=1
2) Mark D. Benigni and Sheryll Petrosky, Mentoring Matters: A Toolkit for Organizing and Operating Student Advisory Programs, Rowman & Littlefield Education, pg. 111

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Program Motivations

Parent Volunteers Launched Mentorship Programs at Two Profiled School Districts

The mentorship programs at **District C & District E** and **District D** began as a result of parental interest in providing children with additional support systems in school. Both programs have existed for over 10 years with parents largely owning responsibility for the programs. At **District D**, the director of the program is a parent who wished to become more involved with the school. At the suggestion of school counselors, the director created a mentorship program and eventually centralized the program across the middle schools in the district. Similarly, at **District C & District E**, a parent hoped to create additional support structures through the school for the community's children by creating and staffing the program. The parent worked to eventually obtain a federal grant to sustain the program. This grant along with conversations between the two school districts and community stakeholders (e.g., local higher education institutions) allowed the program to expand into every school in the two districts.

This mentorship program received the grant on the precondition that the school board found the program to be worthwhile. To address this, the program developers created more rigorous and sustainable mentor training practices and implemented background checks for mentors.

Mentorship Programs Do Not Focus Primarily on Academic Development at Profiled Schools and Districts

No contacts at profiled schools and districts cite academic development as a key motivation for the mentorship program. Rather, contacts emphasize the impact mentorship programs have on the social-emotional development of students. While students who struggle academically (e.g., low test scores, low grades, missing school) are strong candidates for mentorship programing, profiled programs do not incorporate tutoring or homework assistance into the curriculum. Contacts at **School B** and **District D** note that several academic support programs already exist for students. The mentorship programs instead focus on social-emotional development to avoid redundancy. The mentorship program at School B serves as a sustainable response to the limited social support students receive from school, especially compared to the amount of academic support they receive.

At **District C & District E** mentors sometimes incorporate academic elements into mentoring sessions, but initial mentor training does not encourage focusing on academics with students. Mentorship program survey results support this decision as students overwhelmingly enjoy that the program focuses on fostering relationships rather than academics. Anecdotally, contacts note a specific mentorship pairing that was terminated after three months because the mentor focused too much on academic support. This made the mentoring relationship unenjoyable for the student and the mentor.

Individual School Priorities Sometimes Motivate the Development of Mentorship Programs

Contacts at **School A** and **School B** note that internal school priorities served as the main motivation for beginning mentorship programs. At School A, a counselor began the program to provide students with a deeper connection to the school. Contacts point to the book *Meaningful Work: Changing Student Behavior with School Jobs*[3] as a major inspiration for the program. The book focuses on developing student jobs (e.g., line leaders, chalkboard cleaners) to provide students with a sense of purpose and a connection to the school. Contacts also note that continued behavioral issues among

3) Pacific Northwest Publishing, Meaningful Work: Changing Student Behavior with School Jobs, Date access 2/28/2018, https://pacificnwpublish.com/products/Meaningful-Work.html

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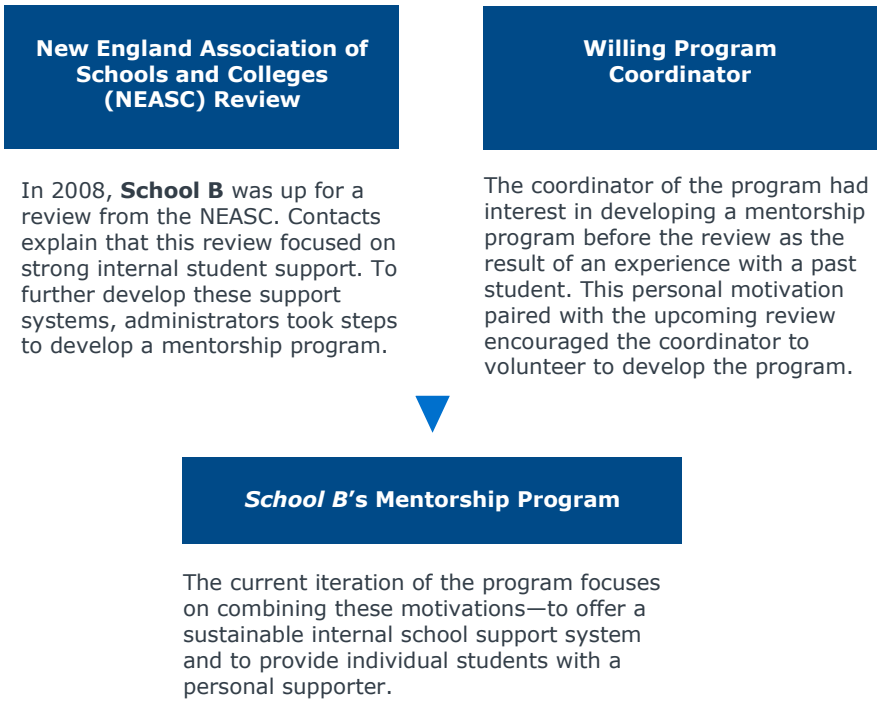
kindergarteners and first graders created the perfect impetus to develop the mentorship program.

At School B, an upcoming school review and teacher concerns for student welfare motivated the creation of the program. To develop a solid foundation for the program, the program director develops all mentorship program curricula so that teachers do not have extra work. Additionally, the program is void of administrative evaluations to allow the teachers to focus more on fostering relationships with students.

Motivational Components of *School B*'s Mentorship Program[4]



When Students Serve as Mentors in Programming, Incorporate Professional Development

The mentorship program at **School A** uses fifth grade students as mentors for first grade and kindergarten students. Contacts explain that although mentors are young children, the program incorporates professional development into the mentor training and recruitment process. Specifically, the mentor coordinator uses an application and interview to give the fifth grade students professional development opportunities. The coordinator provides students with interview practice so the students understand how to behave and answer questions in a professional interview. While the mentor coordinator does not deny any fifth graders from the mentor position, contacts explain that the application and interview make the students feel more valued and take the role more seriously.

One Profiled Mentorship Program Focuses Mainly on Career Development

The specific motivations greatly impact the eventual program format. For example, **School F**'s status as a part of the California Partnership Academies[5] influences the school's mission. State legislation launched the California Partnership Academies and

4) Commission on Public Schools (K-12), NEASC, Date accessed 2/28/2018, https://www.neasc.org/cps
5) California Partnership Academies, California Department of Education, Date accessed: 3/2/2018, https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/cpagen.asp

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About 60 percent of the student population at **School F** is considered at-risk (i.e., students who failed one to two courses their freshmen year, students who have missed 20 or more days of school, and students with low standardized test scores).

uses a career academy model that emphasizes career and college readiness in students, especially at-risk students. The mentorship program's curriculum reflects this mission to provide underserved populations with career development. For example, participating students share with the director several careers of interest at the beginning of the year. Students include a dream job, a realistic job, and a more general area of interest (e.g., video games, animals). Allowing for several responses caters to underserved students who often have a narrow view of available jobs. Students frequently only know of jobs their family or friends have which can limit their options. Including categories like "dream job" or "general interest" allows directors to expand a student's potential mentor options to include careers potentially unfamiliar to the student.

Abridged Objectives and Motivations for *School F*'s Mentorship Program

***School F's* Mentorship Program**

The mentorship program pairs eleventh grade students with a professional adult from the community. Student career interests are widespread and range from environmental design, business and technology to medicine and law enforcement. The mentor provides guidance and advice in directing students toward a successful academic and professional career and serves as a role model for students by demonstrating professionalism.

Time Commitment

Serving as an effective mentor requires approximately 2-4 hours per month, from October through May. The mentor and student are expected to contact each other every two weeks via e-mail, telephone, or face-to-face meetings. While the mentor-mentee relationship officially ends after eleventh grade, most mentors and students remain in contact through graduation.

Student Objectives

Student objectives include: develop an awareness of business and career opportunities, improve self-esteem, increase knowledge of the relationship between school and work, establish relationship with a successful, working adult, and develop a deepened understanding of how to make and keep goals.

Mentor Objectives

Mentor objectives include: make a difference in the life of a teen who needs your friendship and support, contribute to successful graduation rates, and increase the number of responsible community members and employees in California.

Student Demographics

Three of Five Profiled Mentorship Programs Serve Primarily At-Risk Students

The majority of students served by mentorship programs at **District C & District E**, **School F**, and **District D** are considered at-risk for social-emotional reasons (e.g., homelessness) or academic reasons (e.g., behind in courses, missing school). The prevalence of at-risk students increases the need to have social awareness-focused trainings for mentors. Contacts note that mentors receive some training to prepare them to deal with more sensitive issues. At **School B** and **School A**, mentorship programs aim to serve all students in grades targeted by the program (i.e., eighth through twelfth grade at School B, and kindergarten, first, and fifth grade at School A). Contacts at School B explain that topics for mentor session discussions may focus on aspects of identity or social risks (e.g., race, class, gun control). However, contacts explain that teacher mentors can develop alternative curricula to avoid creating uncomfortable situations between students or between students and mentors. For example, the program director developed a mentor session around suicide prevention, but teachers who were uncomfortable with this topic were able to plan and discuss a different topic.

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Social Justice Training Workshops Help Mentors to Support Students with Diverse Needs

To address racial and socio-economic imbalances, the mentorship programming at **District C & District E** includes a specific social justice training for mentors. This training is in addition to initial training which only briefly discusses diversity. Program directors coordinated and created the training to introduce mentors to specific concerns such as English as a second language and multigenerational homes. Contacts explain that the training aims to enhance awareness and skills for mentors working across social differences, including race and sexual identity. The training incorporates a session called *The Circle of our Multicultural Selves* which is meant to foster awareness of each individual's identities. For example, white individuals often do not include race as one of their identities, whereas people of color usually do include race.

Abridged Social Justice Training Curriculum and Handout from *District C & District E*[6]

Bridging the Gap: Social Justice in the Mentoring Relationship

1. **Outcomes:**
   - Deeper awareness of self and identities
   - Building skills to become an effective ally to people who have different life experiences from us
   - Increase comfort level in having conversations about race, sexual identity, and other differences
2. **Circles of our Multicultural Selves**
   - How many of you listed race/ethnicity?
   - Reflect on the above questions.
3. **Video: Understanding Empathy versus Sympathy**
4. **Video: Microaggression**
   - Small group discussion with guided questions (where have you seen these interactions and how might this information help you in your mentoring role?)
5. **Role play**
   - Example: Frisked at airport. How does identity shape this experience? What would be an example of a response incorporating intercultural competence?

Common Language

- **Ally -** Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice.
- **Ethnicity –** The fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.
- **Gender –** The range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, these characteristics may include biological sex (i.e. the state of being male, female or an intersex variation), sex-based social structures, or gender identity.
- **Stereotype –** A preconceived notion about a group of people. Believing that all people in a group share something in common not based on fact or experience.
- **Prejudice -** A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members.
- **Social Class –** a division of a society based on social and economic status.
- **Generalization** – believing that many people in a group share something in common based on fact or experience.

Acknowledge and Develop Mentor Awareness of Demographic Differences with Mentees through Trainings

The student population of **District D** includes many low-income and homeless students, while mentors are typically college students or upper-class individuals. To

6) Microaggressions in Everyday Life, Derald Wing Sue, Youtube video, Date accessed 3.19.2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJL2P0JsAS4

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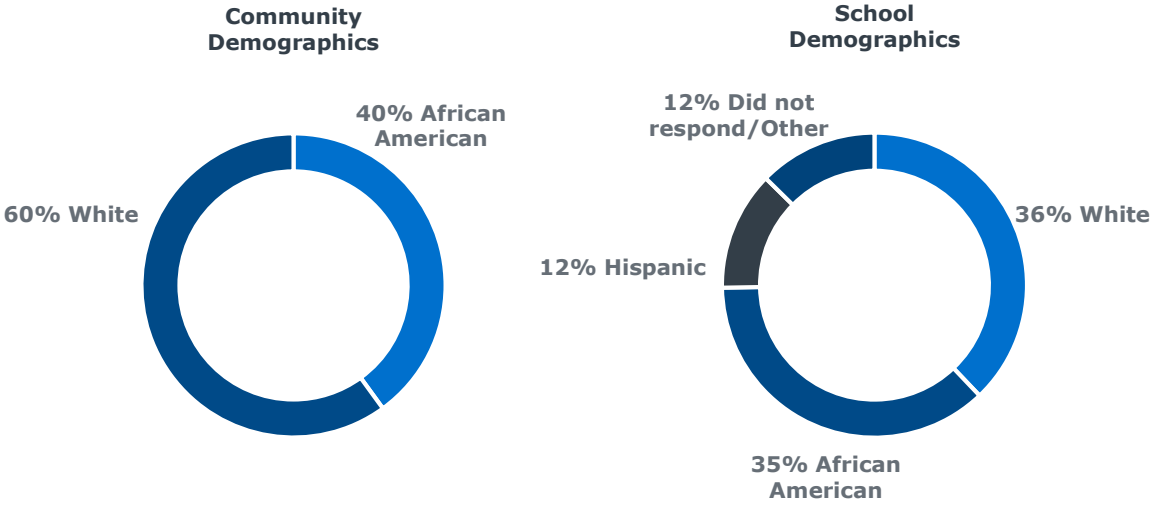
address these differences, training for mentors includes a discussion of checking and recognizing bias and challenging standard conceptions of student experience. For example, due to a relatively high population of students experiencing homelessness, training sessions encourage mentors not to ask students about their homes or bedrooms. This allows students to reveal information in their own time and not feel targeted by mentor questions.

Contacts at **District C & District E** note that differences between mentors and mentees can complicate the connection developed in mentor relationships. Students of color and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds compose the majority of the student body. This differs from the surrounding predominately white, affluent community. Contacts explain that this creates an imbalance between mentors and mentees, where mentors tend to be predominately white, retired, upper-class individuals and mentees tend to be lower class, students of color. For example, 75 percent of mentees in the program are African American while only 13 percent of mentors are also African American. An even smaller proportion of mentors are African American males. Contacts explain that in the surrounding community, people of color may not have the opportunity to mentor due to financial and familial constraints. To address these imbalances, the program directors created social justice training. The training introduces mentors to situations they may not be familiar with such as homelessness and multigenerational homes.

Demographic Differences in *District C*



Use Data Collection Software to Assess and Manage Mentor Demographics

Contacts at **District C & District E** use data collection software to make mentorship program tasks (e.g., pairing mentors, evaluating mentors) more efficient. Specifically, the mentorship program uses Innovative Mentoring Software. Innovative Mentoring Software, based out of Minneapolis, Minnesota, serves over 100 different mentoring organizations. The software uses cloud-based data services to provide mentorship programs with efficient data collection methods.[7]

Contacts use the program to assist in pairing mentors and mentees and collecting demographic numbers. For example, contacts use the report to pull data related to the number of African American mentors involved in the program. The collected data

7) Innovative Mentoring Software, Date accessed: 3/12/2018, http://www.innovativementoring.net/

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revealed a lack of male mentors and an unequal distribution of white mentors to African American mentees. Contacts plan to use data like this to expand recruitment and try to grow diversity in the program.

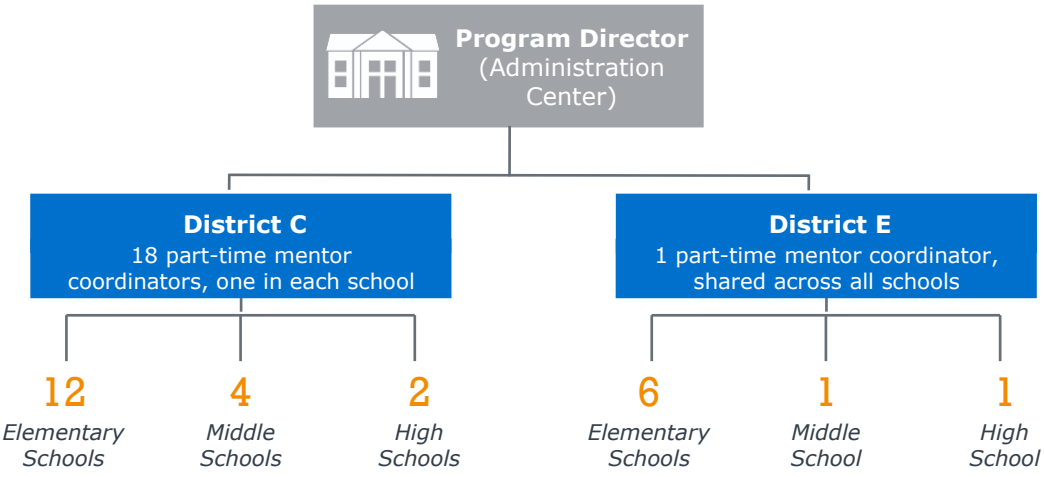
Administrative Structure

Centralized Staff Coordinate Mentorship Programs across Multiple Schools

Administrators at **District D** and **District C & District E** dedicate individuals to centrally manage mentorship programs across multiple schools. At **District D**, contacts explain that the original volunteer who centralized program management now manages the program in all middle schools in the district. The centralization process led to more uniform curricula, reporting structures, and mentor recruitment processes. The program coordinator manages tasks such as training and mentor recruitment. In addition to the program coordinator, mentor coordinators work in each middle school and focus on fostering and developing mentor and mentee relationships.

Contacts at **District C & District E** explain that one program director manages the programming used in both districts. The director also manages part-time coordinators employed in individual schools in the two districts, with the majority of coordinators in District C as the district is larger. The coordinators focus on maintaining the relationships between the mentors and mentees. Additionally, mentorship coordinators provide the mentors with games or crafts to occupy time during mentor sessions. In contrast, the program director leads the administrative concerns of the program (e.g., recruitment, training) across all the schools. Contacts explain that coordinators typically have an education background or are retirees that have a desire to serve their community.

Mentorship Program Organizational Chart for *District C* & *District E*



Profiled Mentorship Programs Often Rely on Interested Staff Members to Coordinate Programs

The mentorship programs at **School B** and **School A** utilize internal staff members to coordinate the programs. At School B, a math teacher is the central coordinator and creator of the entire the program. The coordinator receives a small stipend for assisting with the program. The coordinator's tasks include training mentors, pairing mentee groups, and developing curriculum for the program. Additionally, using an

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internal staff member to lead a mentorship program generates more support from teachers and administrators. At School A, a school counselor develops and coordinates the mentorship program. A combination of experience with the social and emotional development of children and interest in mentorship programs allows the school counselor to excel at pairing students with mentors and coaching students to respond to stressful mentor/mentee interactions.

Informal Mentor Training Sessions Can Develop Relevant Skills

Program coordinators at **District C & District E** develop and offer two informal training sessions to mentors over lunch during the week. The sessions encourage coordinators to be aware of mentor needs as the sessions typically cover topics or skills most relevant to mentors. The sessions also foster a deeper connection to the program and more relevant skills among mentors. These sessions are purposefully informal to encourage open discussion among mentors and the coordinator. Topics have ranged from correcting students who tell lies to dealing with the impact of trauma on students. Program coordinators also create longer flash trainings that occur in the afternoon for thirty minutes. These trainings are not discussion based but instead provide mentors with a great deal of information that they can ask questions about after the session. Contacts explain that this model allows busier mentors who cannot attend long sessions to still benefit from the knowledge shared during the shorter sessions. One upcoming flash training topic is focused on effectively using planners to structure mentor and mentee relationships.

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3) Mentor Recruitment and Pairing Processes

Mentor Recruitment

Three of Five Profiled Programs Rely on Mentors Outside of the School Community

Mentorship programs at **School F**, **District D**, and **District C & District E** rely on community and some teacher volunteers to work as mentors. The mentorship programs at these schools all have program coordinators and directors that recruit from the community. Recruitment strategies vary between mentorship programs. For example, contacts at District D write and publish informational stories and blurbs about the program in local papers, while contacts at School F visit local, small business to find mentors.

In contrast, the mentorship programs at **School A** and **School B** rely exclusively on students or teachers and school affiliates (e.g., administrators, custodial staff). This is especially important at School B where the whole student body participates in the program. Teachers serve as mentors most often for this program as well as some other school affiliates who express explicit interest in mentoring students.

Community Members and Groups Profiled Programs Rely on for Mentor Recruitment

Interested Individuals

- Individuals with education backgrounds
- Retirees

Community Groups and Locations

- Police Departments
- Fire Departments
- Chamber of Commerce
- Rotary Clubs
- Churches

Universities and Businesses

- Companies looking for pro-bono work
- Local university students
- Small local businesses

Community Member Recommendations Often Present the Best Mentor Recruitment Strategy

Mentorship programs that depend on volunteer mentors often rely on mentors hearing about mentoring opportunities from friends and other community members. Contacts explain that word of mouth recruitment strategies, such as conversations among local church members are important. However, contacts also note the importance of a well-developed program before relying on word of mouth recruiting. For example, a mentorship program that poorly trains mentors and expects them to do a significant amount of extra work might lead volunteers to caution friends, families, and acquaintances against volunteering. However, a well-run program is more likely to receive good publicity.

Avoid Parents Serving as Mentors in Their Child's Mentorship Program

Contacts at **District C & District E** caution against relying on parent mentors. If a parent's child participates in the same mentorship program with which the parent volunteers, the parent may over-personalize mentorship relationships and intervene in the program. To address this issue, contacts do not allow parents to be involved in the mentorship program in which their child is involved. If a parent wishes to mentor, they must mentor at a different school in the district.

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One-on-One Mentorship Programs Require Thoughtful Mentor-Pairing Strategies

The success of any mentorship program relies on sustainable and strong mentor/mentee relationships. One-on-one mentorship pairings require program directors to take time to match mentors and students based on the potential for a strong relationship. During training at **District C & District E**, mentors learn to base mentoring sessions around students' wants and needs to build strong relationships and trust. The most successful relationships emphasize compromise between the mentor and the mentee. For example, one mentor/mentee partnership alternates weeks between what the mentee wants to do (e.g., play games) and what the mentors suggests (e.g., crafts).

Mentor-pairing Strategies for One-on-One Program Models

Motivations	Pairing Strategy
Social – Emotional Development	**District C & District E** Mentorship coordinators pair students based on knowledge of students, interviews with mentors, and time spent waiting for a mentor.
	District D School counselors are primarily responsible for pairing students with mentors based on the mentor's life experiences and occupation. The counselor observes relationships to confirm their quality.
Career Development	**School F** Students complete a career interest survey twice, once at the beginning of the year and once in November. Students are then paired with mentors based on similar career interests.

Group Mentor Models Foster Collaboration Along With Individualized Support When Necessary

Group mentorship models allows students to develop supportive relationships among their peers as well as the mentor. In *Mentoring Matters*, the authors explain that a structured group model provides students with a sense of connection to the school and their mentor because the sessions happen on a regular schedule. This avoids spontaneously missed sessions that may exist in traditional one-on-one mentor relationships. Additionally, incorporating mentoring into the lives of every student fosters a positive environment across the school.

The ideal group model provides care to groups of students and provides specific attention to individual students when necessary. For example, the group nature of the mentorship program at **School A** provides kindergarten and first grade students with several fifth grade mentors that offer positive attention and an encouraging role model. However, the program coordinator, who is also a guidance counselor, is sometimes aware of sensitive issues at home and may use this information to provide the struggling student with additional mentor support (e.g., extra time reading a

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book) from a particularly responsible fifth grader. Contacts explain that the mentorship coordinator being a guidance counselor gives the coordinator unique insight into situations that effect the social-emotional development of a child.

Mentor-pairing Strategies for Group Program Models

School Connectedness

School A
Fifth graders work with groups of first graders and kindergarteners based on a pre-determined, randomized schedule.

School B
Students are placed in groups and matched with a teacher (or other school personnel) during their eighth grade year. Groups are often arbitrary and rarely change unless there are severe behavioral issues.

Use Mentor Questionnaires to Aid in Mentor-Pairing Processes

Mentorship program administrators at **District C & District E** and **District D** administer surveys to gather general information about mentors. Program leaders use this information to appropriately pair mentors with students. At District D and District C & District E, mentorship questionnaires are available on the districts' websites. At District C & District E, both the questionnaire and the application ask general questions about the potential mentor's personality, interests, occupation, and motivations behind becoming a mentor.

Abridged Mentor Questionnaire for *District C* and *District E*

Name:

Mailing Address (include city and zip):

Daytime Phone Number (include best time to call):

Alternate Phone Number (e.g. cell, home, etc.):

Email Address:

Gender:

Race:

Employer:

Occupation Title:

Please describe your work:

Please describe your personality:

_____ Soft-spoken _____ Friendly

_____ Thoughtful _____ Outgoing

_____ Adventurous _____ Confident

_____ Excitable _____ Nurturing

What disposition would you prefer your student to have?

_____ similar to yours? _____ dissimilar to yours?

I prefer to mentor at: _____(school)

List two preferences for mentoring time and day:

1.
2.

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Abridged Mentor Questionnaire for *District D*

Name:

Email:

Phone (preferably cell)**:**

Middle School Where You'd Like to Mentor:

Day/Time You Prefer
(please refer to chart on website when listing times):

Age:

Year (if in School):

The following questions will help us match you with a student:

Gender:

Race/Ethnicity:

Language(s):

General Information:

Where do you work or what do you study or do?

What are your interests? What do you like to do outside school/work?
(Please list 3)

What is or was your favorite subject at school?

Was there anything you dealt with in middle school (or at another time in your life) that you feel gives you insight into dealing with a middle schooler? (e.g., ADHD, bullying)

Have you ever mentored before? If yes, when and where?

My Style and Dreams:

What is your favorite kind of movie? Music? Book?

How would you describe your personality? Are you primarily an introvert or an extrovert?

If you could spend a day doing anything, what would you do?

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4) Additional Support and Assessment Strategies

Additional Support Processes

All Profiled Mentorship Programs Make Additional Support Available for Sensitive Issues

Even if a mentorship program does not work exclusively with at-risk students or social-emotional development, the programs should have systems in place to provide additional support. Contacts at all profiled districts recognize that issues outside of school and teacher control impact students' quality of life. At **School B**, the majority of students are not classified as at-risk, but the mentorship program coordinator still emphasizes having additional support options for sensitive issues. To achieve this, counselors and the school psychologist are readily available to students during the 22 minute mentoring session on Thursdays. Similarly, while the mentorship program at **School F** deals with career development, more sensitive issues (e.g., depression, violence at home) do arise. In response, the director developed a system for mentors to use. The system relies heavily on the school's counseling program and initial training to inform students and mentors early in the program that students should report issues to teachers or the director, while mentors should report directly to the director.

Use Initial Mentor Training to Inform Mentors of Additional Support Systems and Processes

Contacts at all profiled schools and districts use initial training sessions to inform mentors how to support students through more sensitive issues. At **District D**, all mentors are mandatory reporters (i.e., state law requires all volunteers who work with children to report any abuse observed or suspected). The status as mandatory reporter requires that mentors complete the school-wide training for mandatory reporting to prepare them for more serious issues (e.g., sexual abuse).

Strategies for Mentors to Report Students Needing Additional Support at *District D*

Mentor coordinators work with mentors to develop the best strategies to resolve more general issues (e.g., needing school supplies).

The program director deals with some more sensitive issues and adds additional support to mentor coordinators.

Guidance counselors deal with the most sensitive issues. Mentors are instructed to immediately take serious issues to counselors over mentor coordinators to maintain student privacy.

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Inform Students of Additional Support and Reporting Processes to Foster Student Comfort

Contacts at **School F** begin the mentorship program with training not only for mentors, but also students. The training session informs students of the nature of their relationship with their mentor and the program expectations. Contacts use the training to inform students on additional support and reporting options, so they can contact the correct individual if an issue arises. Specifically, the introduction instructs students to report any issues to a trusted teacher or to the mentorship program director. This contrasts from the process for mentors who must report issues directly to the program director.

During training for mentorship programming at **District C & District E**, mentors learn to encourage students to accompany their mentors if reporting an issue is necessary. In instances where students are a victim or have been harmed, mentors are instructed to report the incident. In these incidents, students will eventually be asked to explain the situation themselves, so if possible, it is more efficient and helpful for students to be present during initial reporting. Mentors can also encourage a student to report issues to a trusted teacher, rather than a counselor or administrator. This is encouraged if talking to a trusted teacher encourages the student to make the report themselves. During training sessions, mentors also learn to warn students that they must report any violence or harm being done against the student. This may dissuade students from telling their mentor of the situation, but is a caution taken to ensure student safety and trust.

Assessment Strategies

All Profiled Mentorship Programs Use Surveys for Assessment

All profiled mentorship programs administer a survey or questionnaire to assess the impact of the program. Contacts at **District C & District E** use questionnaires to assess all those involved in the program (e.g., mentors, mentees, teachers). At **District D**, the program coordinator uses the survey results to create an annual report that outlines successes and shortcomings of the mentorship program. For example, the program had the goal of increasing awareness of the impact mentoring has on students. The end of year report explains that to address this goal, mentor coordinators used holiday cards from students to mentors to showcase the impact the relationship had on students. At **School A**, the program coordinator recently expanded assessment measures to include school climate surveys for the fifth grade mentors. Contacts explain that the survey (used for the first time in the fall of 2017) assesses the students' connection to the school, teachers, and classmates and will be reissued at the end of the year to assess change over time. Contacts hope that the survey results will reveal the mentorship program's impact on student connection to the school.

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Sample School Climate Survey for Elementary Students

Instructions

The following statements are to find out how you feel about your school. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers.

In my school…

4. I am treated fairly.
- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- **c.** I'm not sure

5. My teachers want me to do my best
- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- **c.** I'm not sure

6. My teachers listen to me
- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. I'm not sure

I feel that…

1. I am valued
- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- **c.** I'm not sure

2. Adults respect me.
- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- **c.** I'm not sure

3. My job is important
- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. I'm not sure

Prioritize Teacher Assessment as They Often Experience the Impact of Mentorship Programs Most

Contacts at **District C & District E** explain that teachers are often the first to see any changes in student behavior, personality, or grades. For example, teachers notice when students show more confidence in the classroom or attend class more often. Therefore, contacts emphasize capturing this qualitative feedback from teachers regarding the impact of mentorship programming. At **School A**, teachers attribute the increased development of positive relationships between students and their classmates to the mentorship program. At **School B**, teachers and mentee groups remain the same throughout high school. This consistency leads program directors to use surveys to assess what age is most affected by the mentorship program. Survey questions ask teachers about the difficulty or ease of working with certain grade levels. Contacts explain that surveys reveal significant change between freshmen and seniors.

Mentorship Survey Results May Show Correlative Not Causal Relationships Between the Program and Student Progress

Contacts at **District C & District E** explain that while it is ideal to assume that changes in student behavior or personality are a result of mentorship programming, it is nearly impossible to show a causal relationship between the two variables. A student's home life, maturity levels, friends, and a number of other variables can have large impacts on a student. Contacts emphasize using teacher comments to most accurately assess the changes as correlative (e.g., changes in a student's confidence as a partial side effect of mentor relationships).

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Assessment Processes Should be Efficient

Contacts at **District C & District E** explain that surveys should be as easy to complete as possible. This increases the likelihood of getting quality responses. For example, teachers receive a printed version of the questionnaire so that surveys are not forgotten or lost among teachers' high volume of emails. Teachers also receive candy or baked goods to further incentivize participation. Mentors receive assessments electronically because contacts believe mentors are more likely to complete an electronic version. Also, the logistics tend to be too difficult to share the assessments via printouts during the short time mentors are on school grounds. Similarly, student assessments are shorter in length because mentor coordinators do not have the time to sit with each student to make sure they comprehend the questions.

District D Abridged Mentor Evaluation Form

Thank you for being a middle school mentor this year! We value your time, your experience, and your feelings about the program. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions so we can make the program even better next year.

At which school(s) do you mentor?

Do you feel you received adequate preparation (via the training) for your mentoring work? If not, what would you have liked to receive?

Do you feel you were adequately supported (by the mentor coordinator, counselor, and others) in your mentoring work? If not, what would you have liked to receive?

Did you have any concerns about your student that you didn't know how to address? How did you deal with those concerns?

What was the most challenging part of being a mentor?

What could the program do better next year?

Please write down any changes you've seen in your student(s) from the start of mentoring to the end (e.g., feels better about being at school, has improved self esteem, gets better grades, has made more friends, has set goals for the future).

Do you plan to continue mentoring next year?
If yes, please tell us why:

If yes, would you like to continue with the same student next year?

If you do not plan to continue mentoring next year, please tell us why:

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5) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

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

- What were contact districts' initial motivations for developing mentorship programs?
- How many students does the mentorship program at contact districts serve each year?
- Which staff members are accountable for the execution, monitoring, and evaluation of mentorship programs?
- What is the structure of mentorship programs at contact districts?
- What groups does the mentorship program serve at contact districts?
- Which grades have access to mentorship programs?
- What are the goals of mentorship programming each year?
- What is the range of programming that contact districts administer?
- How do mentorship programs provide support for academic issues?
- How do programs provide support in situations where students surface issues driven by home/community interactions during mentorship programming?
- Is there a process to triage students who need additional support to appropriate support services?
- How do districts measure the success of mentorship programs?
- What duration of time must mentorship programs exist before contact districts can assess measurable results of the program?
- How do district leaders use performance metrics to improve mentorship programs?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries (eab.com)
- The Chronicle of Higher Education (http://chronicle.com)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (http://nces.ed.gov/)
- Meaningful Work: Changing Student Behavior with School Jobs (https://pacificnwpublish.com/products/Meaningful-Work.html)
- NEASC (https://www.neasc.org/cps)
- California Department of Education (https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/cpagen.asp)
- Microaggressions in Everyday Life, Derald Wing Sue, Youtube video, Date accessed 3.19.2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJL2P0JsAS4

Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed program directors and coordinators of district-run mentorship programs for middle and high school students.

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A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Approximate Enrollment
School A	Midwest	430
School B	Northeast	560
District C	Midwest	10,000
District D	Pacific West	16,000
District E	Midwest	4,300
School F	Pacific West	1,780

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