Lessons Learned: Two Decades of School-based Mentoring

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(A summary of the keynote address delivered to the
School-based Mentoring Conference in Kansas City, Missouri on October 14, 2003)

1. Youth in classrooms experience negative feelings about themselves, poor relationships with family members, poor grades, hanging out with the wrong crowd, loneliness, isolation, lack of moral development, peer pressure, substance abuse, depression, obesity, lack of positive role models and bullying.

2. Labeling youth "at-risk" labels them in the media and for life. Call mentees youth "at the brink of success."

3. Schools need to be equal partners with mentoring programs, providing financial support, space, telephones, materials and flexible scheduling.

4. Superintendent of schools and members of the Board of Education must given written approval in a public session to endorse and begin a program.

5. Kids in school needing mentors are not just from one parent families, poor and minorities; they are also from two parents, upper middle class families where there are neglects; they are rich and majority youth.

6. In order for a school-based program to succeed, schools selected must have an outstanding educational leader as the school principal, a cohesive staff and a friendly secretary.

7. Teachers must learn about the mentoring program BEFORE the public in order to feel empowered to deliver the program.

8. Get parents, PTO, school unions, the community and clergy on board at the very onset of the effort. Clergy needs to pray for our youth and help to recruit parishioners as mentors.

9. School-based mentoring coined the phrase "mentee".

10. Case manager is a threatening name in schools. *School liaison* is a good name to use in schools.

11. The best way to identify youth for a program is to ask teachers for recommendations.

12. Teachers, guidance counselors and social workers are a team with the principal to give final approval of youth to be in the program.

13. Parents must sign a written consent form that is in the first language of the home.

14. On-going support is critical. Each school identifies its school liaison (Guidance counselor, social worker, aide, Vice-Principal or teacher).

15. Mentors who are offered support and supervision are more likely to persist than those not contacted regularly.

16. Constant communication with mentors includes brown bag lunches, notes from teachers, telephone calls, parent-teacher-mentor conferences, birthday cards to mentors and notes of appreciation.

17. Cross gender and cross ethnic matches are very successful.

18. Schools that believe in mentoring offer one parking space reserved for the mentor of the month; have a mailbox in the main office for mentors and invite mentors to meet with teachers regularly.

19. Mentoring is not a dumping ground for discipline problem children or special education needs.

20. Mentors who give gifts to youth cause many problems for teachers and other youth.

21. Recognition events for mentors include the principal, secretary, liaison and teacher of the year.

22. Teachers and administrators can sign up to be mentors.

23. College and High school youth make great peer mentors for middle and elementary students.

24. Confidentiality at all times must be maintained and is critical in small towns.

25. Mentors who say they will be there for a kid and are “no shows” should be counseled out. When mentors FAX youth to say they are unable to make a session, the kids love the fax.

26. The FAMILY can become involved in mentoring.

27. Mentoring should begin at any point in the continuum but the pairs should stay together whenever possible through high school graduation.

28. Social workers tell us their case loads have been reduced and nurses say that youth who used to visit them regularly do not anymore because they have mentors.

29. Parents, teachers, mentors and mentees all benefit from mentoring. Mentoring WORKS!