

The Relationship between Student Mentoring Programs for At-Risk Students and Discipline
Referrals and Academic Achievement

by

Brad Ford

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a yearlong student mentoring program, Gems and Gents, would positively affect the amount of discipline referrals and academic achievement of selected 4th and 5th graders determined as at-risk. The measurement tool was the student discipline referral form with marking period grades in achievement and effort. This study involved the use of a pretest/posttest design to compare data from October of 2012, before the intervention was administered, to data from June of 2013, after the intervention was complete. The decline in discipline referrals was significant, but academic achievement scores did not represent a significant increase. In order to seek a decline in student discipline referrals, research in the area of student mentoring groups for at-risk populations should continue as academic achievement showed no significant gains.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study was designed to explore mentoring programs to improve discipline among fourth and fifth grade students at a school in Owings Mills, Maryland.

Typically, twenty percent of the student population within a school demonstrates the need for significant assistance. African-American students, who represent the majority of the population at the school, are two to three times more likely to be suspended in relation to Caucasian and Hispanic populations (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009). Removal of these students from classes has a direct effect on the amount of achievement on curricular objectives. It might be reasoned that if students who demonstrate unwanted behaviors are instructed on methods to become leaders and to ascertain skills in order to problem-solve, that the at-risk students will counteract research in regards to peer relations and achievement. If students are instructed as to proper methods to handle situations within the school building, then the number of discipline referrals and classroom disruptions will decrease.

In their investigation on ways to improve discipline, Hawken, O'Neill and Rawlings find that there are typically twenty percent of the student populations who demonstrate the need for significant assistance or are determined to be at-risk (2007). At-risk populations demonstrate poor peer relations, low academic achievement and frequently reside in chaotic home environments. Commonly these disruptions of classroom instruction are present in African-American subgroups, which represent the primary demographic of the students at the school of the researcher.

There are numerous methods to assist students in behavioral objectives. This research led to the installation of a mentoring program which would address the most common issues of

social interaction as outlined by Whiston and Quinby (2009). Mentoring allows a group approach in which to address social skills, family adjustment issues and overall discipline matters. Additionally, as noted by Shepard, a mentoring program also can incorporate academic mentoring in addition to social interactions (2009). These positive relationships established between adult and child can increase overall trust and cooperative objectives to best fit the needs of the student as well as the teachers, staff and administration.

The investigator, who teaches instrumental music and instructional technology, observed an increase in student discipline referrals and overall behavior in classes throughout the school within a three year time period. Some students seemed to be continual distractions in the classroom both within the investigators subject area and areas within the school, a rise in student misbehavior in hallways and lunch room and an overall staff feeling of ignorance from rules established by the schools administration. The investigator has witnessed an increase in the amount of disruptions within the public schools he has been an instructor in and believed that positive interventions would assist students who exhibit disruptive behavior as well as allow for significant opportunities for non-disruptive students to enjoy a safe and orderly learning environment. Throughout the investigators studies the significance of maintaining a safe and orderly environment is a cornerstone of proper school function and culture.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study is to explore the effects of a mentoring program to determine the effect on student discipline referrals and achievement.

Hypothesis

The use of a student mentoring program will have no effect on student referrals and achievement.

Operational Definitions

Dependent Variable- The dependent variable were achievement as measured by student outcomes on quarterly report cards and discipline referrals as measured by the administrative created discipline referral forms

Independent Variable- The independent variable was a mentoring program titled Gems and Gents. This mentoring program involved the use of *The Seven Habits of Happy Kids*, *The Leader in Me* and, *The Seven Habits of Effective People* written by Covey to offer students assistance through peer interactions, adult support and leadership based on seven habits of leadership.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

School discipline is defined as school policies and actions taken by school personnel with students. Discipline is used to prevent or intervene with unwanted behaviors, focusing on school conduct codes and security methods in order to manage student's actions in class (Cameron, 2006). Discipline is important to the safety of all members of a school community. Research has found that the increase in student crime and discipline problems nearly doubles the odds of students dropping out of school or committing additional and sometimes more severe crimes (Brownstein, 2010). Additionally, the rise of bullying both electronically and on school grounds continues to affect thirty-two percent of all students during a school year (Dinkles, Kemp & Baum, 2009). In order to continue to achieve academic levels as determined by local, state and federal initiatives, safety is paramount to an effective school culture. It is necessary to understand the effects of behavior in the schools, why these behaviors are a challenge for some students and how these behaviors can be addressed to prevent personal and school-wide problems.

The Importance of Behavior for At-Risk Students

Within schools the environment, or culture, of the students, staff and other stakeholders within the community affect achievement goals. With the increased emphasis on achievement as exemplified by local, state, and federal mandates, the creation of a safe and orderly environment is paramount. Within the schools there are typically twenty percent of the student populations who demonstrate the need for significant assistance or are determined to be at-risk (Hawken, MacLeod & Rawlings, 2007). Of this population of students who are deemed to be at risk,

between ten to fifteen percent need basic at-risk support while the remaining five percent require significant interventions and resources

At-risk populations demonstrate poor peer relations, low academic achievement and frequently reside in chaotic home environments (Hawken et al., 2007). Commonly the students from African-American and disadvantaged backgrounds represent the most significant areas of at-risk need (Dupper et al., 2009). African-American males are two to three times more likely to be suspended than Caucasian or Hispanic males and two to six times more likely to be suspended than all ethnic female groups (Dupper et al., 2007). African-American males are being suspended and expelled from school at an increased rate, removing students from educational environments and causing a disparity in achievement from their counterparts. Schools are making determinations to suspend, expel, refer to an alternate school or involve law enforcement for non-violent behavior at a disproportionate number for African-American and special education students (Fowler, 2011).

Appropriate Behaviors of At-Risk Students

At-risk students, through proper assistance and intervention, can display characteristics of exceptional behavior. A decline in the amount of violent and off-task behaviors can substantially increase the educational process for a student. Students with clear expectations, reminders, and incentives can continue to achieve and attain social and education schools to be successful (Parker, Nelson & Burns, 2010). These students also will frequently determine that cleanliness and tidiness of the classrooms also is associated with a safe and orderly educational experience.

The population also maintains high levels of achievement, helping to limit the achievement gap present in African-American males and other disadvantaged youth. Behavioral

engagement during academic activities can be seen as an indicator of cognitive and emotional engagement, making the education more appealing to the student (Parker et al., 2010).

Engagement allows for students to become more active in the educational process, while bringing personal meaning to subject material. As a student continues to be engaged in learning, the social skills and desire to perform will become more prevalent. Additionally, the displaying of student work as a form of positive feedback has been shown to have a great deal of effect on performance on academic tests (Rusby, Crowley, Sprague & Biglan, 2011). Engaged students also have a desire to attend school, causing a drop in truancy rates for at-risk students.

Inappropriate Behaviors of At-Risk Students

Maintaining a safe and orderly environment for student learning, as well as for teacher and community support, is necessary to promote educational initiatives. Research demonstrates the importance of behavior interventions in order to avoid future disciplinary problems for students. Students who display behavior problems are more likely to drop out of high school after a first time arrest and the chances increase if a student appears before a court (Brownstein, 2010). Frequently students see the schools as the institution which encouraged their discipline problems as many problems result from in-school or on-school grounds disruptions. These Students then become alienated from the school, causing an increase of educator mistrust and leading to additional juvenile offenses.

Additionally, instances of bullying are commonly associated with behavior referrals. Recent research shows that thirty-two percent of students report being bullied at school in one school year (Dinkes et al., 2009). Instances of bullying included such actions as being the subject of rumors, being physically harmed by pushing, shoving, being spit on or tripped, being excluded from activities on purpose and being forced to do actions that the bullied student did

not wish to perform. These actions frequently occurred in school, on school grounds, on school buses or somewhere else. The advent of social media and electronic-based bullying also has caused many schools to adopt guidelines and rules for social media use throughout the country.

Achievement scores are impacted for at-risk students as well, not only for the student themselves, but for other members of the classroom setting. Research shows that a student who is readily engaged in reading lessons will demonstrate academic success (Parker et al., 2010). But competing behaviors such as classroom disruptions and inattention have a negative impact on the engagement of students within the class. With the onset of continually rising standards for achievement levels through No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top initiatives, the importance of on task behaviors and academic achievement are at an all-time high. Students who are demonstrating inappropriate behaviors are shown to serve as a hindrance to that academic achievement.

At-risk students who are experiencing behavior complications also are shown to experience a great deal of social disconnection. In an unstructured environment a student can demonstrate aggression and disruption which can cause cyclical reoccurrences of the inappropriate behavior (Parker et al., 2010). This social disconnection can manifest itself in the actions of the students towards peers as well as adults in the schools and the community. Students with at-risk behavioral difficulties can engage in inappropriate touching, making negative comments about peers or their families, talk out, throw tantrums and demonstrate acts of noncompliance (Lo & Cartledge, 2006). These actions represent low level offenses, but these actions can escalate if not corrected. Students are more likely to become involved in physical fights, carrying a weapon and are also substantially more likely to commit crimes and be incarcerated (Dupper et al., 2009).

These actions typically warrant suspensions or expulsions from the school environment. Research shows that students who are suspended from school are those who are least likely to have supervision at home (Dupper et al., 2009). For a large number of at-risk youths, being suspended from school leads to significant problems outside of the school due to a lack of supervision. The chances of repeat Out of School Suspensions increase substantially and also can lead to students dropping out of school. Specifically, students coming from homes with single parents are two to four times more likely to be suspended from school compared with children with both parents at home. According to research collected using the Adolescent Discipline Perception Survey, family structures that encountered a remarriage also demonstrated the same level of suspensions and discipline referrals due to the fact of a disconnect of authority between the child and the new individual within the family structure (Morin, Milito & Costlow, 2001).

Research also shows that at-risk students receive a higher rate of suspensions for relatively minor or poorly defined offenses. These offenses typically are defined as interactions between peers and adults that do not threaten the welfare of others (Dupper et al., 2009). The majority of these discipline referrals represented student behaviors that threatened teachers' authority rather than dangerous or serious violations of the schools disciplinary code. Continuous removal from the educational setting has been proven to elicit additional disciplinary actions throughout the student's life. The decisions to suspend and remove students from the environment have only proven to have negative consequences for future development.

Behavior Interventions for At-Risk Students

Numerous interventions exist that are used to assist at-risk students in behavioral objectives. Student mentoring within the school day and in an extracurricular setting has proven

to be beneficial to the advancement of behavioral skills. Student mentoring groups allow for group counseling approaches which address social skills training, family adjustment issues, and discipline problems (Whiston & Quinby, 2009). These programs, when run well, can provide additional curricular or extra-curricular opportunities to support youth who are at risk for academic failure as well, as a typical program includes a tutoring component embedded into the overall structure of the mentoring program (Shepard, 2009). Research shows that these, programs are successful due to the effect of having a healthy adult relationship within the group especially with the great deal of single parents at step parents associated with the at-risk population.

Individualized behavior plans are also interventions to assist the at-risk population. With the Behavior Education Plan, or BEP, students and staff develop individualized interventions for the students through a variety of assessment procedures of skills and actions (Hawken et al., 2007). As students are assessed in their effectiveness of the program, research shows that the individualized approach led to a decrease in problem behavior and an increase in academic engagement. Overall, students who participate in the BEP program have shown a sixty-seven percent reduction in office discipline referrals following implementation of the intervention.

Installation of the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support System, or PBIS, may be used in order to encourage behavioral objectives throughout the entire school (Rusby et al., 2011). PBIS includes multiple strategies aimed at school staff members and students. These strategies involve establishing school wide behavior rules, posting and teaching the rules and establishing a system for active supervision in all school areas that includes reinforcement of positive actions. PBIS has proven research that children perform best when taught explicitly what to do and receive positive reaction and praise when proper actions are viewed by staff

within the building (Fowler, 2011). Additionally when behavior mistakes are made, these mistakes are corrected and met with effective consequences that are well presented to students in advance.

In addition to the PBIS plan, there are plans similar in structures that address more need within the school setting, especially at-risk children. School-Wide Positive Behavior Support requires school personnel to define, teach and reward expected behaviors as well as implementation of clear consequences for inappropriate behavior in the same manner as the PBIS system (Chitiyo, 2012). But the School-Wide Behavior Support system provides peer support systems which will aid students in a three tier system; primary, secondary and tertiary. Peer interventions, especially in at-risk population students, allows for a strategy to assist in bridging the social disconnection present in many students in this population.

Conclusion

Recognition of at-risk students within a school is important to development of proper interventions to allow for student achievement academically and socially. At-risk students represent a growing population within the school communities and continuance of support systems can aid in retention of students in school, lowering of crime rates for youth and encourage a safe and orderly educational environment. Through the use of a mentoring program especially, students can grow bonds between adult authority figures in an open forum that also allows for character education objectives and academic objectives to be attained.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study consisted of a quasi-experimental pre-test/post test design. The study utilized behavioral change in response to a student mentoring intervention. Behavior change was defined as the number of discipline referrals received for behaviors deemed as inappropriate by the elementary school administration and staff. In regards to academic achievement, data was collected using quarterly report card grades with measurement in academic and effort objectives. The study reflected data between June 2012 and June 2013.

Participants

The participants used for this research included 13 students in grades 4 and 5 from an elementary school in Baltimore County, Maryland. Participants included students deemed as at-risk using informal feedback from teachers, administration and staff to determine students to participate in an extra-curricular mentoring program.

The participants consisted of seven males and six females with six students being in the fourth grade and seven students being in the fifth grade. All of the students were African American.

The demographic statistics reported for all students who attend New Town Elementary showed a total of 52% male students and 48% female students. Statistics showed that 68% of the students were African American, 12% of the students were Asian, 10% of the students were Caucasian, 6% of the students were more than one race, and 4% of the population were Hispanic.

Instrument

Collection of data regarding at-risk behaviors was the elementary school Office Referral Form created by the administrative team. Students were recommended for additional behavior

interventions through a tri-copy form submitted by teachers or staff that indicates the presence of predefined inappropriate behaviors and provides detailed accounts of actions by students, staff and teachers. Behaviors exhibited by students include bullying, bus misbehavior, disrespect, destruction of property, disruptions, fighting, harassment, indecent exposure, physical attacks, leaving school grounds, profanity, threats, weapons violations theft and refusal to obey the school code of conduct.

Upon completion of the form and signatures from the student, parent and staff member who reported the actions, data was entered by assistant principals into a Microsoft spreadsheet .The data included the names and grades of students as well as the date and time of the incident and its location. Information was organized on the spreadsheet in regards to grade level and description of the incident.

Procedure

The organization, hereafter named Gems and Gents, was created based on a similar program created at another elementary school in Baltimore County, Maryland. Students were invited through formal letters to participate in a student leadership program based on *The Seven Habits of Happy Kids*, *The Leader in Me*, and *The Seven Habits of Effective People* – three books written by Stephen Covey. The seven habits examined by the Gems and Gents club were to be proactive, to begin with the end in mind, to put first things first, to think win-win, to seek first to listen then to be understood, to apply synergy, and to “sharpen the saw” by incorporating the concept of self-improvement.

Students selected were instructed on the seven habits and completed a variety of activities through a weekly mentoring program. Students arrived at school for an extra-curricular program and were assembled in the gymnasium. Initial activities included teamwork challenges in order

to teach and practice skills learned from the seven habits. Activities included completing an obstacle course to retrieve puzzle pieces in order to reveal habits, team problem solving to move members from one side of the gym to another side using three colored dots, and listening activities to learn likes and dislikes of members using memorization and alliteration games. Completion of team building activities culminated in discussions of team work, and how the use of the seven habits had been incorporated into the activities.

The completion of team building activities was followed by a discussion on students' attainment of leadership tickets distributed by teachers and staff. These tickets were awarded to students by teachers or staff who witnessed a member of the group displaying values of the seven habits. Tickets were attached to a profile sheet to be submitted and reviewed as a part of a binder packet that would allow students to collect information about the habits and feedback from parents, faculty, staff and peers.

Discussion followed the collection and sharing of leadership tickets. Each week focused on attainment of different aspects of the seven habits through PowerPoint presentations in addition to discussions and writing prompts which allowed students to brainstorm possible ways in which they may or may not have shown the habit being presented. Students were responsible for the creation of activities such as bulletin boards, volunteer projects and examples of leadership skills in the school, home and community. Students were identified as Gems and Gents through shirts displaying the Gems and Gents logo that was worn on each Wednesday throughout the school year in accordance with the before-school meetings.

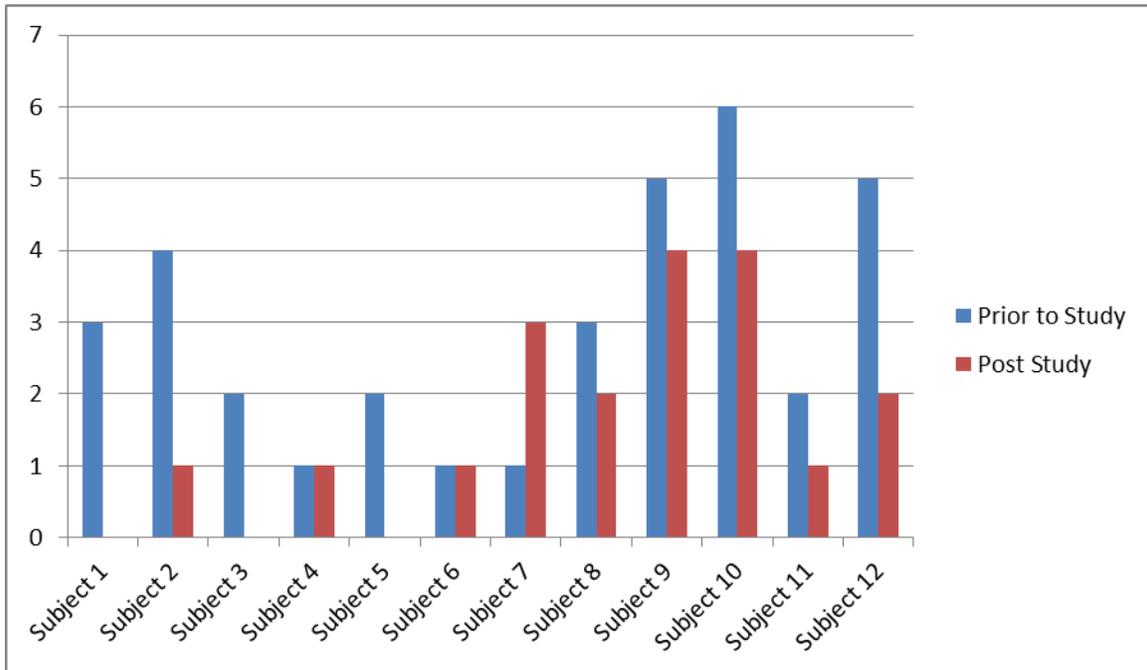
At the completion of each session a portion of time was allotted to check that homework assignments were completed; and that any questions from the students regarding homework were addressed. A continued emphasis of student leadership tickets concluded the session.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Data was analyzed for twelve students participating in the Gems and Gents student mentoring program during the period of August, 2012-June, 2013, to determine any significant changes in the number of discipline referrals and changes in academic achievement prior to installation of the program and after completion of the program. Data revealed that prior to the implementation of the program, the mean of discipline referrals was 2.92 and significantly decreased to 1.58 referrals, $t(11) = 3.08, p < .05$. Examination of individual students showed that 75% of students had lower discipline referrals (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Individual Comparison of Discipline Referrals before and after the Gems and Gents Program



Regarding achievement, the researcher analyzed marking period grades and effort grades collected throughout the 2012-2013 school year. The researcher rewarded passing grades of A, B or C; Data was collected using three core classes: reading, language arts and math. At the first

marking period all students (100%) passed reading, but by the fourth marking period 83% received an A-C while 17% received a D (Table 1).

Table 1: Achievement Scores in Reading for Gems and Gents Participants

Grade	Marking Period 1	Marking Period 2	Marking Period 3	Marking Period 4
Passing (A-C)	100%	92%	92%	83%
D	0%	8%	8%	17%

Language Arts displayed a consistent rate of achievement with all students (100%) passing in the first marking period as well as 100% passing in the fourth marking period with only one subject receiving a grade of a D in the second marking period (Table 2).

Table 2: Achievement Scores in Language Arts for Gems and Gents Participants

Grade	Marking Period 1	Marking Period 2	Marking Period 3	Marking Period 4
Passing (A-C)	100%	92%	100%	100%
D	0%	8%	0%	0%

Students studying mathematics also displayed consistent achievement with all subjects (100%) receiving a passing grade in the first and fourth marking period with only one subject receiving a D in the third marking period (Table 3).

Table 3: Achievement Scores in Mathematics for Gems and Gents Participants

Grade	Marking Period 1	Marking Period 2	Marking Period 3	Marking Period 4
Passing (A-C)	100%	100%	91%	100%
D	0%	0%	9%	0%

Data collected which measured effort was based on a three- point scale. Minimal effort was regarded as a 1 and significant effort was regarded as a 3 based on the scale developed by the school administration. The mean score for effort in reading was 1.67 in the first marking period which increased to 1.92 by the fourth marking period (Table 4); however, this difference was not significant $t(22) = -.84, p=.41$. Further examination of effort scores in reading revealed that 42% of students received the lowest score of a 1 in the first marking which decreased to 33% receiving the same score in the fourth marking period. Those students receiving a 2 in the first marking period represented 50% of the sample while only 42% received the same score in the fourth marking period and 8% received a 3 in the first marking period which increased to 25% of the students receiving the same score in the fourth marking period.

The mean score for effort in language arts was 1.75 in the first marking period which increased to 1.92 by the fourth marking period. But this difference was not significant $t(22) = -.63, p=.53$. Further examination of effort scores in language arts revealed that 33% of students received the lowest score of a 1 in the first marking which decreased to 25% receiving the same score in the fourth marking period (Table 4). Those students receiving a 2 in the first marking period represented 58% of the sample while the same number of students (58%) received the same score in the fourth marking period and 8% received a 3 in the first marking period which increased to 17% of the students receiving the same score in the fourth marking period.

The mean score for effort in mathematics was 1.42 in the first marking period which decreased to 1.33 by the fourth marking period (Table 4). But this difference was not significant $t(22) = .28, p=.78$. Further examination of effort scores in mathematics revealed that 67% of students received the lowest score of a 1 in the first marking which decreased to 64% receiving the same score in the fourth marking period. Those students receiving a 2 in the first marking period represented 25% of the sample which increased to 27% in the fourth marking period and 8% received a 3 in the first marking period which increased to 9% of the students receiving the same score in the fourth marking period.

Table 4: Mean Effort Scores in Reading, Language Arts and Math for Gems and Gents

Participants

Subject	Marking Period 1	Marking Period 2	Marking Period 3	Marking Period 4
Reading	1.67	1.67	1.92	1.92
Language Arts	1.75	1.67	1.83	1.92
Math	1.42	1.25	1.33	1.33

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In reviewing the data collected from the Gems and Gents program, the researcher concluded that the hypothesis had two-fold results. Concerning student discipline referrals, the hypothesis was not supported, as the number of instances of referrals significantly declined from the initiation of the program until the conclusion. However, in achievement the hypothesis was verified as there were no significant changes in student achievement throughout the program.

Theoretical Consequences

Implications of the research shown are supported in regards to lowering of discipline referrals but unsupported for an increase in achievement. The use of the Gems and Gents program allowed students to receive individual adult attention within peer groups in order to attain social skills to assist in decision making and problem solving. Students were able to gather these skills and use them in classroom situations in order to reduce the number of instances in which they were reprimanded for inappropriate behavior. The use of a small group mentoring program allowed the students to continue to build skills in order to aid in decision making and problem solving.

In regards to achievement, though, the lack of significant advancement in grades, with evidence of declining achievement, demonstrates a contrast with prior studies; these students who were deemed as at-risk were already passing so gains would be minimal. Students within the Gems and Gents program made advancements in effort grades, but the rate of improvement was not significant. Students were trained in problem solving and on- task behaviors but according to teacher observations, their effort was still not considerably improved.

Threats to Validity

There were two threats to internal validity: maturation and differential selection because the study took place over one school year, the amount of maturation of the subjects may have had an effect on the outcome of the results. As students continue to mature through the school year and receive new information and experiences, the effects can have impacts on the effectiveness of the program being instilled into the subjects. The effect of the Gems and Gents program cannot be thoroughly validated because in this one group design there is no way to measure if the improvement or decline in referrals and achievement is a result of the instruction of the program or basic maturing of the individual.

Differential selection can affect internal validity in regards to the sample being selected; it was not a random sample but based on convenience. Students were at-risk for high discipline referrals, but the background and prior experiences before starting the program were those in which students could not be homogeneously grouped. These students were selected based on data, but participation in the group was one of availability and volunteerism of students' time and effort.

A threat to external validity was generalization. The sample size of the Gems and Gents program was small with only twelve students participating in the study. The small sample makes the ability to generalize to a larger population almost impossible. Although a large selection of subjects is not necessary, the lower the number of subjects tested the lower amount of validity of the results.

Comparison with Other Research

The use of a mentoring program, in this case the Gems and Gents program, continues to offer students opportunities to receive individual attention on problem solving and conflict

resolution. The Gems and Gents program offered the students, in a group counseling setting, social skills and other external causes as stated by Whiston and Quinby (2009). The students within the study demonstrated many of the characteristics of at-risk students in regards to inappropriate touching, language and overall disregard for authority when the program started (Lo, 2006). However, as the mentoring program continued, the occurrences of these behaviors declined. The installation of social skills as well as the interaction of healthy adult relationships allowed students to reduce the number of discipline referrals throughout the school year.

Achievement, though, contradicted the research of Parker et al., (2010). Students were given clear expectations, reminders and incentives within the structure of the Gems and Gents program but there were insignificant rates of increased achievement in the students. The students, although seen as at-risk based on discipline referrals, did not exhibit overall poor achievement at the start of the program, but still experienced fluctuations in academic achievement as well as effort grades, contradicting the studies of Hawken et al., (2007). Students did not experience significant advancements in achievement throughout the study as research indicated in prior studies.

Implications for Future Research

Future research on the implementation of a mentoring program should focus on numerous aspects. Acceptance of and incorporation of all staff in contact with the mentees is imperative to the success of the program. In order to effectively establish cohesive and consistent expectations, staff should be trained on the expectations and skills being presented by the mentoring program and reinforced in classroom interactions with the subjects. Consistency in rewards and in expected behaviors can assist in more attainment of desired skills.

Consistency of scheduling must be addressed as well. Student attendance declined significantly when numerous schedule changes needed to be made due to school- related activities or other conflicts. Consistency in scheduling will assist students and staff in increased attendance as well as increased student retention of skills and behaviors.

Extending the program to additional staff including teachers, counselors and principals is imperative. The installation of one-on-one teacher mentors in addition to the large group can assist with “check-ins” with the students throughout the day and daily, unstructured observation of student behaviors in the classroom as well as in the hallways, cafeteria or other areas around the school building. This, also, can be installed as a support system in a non-threatening one- on-one atmosphere to allow for additional instruction and aid to students who are at-risk.

Conclusion

At-risk students continue to increase in the school systems. These students, who usually demonstrate poor social interactions with adults and peers as well as low academic achievement, require assistance in order to correct actions and prevent future difficulties socially and academically. Through interventions such as the Gems and Gents mentoring program, students can be offered support in decision making and problem solving that stretch beyond the classroom. Within the study of the Gems and Gents programs a decrease in discipline referrals was noted, but the insignificant gains in effort scores was an area in which the subjects contradicted research studies. However, the program offered students skills both academically and socially which is imperative to future employment as well as overall happiness of the individual. Mentoring programs allow students to experience safe, healthy and positive relationships with adults and peers in order to continue to attain positive skills and educate future generations in gaining positive experiences.

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