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AUTHOR Floyd, Nancy, Ed.
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ABSTRACT

This newsletter, created for teachers, parents, and others interested in current educational themes, addresses the issue of mentoring, what it is, how it works, and why it is needed; and provides some examples of current mentoring programs. It explains that there are two types of mentoring: natural, such as through friends, relatives, and colleagues; and planned, the result of programs and other formal processes. Mentoring programs recruit suitable mentors, formally and informally, through flyers, posters, mailings, and word-of-mouth; these programs then match the mentor with the youth, via interviews, personal profiles, comparative interest inventories, and get-acquainted sessions. Because of data showing greater numbers of single-family homes, increasing school truancy and dropout rates, and greater numbers of teenage pregnancies, mentoring programs are increasing in importance. These programs generally serve in three broad areas: education, career, and personal development. Examples of these types of programs include Big Brothers/Sisters of America; Help One Student To Succeed; One Hundred Black Men, Inc.; and The National One-to-One Mentoring Partnership. Five resources for more information on mentoring are listed. (Contains 7 references.) (GLR)

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Mentoring

What is it? Mentoring—from the Greek word meaning enduring—is defined as a sustained relationship between a youth and an adult. Through continued involvement, the adult offers support, guidance, and assistance as the younger person goes through a difficult period, faces new challenges, or works to correct earlier problems. In particular, where parents are either unavailable or unable to provide responsible guidance for their children, mentors can play a critical role.

The two types of mentoring are natural mentoring and planned mentoring. Natural mentoring occurs through friendship, collegiality, teaching, coaching, and counseling. In contrast, planned mentoring occurs through structured programs in which mentors and participants are selected and matched through formal processes.

Why are mentoring programs so popular? The number of mentoring programs has grown dramatically in recent years. This popularity results in part from compelling testimonials by people—youth and adults alike—who have themselves benefited from the positive influence of an older person who helped them endure social, academic, career, or personal crises.

How do they work? Mentoring programs are established to match a suitable adult or older youth—the mentor—with a younger person. Potential mentors are recruited from various sources including corporate, professional, and religious

communities, as well as neighborhood citizens. Nominations for mentors are sought formally and informally through flyers, posters, mailings, and word-of-mouth.

Appropriately matching mentors with youths is at the heart of all programs. Matching can be done formally and informally through interviews, personal profiles, comparative interest inventories, and get-acquainted sessions. In programs where mentors and youths are given a chance to choose each other, planned mentoring takes on many aspects of natural mentoring.

Why are they needed? Data clearly show many youths have a desperate need for positive role models. The most compelling data describe changes to the American family structure: the number of single-parent homes has radically increased, as have two-parent working families. More preventive care is needed, as are support networks to fill the void left by busy or absent parents. Other statistics are equally troubling: each day in the United States, 3,600 students drop out of high school, and 2,700 unwed teenage girls get pregnant (Petersmeyer 1989).

What are they for? Mentoring programs generally serve the following broad purposes:

- **Educational or academic mentoring** helps mentored youth improve their overall academic achievement.

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- **Career mentoring** helps mentored youth develop the necessary skills to enter or continue on a career path.
- **Personal development mentoring** supports mentored youth during times of personal or social stress and provides guidance for decision making.

What are some examples of mentoring programs? Traditional programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters have been joined by school-based programs, independent living skills programs, court-mandated programs, and recreational "buddy" programs. Religious institutions continue to play a leadership role, and corporations and social organizations now promote employee and member involvement (Newman 1990). Increasingly, older youth are encouraged to volunteer as part of their educational requirements.

- **Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America** provides quality volunteer and professional services to help children and youth become responsible men and women. It is a national, youth-serving organization based on the concept of a one-to-one relationship between an adult volunteer and an at-risk child, usually from a one-parent family. Made up of more than 495 agencies located across the country, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America provides children and youth with adult role models and mentors who help enrich the children's lives, as well as their own, through weekly interaction. Volunteers go through a screening process before acceptance. Professional case workers provide assistance, support, and on-going supervision of all matches.
- **Help One Student To Succeed** is a nationwide, structured mentoring program in language arts that combines community mentors, a computerized database, and a management system to improve student achievement. The program can be purchased and administered by school districts for use in grades K-12. It is now being utilized in over 500 schools in the country and has won numerous awards. Almost 40,000 students are involved.

- **One Hundred Black Men, Inc.**, established in 1963, is a nonprofit organization of men in business, industry, public affairs, government, and the professions throughout New York State and other areas who share a common goal: to improve the quality of life for blacks and other minorities. One component of the organization is the mentoring program that provides a support network and positive role models for young black males, elementary through high school. It is principally an internal mentoring program in which members are paired one-to-one with students.

- **The National One-to-One Mentoring Partnership**, formed in 1989 between business and the volunteer sector, is a mentoring initiative involving dual strategies. It brings together leaders of diverse sectors and encourages them to mobilize people within their networks to recruit mentors, support existing mentoring programs, and begin new mentoring initiatives. Local Leadership Councils then engage leaders, community by community, with support from the local United Way, in a coordinated effort to develop local strategies to increase and support mentoring initiatives.

What does the research say? Arlene Mark of New York City's *I Have A Dream* program has observed, "We will only know who can be helped, or what is the right kind of mentoring, when we try it" (Flaxman and Ascher 1992). Yet, while research on the effects of mentoring is scarce, some studies and program evaluations do support positive claims (Flaxman 1992). In an evaluation of Project RAISE, a Baltimore-based mentoring project, McPartland and Nettles (1991) found mentoring had positive affects on school attendance and grades in English but not on promotion rates or standardized test scores. They concluded that positive effects are much more likely when one-on-one mentoring has been strongly implemented. Another evaluation (Cave and Quint 1990) found participants in various mentoring programs had higher levels of college enrollment and higher educational aspirations than nonparticipants receiving comparable amounts of education and job-related services (figure 1).

Where can I get more information?

ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education
Teachers College, Columbia University
Main Hall, Room 300, Box 40
525 West 120th Street
New York, NY 10027-9998
(212) 678-3433

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America
230 North 13th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Project RAISE
Fund for Educational Excellence
616-D North Eutaw Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

One Plus One
4802 5th Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Public/Private Ventures
399 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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Flaxman, E. *Evaluating Mentoring Programs*. New York: Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1992.

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by Gregory Dennis
ERIC Program, Office of Research

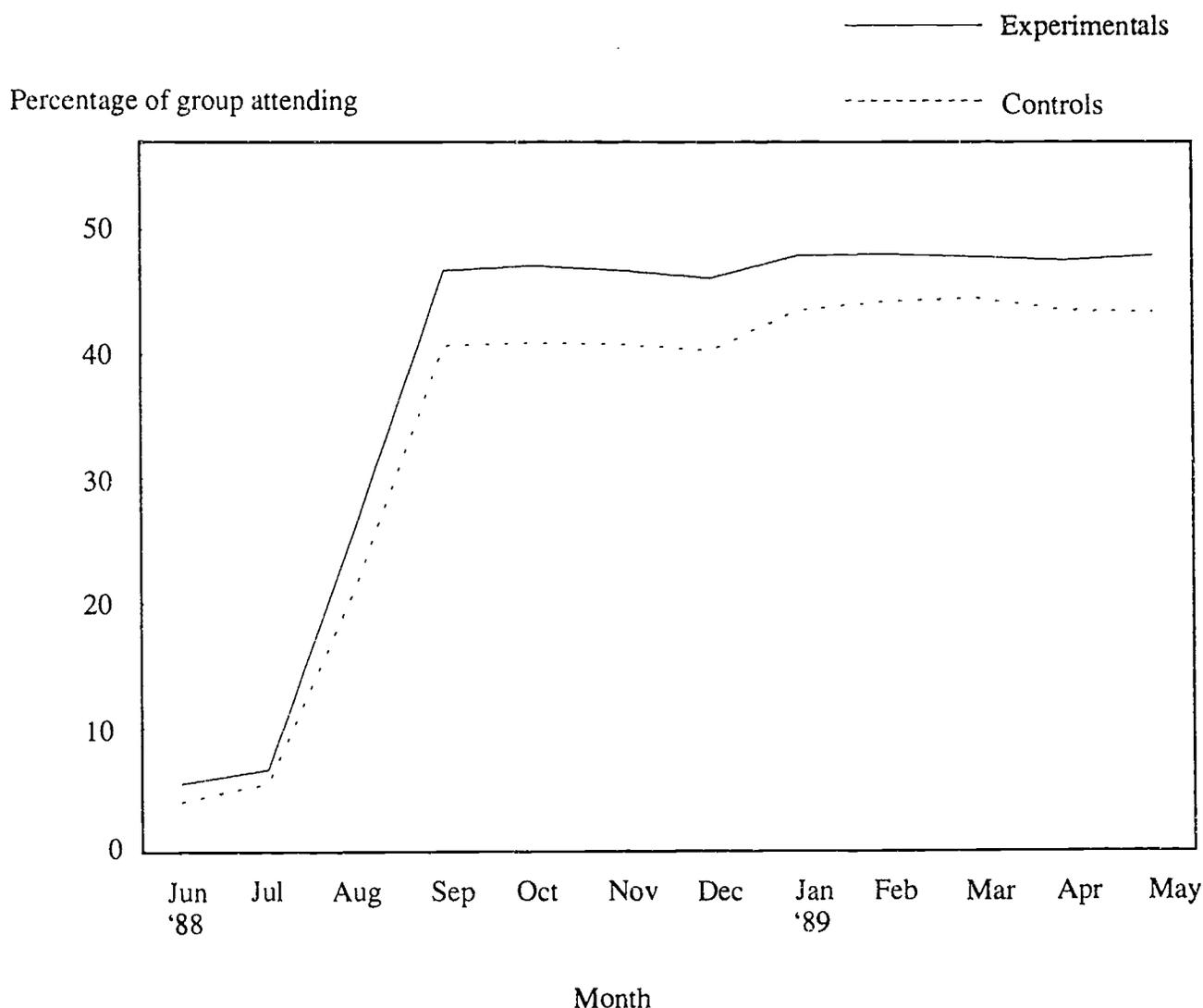
This is the seventh *Education Research CONSUMER GUIDE*—a new series published for teachers, parents, and others interested in current education themes.

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Figure 1.—Effects of the Career Beginnings program on college attendance: Monthly attendance at 2- or 4-year colleges, 1988-89



NOTE: The people in the study were assigned at random to either an experimental group or a control group. Experimentals were eligible for Career Beginnings, which included a mentoring component; controls were excluded from Career Beginnings but were free to participate in other services available in their schools and communities.

SOURCE: Adapted from George Cave and Janet Quint, *Career Beginnings Impact Evaluation: Findings from a Program for Disadvantaged High School Students* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, October 1990). Copyright © 1990 by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and used with their permission.

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Richard W. Riley, Secretary of Education

Sharon P. Robinson, Assistant Secretary, OERI

Joseph C. Conaty, Acting Director, OR