

Role of Intergenerational Mentoring for Supporting Youth Development: An Examination of the “Across Ages” Program in the U. S.

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Meeting the diverse needs of young people who are coping with such problems as delinquent behaviors or poor academic performance is an urgent issue today. This paper aims to demonstrate the benefits of introducing intergenerational mentoring activities into educational programs for supporting “at risk” adolescents by highlighting some innovative and effective methods.

Among various types of mentoring activities, this paper will focus on ones in which older adults take on the role of mentors. The significance of mentoring activities in which older adults give emotional support to at risk adolescents has been recognized since the late 1980s in the United States. An important component of this type of “intergenerational mentoring” initiative involves establishing a sense of mutual trust between the older adult mentors and the at risk youth mentees.

This paper consists of the following parts. Firstly, the author will describe the rationale and some of the societal factors that are contributing to the emergence of the mentoring activities for at risk adolescents in contemporary society.

Secondly, the author will describe key characteristics of intergenerational mentoring activities designed to support at risk adolescents. The primary focus will be on lessons learned from an intergenerational mentoring program called “Across Ages” which is operated by Temple University’s Center for Intergenerational Learning. In analyzing this model program, the author will focus on challenging issues related to how the mentor role is constructed and how the mentors function in the context of program goals to produce benefits for the participants.

Finally, in concluding this paper, the author will point out that such intergenerational mentoring endeavors not only expand informal helping resources for at risk adolescents but also help in establishing a circulative mentoring process that has implications for the enrichment of the lives of people of all ages in the community.

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1 Introduction

In recent years in Japan, there has been a significant increase in the problems of youth truancy (Sato, 2002, 19-22). Factors that contribute to this trend include increased bullying among students in schools and a growing number of youth who have been characterized as “freeters” (i. e., job-hopping part-time workers) or NEETs (i. e., young people Not in Education, Employment or Training). To address such youth-related problems, various government agencies and NPOs are taking measures and organizing intervention activities¹. Since the mid-1980s, “free schools” and other privately-operated educational facilities have been providing young people who do not attend school with time and space where they can make plans for their futures. Meanwhile, for those who have difficulty even in attending these facilities, there are clinical services to which they might turn for support.

In the U. S., problematic behaviors such as high school dropout rates, high levels of drug use, and criminal behavior have dramatically increased since the late 1980s². In these circumstances, J. Dryfoos defined a child as “at risk” if “he/she is in danger of not achieving a productive adulthood.” Dryfoos proposed that “prevention interventions should be directed toward the common *antecedents* of the categorical problem behaviors³ rather than at the separate manifest behaviors” (Dryfoos, 1990, 7). Taylor and Dryfoos discovered that young people heavily involved in behaviors that have negative consequences share many common characteristics. These often include “an absence of nurturing parents, evidence of having been a victim of child abuse, disengagement from school, involvement with a negative peer group, depression, residence in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and little exposure to the work world” (Taylor and Dryfoos, 1998-99, 44).

Against such a background, in the U. S., since the 1990s, a variety of programs aiming at providing preventive measures have been prepared so that schools, families, community groups, and individuals can collaborate in supporting the growth and development of “at risk” adolescents.

One approach for supporting at risk adolescents who are suffering from emotional turmoil and/or academic failure involves conducting “intergenerational mentoring” programs. “Mentoring” is a kind of activity that involves establishing an ongoing face-to-face relationship. “Mentoring”-type programs are found in a wide range of fields and contexts⁴. In this paper, mentoring is narrowly defined as “a one-to-one relationship, over a prolonged period of time, between a youth and an older person who provides consistent support, guidance and concrete help as the younger person goes through a difficult or challenging situation or period in life” (Wright, 1999, 72). In this definition, “mentoring” further refers to “the art of intergenerational bestowal by which elders pass on to younger people the living flame of their wisdom” (Schachter-Shalomi and Miller, 1995, 189). Older mentors, particularly those who have experienced in their lifetimes the same marginal status as high-risk youth, have been found to be effective in reaching out and relating to at risk youth, many of whom feel misunderstood by family and community members⁵.

Researchers specializing in school education, life-long learning, social welfare, and psychology have engaged in theoretical and empirical studies of mentoring as a way of supporting young people who tend to exhibit problematic behavior as a function of receiving a lack of care from their families, relatives, and other adult members of the society. For example, Watanabe (2002; 2003) values mentoring programs developed in the U. S. since they function as bases for mutual exchange among different generations. Psychologists have shown great interest in examin-

ing how young people growing up in unhealthy family environments can mature to become respectable members of society⁶. Proponents of social support theory emphasize the importance of informal, nonprofessional, and extra-familial resources of support not only for the youth but also for older adults who benefit from another opportunity for social engagement.

However, there are also potential problems that can emerge in mentoring programs, particularly when there is lack of adequate staff. For example, since mentors tend to be ordinary citizens who do not have expertise in psychiatry or clinical psychotherapy, they may not know how to best deal with youth who have serious problems and require care and support of a more professional and therapeutic nature. Taylor⁷ states in case mentors decide to terminate their program involvement, the previous mentors are required to explain why they have terminated so the child does not feel he/she is at fault (Taylor, personal communication, September 25, 2007).

This paper will describe the rationale and provide background information on how intergenerational mentoring programs have been used to support at-risk youth. This paper addresses the operational issues, challenges, and benefits associated with running such programs. Particular attention is paid to the way mentors are matched with mentees, how these matches are supported, and how staff are involved. The primary focus is on the Across Ages model program; this paper draws from analyzing studies of this unique program as well as from an online interview conducted with the program developer and evaluator, Dr. Andrea S. Taylor. Across Ages has been designated by federal agencies in the U. S. as a successful mentoring model program and its methodology is presently being applied in 17 states.

Through examination of the program's systematic operation and clinical approach to the participants, this paper endeavors to demonstrate several important implications for educators or staff working with at risk young people.

2 Mentoring as a Strategy for Supporting Adolescents at Risk

A) A Role for Elders in Supporting Younger Generations

Those who are elderly have an important role to play in terms of contributing to the healthy development of young people. In the circumstances where mutual relationships between youth and older generations are diminishing in both families and communities, there is a substantial need to purposely facilitate opportunities for older adults to function as positive role models for young people. In the U. S., it has been advocated since the mid-1960s that there is a need for structured programs to help older adults share their wisdom and experience with youth. In subsequent decades there has been an acceleration in the formation of intergenerational programs; these initiatives serve "as a vehicle for mobilizing powerful but underutilized human resources on behalf of vulnerable youth" (Taylor and Dryfoos, 1998-99, 44).

The archetype of intergenerational programs where elder persons contribute to the social and emotional growth of children and support their schoolwork dates back to "Foster Grandparent Program, FGP" founded in 1965 by the federal government. This program was formulated based on the assumption that even at a later stage, continuing mutual relationships with others is helpful in enhancing elderly persons' sense of self satisfaction, for improving their physical and mental health, and in maintaining their intellectual functioning (Salts, 1989)⁸.

In typical models where older adults serve as resources to youth and families, they serve as mentors, tutors, coaches, caregivers and nurturers. Tutoring and coaching are two ways in which

older adults convey specific skills and talents to young people (McCrea and Smith, 1997, 81-87).

Mentoring, on the other hand, entails building a mutually beneficial, long-term relationship between a mentor and a mentee. Marc Freedman regards “Friendly Visiting”, which was developed in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, as the origin of the modern mentoring movement entailing a distinct mutual help system (Freedman, 1993, 25-28). Taylor and Bressler point out that “Linking Lifetimes, a multisite national initiative, offers perhaps one of the earliest examples of planned intergenerational mentoring models. Based in nine cities throughout the United States, Linking Lifetimes sites recruited older adults as mentors to school age children, to pregnant and parenting teens and to youth incarcerated in the juvenile justice system” (Taylor and Bressler, 2000, 84).

B) Conceptual Framework of Mentoring Activities

Mentoring aimed at supporting at risk adolescents can be framed in the context of Richard Jessor’s model of “risk” and “protective” factors (Jessor, 1992). Jessor conceptualized adolescents’ need for “emotional support” as a pathway for minimizing “risk” factors which hamper healthy adolescent development and for maximizing “protective” factors that promote development:

Protective factors are conceptualized as decreasing the likelihood of engaging in problem behavior through direct personal or social controls against its occurrence. ...In contrast, risk factors are conceptualized as increasing the likelihood of engaging in problem behavior through direct instigation or encouragement (e. g., failure or frustration instigating a coping response, or models and influence from peers); through increased vulnerability for normative transgression (e. g., low self-esteem); and through greater opportunity to engage in problem behavior (e. g., membership in an antisocial peer group) (Jessor, Van Den Bos, Vanderryn, Costa, and Turbin, 1994, 4-5).

Mentoring is receiving increased attention as an effective strategy for preventing/deterring delinquent behaviors of youth who are laden with multiple risk factors. Dryfoos notes that effective mentoring and support can be offered in preschool settings, school classrooms, “time-out” rooms, school-based clinics, alternative schools, after-school programs, community agencies, and programs that provide home visits and community outreach services. “In all of these approaches, the common component involves empowering a caring adult to take the responsibility for giving support and acting as an advocate for one or more high-risk children” (Dryfoos, 1992, 130).

3 Intergenerational Mentoring for at Risk Youth

A) Societal Background of Development of Mentoring

The idea of mentoring dates back to ante-Christum times. Mentoring has been a form of informal education established well before the public education system was introduced.

Mentoring originally meant to form an informal and private intergenerational relationship based on mutual trust. In this conception, “*achievement, nurturance, and generativity*” were considered the basic elements of mentoring relationships. A mentor takes the role of leading a young mentee to success by providing support and affection while teaching him/her traditional skills. A relationship of mutual trust is nurtured between the mentor and mentee (Freedman, 1993, 34-35).

In the corporate world, the mentoring system has become highly valued since the 1970s. Mentoring “became increasingly defined not only as *instrumental*, a strategy for success, but as *intentional*, something that could be engineered” (Freedman, 1993, 37-38). In the corporate world, it was considered a necessary strategy for success and promotion for superiors to give advice as mentors to their newly-employed subordinates, especially to disadvantaged employees such as women or minorities.

The benefits of incorporating mentoring activities into educational programs have been increasingly advocated since the late 1980s. This is characterized by the view that disadvantaged children and youth need to have contact with older adults who care for them. Waddock and Freedman point out that the common characteristics of youth who need mentor support in this contemporary context are experiencing “growing up alone” and tend to be isolated from their families, schools, and neighborhoods due to social and familial changes. Waddock and Freedman note the following three circumstances that contribute to young people’s sense of isolation.

First, factors that may contribute to young people’s feelings of alienation include the decline of the extended family, falling birthrate, more double-income families, single mothers, rising divorce rates, and increased incidence of child abuse or child neglect.

Second, since the 1980s, schools have been building up increased levels of cooperation with the business sector, which recruits students who graduate. Thus, schools are increasingly expected to serve as training centers of human resources needed by the business sector. As a result, schools are at risk of becoming “impersonal teaching factories”, with the emphasis shifting from a place to facilitate students’ human development to a place to train talented human resources. Hence, academic achievement directly affects job-hunting activities, and students with poor academic records tend to internalize their anxiety for their future prospects. This could result in a sort of inferiority complex at a very early stage of life.

Third, there are questions about the extent to which neighborhoods provide the needed web of support and serve as “nurturing places” for youth who feel isolation both at home and at school. One trend that contributes to adults’ reluctance to reach out to local youth is the fear of violence that has gripped many urban neighborhoods (Waddock and Freedman, 1998-99, 54-56).

Under these circumstances, the necessity of building mentoring relationships for adolescents at risk who tend to harbor a feeling of isolation at home, schools, and communities is being re-recognized.

B) Intergenerational Mentoring in the Contemporary Society

The above mentioned changes at home, schools, and neighborhoods have enormous impact on the values and behavior of young people. Factors such as exposure to violence, drug abuse, physical abuse, and poverty are interrelated and have a negative impact on the emotional and psychological development of youth. Among specific negative issues, Wright emphasizes that the single-most consistent indicator of youths at-risk is low household income. Poverty, compounded with a lack of caring, supportive families, places a significant majority of adolescents at-risk. Furthermore, poor academic performance can also lead to low self-esteem and an increase in detrimental attention-seeking behavior (Wright, 1999, 70).

Nevertheless, there are young people who can successfully adapt themselves to the society even though they are not blessed with a good environment at home, school, or neighborhood. Taylor and Dryfoos indicate that the common components for such resilient youths are “attachment to a caring adult, attendance at an effective school, residence in a safe community, acquisition of so-

cial skills to deal with peer influences, and exposure to career paths” (Taylor and Dryfoos, 1998-99, 44). Thus, to enable youths to realize their potential, it is imperative to create opportunities for them to have positive engagement experiences with community adults.

In this contemporary context of mentoring, every mentor is expected to serve as a significant resource for providing social/human support. The main purpose of this type of mentoring activity is “to help the mentees gain the skills and confidence to be responsible for their own futures including, and with an increasing emphasis on, academic and occupational skills” (Wright, 1999, 72).

We will see how this intergenerational perspective is put into practice in the following section.

4 Intergenerational Mentoring Operated by “Across Ages”

A) Characteristics of the Across Ages Program

The “Across Ages” program is an example of a “comprehensive, multidimensional program that has been successful in helping youth navigate the difficult course through the early teen years” (Taylor and Dryfoos, 1998-99, 44).

Across Ages was established by Temple University’s Center for Intergenerational Learning⁹ in Philadelphia in 1991 with federal funding from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. It was “originally developed as a drug prevention program and as such derived much of its theoretical foundation from the risk and protective factor model” (Taylor and Bressler, 2000, 21-22). This program was established in a region where poverty, crime, and unemployment rates are all very high. The majority of young people are raised by economically depressed families. Across Ages youths face the following specific risk factors: “residence in some of Philadelphia’s most economically depressed neighborhoods and communities, characterized by poverty, a high incidence of substance abuse and drug-related crime, ...School attendance is poor, achievement is low, and suspension rates are high; many of the children are at least 1 year behind in school” (Taylor and Bressler, 2000, 23).

Consequently, Across Ages was designed to reach out to adolescents at risk by addressing a range of risk factors, using a mentoring method as a core strategy. Through mentoring activities, the program aims to “increase the resiliency and protective factors within youth in five domains: the individual, the family, the school, the peer group, and the community/neighborhood. The core of the project is the involvement of older adult volunteers as mentors to the students” (LoSciuto et al., 1996, 116).

I consider the following elements to be key characteristics of the intergenerational mentoring activities operated by Across Ages.

First, the intergenerational mentoring model relies on targeting mentors who are local elderly persons, many of whom had experienced “marginal status” in society when young and thus are more likely to be effective in empowering the troubled youth. These individuals are generally viewed as valuable human resources in the community and they are willing to be generous in sharing their values, knowledge and life experiences with at risk youth.

Second, the model places an emphasis on community service activities that enable young people to have meaningful interactions with local people including the frail elderly¹⁰. The youth receive extensive training to better understand issues of aging while the mentors receive training

to help them understand youth issues. By promoting cooperation between schools and community institutions, the program positions mentoring activities as a core strategy for involving the entire community in efforts to support the healthy development of young people as well as to prevent them from getting involved in dangerous activities.

Third, Across Ages employs full-time personnel called “project staff”, whose responsibilities range from program planning, training of program participants, implementation of program activities, and the collection of data for program evaluation. In such a systematic operation, we can see the significant presence of intergenerational specialists¹¹. Taylor emphasizes the significance of project staff in helping the mentor-youth pairs (Taylor, personal communication, September, 25, 2007).¹²

B) Program Operation and Characteristics of Across Ages Participants

1 Program Operation

Across Ages operation can be characterized as systematic. The program starts from project planning (finding allies/building a team, defining the scale and scope of the program, budgeting program evaluation, etc.) and consists of four components: mentoring (the major component of the project), community service, classroom-based life skills instruction, and family activities. The following excerpt details the major steps for each program component:

mentoring component consists of recruiting older volunteers, screening mentors, training mentors, preparing the youth, matching mentors with youth, maintaining and monitoring relationships. ...Community service component consists of such elements as planning the activities, preparing youth, conducting activities, reflecting on the experience. ...Life skills instruction includes planning/ selecting a curriculum, training the instructors, implementing the curriculum/monitoring the instruction, training the mentors. ...Family activities here mean providing outreach to parents, and implementing the activities (Taylor and Bressler, 2000, 31-64).

Across Ages targets sixth-grade students because this period is a “particularly precarious time in a child’s development” and “the influence of peers becomes much stronger as children leave elementary school” (Taylor and Bressler, 2000, 27).

2 Characteristics of the Participants

This section addresses how Across Ages recruits and involves mentors in mentoring activities designed to contribute to positive youth development.

Rogers and Taylor note that the recruitment of appropriate mentors is “a labor intensive process” (Rogers and Taylor, 1997, 131). Across Ages mentors are recruited through “public service announcements, presentations at community meetings, articles in community newspapers, and word of mouth. Perhaps the most effective recruitment method, however, is through affiliations with churches” (Taylor and Bressler, 2000, 6).

Taylor asserts that compared to 10 years ago, “it has become harder to recruit mentors. Mentors must make a commitment of one year and be able to spend time every week with the youth. As older adults have more demands on their time, it can be harder to find enough mentors. It is also harder to recruit male mentors since so many boys need strong male role models” (Taylor, personal communication, September, 25, 2007).

“Since a large majority of the at-risk youth in mentoring programs are from African-American and Hispanic communities, recruiting and maintaining elders of similar cultural backgrounds to serve as mentors is an important task. Attention should also be given to recruiting culturally sensitive elders mentors who may reside in the ‘backyards’ of the targeted youth” (Rogers and Taylor, 1997, 131).

Thus, most of the mentors recruited are African-Americans from Philadelphia or its neighboring communities. Around 60 mentors aged over 55 years old take part in the program per year. Most of the mentors have either professional work experience with children such as teachers and nurses, or have child-care experience. Approximately, one third of the mentors are presently engaged in part-time work, and at least half of the mentors are taking part in other volunteer programs.

As for traits common to mentors, they “have been active in community affairs most of their lives and they describe their participation in Across Ages as a way ‘to give back’”. While mentors are asked to make a commitment of one year and are required to spend a minimum of 4 hours per week in face-to-face contact with their young partners, at least three quarters remain in the program for 5 years (Taylor and Bressler, 2000, 6).

Project staff members assigned to mentor-mentee pairs are also required to have the same cultural sensitivity as mentors. Project staff members play an invaluable role in planning and implementing program activities and in objectively observing mentor-mentee interactions. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined as follows.

A single coordinator, serving a case management role, should be given the responsibility for primary contact for both mentors and youth. A program usually needs at least a 50% time coordinator to manage a 20 mentor -10 youth complement. Cultural sensitivity and understanding should be primary considerations in staff selection. Additionally, program coordinators and other related staff should have opportunities to be updated about the latest developments in their own program as well as the general field of mentoring (Rogers and Taylor, 1997, 131).

C) Program Assessment

Since one of the purposes of Across Ages is to demonstrate the effectiveness of a comprehensive, intergenerational mentoring approach for high-risk middle school students, program administrators have conducted an extensive evaluation of the program and its impact on participating youth. They post evaluation data and information on the program’s website. The program’s director notes that they continually use the data, especially process data, to inform and adapt the project activities (Taylor, personal communication, September 25, 2007).

1 Research Method

Across Ages adapted a classic experimental research design for the evaluation of its effectiveness. The data on the effectiveness of the program was collected during the 1991-1992, 1992-1993, and 1993-1994 academic years. Its major hypothesis was that the multifaceted intervention approach would result in the most positive changes on the selected outcome measures (LoSciuto, et. al, 1996, 120-121).

Nine different classes in 3 public middle schools were randomly assigned to the following 3 groups:

- Group C: The control group did not receive the intervention.
- Group PS: This group participated in the Positive Youth Development Curriculum (PYDC) and performed community service activities 2 hours per week. Caregivers and family members were invited to attend family workshops and activities.
- Group MPS: This group participated in the PYDC, community service activities, and family workshops and activities 4 hours per week. Participants in this group also were matched with older mentors with whom they met regularly for 2 to 3 hours per week (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, website, October 1, 2007).

Evaluators administered a battery of the following 11 evaluation measures. “The pretest was administered to the students at the beginning of each academic year. ...For the 3 evaluation years, a total of 729 students completed the pretest. The posttest was administered at the end of each academic year. ...The final sample used in the evaluation consisted of 562 students who completed both the pretest and posttest (77% of those originally pretested). Approximately equal numbers of students completed both the pretest and posttest in each of the three experimental groups; 189 in Group C, 193 in Group PS, and 180 in Groups MPS” (LoSciuto, et. al., 1996, 122).

2 Research Context

The following 11 surveys were administered by the evaluators; 1) Attitudes Toward School, Future, and Elders; 2) Attitudes Toward Older People; 3) Rand Well-Being Scale; 4) Facts on Aging; 5) Reactions to Situations Involving ATOD (alcohol, tobacco, and other drug); 6) Attitudes Toward Community Service; 7) Frequency of Substance Use; 8) Reactions to Stress; 9) Self-Perception; 10) ATOD Knowledge; and 11) Problem-solving Efficacy-both before and at the end of the program (Taylor and Bressler, 2000, 10-12; Across Ages, website, September 30, 2007).

“Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypothesis that students in the treatment groups would demonstrate more positive changes on the posttest measures than those in the control group”(LoSciuto et al., 1996, 123).

This evaluation verified that the mentoring group (group MPS) scored significantly better than the comparison group on the following 4 measures: Attitude Toward School, Future, and Elders; Attitudes Toward Older People; Attitudes Toward Community Service; and Reactions to Situations Involving ATOD. It was also discovered that those students in the group MPS had significantly fewer days absent than those in both C and PS groups at a statistically significant level (Across Ages, website, September 30, 2007).

Within the mentoring group, it was also discovered that “those students perceived by staff as being highly involved with their mentors were absent less often than those whose mentors were involved at an average or marginal level.”¹³ The general conclusion, which was well received by parents, educators, and community workers, as well as Across Ages program staff, is that mentoring “may be effective in increasing students’ reported sense of self-worth, promoting feelings of well-being, and reducing feelings of sadness and loneliness, as well as discouraging use of various substances” (LoSciuto et al., 1996, 125-127).

5 Discussion

I have discussed the role of intergenerational mentoring programs for supporting at risk adolescents. The main focus was on Across Ages' innovative program, including its objectives, how it operates and its outcomes. This section will review program results in the context of some of the challenges related to doing this kind of work.

The Across Ages program places ordinary elder citizens in the role of mentor, where they are expected to provide emotional and educational support for at risk youth. The crucial challenge of such a program is to establish a dynamic whereby mentors and mentees trust and feel committed to one another, and willingly enter into long-term relationships with one another. The Across Ages program effectively promotes the formation of such relationships through careful attention to recruiting elder mentors, establishing training programs for them, creating appropriate mentor-mentee pairs, planning cooperative activities that appeal to both generations, and providing ongoing support for the mentor-mentee pairs.

It is also relevant to point out that there is a form of circularity involved in intergenerational mentoring-type initiatives. In contemporary society, it has become difficult for each individual, family, and school to single-handedly address all of the academic and emotional support needs of at-risk youth. In such circumstances, programs that introduce additional support resources in the community serve an important function. Community-based intergenerational mentoring programs are sustainable, dynamic, and provide reciprocal support service for those who serve as mentors and mentees. However, given the complexity and scale of the youth problems being addressed, it is necessary to figure out how intergenerational mentoring initiatives fit alongside other approaches that aim to support at risk youth.

It is also important to take a balanced view of intergenerational mentoring programs. For example, the elderly individuals who serve as mentors are considered to benefit from this opportunity to transcend their status as underutilized human resources in the community to meaningful contributors to the lives of others in need. Given the importance that older adult participants find self-fulfillment from their participation in the program, the most challenging aspect of program operation at present is to recruit enough mentors. Since the principal concept of mentoring activities is to generate mutually beneficial relationships between mentors and mentees, it is essential to carry out follow-up surveys on the elder mentors, evaluate the impact on the mentors, and gather feedback on their requirements to increase satisfaction with their participation.

It is necessary to mention the difficulties of purposeful matching people of different ages. Compared with other intergenerational programs such as tutoring or coaching, here we can see certain difficulties associated with establishing the kind of face-to-face intensive relationships involved in mentoring programs. There have been cases where mentors suddenly have terminated their involvement, and according to Taylor, approximately 10 % of the mentor-mentee matches have not been successful. They try to rematch a child with another mentor fairly soon after the program has started—the longer a bad match continues, the harder it is to re-match. Mentors are not easily interchangeable, so it is important to be vigilant (Taylor, personal communication, September 25, 2007). Taylor also emphasizes the importance of dedicated program staff who are available to support the pairs. They also recognize the importance of working with parents and family members¹⁴.

In closing, it is worth noting that one of the strengths of progressive intergenerational programs such as the Across Ages program is the emphasis on systematic operational procedures for

recruiting and training participants, developing activities, and assessing program impact. Such initiatives also demonstrate how efforts to strengthen the web of support for at risk youth rely on establishing cooperative relations between schools, mentees' family members, local people, specialized institutions, and welfare and educational facilities. However, only well resourced organizations are able to make the necessary investments in program planning, publicity, staff and participant training, and evaluation to make long-term operation possible. It also comes down to a question of whether there is public commitment to quality intervention programs serving at risk youth.

Nevertheless, the ultimate mission of mentoring activities serving at risk adolescents is to free and empower them to grow into healthy adults. Across Ages shows the methodology of introducing "multilayered mentoring networks", which encourages mutual support between all stakeholders, including mentors, program staff, mentees, and their families.

Notes

- 1 As for job assistance measures for NEETs provided by government agencies in Japan, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare started "Wakamono Jiritsu Juku" (school for self-supported youth) in 2005. An example of an NPO-based program is an initiative in which "rental brothers" provide advice for youth who are experiencing social withdrawal problems.
- 2 Young people have always been engaged in delinquent conduct, however, what has changed in 1990s was "the intensity, the scale, and the dangerous consequences" associated with such behavior (Taylor and Dryfoos, 1998-99, 44).
- 3 Dryfoos places youth problem behaviors into four categories: delinquency, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and school failure (Dryfoos, 1990).
- 4 In recent years, the term "mentoring" has been used in a wide variety of ways from "coach to mentor to career sponsor, or in the context of higher education, peer counselor" (Budge, 2006, 79).
- 5 For example, Taylor and Bressler highly appreciated older peoples' capability because "older people, who may themselves have experienced the same marginal status (or 'disengagement') as high-risk youth, seem to be especially resourceful in reaching out to young people" (Taylor and Bressler, 2000, preface, 8).
- 6 The researchers pointed out the significance of "a triad of protective factors" (the personality and social responsiveness of the youth; the presence of close-knit, cohesive, and supportive families; and extra-familial sources of support, such as community mentors) for young people to "endure intensive pressures, rebound from collapse, and continue pushing forward" (Freedman, 1993, 62).
- 7 The author cites Dr. Andrea S. Taylor's comments and remarks on the author's questions on September 25th, 2007. Dr. Taylor has been the principal investigator of one of innovative mentoring programs called the Across Ages.
- 8 Refer to Salts (1989) for the details of follow up studies of elders who have participated in FGP.
- 9 The Center for Intergenerational Learning was established in 1979. It is dedicated to strengthening communities by bringing generations together to meet the needs of individuals and families throughout the life cycle (Taylor and Bressler, 2000).
- 10 Across Ages has adopted a program in which mentors and mentees visit nursing homes as a part of a work-study program. Through such activities, whereby youth are able to contact with a variety of elders, they learn to think critically about negative age-related stereotypes ("ageism").
- 11 Well trained intergenerational specialists play an invaluable role in operating intergenerational programs. Intergenerational specialists here refer to "specialists rich in academic knowledge from juvenile psychology to gerontology, as well as rich in on-site experience and training" (Rosebrook, Haley and Larkin, 2001).
- 12 Taylor states that specialists have learned a lot about how much support mentors need as they work with their mentees, so they have frequent communication with mentors. In other words, the staff mentor the mentors (Taylor, personal communication, September 25, 2007).
- 13 As part of their evaluation, they collected data on what kinds of activities mentors and youth do together (going to museums, engaging in outdoor activities) and also how much time they spend. Then, they categorize the "intensity" of the relationships in terms of hours, moderate hours or few hours (Taylor, personal communication, September 25, 2007).
- 14 Taylor states one of the most challenging aspects today is to form good relationships with mentees' family members, who sometimes become jealous of the developing relationship their child has with a non-familial adult and try and sabotage the relationship (Taylor, personal communication, September 25, 2007).

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