

Running head: PEER-MENTORING

Peer-Mentoring for At-Risk

Middle School Students:

A Suggested Program for North Pole Middle School

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Abstract

A major challenge children face is the transition into middle school. Students who are at-risk of dropping out have more difficulties with this transition. In the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, North Pole Middle School is the only middle school with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. A peer mentoring program is presented, which is one intervention that could help facilitate the transition of at-risk students into middle school. According to Rhodes (2002), mentoring programs provide emotional relationships. Once a strong emotional relationship has developed, then social-emotional development, cognitive development, role modeling, and identification are more likely to progress and may lead to positive developments in the mentee, in areas such as academics, behavior, and social competence.

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Introduction

Children face many transitions during their lifetime. According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2002), transition is defined as "passage from one state, stage, subject, or place to another: change" (p. 1250). One of the major transitions children encounter is the transition from elementary to middle school. With this transition, children face physical, social, emotional, and cognitive changes. Schools often try to develop programs which will help students transition successfully. Akos and Galassi (2004) indicate transition programs should focus on helping the students academically, socially, and procedurally. According to Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) effective transition programs focus on increasing student attendance, improving achievements, and improving retention. One intervention that could aid in the successful transition of students into middle school is a peer-mentoring program. A peer mentoring program would help with the social aspects of the transition as well as addressing academic needs.

For the purpose of this paper, at-risk students will be defined according to the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD) definition (Rauenhorst, 2008). At-risk will be defined as a student who is at risk of dropping out of school. These at-risk students have "risk factors of poor attendance, failing grades, lack of proficiency on standardized assessments, and history of disciplinary infractions" (Rauenhorst, p. 2). A study of 13,000 Philadelphia students found 60% of 6th grade students who later dropped out of school, were failing math, failing English, missed school 20% of the time, or had at least one out of school suspension (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007).

At-risk youth are less likely to have support systems necessary for resiliency. McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, and McWhirter (2004) define resiliency as "the capacity to adapt and

function successfully despite experiencing chronic stress and adversity” (p. 109). Resiliency in children can be attributed to having social support, the chance to develop, positive familial support, and individual characteristics and skills. Mentoring can build a child’s resiliency by providing social support. According to O’Connor (2006), mentoring allows a child to reach their full potential.

Students at-risk of dropping out of school can be helped by a mentoring program, which may improve their grades and attendance (Blum & Jones, 1993). The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District steering committee report suggests a mentoring program as an intervention to prevent at-risk students from dropping out (Hawkins, 2005). Mentoring is defined by the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (n.d.) as the relationship between an experienced person, who is usually older, and a less experienced individual to help with personal or professional development. Mentoring offers a number of positive outcomes. According to DuBois and Silverthorn (2005), informal or natural mentoring relationships, where the relationship occurs without any formal program or requirements, result in the child having a greater chance of finishing high school and going on to attend college. A study by Public/Private Ventures in the Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring program for High School Students as Mentors indicates mentees denoted improvements in classroom effort, prosocial behavior, skipping school, quality of class work, turning in completed assignments, oral and written language, classroom behavior, misconduct at school, and grades (Herrera, Kauh, Cooney, Grossman, & McMaken, 2008). Mentoring helps decrease risky behavior, such as belonging to a gang, getting in a fight, and other risk-taking behavior (DuBois & Silverton, 2005). Having a mentor is associated with being more likely to successfully complete high school, having a better self-esteem, having a feeling of satisfaction in life, and participating in greater amounts of

physical activity, all of which result in increases of the child's well-being, physical health, and emotional health. Mentoring allows students to develop more confidence in their schoolwork, improve their relationship with their parents, reduce the number of unexcused absences, develop a better attitude towards school, decrease disruptive class behavior, and become more engaged in class (Cannatra, Garringer, MacRae, & Wakeland, 2005).

With the advent of the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 1991), counselors are required to ensure all the children in their school are successful, no matter what their race, color, or nationality. The role of a school counselor in a middle school or high school is to promote academic, social, mental, and interpersonal development, -career development, and assist with the transition to work (American School Counselor Association, 2005). There are many ways counselors, teachers, and administrators fulfill the requirement to make sure no child is left behind. Mentoring is one intervention that can assist in meeting this need.

Middle school success is one step to help ensure students will graduate from high school. A peer mentoring program with a focus on academics is one intervention which could aid at-risk students with the transition to middle school. The development of a peer mentoring curriculum for North Pole Middle School targeting at-risk students would help with the successful transition of these students into middle school. The main research question is: What are the components of a peer mentoring program targeted to assist students at-risk of dropping out of school with the transition into middle school?

Literature Review

Developmental Needs

When students move from elementary to middle school, they face many changes. They move from having one teacher in a self-contained classroom, knowing all the students in their

class, to having six to seven teachers for multiple classes with different students in each class (B. Bell, personal communication, October 2, 2008). They have to learn new experiences, such as dealing with lockers and getting to and from class. To deal with these changes the students have to develop organizational and time management skills. Middle school students face greater expectations from teachers and are expected to be more responsible for their work. Some students navigate this transition successfully; however, others have a difficult time. For students going through this transition, there are different areas of concern, which include academic, physical, cognitive, and social changes. According to Bishop and Pflaum (2005), middle school students need to have a sense of community, affiliation, and belonging in order to have academic engagement. Mentoring offers one way to provide a sense of community, affiliation, and belonging to increase a student's opportunities for successfully making it through this difficult time period.

Academically the expectations for students in middle school change compared to the expectations in elementary school. The students have to figure out how to learn from different teachers with a variety of teaching styles. Students are required to keep track of the different assignments, due dates, and projects in middle school, with little input from the teachers. In elementary school, the teacher(s) are more aware of the students academically and are better able to ensure the students are completing their work in a satisfactory manner (B. Bell, personal communication, October 2, 2008).

Adolescents between the ages of 10 and 14 years old, undergo many physical changes, they get taller, their body shape changes, and they start developing sexual characteristics (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). This time period is one where children in middle school may or may not be starting puberty. Girls start puberty anywhere from 8 to 13 years old, with boys at 10

to 15 years old (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). With the onset of puberty physical changes are taking place. Both girls and boys start developing sexual characteristics (Search Institute, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2005; Wigfield, Lutz, & Wagner, 2005). Girls start menstruation and develop breasts, with boys developing testes. Puberty brings rapid growth in some adolescents, with different parts of the body growing at different rates and times. Since children are developing at many different rates, early and late developing adolescents face different issues. Girls, who enter puberty earlier than their peers, often face greater difficulties (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Girls, who are early developers, can end up being pressured into adult situations before they are emotionally and mentally ready to face these challenges (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Boys who develop late may feel inadequate because they are not as able to compete physically especially in sports (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). All these physical changes result in a greater awareness of their body image and appearance.

In early adolescence, cognitive changes are occurring (Search Institute, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2005). As a person enters adolescence, their problem-solving abilities increase and the ability to think abstractly is developing. They are now able to determine consequences for different actions. These abilities allow the adolescents to do more difficult schoolwork. Additionally, these students start thinking about their identity and often try out many different roles. The young adolescents begin questioning and will often challenge assumptions (Search Institute, 2007).

From 10 to 14 years old, adolescents experience great emotional changes (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). They have mood swings, short tempers, periods of sulking, and a desire for privacy. They start worrying about their future. As a result of the major physical

and emotional changes, they may become self-conscious and overly sensitive. In adolescence, the child moves from a desire to be independent and do things on their own to needing assistance with decision making (Search Institute, 2007). During this time period, adolescents are developing their self-esteem and self-concept (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). A study by Fenzel (2000) indicated young adolescents transitioning into middle school, who believe themselves capable of making friends easily, will be less likely have a low self-worth and poor social skills. Additionally, Fenzel (2000) found that having close relationships during the transition to middle school helped a student's feelings of self-worth. Jimerson, Ferguson, Whipple, Anderson, and Dalton (2002) found students who are at risk, have lower levels of self-esteem.

Concerns and Challenges of Middle School

There are many concerns and challenges associated with the transition from elementary to middle school. Research by Akos (2004) indicates organizational, personal/social, and academic areas are where students want advice to help transferring into middle school. In a study by Akos and Galassi (2004), students and parents identified how they felt about middle school. Before the school year began, students and parents initially identified the amount of academic work, getting lost, being on-time to class, and fitting in and/or making friends as issues of concern. Later on in the school year, students found classes, getting good grades and completing homework, and teachers to be the hardest parts of middle school, while parents thought changes in the amount of responsibility and relationships with friends were the most difficult parts. These students identified that spending time with friends, trying to fit in, and ignoring those who pick on them helped ease the transition into middle school (Akos & Galassi). A mentoring program would assist with these areas.

Another study by Akos (2002) addressed student perceptions of the transition into middle school. The study indicated students were most distressed by the fear of getting lost, making friends, knowing when and where to go, using lockers, and being to class on time. These students identified friends, teachers, parents, counselors, and others as people who helped with the transition, with friends and peers being the most helpful. Using students who could be a positive role model for at-risk students transitioning into middle school could offer the opportunity to assist in this transition.

Young adolescents transitioning from elementary to middle school usually move from a smaller school to a larger one and are faced with classes of students they do not know (E. Tsikoyak, personal communication, November 3, 2008). The students change from being the oldest in their elementary school to being the youngest in their middle school (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Wigfield and his colleagues (2005) suggest a student's perception of how they believe they will do academically influences how well they actually do and indicate young adolescents do not value school subjects as much as they might have in elementary school.

In a study by Rudolph, Lambert, Clark, and Kurlakowsky (2001) of the transition to middle school, students who felt they had little control over their academic success and were not motivated academically, claimed to have higher amounts of stress related to school than students who wanted to succeed academically. Additionally, these students reported becoming more depressed upon the transition into middle school. The depressive susceptibility may be due to the students already having maladaptive self-regulatory beliefs (Rudolph et al., 2001). Depression from this transition may occur as a result of the student feeling as if they do not have control over being academically successful and do not feel invested in the school. These students reported feeling more stress in relation to school and thus became more depressed when

experiencing a transition into middle school. In a report by Public/Private Ventures, high risk youth who participated in a mentoring program and were showing preexisting signs of depression were found to be 69% less likely to show signs of depression after six months of mentoring (Bauldry, 2006).

According to Cauley and Jovanovich (2006), students with behavior problems often have a difficult time transitioning into middle school due to a lack of social skills. Additionally, children with problematic behaviors are at greater risk of dropping out of school in the future (Jimerson et al., 2002). For children transitioning into middle school, those who are lacking in friendships and/or have an unstable friendship with a best friend have an increased risk of social withdrawal. When students are excluded, victimized, and without friends, increases in social withdrawal may occur (Oh et al., 2008). Additionally, young adolescents having low self-worth and no close friends will have more difficulties with peer relations as they go through the transition to middle school (Fenzel, 2000).

Theoretical Considerations

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory offers a way to understand the implications of the transition to middle school as well as addresses the effects of peer mentoring upon a student (Weiss, Kreider, Lopez, & Chapman, 2005). According to the ecological systems theory, a person develops in relationship to the environmental systems around them through both direct and indirect influences. The systems are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem all affecting the individual. The transition into middle school affects the student's development through many of these different systems.

The microsystem consists of the things and people with whom an individual directly interacts (Weiss et al., 2005). The adolescent transitioning into middle school may have many

people in his or her microsystems. One of the microsystems is the child's family. Another microsystem is the child's school. The school microsystem includes the student's peers, friends, teachers, counselors, and other school staff. The mesosystem is the relationships between the microsystems, including the connection between the parents and the teacher or the relationship between the school and the neighborhood. A person who has healthy connections between the microsystems generally develops in a healthier way (McWhirter et al., 2007). The exosystem is the relationship between things that do not specifically include the student. When looking at the transition to middle school, one of the student's exosystems is the school board's policy regarding who attends middle school. Another exosystem is the federal policy requiring certain academic standards at each level. The macrosystem includes cultural values, beliefs, gender roles, society's structure, and international and national resources. The chronosystem is the relationship between the individual and the different aspects of his or her environment in relation to time. As a student transitions to middle school, they are faced with changing feelings in the areas of social relationships and self-worth. Bronfenbrenner's model reflects the relationship between the person's development and their changing environment (Fenzel, 2000). Altering the environment affects the student's psychological abilities, which in turn causes the person to alter his or her experiences in relationship to the environment. Using mentoring to help strengthen the student's microsystem will aid the student with their development.

Multi-Cultural Considerations

Culture can have a major impact upon the transition into middle school. Research by Akos and Galassi (2004) signified boys feel less connected after transitioning into middle school. One way to help increase the sense of connectedness is through more social support, which a mentoring program would offer. Having matches, which align cultural similar students, could

help with culture identity issues. Another way to address this could be to offer cultural education as an activity for the curriculum (Jucovy, 2002). In research by Crutcher (2007), she has found the mentors believe it is important to be knowledgeable of their mentees race, culture, gender, and/or cultural background.

Research by Akos and Galassi (2004) indicated Latino students believed the transition into middle school was harder than African American or Caucasians found the transition. For Latino students this transition is more difficult than the move from middle school to high school, which may be due in part to an increase in linguistics although the specific reason remains unknown. This study indicated counselors, peers, and family can help in the transition for minority students (Akos & Galassi). Since peers may play a major role in assisting with the transition, a peer-mentoring program could help minorities move successfully through this transition.

A study by Burchinal, Roberts, Rowley, and Zeisel (2008), showed teachers thought African American children with higher social risk had lower reading and math skills, less prosocial skills, and higher amounts of problem behaviors. Peer mentoring might be one way to reduce the high social risk for these students and thus help them improve in the above listed areas.

Mentoring Programs

Elements of successful mentoring programs. DuBois (2007) identified the main purpose of a mentoring program for youth is to “establish and support beneficial relationships” within the mentoring match (p. 3). A key to a successful mentoring program is to ensure the mentoring relationships are of superior quality and have positive outcomes for the youth involved. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure that all parties involved remain safe. With any program it

is important to make sure the resources needed are used in a reliable and efficient manner.

Finally, the program should be sustainable and able to grow over time (DuBois, 2007; Garringer & MacRae, 2008).

For a mentoring program to be successful, the relationship between the mentor and mentee should flourish. According to Rhodes (2002), an emotional relationship is the most significant part of a mentoring program. Once a strong relationship has been developed, then social-emotional development, cognitive development, role modeling, and identification may occur. In turn this may lead to positive developments in the mentee, in areas such as academics, behavior, and competence. Cannata, Garringer, MacRae, and Wakeland (2005) point out the importance of building a strong relationship between the mentor and mentee ensuring the mentee feels the mentor is a trusted and important part of their life. Rhodes found four things necessary to ensure strong and healthy mentoring relationships of the mentors: (a) establishing matches based on common interests, (b) ensuring mentors receive more than six hours of training, (c) providing on-going support, and (d) training after the student and mentor have been matched.

Benefits of mentoring programs. There are many advantages to participating in a mentoring program. A study of high risk youth by Public/Private Ventures indicated a reduction in substance use, fewer reports of feelings of depression, and a reduction in fighting (Bauldry, 2006). The U.S. Department of Education did a review of different mentoring programs and found the following benefits: academic improvement; feelings of connectedness to parents, school, and the future; social skills development; and increases in self-esteem (Mentoring Resource Center, 2005). The Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors (Pardini, 2006) identifies additional benefits of mentoring. Mentors increase personal satisfaction, gain recognition from others, focus on others, and have increases in interpersonal skills. The mentees gain a positive

role model, receive exposure to other people and cultures, receive positive attention from an appropriate source, gain self-confidence and self-esteem, and develop socially and emotionally. According to Jekielek, Moore, Hair, and Scarupa (2002), youth who have taken part in a mentoring relationship have better school attendance; an increased chance of going onto a higher education, and a more positive attitude towards school. Mentees have a lower likelihood of using alcohol and other drugs, a reduction in negative behaviors related to delinquency, and more positive attitudes towards relationships.

Peer mentoring programs offer other advantages as well. With peer mentoring programs both the mentor and the mentee learn and gain skills (Garringer & MacRae, 2008). This peer mentoring relationship allows the mentor and mentee to develop more friendships. An advantage of peer mentoring programs over other mentoring programs is the need for fewer resources due to the program usually being based out of a school. Another benefit is having someone outside of school aid students with the transition into a new school, such as middle school. Parents may feel like peer mentoring programs are better, since most activities take place at a school where it is safe and supervised; a strange adult is not part of their child's life, and the activities generally take place either immediately before or after school or during the school day. According to Nelson (2003), mentors in a peer mentoring program reported increases in self-confidence, self-esteem, communication ability, and problem solving skills. Research by Fenzel (2000) indicates that helping an at-risk student develop social skills will assist the student to successfully make it through other transitions.

Program components. When designing a mentoring program, there are specific steps for starting and running a mentoring program. Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership (2005), a national organization that offers research and advocacy for mentoring, has identified four main

parts to a mentoring program: design and planning, maintenance, operations, and evaluation. Riley et al., (1998) have a guide for starting mentoring programs and identify the steps as program planning, identifying mentors and students, and running the program. Garringer and MacRae (2008) address creating a school-based peer mentoring program, and through this have indicated the areas of importance as program design; recruitment, screening, and selection; training; and match activities. Cox (2009) has identified ten areas in order to have a credible international mentoring program, which are the statement of purpose and a long range plan; recruitment; orientation; screening; training; matching; monitoring; support, retention, and recognition; closure; and evaluation. For purposes of this paper, the four areas which will be addressed are program design, recruitment, matches, and evaluation, which will include all the different aspects each program has suggested.

Program design. The first thing to do is determine what needs the potential program will meet (Garringer & MacRae, 2008; Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005; Riley et al., 1998). The need for the program should guide and provide information about the program components, whether it is academic assistance, social skills improvement, and/or career exploration (Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership).

Next, the population the program will target has to be determined (Cox, 2009; Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005; Riley et al., 1998). The age, gender, needs, and common characteristics of the targeted population have to be considered. The defining factors of the targeted population should be considered, whether the mentees are at-risk of dropping out of school, come from a low income family, are disabled, are members of a language minority, or have other risk factors. After determining what type of population the program will serve, the

mentors can be recruited (Mentor, 2005). It is important to have mentors who have skills, abilities, and experiences which reflect the focus of the mentoring program.

The third step is to decide which type of mentoring will be provided (Mentor, 2005). The different mentoring relationships are: traditional adult to child mentoring, group mentoring, peer mentoring, e-mentoring, and team mentoring. Traditional adult to child mentoring is when a caring adult is matched with a child, and they generally meet for approximately an hour each week. Group mentoring is when a group of students is gathered together and receives mentoring as part of the group. Generally, two people facilitate the group. Peer mentoring occurs when an older child mentors a younger child. This type of mentoring usually takes place in the schools. The mentoring, which occurs when the relationship takes place through the use of emails, text messages, and/or instant chat, is e-mentoring. Team mentoring occurs when a team of individuals is mentored by a coach or someone similar.

The fourth step is determining whether the mentoring program will be a stand-alone program or part of an established organization (Mentor, 2005; Riley et al., 1998). An example of an already established mentoring program would be Big Brothers Big Sisters. This type of program is nationwide and has preestablished guidelines which have been studied and researched (L. Huskey, personal communication, October 7, 2008). A stand-alone program is one where there are not any ties with a preexisting mentoring program. Schools often implement their own mentoring programs, which could then be considered stand-alone programs.

Fifth, the specific goals of the mentoring relationship must be determined (Mentor, 2005). There are three common types of mentoring relationships; however, no matter the type of mentoring relationship, the main purpose should be to develop a strong relationship between the mentor and mentee (Rhodes, 2002). The first kind of mentoring relationship focuses on

character, social, and leadership development, where the mentor acts as a role model and guide to life. The second type of mentoring relationship is school-to-career, with the focus of the match being on career exploration, job skills, and postsecondary education opportunities. The third type is academic success, where the relationship is built but focus is also on academic success.

By knowing the goals of the program, those individuals who will be necessary for implementing the program can be determined (Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005). These people include the mentors, mentees, parents/guardians, the organization, an advisory group, and a management team. An advisory group should be established and members selected (Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership). According to the grants administrator for the Yukon Koyukuk School District in Fairbanks, Alaska, the advisory group should consist of the program facilitator, a teacher, an administrator, a community member, a student, a parent/guardian, and a business partnership member (G. Hrinko, personal communication, February 19, 2009). The advisory committee will determine the mission and vision statements, which will address the purposes of the program and the future of the program (Cox, 2009). Once the mission and vision statement have been determined, then other potential resources can be identified which match the purpose of the program (Garringer & MacRae, 2008). A management team will be determined and their duties are to implement the policies and procedures, which could include finding the mentors and mentees, publicity, coordination with families and community members, arranged meets and trainings, ensuring monitoring of the matches, and evaluation (Cox, 2009; Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005). Community partnerships can be established and resources found to help with the program, through the use of the library and computer lab or a partnership with a local business to provide career information. Additionally, how the program

will be promoted has to be considered, whether word of mouth, advertisement, or informational meetings.

The time and place for the matches to meet, training sessions, and orientations has to be considered (Cox, 2009; Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005). The nature of the mentoring program will assist in figuring out the best time to have the mentoring sessions occur. The type of mentoring which will occur places restrictions on the location. For example, if it is an academic mentoring relationship, meeting at a mall is not a good idea; however, meeting in the school library would be advantageous. With the training sessions and orientations, the number of people and availability of equipment needed for the sessions has to be considered.

It must be decided how often the matches should meet and how long the matches should last (Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005). For strong mentoring relationships to be established, regular and consistent meetings need to take place. The duration of the match also plays a role in the benefits of the match.

Recruitment. Mentors and mentees need to be found in order for the program to work (Cox, 2009; Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005; Riley et al., 1998). The recruitment can take place through a variety of different methods. Meetings or information sessions can provide information about the program and an opportunity to sign up as either a mentor or mentee. The mentors and mentees can be recruited through advertising through the use of radio, television, newspapers, and magazines. Enlisting the help of a journalist to receive publicity through a public interest story and/or provide a press release about the program is a good idea. Offering an open house at the location of the organization sponsoring the program also encourages participation. Another way to recruit is to put up fliers and posters in locations with the targeted populations. Creating a bulletin board, which can be displayed at schools, libraries,

community centers, colleges, or businesses, will help. One additional method of recruitment is to provide promotional activities.

The mentors determine the success for the mentoring program (Garringer & MacRae, 2008). To find successful mentors, their qualifications must be determined and then the mentors recruited (Cox, 2009; Garringer & MacRae, 2008; Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005). A minimum of two years should separate the mentor and mentee in order to allow for appropriate boundaries to be maintained (Karcher, 2007). Mentors should be people who are kind and caring, have a desire to help others, are positive role models, will be able to meet the time commitments, are trustworthy, and have special hobbies or interests (Garringer & MacRae, 2008; Riley et al., 1998).

After a group of mentors has been recruited the mentors must be screened (Cox, 2009; Garringer & MacRae, 2008; Mentor/Mentoring National Partnership, 2005). The screening process should ensure: (a) mentors will be sensitive to the mentees; (b) mentors are responsible and able to commit to a match; (c) mentors will not harm the mentee or the program; and (d) the mentors and mentees will benefit from the match. Potential mentees should be interviewed to determine their suitability for the mentoring program. As part of the screening process a background check should be performed to eliminate potentially unsuitable mentors. A minimum of two references should be checked as another way to maintain the safety of the parties involved.

The potential mentees have to be determined and recruited, targeting the predetermined population (Cox, 2009; Garringer & MacRae, 2008; Mentor/Mentoring National Partnership, 2005). The mentees should be screened, as well, to ensure a stable program. Recommendations will aid in determining who will work as a mentee. Parents of potential mentees should be

included in this process. Mentees should be individuals who will benefit from the mentoring experience. Finally, the mentees should be able to meet the time commitments for being part of a match.

After identifying the mentors and mentees, training and orientation should be provided (Cox, 2009; Garringer & MacRae, 2008; Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005).

According to Cannata, Garringer, Taylor, and Arvalo (2006), the orientation and initial training allows program participants to gain a clear understanding of the programs policies, expectations, and procedures; reduces match risk; sets up a framework for starting the mentoring relationship; and increases the success of the match and the effectiveness of the mentoring program.

Orientations should be required for mentors and mentees and their parents/guardians. The orientation should address the goals and purposes of the program, time and length of commitments, expectations of the individuals, benefits of the program, roles of the participants and their family members, limitations of the program, and support provided for the matches. As part of the orientation, the mentors and mentees should fill out an interest survey to help with matching. Mentors should be provided training prior to the match to help ensure the match will be successful. As part of the initial training of a mentor, the mentor should be taught about the role of a mentor, positive relationships, communication skills, developing life skills, where to go to get help and assistance, how to establish and meet goals, conflict resolution skills, safety issues, and multicultural issues.

Matches. After the initial mentor training and orientations, mentors and mentees can be matched. The interest survey filled out at the orientation will aid in determining appropriate matches (Cox, 2009; Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005; Pardini, n.d.; Riley et al., 1998). The matches should be based upon personal preferences, temperaments, experiences,

interests, gender, parent input, compatibility, and race. Once the matches have been determined, an introductory meeting between the mentor and mentee should take place, which is dependent upon the type of mentoring program. Rules and guidelines for the match should be reinforced during the introductory meeting. Arrangements for further meetings will be made during this initial session. Both parties should sign an agreement, which states the requirements of the respective party (Cox, 2009).

The matches should be monitored and given support, encouragement, and supervision (Cox, 2009; Jucovy, 2001; Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005; Riley et al., 1998). Regular communication should occur between the program coordinator and mentor. The program coordinator should check with the mentor regularly to ensure the match is meeting on a regular basis, appropriate support is provided for the match, the quality of the relationship is being monitored, the goals of the relationship are being met, additional resources and information are available, and to address any problem areas. Jucovy (2001) recommends the mentor be contacted within the first two weeks of the start of the match and every two weeks of the first year of the match. The parents/guardians and the mentees should be contacted within the first two weeks and monthly thereafter.

Training should be provided as on-going basis and regular basis (Cannata et al., 2006; Jucovy, 2001; Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005; Riley et al., 1998). Rhodes (2002) indicates matches, where the mentor has received six or more hours of training develop stronger relationships. Training for the mentors allows the mentors to learn about possible situations which could occur in the match (Cannata et al., 2006). Training could include program information, relationship skills, role plays, social skills, value clarification, safety issues,

personality types, various types of activities, appropriate boundaries, community service opportunities, and training targeted around the program's needs.

Matches should be recognized for special or significant achievements. Events honoring the matches should take place, such as breakfasts or awards banquets (Cox, 2009). At the end of the match, a celebration honoring both the mentors and mentees will help recognize the two individuals and any special accomplishments the match completed can be acknowledged.

There are three stages to matches (Pardini, 2006): establishment, setting and maintaining goals, and closure. The establishment of the match allows the mentor and mentee to get to know each other and develop trust. The length of this stage varies depending upon the relationship and the amount of contact. As the match progresses, goals are established and met, with the mentoring coordinator playing a supportive role. During this stage, time is spent learning, doing activities, and being together. The final stage of the match is closure, which is the end of the match. Closure can occur due to either party being dissatisfied with the match or because the duration of the program's match has come to a close. Closure is a time to reflect on the progress the mentee has made, their strengths, their growth, what has been learned, future possibilities, and whether the mentor and mentee will continue their relationship on an informal basis (Cox, 2009; Pardini, 2006; Riley et al., 1998). This can be a very difficult time for the mentor and mentee emotionally, providing a closing awards program will aid in the termination of the match. Closure should also include individual interviews with the mentors and mentees (Riley et al., 1998).

Evaluation. As with any successful program evaluation is necessary. Evaluation should determine the progress the program made, measure the outcomes expected, and allow for changes and improvements in the program, as well as providing reports to the sponsors, public,

and media (Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005). Additionally, it must be decided who will do the evaluations, how often they will occur, and which types of evaluation will be used. Riley et al. (1998) have identified two types of evaluations. The first type is the process evaluation, which helps determine if the mentoring program is implementing the procedures that have been established and if any changes need to be made to guarantee the procedures are being followed. Process data addresses the number of matches, the length of the matches, the length of the match meetings, the number of early terminations, the activities participated in, and the relationship types. The second type of evaluation focuses on the outcome of the program. Outcome data measures whether the program is meeting the goals and objectives of the program. Outcome data looks at increases in school attendance, percentage of mentee completed homework assignments, and positive changes in mentee behavior and attitude.

According to Karcher (2007), peer mentoring programs are not regularly evaluated, which may or may not result in the program requirements and needs not being met. Effective peer mentoring programs run smoothly using mentors who have been trained appropriately, have mentors who are social and not self-absorbed, have matches differing by a minimum of two years in age, provide activities to ensure the strength and longevity of the relationship, are monitored, provide training for mentees to show how to get support from their mentors, and have a termination process which is taught (Karcher, 2007).

Evaluations can include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and observations (Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership, 2005). Evaluations should take place before the match, in the middle of the match, and at the close of the match in order to assure the program maintains professionalism (Cox, 2009). Mentees, mentors, parents/guardians, and teachers should all be involved in evaluating the match and its success.

Limitations and risks. The biggest limitation of a mentoring program is the status of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. Successful mentoring relationships are long-term with regular contact occurring between the two parties. Whenever the match is terminated early and/or there is not regular contact, the mentor and/or mentee is at risk of being harmed emotionally. Rhodes (2002) did a study on the length of match and its benefits or harm. The results of this research indicated mentoring matches which lasted less than 3 months could have a detrimental effect on the mentee causing decreases in feelings of self-worth and feelings of academic incompetence; however, matches lasting a year or longer generally indicated mentees had feelings of social acceptance, positive feelings of self-worth, and academic competence. Choosing the appropriate mentor to be matched with a mentee is of utmost importance. Mentors must be chosen with care. Mentors would need to be students who are socially capable, have a positive influence on the mentee, have positive self-esteem, are self-confident, and are good examples to the mentees. Implementing the curriculum, as part of a class or as a club, would ensure attendance, commitment, and continued support throughout the year.

Examples of successful peer mentoring programs. One example of a successful peer mentoring program which focuses on academic improvements is Twelve Together (WWC Intervention Report, 2007). The intended population for this program is middle school and high school students. This program meets once a week during the school year and combines twelve students together, part of whom are at high risk of academic failure. During the meetings, the groups discuss a variety of issues, which include family concerns, personal problems, and social issues. As part of the program, homework help is provided. Field trips to college campuses are taken. The group gets together once a year for a weekend retreat. A study of Twelve Together

from a California school district indicated the potential for staying in school increased as a result of the program (WWC Intervention Report).

Another program is the Peer Mentoring program at Tanfield School in the United Kingdom (Nelson, 2003). With this program, students in year 10 were matched with students in year 7. Matches were made based on attendance at the same feeder school, same gender, same hobbies/interests, and same general home location. The goals of this program were to make the transition from primary to secondary school easier; to increase the self-confidence of the mentees; to develop the mentors' self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation, and communication skills; and develop a sense of community within the school. The pilot program matched six sets of students. The matches met at the end of the school year, and then right at the beginning of the next school year. The matches continued to meet throughout the year; however, the time and number of meetings was dependent upon each match. As a result of participating in this program, the mentors believed they had improved in being able to work with others, in problem solving, and feeling more responsible for their schoolwork. Mentees reported being less worried about going to a secondary school, having improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence, and being better able to communicate. The pilot program was followed in the next year with an increase in matches to almost 60. As part of the mentor training, anti-bullying strategies were provided. Additionally, previous mentors worked with small groups to provide knowledge and insight into ways to make a match successful. Since the program had proven to be very successful, Tanfield School enacted a third phase of the mentoring program, which matched all students as mentors and mentees. This third phase also proved to be successful, with mentees feeling more confident and finding the school transition to be easier than expected.

Current Programs for FNSBSD

Currently Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD) has seven middle schools (Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, 2008). Six of the schools have 7th and 8th grade, and one school, North Pole Middle School (NPMS), has 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. North Pole Middle School received its first 6th graders in the 2007-2008 school year. During this school year, families within the NPMS district were allowed to choose between sending their child to the elementary school or to the middle school.

At the present time the FNSBSD has a partnership with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Alaska to provide school-based mentors for at-risk youth. School-based mentoring matches are defined as a match between an adult and child, in which the match meets once a week at the child's school. In this partnership at-risk youth are identified and encouraged to fill out an application to participate in the school-based mentoring program. This program offers many benefits for the child, which include overall academic improvement, increases in the quality of their school work, increases in assignments turned in, less serious social problems relating to school rules, increases in self-esteem towards school work, and decreases in unexcused absences from school (Herrera et. al, 2008). While this partnership offers many advantages, it has a substantial problem. Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Alaska is having a difficult time in finding appropriate adults to be mentors for these students (L. Huskey, personal communication, October 7, 2008), thus many students needing a mentor are not matched. Additionally counselors and graduation success coaches do not encourage students to participate in this program, due to the long wait time for matches to be made (A. Forsman, personal communication, October 12, 2008; G. Hoener, personal communication, September 28, 2008).

At NPMS there are a variety of prevention options for addressing the at-risk students. The school counselor is usually the one who coordinates the student's connection to a program. Currently there are two counselors at NPMS and approximately 600 students. This means each counselor is responsible for about 300 students, which limits the amount of focused attention counselors can have with at-risk students (B. Bell, personal communication, September 27, 2008). Generally, these at-risk students are contacted by the school counselor at mid-terms, at quarter time, and in response to a recommendation or student initiated contact. The programs offered are the after school program, study halls, math tutorial, graduation success program, Alaska Native education program, and the drug and alcohol intervention program, which are described in more detail below. All of these programs and staff are excellent ways to reach the students; however, there is still a need for more regular contact and support for the at-risk students.

One option is the After School Program. This program is offered district-wide; however, it varies depending upon the school. At NPMS, the After School Program is offered Monday through Thursday from 2:30 to 4:30 pm (E. Tsikoyak, personal communication, November 3, 2008). The students who participate in the After School Program must submit an application. The students are selected based upon socioeconomic need and academic need. The program consists of one hour of academics and one hour of an enrichment activity. A total of 40 students may participate in the program (D. Keil, personal communication, February 11, 2009). The students are split into four different groups, allowing for more individualized attention and assistance. The enrichment activities consist of arts and crafts, board games, computers, photography, and an international flavor section. The students rotate on a regular basis between enrichment activities. Different staff members facilitate this program.

Another intervention offered at NPMS, is study hall. The study hall classes are kept very small, with anywhere from three to ten students at a time. Students who are taking study hall often are participating in the After School Program. There are approximately 50-60 students taking study hall as one of their elective classes, of which 15 to 20 of the students are 6th graders (E. Tsikoyak, personal communication, November 3, 2008). At NPMS study hall is offered in a couple of different manners. Study halls are offered through the math tutor, the Graduation Success Program, and the Alaska Native Education Program. The students are chosen for these study halls based on poor academic performance and may be referred by a teacher, parent, or counselor.

The math tutor provides four study halls and assists in two math classes (D. Keil, personal communication, February 11, 2009). The math tutor has an average of 10 to 12 students per study hall period; however, additional students come to the math tutor's room to do homework, quizzes, and tests. She has had up to 24 students in a study hall at one time.

An additional support is the Graduation Success Program, also offered district wide; however, it varies greatly depending upon location (K. Vrabac, personal communication, February 20, 2009). At NPMS, the program allows a graduation success coach to be responsible for six study hall classes; limiting the number of students the program can impact (C. Sanderson, personal communication, December 17, 2008). For the 3rd quarter of this year, the graduation success coach has 35 students assigned to her study hall classes (C. Sanderson, personal communication, February 11, 2009). Of the 35 students in these study halls, only 11 are sixth graders. She has daily contact with approximately 100-110 students each day, which includes incidental contact and students who come to her study hall out of their regular core class. At NPMS there have been 213 students identified as at-risk students; however, the Graduation

Success Program only reaches about one half of these students. As part of this program the students who are enrolled in the graduation success study halls, participate in a minimum of one service learning project. Another benefit offered by this program is the individualized attention, resulting from having four to eight students per study hall class. The grades and the attendance of these students are regularly monitored, with the graduation success coach offering tutoring, incentives, and encouragement. According to Kim Vrabac (personal communication, February 10, 2009), the coordinator of the Graduation Success Program, this program is only in its third year and longitudinal success of the program has not been determined and the short-term success of the program is difficult to evaluate, since much of the program is centered around social work type of activities.

During the 3rd quarter of 2008-2009, a math tutorial class is being offered in addition to students regular math class (B. Bell, personal communication, January 10, 2009). Students in 6th and 7th grade with Standards Based Assessment math scores that were within 20 points of being proficient and /or were identified by a math teacher as needing extra support in math were chosen with parental approval to participate in math tutorial class. The aim of the math tutorial class is to bring up the students' Standards Based Assessment math scores and build math skills in areas the students may be lacking. One math tutorial class is being offered to 6th grade students with 12 enrolled in the class, and one class is offered to 7th grade students having an enrollment of six students.

For Alaska Native or American Indian students, an Alaska Native Education Program is provided. This program offers a part-time person, who works with twelve students on a regular basis and provides two study hall classes (B. Kingus, personal communication, February 11,

2009). The Alaska Native Education Aide sees six 6th graders, one 7th grader, and five 8th graders. The students visit her on an as needed basis for academic assistance.

Another prevention/intervention option is the Drug and Alcohol Intervention Program. The drug and alcohol intervention specialist works with a number of students; however, the focus is more on 7th and 8th grade students (B. Do, personal communication, January 11, 2009). The drug and alcohol intervention specialist does groups for students who have had issues with drugs or alcohol. In addition, prevention activities are offered for the entire school.

According to the Research and Accountability Department of FNSBSD (2008), NPMS had 599 students as of October 1, 2008. These students were in grades 6, 7, and 8. Of these students, 77.3% of the students were European American (463 students), 7.7% were Alaska Native (46 students), 5.8% were multiethnic (35 students), 4.2% were Hispanic (25 students), 2.8% were African American (17 students), 1.5% were Asia American (9 students), 0.5% were Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (3 students), and 0.2% were American Indian (1 student). NPMS has the highest percent of European American students in comparison to the other middle schools in the FNSBSD. The average percent of European American students at a middle school in the FNSBSD is 66.1%. Even though NPMS has a higher population of European American students, all ethnic groups should be considered when establishing any program in a school. With a peer mentoring program, the culture and ethnicity of the mentors and mentees should be taken into consideration when making the matches. In addition, it would be important to include cultural education as part of the mentoring curriculum.

In the 2008-2009 school year, 6th grade students in the NPMS feeder school region were required to send their students to NPMS, with the exception of 6th graders at Ticasuk Brown Elementary. Parents of 6th grade students had Ticasuk Brown Elementary got to choose NPMS

or Ticasuk Brown Elementary for their 6th grade students (B. Bell, personal communication, January 6, 2009). Many of the 6th grade students are currently having a difficult time with this transition. Approximately one third of the sixth graders have received at least one F in a core subject (B. Bell, personal communication, January 6, 2009). This places almost 33% of the 6th grade students at-risk academically. Students may have failing grades due to social issues, the transition, lack of motivation, changes in amount of school work expected, lack of connectedness, or a combination of things. The establishment of a peer mentoring program, with 8th grade students mentoring incoming 6th grade students could help build their 6th grade resiliency and decrease their risk factors.

A report by the Dropout Prevention Steering Committee for the FNSBSD identified turning points, which are times in a child's life that impact his or her learning (Hawkins, 2005). The committee denoted turning points for 5th and 6th graders. The first turning point was the influence peers have upon a student. At this age students are more worried about what their friends think than what adults think. Secondly, this is a time when students begin to be exposed to alcohol and other drug use and may start experimenting with these substances. Thirdly, those students who receive failing grades have a good probability of continuing to get these failing grades throughout their school year. These three turning points indicate the importance of peers and grades at the middle school age level. Additionally, prevention and intervention strategies were proposed for decreasing the dropout rate of FNSBSD (Hawkins, 2005). One of the FNSBSD Dropout Prevention Steering Committee's recommendations for prevention was to provide mentors for these at-risk students.

Application

The recommended program for NPMS will match 8th grade students with 6th grade student to provide social and academic support through a peer mentoring program. At NPMS the school mascot is a Knight, and so the peer mentoring program will be called Shining Knights. Shining Knights will be cofacilitated by a school counselor and the graduation success coach. This cofacilitation will provide support, encouragement, and a wide base of knowledge for running the program. For facilitation of the program, the order of events should be established. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) has recommended mentoring forms, and one of the forms through Albion Ambassadors (n.d.), is a time line for the program. The proposed timeline for Shining Knights can be found in Appendix A.

In order to ensure the peer mentoring program is meeting its goals and purpose, an advisory committee is needed. It should include someone from the school administration, a community member, a teacher, a counselor, a parent/guardian, and other school staff. Additionally, a business partner from a youth leadership organization, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, should be part of the advisory committee. The advisory committee, in association with the mentoring program coordinator, will establish a statement of purpose and a long range plan which will include a mission statement and a vision statement (Cannata et al., 2006; Cox, 2009). The purpose of the program will focus on improving social and academic support for at-risk 6th grade students to aid with the transition into middle school, through the use of 8th grade peer mentors. The long-range plan would be for the mentees to ultimately become mentors for incoming at-risk 6th graders. Ideally, one day every student would have a peer mentor as part of the transition into middle school. Once the advisory committee has approved the statement of purpose, long range plan, mission statement, and vision statement, they will meet on a quarterly

basis to review the goals and ensure the program is meeting these goals. The advisory committee will provide constructive feedback and support to the mentoring program.

The mentors and mentees must be recruited, screened, and provided an orientation. NPMS gets 6th grade students from North Pole Elementary, Ticasuk Brown Elementary, and Badger Road Elementary. Coordination with the administrators, counselors, and/or graduation success coaches at these schools will help identify students. The criteria for students to be chosen for participation in the Shining Knights program are: getting a D or F in one or more classes in 5th grade, having low Standards Based Assessment scores, and/or having a history of attending school less than 80% of the time. These criteria align with the criteria used for identifying students who are part of the Graduation Success Program (Rauenhorst, 2008).

Choosing mentors is a very important step in the mentoring process. In order to do this, a presentation will be given to all the 7th grade social studies classes in April, and then students will nominate other students who they believe would make an excellent mentor. Those who have been nominated will be evaluated based on their academics and behavior. Only students who have a grade point average of 2.0 or above, have not had an out of school suspension or a regular history of behavioral problems, have strong communication skills, are accepted by school staff and peers, are willing to help and listen to peers, and show positive qualities of responsibility and leadership will move on to the next step in the selection process and choose to be a mentor. The nominated students will then be asked to write an essay explaining why they should be considered to be a Shining Knight (Albion Ambassadors, n.d.). Upon receipt of the essays, three teachers will rate the essay. After reviewing the essays, those students selected will be asked to participate in an interview. From all this information Shining Knights mentors will

be chosen. A timeline for potential mentors as suggested through the American School Counselor Association website (Albion Ambassadors, n.d.), can be found in Appendix B.

Once the potential mentees and mentors have been identified, they will be required to fill out a questionnaire of which can be found in Appendix C (Albion Ambassador, n.d.; Pardini, n.d.). The matches will then be determined by comparing the questionnaire answers and interview results between mentor and mentee. The matches will be made based on commonality in regards to gender, interests, race, and other common characteristics. According to the FNSBSD Research and Accountability Report (2008), NPMS has a relatively low minority population; matching students of the same race may be difficult (Jucovy, 2002). Separate orientations will take place for the mentee, their parent/guardians, and the mentors. An example of the mentees and their parent/guardians training agendas can be found in Appendix D (Cannata et al., 2006). After both of these orientations, an orientation will take place with all parties involved. Training for the mentors should take place before the initial match meeting as well as on an ongoing basis. Some training ideas are ways to encourage mentees, nonverbal communication, goal setting, and effective listening (Cannata et al.). An example agenda for the mentor training can be found in Appendix E.

Once the matches have been determined the students have to meet. According to Cannata et al. (2006), there are a few ways to make sure the match starts off successfully. The first meeting location is quite important. It should be somewhere which allows for physical activity and personal conversations. If possible, the meeting should take place in an area where other people will not be coming and going. A good location would be the school library, if it could be closed off to public use. The expectations and rules for the match should be reviewed. An icebreaking activity should be used to help the mentor and mentee get to know each other. It

is imperative to remind the matches of confidentiality. The mentoring agreement should be reviewed and signed, which may be found in Appendix F (Albion Ambassadors, n.d.; Cannata, et al.). As a final part of the meeting, the next meeting time and place as well as contact information are shared between each match. The mentor and mentee matching session should take place at the end of the school year. Every effort possible should be made to encourage the mentors and mentees maintain contact over the summer (Cannata, et al., 2005). Email or mail contact should occur twice monthly throughout the summer months. A barbeque and volleyball game night should take place in mid July, coordinated by the school counselor. In early August before school starts, a mentoring evening should take place at the school. This evening should focus on the mentors helping the mentees find their classes, use their lockers, and find their way around the school. During the end of the first week of school, the mentors and mentees should meet together as a group. At this meeting, an evaluation of the first week of school should take place and activities and ideas for further individual mentoring meetings should be discussed, planned, and arranged. A list of potential activities for the matches is found in Appendix G.

A very crucial part of ensuring the success of the matches is providing supervision and support (Cannata, et al., 2005). For the Shining Knights Mentoring Program, the Graduation Success Coach and/or school counselor, will check in, ask about how the relationship is proceeding, determine if they are having fun together, what type of additional support is needed, and if there are any problems with the relationship. It is a good idea to check with parents as well, which will be the responsibility of the Graduation Success Coach and/or school counselor. As part of the support, it is vital to give encouragement and celebrate any accomplishments. The accomplishments can be shared through the use of the school newsletter, the school website, and displays on a mentoring bulletin board.

The mentors should not be responsible for ensuring the mentees grades improve. The key is for the mentor to work on developing a strong, healthy relationship with the mentee (Cannata et al., 2005). By helping the mentee to become familiar with the school, the mentor can encourage and advocate by helping them become familiar with the After School Program, the library, and study halls. As the mentors get to know the mentees better, the ways in which they can best help the mentee will become more obvious. It is of utmost importance that the matches spend time together doing fun activities in which they both enjoy.

Once a month the matches will meet as a group to participate in an activity coordinated by the mentor coordinator. The suggested activities are found in Appendix H for the matches. The mentors and mentees will be required to have contact with each other a minimum of once a week for the first month of the school year. The rest of the school year, the matches may meet a minimum of twice a month, with either an email or telephone contact one additional time.

When the end of the school year comes close, it is time for match closure. The end of the match should be discussed during the spring semester. As part of the closure, the good and bad parts of the relationship should be shared (Cannata et al., 2006). Matches should be encouraged to share their feelings about the relationship with each other. The matches should discuss the strengths of the mentor and the mentee. If possible avoid any new problems. Have the matches write a note to each other as a token of appreciation. With the last meeting of the match, make sure it is fun and there is lots of laughter.

Finally, evaluation of the Shining Knights program must take place. Evaluation allows needed changes to be noted and fixed. At the start of the match and at the end of the year long match an evaluation will be handed out to the mentors, mentees, and parent/guardians. An example of an evaluation form can be found in Appendix I (Cannata et al., 2006; College for

Every Student, n.d.). Post-match evaluations for mentors and mentees are also found in Appendix I (Cannata et al., 2006; College for Every Student, n.d.). A match monitoring evaluation can be found in Appendix I (Cannata et al., 2006). Suggestions, successes, and failures will be taken into consideration and changes made to make a better program in the following years.

Conclusion

The transition from elementary school to middle school can be a positive or negative experience depending upon the individual (B. Bell, personal communication, September 27, 2008). Adolescents entering middle school face many changes, from different class structures to school size, to having more teachers, lockers, additional responsibilities as a student, as well as physical, social, cognitive, and emotional changes. Students with more protective factors are more likely to thrive as they pass through this transition; however, students who are at-risk of dropping out of school are of concern as they move through this transition. Mentoring programs offer a way for students to make the transition into middle school a little easier.

The ecological systems theory looks at the way an individual relates to their environment and how the things a person comes in contact affects them. Mentoring relationships are part of the microsystem of a person in the ecological systems theory, and thereby offer support and a positive relationship for the mentee (Weiss et al., 2005).

There are some important considerations for establishing a mentoring program. Cannata et al. (2005) point out the importance of building a strong relationship between the mentor and mentee ensuring the mentee feels the mentor is a trusted and important part of their life. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure that all parties involved remain safe. With any program it

is important to make sure the resources needed are used in a reliable and efficient manner. Finally, the program should be sustainable and able to grow over time.

Mentoring programs consist of four parts: program design, recruitment, matches, and evaluation. The different parts allow the program to meet needs of a target population, as well as ensure these goals are being met throughout the course of the mentoring program. A successfully run mentoring program offers many advantages to both the mentor and mentee. Some of the advantages are an increase in self-esteem and self-confidence, increases in academics, new friendships, development of social skills, improvement in the ability to communicate, and improvements in problem solving abilities (Fenzel, 2000; Jekielek, 2002; Nelson, 2003; Pardini, 2006).

Although the FNSBSD offers programs, such as the Graduation Success Program, study halls, the After School Program, the Drug and Alcohol Intervention Program, and Alaska Native Education Program; some of the students at-risk of dropping out of school are not reached by any of these programs. North Pole Middle School is the only middle school in the FNSBSD, which is for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, making this an ideal location to introduce a peer mentoring program.

The peer mentoring program, Shining Knights, would be a yearlong curriculum focusing on building positive relationship, which would allow both mentors and mentees to increase their self-esteem, their academics, and social skills as well as make it possible for the at-risk students to transition into middle school successfully. The mentoring program would enlist 8th grade students as mentors, with recruitment taking place in the spring of their 7th grade year. The mentors would be matched with incoming 6th graders, who have had poor attendance, one or more D or F grades, and/or low Standard Based Assessment scores. The matches would be made

in the spring, at an orientation gathering. Students would be required to commit to being matched for the entire school year, starting in the spring going until the following summer vacation. The school counselor and/or graduation success coach would facilitate monthly activities focusing on improving all the students' skills. Regularly scheduled training would be required for the mentors, in order to provide them the necessary skills for being a successful mentor. The Shining Knights program would improve the mentees feeling of connectiveness with school, their feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, while allowing for skills to be taught in the areas of academics, peer relations, and diversity.

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Appendix A

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM**TIME LINE**

- ✦ February Advisory Committee Meets
- ✦ Early March 7th Grade presentations
 - Mid-March Essay writing time for 7th graders
 - End of March Essays read and evaluated

Coordinate with elementary staff for identification of potential mentees
- ✦ Early April
 - Mid April
 - Interviews conducted by counselor and/or graduation success coach
 - Presentation and sign up for potential mentees at elementary schools

Shining Knights mentors announced
Mentees determined and matches decided
- ✦ Early May
 - May Quarterly Advisory Committee Meeting
- ✦ Mid July Group Activity - BBQ and volleyball at the school
- ✦ Early August Group Activity of School Orientation
- August Quarterly Advisory Committee Meeting
 - 1st Week of School Group Activity and Processing
- ✦ Early September Mentor Training - Setting Goals
 - Mid September Group Activity - Setting Goals
- ✦ Early October Group Activity - Homework Survival Kit
- Early November Mentor Training - Communication
 - Mid November Group Activity - Cultural Appreciation

Advisory Committee Meeting
- ✦ Early December Group Activity - Plan Community Service
- ✦ January Mentoring Month
 - Mid January Group Activity- Study Skills
- ✦ Mid February Group Activity - Swim Party & Random Acts of Kindness
- Advisory Committee Meeting
- ✦ Mid March Group Activity - Career Exploration
- ✦ Mid April Group Activity - Community Service Activity
- Beginning May Match Closure Celebration
- May Advisory Committee Meeting

Adapted from Albion Ambassadors. (n.d.). *Albion Ambassadors forms*. Retrieved January 14,

2009 from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

Appendix B

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM
IMPORTANT DATES FOR FUTURE MENTORS

- ✦ Early March: Presentations to all 7th graders during their social studies class -
ballots will be used
 - Mid-March: Essay writing time for all selected students
 - End of March: Essays read and evaluated by three teachers
- ✦ Early April: Interviews conducted by counselor and/or graduation success
Coach
 - Mid April: Shining Knights mentors announced! Congratulations!

Albion Ambassadors. (n.d.). *Albion Ambassadors forms*. Retrieved January 14, 2009 from

<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

Appendix C

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM

MENTOR/MENTEE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____

Age: _____

Current Grade: _____

Circle your gender: Male Female

Circle your race: African American Hispanic Alaska Native Caucasian Asian Other

Circle ALL the items that you enjoy doing:

Basketball	Reading	Dancing	Playing Music	Video Games	Crafts	Chess
	Wrestling	Swimming	Cooking	Playing Board Games	Skiing/Snowboarding	
Hockey	Computer	TV	Hiking	Fishing	Hunting	
	Reading Comic Books	Ice Fishing	Snowmachining			

What other things do you enjoy doing?

What are your favorite subjects in school?

What subjects in school are most difficult for you?

 Circle the things which describe you the best:

Quiet	Talkative	Friendly	Shy	Loud	Outgoing
Active	Lazy	Funny	Silly	Happy	Sad

College for Every Student. (n.d.). *Mentee/Mentor Interest Survey*. Retrieved November 5, 2008, from <http://www.collegefes.org>

Pardini, E. (n.d.). *Training mentors: Instructions for trainers*. Retrieved January 21, 2009, from http://www.beamentor.org/site_set.htm

Appendix D

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM
MENTEE TRAINING AGENDA

- 3:30 Welcome
- 3:45 Icebreaker Activity
- 4:00 Mentoring Overview
- Definition of mentoring
 - The benefits of mentoring
- 4:15 Expectations, roles, and limitations
- Do's and don'ts
 - Characteristics of good mentors and mentees
 - Why it is important to be dependable
 - Confidentiality
- Break
- 4:45 Communicating with your mentor
- How to say no
 - OK times to talk to mentor
 - Meeting times and locations
 - Brainstorming match activities
 - Examples of activities
- 5:15 Questions and answers
- 5:30 Adjourn

Cannata, A., Garringer, M., Taylor, J., & Arvalo, E. (2006). *Preparing Participants for Mentoring – Draft*. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from <http://www.edmentoring.org/publications.html>

Appendix D Cont.

**SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM
PARENTS/GUARDIANS TRAINING AGENDA**

9:00	Welcome and Introductions
9:15	Overview of the Mentoring Program and Mentoring
9:45	What a mentor is and who are the mentors
10:00	Mentor screening procedures
10:10	Mentor roles and responsibilities
10:20	Parents roles and responsibilities
10:30	Mentee roles and responsibilities
10:40	Confidentiality and abuse issues
10:45	Break
10:55	Community Resources
11:00	Contact Information
11:05	Questions and Answers
11:15	Adjourn

Cannata, A., Garringer, M., Taylor, J., & Arvalo, E. (2006). *Preparing Participants for Mentoring – Draft*. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from <http://www.edmentoring.org/publications.html>

Appendix E

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM

MENTOR TRAINING AGENDA

8:30	Sign in and refreshments
9:00	Welcome and introduction
9:15	Icebreaker Activity
9:30	Overview of Mentoring and Characteristics of mentees
10:30	Break
10:45	Mentoring Program Mission and Vision Statements Mentor Commitment Policies and Procedures
12:00	Lunch
12:30	Mentoring Skills and Tools Effective Communication Body Language Open Ended Questions Ideas from previous mentors
1:15	Boundaries and Difficult Issues
1:45	Mentor Support
2:00	Activities to do with your Mentee
2:15	Building Trust Activity
2:30	Match Closure
2:45	Questions and Answers
3:00	Adjourn

Cannata, A., Garringer, M., Taylor, J., & Arvalo, E. (2006). *Preparing Participants for*

Mentoring – Draft. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from <http://www.edmentoring.org/publications.html>

Appendix F

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM

MENTORING AGREEMENT

We are voluntarily entering into a mentoring relationship which we expect to benefit both of us. We want this to be a mutually rewarding experience. We note the following things about our relationship:

Frequency of Meetings

- How often will we meet?

- Which day(s) of the week?

- Where will we meet?

- How long will our meetings last?

Best Ways and Times to Contact Each Other

- Email: _____
- Home Phone: _____
- Cell Phone: _____

Specific Role of the Mentor

(Examples are model, guide, provide feedback, assist in learning, give suggestions, provide answers)

Specific Role of the Mentee

As a willing participant in the Peer Pals Program, I commit to working with my mentor throughout the school year, attending all scheduled meetings with my mentor, and communicating with my mentor weekly. Emergencies happen, so if I am unable to keep a meeting date, an advance contact will be made to my mentor to reschedule. I will develop personal goals and be open to coaching and feedback from my mentor.

Confidentiality

Nothing that the mentee tells the mentor will be discussed with *anyone* except the Mentor Coordinator. If there is threat of physical harm to either of the youth or to others, the Mentor Coordinator must break confidentiality to seek protection for the endangered individual.

Appendix F Cont.

No-Fault Conclusion

We agree to a no-fault conclusion of this relationship if, for any reason, it seems appropriate. Either party has the option of discontinuing the relationship for any reason, and he or she will discuss this decision with the Mentor Coordinator before terminating the relationship.

Mentee	Mentor
Date	Date

Albion Ambassadors. (n.d.). *Albion Ambassadors forms*. Retrieved January 14, 2009 from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

Cannata, A., Garringer, M., Taylor, J., & Arvalo, E. (2006). *Preparing Participants for Mentoring – Draft*. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from <http://www.edmentoring.org/publications.html>

Appendix G

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM**SUGGESTED MATCH ACTIVITIES**

- ✦ Reading together
- ✦ Studying for a test
- ✦ Joining a club, sport, or other school activity
- ✦ Completing homework
- ✦ Reviewing previous tests and homework
- ✦ Discussing managing time effectively
- ✦ Doing research on the internet
- ✦ Doing research in the school library
- ✦ Talking about what happened during the school day
- ✦ Talking about disappointments during the school day
- ✦ Discussing being accountable for your own actions and responsibilities
- ✦ Creating a notebook to organize school work
- ✦ Creating short and long term academic goals
- ✦ Learning effective study habits
- ✦ Discussing strategies for taking tests
- ✦ Talking about the best and worst parts of middle school
- ✦ Work on spelling - and how to use a dictionary
- ✦ Go to a coffee shop
- ✦ Take a field trip to UAF
- ✦ Go ice skating
- ✦ Go skiing or snowboarding
- ✦ Go snowmachining
- ✦ Go for a bike ride
- ✦ Go swimming together at Wescot Pool
- ✦ Attend a NPMS sporting event
- ✦ Visit North Pole High School
- ✦ Visit Hutchinson Career Center
- ✦ Visit the UAF museum
- ✦ Visit the computer lab
- ✦ Take pictures together
- ✦ Go to Joel's Place
- ✦ Pick up trash on school grounds

- ✦ Play chess or other games
- ✦ Play video games
- ✦ Attend a UAF sporting event
- ✦ Go to Chena Lakes
- ✦ Go fishing
- ✦ Go hiking
- ✦ Go exploring
- ✦ Go to North Pole Mall
- ✦ Go gold panning
- ✦ Visit Creamer's Field

Adapted from Cannata, A., Garringer, M., MacRae, P., & Wakeland, D. (2005). *Making the grade: A guide to incorporating academic achievement into mentoring programs and relationships –Draft*. Retrieved January 3, 2009, from <http://www.edmentoring.org/publications.html>

Appendix H

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM

HOMEWORK SURVIVAL ACTIVITY

Checklist of Materials and Supplies

Circle the supplies you think you need to do your homework. Add items not on the list to the lines provided. How many of each is needed?

Pencils	Hole Punch	Compass
Pens	Stapler	Protractor
Writing Paper	Scissors	Dictionary
Note Cards	Paper Clips	Thesaurus
Markers	Folders	Atlas
Pencil Sharpener	3-ring Binder	Calendar
Erasers	Calculator	Notebooks
Glue	Ruler	Tape

Other Supplies

Making Your Own Personal Homework Survival Kit

Have the student get a large shoebox, zip lock bag or other large container, which is big enough to hold most of the supplies.

Work together to decorate the box or container, personalizing to make it their own. Use stickers, markers, paint, paper, glue - any art supplies available.

Treasure Hunt

Once you have your checklist completed and have made a container, you can start putting the Homework Kit together.

Spend the next few days having the students find the supplies on the list. Mentors can help in locating these items.

When the match gets back together, go through the list and the supplies gathered. What supplies does the student already have? What is still needed? Make a plan for getting these additional items.

Cannata, A., Garringer, M., MacRae, P., & Wakeland, D. (2005). *Making the grade: A guide to incorporating academic achievement into mentoring programs and relationships –Draft.*

Retrieved January 3, 2009, from <http://www.edmentoring.org/publications.html>

Appendix H Cont.

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM**CAREER EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES**

- Explore Alaska Career Information System
- Discuss your dream job
- Take a field trip to job sites
 - North Pole Refinery
 - Eielson Air Force Base
 - Fort Wainwright
 - Golden Valley Electric
 - University of Alaska
 - Alaska Federal Credit Union
 - Fort Knox/Pogo Gold Mines
 - Tanana Valley Clinic
 - Fairbanks Memorial Hospital
 - Fairbanks Police Department
 - Fairbanks International Airport
 - North Pole Fire Department
 - Princess Tours
 - Fairbanks North Star Borough Landfill
 - Department of Fish and Game
 - Fred Meyers
 - Food Bank
 - Walmart
 - McDonald's
 - Alaska Railroad
 - Healy Clean Coal Plant
- Job shadow
- Read books about careers or famous people with interesting careers

Adapted from Cannata, A., Garringer, M., MacRae, P., & Wakeland, D. (2005). *Making the grade: A guide to incorporating academic achievement into mentoring programs and relationships –Draft*. Retrieved January 3, 2009, from [publications.html](#)

Appendix H Cont.

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITY

1. Review the list of ways to help the community-found below. Determine what you are both interested in:

- The environment
- Helping people
- Working with animals
- Working with plants

Do you want to volunteer once or on a more regular basis?

2. Choose a place to volunteer. If you are unable to travel anywhere - here are some suggestions for helping at North Pole Middle School:

- Pick up trash
- Clean up the cafeteria after lunch
- Collect food for the food bank
- Collect things to send to deployed soldiers
- Do a fund raiser - such as bake sale - and donate the funds
- Help tutor students
- Become mentors for elementary students

3. Get permission from the Mentoring Coordinator and/or the parents/guardians before starting your project. The students should talk to their teachers to see if extra credit is available for the experience.
4. Talk about the experience. What did each of you learn from the activity? How does it relate to schoolwork? Are you interested in other activities or subjects?
5. What to do next? Decide if you want to do another community service activity, continue on with the same one, or try other activities.

Possible Volunteer Sites in Fairbanks/North Pole

- Food Bank
- North Pole Senior Center
- Clean up Day
- Chena Lakes
- Creamer's Field
- Animal Shelter
- Soup Kitchen
- Joel's Place
- Pioneer's Home
- Fairbanks Memorial Hospital
- Boys and Girls Club
- Calapso Gardens
- Tanana Valley Fair

Cannata, A., Garringer, M., MacRae, P., & Wakeland, D. (2005). *Making the grade: A guide to incorporating academic achievement into mentoring programs and relationships –Draft*. Retrieved January 3, 2009, from <http://www.edmentoring.org/publications.html>

Appendix I

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM

Evaluation

Evaluation of Match

Name of Mentor: _____ Date: _____

Name of Mentee: _____ Date of Match: _____

Please describe any changes you have observed over the past 12 months in the mentee! If you are uncertain about an area, please choose "Don't Know".

	Much Better	A Little Better	No Change	A Little Worse	Much Worse	Don't Know	Not a Problem
<i>CONFIDENCE</i>							
Self-confidence							
Able to express feelings							
Can make decisions							
Has interests or hobbies							
Personal hygiene, appearance							
Sense of the future							
<i>COMPETENCE</i>							
Uses community resources							
Uses school resources							
Academic Performance							
Attitude towards school							
Prepared for school							
Participates in class							
Classroom behavior							
Avoids delinquency							
Avoids substance abuse							
Able to avoid early parenting							
<i>CARING</i>							
Shows trust toward you							
Respects other cultures							
Relationship with family							
Relationship with peers							
Relationship with other adults							

How many times did the match meet in a month? _____

How long is an average match meeting? _____

How many meetings with the match have already taken place? _____

COMMENTS:

Cannata, A., Garringer, M., Taylor, J., & Arvalo, E. (2006). *Preparing Participants for Mentoring – Draft*. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from <http://www.edmentoring.org/publications.html>

Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership. (2005). *How to build a successful mentoring program using the elements of effective practice*. Retrieved December 23, 2008 from <http://www.mentoring.org/>

Appendix I Cont.

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM
POST-MATCH MENTOR EVALUATION

Please put an X under the best answer.

Please rate the support you received as a mentor:

No Partially Yes Not Sure

Before I became a mentor I had enough training.

The training helped me as a mentor.

I received enough training.

The coordinator provided enough assistance.

Please rate the program:

I received enough information about the program.

I was satisfied with the program.

I would recommend this program to others.

The program was better than I thought.

Please rate the mentoring relationship:

I was satisfied with the relationship.

I had enough interactions with other mentors.

The activities were appropriate and useful.

What did you like best about this experience?

Appendix I Cont.

What did you like least about this experience?

What do you think could be different about the program, which would make it better?

Was your mentee a good match for you? Why or why not?

What has been the most helpful thing about the mentoring program?

Other comments:

Cannata, A., Garringer, M., Taylor, J., & Arvalo, E. (2006). *Preparing Participants for*

Mentoring – Draft. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from <http://www.edmentoring.org/publications.html>

College for Every Student. (n.d.). *Mentee/Mentor Interest Survey*. Retrieved November 5, 2008, from <http://www.collegefes.org>

Appendix I Cont.

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM
POST-MATCH MENTEE EVALUATION

Please put an X under the best answer.

Please rate the mentoring relationship:

No Partially Yes Not Sure

I was satisfied with the mentoring experience.

I was satisfied with the mentoring relationship.

I had enough interactions with my mentor.

Please rate the program:

I received enough information about the program.

I was satisfied with the program.

I would recommend this program to others.

The program was better than I thought.

The coordinator provided enough support.

The activities were appropriate and useful.

What did you like best about this experience?

What did you like least about this experience?

Appendix I Cont.

What do you think could be different about the program, which would make it better?

Was your mentee a good match for you? Why or why not?

Other comments:

Appendix I Cont.

SHINING KNIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM
MATCH MONITORING

Number of contacts per week:

How long does each contact last:

What type of contacts have been made?

What activities have you participated in?

Have you received enough support and training? Why or why not?

What is the best thing about the match?

What is the worst thing about the match?

In what ways could the program help you?

Other comments:

Cannata, A., Garringer, M., Taylor, J., & Arvalo, E. (2006). *Preparing Participants for*

Mentoring – Draft. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from [http://www.edmentoring.org/
publications.html](http://www.edmentoring.org/publications.html)

Author's Note

My interest in this topic stems from my own experiences as a counseling intern at North Pole Middle School and as a Graduation Success Coach at Arctic Light Elementary. As a Graduation Success Coach, I was surprised to discover the large number of students who are at-risk of dropping out of high school. I quickly discovered that the Graduation Success program through the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District targets many of these students, with many of these youth in need of positive attention.

In the past I had been a mentor for a child through Big Brothers/Big Sisters and found the match made a major difference in the child's life. I was happy to find out FNSBSD has a partnership with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Alaska to match students with adults through a school-based mentoring program. While the partnership is great, the students/mentees often wait long periods of time to get a match. As the children get older and reach early adolescents, it is even more difficult to find adults to match the child with.

With my internship at North Pole Middle School, I found out many students were having difficulties with the transition from elementary into middle school. They were facing academic and social challenges. My experiences with Big Brothers/Big Sisters and as a Graduation Success Coach peaked my interest in the possibility of a peer mentoring program to assist students with this transition.