Upper Classmen's Valuation of Their Roles as Mentors to New Ninth Graders: A Case Study in a Diverse Suburban High School

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UPPER CLASSMEN’S VALUATION OF THEIR ROLES AS MENTORS TO NEW NINTH GRADERS: A CASE STUDY IN A DIVERSE SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL

A dissertation submitted

by

Naeemah U. Rodriguez

to

Virginia Commonwealth University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the
degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
Educational Leadership

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this book to two people: Ronald Sterling Rodriguez and Gerald Leon Smith. Ron, your inspiration and belief in me throughout this entire process, especially during the times when I doubted myself, were priceless. You brought me through numerous bouts of writer’s block and were there to “take me away from it all” when I needed it. Gerald, without you being you, the father of my children and the man who has always loved me no matter what, I would never have been saved. You are the angel that God put on my shoulder and despite all that has happened, you never flew away.
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Abstract

This study was conducted to obtain information about a mentoring program through the eyes of eleventh and twelfth grade student mentors. These students were able to tell what needed to be known about the strengths and weaknesses of this mentoring program and what they felt needed to be done to make the program more effective and meaningful. This study will serve to inform school leaders who may be planning a peer mentoring program at an educational institution.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Youth mentoring has a long history and has been insightful in many different organizations for many different reasons. In recent times, mentoring has been proposed as a way to help reduce school dropout rates, increase academic achievement, promote self-identity and positive self-image, reduce risky behaviors, and facilitate career development (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). Mentoring supports the concept that youth learn about themselves and their world best through relationships with significant adults in their lives. Mentoring is also an approach that resonates with mainstream cultural values because it is viewed as simple, direct, individualized, inexpensive and effective (Freedman, 1993).

Public schools have used mentoring to help students in several ways. One way is to pair upper class youth mentors with younger mentees in order to provide a beneficial ninth grade program. Despite longstanding interest in mentoring as a means to influence children’s lives, solid theoretical and empirical literature addressing important issues involved in youth mentoring has only begun to emerge (Allen, 2007).

Although youth mentoring in schools needs more research, many school districts are moving forward with the concept. High school transition programs have recently played an insightful role in incorporating youth mentoring. A high school transition program includes a variety of activities that (1) provide students and parents with information about the new school, (2) provide students with social support during the transition, and (3) bring middle school and high school personnel together to learn about one another's curriculum and requirements (MacIver, 1990).
Many ninth grade transition programs that have tried youth mentoring have found that using upper class student mentors as the main component has proven to be beneficial to new and rising high school students. Some of the ways students can learn about high school include visiting the high school in the spring, perhaps to "shadow" a high school student; attending a presentation by a high school student or panel of students; visiting the high school in the fall for schedule information; attending a fall orientation assembly (preferably before school begins); and discussing high school regulations and procedures with eighth-grade teachers and counselors (Mizelle, 2000).

Currently, educators are aware that there are many best practices that contribute to the implementation of a mentor component in ninth grade transition programs. Some of the best practices of successful mentoring programs were (a) monitoring program implementation, (b) providing mentors ongoing training, (c) involving parents, (d) structuring activities for the mentors and mentees, and (e) clarifying expectations about frequency of meetings (DuBois et al., 2002). DuBois et al. found that the presence of all five of these components doubled the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

Problem Statement

The transitioning of ninth grade students to high school has been an ongoing issue for students as well as stakeholders in school districts. In a study completed by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (March, 2005) the following problems existed as issues that plague ninth graders, therefore supporting the need for comprehensive mentoring programs:

- An increasing percentage of adolescents are not graduating from school in four or even five years.
Florida had as many as 32% more students enrolled in grade nine than in grade eight the previous year due to ninth grade retention. (Based on the National Center for Education Statistics (2009). The national average for students enrolling in grades eight and nine in 2005 and 2006 shows an increase in enrollment in grade nine by between 12% and 13%. Therefore, the 32% reported from the state of Florida is the high end of the national average. (http://nces.ed.gov/).

- The largest dip in enrollment from one year to the next is now between grades nine and ten.

- As grade nine enrollment has increased relative to grade eight, student progress from grade nine to grade ten has become more constricted.

It is apparent that students need more mentoring, life skills, and information about why school and learning are important (Holland, 2001). A "Big Sister/Brother" Program that begins in eighth grade and continues through ninth grade, a spring social event for current and incoming high school students, and writing programs where eighth-graders correspond with high school students are just a few ways that transition programs can provide students social support (Mizelle, 2000). Successful youth programs are multidimensional and blend mentoring with the concept of real-life situations.

**Purpose of the Study**

It is not uncommon for high schools to implement one or more programs to assist new freshmen in the smooth transition to high school. Among the initiatives that have been tried are various forms of mentoring, including peer-mentoring. Concord High School, a suburban high school in a Mid-Atlantic state where the study took place, has implemented a peer-mentoring program for two years. In that program, upper class
students are assigned as mentors for incoming ninth grade students and work with the students in a number of ways throughout the school year.

The program is entitled “Concord High School Mentoring Program” and it entails upper class students mentoring new ninth graders. In addition, several aspects of the program provide opportunities for mentors and their mentees to interact socially. Whereas a growing body of research examines peer-mentoring programs from the perspective of the mentees, the focus of this study is the mentors and not the mentees. This focus was selected to emphasize the value of mentor feedback by somewhat duplicating a peer-mentoring program at the school level, thus building a resource to help future program coordinators. In other words, the overall purpose of this study is to evaluate one high school’s peer-mentoring program by exploring the experiences and perspectives of the upper class mentors.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Conducting a study of upper class students mentoring new ninth graders has a dual purpose. First, this study serves as part of a reflective, evaluative effort on behalf of the leadership team at the high school under study. Second, the findings could possibly provide guidance for any future efforts of those who wish to use the ninth grade transition/mentoring program in their schools to assist their rising or new ninth graders. This study could provide the program coordinators with information that might prove useful in motivating the upper class students.

Brief Review of Literature

Jacobi (1991) identified 15 different definitions of mentoring in the educational, psychological and management literature (Allen, 2007). The operational definition of
mentoring for the purpose of this paper is: A powerful emotional interaction between an older and younger person, a relationship in which the older member is trusted, loving, and experienced in the guidance of the younger (Merriam, 1983). In addition to the meaning of mentoring, there is often confusion as to what mentoring is and what it is not. Typically, mentoring involves regular dyadic meetings between a child and an older person who provides the child guidance, support, attention, and caring over an extended period of time (Karcher, 2005). Karcher (2005) makes reference to mentoring in a general sense; however, more specific aspects of mentoring have obtained a new focus. In more modern times, it appears that mentor relationships are beginning to play a vital role with youth in schools.

Karcher and Lindwall (2003) conducted a quantitative study which focused on school-aged youth who volunteer to mentor. “We examined the characteristics of youth who choose to participate as mentors and the effects of six months of mentoring on the students’ senses of social interest and connectedness to school in order to understand better what makes high school mentors persist” (Karcher & Lindwall, 2003, 293-315). The outcome of the study done by Karcher and Lindwall (2003) which states that youth participation in mentoring may make those youth stronger, builds a bridge between the lives of those student mentors to the lives of elementary level student mentees.

Karcher (2005) further supports the idea of providing youth mentors to younger students, and his qualitative research shows the benefits of that mentoring. In cross-age mentoring programs (CAMP’s) the mentor is an older youth, typically high-school aged, who is paired with an elementary or middle school-aged child (Karcher, 2005). Creating
the aforementioned mentoring relationships within a school setting connects the concept with how educators can possibly hone in on improving the lives of ninth graders.

For more than twenty-four years, educators have been trying to figure out how to raise the achievement of ninth graders as well as how to reduce the discipline problems that ninth graders experience. To date there is little research on how school districts plan to address the issues that plague ninth graders and how to help them better adjust to life in high school. The problem of “what to do with ninth graders” is one that has been touched on by many, yet research fails to cover the issue from the perspective of those who invest in mentoring ninth graders. Thus, there is a reason for using both formative and empirical research on the ninth grade study as it relates to mentoring ninth graders. This analysis indicates that in spite of various renditions of what mentoring is and who actually participates in mentoring youngsters, there is still an unclear aspect of the importance of helping ninth graders to adjust and what works in terms of mentoring and counseling.

**Research Questions**

1. What were the expected as well as unexpected responsibilities of the upper class students as they served as mentors to the new ninth graders?
2. What were the upper class students’ impressions of the mentoring program?
3. Did the upper class students feel either personal gratification or discontent (or both) during the time that they served as mentors to new ninth graders?
4. What aspects of the mentoring program did the upper class mentors think were beneficial to the mentees? What aspects did the upper class mentors think were not beneficial to the mentees?
5. What recommendations did the upper class students have for moving the mentoring program forward?

**Methodology**

The following section briefly describes the methodology used in this study.

**Study Design**

In an effort to ensure that the program is best serving all students involved, this study incorporates aspects of program evaluation and case study research. The research questions guiding this study call for a naturalistic research design. Specifically, for this study, the design that has been chosen is a case study. This design is one that taps into intuitive knowledge and requires inductive data analysis. *Case studies* concern in-depth study of a single or a few programs, events, activities, groups or other entities defined in terms of time and place (e.g., examining the culture of a particular magnet school) (McMillan, 2004). The components of this research design include:

- obtaining information through participant journal writing;
- obtaining information through a focus group;
- negotiating outcomes through member checking;
- obtaining information through a survey; and
- drawing conclusions.

Gathering information on this topic required obtaining information from journals, a focus group, a recording and surveys. The objective was to gain insight into the attitudes of upper class students as they serve as mentors to new high school freshmen.
Setting and Participants

The population in the zip code area of Concord High School is as follows: It is primarily White and about evenly divided between singles and married couples. Housing prices here (average $108,700) are fairly typical for the metro area. The median age in the zip code area of Concord High School is 31.4. There are 7,347 men and 8,216 women. The median age for men is 30.8 while for women the median age is 32.1 (National Network, 2009).

Concord High School, a public school located in suburban Virginia, is known to be the most diverse school in its district, with thirty-two countries represented, and students who speak seventeen different home languages. The numbers below show the number of students for the subgroups listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Number in school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White- non-Hispanic</td>
<td>1,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black- non-Hispanic</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ninety-six plus mentors were part of the study. The 96 plus mentors participated in episodic journaling and an end-of-program survey. Six of the 96 mentors were selected to participate in the end-of-program focus group. The six participants were selected using stratified sampling and systematic sampling. Stratified sampling is a modification of either simple random or systematic sampling in which the population is first divided into homogeneous subgroups; stratified sampling is used to ensure that an adequate number of subjects is selected from different subgroups (McMillan, 2004). In
systematic sampling every \( n \)th element is selected from a list of all elements in the population, beginning with a randomly selected element (McMillan, 2004).

**Data Collection**

Several methods of data collection were utilized. By using a combination of observations, interviews, and document analysis, the field-worker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross check findings (Patton, 2002).

Data collection techniques include:

- Collecting journal writing assignments from mentors- This component is part of the mentoring program and is a program participation expectation. Students who serve as mentors are expected to submit five journals to the program coordinator.

- Conducting a focus group with selected upper class mentors - These individuals were asked to describe their experiences verbally while in the company of five of their peers. This focus group session occurred at the end of the program for evaluation purposes and was recorded.

- Surveying the mentors – At the end of the program, the mentors were given an online, open-ended question survey to complete.

The data analysis process required noticing, thinking and collecting, which are the major components of problem solving. The data analysis began with the input process of the collected data which includes the journals, the tape recorded focus group, and the survey data. The information was coded using NVivo. This was the best way to analyze what has been observed. These items were then transcribed into field observation notes.
Data Analysis

McMillan (2004) noted that the goal of the data analysis is to discover patterns, ideas, explanations, and understandings. Therefore, the data was organized, summarized, and then interpreted. The computer software program that was used to analyze the data was NVivo.

Furthermore, Stake (1995) outlined four kinds of data analysis in addition to descriptions that are used in case studies:

- Categorical analysis – Collecting examples and coding data.
- Direct interpretation – Using a single example to interpret meaning.
- Drawing patterns – Examining correspondences between two or more codes.
- Naturalistic generalizations – Making generalizations from the data to suggest how others could benefit from the information and apply it to other situations.

As part of the evaluation process, the school has developed a component that encourages mentors to write one journal entry per month. Students wrote journals beginning in October when they return to school and the mentoring process gets underway. Upper class student participants were expected to turn in journals of their experiences during the months of October, November, December, January and February. The data from these journals was utilized as part of the data analysis process. A focus group session was conducted after the completion of the study at the end of March.

Finally, an end-of-program, open-ended question survey was given to all mentors at the
completion of the study. All methods of data collection were coded through NVivo and were analyzed after entries were made.

**Program Structure**

Much needs to be learned about upper class students mentoring new ninth graders. The program structure at Concord High School begins with the:

- recruitment of mentors;
- selection of mentors;
- training of mentors;
- monthly meetings with program coordinators and mentors;
- monthly mentoring sessions with mentees; and
- journal writing of experiences.

The study objective is to gain insight and understanding of the mentoring program from the perspectives of the mentors through:

- mentoring sessions;
- journal writing;
- focus group meeting; and a
- survey.

Finally, the goal of the study was:

- to compile information from the data collection sources;
- to code and interpret information;
- to put findings into a written document; and
to provide the finding for public viewing so that program coordinators can use the document when planning youth based mentoring programs at various schools.

Summary

This study provides examples of relationships between upper class students and new ninth graders and how the mentor-mentee relationship affected the mentor. This study is based on researched information that hones in on the mentors and their valuation of mentoring ninth graders. This study touches on the conflicts as well as the triumphs that the mentors experience. It focuses on the highs and the lows of the mentoring program through the upper class student’s authenticated experience of the activity.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of high school mentor volunteers who mentor students that are entering high school as new ninth graders. The mentoring program works in conjunction with ninth grade transition programs that some high schools have in place. These ninth grade transition programs are designed to help rising high school students make a smooth and effective transition from middle school to high school. The purpose of this study was to find out what the experiences and perceptions are of the high school mentors. The questions for the literature are: Why is mentoring important? What contributes to the effectiveness of mentoring programs? What are the characteristics of effective mentoring programs?

Mentoring Defined

Mentoring has been described as a way of helping to ease transitions to adulthood by providing developmental support and challenges from an experienced guide (Freedman, 1995). Based on the literature, mentoring is defined as an activity that encourages older people to develop relationships with younger people in whom they have a vested interest. The relationship is built on the obligation that the older person has meetings with the youngster and effects positive change in his or her life. Broadly defined, mentoring is a sustained “one-to-one” relationship between a caring adult and a child who needs support to achieve academic, career, social or personal goals (McParland & Nettles, 1991). The operational definition of mentoring for the purpose of this paper is: A powerful emotional interaction between an older and a younger person, a
relationship in which the older member is trusted, loving, and experienced in the
guidance of the younger (Merriam, 1983).

**History – The Importance of Mentoring**

Knowledge of the word “mentor” as well as the history of mentoring help to
develop an understanding of why mentoring is important and why it has been known to
have a profound effect on the lives of many. Mentoring is described well by DuBois and
Karcher (2005) who noted that the term *mentor* has a long history dating back to 800 B.C.
It was derived from the character “Mentor” from *The Odyssey*, where Mentor was a
trusted friend of Odysseus, the king of Ithaca. Mentor was to guide the development of
Odysseus’ son, Telemachus, while Odysseus embarked on a 20-year journey.

Biblically, there is a historical perspective of mentoring as the process of passing
knowledge from one to another. The Bible offers another historical perspective of
mentoring as the process of passing wisdom down from one to another. Abraham to Lot,
Moses to Joseph, Naomi to Ruth and Jesus to his disciples (Stamps, 2005). These
examples of mentor-mentee relationships also indirectly allude to age differences that
may exist between the pairs of individuals with the mentor being the older of the two
individuals. Mentoring invokes an image of an older, wiser adult providing thoughtful
and caring guidance to a young person, usually a child or adolescent (DuBois & Karcher,
2005).

In examining the research literature on mentoring, the act of mentoring has had an
impressive history as it relates to its psychological, legal, and educational background.
Psychological History of Mentoring

In *Cultivating the Vital Element of Youth Mentoring* (2007), it is mentioned that good mentoring relationships can yield benefits for both the mentors as well as the mentees. The field of cognitive neuroscience has mapped the ways in which relationships interact with the developing brain to shape mental processes and perceptions—further indicating that virtually every aspect of human development is fundamentally shaped by interpersonal relationships (Liang & Rhodes, 2007). The positive interpersonal relationships yield personal benefits that are helpful to those who serve as mentors. These benefits include a sense of efficacy and pride that can come from being admired and helpful, as well as insights into their own lives and the lives of youth (Philip & Hendry, 2000). Volunteer activity has also been known to provide individuals with that sense of satisfaction.

Individuals who participate in volunteer activities are the types of individuals who have a desire to build a more positive sense of self. Those individuals who volunteer to mentor do it to satisfy a goal or goals based on something that may be absent or missing in their lives. In their qualitative study of 30 mentors in Scotland, Philip and Hendry (2000) identified the following goals for mentoring: (a) to help mentors make sense of their own experiences; (b) to gain insight into youth experiences; (c) to develop alternative kinds of relationships, such as across ages; and (d) to develop skills that will make them “exceptional adults” (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). The results of the study revealed what Philip and Hendry (2000) learned. The benefits to mentors can be classified in terms of their self-esteem, their social insight, and their social and
interpersonal skills (Hall, 2003). Gaining insight into youth experiences is the most appropriate goal of the current study.

The research indicates that individuals have recently expressed an increased interest in becoming volunteer mentors. This interest partially comes from what adults observe as it pertains to the plight of our youth today. The news is not always good. Furthermore, there is research that shows there is a great need for community volunteers to assist program developers in building programs that can better help youth become positive citizens. This surge of interest in mentoring undoubtedly owes some measure of debt to an array of research finding over the past several decades that have highlighted positive contributions nonparental adults can make in the lives of youth (Baker & Maguire, 2005).

From the student perspective, mentoring can have multiple psychological advantages. Involvement in a mentoring relationship can provide children the opportunity to experience helping and caring for others and, in turn, strengthen their moral commitment to themselves and others (Ikard, 2001). The social and emotional growth and development of youth can have a direct correlation to the activities they embark upon as they grow and learn. Many social psychologists have concluded that the most reliable way to induce desirable attitudes is to engage people in desirable behavior; their attitudes then tend towards consistency with their behavior (Hamilton & Fenzel, 1988).

One way of promoting the desirable behaviors that are expected of students is by having these individuals involve themselves in volunteer activity or service learning. Lipsitz (1984) suggested that early adolescents require assistance in dealing with the
developmental challenges of forming a sense of identity, becoming committed to group
ideals, developing personal autonomy, and becoming involved in increasingly more
intimate relationships, all of which might be promoted by participation in community
service. A summary of data from the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
(containing information on 938 service-learning programs), showed that service-learning
coordinators typically saw their programs as a way to enhance the personal growth of
students, particularly their self-esteem and social responsibility (Shumer & Belbas,
1996).

These service learning opportunities are often advertised as being programs that
can be helpful and fulfilling for youth. The 1990 National and Community Service Act
and the 1993 National Service Trust Act, which were both funded by President Clinton,
established programs and policies that encouraged service learning, especially in the lives
of youth. Maryland, for example requires 75 hours of service for high school graduation
(Finney, 1997). One International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme principal from an
urban high school in a southern state noted that, although community action and service
learning was not a requirement for students to complete a regular high school program in
his district, his small group of IB students were indeed required to complete a certain
amount of community service hours in order for the student to be eligible to receive an IB
Diploma. State and local governments have also passed legislation to involve their
student citizens in community service as a required part of education (Sobus, 1995).

In addition to service learning opportunities for students, developmental
mentoring and connectedness have also been shown to have psychological effects on
students. Recent studies suggest that mentoring can affect social skills, school behavior,
and self-esteem as well as mentees’ connectedness to family and to school (Karcher, Davis, & Powell, 2002; King, Vidourek, Davis, & McCellan, 2002; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). Promoting connectedness is the primary goal of developmental mentoring because research reveals that success in school is increased and involvement in risk taking is decreased when adolescents’ activity in and affection for conventional and future-oriented people, places, and activities are increased (Jessor & Jessor, 1977).

Cross-age peer mentoring is a type of developmental mentoring in which high school students work with younger youth. In contrast to cross-age peer tutoring, which has as its primary goal to help children develop specific academic skills, cross-age peer mentoring focuses is on the mentoring relationship, which is viewed as the main mechanism by which mentees’ develop in the areas of self-esteem, connectedness, identity, and academic attitudes (Karcher, 2005). Cross-age peer mentoring is a way to promote connectedness in students’ social and emotional lives. Karcher (2005) noted that low connectedness to school has been found to predict adolescent depression and underachievement, while high connectedness to school contributes to higher self-esteem and social skills.

One criticism of cross-age mentoring in schools is that adolescent mentors may not be mature enough to be consistently present or sufficiently attentive to their mentees (Karcher, 2005). A second criticism of school-based mentoring is that the limited duration of the matches, typically six to nine months, is likely to result in smaller effects than longer relationships established through community agencies (Karcher, 2005). Despite limited research, there is evidence that cross-age peer mentoring can have
beneficial effects for both the mentees as well as the mentors who provide it (Karcher, 2005).

**Legal Issues and Youth**

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, America had a different reason for mentoring youth; especially specific groups of youth. These youth fell into a cluster of children considered to be troubled youth. These populations included but were not limited to youth in foster care, academically at-risk students, youth who have a parent who is incarcerated, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, youth who have disabilities, and pregnant and parenting adolescents (DuBois & Rhodes, 2006). Troubled youth were those who fell into these social situations, and had little to no social support frameworks designed to help them through these problems. Because these children were suffering from these issues that affected their lives, they began to react to these events. Often their reactions were negative which pushed them into lives of delinquency.

The issue of delinquency became an important American topic beginning with the Great Depression and continues to exist in more modern times. Travis Hirschi’s social control theory (1969) examined how the goals of rules in society look to maintain conformity and order in that society. In Hirschi’s social control theory, delinquency resulted when the connection between rational thinking and the desire to act somehow did not connect. In the sociological control theory, it can be and is generally assumed that the decision to commit a criminal act may well be rationally determined – that the actor’s decision was not irrational given the risks and the costs he faces (Hirschi, 2004).

Often, these troubled youth were referred to as juvenile delinquents. However, the literature shows that these youth are typically not referred to as troubled youth or
juvenile delinquents any longer, but the term of choice is “at-risk” youth. The term “at-risk” is generally used to describe youth who come from single-parent homes, who show signs of emotional or behavioral problems, and who lack the support to navigate developmental tasks successfully (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002).

Thus, the concept of having an at-risk youth population, which included youth who were involved in delinquent behavior, soon grew to become one of the more important issues that afflicted school-aged youth. Juvenile delinquency was seen as symptomatic of a larger ill—an early and slow descent into a vicious cycle of poverty, moral, decay, and social decline (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

The trend for mentoring youth became increasingly important as the issue of at-risk youth became more apparent. It was clear that assistance was needed to serve this population of at-risk youth in America. Although schooling was provided for these children, it was not the responsibility of the schools to monitor whether children were being well kept. Schools seldom noticed or cared whether children dropped out (which many of them did by 6th grade); and there were few, if any, safeguards in place to protect against the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of children and adolescents (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). In the following section on probation officers, it is necessary to take the reader back several decades so that a better understanding can be made as to the role probation officers played in the rearing of at-risk and delinquent youth.

People known as probation officers surfaced during the time of the Great Depression to help youth overcome their plight. These were not trained professionals; rather, they were socially minded individuals who shared a common belief that delinquency resulted from abhorrent circumstances in need of remedy (DuBois &
Karcher, 2005). Probation officers were present when these troubled youth had legal issues that derived from their negative behaviors, thus sending the youth to probation centers throughout the United States. In many ways, these probation officers were among the first mentors of disadvantaged youth in America (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Probation officers were the number one players who provided mentoring as support for the youngsters in juvenile detention centers. Probation officers took on the role of youth mentors because part of their responsibility was to get to know the youth and counsel them each time the visits were made. According to J.T. Bowen (1925):

I think the first probation officer was Mrs. Alzina Stevens, perhaps the best example of what a probation officer should be. Her great desire was to be of use to her fellow-men. Her love of children was great; her singleness of purpose and strength of character so remarkable that she exerted a great influence over the children committed to her charge (p. 299-300).

The responsibilities of probation officers were similar to the responsibilities of those who mentored youth outside of the Juvenile Justice System. Probation officers provided mentor-like support for youth in need. Meanwhile, other organizations that shared similar goals in helping youth of all kinds were developed. Developing over the past decade, a multitude of mentoring programs targeted a wide range of youth such as gifted children, disadvantaged youth, children at risk for dropping out of high school, children with disabilities, and juvenile delinquents (Searcy, Lee-Lawson, & Trombino, 1995). The need to assist these youth began to grow; thus, more programs were born.
The founding of the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) was located in the same time and place as the juvenile court movement, and like that movement, it appeared simultaneously in cities across the United States (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). BBBSA was one of the first founding organizations to move from using adults to serve as mentors for youth, to using other youths to serve as mentors to younger youth. BBBSA, the oldest and most established mentoring organization in the country, began using high school volunteers in earnest about seven years ago, in 2001; today, close to 50,000 high school volunteers are mentoring youth in their School-Based mentoring (SBM) programs (Herrera, 2008). The use of high school students was a fairly new initiative but has become more prominent in recent years. High school students likely bring unique perspectives to the match, engage their mentees in distinct activities, and ultimately develop relationships with them that differ in many ways from those with adult mentors - differences that may translate into distinct benefits for involved youth (Herrera, 2008).

The rapid expansion of formal initiatives to support mentoring, although not extending equally to all segments of society, was proof of its value and need (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

**Educational History of Mentoring**

The last two decades have seen educators and administrators incorporating mentoring in school settings (Akos, 2000). The incorporation of mentoring programs in schools was done with an effort to enhance school cultures. In attempting to improve the educational environment, as well as to enhance feelings of peer connectedness and the desire to stay in school, many school systems have successfully implemented mentoring
programs (Collins & Scott, 1978). The term that is used to describe mentoring in the school setting is typically referred to as peer mentoring or peer helping. Peer helping and mentoring are terms that have been used for centuries to define the behaviors of one person toward another (Ikard, 2001). The research has shown that when the word “peer” is used, in most cases it relates to individuals of the same or similar age. Peer mentoring programs are designed to match older youth with younger students in order to provide guidance, advice, support and modeling (Malderez & Bodoczky, 1999). The popularity of this approach rose due to the societal belief that students could relate more closely to peers than adults (Tindall & Salmon-White, 1990).

Many schools like to believe that it is the responsibility of the institution to see to it that students learn and that they are provided the greatest opportunities. School based peer mentoring is an effort to increase the school’s capability to promote academic achievement as well as interpersonal growth (Akos, 2000).

The need for mentoring in schools continues with the efforts that schools have put forth in trying to eliminate student drop-outs. The failure to develop social skills and relationships can be a predictor of substance abuse, delinquency, mental health problems and school dropout (Garnier, Stein, & Jacobs, 1997; Mason & Collison, 1995; Tindall, 1995). High school drop outs reported several reasons for dropping out of school including inability to complete school work, unsatisfactory peer relationships, and social isolation (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1994). Downing, LoVette and Emmerson (1994) noted that 62% of students said that someone convinced them not to drop out of school and 32% of those students noted that a peer helper had helped them come to that decision.
The school can be a tremendous resource to provide opportunities to engage students in prosocial activities and promote the development of skills (Akos, 2000). Schools have developed an interest in students mentoring other students as a way to contribute to student success. Research has shown that a properly mentored student over time (one year) will exhibit benefits not seen by an unmentored student (Walker & Freedman, 1996). A properly mentored student is a student who benefits from their participation in mentoring, and the act of mentoring contributes to the student’s success academically and/or socially. Although research has shown this, results could differ based on the specific student being studied as well as the environments surrounding that student. Even within school based mentoring, programs differ to population served, type of mentor (peer or adult), long or short term, program goals, and amount of infrastructure included (Sipe & Roder, 1999). Although mentoring has shown to be an effective helping tool in the schools, continued investigation specific to each program structure and goal is needed (Akos, 2000).

**Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs**

The influences that mentors have on mentees are directly as well as indirectly related to the relationships that they develop with each other. Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) recently has begun a program called High School Bigs, which may provide the best example of a nationally known cross-age peer mentoring program (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). The focus of the mentors in this program was not based on improving academics or addressing social problems, but it was based more on building relationships with the younger youth. Cross-age peer mentoring is an example of the relationship that high-school mentors built with their younger peers. If the rising number of BBBS
school-based, child-with-adolescent-mentor program is any predictor, cross-age peer mentoring may emerge as one of the most widespread mentoring approaches in the near future (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). This statement further supports that high school mentors are eager to build relationships with their younger mentees in the hope that they will effect positive change in their lives.

Rhodes (2002) presented an inciting framework proposing that mentors promote youth development in three interrelated ways: (a) enhancing social skills and emotional well-being, (b) improving cognitive skills through instruction and dialogue, and (c) fostering identity development by serving as role models and advocates. For these reasons, it is vital that all mentors and mentees have clear expectations of the program, and that there be a proper pairing of the mentors and the mentees. Over the course of their time together, the mentor and protégé often develop a special bond of mutual commitment, respect, identification, and loyalty which facilitates the youth’s transition into adulthood (Rhodes, 2006).

It is in the interest of program planners to identify locations for mentors and mentees that best suit the two parties. Given that those targeted by primary prevention programs spend a substantial portion of their time in school, schools represent a natural context in which to establish mentoring relationships for children and youth (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). In addition, mentoring programs that are planned and occur through schools have proven to be some of the best structured programs for mentor-mentee relationships. Overall, school-based mentoring programs tend to be more structured than community-based programs; they are characterized by regularly scheduled meeting times; and typically more activities are dictated by the program (DuBois & Karcher,
One of the other benefits of school-based mentoring is that these programs tend to cut down the cost of providing mentoring services. Since they are more likely to receive in-kind contributions such as staff support, office space, and telephones, school-based programs simply do not have the overhead costs associated with most community-based programs (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

One impetus for the creation of formal mentoring programs is the perception that parents are less available to teens than they once were and that youth increasingly are separated from relatives and casual social contact with unrelated adults (Rhodes, 2002). Mentoring programs have been effective in providing youngsters with indirect parenting given to them from others. By helping adolescents cope with everyday stressors, providing a model for effective conflict resolution, and indirectly reducing parental stress, mentor relationships are thought to have the capacity to facilitate improvements in parent–child interactions (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000; Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999).

Although mentoring has shown to be an effective helping tool in the schools, continued investigation specific to each program structure and goals is needed (Akos, 2000). To date, the literature on mentoring is mixed and little research has adequately assessed the efficacy of mentoring programs (Keating et al., 2002).

**Characteristics of Effective Mentoring Programs**

This section looks at mentoring and notes the strategies that have been developed to build effective mentoring programs. As the role of mentors has advanced, effective mentoring programs have several components that can make them successful. The components of best practices in a mentoring program are noted by Allen (2007).
According to Allen (2007) best practices included planning, mentor recruitment and matching with mentees; and evaluation.

**Program Planning**

Mentoring programs begin with planning that occurs prior to the start of the mentoring sessions between mentors and mentees. There is a strong possibility that mentoring programs will thrive if they are planned properly with the emphasis on helping students.

The planning of a mentoring program has essential components that are necessary to address so that all parties are made privy to the program’s goals and expectations. Setting goals of the program is a critical first step. Establishing goals and objectives allows a program to set a clear direction and enables it to specify measurable outcomes (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Often, these expectations are noted in structural guides or manuals that are created for the mentors; these guides delineate the goals of the program and provide instructions as to how the goals can be achieved. In Karcher’s (2006) qualitative research report entitled “Cross-Age Peer Mentoring” he noted:

Programs such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, that focus on relationship development, helping mentees understand their value and importance as persons, and facilitating character development – although a curriculum or other structural guide can be used, the goal is to provide empathy, friendship, and attention to the child and to establish a caring relationship with him or her (p.1-17).

Mentors also need to be made aware of what characteristics are expected of them as they embark upon mentoring others. These include being knowledgeable and respected in their field, being responsive and available to the mentees, interest in the
mentoring relationship, being knowledgeable of the mentee’s capabilities and potential, motivating mentees to appropriately challenge themselves and acting as advocates for the mentees (Ramani, Gruppen & Kachur, 2006).

Program planning includes the need for training and orientation. A review of ten mentoring studies in the United States found that the only training program that appeared to have a positive effect was when mentors received training on giving praise and rewarding positive behavior changes (Fo, 1974). Jucovy (2001) studied recruitment and noted that one of the best ways to recruit mentors is bringing in former mentors to discuss their experiences and use videos and slides of prior mentor experiences to enhance the presentation. In another survey of 1,762 programs, 76% of programs reported providing orientation and training, and 94% offered some type of continuous support to matches (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). The trend of providing training and support is documented in another survey conducted by Sipe and Roder (1999) that required mentors to go through training. In one survey of almost 800 mentor programs, approximately 80% of the programs reported that they do require mentors to attend an orientation and complete some type of prematch training, although the total amount of time spent in these activities varied greatly (Sipe & Roder, 1999).

Often, there are assumptions that the training of mentors is not needed. In many cases, program planners forgo training because they assume that their mentors already possess the necessary skills needed to provide mentoring. However, the training of mentors helps to organize the program and, in some cases, lays out the expectations of the program. The initial training session prepares participants to step into the formal mentoring relationship on which they are about to embark and offers structured support
for setting up their mentoring agreement and relationship guidelines and boundaries (Allen, 2007).

Subsequent training sessions keep up the momentum of mentoring and help to continue encouraging all those involved. Mentoring programs that provided opportunities for ongoing training throughout the mentoring relationship had larger positive effects on protégés than those that did not (DuBois et al., 2002). Over the life of the matches between mentors and mentees, ongoing training may increase the likelihood of longer-lasting relationships and has been found to predict positive youth outcomes (DuBois et al., 2002).

Developing support systems for mentors is also critical to the planning process. Even in the best of mentoring relationships, there will be times when mentors, in particular, experience frustration, exasperation, impatience, anger, and, in some cases, even regret that they entered in the relationship in the first place (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). When these emotions occur, mentors need to be able to rely on program coordinators to guide them through the process of healing and understanding. Mentors cannot work in a vacuum, and they need to know that professional staff will assist them when they have issues, concerns, or do not feel that they are making progress in the relationship (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Ongoing support of mentors and mentees is critical to any program’s success (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Monitoring the progress of a program is essential in the planning process as well. Constant monitoring will help identify problems and help staff address issues immediately and solve problems that may be addressed by providing additional training and support for mentors’ needs (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).
Karcher (2005) noted that some of the best practices in identifying effective programs in mentoring were (a) monitoring program implementation, (b) providing mentors ongoing training, (c) involving parents, (d) structuring activities for the mentors and mentees, and (e) clarifying expectations about frequency of meetings. DuBois and Karcher (2005) found that the presence of all five of these components doubled the effectiveness of mentoring programs. Allen (2007) mentioned that a reference and policy guide would be helpful in assisting program developers in understanding the expectations and goals of a mentoring program. Specifically, it may be useful to have a handbook or manual stating program policies in order to show organizational support, help obtain funding, recruit and select program participants, provide training, and establish program structure (Allen, 2007).

Being an effective mentor as well as an effective mentee are the two primary components necessary to make a program successful. Although DuBois and Karcher (2005) and Allen (2007) made sound statements on what makes a mentoring program successful, the truth is that there is a need for more empirical research to better determine what best practices work in a mentoring program. Exact optimal practices regarding participant selection, partner matching, and program structure have not been well established (Allen, 2007).

**Matching Mentors and Mentees**

Another characteristic of an effective mentoring program comes from selecting and matching mentors. For the purposes of this study, this process should yield a group of volunteers or protégés who are really interested in facilitating relationships with students who are rising into high school from the middle school setting.
Typically, when mentors are needed for a program such as this, they are likely to volunteer their services with the hope that they will be matched with a mentee that suits their own personal agenda. When selecting mentors to work with youth, it is beneficial to get some background information from the applicants to identify the reasons why they want to help and what they expect to gain from the experience. Ask applicants to provide information on their experiences working with young people, their motivation for becoming a mentor, and the types of students they are interested in working with (Crocker, 1991). This leads naturally to a discussion of how mentors choose their mentees and how to match mentors and mentees appropriately.

It is hopeful that when a mentor is paired with a mentee or group of mentees that a relationship can grow and can be maintained for an extended period of time. The goal of research is not just to put a mentoring program together that can be studied, but to create environments that foster long lasting, mentor-mentee relationships.

In terms of implementation of one-one-one mentoring programs versus group mentoring programs, there was insufficient research that provided information regarding which pairing was most or lease effective. However, one would hypothesize that one-on-one mentoring is far more intimate and personal that group mentoring. This area could be open for more research.

Promoting the sustained development of positive relationships is a primary goal because longer-lasting relationships tend to yield greater benefits for youth, while short-term relationships may have unintended negative consequences (Grossman, 2002). In pairing mentors with mentees, it should be done with the expectation that the relationships will be amicable, hopefully long ones. The lack of using some kind of a
pairing technique can cause unintended consequences for mentors and mentees, as seen by the following example. Karcher & Lindwall (2003) in their quantitative study thought their mentoring program was going well until they received a phone call from a parent:

I’m a teacher and my daughter wants to be a teacher, but I’m afraid that being a mentor may discourage her from the profession. She is working with a very difficult child, and sometimes she comes home wondering if she is making a difference at all. I think that being a mentor to this particular child is too much to ask of a teenager (p. 293-315).

In this case the parent has a valid concern that certainly was not foreseen by the researchers. One way to prevent mentor-mentee relationships from being poor match ups is to take steps to ensure a better pairing.

Appendix A shows an example of a “Match Worksheet” that may be used when planning mentor-mentee pairs. This worksheet was obtained from the Virginia Mentoring Partnership. The Match Worksheet helps the program coordinators to build prospective matches. This Match Worksheet can be used to help coordinators determine whether or not a specific mentor will work well with a specific mentee. Areas to be filled in on the Match Worksheet include: Preferences of the mentor, mentee, and/or parent/guardian; Similar gender/ethnicity; Common interests; Geographical proximities; and Similar personalities. This document is yet another step in the planning of an effective mentoring program.

**Evaluation of Effective Mentoring Programs**

To determine the effectiveness of mentoring programs, there needs to be a goal or frame of reference from which to work. Based on the goals and objectives selected for a
program, evaluators should select valid and reliable tools to measure relevant outcomes (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Grossman’s (2002), evaluation of the BBBS program put the evaluation expectation in place with the model that was used. When the following goals are in place, it makes for an easier program evaluation. Their national manual lists four “common” goals for a Little Brother or Little Sister: providing social, cultural, and recreational enrichment; improving peer relationships; improving self-concept; and improving motivation, attitude, and achievement related to schoolwork (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Tierney’s (1995) study could also be used to evaluate three aspects of mentoring relationships: a) the extent that the relationship is centered on youth; b) the youth’s emotional engagement; and c) the extent that the youth is dissatisfied with the mentoring relationship.

Program effectiveness can also be evaluated by use of data to improve a program. That data could come from a research study that tracks information about mentors and mentees. DuBois and Karcher (2005) mention a quantitative study that suggested evaluating mentoring programs from three key dimensions. First, identify youth and volunteer characteristics, match length, and quality benchmarks. Second, they could track information on how long matches last, for example, the proportion making it to various benchmarks (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). The third measures benchmarks on issues, such as quality relationships.

Another evaluation tool is the recognition mentors seek for their effort, even if it is simply verbal. At retreats or even just occasional dinners mentors can interact with their colleagues, share their experiences and techniques, both effective and ineffective (Ramani et al., 2006).
There also needs to be continued clinical support for those who have dedicated their time and energy to helping others. Mentors should be able to recognize when they feel unable to resolve such problems and should be supported by a network of specialists such as study counselors and psychologists to whom they can refer their mentee (Ramani et al., 2006).

Summary

This review of literature demonstrates the importance of mentoring, the effectiveness of mentoring, and program evaluation. These issues can contribute to the success of high school mentoring programs. The literature identifies mentor – mentee relationships that are primarily adult mentor relationships with youngsters. In the literature, there was little, if anything, said about high school mentors and their connection to mentoring other high schoolers. Moreover, the literature says little about mentors connected with specific programs that are geared towards helping middle schoolers transition to high school. The purpose of this study is to examine the high school mentor’s valuation of their role in a program that helps rising ninth graders make the transition to high school, and to identify any recommendations that the upper class mentors may have for sustaining and improving the program.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The following section describes the methodology that was used in this study. The research questions are listed, and the following is discussed: purpose, design, setting, program description, participants, mentor retention, data collection, cognitive interview, data collection components, and data analysis.

Research Questions

1. What were the expected as well as unexpected responsibilities of the upper class students as they served as mentors to the new ninth graders?

2. What were the upper class students’ impressions of the mentoring program?

3. Did the upper class students feel either personal gratification or discontent (or both) during the time that they served as mentors to new ninth graders?

4. What aspects of the mentoring program did the upper class mentors think were beneficial to the mentees? What aspects did the upper class mentors think were not beneficial to the mentees?

5. What recommendations did the upper class students have for moving the mentoring program forward?

Purpose

There were three purposes for which this study was conducted: To find out how upper class students who served as mentors to new ninth graders experienced the process of mentoring; to seek to understand the upper class students as they went through the mentoring process as well as how these students evaluated the mentoring program; and to
elicit recommendations from the upperclassmen for making the program more successful and contributing to its longevity. We enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they (students) function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn (Stake, 1995). A qualitative case study design allows the research to be conducted by gathering data that conveys details to readers from the perspective of upper class students.

**Design**

This study of upper class students mentoring new ninth graders employed a case study research design. This design was selected so that the subjects could carry out the activities in their natural setting and so that experience information could be easily obtained from the participants. The goal of this design and the qualitative research approach, was to obtain a better understanding of the value of a mentoring program as determined by the upper class mentors. Qualitative researchers try to reconstruct reality as the participants they are studying see it (McMillan, 2004). Qualitative research tries to establish an empathetic understanding for the reader, through description, sometimes *thick description*, conveying to the reader what experience itself would convey (Stake, 1995).

McMillan (2004) described a case study as an in-depth analysis of a single experience or entity. This study examined a cohort of high school upper class students and their involvement in a school-based mentoring program. Yin (1989) believed a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.
In addition to Yin’s philosophy on case studies, case study research was also selected for this study in the interest of grasping the quintessence of a specific case. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activities within important circumstances (Stake, 1995).

In order to ascertain that the prompts selected for the journals, the questions selected for the focus group and the question selected for survey aligned with the literature and the research questions, appendixes B through E is provided.

**Setting**

The study took place at a high school in suburban Virginia, which we will call Concord High School. Concord has a population of approximately 1,750 students. This is a campus style school which houses students from the ninth through the twelfth grades. The school specializes in Career & Technical Education (CTE), English as a Second Language, General Education, Magnet/Specialty Center (Immersion Language), Remedial Programs, Exceptional Education, and a Talented/Gifted Program. Last year, the school was fully accredited and made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Concord High School is a school that has been known by its “Unity in Diversity” theme, which helps school personnel and students know and accept that a myriad of ethnicities exist at the school. The schools ethnic breakdown is as follows: White- non-Hispanic 61%, Black- non-Hispanic 18.2%, Asian 9.3%, and Hispanic 6.5%. Identifying these subgroups is necessary so that the research includes a fair representation of the school population when recruiting the study participants. Indeed at Concord High School, there are students who are Black, White, Asian, East Indian and Hispanic to name a few; but these subgroup categories lack the true identification and diversity of
students who walk the campus each day. The breakdown of the number of students in each grade level is as follows:

- Ninth grade – 440
- Tenth grade – 420
- Eleventh grade – 431
- Twelfth grade – 344

Program Description

Concord High School runs an annual mentoring program that is designed to help new ninth graders transition to high school. The mentoring program begins with the selling of the program to the upperclassmen during the spring semester. Tenth and eleventh grade students are the target population, since these students will be eleventh and twelfth graders in the fall of the following year.

The program was spearheaded through an informational meeting that invited tenth and eleventh graders to the school auditorium for a picture presentation detailing the new freshmen students as the target population, highlights from the previous year, as well as the goals of the mentoring program. The goals of the mentoring program supported by our study participants stated that the mentors would:

- provide the freshmen with continued reinforcement of positive values;
- provide a continuing source of information to the freshmen as new challenges are encountered;
- provide themselves as positive role models to the freshmen; and
- provide a positive atmosphere that will encourage students to stay in school.

Interested students were informed about the responsibilities of the mentors. These
responsibilities required mentors to:

- attend an all-day training session during the summer of 2009-2010;
- plan and attend an orientation program for freshmen which includes a campus tour, presentation by a motivational speaker, touring the curriculum, getting to know your school counselor, code of student conduct fashion show, closing remarks, and door prizes, prior to the first day of school;
- meet and collaborate with fellow mentors monthly to discuss topics that were discussed with the mentees. (This collaborative effort was necessary so that each group of mentors assigned to their respective homerooms shared their individual creative strategies for introducing the activities to the mentees);
- meet with program coordinators regularly;
- mentor ninth graders monthly for eight months of the school year- (The mentors taught lessons and interacted with their freshmen. The mentoring sessions were known as Connections meetings). These Connections meetings or mentoring sessions took place in the classroom with five to six mentors working with classrooms of 25 to 30 freshmen. (This set up makes this type of mentoring program a “group” mentoring program, which is different that a one-on-one mentoring program.) Each of the mentors explained a certain part of the activity to all students and then demonstrated the activity. When it was the freshmen students’ turn to embark upon the activity, the mentors made their way around the room, helping freshmen with the task, and reinforcing the reason for the activity and how it would be helpful to them socially, academically, behaviorally, etc.
The facilitation of Connections meetings in this way created opportunities for discussion between mentors and mentees; and

- submit a written journal entry each month while the program was active.

Students, who showed interest in the program, were given an application and a deadline in which to turn it in. The applications were then reviewed by the program coordinators and the teachers of the ninth grade students, whose classrooms would be affected. Mentors were selected and informed via a letter that they received through United States mail.

The selection process targeted certain profiles. Diversity is vital when selecting the mentor group. The mentors reflected the diversity of the school in terms of culture, ethnicity, social strata, and any other groups that are represented in the school. For example, Concord High School may have a group of students who like to paint their hair orange and carry green knapsacks. We needed mentors from that group. Mentors who shared a passion for helping others were also vital. Moreover, just as many great teachers did not always graduate as the class valedictorian, many upper class students with “average” grades may make great mentors. In fact, the qualities that one would look for in a great teacher are often the same qualities that characterized the selected mentors. In addition, a fairly equal mix of males and females support the diversity criteria.

The mentoring program at Concord High School was set up to provide mentors for our entire freshman class of approximately 440 students. Our goal was to recruit approximately 110 mentors each year, which would allow us to maintain a mentor-student ratio of 1 to 4.
When program coordinators began to plan for the 2009-2010 mentoring program, they needed to address an issue that had concerns the year before. During the 2008-2009 school year, the mentoring program assigned five freshmen to one upper class mentor (5:1). For the 2009-2010 school year the program assigned 25 freshmen to a team of 5 upper class mentors (25:5). The reason why the program planners made the change from the 5:1 ratio to the 25:5 ratio was because mentor attendance was a major issue. During both school years, there had been multiple times when Connections sessions were held but some freshmen mentors did not show up. At times this left five freshmen students without a mentor. This concern with mentor attendance sometimes occurred in succession, which kept some freshmen students from being mentored month after month.

The upper class student mentors benefit substantially from participating in this program. Some of the benefits included:

- a visit, photo opportunity, and an article written by the local newspaper when they visited during the ninth grade summer orientation;
- recognition at the senior class awards assembly and the underclassmen awards assembly;
- a college recommendation letter written by the administrator/program director;
- a sash that students can wear at graduation which indicates their service as a mentor; and
- a luncheon at the end of the program recognizing the mentors for their service.

Participants

The participants in this study came from Concord High School’s spring sophomore and junior population. The sophomores and juniors applied in April to be
mentors for the following fall semester, when they would be juniors and seniors. Six mentors were selected to be the main participants in the study. Since sophomores and juniors make up more than 50% of the school’s population, the expectation was that the applicant pool would be large enough to select six study participants who represented the diverse school population. This group of mentors was selected based on diversity and sex. The group contained two White students, two Black, one Asian, and one Hispanic; there were three males and three females. Permission was granted by the participants as well as the parents. If permission was not obtained, that particular participant would have been replaced with a student with the same demographics.

In addition to the six focus group mentors, the whole population of mentors who provided self and parental permission participated in the survey at the end of the study that yielded information based on the research questions. The estimated number of mentors who were expected to participate in the survey was approximately 75, the number of mentors left following a 5% mentor attrition rate per month.

Mentor Retention

As the mentoring session got under way in September, the program began with 110 mentors. Mentor attendance for each of the mentoring sessions was monitored by the assistant principal who supervised the ninth grade class. Attendance was taken at the monthly mentor meetings as well as each of the mentoring sessions. On average, the mentoring population decreased by 5% each month. At the last mentor meeting, which commenced at end of the program in April, there were 74 mentors present. The lack of mentor retention was attributed mainly to the additional responsibilities that the mentors had.
Many of the mentors that were part of this program were also athletes and members of various clubs, organizations, and teams that were offered at Concord High School. These included but were not limited to, the National Honor Society (NHS), Keyettes Club, World Affairs Forum, Circle of Friends, Discovering the Educational Consequences of Advanced Technical Education (DECA), Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), and the Spanish Honor Society.

Monthly mentoring sessions took place during the school day, during a time period called, “Concord Time.” This was a time of day that was not included in any specific academic period. “Concord Time” was a 48-minute period of the day from 1:27 to 2:15 Monday through Friday. Mentors met with their freshmen during “Concord Time” on a Thursday once per month.

Freshmen mentor coordinators informed school staff via email when the mentoring sessions were being held, and each month, they were provided with the list of freshmen mentors that were part of the program and would be meeting with their freshmen group during “Concord Time.”

“Concord Time” was a convenient time not only for mentors to meet with the entire freshmen population but also for teachers, club sponsors, and coaches to meet with their members of the student body. Therefore, this time was opportune for school staff since it took place during the school day, when student availability was at its peak.

Although it was not a requirement or expectation that mentors inform program coordinators of other conflicting responsibilities they had during “Concord Time,” the mentors were quite diligent in informing coordinators of their whereabouts when they had to miss a mentoring event. Most mentors did this prior to the mentoring sessions. In
some cases, many of the mentors who were members of four to five different programs in addition to mentoring were only able to attend one or two mentoring sessions with their freshmen. Many of the mentors joined these other programs after committing to the mentor program. Further information regarding the attendance of the mentors is addressed in the section that follows.

The ninth grade assistant principal, who was supervising the attendance of the mentors, kept track of the mentors who were not available to meet with their freshmen during specific occasions, primarily because of meeting conflicts. The issue of mentor meeting conflict was prominent in terms of mentor retention in the program.

Although meeting conflict was the major factor in mentor retention, part of the monthly 5% loss in mentor participation was not a result of meeting conflict. Some of these mentors attended one or two mentoring sessions with their freshmen, but did not show up to mentor another time. Research was not done to determine any other reasons why the mentors did not continue with the program. Nevertheless, those who did not persist in the program were encouraged to attend the final mentor meeting and were asked to participate in the study. For those upper class mentors who participated in the study, a compilation of the mentor journals, surveys, and focus group responses included the feelings of both those who continued to mentor and those who did not. (The reasons are explained in the mentor retention section of this document.)

Data Collection

This study was conducted with students in their natural setting. Data were collected through the following methods: journals, a focus group and an end-of-
survey. Appendixes B through E support that the questions used in the data collection methods align with the research questions.

Journals were kept by all the mentors as a component of the mentoring program. Mentors submitted journals based on their experiences as ninth grade mentors. Basically, the art of journal writing and subsequent interpretations of journal writing produces meaning and understanding which are shaped by genre, the narrative form used and personal culture and paradigmatic conventions of the writer (Janesick, 1998).

As part of the student mentoring program, upper class mentors were expected to submit five journals entries between the months of October and February. Students were given eleven journal topics and needed to select 5 of the eleven journal topics on which to focus their writing. Journals were written by students and submitted to the program coordinator via email or hard copy. Students were encouraged to write one journal entry per month as a program expectation. Reminders of the journal writing activity were given to students monthly through announcements made on the daily morning school video feed. Students were also reminded of the journals during the monthly Concord High School freshmen mentor meetings, when participating mentors met with the program coordinator.

The mentors in the program received oral and written instructions on the journal writing component; an outline of the journal writing topics and an explanation of the activity is contained in chapter 4 and appendix F.

A focus group session also occurred within the data collection process. The focus group technique is most useful for encouraging subjects, through their interaction with one another, to offer insight and opinions about a concept, idea, value or other aspects of
their lives about which they are knowledgeable (Mitchell, Jolley & Janina, 2004). The purpose of conducting the focus group was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of upper class mentors who mentored new ninth graders. These perceptions were evaluated to ascertain what their expected as well as unexpected responsibilities were while they participated in the program. The evaluation also included insight into what these students thought worked or didn’t work for them, as well as what aspects of the program mentors felt were most or least beneficial to the freshmen.

Mentors were also given an opportunity to offer recommendations that would help in organizing more successful mentoring programs in the future. This 45 minute focus group meeting was held with the participants at the end of the study for data collection purposes and also for participants to hear what the other participants of the study experienced.

The final form of data collection was the survey. The survey was administered to the entire population of mentors who returned consent and assent forms (Appendixes G through J). This survey group included the regular mentors as well as the six mentors that were selected for the focus group. The format for the survey was open-ended questions. This type of question was selected in an effort to obtain better responses to the research questions and to allow participants to further describe their experiences in their own words. This on-line survey contained seven open-ended questions.

**Cognitive Interview**

Beginning in the 1980’s, cognitive interviewing has emerged as one of the more prominent methods for identifying and correcting problems with survey questions (Beatty & Willis, 2007). Not only has cognitive interviewing emerged as a method for
addressing problems with surveys, but it has also emerged within the interview process as a method that law enforcement officials have utilized in retrieving accurate information from children suffering from traumatic experiences. This can be especially important when interviewing alleged child abuse victims because they are often the only sources of information about the crimes in question (Larsson & Lamb, 2008).

Beatty (2003) indicated that the most common application of cognitive interviewing is administering draft survey questions while collecting additional verbal information about the survey responses. This verbal information can be used to evaluate the quality of the response or to help determine whether the question is generating the information that its author intends (Beatty & Willis, 2007). To elicit this information, interviewers have several options from which to choose. For example, the verbal material generated by such interviews could consist of (1) respondent elaborations regarding how they constructed their answers, (2) explanations of what they interpret the questions to mean, (3) reports of any difficulties they had answering, or (4) anything else that sheds light on the broader circumstances that their answers were based upon (Beatty & Willis, 2007).

Researchers and interviewers are the primary users of the cognitive interview process. A suitable way of applying this process is for the interviewer to formulate questions in ways that are age-appropriate based on the population being studied. Furthermore, interviewers can affect the level of performance dramatically by changing their own behavior, using recall rather than recognition prompts, and developmentally appropriate, simple and clearly worded questions, like ‘Tell me what happened’ instead of complex multifaceted questions (Larsson & Lamb, 2008).
For this study, all survey questions and focus group questions went through a review process to determine that the wording supported recall rather than recognition, to determine the age appropriateness of the questions, and to determine if the questions were simple and clearly worded. The review of the questions was done by a tenured, veteran English Department Chairperson at the school and was then reviewed by two other veteran teachers.

In addition to the teacher evaluation of the questions, several former mentors also took the surveys and participated in a mock focus group where the focus group questions were used. The responses given by the students supported that they recalled their experiences. They were often followed by examples of what they experienced. Examples of some of the response are as follows:

- Well, I was expecting to deal with a bunch of ninth grades acting up because they think it’s cool, but it changed because after I got to know my kids I started to like them more and more; they were smart, just misunderstood.

- I found enjoyment helping and have fun with my kids. They were always respectful to me. I liked it.

- I would have liked to see more mature lesson plans! From my knowledge, a lot of the freshman felt as if they were being talked down to or treated like babies. Mentors should try harder to try to "come down" on their level and try to better interact with them.

- I think knowing the other upperclassmen and being able to talk to them and build a friendship was most beneficial to the freshmen because it made them feel more at home and welcome.
The responses obtained by these former mentors were responses that work well for this study.

**Journal Component**

One of the program expectations made of the upper class mentors in the freshman mentoring program was that they submit a journal entry once a month for the duration of the program. Journal instructions are contained in appendix F. Mentors met with freshmen each month from September through April; however, they were only expected to write journals from October through April. This meant that if all mentors adhered to the expectation of the journal writing, the greatest number of journals that should have been received while factoring in the 5% attrition rate of mentors would have been approximately:

- 105 journal submissions in October
- 99 journal submissions in November
- 94 journal submissions in December
- 89 journal submissions in January
- 85 journal submissions in February
- 81 journal submissions in March
- 76 journal submissions in April.

It is important to stress that, although the journal submissions were an expectation of the mentors, it was not a requirement.

If all mentors persisted in the program and submitted journal entries as expected, this method of data collection would have yielded approximately 605 journal entries from mentors. By the end of the term in which the journals were expected to be written, there
were 212 journal entries submitted by the 50 mentors who submitted consent and assent forms. 46 of the 50 were mentors throughout the program. The other four missed either one or two mentoring session. Three mentors missed one session and the last mentor missed two sessions. Of the missed sessions for the four mentors, none fell between the last and second to last sessions. All of the missed session fell at the mid-point of the program.

Journals that were submitted were emailed to the program coordinator once per month. Students selected one of eleven prompts to guide them in the journal-writing process. The following prompts were used:

1. What are your main responsibilities as a mentor?

2. What aspects of the mentoring program do you think were beneficial or not beneficial to the freshmen?

3. What does the art of mentoring freshmen include?

4. What do you like about being a mentor?

5. What advice would you give your freshmen students?

6. What are some attitudes of your fellow mentors towards the process?

7. What are some of the attitudes that you have seen in the freshmen?

8. How can the time be better managed during the Connections sessions?

9. What were your impressions (feelings, opinions, points of view) of the mentoring program?

10. What would you change about the mentoring program?

11. How have you grown or changed as a result of your participation in the mentoring program?
Students selected one prompt per journal writing session and did not repeat the same prompt twice. Students who did not have permission granted to participate in the surveys and/or the focus group did not have their journal entries used in the study. These journal entries were coded using the NVivo qualitative research program.

**Focus Group Component**

The focus group met in an on-campus conference room after school one day. Appendix K lists the questions asked in the focus group. Just prior to the five study participants and the researcher entering to room, a message was received from the sixth focus group participant informing the researcher that she would not be able to participate, due to a previous obligation. This brought the focus group number to five. The group moved forward with the focus group session after students enjoyed pizza and soft drinks.

The focus group session lasted 45 minutes. The session was recorded and then transcribed. The transcribed focus group session was entered into NVivo along with the other collected data.

**Survey Component**

By the time the consent and assent forms were distributed at the end of April and returned by participants in the beginning of May, the program had lost yet another 5% of the mentor population. This loss put the number of mentors who still considered themselves freshmen mentors at approximately 71. One reason shared by the mentors for moving on between March and April was a greater focus on passing state standardized tests and doing well on college entrance exams. For those who had already taken the college entrance exams, their focus was on college admission and expectation of acceptance letters.
Out of the 71 mentors, 50 attended the informational meeting that provided details about the study. All these students were handed assent and consent forms and all returned the forms within the allotted time. Thus, 50 assent and consent forms were returned.

The format for the survey questions was open-ended. Appendix L lists the survey questions. Open-ended type questions were selected to obtain responses to the research questions and to allow participants to describe in greater detail their experiences in their own words. There were seven open-ended questions administered to participants via a QUIA on-line survey.

Morning and afternoon announcements were made regarding the survey administration date. These announcements were made through the school’s multimedia department where students televise the morning and afternoon announcements. The announcements informed all students who submitted assent and consent forms to meet in the third cafeteria during “Concord Time” on a specific day so that they could take the survey.

As students arrived to the third cafeteria on survey administration day, their names were cross-referenced with the list of survey participants who submitted an assent and consent form that was compiled as the forms were returned. The survey was administered during “Concord Time” which is the 48-minute block of time allowed to students each day for activities such as clubs, groups, freshmen mentoring, or athletics. However, it was obvious that the upperclassmen survey was not the only activity going on that day at the school because only 31 of the 50 students showed up.
Throughout the course of the next three days, upper class mentors personally explained why they were not able to take the survey when it was given. One student said she had to make up a test, another said he was on a trip, and the final two said that they were visiting a teacher to retrieve mandatory assignments that would only be given out during “Concord Time.” When they asked if it were too late to take the survey, they were given the opportunity. These students reported to the conference room in the main office during homeroom, (homeroom met every day for nine minutes) and commenced to taking the survey. When they completed the survey, they were given passes to return to their third period class, which was already in progress. These students were approximately twelve minutes late to class. Their passes specified that their lateness to class was an excused tardy. These final responses brought the survey number up to 35.

At the end of the survey administration piece, the survey data were imported into NVivo for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was the researcher’s way of reviewing the documents collected for this study. This study included collecting data through journal writing, a focus group and a survey. Any written records, such as journals or surveys, were categorized as documents subject to data analysis.

Information from the journals and the focus group were analyzed through naturalistic generalizations. Naturalistic generalizations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves (Stake, 1995). Since the information derived from the student journals and the focus group were taken from the
perspectives of five different students, we are able to observe five different approaches that yield five different interpretations of certain aspects of the program. This method of data analysis helped to triangulate the information, which helps readers to understand the collected data from several different perspectives. The triangulation design, theoretically, is used because the strengths of each approach can be applied to provide a more complete result and one that is more valid because of the use of multiple methods (McMillan, 2004). There was no linking of data within students.

Survey data were analyzed by first using content analysis. In content analysis, you code behavior according to whether it belongs to a certain category (aggressive, sexist, superstitious, etc.) (Mitchell et al., 2004). The behavior responses of the participants were placed into carefully defined coding categories that were created in the data analysis process. Following the content analysis, the information from the open-ended questions was converted into nominal data. Data are referred to as nominal if the researcher simply counts the number of instances, or frequency of observations, in each of two or more categories (McMillan, 2004). Nominal data were analyzed in one way by using “word clouds” which counted the frequency of certain responses.

All obtained data were imported, classified, sorted, arranged, and analyzed by the use of computer software entitled NVivo. The software program acts as a personal assistant to help you locate key passages with the click of your keyboard; assign codes to the text, including assigning a unit of analysis to more than one category; and move the segments around for easy categorization, search, and retrieval (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This software tool has security settings that require the user to open secured
documents by entering a username and password. This component of NVivo helped to keep secure information confidential.

**Timeline**

1. Upper class students were expected to submit journals to the program coordinator as a component of the program.

2. A focus group was conducted with the five selected students. The meeting occurred after school in a conference room on campus following approval from an Institutional Review Board- (Duration of focus group session - 45 minutes).

3. All mentors had an opportunity to participate in a QUIA on-line survey in which they answered open-ended survey questions as a closing activity. The survey was administered in the school’s cafeteria on a designated day. Survey administration followed approval from an Institutional Review Board- (Estimated duration of survey - 30 min.)

**Summary**

The methodologies that were selected for this study to gain a better understanding of the upper class students’ valuation of a mentor program are ones that worked well for this study. The selection of diverse students to participate, the research questions, and the case study design, were the most effective way to gain the information needed. The setting for the study group and the population of students selected, as well as the procedures for obtaining information all worked well together to advance this study. Finally, the coding and analyzing of the data were organized so that the findings could be explained in the chapters that follow.
Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are used:

1. Cross-aged peer mentoring--In cross-age mentoring programs (CAMPs), the mentor is an older youth, typically high school aged, who is paired or matched with an elementary or middle school aged child.

2. Connectedness--Reflects youth’s activity with an affection for the people, places and activities within his life (e.g., school, family, friends) (Baumeister & Leary 1995; Nakkuula & Selman, 1991).

3. Formal mentoring--Natural mentors distinct from adults assigned to work with individual youths through programs such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

4. Freshman Transition Program--Multi-dimensional program that incorporates the minimum of a year-long course and an application of skills to students’ future careers (Dedmond, 2006).

5. School-Based mentoring--Volunteers from the community meet with students at their school for about an hour a week during or after school (Herrera, 2008).

6. Transitioning--“Orientation” or school tour to locate locker rooms and gym facilities, even though studies, show that students’ needs are long term and comprehensive (Dedmond, 2006).

7. Upper class mentors--A young person-the “mentee”- is matched with a mentor through a structured program with specific objectives and goals in mind.

8. Informal mentoring--Mentors that are actively sought out, but not connected to any specific program (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Brief Overview of Study Purpose and Goal

The overall purpose of this study was to evaluate one high school’s peer-mentoring program by exploring the experiences and perspectives of the upper class mentors. The goal of the study was to create and provide a written resource for program coordinators who decide to move forward with a peer-mentoring program at the school level. The resource would give them information about what worked, what did not work, and any necessary improvements to the mentoring program at Concord High School. This document is meant to offer insight into a mentoring program through the eyes of high school upper class mentors.

Overview of Data Analysis

All upper class mentors who participated in the study had their journal entries, survey responses and focus group responses entered into NVivo. The “Internals” folder under the “Sources” materials tab, contained all data that was imported into the NVivo database. Three folders were created: journals, surveys, and focus group. All journal entries were imported into the journals folder, all of the open-ended survey entries were imported into the surveys folder, and the transcribed focus group data were imported into the focus group folder.

The next step in the data analysis process was to use NVivo to createNodes. NVivo themes and codes are represented by Free Nodes and Tree Nodes. The Free Nodes designation was where the research questions were listed. This was done so that when all of the data were sorted and categorized, it could be distributed into the Free
Nodes based on themes. The Tree Nodes were created based on the journal entry topics, the survey questions, and the questions asked during the focus group. At the beginning of the data analysis, there were ten Tree Nodes created with more than 60 corresponding codes. Due to a great deal of redundancy in the student responses (which created multiple synonyms in the codes) these Nodes and codes were appropriately reduced. Six Tree Nodes were finalized and within each Tree Node, there are one to six codes.

To arrive at the codes, the most prominent words that appeared within the data were used. The use of Wordle.com helped to identify some of those outstanding words. Wordle.com is an on-line program that generates “word clouds” from text that is provided. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text. Below is one of the “word clouds” that was created. This one represents the survey, journal, and focus group responses from the question that asked about mentor recommendations for moving the program forward.

![Word Cloud Image]

This method of sorting and categorizing responses helped to establish which codes connected best with the themes created. To identify some of the codes for other
questions, words that were sorted from the Nodes and then placed into the code categories were done so based on the similarities and synonymous words that emerged from each journal, focus group or survey question answered. The researcher was able to look at the words used, group synonyms and create less complex codes.

Table 1 lists the research questions with corresponding themes and codes that helped to organize the data.

**Table 1**

**Research questions with corresponding Tree Nodes and Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Tree Nodes/Themes</th>
<th>Categories/ Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Question #1 - What were the expected as well as unexpected responsibilities of the upper class students as they served as mentors to new ninth graders? | 1. Expected/ Unexpected responsibilities | Expected  
1. Transition  
2. Friendships  
Unexpected  
3. Lack of mentor acceptance |
| Question #2 - What were the upper class students’ impressions of the mentoring program? | 2. Impressions of program (mentor/freshmen/planner relationships, lessons, freshmen attitudes.) | 1. Communication issues  
2. Mixed effectiveness  
3. Freshmen “buy-in” |
| Question #3 - Did the upper class students feel either personal gratification or discontent (or both) during the time that they served as mentors to new ninth graders? | 3. Fulfillment/ Displeasure while participating | Fulfillment  
1. Building relationships  
2. Influence  
3. Leadership  
4. Self-accomplishment  
Displeasure  
5. Respect  
6. Freshmen posture |
| Question #4 - What aspects of the mentoring program did the upper class mentors think were beneficial to the mentees? What aspects did the upper class mentors think were not beneficial to the mentees? | 4. Most/Least beneficial aspect of program | Most beneficial  
1. Concord Camp  
2. Final Score  
Least beneficial  
3. Large group |
| Question #4 - What aspects of the mentoring program did the upper class mentors think | 5. Advantages/ Disadvantages of program | Advantage  
1. Life lesson  
Disadvantages |
Research Question #1: What were the expected as well as unexpected responsibilities of the upper class students as they served as mentors to the new ninth graders?

**Theme: Expected/ Unexpected**

Participant responses to the expected responsibilities identified transition and friendships as the most prominent codes with an additional focus on several general expectations that were too broad to be set up under their own code. Unexpected responsibilities listed disengaged freshmen and lack of acceptance of mentors.

**Expected Responsibilities**

**Transition.** The mentors went through a training session in the summer prior to the beginning of the mentoring sessions. Several of the participants affirmed that there was a correlation between actual expectations and previous training. That is, some of the responses that the mentors offered suggested that they were expected to serve as an entity in the lives of the new ninth graders to help the youngsters transition to high school.

The mentors stated that part of their expected responsibilities included reaching out to the ninth graders and helping them have an enhanced transition experience. The mentors expected to help the freshmen to make that transition from middle school to high
school and to make that transition a bit easier and to relieve any anxiety the newcomers may have felt upon coming to the new school. One mentor gave the following response in the survey:

My job was to serve as a person for freshmen to go to if they were experiencing academic or social problems associated with transitioning into high school from middle school. My job was also to help them in whatever they needed and let them know what to expect from high school. I had to help them get good grades and not let them fail or drop out of school.

One mentor continued by disclosing in a written response: “Part of what we were expected to do was to deliver lessons given to us by the program planners.” These lessons were designed to help the ninth graders adjust socially and academically during the freshman transition period. The mentors knew that in order to be able to deliver these lessons, the freshmen needed to respect and accept them. It was important for the mentors to have an approachable disposition from the very beginning. One mentor wrote: “Many of us were able to fall gracefully into the lesson part by always having a smile on our faces and making sure we had a positive attitude when first meeting with the freshmen during this time of transition.”

**Friendships.** The mentors reported that part of their responsibilities as ninth grade Concord High School mentors was for them to develop healthy friendships with the freshmen. This was an area of major concern for the mentors because many felt that this was a primary responsibility. The mentors viewed developing friendly relationships as key in helping the freshmen to feel accepted as new Concord students with a sense of
belonging to this new community. These students needed to know that, even as new students, they were now part of the Concord High School family.

In the development of these new friendships, many of the mentors knew what would ensure success. They knew they needed to be available to the freshmen and to be able to give them valuable advice that they could use. During the focus group, one mentor maintained the following:

I actually want to be their friend and just help them with their struggles. I made a friend and I still say ‘hi’ to him every day and he’s really outgoing and he loves his freshman year. He would tell me about his summer and the dances he learned. I soon realized that my friendship with him and some of the things I shared really motivated him to do good. I also felt that it was my responsibility to help the freshmen in my class or to find someone who can help them if their grades began to slip or if they were having issues with someone.

Other mentors expanded on the importance of friendships by saying that they offered their group of freshmen different and helpful studying techniques to assist them in performing better in school. One mentor’s journal read:

I tried to share all of the techniques I had buried away and saved, not knowing that I would later teach these same techniques in a structured mini-lesson to a group of new ninth graders, so that they could have a successful freshman year. Another mentor wrote in a survey response:

We were there for them to talk to about problems we may have experienced. We were in their shoes two and a half to three years ago. We told them what we did to fix some of the same problems they were having. It helped them to know that they
weren’t alone. As a mentor, we taught them simple lessons that would help them
now and later on in life. I was also expected to help them in any way that they
needed help. The mentors were expected to be somewhat of a teaching figure to
the freshmen.

Whether it was with friends, school work, or family life, many of the mentors
became that friendly figure that the freshmen needed to help them adjust to this major
change in their lives.

**Other General Expectations.** In addition to the aforementioned expected
responsibilities, in order to intensify the assistance that the mentors gave the new
freshmen, the mentors at times recommended that freshmen see their personal school
counselor or grade level administrator if there were any situations that could not be
handled by mentors. Freshmen were also encouraged to seek out help from school
professionals if they felt an issue seemed serious enough.

Mentors identified an additional responsibility of teaching the freshmen good
time-management skills, as well as, encouraging them to join as many clubs and sports
teams that they could handle with their schedule. Mentors reported that it was extremely
beneficial for the freshmen to believe in the importance of becoming part of the Concord
High School family. Doing this would motivate the freshmen to make more friends and
interact with people of all ages, genders, and ethnicities. Some mentors maintained that
because there is so much diversity at Concord High School, it would benefit the freshmen
to learn the importance of taking advantage of all of the differences that Concord High
School had to offer. A survey response from a mentor read:
I feel it is important for the freshmen to get out on to the walkways and do their best to mingle with the rest of the students. If they do this then it would help them to understand that their building is not the only good part of Concord High School. We have all different kinds of people from all different places around the world. If the freshmen just go to lunch and see all of the different people and get to know them they would really understand what Concord High School is all about.

Finally, some upperclassmen stated that an additional responsibility assumed by mentors was introducing the freshmen to the realities of high school by delivering the message that ‘yes’ it is challenging. Freshmen can expect to encounter both good and bad experiences. However, the fact that the freshmen had someone who had been through almost everything they were going to experience in their four years at Concord High School was a plus for them. One mentor participant claimed in his journal that:

If I had a mentor in my freshmen year of high school, I know my transition would have been easier and I wouldn’t have made some of the mistakes I made. It would have been great if I had someone older above me telling me ‘no, don’t do it, it’s not worth it’, or ‘maybe you should try to do this instead’. So that’s why I participated to be a Concord High School freshmen mentor.

**Unexpected Responsibilities**

**Freshmen lack of acceptance of mentors.** An unexpected responsibility that seemed to catch the mentors off-guard was having to push month after month to keep the freshmen motivated and making visits productive so that the freshmen were willing to listen. Another unexpected responsibility was the amount of time needed to establish
good communication with freshmen by finding ways to keep their attention and elicit a certain level of respect which would allow the mentors to teach the lesson. One of the major communication barriers that continued to appear in the data included excessive classroom management issues. Simply said, mentors repeated the sentiment that one important unexpected responsibility was making the freshmen “be quiet!”

One mentor in the focus group said:

I was not expecting to take care of the freshmen by asking them continuously to keep quiet, and helping to make them pay attention. Even though I expected for them to not give us their undivided attention, I at least tried to get them excited about the various lessons, but I seemed to mostly just annoy them.

Although class management was a huge concern of the mentors, one mentor did say it was a challenging task but well worth his while.

**Disengaged freshmen.** Some mentors did not expect the negative attitudes that the freshmen exuded. When the mentors were in the classrooms interacting with the freshmen, the attitudes of the youngsters showed that there was a lack of caring and interest. Mentors felt these negative attitudes coming from the freshman, and sometimes they affected the mentor’s motivation level. Many wondered whether anyone would truly benefit from the value of the program. In a survey response, a mentor said:

Students sometimes would not participate, and it was usually the students who would benefit the most from the lessons. The freshmen definitely needed to be more into the program and be more active with what we were trying to help them with.

Another mentor’s journal entry read, “Right now a lot of them are closed-off and
really smart-mouthed. They (like all of us at one point) feel that they are grown-up enough and don’t need to be told what to do.”

This negativity created tension within the program at times. The mentors wanted the freshman to be more open and accepting of their efforts. One statement made by one of the mentors summed up their feelings: “Enthusiasm from all sides really helps programs like these to be successful.”

Research Question #2: What were the upper class students’ impressions of the mentoring program?

Theme: Impressions of the Concord High School Mentoring Program

Mentors were asked to discuss their impressions of the program in order to determine whether or not the program was one that would be appealing to upper class mentors in the future. It was important to know if the mentors thought that a mentoring program would have been beneficial to them if it were available when they were freshmen. For this section of the study, it was essential to break the topics down into several different areas because when mentors reported their responses, their impressions for one part of the program yielded different responses than impressions from other aspects of the program. The codes that arose from the data were the mentors’ reflections of lessons and activities, freshmen participation and “buy-in,” as well as freshmen/mentor relationships.

Reflection of lessons and activities. Throughout all three data collection methods, mentors were asked for their impressions of the Connections lessons and activities. This question generated both encouraging as well as discouraging responses for program planners who thought they were on the right track in this area. On the
positive side, the mentors believed that the lessons functioned as ice breakers. Some said that in the lessons, they had the chance to bond with the freshmen. The mentors thought that the lessons were very useful to the ninth graders and that they became involved and connected. They felt that the lessons were educational for the freshman, and that they worked well when cooperation was received from the mentees. Mentors thought the lessons ran very smoothly and that for the most part, the mentors and mentees cooperated with each other. In the survey data, one of the participants stated:

The connections lessons worked well but would have worked better if total cooperation was received from the students. They functioned as ice breakers and helped the students to become more accepting of our advice. So, I would say that the lessons functioned appropriately.

On the contrary, many of the mentors shared that the freshman did not like the Connection lessons. The mentors thought the lessons lacked energy and liveliness, which essentially is the stimulation that the freshmen were looking for. While most of the mentors thought the Connections lessons were headed in the right direction, many of them found the lessons needed to be more advanced for the freshmen. A survey response read:

I thought the Connections lessons were at times not effective because of the content. The lessons that we were instructed to teach to the ninth graders were not fun and not well received. It was hard for the ninth graders to stay interested or to see any relevance of the lessons in relation to their lives.

The mentors continued by reporting that some of the Connections lessons were not interesting to the freshmen. They added that at times they either ran out of the time
allotted with their freshmen or did not have enough good content to complete the lesson to their own personal satisfaction. During the focus group, a mentor mentioned:

The freshmen did not cooperate most of the time because a lot of them were not interested in what we had to say. It was a difficult struggle that lasted all class, to get them to be quiet and pay attention.

Another survey response revealed:

The kids did not enjoy the Connections and felt that they took nothing out of the program. The freshman failed to listen to the mentors during most meetings and ignored the lessons, harboring resentment towards the mentors for taking away their studying time.

Somewhere in the middle of the positive and negative comments on the lessons, the mentors’ mixed impressions of the Connections lessons and activities were revealed. Several mentors reported that they thought some of the lessons were quite influential, but the freshmen were not quite as enthusiastic. One mentor wrote in his journal that, “The Connections lessons, I felt, were interesting but I felt that the freshmen didn’t care at all about them.” Another entry said, “Connections were fun, except the freshmen often did not take the lessons seriously, or did not seem to care.” A survey respondent shared this:

While the Connections lessons were headed in the right direction, I often found that they were almost too juvenile for the freshmen. I think that there could have been better and more interactive ways to teach the same lessons. I also felt that there were some topics that could’ve been addressed and would’ve been more realistic and helpful, but we never touched on them.
Mentors reported that, often, they took the basis of the lesson and went off on their own track with it because they knew it was a better way to connect with the freshmen. Mentors also disclosed that freshmen/mentor interaction during the lessons started off very poorly but got much better as the meetings continued. By the last Connections meeting in April, the mentors said the freshmen had no problem opening up and sharing their thoughts and feelings.

**Freshmen participation and “buy-in.”** Freshmen participation in the mentoring program played an important role. It is no secret that in order for a mentoring program to be successful, at minimum, there must be at least two parties that offer a certain amount of mutual interest in the relationship so that good communication can be sustained.

The mentors explained that some of the freshmen participated with a great deal of coaxing or with guided questions from the mentors. This behavior was expected during the first few Connections lessons, but the mentors expected that reluctance to participate would change as the Connections lessons progressed. Some of the mentors from one particular class said, “There were a few freshmen who always seemed to want to cooperate but appeared as though they did not necessarily enjoy doing it. Their attitudes were not always positive when it came to the mentor visits.”

Some agreement among the mentors was that communication with the freshmen was poor because they were not very responsive. Often the freshmen were not very respectful to the mentors and rarely listened to them. The mentors concluded that the freshmen saw the program and the people delivering the message as young teachers telling them what they could and could not do.
As the Connections lessons continued and the communication with the freshmen improved, the mentors were able to begin more productive dialogue with them. The freshmen would give the mentors attention that was second-rate and the mentors would listen to the freshmen as they spoke. The only problem was that often when the mentors tried to answer a student's question, a few freshmen would break off into their own conversations. Even when the mentors tried to get the group’s attention, idle chatter would begin and continue, causing frustration for the mentors. One mentor reported that, “We had to raise our voices a few times just to get everyone's attention.” Another mentor’s journal response about freshmen participation was:

Kids just would be talking and we tried to do a lesson but when nobody answers your question, it’s kind of hard to keep going. Despite the little frustration it caused, the students' readiness to speak and get loud and energized is indicative of their social growth.

**Freshmen/mentor relationships.** Several mentors thought that within their classrooms they had more success and more input from their students when they just talked to them. They felt that just having conversations with the freshmen was important in building and maintaining strong relationships with them. Lessons were provided as guides for the mentors, but sometimes the mentors did not follow the lessons because a student had a question that was more important. Mentors said that the freshmen showed the most interest and the strongest relationships were built when they talked about things that happen at school (like homecoming, sporting events, and funny things). It was during those times that everyone joined in the conversation. One mentor wrote in his journal, “Some of the mentors said that they did not think the lessons could work unless
the freshmen could feel that relationship bond and a personal connection to the freshmen.” One mentor shared this in his survey response:

If we could find some way to connect with them as human beings, friends instead of teachers, then maybe we could make a huge breakthrough with the freshman and really hit the nail on the head, build our relationships and get into the real reason freshmen could benefit from upper class mentoring.

Another mentor wrote the following response in the survey:

At our last meeting we all shared why we decided to become Concord High School mentors, and I think it really helped the freshman in our homeroom understand that we really are here for them. I think it helped them to understand that this means something to us. I personally enjoyed telling them my story even though it was hard for me to do. I got to tell them about my freshman year and how absolutely horrid it was. I got to explain to them how close I was to dropping out because I was so scared of school. My freshmen watched me shake as I told them this story. Here I was, standing in front of 20-something freshmen, telling them the scariest secrets I keep inside of me. And I think it really hit them. After that day, one of them added me on Facebook (which is so amazing), and I can say hello to a few of them in the halls without it being awkward. I love going into the freshmen building now and seeing some of my freshmen.

One final statement that the mentors shared on numerous occasions was that they felt it was important for the freshmen to know that the upperclassmen joined the mentoring program and were here because they wanted to be here and not because someone told them they had to be.
Research Question #3: Did the upper class students feel either personal gratification or discontent (or both) during the time that they served as mentors to new ninth graders?

**Themes: Fulfillment/ Displeasure**

It is no secret that there is nothing easy about starting life over again with new surroundings, new people, and new teachers. This is true for adults who frequently have difficulty with this area, but it is also true of the youngsters in our population. For rising freshmen starting life all over again, high school seemed to have its triumphs and challenges.

For those who assist in helping freshmen transition to their new lives, the task also has some personal triumphs and challenges. The majority of mentors experienced personal fulfillment in their roles as upper class mentors. These mentors identified the activities which were rewarding for them. These activities were coded as building relationships, being influential, exercising leadership, gaining experience and self accomplishment. However, mentors also experienced a lack of respect from freshmen which caused bouts of displeasure.

**Fulfillment**

**Building relationships.** Many of the mentors gave the impression in their responses that the building of relationships with the freshmen was rewarding for them. In some cases, these relationships grew stronger as some of the mentors focus more attention on their freshmen mentee’s. They were able to watch the newcomers grow and make wiser choices in school by the end of their freshmen year.
A journal respondent wrote:

Essentially, I commend them on their adaption to Concord High School. As I approach graduation next year and then college, I will have to adapt, just like the freshmen did, all over again. In that endeavor, I will take with me all that I have learned from my freshmen: my maturity, and my sanguinity. I genuinely believe I have become a better person thanks to my involvement as a Concord High School mentor.

Other mentors reported that they enjoyed being mentors because they felt like they were able to play a part in building strong relationships with other people. A survey response read, “This program helped me get a broader perspective of the different challenges student’s face that affect their personal and academic lives. Our relationship grew as a result of getting to know them.”

A few mentor responses revealed that the mentors admitted to having a passion for being able to build meaningful relationships especially when it was in a vital area such as education.

Influence. Numerous mentors commented in the journals and surveys that they liked being a mentor because of the positive influence they had on others. One mentor said, “I feel like I’m giving back to my school.” She added that watching the freshmen mature and flourish throughout the year was something of which she wanted to be a part. Many of the responses were in line with this journal entry:

When I was a freshman, it would have helped if I had a sort of guide my first year of high school. I’m glad I could be that guide and role model for the freshmen this year. Freshman year is a crucial year. When I was a freshman, I was clueless
when it came to the idea of college. I also didn’t know much extracurricular and the importance of academics. That is the main thing I want to express to the freshmen.

One mentor stated that having the opportunity to influence the freshman in a positive way by converting the planned Connections into less formal meetings was priceless. Other mentors felt the same way and recognized that freshmen valued the responses to their concerns, which were most important to them. On occasion, teachers tried to answer the questions that freshmen had, but sometimes it helped that the freshmen got advice from a different point of view. A mentor reported in the survey that:

I wish I would have had somebody that was a great influence on me and that I could just ask random questions when I was a ninth grader. This was a well thought out program with the right lessons that were mostly effective. It is rewarding to know that you have helped someone out, even if you were only able to answer one or two questions for them.

Leadership and gaining experience. What most of the mentors seemed to enjoy about being a mentor is demonstrating their ability to be a leader. They got personal gratification just from visiting the classrooms and teaching the freshmen about life lessons that they learned throughout high school. A mentor responded that, “I love being a mentor and watching the freshmen grow from middle schoolers to high schoolers in about two months.” During the focus group, another mentor commented:

I like being a mentor because I know I have a positive effect on the lives of my freshmen just by being a good example of a leader. Hopefully, I have shown them
that getting involved in high school is fun and will lead my freshmen to participate.

Another mentor in the same focus group said:

What I like about being a mentor is that I get to show my freshmen how to be leaders in the school so when they have this same opportunity to mentor, they will be able to show their upcoming freshmen how to succeed in school.

The responses continued with this journal entry:

I like being a mentor and leader in this program because I like the idea of giving the freshman something I never got. I believe that if I had had this program when I was a freshman, maybe my freshman year would’ve been better. My freshman year was really hard; and I’m not going to lie. I ended up getting pulled to whoever would have me and ended up having “friends” that weren’t good for me and an abusive boyfriend. Freshman year was so tough for me, and I wish I had had a program like this. I wish I had had some older, wiser upperclassman telling me “go out and meet people” and teaching me things I needed to know. If I had someone guiding me, I can almost promise you my year would’ve gone better and the emotional scars I still have would not exist. Yes, freshman year taught me a lot. It taught me to be tough and learn how to split the people who really cared from the people who were bad for me. But if I could have had this program it would’ve been a better experience for me to remember.

In addition to the opportunity that mentors had in leadership, many of the mentors added that the experience that they had of being a teacher to the freshmen for a mere 48 minutes was an experience that one mentor described as “took to heart.”
Another mentor wrote in a journal response, “I can now understand what teachers go through when they must deal with a class of twenty or more students. Especially being the teachers of the youngest students in the school.” Another mentor shared in his survey response:

Being a teacher of the youngest class in high school is rough; the students are new to high school and are not as mature as the upperclassmen. You can give them a real life situation, they ask you a question and you answer it the best way you can as a student. This should happen. It’s a lot more beneficial than a teacher telling them something because teachers tell them all of the time but they usually don’t listen. But they listen to us, and that makes me feel important. I realized that we actually have the potential to help every one of them, but the freshmen also have the capability to teach and remind us of morals like benevolence. Most of us sometimes lose sight of it with all the stress and pressure of high school, but it was inspirational hearing this from one of my own freshmen.

One focus group mentor stated this, “Going into this Concord High School freshmen mentor program, I did not expect that this experience would teach me as much as it did. I actually learned from the freshmen and the Connections activities.”

**Self-accomplishment.** In terms of self-fulfillment with the Concord High School mentoring program, the mentors shared that many of them saw themselves as role models to the freshmen. They stressed that even if the freshmen did not regard them as their hero or idol, they needed to keep an optimistic, friendly attitude. A mentor survey response contained this information:
What was different about me is that I did not allow a grouchy, bad mood bring the freshmen down. I have done this with people in the past. To me this means that my maturity has developed around the freshmen. I feel like I am more aware of my actions— and that my actions should reflect integrity, sincerity, and kindness. Now I try to act as a more positive person.

During the focus group another mentor said:

Personally, I believe that I have gained a better understanding or reminder of what it is like to be a freshman. Adjusting to high school, studying more intensively, making new friends— I feel like the freshmen have become my children. I look out for them so much, and the process is going along much easier now that we have their willingness to participate. I’m not really excited to watch this program improve now that our meetings don’t resemble the act of pulling teeth. But I’d say my relationship with my freshman is improving.

And a final journal response noted:

As a result of being a Concord High School freshmen mentor, I have matured mentally. I now have a broader view of what it is like to be a teacher. I have developed more teamwork skills with my fellow Concord High School freshmen mentor members. I’ve learned to problem solve and deal with problems while answering questions my freshman asked. I have further more expanded my social network with my freshman.

In terms of self-fulfillment, this mentor seemed to sum up his feelings when he responded to this question in the focus group. “What I like about being a mentor is the
rewarding experience and bonding that we hopefully shared through the year. I loved being a mentor!”

Displeasure

A small group of mentors reported that they experienced displeasure from the experience of being a Concord High School mentor. Many of these responses revolved around the lack of a caring attitude and respect exhibited by the freshmen.

**Respect.** Several of the displeased mentors were glad to be part of the mentoring program and to help the freshmen when they needed it. However, this minority was displeased with the lack of respect the freshmen showed and were unprepared for some of the immature attitudes that the freshmen exhibited. One of the mentors responded in a journal entry by saying, “They would joke about things and continued to joke. On most occasions, they were discussing issues that did not pertain to the lesson focus.” One mentor wrote in the survey response:

The only displeasure I had was that the students had disrespectful attitudes. I feel this mainly came from the mentors trying to sugar coat the information we presented to them and not being able to present it to them more candidly.

In another survey response a mentor wrote, “I was displeased with the lack of respect they showed to the mentors and the joking attitude they had towards the program in general.”

Even though the lack of freshmen respect was an issue, mentors reported that the experience was not all bad. The mentors were glad to know that the freshmen did take their advice on occasion. (This information was obtained through an informal evaluation
that was done by Concord High School in which program coordinators asked the freshmen how they felt about the program.)

The mentors also expressed some displeasure with the size of their freshmen group as well as the quality of the lessons. These areas of displeasure are discussed in research question 4, which addresses disadvantages of the program.

Research Question #4: What aspects of the mentoring program did the upper class mentors think were beneficial to the mentees? What aspects did the upper class mentors think were not beneficial to the mentees?

**Theme: Program Advantages/ Disadvantages**

When the mentors were asked what they thought was beneficial to the mentoring program, the codes were made clear immediately. Many of them said it was the inclusion of Concord Camp, the Final Score Calculator, the opportunity to have an intimate open forum with the freshmen and teaching them the basics of life lessons. When asked what was not beneficial to the mentoring program, the mentor responses were large group sizes and the quality of the lessons.

**Advantages**

**Concord Camp.** Concord High School provided every new incoming freshmen student an opportunity to attend an orientation that was held a week prior to the first day of school. During this orientation day entitled “Concord Camp,” the Concord High School mentors prepared and presented an intensive orientation program for the freshmen. Some of the activities included:

- meeting your mentor;
- Campus tour;
- let’s go through your academic day;
- fashion show (What Not to Wear); and
- lunch in the school cafeteria.

Although all new freshmen were invited, only two-thirds of the incoming class actually attended. The mentors felt that those freshmen who attended Concord Camp had a greater advantage in terms of understanding, accepting, and benefiting from the mentoring program.

The mentors thought Concord Camp was one of the most beneficial aspects of the mentoring program. Many of them agreed that even though the freshmen disliked the idea of coming to their new high school on a Thursday morning during the last week of their summer vacation at 8:00 AM, it was the catalyst for beginning and maintaining a successful mentoring program. Mentors said that by the end of the Concord Camp day, the freshmen were much better prepared for the first days of school and the important roles that the mentors would play in their lives. One mentor added in a survey response, “I think Concord Camp was definitely one of the most beneficial things for them. They were able to meet their new class before the pressure of school kicked in.” Another survey response said:

I think Concord Camp was the most beneficial aspect of this program. The freshmen were able to become adjusted to their new school and their new environment. They also made friendships which helped them feel more comfortable during the first weeks of school.

A journal entry included:

In the beginning of the year Concord Camp was really good. We got to sit down
and do a few lessons with the freshmen and show them how high school is. I think the best part of Concord Camp was showing the freshmen around school so they do not get lost on the first day of class.

In the focus group, one of the mentors said, “Concord Camp worked as a good introduction to high school; students got to know one another and were offered an opportunity to get used to the overall atmosphere of high school.” In a survey response another mentor wrote, “I thought Concord Camp was most beneficial for the freshmen because it allowed them to know the layout of the school before the first day.”

The mentors were clear that they felt those freshmen who did not attend Concord Camp were at a disadvantage when it came to knowing a bit about the school as well as about the mentoring program. A survey response stated, “Unfortunately, the freshmen who did not have that couple of hours with the mentors were quite naïve as to who the mentors were and what their contribution would be to their lives as Concord High School freshmen students.” Finally, a focus group participant added this in regard to Concord Camp:

I loved Concord Camp and thought it was really fun to get to know everyone.
The kids who were not at Concord Camp acted like we (mentors) were strangers. Like, what are you here for? They gave us mean looks and my thoughts were, “We’re here to help you!” It was hard to get them to appreciate that.

**The Final Score.** In addition to Concord Camp, the mentors held in high regard a particular Connections lesson they presented to their freshmen. They considered this lesson helpful and realistic. It was called, “The Final Score”, which was a grade calculator designed to help most students find out what they would have to do during the
next nine-weeks and beyond to pass a specific class or all of their classes for the school year.

The January Connections meeting involved talking to the freshmen about the upcoming exam week. Prior to this meeting, the mentors had been provided with “The Final Score” grading calculator tool. This calculator was made available to all freshmen students through a type of file sharing folder that Concord High School students used, and all freshmen were to download this tool prior to the mentoring session. This technological tool calculated semester grade point averages and yearly grade point averages for the freshmen students. By plugging in their first and second nine week grades, freshmen were able to determine what they needed to earn as a score on their midterm exam or during the second or third marking period in order to get a semester or yearly passing grade for their class. One mentor survey response was:

The final score lesson helped the freshmen because most of them were unfamiliar with high school grading. They were also unfamiliar with how important their grades were in their freshman year of high school. Some of the lessons helped students to realize that their academic performance as freshmen could really make or break their overall success in high school. They learned about Grade Point Averages (GPA’s) as well as how to stay organized with study.

Those freshmen who aspired to retrieve information about not just passing a class, but passing with a high score, also found great advantages with The Final Score calculator. One mentor shared in a journal entry:

I thought this was such a beneficial tool for our freshmen and surprisingly for us mentors, too. During the scenario activities, one of the freshmen became a pro at
mastering the calculator, and he had won two prizes in a row for correctly calculating the grades. However, the second time he gave his prize (a candy bar) to his best friend. This was genuinely sweet and brought all of the mentors back down to earth.

There was a huge mentor response regarding the success of this calculator. Most of the mentors thought that this tool was one of the best resources used in the mentoring program because not only did the freshmen use it, but immediately following its success the resource was opened to the entire school and students in grades nine through twelve actually used it.

The Concord High School mentoring program was the catalyst for piloting the “The Final Score” calculator to the entire school. It was the upper class mentors who spread the word to the school and gave the entire school population information about the grading calculator. Activities such as this helped the freshmen as well as other Concord students to organize and set goals.

**Intimate open forum.** A common sentiment shared by the mentors was their desire to develop a relationship with their freshmen in which they felt comfortable asking questions and speaking freely about issues that interested or concerned them. In order to facilitate the relationship, the mentors were provided with Connections lessons as guides that included topics to discuss with the freshmen when they visited the classroom. Although the program coordinators expected that the lessons would be followed they also realized that there may be time left over at the end of the lesson, thus providing an opportunity for mentors and freshmen to engage in open forum conversations.
Recognizing the fact that the pacing of lessons in class would differ, the program planner sensed the need to over-plan the mentor lessons with the freshmen. This over-planning was done to minimize idle time for mentors and freshmen, which could cause students to act out or for mentors to try different tactics to stretch a lesson.

The mentors in the program desired to have less structured lessons and more informal time to spend with their freshmen. Mentors said the most beneficial part of the time that they spent with their freshmen was when there was dialogue about whatever seemed to be important to the freshmen at any particular time. The mentors noted that during these informal mentoring times, the freshmen seemed more engaged and seemed to listen more attentively to the mentors and the discussions on how they handle situations.

The mentor responses revealed that the time they had for open discussions between them and the freshmen was the most beneficial time for both the mentors and the freshmen. This format created a sense of community between the students because when a particular freshman had an issue that an upperclassman had experienced, conversation was generated and mentors and freshmen talked with each other and helped each other to resolve the issue. A survey respondent said:

I think that just being able to talk to the freshmen was the most beneficial thing. They got to ask questions that they needed answered about the school, grades, relationships, exams, classes, etc. And we got to know a lot about them and how they are. They told us straight forward what was wrong and if it was more personal, they could tell us privately and ask me after the meeting or call me.

A focus group response was:
It was good to talk to the freshmen personally. It didn’t even have to be one-on-one. One-on-one helps, but when someone in the class has a question, getting their opinion on everything and including them counts for something. So, I think starting their freshman year with the mentors listening to them and responding to exactly what they want to know really helps.

Mentors explained that these open forums were not necessarily one-on-one mentor and freshmen opportunities, but were, in fact, much needed opportunities to answer questions that class members had that they did not mind sharing with the group. Mentors further explained that they felt the open forums were opportunities that freshmen were seeking to obtain opinions from anyone who could help them. A journal respondent said:

The freshmen wanted to be included and they wanted to know that their questions or opinions counted for something. During the times when we got to just talk to them, the freshmen asked questions about school work, home life, teachers, and after school activities. We listened to them and responded. The freshmen were open and told us exactly what issues caused them concern or anxiety. This way of communicating greatly helped build our relationships.

**Life Lesson.** Mentors said that when the freshmen realized there were sincere upper class role models who wanted to help them transition to high school, the mentoring program was most successful. A mentor journal response to his impressions of the program revealed this:

I want them to really care and do well in school. Some already told me what they want to become. Many of them know in their freshman year, and I want them to
take all the classes that lead to their ultimate accomplishment. It’s really nice to hear what they want to do and I want them succeed at their goals.

Another mentor’s focus group response shared that:

I like the fact that instead of having someone that’s so much older than them (a teacher) not understand the struggles that they’re go through, now have someone that’s two or three years older than them giving them advice and helping them out leaves more of an impression. It’s not just another adult telling me what I should or shouldn’t do.

Another mentor survey response revealed:

I think the freshmen got a bit more comfortable coming out of their shells because I think part of the reason why some of them acted like they didn’t care or they made themselves really not care, was because they felt embarrassed being vulnerable and admitting that they don’t know everything. They were not only the youngest that came from being the oldest; but now they are the youngest again. So now this way they can feel comfortable asking questions and not feel so bad about it.

Disadvantages

**Group size.** Mentors felt that the large group meetings were not beneficial to the freshmen. The larger groups prevented the mentors and freshmen from connecting on a personal level. A survey response disclosed, “It was always easier to talk to the freshmen one-on-one or in a relaxed setting because they were more comfortable opening up.” In the focus group, one of the mentors said, “I think that having five people go into a homeroom of twenty-five and expect each of them to get to know everyone is almost an
impossible task.” Another mentor said, “I knew some of the kids in my class but because the class was so large you might miss the occasional kid who might have really needed us for something.” An additional focus group comment on this issue was that, “Having a lot of freshmen in a group did not allow for enough one-on-one time with a mentor. It would have been better if each mentor had a small group of 3-5 students.” These sentiments from the mentors resonated very strongly in response to this question.

**Lesson quality.** For the mentoring program, the mentors were given lesson plans as guides that would hopefully assist them in connecting with the new ninth graders. The plans were used as a tool to help the mentors strike up conversations with their freshmen. Program planners thought that this step was important because it created an avenue that the mentors could take to generate conversation. Nevertheless, the mentors’ impressions of the quality of the lessons revealed that they had an aversion to them.

Some mentors agreed that they would have rather had one-on-one conversations with their freshmen during the Connections sessions. They said they would have used these opportunities to get feedback from the freshmen students about issues that were important to them such as school, grades, or even the mentoring program.

Other mentors said that they often felt like they were talking “at” their freshmen rather than talking “to” their freshmen. A journal entry read:

Sometimes I felt like we were talking at them rather than to them. They want to feel like we’re an older brother or sister that they can come to but if we can’t hold a deep unrehearsed and written conversation then that pushes their hopes farther away and they lose hope and interest.
All seem to agree that one of the least beneficial aspects of the mentoring program was the quality of the lessons. A recurring theme was that the lessons and the worksheets that came with them were not very helpful. A survey respondent wrote, “The students were put off by this type of work because it seemed to them to be another boring school assignment.”

The mentors also felt like many of the lessons sent a trivial message to the freshmen. Mentors instructed the freshmen to sit down and then they began spewing facts at them. This approach set off a reaction from the freshmen that just made them kind of “zone out” and not pay attention. The mentors felt at some point like they were rambling away. This generated a lack of class management as the freshmen reaction was to talk to somebody and everyone else started to talk to others as well.

A couple of mentors thought that doing group activities like playing games was also not beneficial to the freshmen. A suggestion that was given by one of the mentors and echoed by the others was that program planners break the freshmen and the mentors up into smaller groups. Their wish was that they could be assigned to a small group of freshmen and work with them in an intimate and informal manner.

Research Question #5: What recommendations did the upper class students have for moving the mentoring program forward?

**Theme: Recommendations**

As the mentors reflected on the entire mentoring program, their recommendations for making the program more successful in the future were some of the most valuable pieces of the research. As the data were analyzed, it became clear that these upper class students were going to be as honest as possible. Knowing these students and spending a
year or more working with most of them as they served as mentors helped the program coordinator to realize that the recommendations were not meant to criticize the program but were meant to reveal what they thought would make the program more successful in the future. The codes that they talked about were the classroom sessions, time, and planning. Another code that they talked about was relationships (bonding). The mentors gave some very promising recommendations as to how to move the program forward.

**Classroom sessions.** In terms of the assignments that were used for the Connections sessions, many of the mentors thought that these activities should have been created to teach the freshmen lessons or skills that would be beneficial to them academically or socially. One journal entry said:

> The activity where freshmen had to listen for clue words in a story and pass the pen back and forth to each other based on the clue words was a useful lesson; but maybe the freshmen did not really enjoy this activity because the listening skill wasn’t as clear as it should have been.

There were mentors who thought that the lessons had too much of an academic focus. They felt they should not have had lessons on academics every time. A focus group participant said, “The freshmen never really paid much attention to the lessons and it was very easy to tell that they felt babied.” The mentors suggested that focusing half of the lesson on academics and half on how the week was going for the freshmen would have created a good balance for the freshmen.

The mentors were passionate about the need for time with their freshmen that would allow them to talk and get to know them. The mentors thought that it might be a good idea that program planners formulate the Connections lessons so that there is a
general lesson; but they wanted fewer specific activities for freshmen. They felt that the freshmen viewed those activities as though they were replications of in-class assignment as opposed to true bonding experiences with their mentors. In one survey response a mentor said, “They seemed to enjoy the meetings more when they involved more interactive stuff rather than just sitting down. Even though we had most of our discussions sitting down, they rather have more interaction than just being handed a worksheet.”

The mentors also thought they should have had an opportunity to sit down and talk with their freshmen individually and really get to know them. They shared with program coordinators that they felt the freshmen didn't get a chance to know them due to the lack of open forum time they were given; therefore, the freshmen never really gained the confidence to feel comfortable enough to talk with the mentors about any struggles they may have been having or to get answers to any questions. The survey data revealed the following responses from mentors, “It was difficult having a lot of freshmen in a group. There was not enough one-on-one time with the mentors,” “I expected to have six freshmen of my own but I didn’t get that. I never got to bond with any of the students in my homeroom. It was extremely awkward,” “We should have had more free time to talk with the freshmen. Having more one-on-one relationship with the freshmen would help them feel more connected and secure.” A focus group student said:

Having one mentor per five kids helped you get to know your freshmen and they got to know you. And I think it’s a lot easier because you could be more personable and they can be more personal with you.
In addition to the lack of bonding time with their freshmen, the mentors also thought that the Connections sessions with the freshmen were far too spaced out. Some of the other recommendations made by the mentors included adding more fun activities for the mentors to engage in with their ninth graders and more realistic material for the lessons. Mentors continuously encouraged more discussion-based Connections sessions that included more interactive activities for the freshmen.

A final recommendation for the classroom sessions was the need for more authoritative figures making rounds during this time. Having too few adults walking around often encouraged the freshmen to rebel against the mentors, and exhibit some acting-out behaviors. The mentors would have appreciated the presence of supportive teachers and more program planners monitoring what was going on in the classrooms.

**Time.** In terms of time, the mentors had several comments as to how it worked out for them as well as how they thought it could work better for the program.

The mentors said that they got to know the freshmen well during the Concord Camp in August and even knew the names of many freshmen during the first month of the mentor meetings. However, during those first meetings, the mentors felt that the majority of their relationships with the freshmen was very distant. The mentors felt they could have connected more strongly with the freshmen during the Connections sessions; but they felt like they should have spent more time together with the freshmen if they were expected to have a friendly relationship with them. The mentors thought they needed to have more together/bonding time with the freshmen to build a better and stronger program.
In addition to spending more time with the freshmen, mentors also believed that time would have been better spent in helping the freshmen with homework questions or other academic concerns. Since many of the mentors had already been through the courses the freshmen were taking, there would have been benefits to the freshmen academically if mentors were allowed to just talk to them, get to know them, and answer any questions they had. One mentor recalls that he and his fellow mentors in a particular homeroom had about ten minutes left in the session, so the mentors decided to ask if the freshmen had any questions for them. They were surprised at how many questions the freshmen actually had. If the freshmen had had more time to interact with the upperclassmen perhaps they would have broken the freshmen mentality of not listening and being disruptive at times.

Mentors also believed that there should have been more Connections sessions with the freshmen. For the mentors, meeting with the freshman once a month felt as though it was an eternity before mentors would see them again. The mentors thought that seeing the freshmen every three weeks or so might have been better.

**Planning.** Mentors had strong feelings in regard to the mentor meetings and the planning of the Connections sessions. Many felt like there was a lack of organization in the planning of the meetings and having information disseminated to them. There was some similarity in many of the mentor responses that conveyed that since there was such a large group of people associated with the mentoring program, it was hard for all of the mentor meetings to run smoothly. Mentors felt that in order for there to be better communication among all of those involved in the program, there should have been more meetings that would help with the lesson planning for the freshmen. Additional meetings
would have created more program coordination so that the mentors would have had more information and easier access to the classroom activities.

Furthermore, mentors expressed the need to have a sufficient number of mentors in each room. One mentor said that for half of the year, only she and one other mentor conducted the classroom sessions. This made it very difficult to control students that in some cases had attention and behavior problems. She said that the program needs to be better organized for next year.

**Bonding.** An issue that had come up more often than any other is the fact that the mentors wanted to have one-on-one bonding time with their freshmen, in the hope that they could build trusting relationships with them. A focus group member said that during the October Connection session, their group decided to interact with the freshmen prior to starting the time management activity because some of the freshmen did not even know the names of their mentors yet, everyone introduced him or herself and learned everyone’s name. The mentors used this method of communicating to try to share and socialize with the freshmen. They found this way of beginning a session and then moving forward into the lesson to be very effective in reaching their goal of interacting with and getting to know the freshmen. This method broke the ice between mentors and freshmen.

Although the mentors did not have enough time to begin the activity that was given to them during that meeting, they felt that the freshmen were more responsive to them. Mentors wanted to continue to build these relationships so that the freshmen would eventually be able to ask questions and trust their mentors.

Mentors felt that it was important for the freshmen to get a feel of what Concord High School was like by talking to people who play sports, who were in clubs, or who
could help them with homework. Oftentimes, the mentors noticed that the freshmen had questions they were afraid to ask or questions about things they were never told, such as: “What is the difference between a college prep and honors class?” The opportunities that mentors had to answer such questions were extremely limited.

**Summary**

Mentors clearly wanted more frequent Connections sessions, less structured lessons, more one-on-one interaction between mentor and freshmen, and more time for the freshmen and mentors to get to know each other. Mentors also wished that they had had the phone numbers of their rising freshmen in the summer so that they could begin building the lines of communication and trust. Mentors said that this would have been a great way for them to make sure that they stayed connected with the freshmen even if they did not see them during the school day.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When a new program is implemented there is a common desire that professionals have to evaluate the program to see if it was beneficial to those who participated. This research study was a case study that examined a mentoring program that had eleventh and twelfth grade upper class students serve as mentors to ninth graders that were new to a high school. A case study with elements of evaluation was undertaken from the perspective of the upper class students who served as mentors. The upper class students were asked to give their viewpoints of the program and report them through the following methods: writing journals, taking a survey and participating in a focus group. Various questions were asked of the mentors using these three different sources so that their thoughts and feeling about the mentoring program could be studied. The students’ answers provided valuable information that the researcher used for the purpose of and producing a valuable resource for those interested in this type of research study.

Patterns Evidenced by the Data

This study offered a great deal of valuable data from mentors about the freshmen mentoring program at Concord High School. It produced the mentors’ valuations of the mentoring program, which helped the researcher gain information about how students felt about a program implemented at a high school. Four primary recurring themes surfaced from the data analysis that appeared substantial enough to warrant changes in the program. The first was the Connections lessons and activities.

The mentor lessons were designed to provide new ninth graders with continued reinforcement of positive values and to include social activities, academic focuses, and
informational sessions between the upper class mentors and their students. The Connections sessions consisted of mentors talking to freshmen about topics that would generate positive discussion. The lessons and activities were provided to the mentors as guides to assist them in having smooth meeting sessions with the freshmen.

The lessons were provided to the mentors prior to their meetings with the freshmen. The mentors were given a directive by the program planners to meet with the other mentors with whom they shared a classroom and discuss how they wanted to carry out the lesson. Each group of mentors came up with a different way to do this. Program planners were interested in the collaboration efforts of the mentors and how they would come up with collective ways of conducting their mentoring sessions. Having the lessons organized this way, helped the mentors to work together in groups.

The lessons and activities were obtained through a high school age appropriate guide that was adopted by the program planners. Although the guide was said to be one that had a history of successful use, it obviously did not work for the mentors in this program. The fact that the mentors generally found little quality in the lessons that came from the guide raises a number of questions, including: Was the guide created with freshmen in mind; or did a group of adults simply get together and come up with the best ideas they had for the students and use these lessons as tools that would fill time?

There was a reoccurring theme in mentor responses that the lessons and activities provided to them by the program planners were not age appropriate or beneficial to the freshmen. Program planners accepted this analysis as valid and chose to take a closer look at the lessons and activities used in the program; consequently, they made some major changes for the following school year. One of the changes was to make the lessons
more age appropriate and to determine whether the respective lessons would have a positive impact on most freshmen. The objective is to produce lessons that provide benefit to the new ninth graders. The way in which the lessons will be presented to freshmen will also be addressed, taking into account the issue of mentor to student ratio.

The mentor to student ratio was the second major theme. The year prior to the current research study, this same mentoring program was offered to new ninth graders at Concord High School. The program was basically run the same way; the only difference was that each mentor was assigned to five freshmen students. However, program planners ran into major issues with this setup because of poor mentor attendance.

Considering that the mentors were only responsible for their five freshmen, many of them decided to mentor their students in the classroom, but because of privacy and space issues, some mentors used other areas of the school campus for mentoring their freshmen. Given that the campus of Concord High School is an unenclosed outdoor facility, it was not unusual to see groups of students on the grass, near the senior wall, or on the benches. This made the task of supervising the multiple groups a challenge for program planners.

As the program planners bounced from classroom to classroom as well as from area to area on the school campus, they soon realized that many freshmen students’ mentors were absent. The absences occurred month after month, sometimes consecutively, thus affecting the same groups of freshmen. Because the program planners wanted to ensure that the mentors were having smooth meetings with their groups, it was not possible for them to visit all of the areas within the 48 minutes of Concord Time. Therefore, the discovery of the absent mentors sometimes went unknown
to planners for the entire duration of Concord Time. The freshmen who had absent mentors fell victim to what is known as idle time. Many of them used the opportunity to sleep or to be disruptive to the groups who did have a mentor. Some freshmen made the choice to work on school assignments.

In the beginning of the 2009-2010 program the objective was to recruit at least one mentor for every five freshmen. In addition, several more mentors were recruited to serve as substitutes for those mentors who did not show up.

Knowing that the mentor retention rate would decrease, program planners addressed this issue for 2009-2010 by placing the mentors in a situation where there would be five mentors in a classroom with twenty-five freshmen. This was to ensure that no freshmen would be left without a mentor. It made sense to planners that, if a mentor was absent, the other mentors in that classroom would simply “be there” for the freshmen. In theory, this arrangement seemed to be one that would work out well. However, according to the mentors, it was unsatisfactory because it meant that they needed to be responsible for many more freshmen than they expected. In some cases, two mentors were absent from a classroom; this left three mentors in the classroom with twenty-five freshmen which was a responsibility that the mentors did not expect. Moreover, this type of setup did not allow for mentors to build a more personal and bonding relationship with the freshmen, something that the majority of them desired.

Mentor to student ratio, as well as mentors having more personalized time with their freshmen, went hand-in-hand with this study. The plan to rectify the mentor to student ratio is included in the next section, which addresses the mentors’ desire to have one-on-one time with the freshmen.
The third major theme was the desire that mentors voiced regarding having more one-on-one time with the freshmen. As noted in the previous section, program planners had challenges with balancing the ratio of mentors to freshmen. Keeping the ratio at a level that was workable for the mentors as well as fair to the freshmen was almost unattainable without increasing the number of mentors in the program. With that in mind, the mentors’ wish to build better relationships with the freshmen through the use of an increased amount of one-on-one time was a concern that was noted by the researcher as one of the aspects of the program that needed to be changed.

To rectify the issue of more one-on-one contact between mentors and freshmen for the next school year, there needs to be one mentor for each freshman. Realistically, a plan such as this is not possible. Although this sounds like an ideal situation, there would need to be approximately 400+ mentors to accommodate the entire freshman class. What would be more realistic would be to revert to the way the program was run a year ago and assign one mentor to every five freshmen. Doing it this way will partially give the mentors what they are looking for in a successful program. This means that program planners need to recruit at least 80 mentors and an additional dozen or so (at 5% attrition rate for eight months) to sustain the program. Although this does not sound like an impossible task, predicting whether or not a mentor will stay has never been easy.

An additional safeguard will be to stress to the mentor applicants that, upon signing up for the responsibility of being a mentor, they must make sure that mentoring is an activity that will fit into their schedule, just as soccer, or Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) would. Finally, it needs to be made clear that mentors who miss more
than two sessions due to absences will be held accountable with the possible repercussion of being dropped from the program.

The fourth and final matter was **freshmen behavior**. Teachers, as well as mentors, believe an ideal situation would be to have 25 freshmen in a classroom behave, listen, and be responsive; however, this does not typically happen. It is not the intention of the mentoring program to exclude any freshmen from the program; in fact, it is likely that the freshman who misbehaves probably needs the most mentoring.

There were teachers in each classroom who were asked by program planners to stay in the classrooms during the mentoring sessions, but they were not given any specific responsibilities. From the mentor responses, they reported that most of the teachers who were in the classrooms offered little to no assistance when they noticed students misbehaving. Many teachers were purposely resistant to assisting because they did not agree with the use of Concord Time for mentoring. Other teachers chose to tutor small groups of students quietly in the back of the classroom instead of being a disciplinary or supportive force for the mentors. It is important to mention that Concord Time is paid teacher time.

To rectify the discipline issue, teachers in the freshmen classrooms will be given a specific set of responsibilities that they will be expected to adhere to during the mentoring sessions. Furthermore, more program planners will be recruited to work with the mentoring program. These planners will come from the population of teachers who are seeking school leadership positions and are pursuing or have pursued administrative certification. These teachers who will be appointed as program planners will come from a list of teachers who have agreed to serve in a leadership capacity at Concord High
School. This list is created by school leaders annually. These program planners will be expected to visit the classrooms during the mentoring sessions. It will also be beneficial for a program planner to be assigned to two specific classrooms, which would help to centralize their responsibility.

The patterns evidenced by the data offer information on the areas of concern brought up by the mentors as well as ways in which their concerns will be rectified. This study provides information that is typically not sought by researchers. A good number of research studies on school mentoring programs evaluate them based on student success indicators and adult mentor interpretations of programs. The information obtained in this research study will provide program planners, who intend to duplicate a mentoring program using older students as mentors, with the necessary tools to plan a successful program or to improve upon a program already in place.

**Discussion**

With increased accountability in student learning, schools are under pressure to improve student academic performance (Randolph, 2008). One of the tools that many schools use to improve the performance of their students is the implementation of new programs. The school objectives are to allow students an opportunity to start out with strong focuses and goals, because that positive trend will continue if the correct interventions are applied. Once in high school, students’ skills such as time management, ability to stay on task, social skills, and acting in accordance with school rules become integral to being successful in high school (Zeedyk, Gallacher, Henderson, Hope, Husband & Lindsay, 2003).
The mentoring program that occurred at Concord High School was one of many programs that were implemented at the high school during the same school year. Beginning and sustaining quality programs that contribute to the success of students is a practice that is popular with schools. However, through effective evaluation, results may indicate that certain programs cease to show increases in student performance. Therefore, those programs are quickly changed or improved. In education, new programs continuously follow new programs without effective evaluations or sufficient time for changes to impact student achievement (Thornton, Peltier, & Perreault, 2004). The act of adding and subtracting programs is a paramount task that schools embark upon to find good fits for their population of students.

Plewis & Mason (2005) mentioned that if change is observed, more especially change for the better, how can one be sure that this change was brought about by the program rather than by, for example, broader societal changes? Qualitative data can enhance the quantitative and lead to a better understanding of the strengths of a program that is certainly heterogeneous in terms of its delivery and is likely to be heterogeneous in terms of its outcomes (Plewis & Mason, 2005). Although this study did not determine whether a specific program contributed to student achievement, it was able to determine that a mentoring program that was in place needed improvement in order to thrive.

The data collected for this study indicated what was important to the mentors as they embarked upon a journey that would contribute to their personal gratification and eagerness to make new friends, as well as their need for personal mentoring time with their freshmen.
What is Important to Mentors

Throughout conducting this study, it was observed that most of the mentors who participated were serious about the task. Past research has not sufficiently evaluated the effectiveness of mentoring on peer-mentors. Relatively little emphasis had been placed on the mentors themselves, particularly in relation to their own development and the construction of their identities (Kwan, 2005). In fact, it was not until late in the program, during the evaluation process, that mentors were asked about personal gratification or displeasure. Getting to know these upper class students by spending time with them and reading the feedback that they provided regarding their experience as mentors, offered an enlightenment that was beneficial to the researcher and will be beneficial to anyone who is interested in using a peer mentoring program in a school setting.

As the data were sorted out and coded, there was no mistake that, through this experience, the mentors were able to reveal what was most important to them as they served in this capacity. The desire to build long-lasting and meaningful friendships with the freshmen ranked high on the list. A close second was the mentors’ wish to have more one-on-one time with the freshmen.

In terms of building friendly relationships, it was clear that the mentors felt that doing this would benefit themselves as well as the freshmen. The friendships developed so that mentors were able talk to their freshmen and give them information and feedback about real world issues that would assist them in setting up a positive future. Through mentoring, protégés receive specific knowledge, advice, challenge, and counsel regarding how to achieve their goals (Warren, 2005). Not only could the mentors act as a support for the freshmen as they embarked upon their academics, but, more importantly, they
were willing to offer the freshmen a friendly relationship that would last throughout their first year or two of high school. Developing and maintaining meaningful friendships is more salient than academic adjustments in the minds of young people (Smith, 2008).

Along with the mentors’ persistence in building strong and lasting relationships with the freshmen, they were also willing to make themselves available to their freshmen when school was not in session and even on weekends. These mentors wanted to be all that the freshmen needed as it related to friendships, but none of the mentors seemed to lose sight of the fact that guidance in other areas would be important to the freshmen as well. The mentors had additional goals for helping their freshmen. Mentors provide guidance for the development of the younger members of the profession and may eventually elect to act as advocates, sponsors, or promoters for their protégés (Warren, 2005).

**Successful Mentoring Program**

In conducting this study, organizing all of the data and becoming connected with the students and their responses helped the researcher to determine after all the research and writing had been completed, whether the mentoring program at Concord High School was indeed a successful mentoring program. According to Allen (2007) best practices included planning, mentor recruitment, matching, and evaluation. The program at Concord High School consisted of these components. However after looking at the data it is safe to say that there were some successful elements of the program; but it appears that there were more problems than benefits.

Issues such as mentor retention, student to mentor ratio, and one-on-one mentoring being areas of concern, the program needs to revamped to ensure that any
changes made would positively affect those who expressed concerns. Indications of the success of the program will occur when the program planners move forward with the changes, and the mentors make it known that they notice the changes and are pleased with them.

**Implications for Further Study**

This study examined a mentoring program from the point of view of the upper class student mentors. Though the research in this area can be beneficial to those who seek information on implementation, improvement and evaluation of programs such as this, studies of other views of mentoring programs can also offer numerous advantages to program coordinators. Other studies may include research on the impact of mentoring programs for students, teachers and parents.

As the upper class mentoring program moved forward, it was natural to wonder how the program affected the new ninth grade students. Typically, a program such as this will look to do an evaluation of the mentees. Quantitative studies on academic achievement, attendance, student conduct, graduation rate, and student self-esteem would be a helpful addition to this research study, especially for those who are considering building upon this study for the further benefit of mentoring in high schools.

In conducting studies on the areas listed above, considerations need to be made as to whether or not the mentoring program contributed to any positive or negative changes in the aforementioned indicators. As was mentioned in the previous section, educational institutions will implement several different programs in order to target student success. An execution of too many programs may make it difficult to determine if the mentoring component was the piece that caused any progression or regression in the data derived
from the student success indicators. An in-depth study of mentoring and progression and regression in data would yield useful information that could be added to this study.

Although not part of this study, another area that became meaningful while conducting this study was the teacher perception of the program. Areas of teacher concern included frequency of the program meetings and benefit to students, as well as the program’s impact on teacher instructional time. The study that was conducted at Concord High School had the mentoring session take place in ninth grade classrooms with the ninth grade homeroom teachers serving as the monitoring adults in the room. Several teachers offered anonymously written opinions about the mentor lesson plans and/or the interactions between mentors and mentees. The information that was provided by those teachers offered an adult perspective of the communication between mentors and mentees. Conducting a study around the focus of the teacher perspective would help to further bring this research study full circle in terms of the teacher resistance and how it contributes to the success or failure of a school program.

A final implication for further study would be one that could include parents of the mentored students. Parents can offer information regarding their children and the impact that a mentoring program may have. Through the use of interviews, researchers could obtain qualitative data on changes that the parents may see in their children during and after participation in the mentoring program. Areas to be considered in the study would be ones that include their child’s social life, attitude, opinion of school, interaction with siblings, and outlook on the future. Parent evaluation could also include details regarding their child’s relationship with their mentor, if there is contact made between the two outside of the normal school setting.
It would also be interesting to have the current research study repeated again next year or the year after. Differences in the program would be that considerations and changes that were recommended and applied to the program were put in place. It would be interesting to see if the changes to the program effected change for the mentors or the new ninth graders.

In the world of mentoring, there are people who help and people who are helped. Either way, something happens in the life of someone who is involved in mentoring. Their lives are touched by someone who has delivered change and joy and who has shown that they care. It is because of this, that an encouraging thought or feeling can make all of the difference.

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”.

Maya Angelou
References


Appendix A

Match worksheet

NEW INSIGHTS MENTORING PROGRAM
Creating Vision Through Mentoring

Match Worksheet
(To be completed by the program coordinator)

Prospective Match Participants

Mentor: 

Mentee: 

Parent/Guardian: 

Match Criteria
Why you feel the match would be compatible and successful, considering the following match criteria:

- Preferences of the mentor, mentee, and/or parent/guardian
- Similar gender/ethnicity
- Common interests
- Geographical proximity
- Similar personalities

Other reasons for compatibility:

Any areas of concern:

Comments:

Note: Place copy in both mentor and mentee files.
##Appendix B

**Chart aligning data collection: Journal questions with research questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions:</th>
<th>Question #1</th>
<th>Question #2</th>
<th>Question #3</th>
<th>Question #4</th>
<th>Question #5</th>
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<tr>
<td>Data collection methods:</td>
<td>What were the expected as well as unexpected responsibilities of the upper class students as they served as mentors to the new ninth graders?</td>
<td>What were the upper class students’ impressions of the mentoring program?</td>
<td>Did the upper class students feel either personal gratification or discontent (or both) during the time that they served as mentors to new ninth graders?</td>
<td>What aspects of the mentoring program did the upper class mentors think were beneficial to the mentees?</td>
<td>What aspects did the upper class mentors think were not beneficial to the mentees?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>-- What were your main responsibilities as a mentor?</td>
<td>-- What were your impressions (feelings, opinions, points of view) of the mentoring program?</td>
<td>-- What does the art of mentoring freshmen include? -- What do you like about being a mentor? -- What are some attitudes of your fellow mentors towards the process?</td>
<td>--What aspects of the mentoring program do you think were: a.) Beneficial b.) Not beneficial to the freshmen?</td>
<td>--How can the time be better managed during the Connections sessions?</td>
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## Appendix C

### Chart aligning data collection: Survey questions with research questions

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<th>Research questions:</th>
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<th>Question #2</th>
<th>Question #3</th>
<th>Question #4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Data collection methods:</td>
<td>What were the expected as well as unexpected responsibilities of the upper class students as they served as mentors to the new ninth graders?</td>
<td>What were the upper class students’ impressions of the mentoring program?</td>
<td>Did the upper class students feel either personal gratification or discontent (or both) during the time that they served as mentors to new ninth graders?</td>
<td>What aspects of the mentoring program did the upper class mentors think were beneficial to the mentees? What aspects did the upper class mentors think were not beneficial to the mentees?</td>
<td>What recommendations did the upper class students have for moving the mentoring program forward?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>--What were your expected as well as unexpected responsibilities as a ninth grade Concord High School mentor? (Please be specific).</td>
<td>--What are your impressions of the mentoring program? a.) Kick-Off meetings b.) Connections lessons c.) Communication between program coordinator-mentor d.) Communication between mentor and freshman.</td>
<td>--Did you experience any personal fulfillment and/or displeasures from your participation in this mentoring experience?</td>
<td>--What aspects of the mentoring program do you think were most beneficial to the freshmen? --What 2-3 aspects do you think were least beneficial to the freshmen?</td>
<td>--What recommendations do you have for improving the mentoring program that will hopefully make it more successful in the future? --Is there anything else you would like to add?</td>
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## Appendix D

**Chart aligning data collection: Focus group questions with research questions**

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<tr>
<th>Research questions:</th>
<th>Data collection methods:</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Question #1</th>
<th>Question #2</th>
<th>Question #3</th>
<th>Question #4</th>
<th>Question #5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What were the expected as well as unexpected responsibilities of the upper class students as they served as mentors to the new ninth graders?</td>
<td>--How would you describe your responsibilities as a Kick off Mentor?</td>
<td>--How did you think about the way the program is structured in terms of: a.) Meeting during Academic Extension b.) 5 on 20 mentor to student ratio c.)Thoroughness of the in-class activities</td>
<td>--How has the mentoring program impacted you?</td>
<td>--What did you hope to accomplish in this endeavor: a.) For freshmen b.) For yourselves?</td>
<td>--What aspects of the mentoring program have been or will be beneficial to the ninth graders?</td>
<td>--What aspects of the mentoring program have less of a chance of benefiting the lives of the freshmen?</td>
<td>--What recommendations do you have for moving the program forward and hopefully making it a more beneficial program for new ninth graders in the future?</td>
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Appendix E

Chart matching research questions to literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature review focus</th>
<th>Importance of mentoring: Psychological Youth, educational</th>
<th>Effectiveness of mentoring: Social contact, cross-age, build relationships</th>
<th>Characteristic of mentoring program: Plan, recruit, train evaluate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 1 - What were the expected as well as unexpected responsibilities of the upper class students as they served as mentors to the new ninth graders?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2 - What were the upper class students’ impressions of the mentoring program?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3 - Did the upper class students feel either personal gratification or discontent (or both) during the time that they served as mentors to new ninth graders?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4 - What aspects of the mentoring program did the upper class mentors think were beneficial to the mentees? What aspects did the upper class mentors think were not beneficial to the mentees?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5 - What recommendations did the upper class students have for moving the mentoring program forward?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

Journal entries from all mentors

Part of the program expectation is that all mentors take part in helping the program coordinator evaluate the progress of the program. Study participants will be told not to use the names of mentees or teachers in their responses. Journal topics that will help guide the mentors in their writing are:

1. What are your main responsibilities as a mentor?
2. What aspects of the mentoring program do you think were beneficial or not beneficial to the freshmen?
3. What does the art of mentoring freshmen include?
4. What do you like about being a mentor?
5. What advice would you give your freshmen students?
6. What are some attitudes of your fellow mentors towards the process?
7. What are some of the attitudes that you have seen in the freshmen?
8. How can the time be better managed during the Connections sessions?
9. What were your impressions (feelings, opinions, points of view) of the mentoring program?
10. What would you change about the mentoring program?
11. How have you grown or changed as a result of your participation in the mentoring program?

Kick-Off-Mentors (Concord High School freshmen mentors) will select one prompt per journal writing session, and will not repeat the same prompt twice. Concord High School freshmen mentors will select five of the nine journal topics and submit them via email to the program coordinator on the dates below:

Entry I – Between October 25-30, – (10 min.)
Entry II – Between November 20-23, – (10 min.)

Entry III – December 18, – (10 min.)

Entry IV – Between January 15 – 19, ( 10 min.)

Entry V – Between February 8-12, (10 min.)

Journal entries will be accepted throughout the month of March for those who did not meet the journal entry expectation of the program.
Appendix G

Youth assent form

TITLE: Upperclassmen’s Valuation of Their Roles as Mentors to New Ninth Graders: A Case Study in a Diverse Suburban High School

VCU IRB NO.: HM 12812

Concord High School mentor,

This form may have some words that you do not know. Please ask someone to explain any words that you do not know. You may take home a copy of this form to think about and talk to your parents about before you decide if you want to be in this study.

The study is about the “Kick-Off” mentoring program. It is being done so that I can get an idea of the success of the program. I want to know, from the mentors if they thought it was a good program for freshmen, and to find how participating in the program made mentors feel.

In this study you will be asked to take a survey. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. You will take the survey in the auditorium during the Academic Extension period. In the survey, you will be asked questions like: what did you think of the program, and how did you feel about being a mentor. You will not have to include your name or anything else about you in the survey. It is completely anonymous.

If you decide to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this form. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered, and understand what will happen to you.

The answers to the survey questions will only be shared when the results of my study are made public. Again, there is no way you will be identified by name or description. If I ever talk about this study in speeches or in writing, I will never use your name.

You do not have to be in this study. If you choose to be in the study you may stop at any time. No one will blame you or criticize if you drop out of the study. At any time, if you decide not to participate you will not be penalized.

If you have questions about being in this study, you can talk to or email the following people or you can have your parent or another adult contact us:

Jonathan Becker P.hD., the Principal Investigator in my study (jbecker@vcu.edu), or Naemah Rodriguez, (804) 514-7882. Do not sign this form if you have any questions. Be sure someone answers your questions.
Sincerely,

Naeemah Rodriguez

**Assent:**
I have read this form. I understand the information about this study. I am willing to be in this study.

______________________________________________
Youth name printed

______________________________________________
Youth signature

______________________________________________
Date

________________
Name of Person Conducting Informed Assent
Discussion or Witness *, printed

______________________________________________
Signature of Person Conducting Informed Assent
Discussion or Witness *

______________________________________________
Date

* [A witness to the signature of a research participant is required by VA Code. If the witness is to be someone other than the person conducting the informed assent discussion, include a line for the witness to print his/her name and lines for signature and date.]

Principal Investigator Signature (if different from above) ________________________

______________________________________________
Date **

** [The purpose of this signature is to ensure that the principal investigator is aware of who has been enrolled in studies. The principal investigator’s signature date need not correspond to that of subject or witness, but should be provided after both the subject and witness have signed.]
Appendix H

Youth assent form

TITLE: Upperclassmen’s Valuation of Their Roles as Mentors to New Ninth Graders: Case Study in a Diverse Suburban High School

VCU IRB NO.: HM 12812

Concord High School mentor,

This form may have some words that you do not know. Please ask someone to explain any words that you do not know. You may take home a copy of this form to think about and talk to your parents about before you decide if you want to be in this study.

The study is about the “Kick-Off” mentoring program. It is being done so that I can get an idea of the success of the program. I want to know, from the mentors if they thought it was a good program for freshmen, and to find how participating in the program made mentors feel.

In this study you will be asked to take a survey and participate in a recorded focus group. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete and the focus group will last about 90 minutes. You will take the survey in the auditorium during the Academic Extension period. In the survey, you will be asked questions like: what did you think of the program, and how did you feel about being a mentor. You will not have to include your name or anything else about you in the survey. It is completely anonymous. The focus group meeting will take place after school. You will be in the conference room with me, and five other mentors. I will ask you a series of questions, kind of like the ones you saw in the survey. I will be recording your answers so that I can easily remember what was said. You will be served pizza and soft drinks prior to the focus group session beginning.

If you decide to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this form. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered, and understand what will happen to you.

The answers to the survey questions will only be shared when the results of my study are made public. Again, there is no way you will be identified by name or description. If I ever talk about this study in speeches or in writing, I will never use your name.

You do not have to be in this study. If you choose to be in the study you may stop at any time. No one will blame you or criticize if you drop out of the study. At any time, if you decide not to participate you will not be penalized.

If you have questions about being in this study, you can talk to or email the following people or you can have your parent or another adult contact us:
Jonathan Becker P.h.D., the Principal Investigator in my study (jbecker@vcu.edu), or Naeemah Rodriguez, (804) 514-7882. Do not sign this form if you have any questions. Be sure someone answers your questions.

Sincerely,

Naeemah Rodriguez

**Assent:**
I have read this form. I understand the information about this study. I am willing to be in this study. **I understand that as part of the focus group that the session will be recorded.**

________________________________________________________________________________
Youth name printed       Youth signature       Date

Name of Person Conducting Informed Assent
Discussion or Witness *, printed

________________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Person Conducting Informed Assent
Discussion or Witness *

* [A witness to the signature of a research participant is required by VA Code. If the witness is to be someone other than the person conducting the informed assent discussion, include a line for the witness to print his/her name and lines for signature and date.]

Principal Investigator Signature (if different from above)       Date **

** [The purpose of this signature is to ensure that the principal investigator is aware of who has been enrolled in studies. The principal investigator’s signature date need not correspond to that of subject or witness, but should be provided after both the subject and witness have signed.]
Appendix I

Letter to parents (For students taking the survey only)

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

Your child is being selected for participation in this study since they have been mentoring freshman students at J.R. Tucker High School this year. I am writing to ask permission for your child to participate in a study called *Upperclassmen’s Valuation of Their Roles as Mentors to New Ninth Graders: A Case Study in a Diverse Suburban High School*. The study I am conducting is for my dissertation in pursuit of my doctoral degree in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. This study is being conducted solely by me, Naemah Rodriguez and is not being conducted by Henrico County Public Schools; however the results will be shared with Henrico County Public Schools staff to inform best practices.

Your child has been mentoring ninth graders this year, and an expectation of the program is that he/she write a journal entry each month following mentoring sessions with the ninth graders. These journal entries have been emailed to me monthly and kept in a folder on my computer. I will use this information to evaluate the mentoring program to see if it was beneficial to the mentors.

In this study that I am conducting, students with parental permission will participate in completing an on-line survey at the end of the study. The questions in this survey will ask your child questions that will provide me with further information about their experience as a ninth grade mentor.

The 20-30 minute survey will be available for your child to take during the April monthly mentor meetings that are held in the school auditorium. Students will bring their school issued laptop to the mentor meeting so that the survey can be taken.

Only students who have parental permission, and who themselves agree to participate, will be involved in the study. Also, students and parents may withdraw their permission at any time during the study without penalty by indicating this decision to the researcher. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study. Identification of all participants involved will be kept strictly confidential.

Your child’s participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if he/she does not participate. Regardless of whether you choose to participate, please let me know if you would like a summary of my findings. To receive a summary, please email me at humphreyn@vcu.edu.

If you have questions about being in this study, you can talk to or email the following people:

Jonathan Becker P.h.D., the Principal Investigator in my study (jbecker@vcu.edu) or Naemah Rodriguez, (804) 514-7882. Do not sign this form if you have any questions. Be sure someone answers your questions.
Sincerely,

Naeemah Rodriguez
Doctoral student
Virginia Commonwealth University

Please enter your child's name and sign below if you give consent for your child to participate in the survey section of the study.

Your child's name: _____________________________________

Your signature: ________________________________________ Date _____________

Your printed name: _____________________________________ Date _____________

Signature of person obtaining consent: ___________________ Date _____________

Printed name of person obtaining consent: ___________________ Date _____________

Principal Investigator Signature (if different from above)  Date **

** [The purpose of this signature is to ensure that the principal investigator is aware of who has been enrolled in studies. The principal investigator’s signature date need not correspond to that of subject or witness, but should be provided after both the subject and witness have signed.]

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.
Appendix J

Letters to parents (for six selected study participants – survey and focus group)

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

Your child is being selected for participation in this study since they have been mentoring freshman students at J.R. Tucker High School this year. I am writing to ask permission for your child to participate in a study called *Upperclassmen’s Valuation of Their Roles as Mentors to New Ninth Graders: A Case Study in a Diverse Suburban High School*. The study I am conducting is for my dissertation in pursuit of my doctoral degree in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. This study is being conducted solely by me, Naemah Rodriguez and is not being conducted by Henrico County Public Schools; however the results will be shared with Henrico County Public Schools staff to inform best practices.

Your child has been mentoring ninth graders this year, and an expectation of the program is that he/she write a journal entry each month following mentoring sessions with the ninth graders. These journal entries have been emailed to me monthly and kept in a folder on my computer. I will use this information to evaluate the mentoring program to see if it was beneficial to the mentors. If you do not grant permission for your child to participate in this study, the journal entries that they submitted will also be eliminated from the study.

In this study that I am conducting, students with parental permission will participate in completing an on-line survey and participating in a focus group at the end of the study. The questions in this survey will ask your child questions that will provide me with further information about their experience as a ninth grade mentor.

The 20-30 minute survey will be available for your child to take during the April monthly mentor meetings that are held in the school auditorium. Students will bring their school issued laptop to the mentor meeting so that the survey can be taken.

Only students who have parental permission, and who themselves agree to participate, will be involved in the study. Also, students and parents may withdraw their permission at any time during the study without penalty by indicating this decision to the researcher. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study. Identification of all participants involved will be kept strictly confidential.

Your child’s participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if he/she does not participate. Regardless of whether you choose to participate, please let me know if you would like a summary of my findings. To receive a summary, please email me at humphreyn@vcu.edu.

If you have questions about being in this study, you can talk to or email the following people:
Jonathan Becker P.hD., the Principal Investigator in my study (jbecker@vcu.edu) or Naeemah Rodriguez, (804) 514-7882. Do not sign this form if you have any questions. Be sure someone answers your questions.

Sincerely,

Naeemah Rodriguez
Doctoral student
Virginia Commonwealth University

Please enter your child's name and sign below if you give consent for your child to participate in the survey and focus group sections of the study.

Your child's name: _____________________________________

Your signature: _______________________________________ Date _____________

Your printed name: ____________________________________ Date _____________

Signature of person obtaining consent: ________________ Date _____________

Printed name of person obtaining consent: ______________ Date _____________

Principal Investigator Signature (if different from above) Date **

** [The purpose of this signature is to ensure that the principal investigator is aware of who has been enrolled in studies. The principal investigator’s signature date need not correspond to that of subject or witness, but should be provided after both the subject and witness have signed.]

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

I give permission for my child to be audio recorded during the focus group session:

Yes ________

No ________
Appendix K

End of program focus group

The group will meet for approximately 90 minutes. The group will contain no more than six and no fewer than five members. The focus group session will be recorded. Study participants will be told not to use the names of mentees or teachers in their responses. The questions that will be used in the focus group are as follows:

1) How would you describe your responsibilities as a Kick off Mentor?

2) What did you hope to accomplish in this endeavor?
   a) For freshmen
   b) For yourselves

3) What did you think about the way the program is structured in terms of:
   a) Meeting during Academic Extension
   b) 5 on 20 mentor to student ratio
   c) Thoroughness of the in-class activities

4) How has the mentoring program impacted you?

5) What aspects of the mentoring program have been or will be beneficial to the ninth graders?

6) What aspects of the mentoring program have less of a chance of benefitting the lives of the freshmen?

7) What is the most interesting or intriguing idea, thought or perception you have experienced while serving as a ninth grade mentor?

8) What has been the most useful tool or approach you have used during your mentoring session, and why?
9) What barriers did you encounter in trying to reach freshmen who didn’t seem to want to be
mentored? (describe).

10) What recommendations do you have for moving the program forward and hopefully making
it a more beneficial program for new ninth graders next year? What changes in the program
would you recommend? Please explain.

11) Is there anything else you would like to share with me?
Appendix L

Survey questions

Below is the list of survey questions that will be administered to freshmen mentors at the end of the program. The survey will be administered through QUIA on-line surveys. The open-ended survey questions will be available for students to take beginning following IRB approval, and will remain available for two weeks. The survey will be available for students to take during the school day in the auditorium during an Academic Extension period: (Total 20-30 minutes). Participants will be encouraged to elaborate on responses, and not to use mentee or teacher names in their responses.

1. What were your expected as well as unexpected responsibilities as a ninth grade freshmen mentor? (Please be specific).

2. What are your impressions of the mentoring program?
   a) Kick-Off meetings.
   b) Connections lessons.
   c) Communication between program coordinator-mentor.
   d) Communication between mentor and freshman.

3. What aspects of the mentoring program do you think were most beneficial to the freshmen?

4. What 2-3 aspects do you think were least beneficial to the freshmen?

5. What recommendations do you have for improving the mentoring program that will hopefully make it more successful in the future?
6. Did you experience any personal fulfillment and/or displeasures from your participation in this mentoring experience?

7. Is there anything else you would like to add?
VITA

Naeemah U. Rodriguez Ph.D.

Objective
To work as a school administrator who supports the implementation of Ninth Grade Transition activities; to work collaboratively with other school leaders to improve student performance and reduce the number of students who have failures in core classes.

Education
2004-2010/ PhD- Educational Leadership / Virginia Commonwealth University
2000-2002/Master’s Degree- School Administration and Supervision / Virginia State University
1986-1989/Bachelor of Arts-Education / College of New Rochelle

Awards
Henrico County Public School/Mount Vernon Middle School
Recognized as Teacher of the Year 2001-2002

Positions Held
2008-present, Assistant Principal, J.R. Tucker High School
Assist in the development and establishment of school goals and objectives and the planning of the school instructional program. To provide direction to faculty and staff, which helps to assist in the professional development and growth. To promote and maintain open communication, positive student attitudes, respect and dignity, and worth of staff and students.
**Positions Held Cont’d**

2007-2008, Assistant Principal, Hermitage High School
Description of job is noted above

2006-2007, Vice Principal, North Point High School for Science Technology and Industry
Description of job is noted above

2003-2006, Assistant Principal, Louisa County High School
Description of job is noted above

2001-2003, Teacher, Staff Development Planner, English Department Chair/ Mount Vernon Middle School
6th grade mathematics and science teacher

1997-2000, Teacher & Administrative Aide/ Chandler Middle School & Mosby Middle School
6th grade mathematics teacher

**Presentations**

December, 2005
*Virginia NGA Honor School Symposium on Ninth Grade Transition*
Presented at break-out session on “9th Grade Transition that Works!”

July, 2004
*Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals*
Presented at breakout session: Remediation and Recovery for Students Re-taking the SOL Test.

**Endorsements**

2006- present
Postgraduate Professional License/ Virginia Superintendent’s License

2002- present
Postgraduate Professional License/ School Administration and Supervision K-12
1994- present
Postgraduate Professional License/ Secondary Sociology and grades 3-6

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E-mail: nurodriquez@henrico.k12.va.us