

2nd Regional Conference on Student Tutoring and Mentoring

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Mentoring: “An Old Idea That Works”

- Or does it?

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The literature on mentoring abounds with mentoring guides describing how to set up a mentoring program. There is an assumption that if anyone were to follow the guidelines then the mentoring program would be successful. Also, mentoring is seen as a way to solve many of the problems faced by today's young people.

Mentoring is an old idea that works... Mentoring is a powerful way to provide adult contacts for youths who receive little guidance in their schools, homes, communities, and workplaces. Supportive one-on-one relationships provide youths with the opportunity to explore career paths and broaden their horizons. Adult mentors serve as beacons of hope for young people adrift in an uncertain world". (Dondero, 1997, Abstract)

Hamilton and Darling (1989) suggest, however, that large numbers of young people (82% in their study) develop a mentoring relationship with an adult in an informal way. Others question not only the need for formal programs, but also the extent to which they can fulfil the expectation.

The broader cultural legacy of mentoring presents a model of human relationship that does not lend itself well to policy intervention... Formal initiatives to develop and support mentor roles are thus in some respects an odd enterprise. (Carruthers, 1993, p. 299)

Mentoring is not always successful and unsuccessful matches can be worse than no mentoring at all.

....drive-by mentoring can be more detrimental to the youth than never having had a mentor". (Dondero, 1997, p. 22)

Little of the research literature considers the mentoring program from the perspectives of the different stakeholders. Most focuses on programs from the coordinators' point of view. Participants' and mentors' views may only be considered after the program has concluded as part of the feedback and evaluation process. Lauland (1998) suggests taking stakeholders' expectations and concerns into account when establishing mentoring programs. There is, however, little discussion in the mentoring literature of what these expectations and concerns may be or whether they are taken into account in practice.

This workshop focuses on the expectations and concerns of a range of stakeholders and the strategies that each might consider to work through these issues. The aim was to broaden the outlook of the participants to consider a range of issues relevant to the programs they are, or may be, involved with.

Specifically, the workshop was designed to provide the following outcomes:

- Participants will reflect, from the perspectives of the various stakeholders, on expectations and concerns relating to involvement in mentoring programs.
- Participants will consider issues that impinge on the success of mentoring programs and share strategies to address concerns.

Participants

The participants were 35 conference delegates having experience in a range of roles in mentoring programs such as coordinators, mentors and mentees.

Group Formation

As the workshop was conducted as a group activity, a short group formation exercise was carried out to 'break the ice' and help participants to feel relaxed and learn the names and mentoring background of some of the other participants. After a line-up based on the participants' first names and an opportunity to chat with neighbours in the line-up, cards with the name of a mentoring program stakeholder were (randomly) given out and participants had to find the other members of their stakeholder group. The five stakeholder groups were: sponsor / funding organisation, program coordinator (at a local site), parent / caregiver of mentee, mentor, and mentee.

Group Activity

Each group was given the same activity but was to approach it from the perspective of their designated stakeholder. Each group received a written copy of the task, 3 pieces of A3 paper, and large markers (see Appendix). In short the task was to think about becoming involved in a mentoring program and to consider from their stakeholder's perspective their **expectations** and then their **concerns** and write them on the relevant sheet of A3 paper. On the third sheet of A3 they were to list any **strategies** which could address these issues or concerns.

Expectations, Concerns and Strategies

The ideas from each group were presented (see Tables 1, 2 and 3 below for points in the order they were generated). Although there were similarities across stakeholders, the workshop participants were surprised by the number of different expectations and concerns that were evident. Expectations tended to reflect the differing individual needs of each stakeholder, whereas concerns seemed to centre around issues of possible problems with relationships and the need for positive outcomes. A wide range of strategies was suggested.

Conclusion

The workshop activity of adopting the position of various stakeholders appeared to be effective in broadening participants' ideas. It could be a useful strategy to use in the planning stage of a program of in training for participants.

The range of expectations, concerns, and strategies generated highlights the importance of joint planning and the need for ongoing communication between the stakeholders to ensure everyone's concerns are acknowledged and addressed. In this way the old idea of mentoring would have the greatest likelihood of 'working'.

Table 1: Expectations of stakeholders.

EXPECTATIONS

<p>SPONSOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible (PR for the sponsor) (eg Bunnings, Alcoa) • Successful (needs to be measured and reported) • Accountability • Marketable • Our concerns addressed? • Tax deductibles • AIMS • Address skills shortages eg for future employment • Address gender/race issues eg recruitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> diversity customer service • Good for the community, not just the sponsor (company) <p>MENTEE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be matched with someone who is sympathetic • Friendly • Help me to learn • Someone to encourage me • Someone to listen to me • To have fun • To share and/or have many common interests • Someone who is prepared to spend some time with me • Someone who is reliable • Someone who won't tell me what to do • Someone who will help me do things, but doesn't do it <i>for</i> me • Honest, kind, caring 	<p>COORDINATOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to be involved as mentors/as mentees • Measurable outcomes • Suitable mechanism for matching - ability to rematch • Appropriate screening procedures • Continued long term funding • Time-work effective • Create a vehicle to facilitate the development of a relationship <p>PARENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship • Role model (positive) • Information and feedback • Safe environment • Positive attitude • Better behaviour • Accountability <p>MENTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard work • Job satisfaction • Know what role is – role description • Positive outcomes – to do good • Receive training • To encounter problems • To know & to be able to go to a central coordinator for concerns • Support for mentors • To be tested – by mentee/mentors
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Table 2: Concerns of stakeholders.

CONCERNS

<p>SPONSOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-off? – sustainability • Child protection • Value for money • TIME = money (training etc) • Insurance • Confidentiality (for business) • Legal issues • Organisational priorities (does it fit??) • Budget • Will it work? be effective? • Will our staff want to be involved? • Is this really for the kids? eg Mentoring scheme set up by PLO <p>PARENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • OK to opt out • Parent comfort with mentor • Confidentiality • Will there be benefits? (to mentee) <p>MENTEE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That I might get hurt • They mightn't like me • Clash of times of when we're available • That there won't be cooperation from my parents • Don't spend too much time together • What will my friends think/how do I explain this person in my life? • Can my friend do it too? 	<p>COORDINATOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate behaviours (mentors and mentees) • Mismatch • Money – long term goals may be unachievable • Law, insurance • Screening • Will it work? • How to measure outcomes? • Reliability, validity, cost-effectiveness • Ability to maintain confidentiality – ethical issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – privacy • Setting boundaries <p>MENTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibilities • Time • Fear of failure • How to cope with difficult situations • Cultural background, values, relating at mentee's level, judgement from mentee due to difficult experiences, social background, age differences, unknown territory, image of middle class values • Emotionally drained, over burden • Drive-by mentor
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Table 3: Concerns of stakeholders.

STRATEGIES

<p>SPONSOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report/evaluation (to measure outcomes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodic – set time frame (eg 1 year) Subsequent funding to be linked to outcomes • Evidence of structure, training research and adequate planning etc, ie proper business plan ... submission (ie how it will meet our aims) • Survey own staff to assess their interest • Organisation develops or assists coordinator to develop criteria for assessing program (ie not anecdotal evidence) <p>PARENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety process/check • Clear guidelines • Regular commitment • Flexibility • Screening, eg values, motives • Meet the mentor • Sound coordinator support • Training program for parents • Non threatening approach • Non controlling approach <p>MENTEE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short regular time together • Support and reassurance for the mentee • Opportunity to talk to someone (other than my mentor) if I don't like them • Provide good information to my parents and address their concerns • Good screening process • Give me and my friends good information about the program • Relaxing place to meet • Do enjoyable things • Involve me/my ideas in the program 	<p>COORDINATOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> networking, assessing pitfalls • Start small • Start with an “easy” group – not <i>at risk</i> • Choose a specific focus issue • Develop partnerships with other organisations • Feasibility study • Appropriate training of mentors • Define roles and expectations of mentors and mentees • Never deliberately oversell! • Evaluate and revise as necessary <p>MENTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of training • Adequate support • Time management • Financial/human resources • Rewards • Vetting applicants for mentor role • Appropriate matching • Time management/networking • Promotion/publicity • Marketing • Sponsors? • Community involvement • Building partnerships • Involve parents • Defining boundaries • Coordination • Evaluation • Ongoing monitoring • Insurance • Transport • Taking on board successful practice • MENTOR/MENTEE relationship • Clear role description to establish boundaries • Initial contact directions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First meeting between mentor/mentee • GOALS: short/long term
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References

Carruthers, J. (1993). The principles and practice of mentoring. In B. J. Caldwell & E. M. A. Carter (Eds.), *The return of the mentor: Strategies for workplace learning*. London: The Falmer Press.

Dondero, G. M. (1997). Mentors: Beacons of hope. *Adolescence*, 32(128), 881-886.

Hamilton, S. F. & Darling, N. (1989). Mentors in adolescents' lives. In K. Hurrelmann & U. Engel (Eds.), *The social world of adolescents: International perspectives*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Lauland, A. (1998). *Yes, you can. A guide for establishing mentoring programs to prepare youth for college*. U.S. Department of Education. Available: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/YesYouCan/title.html>

APPENDIX: WORKSHOP TASKS.

GROUP 1.

STAKEHOLDER: sponsor / funding organisation

TASK:

- Your organisation is considering funding a mentoring program.
 - Put one of the following headings on each of your group's sheets of paper: "expectations", "concerns" and "strategies".
 - From your stakeholder's perspective, what are your expectations and concerns?
 - List these in point form, and any strategies that could address these issues or concerns.
 - Be prepared to briefly share your ideas with the whole group.
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GROUP 2.

STAKEHOLDER: program coordinator (at a local site)

TASK:

- You have been asked to coordinate a mentoring program.
 - Put one of the following headings on each of your group's sheets of paper: "expectations", "concerns" and "strategies".
 - From your stakeholder's perspective, what are your expectations and concerns?
 - List these in point form, and any strategies that could address these issues or concerns.
 - Be prepared to briefly share your ideas with the whole group.
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GROUP 3.

STAKEHOLDER: parent / caregiver of mentee

TASK:

- You have been asked to give permission for your son / daughter to be involved in a mentoring program.

- Put one of the following headings on each of your group's sheets of paper: "expectations", "concerns" and "strategies".
 - From your stakeholder's perspective, what are your expectations and concerns?
 - List these in point form, and any strategies that could address these issues or concerns.
 - Be prepared to briefly share your ideas with the whole group.
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GROUP 4.

STAKEHOLDER: mentor

TASK:

- You are thinking about becoming a mentor in a local mentoring program.
 - Put one of the following headings on each of your group's sheets of paper: "expectations", "concerns" and "strategies".
 - From your stakeholder's perspective, what are your expectations and concerns?
 - List these in point form, and any strategies that could address these issues or concerns.
 - Be prepared to briefly share your ideas with the whole group.
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GROUP 5.

STAKEHOLDER: mentee

TASK:

- You are thinking about becoming involved in a mentoring program as a mentee.
- Put one of the following headings on each of your group's sheets of paper: "expectations", "concerns" and "strategies".
- From your stakeholder's perspective, what are your expectations and concerns?
- List these in point form, and any strategies that could address these issues or concerns.
- Be prepared to briefly share your ideas with the whole group.