BETWEEN DATA AND DECISION

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS AND INNOVATIONS

Michael Garringer, Education Northwest

A quick mentoring research quiz…

True or false?

- Recent research found that evidence of positive effects of volunteer-based one-to-one community-based mentoring on youth outcomes (in a variety of areas) tended to be greatest among youth who exhibited relatively high levels of indicators of **individual** risk (emotional, behavioral, and/or academic difficulties) when entering programs.

True or false?

- A recent study of the BBBSA school-based mentoring program found that program effects were similar regardless of whether youth met with mentors at lunch, after-school, or as part of pull-out during the non-lunch part of the school day.

True or false?

- Supporting mentors in advocacy roles with youth has been found to be predictive of greater program effectiveness.

True or false?

- Recent findings provide support for a model in which the competence of staff (as rated by their supervisors) contributes to the mentoring relationships they support having greater quality and longevity.

True or false?

- A recent long-term follow-up of an RCT of a youth mentoring program found that program participants, as an entire group, had significantly lower overall levels of involvement in crime during adulthood relative to non-mentored controls.

Quiz answers can be found at…

- http://chronicle.umbmentoring.org/what-is-your-evidence-based-mentoring-iq-the-winner-is/

- The *Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring* is a great place to keep up with the latest research

  http://chronicle.umbmentoring.org/

Goals for this session

- Discuss the importance of research in relation to program practice and improvement
- Review a framework for understanding and applying research
- Review some recent research that might interest you
- Review the research presented so far at this event
- Develop some next steps for you to apply some of this research to your own program

Why mentoring research matters

- Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) is not going away, funders will increasingly demand it
- Best way of making good program decisions
- Confirms (or refutes) the assumptions your program has made over time
- Staff development and ongoing professionalization of our field
- Better integration with, or comparison to, other youth services
- Insights into how you might evaluate your own efforts

Evidence-Based Practice is…

"The conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of both external research and internal program monitoring and evaluation data, as well as other sources of knowledge, to inform decisions about the design and ongoing improvement of mentoring programs and services for youth."

- David DuBois, 2009

Resistance to research in the mentoring field

1. A sentiment of “art” over “science”

2. Few incentives to change programming or embrace research

3. Incompatible priorities
   (expansion > understanding; perception > reality)

4. Researcher “disconnect”

5. Divergent definitions of “evidence”
   (local context, implementation criteria)

(Jean Rhodes, Chronicle of EBM, 2013)

How to better understand research

One framework is TUPAPAS:

- ***Transparency***. Is it open to scrutiny? Is it easy to tell how the evidence was generated?
- ***Accuracy***. Is it well grounded? Are the recommendations and conclusions based on data or are they just asserted with little basis in the research itself?
- ***Purposivity***. Is it fit for the purpose? Was the methodology a good fit for the types of questions being researched?

How to better understand research

- ***Utility***. Is it fit for use? Can information presented be used by others in the field, or is it incomplete or missing important information that would help in practical use?

- ***Propriety***. Is it legal and ethical? Was the research conducted with the consent of stakeholders and within ethical guidelines?

- ***Accessibility***. Is it intelligible? Is the information presented in a way that allows those who need it to readily understand and use it ?

- ***Specificity***. Are there specific standards in a field that come into play? Are there elements of what's being researched that deviate from common practice?

Other evidence matters too…

- Client feedback
- Community opinions and culture
- Policy and law
- Organizational values
- Ideas and practices from other fields
- Mentoring professionals' own experience and wisdom

Evidence from your own program will always have more value than external evidence

A Framework for Using Mentoring Research

The Basics

- What is being studied or researched in this article/report?
- What is the research focused on? What questions?
- What methods were used?
- Who did it and how old is it?

A Framework for Using Mentoring Research

Inquiry and Understanding

- What are the main findings and how solid are they?
- Are there nuances? Major caveats?
- What questions do I still have? What seemed "off"?
- Is there other research to compare this to?

A Framework for Using Mentoring Research

Compatibility and Utility

- How similar are these programs to mine?
  - *Age range of mentees*
  - *Other demographic similarities to our youth*
  - *Program setting (both program space/setting and general geographic similarity)*
  - *Program model and general services*
  - *Program goals/theory of change*
  - *Mentoring relationships and activities*

A Framework for Using Mentoring Research

Compatibility and Utility

- What might be useful to our program? And why?
- What additional information do I need?
- What would a change based on this research look like? Are there risks?
- How would we determine if it was the right choice? What would success look like?

New(ish) Mentoring Research

- DuBois meta-analysis (2011) – Broad implications for practice and evidence of our field's efficacy
- Mentoring Youth At-Risk (MARY) study (2013) – Nuances of serving certain types of youth
- Youth-Initiated Mentoring (2013) – A new approach to finding mentors
- Test of Time in School-Based Mentoring (2011) – Exploring the idea of "dosage'
- Campus Corps (2013 SIYM) – Interesting program structure
- Mentoring Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Problems (2013) – Broad look at serving certain types of youth

2011 Meta-Analysis

- http://www.rhodeslab.org/files/DuBoisetalMeta.pdf
- 73 studies (1999-2010)
- *"Overall, findings support the effectiveness of mentoring for improving outcomes across behavioral, social, emotional, and academic domains of young people's development."*
- A small positive effect from the typical mentoring program; the average youth in a mentoring program scores approx. 9 percentile points higher than average youth
- Overall effect size of .21 (very similar to .18 in 2002 meta-analysis)

2011 Meta-Analysis

- Significant outcomes in the domains of:
  - Attitudinal/motivational
  - Social/relational
  - Psychological/emotional
  - Conduct problems
  - Academic/school

- Nearly half of the programs saw increases in multiple domains

2011 Meta-Analysis

No significant differences seen with…

- Age of youth
- Setting of mentoring
- Goal of programs
- Length of relationship
- Peer or adults as mentors
- Utilizing a group/team or one-on-one

2011 Meta-Analysis

Moderators of effectiveness

- Youth had a background of high individual <u>or</u> environmental risk (but not both)
- Relatively high number of male mentees
- Program included an advocacy role for mentors
- Program included a teaching or informational role for mentors
- Mentors and youth matched based on similar interests
- Mentors and youth <u>not</u> matched primarily on race

"The six moderators together accounted for essentially all the variation in… effect sizes."

2011 Meta-Analysis

- Mentoring compares well to other school and community interventions (in terms of effect size)

Table 4. Comparison of Mean Post-Treatment Effect Sizes for Mentoring Programs in the Current Meta-Analysis to Effect Sizes Reported in Other Meta-Analyses of School- and Community-Based Interventions for Children and Adolescents

Type of outcome	Current	Other meta-analyses
Attitudinal/motivational	0.19	0.23[s], 0.25[b]
Social/relational	0.17	0.15[a], 0.17[l], 0.24[s], 0.29[b], 0.39[g]
Psychological/emotional	0.15	0.10[a], 0.17[q], 0.18[j], 0.19[d], 0.24[s], 0.37[b]
Conduct problems	0.21	0.02[k], 0.07[l], 0.14[h], 0.15[t], 0.21[a], 0.21[e], 0.22[s], 0.30[b], 0.30[c], 0.41[m]
Academic/school	0.21	0.11[a], 0.23[o], 0.27[s]
School attendance	0.19	0.14[b]
Grades	0.24	0.22[b]
Achievement-test scores	0.18	0.11[a], 0.20[b], 0.24[f], 0.30[c]
Physical health	0.06	0.08[n], 0.17[u], 0.29[r], 0.41[p]

MARY Study (2013)

- The study was framed by 4 questions:
  - Can mentoring programs reach "higher-risk" youth?
  - Does match quality differ depending on youth risk?
  - Does mentoring benefit different youth in different ways?
  - What practices are needed to ensure effectiveness?

- 7 participating agencies (all CBM)
  - 5 BBBS agencies
  - 1 targeted higher-risk youth
  - 1 combined SBM/CBM program

- Two study components
  - Random assignment "impact" study
  - Quasi-experimental "outcomes" study

MARY Study (2013)

Designations of the four risk profiles

- ***High Env*** = High only in Environmental risk
- ***High Ind*** = High only in Individual risk
- ***High/High*** = High on both types of risk
- ***Low/Low*** = Low on both types of risk
- ***Low Env*** = BOTH groups low in Environmental risk
- ***Low Ind*** = BOTH groups low in Individual risk

MARY (2013)

- All four profiles benefitted from mentoring; *High Indv./Low Env.* may have benefitted the most
- Reducing depressive symptoms was the strongest and most consistent finding
- Some gains in social acceptance, academic attitudes and grades
- Matches with the lowest risk were most likely to terminate; high environmental risk had most meeting difficulty
- Interesting findings related to mentor background and support seeking, case manager support, and challenges of the relationships

MARY Study (2013)

	Higher Individual Risk		Lower Individual Risk
Higher Environ-mental Risk	**Mentors** Most likely to mentor again **Expectations** Youth needs **Training/Support** --More consistent support and ongoing training --More training needs in: Interacting with family Social services Youth's emotional needs Youth's social needs Youth's behavior High-risk youth	**Meetings** More youth cancellations More character/behavior change activities More growth/goal focus **Challenges** Conversations Youth's prep for meetings Support from family Family asks for too much Managing behavioral problems Bridging economics **Closures** Youth needs were too severe Differences in interests/personalities	**Expectations** Family's needs **Meetings** More cancellations Training/Support --More likely to get ongoing training **Challenges** Preparation for mtgs Family support Family asks for too much
Lower Environ-mental Risk	**Mentors** More mentoring experience **Match length** Less rematching **Training/Support** --More frequent support --Longer support calls --More likely to get early training and enhancements Youth's emotional needs Youth's social needs	**Challenges** Managing behavior problems **Closures** More program instigated Youth didn't seem to need a mentor **Benefits** Relatively large benefits	**Expectations** Time commitment **Challenges** Conversations **Closure** Lack of youth interest Youth didn't seem to need a mentor **Benefits** Relatively small benefits

Youth-Initiated Mentoring (2013)

- Youth nominate someone from their existing social networks to be their mentor (National Guard ChalleNGe program)
- Build on the strengths of natural mentoring
- Promotes youth and mentor buy-in
- Addresses shortage of mentors, recruitment expenditures
- 74% still meeting after 21 months, 56% after 38 months; even higher for matches where youth found mentor with no help
- Youth-initiated matching helped with program completion, retention of positive impacts

Test of Time in School-Based Mentoring (2011)

- Focus on match length and rematching on outcomes in SBM
- Intact matches fared the best; early terminated showed no impact but…
- Re-matched youth showed academic *declines*
- Rapid re-matching for "dosage" may not be the best idea; match integrity really matters
- Rejection-sensitive youth were most likely to have intact match

Campus Corps @ Colorado State University (2013 SIYM)

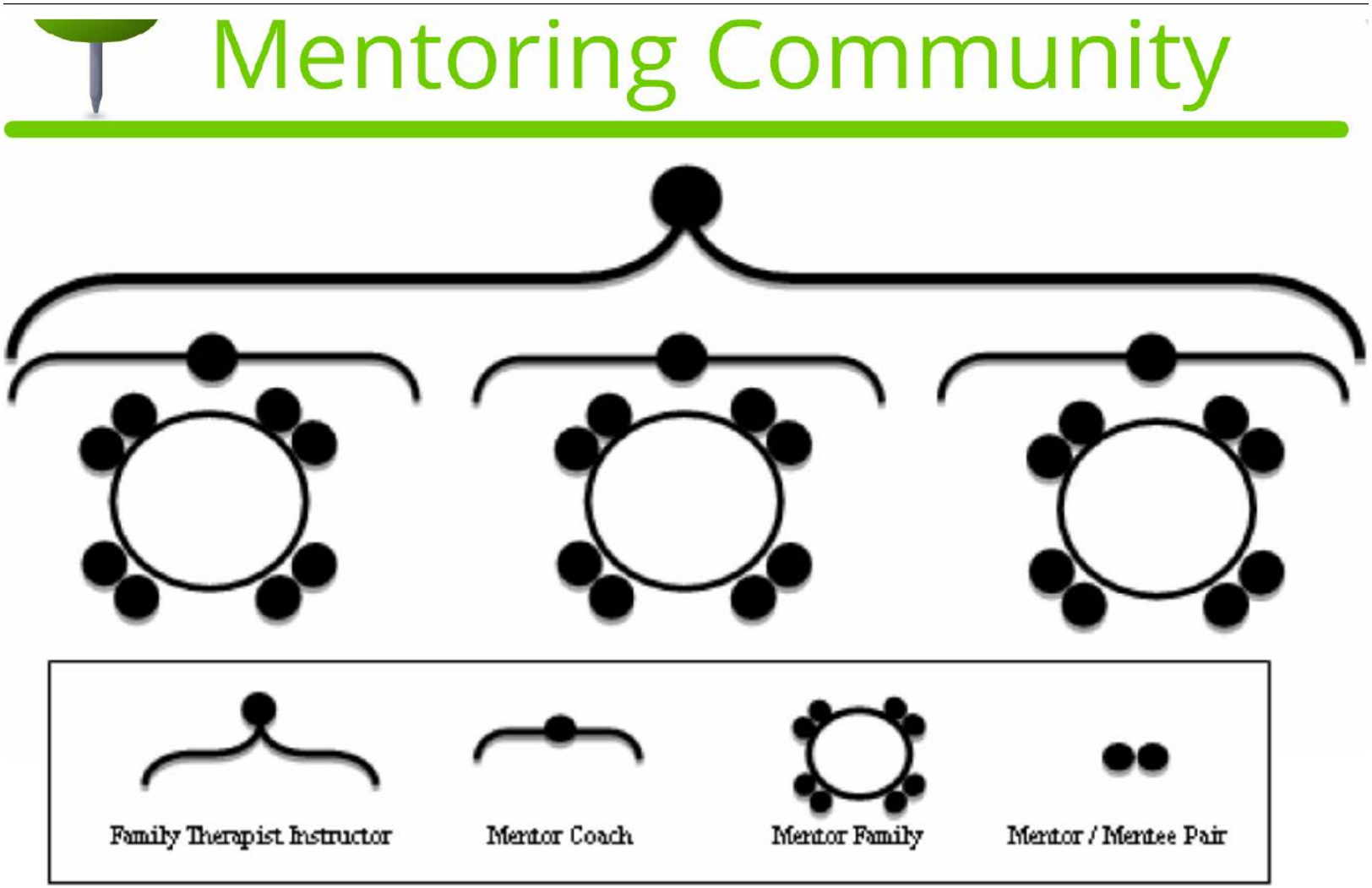
- Intervention for juvenile offenders
- College mentors paired with youth
- Excellent blend of 1:1 and group mentoring
- Quasi-experimental evaluation showed major improvements in school attendance, grade point average, substance use and attitudes, and self-reported problem behavior

Campus Corps @ Colorado State University (2013 SIYM)

- 4 evenings per week from 4 to 8 pm (youth attend one night/week for 12 weeks)

- Engaging and effective schedule:
  - 4:00-4:30pm - **Walk and Talk**
  - 4:30-5:30pm - **Supporting School Success** (including job readiness/life skills training)
  - 5:30-6:00pm - **Family-style Meal**
  - 6:00-7:00pm - **Pro-social Activity 1** (recreation/art/classes and workshops)
  - 7:00-8:00pm - **Pro-social Activity 2**

Campus Corps @ Colorado State University (2013 SIYM)



Mentoring Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Problems (2013)

- Meta-Analysis of programs targeting these youth; examining mentoring as a prevention or intervention strategy in mental health
- 14 studies included
- Examined overall effectiveness and moderators

Mentoring Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Problems (2013)

- Small-to-moderate positive effect overall and in four categories: internalizing symptoms (least), externalizing symptoms, interpersonal, and school/academic

Moderator analysis:

- Formal mentors were most effective
- Group mentoring was just as effective
- Site-based was more effective than community
- Duration didn't matter
- Ongoing training didn't matter, nor did mentor support
- Parent involvement helped
- Age, gender, race, etc. did not moderate impact

Research presented at the Symposium

- Qualitative and quantitative
- Different program models (peer and adult, school-based and community-based, group and one-to-one)
- Examining many elements:
  - Program practices
  - Participant characteristics and experiences
  - Relationship qualities and outcomes
  - Broader context surrounding the mentoring dyad

David De Wit and Ellen Lipman on Program Entry and Departure

- Examined 997 families and 477 mentors in 20 BBBS agencies
- Interviews with families, youth, and mentors every 6 months for 30 months!
- Looked at match formation and closure points, as well as outcomes and experiences

David De Wit and Ellen Lipman on Program Entry and Departure

- Girls matched much more quickly on average than boys (3.76 months on average compared to 7.07)
- 25% of the boys were still not matched after 30 months!
- Girls had shorter relationships (14.18 months on average to 24.67 for boys)
- Interesting predictors of match formation and dissolution
- The field must find a way to get boys matched sooner and better understand why girls' relationships fizzle out sooner

Michael Karcher on Match Closure

- The field does not pay enough attention to closure… "Give your mentee the gift of goodbye"
- Early terminated and poorly-ended matches cause harm to mentees (and maybe future relationships)
- There are tools that can help you predict who is at risk for a negative mentoring experience and early closure
  - Social interest scale (http://highschoolbigs.org/)
  - Mentor attitudes about youth scale

Michael Karcher on Match Closure

Closure in the CAMP program:

- 3-2-1 Touching Base Activity
- 3-2-1 Activity Reflections
- 3-2-1 Relationship Reflections (quarterly)
- Closure Rituals
  1. Discuss what worked and what didn't
  2. Highlight what each found special about the other
  3. Share how each other feels—both sadness and thankful for their year together
  4. Hopes for each other about how each will take lessons learned to the next relationship

Tim Cavell on Teen Mentoring

- Mixed record on the use of teens as mentors of younger children
  - BBBSA SBM study found far fewer impacts from teen mentors; jury is still out on enhancements to the model

- Research on the use of teens as mentors in Canada (123 agencies)
  - Over 60% were offering, 90% were less than 10 years
  - 58% of programs were growing this model, 15% declining, 73% had plans to increase
  - Teen in-school mentoring was most common, co-op was second
  - Supervision, cost/funding were among the challenges

Tim Cavell on Mentoring Teens

Canadian teen mentoring

- Evidence of impacts for bigs and littles, especially when there is high relationship quality and low conflict)
- Differences in impacts related to program model, whether mentors were voluntary, how children were referred
- Mandatory mentors and whole-class mentee referrals seems to be problematic
- Logistics seem to be driving program design rather than a solid theory of change

Renee Spencer on Family Involvement

- Models
  - Youth *and* family mentoring
  - Youth mentoring and family skill building
  - Youth mentoring and family activities

- Approaches to family involvement
  - Involving (communication focus, family seen as possible barrier)
  - Engaging and serving (meet family needs, coaching and support)
  - Collaborating (parents as experts on the mentee, asset to the mentoring relationship, true partners)

Renee Spencer on Family Involvement

- Socio-cultural forces complicate family involvement

- Pay attention to parents' perspectives!
  - *Hopes and expectations* (additional supportive adult, confidant, new experiences and opportunities)
  - *Relationship with the mentor* (open and consistent communication, personal relationship)
  - Trust and satisfaction (clear commitment, genuine positive regard, respect for parent guidelines)

- Parents are an asset that we are not leveraging as well as we could – a missed opportunity

Common threads

- Characteristics of our program participants matters a great deal (guide design, predict challenges, illuminate results)
- The beginning and end of program involvement need extra attention
- We cannot let logistics govern program design
- Mentors do their work inside a complex ecology, one that programs need to pay attention to

Activity: Applying Research to My Program

- Reflect on the research you heard at this event
- Answer the questions yourself about:
  - Research to potentially apply to your program
  - Research you want to conduct on your program
- Break into groups and discuss your answers
- We'll do some sharing if time allows

Advice for the Evidence-Based Professional (DuBois, 2009)

1. Seek out and utilize all forms of research that may inform the practice of youth mentoring
2. Cultivate collaborations with researchers
3. Develop and utilize internal and local sources of evidence
4. Be a critical consumer of all forms and sources of evidence
5. Pay equal attention to evidence that supports or challenges existing practices
6. Pay special attention to findings/learnings that replicate across different studies and sources of evidence as well as to those that emerge out of reliable syntheses by others of available evidence
7. Infuse use of evidence in decision-making into all areas and levels of agency operation
8. Institute processes to cultivate use of evidence by program staff
9. Assign staff to assume leadership role(s) in EBP
10. Evaluate all decisions and proposed solutions, regardless of their evidentiary basis

Thank you!

Michael Garringer, Education Northwest

- Michael.Garringer@educationnorthwest.org
- 503-275-9647

education northwest

CREATING STRONG SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES

Download these materials at…

- Slides – **http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/1447**
- Framework – **http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/1448**
- Reading list – **http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/1449**