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M&Ms: Mentors and Mentees

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Approval

This consultancy project was submitted by Melody B. Johnson under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to Gardner-Webb University College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

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This project focused on the challenge of meeting the needs of at-risk students in an elementary school setting. In response to the literature, we designed and implemented a school-based mentoring program. This project examined whether a face-to-face mentoring program in this school with these students could meet three goals: provide students regular contact with a caring adult, increase student confidence in themselves or their environments, and reduce behavior infractions. These students, ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade, were identified for social-emotional and/or behavior issues by their teachers, administration, or guidance counselor. School employees served as the pool for mentors, and mentors received training. The pairs met regularly during the school day to establish a trusting relationship. They talked, ate lunch, played games, and/or engaged in other activities. A mixed methods research design was used to collect data. The study found that the program positively impacted mentees in relation to confidence, attitude, intrapersonal skills, interpersonal abilities, and behavior. Furthermore, this study aimed to inform effective strategies for improvement of the program moving forward.

Keywords: at-risk, mentor, mentoring program, confidence

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to provide a face-to-face mentoring program for at-risk elementary school students. The partnering organization, a Title I school in the midlands of South Carolina, serves approximately 600 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. The school's mission, according to its website, states a desire "to develop competent, confident, lifelong learners by creating a safe, child-centered environment where the school and community collaborate to help students attain their maximum potential" (Kershaw County School District, n.d.-b, Our Mission/Mission Statement section). The school utilizes two school-wide support systems. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional, and behavioral support. By implementing PBIS, "schools support their students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral success, engage with families to create locally-meaningful and culturally-relevant outcomes, and use data to make informed decisions that improve the way things work for everyone" (Center on PBIS, 2022, para. 1). In this school, students are explicitly taught the three ABC expectations: Act safely; Be responsible; and Care for yourself, others, and the environment. Teachers frequently model what this looks like in all areas of the school, and students role-play and practice using the ABC expectations to make decisions. Class Dojo, a web-based program in which students receive digital points for positive behavior and lose points for negative behavior works in conjunction with PBIS. Parents receive information regarding their child's behavior in real time and can communicate with teachers directly. Students earn incentives based on their points.

Although administrators reported these systems work effectively for most students, there were students who continued to exhibit at-risk behaviors, disrupt the learning environment for others, and show disrespect to peers and adults alike. The administration recognized this challenge and the need to address it but did not have the time or resources.

I used multiple educational terms in this paper. In an effort to provide clarity, I define the terms below.

- Title I–a federal program that provides financial support and services for schools that qualify based on a poverty index
- Mentor–a trusted counselor or guide
- Human capital–the value of the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or population of an organization
- Intervention–an action taken or strategy used to improve a situation
- Strategy–a plan of action

1.2 Project Qualification

To invest a significant amount of time on a project, I wanted to do so within my own organization. I am passionate about the students in our community and those with whom I serve. I brainstormed needs within our organization and ways I could contribute. I came

up with three potential projects, weighed the pros and cons of each, and evaluated their potential impact on the organization. I worked through the "Is this a project" question guide provided by the DEOL program.

Based on that exercise, creating a face-to-face mentoring program rose to the top of the list, as it met all the requirements of a project, and its potential to affect the entire school was great. The project had a specific timeline that included the 2020-2021 and the 2021-2022 school years. I would use the in-between months to evaluate and make improvements. The project aligned with the challenge facing the organization and was consistent with its overarching mission. We believed recruiting the necessary human capital was highly likely. In fact, the administration was willing to provide flexibility in scheduling for mentors and mentees to meet. There were tasks that I would need to complete before, during, and after launching the program. I would be responsible for them, with the full support of my project sponsor, who serves as the assistant principal. In addition, this project would allow me to leverage my strengths in communication and organization and provide me with opportunities to develop and demonstrate my leadership abilities.

1.3 Project Complexity and Impact Assessment
The Project Assessment Matrix helped define the project's complexity and impact. It provided a scoring system that classified the project as minor, medium, or major. After going through this process for my project, the result was a major project. See Appendix A for the complete document.

1.3.1 Project Complexity
I evaluated the complexity of the project based on six criteria: delivery timescale, stakeholders, operational change, contract complexity, in-house expertise, and dependencies. The overall score was 15 on a scale of 0-24.

Criteria	Score
Delivery Timescale	4
Stakeholders	2
Operational Change	2
Contract Complexity	1
In-house Expertise	3
Dependencies	3
Total	15

1.3.2 Project Impact
In determining the potential impact of my project, I evaluated strategic contribution, return on investment, and operational effectiveness. The overall score was 13 on a scale of 0-15.

Criteria	Score
Strategic Contribution	4
Return on Investment (ROI)	5
Operational Effectiveness	4
Total	13

1.4 Project Charter Information

A project charter is an agreement between all parties involved in the project. It outlines the participants, roles, stakeholders, project purpose, scope, resources, milestones, goals, risks, constraints, dependencies, and communication strategy for the project. I created the charter, met with my organization sponsor to discuss it, and made edits before we signed. The stakeholders included those who could be affected directly or indirectly by the project: teachers, staff, mentees and their families, and administration. The purpose outlines the need for the project and its goals. The scope of my responsibilities was outlined. I revisited each of the sections periodically, making them more detailed as the project progressed. See Appendix B for the project charter.

2. Project Objectives

This section provides an overview of the project's objectives, from both the partnering organization's perspective and my own perspective. The key success criteria are also included.

2.1 Outline of Partnering Organization's Objectives

2.1.1. Objective

M&Ms: Mentors and Mentees spoke clearly to the orienting values of the organization. The school's mission states its desire "to develop competent, confident, lifelong learners by creating a safe, child-centered environment where the school and community collaborate to help students attain their maximum potential" (Kershaw County School District, n.d.-b, Our Mission/Mission Statement section) This project aligned with that vision. The organization saw an opportunity to grow in its support of at-risk students. They believed a school-based face-to-face mentoring program that focused on building relationships and provided adequate training for its mentors could make a significant difference in the lives of these students and those who interacted with them daily. In the early stages of planning, we had no inclination that students would need mentors for additional reasons. COVID-19 brought on many concerns. From isolation and fear to the deaths of family members and close friends, many students entered the 2020-2021 school year struggling with confidence in themselves and/or in their surroundings. The "unpredictable stress and the lack of control that goes with it" (Winfrey & Perry, 2021, p. 61) created a pool of students needing an adult encouraging them, checking up on them, and spending time with them each week. Not only could this make life better for those students but also for the other students and adults who encountered them throughout the day. The project's objectives from the partnering organization's perspective follow:

Objective 1: To design a mentoring program
- Strategies:
  - To create program guidelines and expectations
  - To create an effective training program for mentors

Objective 2: To implement a mentoring program
- Strategies:
  - To recruit volunteers to serve as mentors
  - To implement the training program
  - To identify students in need of a mentor
  - To secure parent permission for mentee participation
  - To match mentors and mentees
  - To follow up and support mentor/mentee relationships

2.1.2   Success Criteria

The success of this project initially was measured primarily by the implementation of the strategies that would lead to accomplishing the objectives. The organization's primary goal was to have a program up and running. They hoped to use the data collected and analyzed as a springboard upon which to build in future years. The success of the project in the 2021-2022 school year was measured not only by the implementation of the objectives but also by the progress towards meeting the desired goals of regular contact with mentors, increased confidence in mentees, and reduced behavior infractions in the subgroup identified for behavior concerns.

Success criteria
- Guidelines and expectations created
- Mentors recruited
- Mentors trained
- Students identified
- Parent permission secured
- Students matched with a mentor
- Contacts between mentors and mentees monitored
- Follow-up and support provided

2.2 Student's Personal Leadership Objectives

2.2.1   Objectives

My primary personal goal going into this project was to develop and demonstrate my leadership skills by designing, implementing, and leading the program. Rath and Conchie (2008) stated that the path to great leadership starts with a deep understanding of the strengths you bring to the table. "Without an awareness of your strengths, it is almost impossible for you to lead effectively" (Rath & Conchie, 2008, p. 10). My strengths in strategic thinking, communication, and organization would be essential. I needed to develop a realistic plan that would work within the time and space constraints in an elementary school. I also needed

to effectively communicate the rationale for and vision of the plan in order to recruit adult volunteers. Maxwell (2001) stated, "Paint the big picture for your people, without the vision, they will not find the desire to achieve the goal" (p. 21). These potential volunteers were already dealing with a worldwide pandemic and facing many uncertainties in and out of the classroom. Their daily operational demands were overwhelming, yet the program's success depended on building and maintaining strong human capital. My ability to cast vision and recruit was paramount.

2.2.2 Success Criteria

I continually measured the success of my personal leadership objectives throughout this process. Meeting the deliverables on time was key. Without a doubt, building and maintaining the necessary human capital to implement an effective program was most important to me.

3. Project Scope

3.1 Definitive Scope of Work

The scope of this consultancy project was to create, implement, and assess a face-to-face mentoring program for at-risk students. This involved the following activities:
- Research other mentor programs and their results
- Develop a plan that best suited the needs of students
- Determine criteria for mentors
- Establish roles and responsibilities of mentors
- Recruit mentors
- Train mentors
- Determine criteria for identifying mentees
- Lead the identification process of mentees
- Secure parent permission for mentees
- Match mentors and mentees
- Create feedback/evaluation tools
- Collect data using tools
- Analyze data
- Communicate as described in the communication plan

The scope of the project did not include the development of any other program at the school or any fundraising efforts.

3.2 Project Benefits

The project provided concrete benefits for the organization as a whole and the people within.

Benefits to the mentees:
- Having a positive role model
- Dedicated time with a caring, empathetic adult

- Source of emotional support
- Builds confidence
- Builds connectedness

Benefits to the mentors:
- Sense of connectedness and shared purpose
- Contributing positively to the school community
- Increased awareness of issues facing students and their families

Benefits to the organization as a whole:
- Competent, passionate leader to create, implement, and evaluate the program
- Individualized, frequent support for students
- Sense of community working towards the achievement of school-wide goals and expectations for students
- Additional intervention for classroom teachers to employ

3.3 SMART Goals

Figure 1 outlines the SMART goals as developed and revised over the life of the project.

Figure 1

SMART Goals for M&Ms: Mentors and Mentees

SMART Goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely)	
Goal	Deadline
• By September 2020, develop a mentoring program to meet the needs of at-risk students.	09/30/20
• By the end of October 2020, mentors will be recruited and trained for participation during the 2020-2021 year.	10/30/20
• By the end of October 2020, mentees will be identified and parent permission obtained.	10/30/20
• Mentors and mentees will be matched and their first meetings held by November 20, 2020.	11/20/20
• By the end of June 2021, recommendations will be made for the 2021-2022 year.	6/30/21
• By the end of September 2021, mentors will be recruited and trained.	9/30/21
• By the end of September 2021, mentees will be identified and parent permission obtained.	9/30/21
• By the end of October, a kickoff event for mentors will be held.	10/31/21
• Mentors and mentees will be matched and their first meetings held by October 30, 2021.	10/30/21
• By the end of June 2022, collect and analyze data and make recommendations to the organization.	6/30/22

4. Disciplined Inquiry

4.1 Introduction and Theoretical Framework

For the purposes of this consultancy project, I worked in partnership with an elementary school in the midlands of South Carolina. M&Ms: Mentors and Mentees offered a face-to-face mentoring program designed specifically for at-risk students. Teachers, administrators, and the counselor identified students for behavior concerns and/or confidence issues. Confidence included but was not limited to self-confidence, confidence within the school environment, or confidence in their home environment. The project provided these students with a caring mentor with the following goals in mind: enhance personal support of students through contacts with adult role models, increase confidence (in themselves and/or in their environment), and reduce behavioral infractions within the school environment.

The theoretical framework grounding this study is Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs. In "A Theory of Human Motivation," written in 1943, Maslow outlined five human needs and their influence on motivation. Although he never depicted his theory this way, many have used a pyramid, as in Figure 2, to visualize the concept. According to Maslow, needs lower on the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals can attend to the needs higher on the hierarchy. "The satisfaction of any given lower-level need according to Maslow's theory, makes it possible to satisfy the next higher-level need" (Taormina & Gao, 2013, p. 158). Basic physiological and safety needs must be met before one can "truly move up into the higher levels of thought" (Smith, 2017, p. 32). For example, the theory implies the "threat of danger, death or destruction can prevent a person from being able to make the most of their lives" (Smith, 2017, p. 8). Safety threats can be "both concrete and abstract things, such as wild animals, criminal assault, disease, war, anarchy, social chaos, natural catastrophes, and, in more peaceful times, the lack of such things as job security, financial security…" (Taormina & Gao, 2013, p. 157). Therefore, it would be incredibly difficult for someone to attend to issues of belonging or respect if they have unmet physical needs or feel unsafe in their surroundings. "Safety involves order, predictability, and fairness, which reduce the possibility of physical or emotional harm" (Boogren, 2018, p. 43). Therefore, understanding Maslow's theory is foundational to understanding the challenge this program sought to address.

Figure 2

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Graphic

4.2 Hypothesis

Providing a face-to-face mentoring program for at-risk students would have a positive impact on student behavior and confidence.

4.3 Research Questions

This project examined the following research questions:
1. Does mentoring help reduce behavior infractions in school?
2. Does mentoring increase students' confidence?
3. How does a mentoring program impact students, their teachers, and their families?

4.4 Literature Review

My goal for this literature review was to determine if a mentoring program would be a possible solution to this organization's challenge. As part of this professional literature review, I reviewed 46 research articles and professional publications regarding mentoring. The specific goal for this literature review was twofold: (a) to assess the overall effects of mentoring programs on young people by answering the question, "Is there value in a mentoring program?"; and if so, (b) to answer the question, "What makes a mentoring program successful?" After reviewing each article, I sorted them into three main themes. The first theme related to the value of a mentoring program in a school. The second theme was in relation to the most important characteristic of a successful program: relationship. The third theme concerned the training of mentors. A thorough review of the literature showed instituting a mentoring program that focused on building relationships and provided adequate training to the mentors likely would be the missing element these at-risk students needed. See Appendix C for my literature review in its entirety.

4.5 Methodology

For the purposes of this project, I used a mixed-methods research design. Both qualitative and quantitative data were important in understanding the impact this program had on the organization. I had a convenient sample, using only the students who had been identified based on the given criteria for the program. Of the 25 mentees, 13 were boys and 12 were girls; 13 were Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and 12 were White. Students ranged in age from 5 to 12. It is important to note that 10 students identified by their teachers, due to behavior infractions, did not receive parental consent to participate. Consequently, these students were not part of the program. To ensure ethical conduct, I received parent permission in order for a student to participate. I have not published the names of the participants. All questionnaires were anonymous, and the names of the interviewees were kept confidential.

The quantitative data came from multiple sources: a close-ended survey administered to all mentees, a frequency table representing contacts between mentors and mentees, and discipline data for the subgroup of mentees who were identified for behavior concerns. The purpose of the survey was to gain insights from the mentees related to their perceived value of the mentoring program: if and how it affected them personally. In quantitative research, surveys are widely used to collect information "in a systematic, standardized way" (Taylor-Powell & Merman, 2000, p. 5). Often through a questionnaire, respondents are all asked identical questions in the same manner. Questions 1-4 asked students to choose between two or three options that best described their feelings. Question 5 allowed the students to choose any or all statements that represented their feelings. I designed the survey, Figure 3, using Qualtrics.

Figure 3

Survey for Mentees

How do you feel about getting to spend time with a mentor?

○ I am happy!

○ It's ok.

○ I am sad.

Which best describes how you often feel at school?

○ I feel like I belong.

○ I don't feel like I belong.

Which best describes how you often feel?

○ I am happy with my life.

○ I am sad about my life.

Which best describes how you often feel?

○ I am confident.

○ I am not confident.

Which statements, if any, are true?

☐ Meeting with my mentor has helped me feel more confident.

☐ Meeting with my mentor has helped me with my friendships.

☐ Meeting with my mentor has helped me with my family.

☐ Meeting with my mentor has helped me in other ways.

It was also important to maintain a frequency count of the number of contacts between the mentors and mentees, as this spoke to the efficacy of the mentoring program and its first goal: to enhance the personal support of students through contacts with adult role models. I requested that mentors log their contacts monthly through a Google form. Appendix D reveals the frequency data.

Collecting behavioral data spoke to another goal of the program: to reduce behavioral infractions within the school environment. The school tracks behavior using a program called Class Dojo. This is a free web-based behavior tracking and reporting system that all teachers and administrators share. Any adult who encounters a student throughout the school day can easily log behavior infractions. For the purposes of this project, I collected data monthly. Appendix E shows the behavior infractions by month.

Additionally, qualitative research was a crucial piece of this design, as it allowed me to focus on "how people interpret their experiences…and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). I used interviewing as my primary source of data collection. The interviews were purposeful, filled with "careful questioning and listening" (Kvale, 1996, p. 6), and intended to "elicit views and opinions from the participants" (Creswell, 2009, p. 169). My overarching goal was to "allow respondents to express themselves freely and in their own words" (Royse et al., 2016, p. 103). I conducted the interviews privately one-on-one with participants, both mentors and mentees. I utilized a semi-structured format, starting with guiding questions, yet maintained the freedom to change the wording or order of the questions, ask follow-up questions, and/or encourage elaboration. I had the chance to "clarify or explain the question/topic for better responses" (Bhatia, 2018, Advantages of In-Depth Interviews section). With the mentees, I took hand-written notes. Each interview with mentors was audio recorded and transcribed later. This allowed me to take note of "invisible information such as body language and facial expression" (Bhatia, 2018, How Should Researchers Collect Data During In-Depth Interviews section). The interviews were informative. Both mentors and mentees spoke freely.

The following questions guided the conversations with each mentee:
- How do you feel about having a mentor?
- Tell me about a typical time you meet with your mentor.
- Suppose you were going to tell a new student at our school about M&Ms. How would you describe it?
- Some people might say meeting with a mentor is scary or embarrassing. What would you say to them?
- In what ways have you benefitted from having a mentor?
- What will you miss most about your mentor?

The following questions guided the conversation with each mentor:
- How did you feel about meeting with your mentee?
- Tell me about a typical time you spent together.
- Suppose you were going to tell a new employee about the M&Ms program. How would you describe it?
- Some people might say meeting with a mentee is too time-consuming or unimportant. What would you say to them?
- What impact do you believe M&Ms has had on the school?
- What suggestions do you have for making the program better going forward?

I used a secondary tool, an open-ended questionnaire, to gain insights and perceptions from the teachers and parents of the mentees related to the value of the mentoring program. Although neither of these groups of respondents directly participated in M&Ms: Mentors and Mentees, their perception of the program and its value gave me a much-needed perspective for this project. I designed the questionnaires using Qualtrics and sent them out through email to teachers. Parents of mentees received a letter explaining the survey with a QR code link. They also had the option of answering the survey questions by phone.

The following questions were included in the teacher questionnaire:
- How has having a mentor benefitted your student? If so, in what ways?
- What changes have you seen in your student this year?
- Would you recommend the M&Ms program (Mentors and Mentees) to others? Why or why not?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

The following questions were included in the parent questionnaire:
- How has having a mentor benefitted your child? If so, in what ways?
- What changes have you seen in your child this year?
- Would you recommend the M&Ms program (Mentors and Mentees) to other parents? Why or why not?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Combining qualitative and quantitative data allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the impact the program had on the organization and the implications moving forward.

5. Continuous Improvement Systems

5.1 Continuous Improvement Planning
In order to address the challenge identified, the organization fully implemented this project in the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. We made a deliberate decision from the beginning to use all research findings and data collected to inform decisions. I had the unique opportunity during the life of this project to complete two action research cycles using the "plan, act, observe, and reflect" model (see Figure 4). Sustaining this continuous improvement will depend on a cycle of learning based on feedback practices that shape, cultivate, and enhance the program. There is an overwhelming desire and intention to continue the program in the future.

Figure 4

Continuous Improvement Model
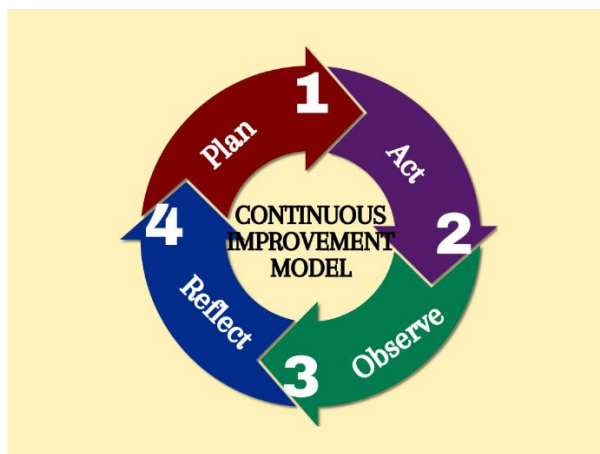
5.2 Continuous Improvement Actions

The organization fully implemented the program based on my recommendations and design. In the 2020-2021 school year, I launched the program with 20 mentees and matched each with a mentor. I observed and gathered feedback throughout the process, monitoring matches and providing resources and support as needed. I interviewed participants at the end of the 2020-2021 school year, made recommendations to my project sponsor, and relaunched the program with 25 mentees.

The 2021-2022 relaunch reflected several recommendations. Regarding feedback, I altered the schedule and sources. Although it was important initially to hear from mentors and mentees frequently so we could pivot our process as needed, it was not crucial to collect data from mentees every 4 to 5 weeks moving forward. Instead, I continued to get feedback from mentors monthly but only interviewed and surveyed mentees at the conclusion of the year. I also added two additional feedback sources: parents of mentees and classroom teachers. Both groups completed a survey. I believed doing so would give us valuable information about the students' day-to-day interactions with adults and peers. After all, parents and teachers spend significantly more time with the students than their mentors. They would have a front-row seat to the differences in the child's life. In regard to communication, I added two groups of people who needed a broad overview of the program and its benefits: the Parent Teacher Association and the School Improvement Council.

The other recommendations were implementation oriented. First, I hosted a kickoff event at the beginning of the 2021-2022 launch where mentors met and mingled with one another. Mentors from the previous school year shared their own mentoring stories and experiences and gave tips for success. Secondly, both potential mentors and mentees filled out a brief survey sharing their interests to guide my selection of matches. Thirdly, I redesigned the parent permission form to include a section for parents/guardians to share information with their child's mentor at the beginning of the match. This gave them

the opportunity to give vital information to the mentor and for the mentor to see what concerned the family. Lastly, I created a SHAREABLES bucket, which included board games, card games, fidgets, puzzles, craft ideas, and coloring sheets that mentors and mentees could enjoy during their time together. I placed it in an easily accessible area for all.

5.3 Continuous Improvement Feedback

Moving forward, I recommend the following formative and summative measures to ensure continuous feedback. They need to "create conditions for reflection" (Sowcik, 2015, p. 83) to ensure that all stakeholders feel heard and valued. Adults within the organization and families should have the capacity to engage in conversation and submit input about the program. An online suggestion box would be an anonymous, convenient way to offer this. This would allow the organization to remain responsive to internal and external factors and adapt as needed. Additionally, I recommend summative measures that include both the processes and outcomes of the mentoring program. For processes, they should look at the number of staff trained in the guidelines of the program and its identification process, the number of mentors recruited and trained, the number of mentees served, the frequency of contact between the mentors and mentees, and the number of families engaged. For outcomes, they should focus on the overall achievements of the program and the impact it has on students and the adults who serve them.

5.4 Continuous Improvement Implementation

Based on the feedback systems I recommended, it would be critical for the organization to create an M&M: Mentors and Mentees team to ensure that continuous improvement is planned for, feedback is collected, and improvement initiatives are implemented. Maintaining an "ongoing action research cycle of plan, act, observe, reflect" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 235) is critical to continuous improvement.

6. Deliverables

6.1 To Partnering Organization From Candidate

This section includes the deliverables provided by me in both the 2020-2021 and the 2021-2022 school years.

Figure 5

2020-2021 Deliverables

Deliverable	Description	Due Date
Written plan for M&Ms: Mentors and Mentees	Criteria for mentors, roles and responsibilities of mentors, and criteria for mentees	August 2020
Training materials	Google Slide presentation for mentor training	September 2020
Parent permission form	Permission form to allow students to be involved	September 2020
Survey for mentors	Google form used to gauge success of match and provide support	October 2020
Survey for mentees	Google form used initially to gauge success of match and provide support	October 2020

Figure 6

2021-2022 Deliverables

Deliverable	Description	Due Date
2020-2021findings and recommendations	Findings and recommendations	June 2021
Parent Permission form	Updated form to give parents an opportunity to provide input	September 2021
Surveys for mentees, classroom teachers, and parents	Qualtrics surveys for end-of-year data collection	November 2021
Interview questions	Used as a guide for interviews with mentees and mentors	November 2021
2021-2022 findings and recommendations	Findings and recommendations for future	July 2022

6.2 Deferred Deliverables
I met all deliverables on time.

7. Communications Plan
This section provides an overview of the communications plan for the project.

7.1 Communications Plan Development
Communication in this project was key. Initially, it was important to communicate with the faculty and staff about the program's goals, the process for identifying students for the program, and their opportunity to serve as a mentor. Without buy-in from the faculty and staff, there would be no program. Once mentors were established, I communicated

monthly to encourage, assess needs, and offer my assistance. I created a free flow of downward, upward, and horizontal channels of communication but tried to avoid information overload. Mentors knew they could contact me as needs arose. I initially planned to communicate with the assistant principal, who was the project sponsor, at least quarterly on the progress of the project towards its goals. Uniquely, however, both the principal and assistant principal volunteered as mentors in the M&Ms program. Therefore, they had firsthand knowledge of the program and my role as the leader. In the 2021-2022 school year, I added communication with our Parent Teacher Organization to give them a broad overview of the program and a chance to ask questions. Figure 7 captures my communication efforts.

Figure 7

Communication Plan

Stakeholder	Information Needed	Why Needed	When they got it	How they got it
PTO (Parent Teacher Organization)	Broad overview of program and how it impacts students	To understand how this impacts the school community as a whole	Once per year	Information given during PTO meeting
SIC (School Improvement Council)	Broad overview of program	To be aware of the opportunity	Once per year	Information given during meeting
School community	Opportunity the program provides for students	To have an awareness	Once per year	Included in yearly report from school to school community
Principal	Project Progress	To understand the progress the project is making	Once per year	Copied on Project Final Report
Project Sponsor/ Assistant Principal	Progress towards meeting goals	To understand the progress the project is making, to monitor the ROI	Monthly-phase 1 Quarterly-phase 2	In-person updates Project Final Report submitted at end of each phase Debrief meeting at end of each phase
Faculty and staff	Opportunity to serve as mentor Responsibilities of mentor	To understand the program and its impact on students	Beginning of school year More often (if need for additional mentors arises)	Presentation given during faculty meeting One-on-one recruiting
Faculty and staff	Method for recommending students for the program	To understand how the program can benefit students and how to refer them	Beginning of year and once per quarter	During faculty meeting initially and email following
Mentors	Resources available Opportunity to ask questions, express concerns, share	To have available resources for improving their experience with mentee	Monthly	Google form One-on-one (as needed)

	experiences			
Parents of potential mentees	Purpose and goals for program	To understand how this could benefit their child	Once per year	Paper copy sent home in student Friday Folder
Parents of mentees	Opportunity to provide information about child, impact, if any, they see at home, and feedback on program	To give parents an opportunity to share how the program is affecting their family	2 times per year (beginning and end)	Paper copy sent home in student Friday Folder- beginning Survey in Qualtrics- end

7.2 Stakeholder Engagement Plan

I identified the project stakeholders by examining every person or group that might potentially be impacted by the project directly or indirectly. This included the students, teachers, administration, other faculty and staff, our Parent Teacher Organization, our School Improvement Council, and our families. I engaged them throughout the process primarily through my communication efforts outlined in the previous section. The value of the stakeholders could not be overstated. Without the willingness and collaboration of them all, this project would have been impossible.

8. Risks

This section provides an overview of the risks associated with the project, their potential impact, and my plan for addressing them.

8.1 Mitigation and Contingency

I identified both low and medium risks, as noted in Figure 8. I provided a mitigation plan and/or contingency plan for each of those risks.

Figure 8

Potential Risks and Plans for Addressing Them

Risk	*Level	Mitigation Plan (if high or medium)	Contingency Plan (Plan B)
Need Risk: the inability to identify mentees who are at-risk *We assume a continued need by students to have a mentor.*	Low		
Resource Risk: the inability to secure sufficient resources/volunteer mentors *We assume broad support from adults in the school community.*	Low		
Health and Safety Risk: due to Covid 19 implications, mentors and mentees cannot meet because one or the other is quarantined *We assume mentoring will take place during school hours.*	Medium	All staff and students will wear face masks inside the school building and practice social distancing to reduce the chance of getting the virus.	Mentors and mentees will use Google Meets to meet virtually. If virtual meetings are not possible and/or quarantine extends longer than expected, mentee can be matched with a different mentor
Scheduling Risk: the school schedule changes from face-to-face environment to all virtual *We assume there are no unforeseen changes in the school schedule.*	Medium		If this happens prior to October 2020, project implementation will be delayed. If matches are already in place, mentoring will pivot to a virtual environment using Google Meets
Confidentiality Risk: a mentor breaks a mentee's confidence *We assume school district employees abide by the district's code of ethics policy regarding confidentiality*	Lo	The district's code of ethics will be included in and highlighted during training.	
Interpersonal Risk: the relationship between mentor and mentee is unsatisfactory *We assume mentors and mentees will build a trusting relationship*	Medium	Mentor training will include strategies for building a trusting relationship.	Mentee will be rematched with another mentor.

Interpersonal Risk: A mentor becomes too emotionally invested in a mentee's life *We assume school district employees abide by the district's code of ethics policy*	Low	KCSD's code of ethics will be included in and highlighted during training.	Mentee will be rematched with another mentor.
Sponsor Risk- sponsor changes positions and no longer works at school *We assume sponsor, Adele Dixon, will remain in her position as AP.*	Low		

At one point, it was necessary to implement our contingency plan due to a health and safety risk. We pivoted to a virtual environment via Google Meet on two occasions when a mentor was quarantined for an extended period. I scheduled and arranged the meetings as needed.

8.2 Constraints
This project had to operate under the time constraints of a school schedule and the social distancing rules of COVID-19. Mentors and mentees only met during school hours and wore masks during the 2020-2021 school year, as these were mandatory at that time.

9. Budget
There were no significant costs necessary to complete this project. Initially, the financial plan relied on human capital alone. People already employed within the organization served as mentors. As noted in the chart below, the material resources necessary were resources already provided by the organization. Students, faculty, and staff had access to computers and Google products for use within the regular school environment. I was able to take advantage of these resources. In the 2021-2022 relaunch, I made two additions to the program that required monetary resources: a mentor kick-off event and a SHAREABLES bucket. These expenses fit into the existing PBIS budget, which relies on fundraising and donations.

Figure 9

2020-2021 Budget

People (work resources)	Capital (cost resources)	Materials (material resources)
Mentors' time 21 mentors	$0	Computers and software for mentor training and for mentors to complete surveys- Previously provided by organization
Project manager's time	$0	Computers and software for mentees to complete surveys- previously provided by organization to all students
Sponsor's time	$0	Computers and software for project manager and sponsor- previously provided by organization
Total	$0	

Figure 10

2021-2022 Budget

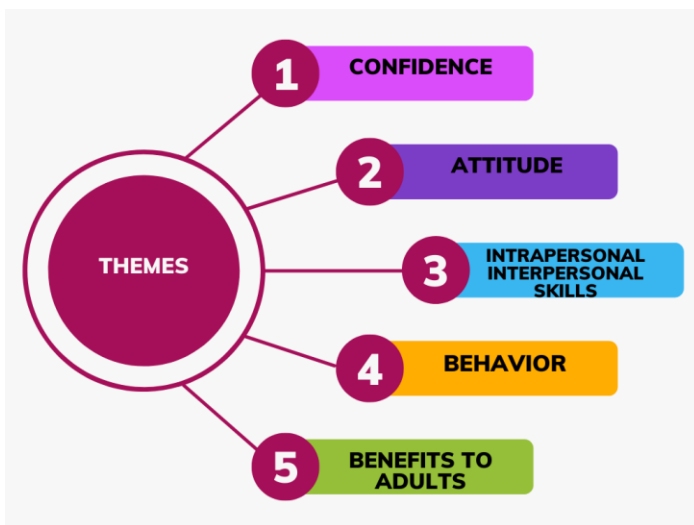| People (work resources)	Capital (cost resources)	Materials (material resources)
Mentors' time 24 mentors	$0	Computers and software for mentor training and for mentors to complete surveys- Previously provided by organization
Project manager's time	$0	Computers and software for mentees to complete surveys- previously provided by organization to all students
Sponsor's time	$0	Computers and software for project manager and sponsor- previously provided by organization
Mentor Kick-off event	$30	Breakfast event- Mentors enjoyed doughnuts and juice as they shared stories from 2020-2021 with new mentors. They also shared effective scheduling strategies and activities.
SHAREABLES bucket	$50	Contained board games, card games, coloring pages, growth mindset activities, and crafts that mentors could use when meeting with their mentees
Total	$80	

10. **Analysis and Recommendations**

As noted in Section 2, the main aims of the program were to provide regular contact with mentors, increase confidence in mentees, and reduce behavior infractions in the subgroup identified for behavior concerns. For this study, as noted in Section 4, I used multiple quantitative data sources: a close-ended survey of mentees (Appendix D), a frequency table of contacts between mentors and mentees (Appendix E), and discipline data for the subgroup of mentees who were also identified for behavior concerns (Appendix F). There is ample evidence that the first two program goals were met. Appendix E shows the interactions between mentors and mentees on a monthly basis. From that, you can see that there was a substantial number of contacts between the matches each month even though not all 25 mentors logged contacts in any given month. Interestingly, three of the matches decided to interact on a daily basis. In regard to confidence, what is striking about the survey results, as shown in Appendix D, is that 22 of 25 mentees chose "I am confident" when asked which statement best described them. Regarding the subgroup of students identified for behavior reasons, the findings were inconsistent. One mentee, S3, showed a large decrease in behavior fractions. He went from 36 behavior infractions in 1 month before the program began to zero, one, or two infractions each month while in the program. Similarly, S6, S7, and S8 showed declines in 5 of the 6 months. However, S4 showed an increase in infractions while in the program, and the other four students fluctuated up and down. Hence, the quantitative analysis does not confirm the mentoring program reduced behavior infractions. Contributing factors could be the timespan of the study and/or the content of their time together. The mentors and mentees were matched for only 6 months, and their time together was not structured or based on growth in any particular life skills. These potential contributing factors open the door for future research. I will also discuss behavior outcomes in the qualitative data analysis below.

It was important to my analysis to triangulate the data by looking at multiple sources. Triangulation is a "powerful strategy for increasing the credibility or internal validity in your research" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 245). The qualitative data, as noted in Section 4, came from interviews and an open-ended questionnaire administered to the classroom teachers and the parents of mentees. As part of my analysis process, I analytically and critically read the interview transcripts of mentors and mentees multiple times. I generated codes that captured interesting and relevant findings that related to my research questions. I used Microsoft Word to code transcripts. Afterwards, I organized the codes into potential themes by clustering codes together. This process yielded six themes, which I have included in Figure 11 in an effort to explain my thematic framework.

Figure 11

Model Showing Themes Generated From Qualitative Data

THEMES

1 CONFIDENCE

2 ATTITUDE

3 INTRAPERSONAL INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

4 BEHAVIOR

5 BENEFITS TO ADULTS

Confidence was a central theme. Overwhelmingly, the evidence shows that students gained confidence to be more participatory and involved in their classrooms. A third grader shared, "It's really fun having a mentor. It helps me feel more confident and realize I have a place in my life." Another said, "They can help you feel like you belong." When asked what changes, if any, she had noticed in her student, a classroom teacher wrote,

> When R moved to our school and started in my class, she was shy. In fact, she would never raise her hand and even sat silent when called on. Now, she speaks up in class meetings, raises her hand to contribute to discussions, and seems much more confident.

Other classroom teachers noted that mentees have "opened up" and "become more vocal in the classroom setting." Parents also noticed an increase in self-confidence as evident in the words of one parent: "Her confidence has spiked and she looks forward to the meetings." Another wrote, "My child has became more confident in her work and her ability to do her work." Research suggests confidence "grows with each experience of successful interactions through positive words. It is important to build a child's belief that they can handle their life and handle it well" (Newman, 2022, para. 3).

Another theme centered on attitude. Students who once were negative about school began to embrace more positivity. A teacher reported sensing one of her student's new "excitement about being at school." Another reported, "He seems happier." Parents brought out this same idea and one stated, "Her attitude has improved. She used to say she couldn't do it and shut down. Now she's trying." Another offered, "I've seen his attitude changed and how he deals with certain situations." One of the mentees, a tall, third-grade girl, earned a reputation early on for having a negative, uncooperative spirit. From the moment she got out of the car in the morning to the time she got on the bus in the afternoon, everyone who encountered her knew how unhappy she was to be there. She was matched

with a fourth-grade teacher as her mentor. They played games together, usually UNO, and talked. It did not matter if she won or lost the game; she smiled and laughed at each meeting. Within weeks, her attitude throughout the school environment completely changed. She would get out of the car on Wednesdays, their meeting day, and announce to everyone along the sidewalk that she was hanging out with her "best friend" today. This story demonstrates the power of this program.

I identified intrapersonal abilities as another theme. It was clear that because the program emphasized building positive relationships, students felt safe and connected. Playing games, having lunch, engaging in art activities, and/or enjoying outside play, mentors set the stage for mentees to open up and share personal thoughts and emotions with them and others. A fifth grader told me in our interview that "having a mentor helps you get out emotions. If you have a problem, you can get with them and talk." Another interviewee, a third-grade boy, also talked about his struggle with his emotions: "I get mad fast. She talks to me and helps me get calm. She has things like puppets that I can focus on to calm down." A classroom teacher celebrated, "I've seen her learn to be able to handle her emotions better." Parents agreed. One acknowledged that for their child, the program had "given him an avenue to be able to express his thoughts to someone other than family." Another said, "He's opening up and talking about things that bother him at home." A first grader is just one of our mentees who has dealt recently with death. She lost her mother this year. Meeting with her mentor brought her joy every single week. I asked her how she felt about meeting with her mentor. She smiled, opened her arms as wide as she could, and shouted, "This much!" The importance of connectedness cannot be overstated. Dr. Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph.D. told us, "Connectedness has the power to counterbalance adversity" (Winfrey & Perry, 2021, p. 108).

Students have shown growth in their interpersonal abilities as well. They are learning to relate to others in a more positive way. Even the youngest of mentees articulated this phenomenon. A kindergarten student reported, "She helped me with my friends and being nice to my friends." A third grader stated that having a mentor has "helped me be more kind." A parent of a first grader stated that her child believes her mentor "helped her to be a nicer person." A fourth grader told me in an interview that her mentor "helps me handle situations better with my friends. We talk about situations and issues." Teachers have a front-row seat to how students interact with one another on a daily basis. One submitted, "She had a hard time at the beginning of the year with having conversations and interacting with others. She has grown a lot." It is also important to note that the quantitative data as explained earlier (Appendix D) adds additional support to this theme. Twelve of 25 mentees indicated that their mentors helped them with their friendships, while 11 stated their relationships within their family were better because of their mentors. These findings mirror the research. Students who are involved in mentoring programs have developed "more positive attitudes toward school, were more likely to trust their teachers, and developed higher levels of self-confidence and a greater ability to express their feelings" ("ABC's of School Based Mentoring," 2007, p. 5).

Another theme the data illuminated was behavior. As explained earlier, the results of the quantitative data did not show that the program consistently reduced behavior infractions.

The qualitative data, however, paint a clearer picture. When describing a mentee in her homeroom class, one teacher wrote, "He has progressively made better choices and thinks of his mentor before he acts." Another stated, "Self-control is still a huge issue with my student; however, there has been a very noticeable improvement." One particular story, shared by the assistant principal, highlights this theme. One student engaged in many negative behaviors early on in the school year. In one instance, she trashed the bathrooms on her hallway. The assistant principal referred her to the program, and I matched her with a mentor. Once the mentoring relationship began, the assistant principal never again saw this student for a negative reason. This mentee likely engaged in these attention-seeking behaviors because she craved attention and would use any means necessary to get it. Spending time each week with a mentor met this need for her and changed the direction of her school year. Stories like this serve as a reminder that "belonging and being loved are core to the human experience. We are social species; we are meant to be in community" (Winfrey & Perry, 2021, p. 75).

A surprising theme that emerged from the data was the benefits felt by the adult participants. They overwhelmingly spoke of feeling fulfilled. Again and again, the people I interviewed reported they felt they were making a difference. There was also a sense of community among those interviewed. "Our overall school community I think has grown," one reported. Another said,

> I think that it has brought the students and teachers closer together. I think that a lot of times we go into it thinking that we're going to be the ones helping the students out. But we learn so much from it, and it helps to shape and mold me as a teacher.

One mentor's comment sums it up best: "Building all those relationships together somehow makes you a bigger, a better family."

Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative data make it clear that this face-to-face mentoring program was an effective response to this organization's challenge. When the classroom teachers of mentees were asked if they would recommend the program to others, all 21 respondents answered, "yes." Figure 12, generated in Qualtrics, visually depicts their responses for reasons why they would recommend the program.

Figure 12

Word Cloud Depicting Classroom Teachers' Responses

In light of the findings explained above, I make the following recommendations for this organization.

1. Increase awareness of the program with outside stakeholders. As previously mentioned, 10 students were identified yet never received parental consent to be a part of the program. Research tells us that "some parents are afraid that the mentors will try to take the parents' place or usurp their authority" (Lauland, 1998, p. 36). Regularly shining a positive light on the program and its benefits could increase the receptivity of the program. An effective and efficient method for doing this is by marketing the program in a weekly school newsletter, on the school website, and on other social media outlets.

2. Conduct internal skill building to expand teachers' capacity to understand students' needs. According to Dr. Perry, "studies show that between 30 and 50 percent of children in public schools have three or more ACEs [Adverse Childhood Experiences] which can be activated innocently by uninformed adults" (Winfrey & Perry, 2021, p. 223). Teachers need knowledge of trauma-informed strategies and interventions that help students regulate their emotions. Including all staff in such training gives the organization the best chance to ensure a sense of safety and belonging for all students. The literature asserted, "The more you learn about trauma and stress response, the easier it is to understand certain behaviors you encounter in a workplace, in a relationship, or at school" (Winfrey & Perry, 2021, p. 225).

3. Create spaces for mentors, mentees, and their families to interact. One way to do this would be to host a Family M&M night where parents get to meet mentors and get to know one another over dinner or games. This would give a voice to families and open the door for communication throughout the match.

4. Mobilize the resources of the school district's Behavioral Health Services Department. Such a partnership would make Recommendations 1 and 2 feasible. They are equipped to provide trauma-informed training for teachers and staff. They are available to make home visits when needed. These visits can bridge a gap between home and school and inform parents of how this program could benefit their children. They can even offer parenting classes and connect students and/or parents with other necessary resources. This untapped resource will be invaluable to the organization moving forward.

5. Investigate the possibilities of increasing the pool of volunteers. The needs are great, and finding new channels for mentors may be crucial as the program grows and expands. This could mean brainstorming ways to incentivize volunteers within the organization. It could also mean recruiting and utilizing outside sources.

> [Volunteers can come from] large corporations, small businesses, church groups, utility companies, hospitals, charitable institutions, and "mom-and-pop" stores. These diverse individuals can work successfully with the equally diverse population of children who need mentors. For example, research on mentor programs has found that retired people make excellent mentors. (Lauland, 1998, p. 12)

11. Reflection

This section includes both my professional and personal reflections on the entirety of this project.

11.1 Professional Learning

My knowledge, skills, and attitudes have grown due to this project. My consultancy project began in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis and therefore presented many challenges. The uncertain times demanded that I use adaptive leadership, even before I knew the term. I had to build relationships in order to recruit volunteers who were already overwhelmed with teaching face-to-face, asynchronously, and synchronously. *The Leadership Challenge* reminds us that "when people are worried, discouraged, frightened, and uncertain about the present, they often struggle to focus on the possibilities of tomorrow" (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 36). I had to actively listen to their needs, concerns, and fears and find ways to address them. I learned to invite diverse perspectives into my decision-making and truly value how much better our decisions and processes are when we engage with one another. As a result, my instinct presently is to encourage, serve, and empower those around me. I look for ways to help others reach their personal and professional goals. I truly embrace the idea that "leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence" (Sandberg, 2013, p. 198).

11.2 Personal Development

Because of my experience in the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program, I have grown personally as well. I have learned that great leadership begins with leading oneself. This means prioritizing activities that allow me to renew physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It means setting boundaries and maintaining a better work-life balance. Additionally, I am more open to others' perspectives and

genuinely value our differences. As a result, I am a better wife, mom, daughter, friend, teacher, leader, and Christ-follower.

Appendix A

Table A1
Project Impact Assessment Matrix

Criteria	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Strategic Contribution	None	Contributes indirectly to the org. mission	Contributes indirectly to >1 strategic themes	Contributes directly to 1 strategic theme	Contributes directly to >1 strategic theme	Very Significant strategic Impact
ROI	>5 years	4-5 years	3-4 years	2-3 years	1-2 years	<1 year
Operational Effectiveness	None	Improves work of a small group of staff < 6	Improves work of a large team of staff > 5	Improves work of whole department	Some improvement across whole organization	Significant improvement across whole organization

Table A2
Project Complexity Assessment Matrix

Criteria	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
Delivery Timescale (months) – 10%	1-6	6-12	12-18	> 18
Stakeholders 20%	Internal and within single organizational area	Internal across more than one business area	Mainly external	Internal and external
Operational change 15%	Very minimal	Some new processes and possible some re-training	Significant restructure of processes and work areas	Major change/ large scale restructure, outsourcing
Contract complexity 20%	No new contracts required	Single contract with known supplier	Multiple contracts with known suppliers	Contract(s) with new suppliers(s)
In-house expertise 20%	Have done this before many times	Have done this before once or twice	Have done similar before, but not the same	Have not done anything like this before
Dependencies 15%	Very minimal links with other projects	Links with other projects but little impact	Links with other projects upon which this project depends	Other projects depend upon this project

Appendix B

Project Charter

Doctor of Organizational Leadership Program

1. General Project Information			

Project Title:	*M&Ms: Mentors and Mentees*		
Project Host(s):	Lugoff Elementary School		
Project Sponsor (GWU):	Dr. Elizabeth Jones		
Project Manager:	Melody Johnson	Date: 6/17/2020	
Project Description	*M&Ms: Mentors and Mentees* will offer a face-to-face mentoring program designed specifically for at-risk students. Students will be identified based on historical data from the school-wide PBIS classroom management system and/or teacher recommendation. These students need more guidance, support, and accountability than the PBIS model alone provides. We believe *M&Ms* can make a tremendous difference in their lives. Having a significant relationship with an adult in the building who is cheering for you, checking up on you, spending time with you each week, and holding you accountable will be the missing component these boys and girls need.		

2. Project Participants and Roles

	Name	Role	Telephone	E-mail
Project Manager:	Melody Johnson		803-420-7491	melody.johnson@kcsdschools.net
Team Members:	Adele Dixon	Assistant Principal/ Project Sponsor	803-438-8000	adele.dixon@kcsdschools.net
		Volunteer mentors-not yet determined		

3. Stakeholders *(e.g., those with a significant interest in or who will be significantly affected by this project)*

Mentors
Mentees and their families
Classroom teachers
Other staff members in the school

4. Project Purpose Statement

Project Purpose

This project provides at-risk students with a caring adult who is invested in his/her personal growth.
The objective of this project is to implement a face-to-face mentoring program that pairs and/or groups adults with at-risk students from October 2020 to May 2021 and from October 2021-May 2022 in order to:
- enhance personal support of students through contacts with adult role models
- build confidence in students
- reduce behavioral infractions within the school environment

Scope

The scope of M&Ms includes the activities listed below:
1. Research other mentor programs and their results
2. Develop plan that best suited the needs of students
3. Determine criteria for mentors
4. Establish roles and responsibilities of mentors
5. Recruit mentors
6. Train mentors
7. Determine criteria for identifying mentees
8. Lead the identification process of mentees
9. Secure parent permission for mentees
10. Match mentors and mentees
11. Create feedback/evaluation tools
12. Collect data using tools
13. Analyze data
14. Communicate as described in the communication plan

The scope of the project does not include:
- Development of any other program at this elementary school
- Fundraising

Resources

The only capital needed for M&Ms is human capital. Potential mentors will be selected and invited to participate on a voluntary basis. *Update to charter: The relaunch in 2021-2022 added a Kick-off event ($50) and a SHAREABLES bucket with games and other activities to mentors' use ($30).

Project Milestones

1. Research conducted and analyzed by end of July 2020
2. Plan developed and agreed upon by end of September 2020
3. All mentors selected and trained by end of October 2020
4. All mentees selected and permission obtained by parents by end of October 2020
5. Program fully implemented (November 2020- beginning of 2nd quarter)
6. Recommendations made for relaunch by end of June 2021 (following feedback at 4 ½ week intervals)
7. All mentors selected and trained by end of September 2021
8. All mentees selected and permission obtained by parents by end of September 2021
9. Kick-off event for mentors by the end of October 2021
10. Program fully implemented (end of October 2021-May 2022)
11. Recommendations made for future implementation by end of June 2022

Project SMART Objectives

1. By the end of October 2020, we will select and train mentors for M&M's.
2. By the end of the October 2020, we will select mentees and obtain parent permission.
3. Mentors and mentees will be matched and their first meetings held by end of November 2020.
4. Frequency of contacts between mentors and mentees will be collected by the end of each month of the program.
5. By the end of the program, students will show increase in confidence, as evidenced by surveys and interviews.
6. By the end of the program, students will show a decrease in behavior infractions, as evidenced by Class Dojo points.

Major Known Risks (including significant Assumptions) *Identify obstacles that may cause the project to fail.*

Risk	Risk Rating (Hi, Med, Lo)
We assume broad support from adults in the school community.	Lo
We assume there are no unforeseen changes in the school schedule.	Lo
We assume a continued need by students to have a mentor.	Lo
We assume mentoring will take place during school hours.	Lo

Constraints

- Student availability to meet with mentor is limited to school hours
- Possible Covid-19 instructions that impede face-to-face interaction
- Possible Covid-19 instructions that delay or alter school schedule
- Possibility that mentor/mentee will not mesh well together

External Dependencies

Project success depends upon the efforts of this project team and the school PBIS team because *M&Ms* relies on data provided by the PBIS team to match mentors and mentees and to monitor progress.

5. Communication Strategy

Project manager, Melody Johnson, will provide sponsor, Adele Dixon, with regular updates through email. See Communications Plan for more specific details regarding communication.

6. Sign-off

	Name	Signature	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Project Host	Lugoff Elementary School		
Project Sponsor	Adele Dixon		
Project Manager	Melody Johnson		

7. Notes

This project was first implemented in the 2020-2021 school year. Changes were made, and the program was relaunched for the 2021-2022 school year.

Appendix C

Professional Literature Review

Lugoff Elementary School, a Title I school, serves approximately 600 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade; 37% are economically disadvantaged, 60% are Caucasian, 38% are African American, and 18% are identified as gifted and talented. The organization scored an average rating on the 2018-2019 SC School Report Card (n.d.). The school proudly champions its PBIS school status. PBIS is a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional, and behavioral support. By implementing PBIS, "schools support their students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral success, engage with families to create locally-meaningful and culturally-relevant outcomes, and use data to make informed decisions that improve the way things work for everyone" (Center on PBIS, 2022, para. 1). Students are taught the three ABCs: Act safely; Be responsible; and Care for yourself, others, and the environment. Teachers model what this looks like in all areas of the school, students role-play and practice using the ABCs to make decisions, and students are rewarded for suitable choices.

Lugoff Elementary administrators report successful outcomes using this model. They see fewer students in the office for disciplinary reasons. Referrals and suspensions have decreased. Nonetheless, teachers reported that there were students who continue to exhibit at-risk behaviors, disrupt the learning environment for others, and show disrespect to peers and adults alike. A new intervention, aimed at better communication with parents and well-established reward criteria, was implemented in the 2017-2018 school year. "Class DOJO is a computer based program that allows teachers to reward students for appropriate behavior" (Kershaw County School District, n.d.-a, para. 2). Parents can receive information regarding their child's behavior in real time and can communicate back to teachers immediately. Students receive points for positive behavior

and lose points for negative behavior. The target is 90% positive behavior daily, weekly, and quarterly. "As part of our PBIS policy, students will be allowed to participate in a celebration to reward their progress of good behavior" (Kershaw County School District, n.d.-a, para. 2). With this initiative came improved behavior, yet more is needed. There are students who continue to disrupt the learning environment and exhibit disrespectful attitudes. The administration recognizes this challenge but has not had the time or resources to address it in a significant way. They believe a school-based mentoring program is the solution to the problem.

As part of this professional literature review, I reviewed 46 research articles and professional publications regarding mentoring. The specific goal for this literature review was twofold: (a) to assess the overall effects of mentoring programs on young people by answering the question, "Is there value in a mentoring program?"; and if so, (b) to answer the question, "What makes a mentoring program successful?" After reviewing each article for key themes and takeaways, I sorted them into three main themes. The first theme relates to the value of a mentoring program in a school. The second theme is in relation to the most important characteristic of a successful program: relationship. The third theme concerns the training of mentors.

Value

Most agree that students of all ages need support and guidance. This premise has fueled the creation of countless programs across the world, most notably the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. Mentoring in the U.S. flourished as it gained a high profile with encouragement from influential political figures. In 1989, President Bush "endorsed mentoring in a commercial" (Miller, 2004, p. 5). In 2012, Michelle Obama created a mentoring program in which disadvantaged young girls were paired with members of the president's staff because she

believed that "even though our children are connecting in ways we never imagined, you've got an entire generation of young people truly in desperate need of a friend. Someone they can trust, an example they can follow" (Curtis, 2015, para. 4). President Barack Obama also addressed the "opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color" (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2016, para. 1) and issued a challenge entitled "My Brother's Keeper" (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2016, para. 1). In response, over 250 communities in all 50 states implemented mentoring programs, like the MBK School Success Mentor Initiative, to address the needs in their communities (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2016, para. 2).

For many students, even with in-tact family home lives, the "existing network is not strong or diverse enough to help navigate through the social and academic challenges in their lives" (Schenk et al., 2020, Introduction section). Mentoring can increase their network of support and provide the additional guidance longed for. One meta-analysis of more than 73 independent mentoring programs found positive outcomes across social, emotional, behavioral, and academic areas of youth development (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Another study revealed that "favorable effects of mentoring programs are similarly apparent across youth varying in demographic and background characteristics such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, and family structure and across differing types of outcomes that have been assessed using multiple sources of data" (DuBois et al., 2002, p. 186).

MENTOR, The National Mentoring Partnership, estimates that currently there are 4.5 million at-risk youth involved in structured mentoring relationships (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014), while 20 years ago, that number was 300,000 (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014, p. 155). Positive outcomes lead to more interest in developing new programs. A study of the Big Brothers Big

Sisters of America mentoring program revealed that students who were mentored were "less likely to start using drugs and alcohol, less likely to hit someone, improved school attendance and performance, and attitudes toward completing schoolwork, and improved peer and family relationships" (Tierney et al., 2014, p. ii).

> Regardless of the structure, staffing, and goals of the program, mentoring programs in schools have shown to be a cost-efficient way of increasing the positive relationships students have in their lives, while also having the potential to boost factors that can lead to educational success, such as connectedness to the school environment and peers, improved relationships with teachers and staff, improved feelings of academic competence, and greater access and use of other supports. (National Mentoring Resource Center, 2021, para. 2)

Mentoring can help guide a young person toward a more positive life experience. It helps young people, especially at-risk youth, "succeed in school, work, and life" (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014, p. 5). A survey of young people revealed that those with a mentor are 81% more likely to participate in extra-curricular activities and sports and more than twice as many held leadership positions (Schwartz et al., 2012). "The research and evaluation evidence supports the view that student mentoring can bring many benefits to students, schools, mentors, and communities" (Miller, 2004, p. 271).

Based on the information given above, one might expect there are plenty of mentors and mentoring programs already in existence. In reality, one in three young people does not have a mentor. That means that "approximately 16 million youth, including nine million at-risk youth, will reach age 19 without ever having a mentor" (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014, p. 5). When asked as adults if they had a mentor in elementary school, 66% responded negatively. While there has

been much research on mentoring, little research focuses on mentoring programs with younger students. Bruce and Bridgeland (2014) posited, "Mentoring could have powerful effects if leveraged as an intervention earlier in life" (p. 5). They even argued that "we must close this mentoring gap, and ensure all children have the mentoring supports they need to grow, thrive, and succeed" (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014, p. 42). This sentiment is repeated in the "ABC's of School Based Mentoring" (2007), which reported that school-based mentoring programs showed "mentored students developed more positive attitudes toward school, were more likely to trust their teachers, and developed higher levels of self-confidence and a greater ability to express their feelings" (p 5). "The need for mentoring programs is indisputable" (Levine, n.d., p. 1). Miller (2004) argued that mentoring can affect society so greatly because it is simple, direct, cheap, sympathetic, legitimate, and flexible. The message is clear; mentoring programs are indeed valuable.

Relationship

Just as there is consistent research pointing to the value of mentoring, there is extensive research pointing to the most important characteristic of a successful mentoring program: the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. Relationships built in trust and empathy are essential. Bayer et al. (2013) posited, "A close relationship between mentor and protégé may be the key to the effectiveness" (p. 24). They called a close relationship the "active ingredient of mentoring" (Bayer et al., 2013, p. 29). Similarly, a study conducted in Hong Kong showed the "quality of relationships between mentors and mentees supports positive outcomes" (Harrison et al., 2018, p. 150). Mentees felt their mentors provided them with emotional support, advice support, self-esteem support, and companionship support (Harrison et al., 2018). These

comments parallel another study in which "trust was a key theme raised by young people being interviewed" (Miller, 2004, p. 27).

Although characteristics such as gender or same race seemingly would make a perfect match, the research shows this type of matching is not necessary. "Same-race and same-gender matches were not more likely to be close" (Bayer et al., 2013, p. 26). Spending time to build trust and develop relationships is what makes the difference. "Students love having a specific person they can talk to and trust at school, and when they feel safe and cared for, it leads to increased attendance and academic performance" (Szot, 2020, para. 6). Similarly, the founder of Turnaround for Children, Dr. Pamela Cantor, said, "Children need to have that overall sense of safety in the environment and they need to have strong relationships with adults and peers to set the stage for the kind of learning that we want them to do" (Faggella, 2017, Relationships Built on Trust section). Jean Rhodes's extensive research on mentoring agreed and suggested mutual trust and empathy are necessary components in a positive mentoring relationship (Rhodes & Dubois, 2008, p. 256).

Training

In order to cultivate the type of relationship described above, training must take place for the mentor prior to being matched with a mentee and be ongoing throughout the life of the program. This resonated throughout all my research. Simply matching a caring adult with a child does not equal success. Training prepares mentors for their critical role. There is a direct correlation between the training and "both mentors' and mentees' perceptions about the quality of their mentor-mentee relationship, including their feelings of closeness, support, satisfaction, and effectiveness as a mentor" (Garringer et al., 2015, p. 39). "Mentors who received more training before and during their mentoring assignments were more likely to have close

relationships with their protégés" (Bayer et al., 2015, p. 26). Training ensures that all mentors have "the basic knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to develop effective relationships" (Garringer et al., 2015, p. 2). "Mentoring programs also have differed in their basic goals and philosophy" (DuBois et al., 2002, p. 159). Therefore, the specifics of the training vary from program to program whether the focus is on goal setting, growth mindset (Mindset Kit, n.d.), self-efficacy (Bayer et al., 2013), social-emotional learning (DuBois et al., 2002), or another. Though there is no standardized approach, there is general agreement that the strongest predictor of success lies in training (DuBois et al., 2002). Training should be tailored to the "aims of the program" (Miller, 2004, p. 218) and delivered face-to-face as opposed to a written handbook only, include experiential and participatory activities, and must focus on relevant skill-building (Herrera et al., 2013, p. 42). A framework of ground rules and objectives should be set (Miller, 2004, p. 69). Mentors should be given relationship-related activities and expectations (Szot, 2020). In addition, training should expose mentors to common situations that likely arise when mentoring. This will "increase mentors' confidence in their ability to work effectively with youth" (Rhodes & Raposa, 2020, para. 8). Mentoring activities can also provide "social experiences that develop the youth's perception of positive adult relationships and, in turn, improve other adult relationships in the mentee's life" (Lee, 2017, p. 26). It is important to offer "ongoing, top up training during the course of the program as and when particular training needs arise" (Miller, 2004, p. 209). This ongoing support can be "individualized or tailored to help mentors continue to build their relationships, and address more complex issues that may have arisen in the context of an actual relationship" (Garringer et al., 2015, p. 40). Though research varies as to the specific training that should be implemented, it is consistent in its importance to the success of any mentoring program.

My goal for this literature review was to determine if a mentoring program would be a possible solution to this organization's challenge. The leaders of the organization believe so. If the literature supported their thinking, my goal was to identify the important characteristics to make the program successful. As I reviewed the literature, three themes emerged: the value of a mentoring program, relationship as the key ingredient, and training as essential. There is a solid body of literature that supports that students benefit from a trusting relationship with a mentor. To create an environment conducive to such a relationship, mentors need training before and weaved throughout the life of the program. The overall implications of this literature review bring good news for Lugoff Elementary. Instituting a mentoring program that focuses on building relationships and provides adequate training to the mentors likely will be the missing element these at-risk students need.
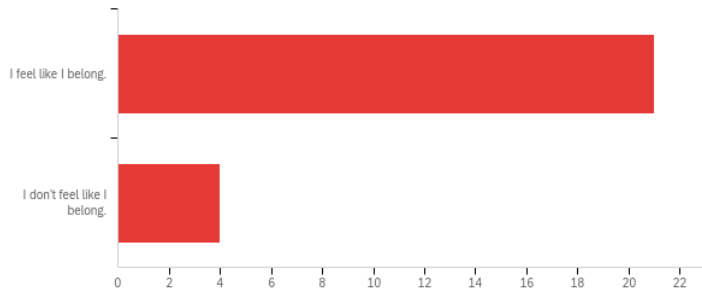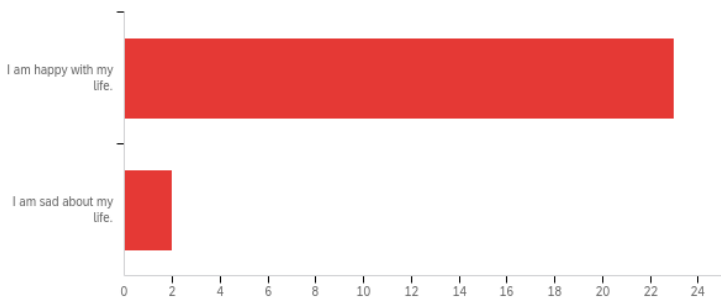
Appendix D

Mentee Survey Results

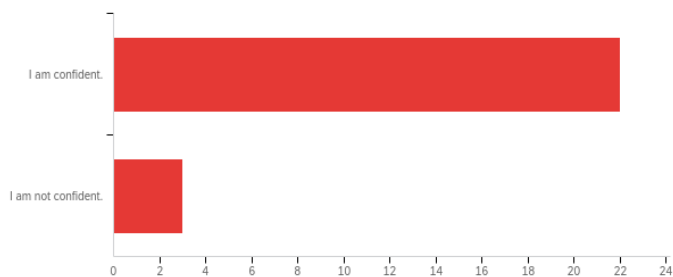Q1 - How do you feel about getting to spend time with a mentor?
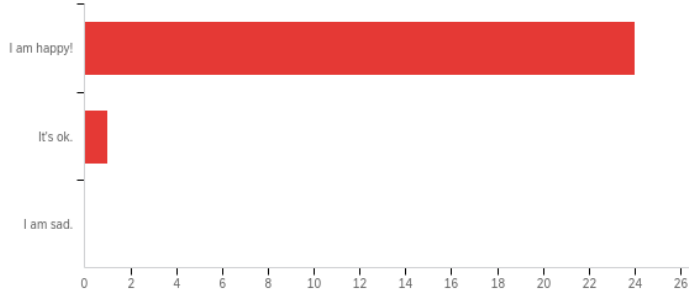
Q2 - Which best describes how you often feel at school?

Q3 - Which best describes how you often feel?

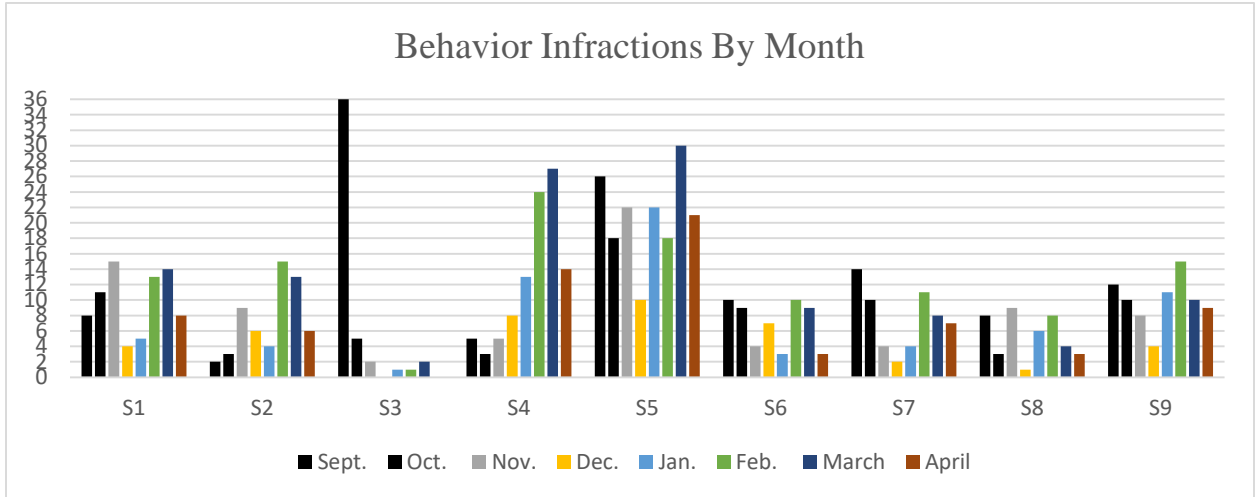Q4 - Which best describes how you often feel?

Appendix E

Frequency Data Table

Program Months	# of mentors who logged contacts	# of school weeks during the month	# of matches that met each week during the month	# of matches that met 3 times during the month	# of matches that met 2 times during the month	# of matches that met 1 time during the month	# of matches that met 0 times during the month	# of matches that met 2 times **per week** during the month	# of matches that met **daily** during the month
Nov.	20	3	10	NA	7	0	1	2	
Dec.	20	3	6	NA	10	4	0		
Jan.	14	3	3	NA	3	7	0	1	
Feb.	20	4	5	7	6	0	0		2
March	19	4	10	1	5	0	0		3
April	18	4	8	0	6	1	0		3

Appendix F

Behavior Data Chart

Behavior Infractions By Month

*Sept. and Oct. (in black) represent behavior fractions proceeding the match.

Appendix G

Mentor Training Materials

M&M's

M&Ms: Mentors and Mentees

Without you, this would not be possible!

1

M&M's

Criteria for mentees

- Student of Lugoff Elementary School
- Meets one or more of the following:
  - Less than 80% positive behavior in Class Dojo
  - Has teacher, counselor, or administration recommendation to participate due to social or emotional concerns
  - Has teacher, counselor, or administration recommendation to participate due to fixed mindset about his/her ability to learn and grow. (needs confidence)
- Has parent consent

2

M&M's
Goals

- enhance personal support of students through contacts with adult role models

- build confidence in students through affirmation of their skills and values

- reduce behavioral infractions within the school environment

3

M&M's

What do I do?

Build a relationship
- Eat lunch together
- Help with your class
- Play a game/cards
- Other activities- M&M Shareables!

4

M&M's

What do I talk about?

-Build self-efficacy

You can do it!
You have control!

- Growth mindset vs fixed mindset

Yet is powerful
You can grow, change, and learn

5

M&M's

Expectations and Restrictions

1. Spend time each week
2. Maintain confidentiality
3. Fill in quick check-ins
4. Communicate issues

1. School hours
2. No students in car
3. Refrain from excessive gift giving
4. Excessive closeness

KCSD Ethics policy

6

M&M's

Surveys

- Quick check-ins through email
- Feel FREE to reach out to me

7

M&M's

M&M Mentor Pack

Tell us:
RED- something about yesterday
ORANGE- something you do well
YELLOW- something about your childhood
BLUE- something you learned last week
BROWN- something you can't live without
GREEN- something you watch/listen to

- mentee's name
- mentee's schedule
- mentee's interests
- possible conversation starters
- game for first meeting

HI

8

M&M's

Questions?

9

Appendix H

CITI Certification

Completion Date 19-Oct-2020
Expiration Date 19-Oct-2023
Record ID 38906889

This is to certify that:

Melody Johnson

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. Do not use for TransCelerate mutual recognition (see Completion Report).

Graduate School of Education Research Investigators (Curriculum Group)
Graduate School of Education Research Investigators (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Gardner-Webb University

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wd83a4b43-ae69-48af-abec-a537c4eb23b0-38906889

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