

# BEST FRIENDS MENTORING PROGRAM



2009 EVALUATION REPORT

Merriam-Webster defines a mentor as “a trusted counselor or guide” (2009). Mentoring programs throughout the country are in the limelight as a proven practice to “change youth’s life trajectories, reduce alcohol use, and improve academic behaviors” (Grossman, 2000). Mentoring is not a new concept, however, the “term” mentoring actually comes from the Greek word that means “enduring” (Learnings from Mentoring Quotes, 2008). The definition has its roots in ancient Greece. Odysseus, who was one of the most prominent Greek leaders in the Trojan War and hero of Homer’s *The Odyssey*, entrusted a good friend with the education and care of his son. This trusted counselor and guide’s name was Mentor. And hence, mentoring programs were begun.

## OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

This is a study of the youth who were enrolled in the Best Friends Mentoring Program (BFMP) from May 2008 through May 2009. These mentees are known as Junior Friends in the BFMP. Mentors, parents, and teachers were surveyed to acquire data for the variables represented in the following pages. Characteristics of the youth, such as age, race/ethnicity, and family status were acquired from the referral source surveys. School offices provided the data for GPAs and free or reduced hot lunch fees.

The BFMP had a total of 128 matches in the past year. Some of these matches were discontinued. Other youth were re-matched with a different mentor. When that happened, they were counted as a new match. Ninety of the youth were matched long enough to gather comparative data from May 2008 to May 2009. The remaining 38 youth were either new matches, for whom there was no baseline data, or they were discontinued matches. Thirty three of the matches were community-based and the evaluators were able to gather data on 21 of these youth. Ninety five of the matches were school-based, of which 69 of the school based youth had data. Three of the 90 youth, for which the BFMP could gather demographic data, did not have comparative data because teachers were not able to complete their surveys before the school year ended. Overall, then, the evaluators were able to acquire demographic data and data from mentors for 90 of the mentees, but only 87 of the mentees had comparative data from the schools. This will explain why  $n=90$  for some of the findings and why  $n=87$  for other findings.

## CONCLUSION

A number of questions were raised at the beginning of the report. For some, the collected data were able to answer the questions to the fullest extent; for others, answers led to additional questions. What follows are the conclusions that could be drawn from the data that were collected and analyzed.

- **Overall, the majority of youth enrolled in the Best Friends Mentoring Program (BFMP) were reported to show improvement in social skills, attitude, behavior and academic competencies** by teachers, parents and mentors. Parents reported greater improvement than teachers, and mentors reported the greatest improvements. While each of these groups evaluated youth somewhat subjectively, it is entirely possible that youth demonstrated different levels of improvement, particularly in the areas of social skills, attitudes, and behaviors, in different settings. It would not be unreasonable to assume that teachers might hold youth to higher standards in the school setting than mentors or parents in less structured settings.
- **Youth in the school-based mentoring program were reported to have better levels of improvement in social skills, attitude, and academic competencies than community-based youth.** On the other hand, youth in the community-based mentoring program demonstrated slightly better behavior changes. Overall, youth in the school-based program improved their GPAs more than did those in the community-based program. This may simply be because activities with more attention given to academic performance in the school-based program.