Grand Area Mentoring
2014/2015 Annual Report

*In a Nutshell*

Grand Area Mentoring established a new record in 2014/2015 with a total of 80 students served one-on-one by volunteer adult mentors. Responsible mentors and at-risk children met weekly to boost student performance in three domains – academics, social skills, and attendance.

Teachers know what’s going on with the children in our schools. Their feedback paints a powerful picture of school based mentoring in Moab:

- **Academics** • 100% of teachers feel that mentored youth seem to care more about schoolwork and grades.

- **Social Skills** • 95% of teachers agree that mentored youth have better social skills with peers, and 100% believe they have better relationships with teachers.

- **Attendance** • 100% believe that mentored youth like school more, especially on mentoring days.

Furthermore, 100% of teachers surveyed agreed that mentoring is a good strategy to prevent anti-social behavior, unexcused absences, and academic decline among at-risk youth.

*A Matter of Closeness*

A new study of school-base mentoring supports these teacher observations. According to the Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring, “For financially strapped school districts, school-based mentoring has the potential to provide a cost-effective way to assist and support struggling students.” The piece goes on to say: “*It was the relationship closeness, not a focus on academics, which led to greater outcomes in mentees.*”

As a result of relationship quality, performance results in Grand County School District exceeded federal benchmarks set by experts for school-based mentoring. A snapshot of Grand Area Mentoring’s major measurable objectives for the year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure &gt;&gt;</th>
<th>Reduce disciplinary actions</th>
<th>Increase core academic performance</th>
<th>Reduce unexcused absences</th>
<th>Sustain relationships &gt;12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACTUAL PERFORMANCE</strong></td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Improvements in student academic performance are based on core subject report card scores. Grand Area Mentoring met the goal of 35% of mentored students improving their academic score since last year or since being matched with a mentor. Of the students for whom baseline academic data was available, **60% improved their overall academic score.** (Flat academic performance is not counted as improvement.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Students with Improved Academic Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Goals vs. Performance) 2014/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

89% of surveyed teachers believe the mentored students they know earn better grades. Furthermore, 100% of parents agree that their child seems to care more about schoolwork and grades. One parent said…

**“I don’t know how I would have helped my daughters with their schooling. I really appreciate all the help you have given the children.”**

**Parent Testimonial**

“My son has always been excited for the days he has mentoring. His mentor has made a huge impact on his life in a positive way.”

**Mentor Confidence**

Mentor surveys found that 100% of volunteers feel confident in their ability to help their mentees academically, with 66% feeling ‘quite confident’ or ‘extremely confident.’ This confidence does not necessarily depend on experience in the teaching field. New research says: “Volunteers need not be trained with a rigorous academic background, and mentors might prove as beneficial as tutors to struggling students.” (Nestor, Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring)
Student Behavior

Of Grand Area Mentoring’s student participants for which Grand Area Mentoring had baseline discipline data, 72% reduced their discipline referral rate or maintained it at zero. The graph below illustrates Grand Area Mentoring’s performance outcome:

**Percentage of Students with Reduced Discipline Referrals**
*(Goals vs. Performance) 2013/2014*

95% of surveyed teachers agree that the mentored students they know have gotten in less trouble. 91% also agree that mentored youth are less disruptive in class. Parent surveys provide additional support for the link between mentoring and improved behavior. **100% of parents agree that since being matched with a mentor, their son or daughter has improved social skills.**

Studies suggest there is a link between improved social skills and a reduction of behavior problems at school and in the community. Here is a selection of direct quotes from mentees:

**QUESTION**: DO YOU THINK HAVING A MENTOR HAS CHANGED THE WAY YOU GET ALONG WITH OTHER PEOPLE? IF SO, HOW?

**ANSWER**: A selection of student quotes:

“Now I have the courage to meet new people.” (third-grade student who has limited contact with biological mother and whose step-mother was recently diagnosed with cancer)

“Before I got my mentor I didn’t have as many friends. But then I got my mentor and I got along with other people because I understand them more.” (fourth-grade student who struggles with loneliness and lives with low-income single parent)

“Before I had a mentor I wasn’t a good communicator. Now that I have a mentor, it helps me practice talking to people.” (sixth-grade student with very stressful life outside of school)

“Most people are mean to me, but she makes me feel happy.” (fourth-grade student removed from parent’s custody because of drug abuse)

“It makes me nicer to people. When I didn’t have a mentor I didn’t have any friends. People were scared because I never smiled.” (third-grade student who witnessed domestic violence and whose father is incarcerated)

“Yes, she invites people to play four-square with us all the time, and I do too. And then I become friends with more people.” (fifth-grade student diagnosed with autism, struggles with social skills)

“I talk to people more. I feel more comfortable talking to people.” (seventh-grade student struggles with anger issues, removed from home because of parental drug issues)

“I have more friends now.” (fourth-grade student whose father died in a work related accident this year)

“She shows me confidence. When I talk to her she’s always smiling and happy.” (sixth-grade student who was removed from parent’s care because of addiction issues and neglect)
BEST PRACTICE: Developmental Mentoring

Although Grand Area Mentoring aims to improve student performance above all, it does so through developmental mentoring. Developmental mentoring focuses on building a strong relationship first. Studies have shown this approach leads to increased student confidence, higher attachment to school, better grades, and longer lasting matches.

QUESTION: DO YOU FEEL MENTORING HAS CHANGED HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOURSELF? IF SO, HOW?

ANSWER: A selection of student quotes:

“I used to be super depressed. My anxiety levels were high all the time. Since I got my mentor, my depression has gone away and my anxiety is only high some of the time. She’s pretty much made me feel better about myself.” (seventh-grade student who has struggled with mental health issues and has gradually been able to reduce his medications)

“Mentoring helped me to change myself to where I’m doing better at school and doing better at home and all that other stuff.” (fifth-grade student who was physically abused)

“Yes, she makes me happy every day.” (third-grade student of Navajo descent who comes from large at-risk family)

“Yes, I’m more active now.” (seventh-grade student with depression & low school attachment)

“My mentor makes me feel safe and happy.” (sixth-grade student who was removed from home because of addiction and neglect issues)

“I haven’t gotten any office referrals this year. I’m doing better in school. I’m being nicer.” (fifth-grade student diagnosed with autism, struggles with social skills)

“Yes. Yes it does. It’s because how she smiles at me and laughs when I say funny things. It makes me happy. When I didn’t have a mentor I wasn’t happy much.” (third-grade student who witnessed domestic violence and struggles with anxiety)

“Yes because I get to tell her stuff that is happening at my house without her telling everyone else.” (sixth-grade student who was physically abused, witnessed severe domestic violence, and was diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder)

“Yes, I’ve been talking a lot louder, seeing things clearer, going outside more, and getting more exercise. When I didn’t have a mentor, I didn’t go outside much and just played video games.” (third-grade student who has emotionally disturbed brother, parents divorced, family of low socio-economic status)

“I have someone to talk to and I don’t feel lonely or anything.” (fourth-grade student with unstable home, student has never attended the same school for entire year)
Student Unexcused Absences

In 2014/2015, Grand Area Mentoring aimed to reduce unexcused absences for 35% of mentored youth. **50% of mentored students had fewer unexcused absences this year compared with student attendance in 2013/2014.** Students reported greater affinity for school in end-of-year interviews, and both parents and teachers noted the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Students with Improved Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Goals vs. Performance) 2014/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MENTEE INTERVIEW QUESTION: DOES HAVING A MENTOR MAKE YOU FEEL ANY DIFFERENT ABOUT SCHOOL?

**ANSWER:** A selection of student quotes:

“I’m really excited to earn activities to do with my mentor as a reward for when I come to school every day. They make it easier to focus and think about everything you are capable of.” (fourth-grade student removed from parent custody this year)

“Yes, before I didn’t like school. Now I look forward to mentoring and I come to school every day. ” (fifth-grade boy with limited contact with father, single mom struggles making ends meet)

“Mentoring makes me feel like I have more of a reason to come to school.” (third-grade student with inappropriate awareness of adult subjects and who struggles with social skills)

“Before I got my mentor I didn’t like school very much. Then when I got my mentor, I like school on mentoring days.” (fourth-grade student who struggles with loneliness, lives with single mom)

“Mentoring makes me want to get up more. It makes me want to learn faster so the school day gets shorter and it’s mentoring time.” (third-grader who struggles with depression, father was incarcerated)

“Yes, I feel happy because every Thursday I get to see her.” (second-grade student whose single parent has struggled with chronic illness/substance abuse)

“It makes me want to come to school.” (eighth-grade student who was lonely & bullied by peers)
Sustained Relationships

Grand Area Mentoring surpassed the key goal of 55% of relationships sustained for more than 12 months. A sustained relationship is defined as a match of student and mentor that meets consistently for 12 consecutive months, not including June, July, and August.

Of all 80 matches in the 2014/2015 school year (including those closed and those expected to continue), 66% of Grand Area Mentoring matches were sustained for more than 12 months. Of those, 28% were sustained between 12 months and 2.5 years, and 26% were sustained for more than 2.5 years. The longest ongoing match has lasted 79 months or 6.6 years.

The Effects of Long-Term Mentoring

Students who have been mentored for more than one year often performed better than their peers mentored for fewer months. Grand Area Mentoring’s average match length at close is two years and four months, or nearly 500% better than the national average.

MENTEE INTERVIEW QUESTION: WHAT HAVE YOU GAINED OR LEARNED THROUGH YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MENTOR?

ANSWER: A selection of student quotes:

“‘She’s helped me to go to summer camp and sign up for the Boston trip.’” (fourth-grade student who has witnessed domestic violence and whose parent has struggled with substance abuse)

“That you don’t have to deal with everyone being mean to you, you can stick up for yourself.” (fifth-grade student who was physically abused)

“I learned that people will be nice to you only if you treat them with respect. And if you say please and thank you, it makes people happy.” (second-grade student who struggles with social skills and social isolation)

“I gained more happiness.” (fifth-grade student who was removed from parent’s custody because of neglect)

“That it’s okay to try new things and do things that make you uncomfortable like the adventure park.” (eighth-grade student struggles with anger issues, removed from parent’s custody because of drug abuse)
**Number of Matches**

Grand Area Mentoring served 80 matches during the 2014/2015 school year. To provide optimal support to greater numbers of Grand County School District’s at-risk students in the years to come, Grand Area Mentoring may need to increase capacity by expanding its budget.

**Mentor vs. Parent vs. Teacher Perception**

Mentors, parents, and teachers have time to closely observe students, but they may tune in to different behaviors in their respective settings. Side by side, these results suggest a strong correlation between mentoring and enhanced psychosocial outcomes for at-risk youth in four key domains: happiness, communication, confidence, & respect of others.

**MENTEE INTERVIEW QUESTION: IS IT IMPORTANT, SORT OF IMPORTANT, OR NOT IMPORTANT TO HAVE A MENTOR IN YOUR LIFE? WHY?**

“When my mom is working and I’m done with school, I really need someone to keep an eye on me because it might be for a long time I am alone.” (second-grade student who struggles with emotional issues and ADHD)

“It’s important because it gets my head off my dad.” (fourth-grade student whose father died in a work-related accident recently)

“I have a lot of feelings inside I don’t like to express to people. With my mentor I can get it all out and don’t have to worry.” (sixth-grade student with very stressful home life)
Administrative Performance

Grand Area Mentoring surveyed teachers, administrators, parents, and mentors about staff performance to provide guidance for program improvement and staff professional development. A mean response of 8 is the goal for each question. Seven of eight scores rose this year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM SURVEYS (2014/2015)</th>
<th>AVERAGE SCORE on a scale of one to ten (ten being best)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication with parents:</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to parent questions or concerns:</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with volunteers:</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to mentor calls and concerns:</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and administration agree that staff are easy to reach and knowledgeable:</td>
<td>9.9 (100% agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and administration agree they are supportive of mentoring:</td>
<td>9.6 (100% agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and administrators agree that mentors are well trained and effective:</td>
<td>9.5 (100% agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and administrators understand what mentoring is and how it works in Grand County:</td>
<td>9.8 (100% agree)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“On mentoring days when my mom says, ‘It’s time to get up!’ I get up really fast. Sometimes on other days I just say, ‘I’m too tired.’”

(second-grade student who struggles with social isolation and obesity)

Successes

Number of Students Served – Grand Area Mentoring served a record 80 students during the 2014/2015 school year. This number represents about 6% of the school district’s student body, and it includes many students who disproportionally affect classroom management and mean academic performance. This number of mentees stretched the program to the full limits of its capacity.

Collaboration with Beacon Afterschool Program – This project provided mentoring and enrichment/tutoring for targeted students. Grand Area Mentoring and Beacon Afterschool Program provided wraparound service to 26 of HMK’s most at-risk students. These students’ behavior, attendance, and grades rose above and beyond their mentored peers.

Opportunities

Fundraising – Current funding levels are inadequate to support school-based mentoring numbers reached in 2014/2015. In the coming year, Grand Area Mentoring must expand its funding base if it is to maintain excellent programming without turning away students and volunteers. A grant writer and former governmental agency director has agreed to assist in this endeavor, and new opportunities – for contributions and grants – will be explored starting in the fall.