



INSPIRE

School-Based Mentoring Program

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Introducing INSPIRE

- Flinders University, Community Engagement Strategy
- School-based mentoring
- Career and Employer Liaison Centre
 - Co-ordinator – Catherine Koerner
- Funded via FaCSIA 2004-2009



INSPIRE Mentors

- Average 50 new mentors / year
- Range of backgrounds:
 - Discipline / area of study
 - Age and gender
 - Ethnicity
- In 2006, mentoring was embedded within Education Degree



Evaluating INSPIRE

- Action learning process
 - Internal
 - Ad-hoc
 - Focus on problem-solving
- FaCSIA data collection
 - Systematic (annual, set questions)
 - Focus on outcomes for mentee



The Research

- Focus on experience of mentors
 - Identify the opportunities and challenges for university students in developing and sustaining a mentoring relationship
 - Examine ways of improving the INSPIRE community engagement strategy to support the needs of mentors



The Participants

- 2007 mentor intake – 49 students
 - 23 were selected to be interviewed
 - Early in mentoring period
 - At the end of each semester
 - Upon exiting the mentoring program
 - 26 were to participate in providing email feedback (part of their normal participation in INSPIRE)
 - Fortnightly email feedback
 - Exit email



What We Asked - Emails

- Regular fortnightly emails:
 - Briefly describe your mentoring activities since the last email
 - What went well?
 - What challenged you?
 - How can these challenges be overcome / addressed?



What We Asked - Interviews

- End of each semester:
 - What did you enjoy about being a mentor last semester?
 - What did you dislike about being a mentor last semester?
 - What influenced your decision to continue with INSPIRE this semester?
 - What would you like to achieve this semester? Probe re
 - Skill development
 - Achievements for mentee
 - Personal development
 - Professional development
 - What challenges do you think you will face this semester?
 - How can these challenges be overcome / addressed? Probe re
 - Further training
 - Resources
 - Support



To Date

- **Interviewees** (n=23):
 - 9 are continuing on
 - 9 graduated and left program
 - 2 exited for personal reasons
 - 2 did not start (no available placement)
 - 1 exited because placement broke down
- **Email Group** (n=26):
 - 14 lodged emails
 - 8 made no contact at all (despite requests)
 - 4 notified us they had ceased mentoring



The Data

- Transcribed interviews
- Emails

- Analysed using NVIVO
 - Collated
 - Coded

What attracts Flinders students to the Inspire Mentor Program?

Career direction

- "...cause I wanna be a counsellor when I finish Uni so it's sort of just given me some perspective of what area that I wanna work."
(Female Behavioural Science/Psychology student)
- "It gives me a bit of confidence in myself, also to reassure me that I can do what I want to do, that I'm not wasting my time at uni."
(Female Behavioural Science/Psychology student)
- "I would gain experience to see if it was what I wanted to do or to see if you know I was any good at it." (Female Behavioural Science student)

What attracts Flinders students to the Inspire Mentor Program?

Altruism

- "I think I've kind of been wanting to volunteer for something for quite a while. I'm not really sure for what reason, to give something back I guess." (Male Education/Arts student)
- "I've always wanted to help out with people and I've never known how to actually go about doing it and then I got the email, and I was like this will be the perfect chance to actually do something aside Uni."
(Female Behavioural Science student)
- "It's inspired me to get involved in other volunteer programs, just I really enjoy the satisfaction I get out volunteering, and yeah I'd like to find wherever I go, something that I can do." (Female Education student)

What attracts Flinders students to the Inspire Mentor Program?

Education students

- "Yeah, the idea of getting a bit of classroom experience and school experience really appealed to me because I'm quite nervous about getting out there and actually doing the teaching thing when I've finished." (Male third year Education/Arts student)
- "I wanted to get the classroom experience and because it's harder for education graduates to get jobs I wanted to put something on my resume that would help me out" (Female first year Education/Arts student)
- "There's also the fact that I want to teach middle school, so working with a Grade 8 class this is gonna throw me in first year to see if you know whether I am actually gonna handle being a teacher." (Female first year Education/Arts student)
- "It's been a long time since I've left school so it's really put me back in touch with young people." (Female final year Education/Arts student)

What's needed at the site for a positive mentoring experience?

Importance of the contact person

- Available
- Encouraging
- Provides information

"The counsellor at the school was my contact person there and she was really helpful and I saw her for the first four weeks before and after the sessions sort of like, to ask her "What am I doing right and wrong?... Knowing that she was there for me if, like, I needed her. She was really helpful." (Female Behavioural Science /Psychology student)

What's needed at the site for a positive mentoring experience?

○ Background Information

- "I didn't feel like I was given a lot of information as to why this one child that I've been asked to mentor really needed me mentoring, because the things that they were telling me that were her problems, I thought was fairly typical of most six year olds"

Soon after making this comment, the counsellor:

"spoke to me about my mentee's problems more extensively...and sort of gave me more information about some of the background problems which quite surprised me, I mean I had the idea that I felt that I was just dealing with what I thought was a bit of a spoilt little girl who was a bit bossy." (Female Education/Arts student)

- "I didn't realise because the teacher didn't say anything but she had like trouble writing and stuff and she didn't say anything either...and this teacher actually said she does have trouble so I thought okay and then you can work with that." (Female Forensic Science student)

What's needed at the site for a positive mentoring experience?

Outline expectations/give a defined role or task

- "It just was kind of a little bit hard to do what they wanted when not knowing. And I asked them a couple of times to clarify it but they just said that they wanted him to learn how to stay on task...And that was kind of hard to do because it's hard to sit there with a five year old and say, do your work." (Female first year Education student)
- "But it can be awkward sometimes. You kind of feel like you're wandering around doing nothing...I think it's the biggest thing I probably struggle with." (Female Bachelor of Arts student)
- "My supervising teacher doesn't really know what to do with me either, so it was kind of a bit hard so I have to sort of find my own place... felt like I was being thrown in the deep end." (Female first year Education/Arts student)
- "It's nice to know that I'm actually been given something to do with her rather than just hang around the yard watching that she behaves herself, which is a bit tedious really. The novelty of that wears off pretty quickly." (Female third year Education/Arts Student)

What's needed at the site for a positive mentoring experience?

Feeling Useful

- "I would have to say that it is all ok, but nothing seems to be wonderful, in that I don't feel particularly useful." (Female)
- "I'm not really doing anything except to be there, to fill the numbers you know, females, males, ratio things." (Female social work student)
- "I feel embarrassed because I've, I can feel, I feel very upset sometimes when I feel that unproductive and that sort of like it's not helping." (Male Behavioural Science student)

What's needed at the site for a positive mentoring experience?

Regular feedback/encouragement/appreciation

- "At the end of the lesson the teacher told me that my presence really did help which helped erase the feelings of uselessness that sometimes plague me." (Female Education student)
- "The teachers are always very appreciative, you know, "Thanks for coming, that's great, whatever you can do..." (Female final year Behavioural Science student)
- "She said that she was really happy with how it went and she herself sees an improvement in him in the school yard ... and she was really, really happy with how it went so it was good to feel that they were happy with how I went." (Female Behavioural Science/Psychology student)
- "It was good to be told that you might not think that you're making any difference, but just being there for them does make a difference, and it's good to remind yourself of that when you go there every week, and you're thinking to yourself, this was a bit of a doddle, I didn't do anything much, am I making any difference here?" (Female Education/Arts student)

What's needed at the site for a positive mentoring experience?

Relationships

- "The relationship with the teacher, her saying you're appreciated, thanks and I would say if I'm five minutes late I'm so sorry, and she would be oh no, no, no, no, we're glad you can come five minutes anyway. So just her" (Female Behavioural Science student)
- "We get on really well, like she's a lovely, lovely lady and it's interesting watching her teaching style for me being a future teacher, I've learnt a lot from her... she makes you feel as though she actually values my sort of input and my opinion and it's good, she tells me a bit about what life will be like when I'm actually a teacher." (Female Education/Arts student)
- "The people are really good and helpful and they, they'll, you feel like you're valued, so whether you're actually doing something particular that day or not you're always feel like you're actually valued so I think I've got in with a good lot." (Female Social Work student)
- "You can get hell from the students and get by cause you get on well with the staff, or you can get on well with the kids but not like it cause no one on staff likes you. So you gotta have both." (Female Social Work student)

What's needed at the site for a positive mentoring experience?

Ending the mentoring relationship

- "Well it was my decision to stop because I think when I was there I felt that, I am more like a liability rather than a help." (Male Science student)
- "Then on my last session, I'd asked the counsellor previously, like a couple of weeks before, let the teachers and students know that this would be my last session, and when I got to the school, no-one knew that, like the teachers didn't know, so when I told her she just was like okay, that's fine, see you later".
This mentor had to advise the reception level student who she was mentoring that the session that day would be their last together.
- "And it was really hard and just almost heartbreaking to try and tell him that I'm not back again. It was really horrible actually, because he was really upset" (Female final year Education student)



To conclude

- The experience of mentoring will influence ongoing mentoring commitment
- There is a relationship between motivation, 'reward' and program outcomes
- The reward needs to come from the site at which mentoring takes place
- This may require new strategies to be developed at the program level