Summary

This review examines research that addresses the potential influence of mentoring for youth on their educational attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (EABBs). In general, from experimental and meta-analytic studies, the effects of mentoring on educational attitudes and beliefs were small and inconsistent across studies and forms of mentoring (e.g., naturally occurring vs. program sponsored). Yet, there is evidence that mentoring has the potential to influence a range of EABBs, including self-esteem, school connectedness, school engagement, and attitudes toward school. The cumulative literature provides some insight into how programs and institutions that offer mentoring might better support mentoring relationships to expand and improve EABB outcomes. These factors include cultural, environmental, social experiences of youth, the strategic selection of program practices that are aligned with EABBs (e.g., setting goals with youth, teaching youth how to cope with stress), and the use of more carefully designed experiments that focus on measuring and improving EABBs. Finally, the review suggests that attention to implementing these enhancements is limited; but that when programs do adopt and implement these programmatic enhancements, mentoring can have a greater positive effect on EABBs.

In addition to the formal review of research on mentoring and EABBs, Implications for Practice based on this research are also included. These practice recommendations focus on actions that mentors or program staff could take to support development of positive EABBs, including the identification of root causes of negative EABBs, supporting growth mindsets and persistence skills, providing emotional support and encouragement, facilitating referrals to tutoring or other direct academic supports, working collaboratively with parents around academic challenges, and both direct advocacy on behalf of the child within schools and teaching youth to advocate for themselves to address points of disconnection. Links to relevant resources and training are provided when relevant.
Introduction

Youth mentoring programs are predicated on the notion that a supportive, trusting non-familial adult (i.e., a mentor) can help facilitate the youth’s social, academic, and behavioral development in positive ways. Educational attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (EABBs) refer to the attitudes, beliefs youth have about their experiences in school (e.g., academic self-efficacy, connectedness to peers and teachers) as well as the behaviors (e.g., classroom participation, prosocial helping) they exhibit during the school day. Because EABBs are thought to be causal and maintaining factors that influence academic (e.g., grade point averages, test scores) and behavioral (e.g., delinquency, behavioral referrals) outcomes, they are often targeted by mentoring programs as a means to influencing supporting youths’ performance in school.

This review of mentoring research was conducted to examine four questions:

1. What are the effects of mentoring on educational attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (EABB) among youth?
2. What factors condition or shape the effects of mentoring on EABB?
3. What intervening processes are most important for linking mentoring to beneficial effects on EABB?
4. To what extent have efforts to provide mentoring to youth with EABB as a priority outcome reached and engaged the intended youth, been implemented with high quality, and been adopted and sustained by host organizations and settings?

For this review, we limited EABBs to the positive constructs: School belonging, school connectedness, academic self-efficacy, growth mindset, grit, self-discipline, homework, school value, study skills, self-regulated learning, goal-setting, non-cognitive skills, academic mindset, mastery beliefs, and academic motivation. In this review, we focus on positive EABBs given their long-term association to positive school outcomes like grades, school-related behavior, and economic success.
1. WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF MENTORING ON EDUCATIONAL ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, AND BEHAVIORS (EABB) AMONG YOUTH?

BACKGROUND
History, mentoring programs targeting EABBs have been viewed as a service to prevent and address negative school-related outcomes (e.g., dropout, suspension, and school failure). The earliest forms of formal mentoring programs, for example, paired non-familial adults with youth identified by schools or communities as having a problem behavior that a mentor could address. In particular, prevention-focused mentoring programs were thought to be one way to address students’ deficits in schools by interrupting harmful causal influences and increasing their connection with other non-familial adult (or peer) mentors who could provide emotional support and teach youth skills necessary for success in school.

In addition to being a means for preventing and addressing negative school-related outcomes, EABBs have also been viewed as a way to promote positive youth development in school. This shift from mentoring programs as preventing unwanted EABBs to promoting EABBs coincides with similar shifts in the fields of education, human development, and psychology. Collectively, these fields have begun to recognize the importance of not only alleviating problems but also promoting positive youth development because positive outcomes are associated with long-term social, academic, and economic success.

This is also consistent with a common motto of proponents of positive youth development: “Problem free is not fully prepared”. Students who report high levels of school engagement, feel connected with peers and teachers, and believe they can be successful in school are more likely to stay in school, be suspended less frequently, and exhibit fewer behavioral challenges. EABBs are associated with a host of positive developmental outcomes such as better grades, greater engagement in school, and increased resiliency.

Mentors are often thought to be an important source of support for the development of EABBs through role modeling, guidance, support, and encouragement. Mentors’ “lived experiences” as former (or current) students themselves and their ability to engage with students flexibly in relatively more personalized one-to-one or small group settings may offer them avenues for insight and influence not always available to others such as classroom teachers. Such advantages may be especially well-suited to strengthening what Farrington and colleagues (2012) refer to as “non-cognitive factors” in academic achievement. These include “academic mindsets”, defined as “the psycho-social attitudes or beliefs one has about oneself in relation to academic work” (e.g., growth mindset, sense of school belonging or connectedness, academic motivation, academic self-efficacy beliefs, and perceptions of the value of school), “academic perseverance” (e.g., grit, self-discipline), “learning strategies” (e.g., study skills and self-regulated learning), and “academic behaviors” (e.g., class participation and doing homework).
Consistent with this possibility, various frameworks have pointed to interpersonal relationships that incorporate features of mentoring as a key mechanism for promoting non-cognitive factors, such as growth mindset (i.e., a belief that one’s ability to learn is malleable, rather than inherent or fixed). Farrington et al., also note that the development of these non-cognitive factors must be considered in the school, classroom, and socio-cultural context, writing that, “any given school and classroom context will reflect a wide variety of variables affecting student motivation and opportunity to learn” (p. 12)

At times, mentoring has emphasized changing EABBs by targeting the child while neglecting to emphasize systemic issues that also contribute to the development of EABBs. Albright et al (2017) argues that “[t]here is likely a risk of mentors from privileged backgrounds to indirectly or directly communicating to youth that they should simply work harder or follow the same path that the mentor followed to obtain their social status. This may increase the likelihood that mentors will blame youth—and consequently, youth will blame themselves—for having difficulty overcome the barriers posed by an unjust system.” (p. 9) If mentors approach mentoring from the perspective that the primary barrier to the mentee is the lack of a role model, or some specific set of skills, they might be perpetuating these unjust systems.

Collectively, this work points to EABBs as an important set of constructs that have considerable theoretical potential to be strengthened through mentoring relationships and programs; but the potential for such contributions to be constrained by broader context of educational and other related systems within which they are necessarily embedded. It is worth noting, however, that some research on peer-led mentoring interventions in schools suggests that those types of programs have the potential to disrupt negative school peer ecologies and improve school climate and culture in ways that support the growth of EABBs.

All of the preceding considerations could pertain not only to mentoring relationships established through formal programs designed for this purpose, but also those that emerge more organically in the context of the youth’s time spent at school and in other settings. Theoretically, when such “natural” mentoring relationships involve teachers or other adults at school, they may provide opportunities for enhancement of EABB that stem from the mentor’s knowledge of the school environment (e.g., expectations for students, or cultural context), extensive time spent together in learning contexts (e.g., classroom instruction).

**RESEARCH**

Mentoring programs have used a variety of methods to support mentees’ development of EABBs. One approach for promoting EABB development is to use mentors as a mechanism for delivering evidence-based practices. Researchers, for example, have embedded training on evidence-based cognitive coping strategies (e.g. muscle relaxation; meditation) into youth mentoring programs to support youths’ ability to cope with stressors in- and after-school, leading to small to moderate changes on adolescent life satisfaction, self-esteem, and school engagement. Other studies have focused on brief goal-focused forms of mentoring which has been found to produce small to moderate positive effects on grades, misconduct, and life satisfaction in some studies.
McQuillin and Lyons (2016)\textsuperscript{18} incorporated practices such as having mentors and youth jointly set goals, teaching youth how to cope with stress, and helping youth organize and manage homework. In addition, other programs have used evidence-based study strategies to improve self-efficacy for school and grades, or to provide positive reinforcement for prosocial behavior in specific school contexts (e.g. the lunch table).\textsuperscript{19,20} Thus, it seems that effects of mentoring programs on EABBs improve when mentoring programs teach youth specific skills (e.g., goal setting, organizational strategies, how to cope with stress) and use mentors to help youth practice these skills over the duration of the mentoring relationship.(for an expanded discussion see McQuillin et al., 2020). Cumulatively, these small to moderate positive effects of mentoring are comparable to other social-emotional interventions,\textsuperscript{21} but smaller than more focused tutoring interventions that are more focused on academic skill development as opposed to EABBs.\textsuperscript{22,23}

Despite the small to moderate positive effects observed in some studies (described above), other studies produced no effects across a range of EABBs.\textsuperscript{24} Several large scale randomized controlled trials of mentoring have found no or small positive effects on youth EABBs.\textsuperscript{16,25,26} For example, Herrera et al. (2007)\textsuperscript{25} randomly assigned nearly 1,200 students in grades 4 through 9 to a Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring program or control and, at the end of the school year, found small, statistically improvement (i.e., more favorable scores for youth assigned to receive mentoring) on self-perceptions of academic ability as well as teacher ratings of quality of class work and number of assignments completed, but no improvement in classroom effort. After 15 months (through fall of the next school year), statistically significant improvements were not found on any of these outcomes, indicating that improvements apparent at the end of the school year were not sustained into the following school year, when only about half of the youth in the treatment group were still paired with a mentor through the program. In general, the effect size of these evidence-based programs on EABB development is positive and ranges from small to moderately positive effects.

Alternative mentoring models, including group mentoring and cross-age peer mentoring, have sought to capitalize on the potential for positive peer influence on EABBs. For example, Project Arrive, a school-based group mentoring program designed to facilitate adaptation to high school for 9\textsuperscript{th} graders identified as being at high risk for dropout, found significant improvements in participants’ sense of school belonging, perceptions of teacher (and peer) support, and perceptions of meaningful involvement in school, relative to non-mentored comparisons using a quasi-experimental design.\textsuperscript{27} Better Futures, a group mentoring program for youth transitioning out of the foster care system, was found to produce higher levels of preparation for post-secondary education among program participants randomly assigned to the program as compared to those who did not receive the treatment.\textsuperscript{28} Take Charge, a similar program that targeted youth ages 14-18 who were involved in the foster care system and received special education services, found small but significant differences related to school engagement favoring program participants who were randomly assigned to receive a mentor as compared to those who did not receive this program.\textsuperscript{29}

It is also worth noting that studies of programs in which older youth serve as mentors to younger students have also demonstrated benefits to youth mentors that may contribute to their own EABBs. In a review of peer mentoring programs, authors found associations between peer mentoring and perceived gains in school connectedness and social support at school, as well as interest in taking on leadership roles within school.\textsuperscript{30}
Collectively this work shows promise for alternative models of mentoring including group and cross-age peer mentoring.

Finally, other studies have examined and found significant associations between natural mentoring relationships and EABBs. In a longitudinal study of several hundred high school students, those reporting a school-based natural mentoring relationship (i.e., with a teacher or other adult at school) reported significantly increased feelings of attachment to school at a 1-year follow-up, controlling for their initial feelings of attachment. Similarly, in a longitudinal study of African-American adolescents, it was found that having a natural mentor while in high school was associated with stronger beliefs in the importance of school for later success in 12th grade; another study from the same project found that youth reporting at least one natural mentor was associated with stronger attitudes of school importance. Finally, in a cross-sectional study, Latino/a high school students who reported a natural mentor correlated positively with expectancies for future academic success than those without a mentor. These studies indicate that institutions beyond formal mentoring programs may benefit from encouraging natural mentoring relationships.

When viewed collectively, the field of mentoring is somewhat limited in the inferences researchers may make about how youth mentoring affects EABBs. These limitations are caused by inconsistent results across studies, a lack of understanding in the differences between programs tested, and inadequate documentation of what mentors do when they are with mentees. Perhaps the best available information is from meta-analyses. A meta-analysis of school-based mentoring (SBM) for adolescents concluded that, on average, the effects of SBM on adolescent attitudes and behaviors about school were near zero. In addition, a more recent meta-analysis found that estimated effects of youth mentoring programs on school engagement was small. Importantly, there was substantial variability within these effects, clouding conclusions around the general effectiveness of mentoring on EABBs.

**CONCLUSIONS**

1. Mentoring programs of varying types and formats have a demonstrated potential to strengthen EABB with the size of the effects on outcomes appearing, on average, to be small in magnitude; specific types of EABBs showing evidence of responsiveness to mentoring include school connectedness, school engagement, and attitudes toward school.

2. Naturally-occurring mentoring relationships, as studied to date, appear to be associated with stronger EABBs relating to attachment to and valuing of school, including prospective improvements in these EABBs in accordance with a possible causal contribution of mentoring to these outcomes.

3. There is some tentative evidence that more targeted, evidence-based approaches to influencing EABBs will produce stronger results.
2. WHAT FACTORS CONDITION OR SHAPE THE EFFECTS OF MENTORING ON EABBS?

BACKGROUND
To better understand positive changes on EABBS, studies have also examined conditions that promote (or inhibit) the development of EABBS. Much of this work is based on current understanding of ecological factors that influence child development. Because mentoring programs are historically based on the notion that mentors support youth development by providing a relationship with another non-familial adult that can support their growth, mentoring programs frequently conceptualize the support they offer through ecological models of human development. Ecological models describe the processes and systems in the child’s life that influence their development. Related to the development of EABBS, salient factors that influence the development of EABBS are those in a youth’s environment, such as their family support for school, student-teacher relationships, and well as their relationships with peers in school.

Research indicates that mentoring relationships do not occur in a vacuum, and are influenced by, and influence, other relationships and contexts. For this reason, social relations (e.g., parent-child, mentor-mentee, teacher-student) are thought to be important sources for helping children to develop EABBS. Mentoring programs might benefit from considering how mentoring relationships influence these contexts, how these contexts might affect mentoring outcomes, and how, as programs, they might promote more positive contexts and relationships. For example, Chan et al. (2013) found that stronger relationship quality between mentor and mentee predicted stronger relationships between children and parents, children and teachers, and between parents and teachers. In addition, researchers have also identified how social and cultural factors influence a child’s experiences in school and, therefore, influence the development of EABBS. Garcia-Coll et al (1996) Integrative Model of Child Development, for example, describes how social position variables (i.e., a person’s race, social class, ethnicity, and gender) interact with sociopolitical variables (e.g., racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression) in ways that lead to residential, economic, social, and psychological segregation. The combined effect of the sociopolitical context and subsequent segregation means that, for some youth, some environments are more conducive to positive development (called promoting environments) whereas other environments may not be conducive to positive development (called inhibiting environments). The consequence of this model is that, even among youth who go to the same school or grow up in the same community, may have different experiences based on their social-position and the sociopolitical climate within the community.

Empirical studies find that youth experiences of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression negatively affect the development of EABBS and that youth-adult relationships can either mitigate or magnify these effects. Researchers, for example, have found that students’ attitudes about how racially fair their school is (i.e., students’ perceptions of race-based discrimination perpetuated by teachers and administrators) influence school engagement, suspensions, and disciplinary referrals, indicating that schools that feel more racially fair also produce stronger EABBS. Presumably, the same may be true for mentoring programs. In addition, researchers have also found that youth-adult relationships may attenuate the negative effects of race-based discrimination.
has on youth engagement in school. For example, researchers have found that youth who have strong relationships with adults that promote positive attitudes about racial identity while also supporting resilience tend to also report higher levels of EABBs (e.g., school engagement, school connectedness). In contrast, other researchers have found that experiences with discrimination and racism may reduce mentoring relationship quality. A practical implication of this work is that mentoring programs might achieve stronger effects when they simultaneously provide culturally responsive mentoring and work to improve racial fairness, reduce racist experiences, and promote positive racial identities within the institutions or communities in which they provide services. In summary, mentoring programs that exclusively focus on influencing the individual may miss opportunities to enhance the contexts in which the youth live, thereby reducing the effectiveness of mentoring interactions.

Mentoring programs focused on EABB development may benefit from considering how programming interacts with youths’ awareness of, and attention to, contextual factors that influence EABB development. Ellis et al. (2018) described how mentoring may be able to support Black male development, writing that

Mentoring also provides an opportunity and place for Black males to discuss the negative and positive narratives around being a Black male in America. Depending on the degree of trust developed in a mentoring relationship, Black males can learn more about how to recognize and manage negative academic racial stereotypes about Black males through the lived experiences and strategies implemented by their mentors. The wisdom shared and learned between mentor and mentee can serve as a protective factor in preventing the internalization of negative academic racial stereotypes for Black male adolescents. (p. 917)

Others have suggested that a stronger emphasis on the integration of evidence-based practices might influence the effectiveness of mentoring on EABB outcomes. For example, intentional efforts to match the context (e.g. school vs. faith-based) of the mentoring program, the structure (e.g. 1-on-1; e-mentoring, etc.) of the relationship, and the goals of the program (e.g. EABB) with evidence-based practices might improve the effectiveness of specific practices on program outcomes. Mentoring practices or programs focused on EABB development alignment of context, structure, and goals means that programs address the mechanisms that are proximal to EABBs. Using Garcia-Coll’s model as a guide, this means that mentoring activities address both individual (e.g., attitudes toward school) and systemic factors (e.g., classroom and school climate, racism, sexism) that influence EABB development.

Related research in both the areas of mentoring and after-school programs suggests that offering specific guidance or instruction in relevant skills could be important for strengthening EABBs. Durlak et al (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of after-school programs seeking to enhance the personal and social skills of school-age youth, for example, found that the presence of four recommended practices for skills training (SAFE: sequenced, active, focused, and explicit) was associated with enhanced program effects on outcomes.
In general, these recommendations translate to having structured, step-by-step instructions to actively involving youth on improving specific outcomes. Such structure may be especially important in alternative mentoring approaches, such as group and cross-age peer mentoring programs that tend to hold meetings at a regularly scheduled time and place, given logistical and developmental concerns (e.g., coordinating multiple schedules, supporting teen mentors with emerging skills). The use of a curriculum to guide mentoring sessions can support skill development and relationship building, as suggested by qualitative research on the Campus Connections program; however, strict reliance on a curriculum can be a barrier to relational development if it prevents discussion of meaningful topics to mentees. In general, research suggests that the value of a balance between structured curriculum-focused activities and the development of a positive, authentic relationship that affords some flexibility in programming.

**RESEARCH**

In mentoring research focused on promoting EABB, knowledge of models of child development has been used to explain the conditions under which mentors may positively influence EABBs. Historical studies of youth mentoring regarded the mentor as influencing EABBs by providing an additional non-familial adult to act as an older friend who can support youth development by helping them cope with stressful life events, teach them new skills, or help them think about their future goals.

Consistent with Garcia-Coll’s previously described Integrative Model of Child Development, other studies of mentoring and EABB suggest that the sociopolitical context is an important condition that influences the development of EABBs. Ellis et al. (2018), for example, found evidence that mentors can help shape academic self-efficacy by helping youth navigate experiences related to racial stereotypes. The development of EABBs, from this perspective, suggests that mentors not only have the capacity to influence development through the one-on-one relationship that they develop with youth; but that sociopolitical factors (e.g., racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression) create scenarios in which youth’s school environment does not support their positive development (i.e., creates an inhibiting environment). Thus, the sociopolitical climate within youths’ school and community context appears to be a critical contextual factor in how mentors are (un)able to shape the development of EABBs of their mentees. This suggests that attempts to simply focus on integrating individual practices designed to increase (or prevent the decline of) EABBs may be misaligned with the causal and maintaining factors of EABBs in the children’s environment. Rather, programs may benefit from incorporating programming directly relevant to the youth’s social context (including race and identity) and community.

By centering issues of race and identity into mentoring services, programs give agency to youth to address systemic issues present in their school or community context that influence EABB development. Smith and Hope (2020) used participatory action research (i.e., research that is led by the youth participating in mentoring programming) to increase mentee’s agency in facilitating systemic change. The authors explain that:

>Youth participatory action research allows Black boys the radical space to reimagine and redefine their relationship with their school communities; it offers school communities yet another chance to reimagine and strengthen their commitment to Black boys. (p. 563)
EABB development is shaped by youth experiences in school, at home, and in their community. As described by Garcia-Coll (1996) and others, the development of a youth’s experiences and attitudes about school are shaped by an interaction between the individual and their environment. It is not logically possible to separate the experiences of the individual child from the environment in which they develop. Understanding this developmental context is essential for understanding the conditions by which mentoring programs may facilitate the development of EABBs; yet research on effective practices in this area is very limited.

Characteristics of the mentors and mentees can also play an important role. For example, whereas meta-analytic studies (e.g., DuBois et al., 2011) have found few overall differences in the effectiveness of 1:1 as compared to group or peer mentoring approaches, it may be that adult mentors play a more influential role in promoting EABBs than peer mentors. An evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters’ school-based mentoring programs found that children with teen (high school-age) mentors benefited less than those with adult mentors with regard to classroom effort, difficulty in class, and intentions to go to college. This is not to say that teen mentors cannot play an important role in fostering EABBs. For example, a secondary analysis of data from the High School Bigs peer mentoring program found that high school students who expressed more positive attitudes toward youth were particularly effective with more academically disconnected mentees.

Alternatively, there have been a few studies of peer-led behavioral interventions in schools that suggest peers might be more effective influencers of youth behavior than teachers, on non-academic behaviors (e.g., healthy eating).

Some research has also looked at the effects of integrating practices or activities into mentoring programs and relationships that reflect an intentional focus on promoting particular EABBs. Perhaps the most evident example of this integrated practice is focused on promoting growth mindsets in mentees. The theory underlying growth mindset posits that peoples’ perceptions of how stable (i.e. “fixed”) their intelligence is influences their effort and subsequent outcomes. This theory hypothesizes that students who believe that the brain functions can be strengthened through practice will typically exert more sustained effort towards difficult tasks, and may be less likely to feel defeated by failure.

At least three separate studies have investigated potential benefits of the incorporation of intentional activities to promote growth mindset in mentoring programs. In perhaps the most noteworthy of these investigations, college students mentors for a sample of largely minority and low-income students entering junior high school were randomly assigned either to encourage their mentees to view intelligence as malleable (incremental) or to attribute academic difficulties in the seventh grade to the novelty of the educational setting (attribution)—both as strategies for reducing effects of stereotype threat on test performance—or to provide general mentoring oriented toward substance use prevention. Illustratively, as described by the authors of this study in the incremental condition, mentees learned from their mentors “that intelligence is not a finite endowment, but rather an expandable capacity that increases with mental work. To reinforce the scientific validity of this perspective, the mentors taught students some facts about the brain and how it works.”
Students in this and each of the other conditions also created their own websites in collaboration with their mentors to convey the information they had learned. Results showed that females in both of the stereotype threat reduction conditions earned significantly higher math standardized test scores than their counterparts in the general mentoring condition; similarly, as a group, the students in the threat reduction conditions earned significantly higher reading standardized test scores than students in the general mentoring condition. Although corresponding changes in growth mindset or related EABB are plausible for students in the student stereotype threat reduction conditions given their goals and the activities involved, effects on these outcomes were not reported. Two other more recent studies examined effects of “add ons” to existing mentoring programs that incorporated mentor training and activity resources for promoting growth mindset. In one of these studies, which involved a mix of school- and other site-based mentoring programs, youth in the more intentional mentoring condition showed significantly greater improvement in their growth mindset for their intelligence compared to those in the standard mentoring condition; a corresponding effect was not evident, however, in the other investigation which focused on the Big Brothers Big Sisters community-based mentoring program. It is unclear why some studies found positive effects of these practices and others did not.

Yet, the positive findings on growth mindset are consistent with research on school-based mentoring, suggesting that a focus on goal-setting activities in which mentors provide constructive feedback to mentees in school-based programs may be key to achieving effects on academic outcomes. These findings have also been corroborated by recent work investigating the role of relationship quality and goal-focused activities, wherein researchers found that outcomes for youth are maximized when young people report strong relationships and frequent engagement in goal setting and feedback, whereas the effects are much smaller when one of these pieces are missing.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Interactive processes between the cultural, sociopolitical, and environmental context in which children live influence how young people experience, and benefit from, youth mentoring programs focused on EABB outcomes.

2. Research suggests that experiences of racism and discrimination can influence the relations between mentoring and subsequent EABB outcomes; thus this might be one environmental factor of interest for mentoring agencies and advocates.

3. Research also indicates that mentoring programs can increase effects on EABBS when practices encourage strong relationships and more goal-focused activities.
3. WHAT INTERVENING PROCESSES ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR LINKING MENTORING TO BENEFICIAL EFFECTS ON EABB?

BACKGROUND
Linking mentoring practices to EABB improvement requires that program activities target EABBs. Although many different models exist that describe this process, in general, this is a cyclic process by which programs select, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of activities. (1) First, selecting activities means that programs (or mentors) choose activities that have prior evidence for effecting positive changes on EABBs. Programs or mentors may find additional research-informed activities by accessing publicly available databases (e.g., crimesolutions.gov) that summarize available evidence of program practices. (2) Second, implementing activities requires that mentors and mentees use the activities in the way the program or activity was intended. That is, even if programs choose activities that are likely to influence EABBs, these activities are unlikely to impact EABBs if mentors and mentees do not use these activities or if they fundamentally change the activity. (3) Third, programs and mentors must monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of the selected activities to assess if the activity had the intended effect for youth participating in the program. If, through this process, programs find activities have null or minimal effects on the desired outcomes, this requires programs to adjust practices and start at step one (i.e., selection).

An additional factor that may be important in mentoring to beneficial effects on EABBs could be the nature and quality of the mentoring that the youth receives. Theory and related research that has focused on mentoring as a contributor to other types of outcomes points to a wide range of considerations that could be important in this regard. These include, but are not limited to, the duration of the mentoring relationship, whether EABBs are addressed in the activities that mentors and mentees engage in or discuss, and the degree to which the mentee sees the mentor as a trusted source of guidance.

RESEARCH
Although the iterative development process described above provides a framework for selecting and maximizing the impact of mentoring on EABBs, this process is not frequently observed in the research on mentoring and EABBs. Central to this process is clearly documenting the desired activities, measuring the implementation of activities, and evaluating the quality or influence of these activities. In our review of 23 studies of mentoring and EABBs, 65% (n = 15) described (usually in brief) the training and support programs offered to mentors. However, only 47% (n = 11) included any information on the extent to which programs monitored the implementation of the activities as intended, and only 17% (n = 4) reported some formal manual or curriculum designed to communicate the desired activities.

Although the existing literature is limited because the mentoring activities are frequently underspecified (i.e., researchers do not sufficiently define or describe what occurs in the mentoring relationship), programs focused on EABB development tend to specify program practices in terms of developmentally-focused mentoring or instrumentally-focused mentoring activities.
Developmental models of mentoring focus on relational aspects between the mentor and mentee and emphasize the need to develop a close, long-lasting bond between the youth and adult. These programs are based on developmental research suggesting that close youth-adult relationships are necessary for positive youth development. Others have suggested that the mentoring relationship is more accurately conceptualized as a vehicle for delivering evidence-based practices known to produce positive outcomes, wherein mentors incorporate more structured goal-directed activities as opposed to exclusive reliance on relationship development. In practice, the categories of developmental versus instrumental mentoring are a false dichotomy, and most mentoring relationships and programs are rarely exclusively developmental or instrumental, though they may emphasize goal-setting versus long-term relationships differently. It is also likely that some more developmental programs might desire critical periods of more instrumental mentoring activities (e.g., if a youth is failing at school), and that some instrumental programs might relax goal-setting and curricular expectations if they hurt relationship development.

Researchers have found that the relationship quality that mentees report is more strongly associated with some EABBs (e.g., delinquency and misbehavior) and less strongly associated with other EABBs (e.g., standardized test scores). This might indicate that for some outcomes, the relationship between the mentor and mentee is more critically important than for other outcomes. In addition, researchers also find that mentoring impact may be maximized when mentors attend to both relational and instrumental aspects of the relationship. In particular, researchers have found that mentors and mentees who report a strong relationship while also setting goals and providing mentees feedback on their school performance tend to have stronger effects on some EABBs (e.g., delinquency) as compared to mentors who have weaker relationships nor engage in more instrumental activities with their mentees. Ellis et al. (2018) summarized the need to blend developmental and instrumental aspects of the mentoring relationship, writing that:

Mentoring that offers a consistent space for communication, is structured around goals, and is well-matched according to the needs of the mentee is suggested in an effort to promote school efficacy. (p. 918)

The inherent flexibility involved in selecting mentoring activities suggests that the manner and extent to which mentor programs and mentors continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the choices of activities they make could be an important intervening process shaping ultimate effects of programs on EABBs.
Another key feature of relational-based mentoring is the freedom to work on thinking and behaviors that the established relationships subjectively deemed to be worthy of attention in assisting the protégé. Inherent in that freedom is the responsibility to self-check or self-validate approaches by keeping account of what behaviors are being worked on, how it is being worked on, and what results are being generated. (p. 2298)

The extent to which youth experience mentoring as supporting their psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness may play a critical role in promoting EABBs. Although there were no overall effects of participating in Metodología TUTAL, a school-based group program, youth who experienced support from the mentoring group for those psychological needs reported improvements in academic self-efficacy and academic well-being. In group mentoring models, youths’ experiences both with adults and peers can contribute to growth in EABBs. In the evaluation of Project Arrive, participants’ reports of the quality of their relationship with mentors and of a positive group climate both contributed to improvements in their perceptions of teacher support, whereas only group climate contributed to improvements in meaningful involvement at school.

Limited research also has examined the potential implications of the nature and quality of the mentoring relationship. In a study of Latinx high school students, those reporting higher levels of instrumental quality for their natural mentoring relationships (as assessed by a measure asking youth the extent to which they experienced their relationships with their mentors as growth-oriented and involved with learning) reported more perceived benefits of education than those reporting more relational quality (as assessed by a measure of the extent to which youth reported feeling close, happy, and satisfied in their relationships with their mentors). Neither relationship measure, however, was associated with change in these outcomes at a one-year follow-up. Interestingly, though, greater reported instrumental relationship quality was linked to increased perceived benefits of education at the later time point via its intermediary association with greater intrinsic motivation for academic learning. The extent to which the mentoring approach is tailored to program goals may play an important role, as well. For example, an evaluation of CyberMentor, a program designed to increase girls’ exposure to and interest in science, technology, and mathematics (STEM) education, compared 1:1 and group versions, finding that implementation in a group format contributed to greater proportion of STEM communication, STEM-related networking, and in elective intentions.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The variability in mentoring program practices along with the implementation and evaluation of these practices means that it is difficult to generalize about the types of programmatic practices that are most likely to increase EABBs within specific programs and settings.

2. The impact of mentoring programs on EABBs may be most likely to be maximized if programs follow a development cycle that prioritizes the selection of research-informed practices, consistent monitoring of implementation of these practices, and evaluation of effectiveness of the selected activities.
4. TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE EFFORTS TO PROVIDE MENTORING TO YOUTH WITH EABB NEEDS REACHED AND ENGAGED THE INTENDED YOUTH, BEEN IMPLEMENTED WITH HIGH QUALITY, AND BEEN ADOPTED AND SUSTAINED BY HOST ORGANIZATIONS AND SETTINGS?

BACKGROUND
In a systematic review of over 500 intervention studies, Durlak and Dupree (2011) found that monitoring the implementation of practices increased the effect sizes of interventions by a factor of three. This finding is similar to a youth mentoring specific meta-analysis, also included in the aforementioned synthesis, which reported monitoring implementation was associated with greater program effectiveness. Thus it appears that strong implementation, in general, produces larger outcomes, regardless of specific outcome.

However, a presupposition to the notion of implementation monitoring is that some specific practice, or set of practices or procedures, is in fact available to be monitored. Thus, it could be that more specific practices lend themselves to easier monitoring and larger effect sizes. This hypothesis is consistent with more recent meta-analytic work which indicates that more targeted programs, presumably based on more focused intervention strategies that lend themselves to easier implementation monitoring, produced larger effects, on average, whereas programs that are more diffuse in their focus, or adjust practices on the basis of match specific needs and desires, might produce smaller effects. Yet some researchers have argued that these smaller effects might not be representative of the actual pragmatic helpfulness of the mentor, rather are a product of a mismatch between the experimental evaluation of mentoring and the wide and varying ways in which mentors help others. This is consistent with the original evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, wherein over 40 outcomes were considered.

Importantly, research on mentoring activities that promote EABBs indicates that effective activities prioritize both developmental (i.e., strong trusting relationship between mentor and mentee) and instrumental approaches (i.e., setting goals, providing feedback) and are more likely to be effective in creating the conditions for positive EABB development.
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership’s National Mentoring Survey found that roughly 45% of mentoring agencies engaged in implementation evaluation that emphasized assessing or improving fidelity to the program model. It was unclear from this survey what percent of mentoring agencies engage in routine implementation monitoring. However, roughly 50% of responding programs endorsed some type of formal curriculum or mentor manual that was used to guide activities and experiences. This data does not provide information on what specifically the focus of the curriculum was, or how instrumental the guidelines for mentoring were. Other studies on large national mentoring organizations shed some light on this uncertainty. In the most recent evaluation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based model, approximately 11% of mentors endorsed having some instrumental goal, whereas 79% endorsed broad relationship goals. From this literature, it appears that most mentors and mentoring programs do not target specific instrumental goals in their relationships, making it unlikely that they are also monitoring implementation.

Despite the limited number of studies that sufficiently defined program practices and monitor implementation, there was considerable variability in how programs were defined and how implementation was measured. For example, one experiment described implementation monitoring in brief: “[implementation monitoring] includes monthly meetings and informal communication by phone and email with a designated coordinator.” (p.412). Other studies provided more detail on the amount of implementation monitoring and the specific types of implementation products. For example, Elledge et al., (2010) write “Mentors completed a 4-item log sheet after each visit... Mentors met each week as a small group (4-6 mentors) with a graduate research assistant who collected weekly log sheets, monitored the consistency of visits, and addressed any difficulties that arose.” Exceedingly rare were studies that reported any measurement of the implementation beyond the number of visits. One evaluation, however, included semi-structured interviews with mentors following the program, and weekly logs between sessions that documented mentor activities and experiences. Both of these products were then coded and analyzed and variability within logs predicted mentor effectiveness in the program. Yet, such measurements are the exception, not the rule. McQuillin et al., (2018) conducted a review of how mentoring programs described and defined the mentoring treatment and reached a similar conclusion as we found in this review. The authors concluded that “researchers, on average, are not specifying aspects of the treatment constructs that are presumed to be the essential elements of mentoring relationships.” (p. 219) Because of this reality, it is unlikely that programs are currently monitoring, documenting, or encouraging the specific application of practices or procedures linked to EABBS.

**CONCLUSIONS**

1. Available research is insufficient for understanding the extent to which programs that target EABBS are successful at reaching strong implementation quality.

2. Research within and outside of youth mentoring highlights the promise of implementation monitoring as a useful strategy for improving the quality of research to understand how, and for whom, mentoring has the largest effect on EABB development.
Implications for Practice

*(Mike Garringer – MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership)*

Mentoring programs have long valued academic-related goals and outcomes for their services. A 2016 survey of youth mentoring programs nationally found that 36% of all programs reported “academic enrichment” as a core outcome, with another 18% and 15% emphasizing college access and educational attainment outcomes, respectively. Even if those outcomes are not perfectly analogous with the EABBs discussed in this review, chances are that the vast majority of those programs are trying to achieve those matriculation and academic performance outcomes through the strengthening of positive EABBs. These are not tutoring programs, after all—their success on academic issues depends on influencing how youth perceive their own relationship to school and learning as much as anything.

Thankfully, the review here provides plenty of hints as to things practitioners can do to support the development of positive EABBs in mentees. While the specific strategies deployed by any program will likely vary due to local circumstances and resources, the following principles may set the stage for success:

1. **MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE ROOT CAUSES OF NEGATIVE EABBs.**

   One of the clear takeaways from the review is that there are many, many reasons why EABBs may be suffering, both at a large scale (such as in a school that has a pervasive bullying culture) or for individual youth (a specific learning disability, for example). A major pitfall for programs might be thinking too narrowly about the root causes of negative EABBs. Some youth might be getting negative messages about education at home or be influenced by stereotype threat that makes them believe they are not inherent “learners.” Others may be the victim of negative peer relationships while at school, or be in a high-conflict relationship with a teacher. More systemically, as the review notes, youth may be noticing patterns of institutional racism or marginalization, or simply feel that their efforts in the classroom are not supported or valued by a burned-out teaching staff. As noted earlier, school climate issues or widespread misconduct can create an environment where many students feel uncomfortable and not ready to engage or learn. And lastly sometimes negative EABBs are just the byproduct of struggling to understand or master learning content. We’ve all had that one class that was harder than we thought it could be and perhaps made us doubt our abilities or intellect in new ways.

   The point is that the youth in a mentoring program may be experiencing radically different root causes of their EABBs and mentoring relationships are unlikely to offer the right kinds of support if the adults running the program are assuming what those causes are or lazily attributing a lack of youth engagement to simply not caring or misaligned values. Directly asking youth about why they may have negative EABBs can reveal both deeper systemic challenges and personal struggles that are likely at the heart of those feelings, as can data from school climate surveys, teacher report cards, and even disciplinary referrals.
So, practitioners should take the time to learn exactly why each youth in the program is struggling with how they think about school and their education and recognize that each of them may need a unique mentoring experience to get back on track. This can be done through surveys at different points in time or through interviews with youth as they enter the program—it could also be positioned as something that mentors are tasked with exploring with the student early in their relationships. One resource that might help with broader surveying, especially for school-based programs, is the great collection of school climate and related surveys made available through the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. The National Mentoring Resource Center’s Measurement Guidance Toolkit also offers many evaluation tools that could be used to gauge how young people are feeling about their academic abilities and institutions. It’s also worth noting that this toolkit offers measures that could help assess whether the work of mentors in critical areas such as teaching perseverance, building academic identity, and guiding youth on self-advocacy are making a difference.

Regardless of how a program gets at this information, the main idea is to not guess or assume why mentees might have negative views about education, but to find out what’s really happening to drive those feelings. This might be hyper-specific to each child in the program, but practitioners might also find that there are some very specific issues (or individuals) in the school that are causing many students to disconnect or give up, so don’t pass on the opportunity to tackle pervasive systemic causes too.

2. **RECRUIT (OR TRAIN UP) THE RIGHT MENTORS TO ADDRESS EABBs.**

Given that EABBs might be influenced by many factors, it may seem challenging to think about what kinds of mentors would be a good fit for supporting youth on these myriad challenges and concerns. But there are a few traits that, if we read a bit between the lines of the review, seem like they might be helpful to keep in mind:

* **Mentors who are empathetic** – Struggling in school, especially if that struggle has made one doubt their own abilities and future, can be a deeply depressing and alienating experience. In order for mentors to make a connection with a young person, to bring that relational focus the review suggests will contribute to improving EABBs, you will need to recruit individuals who have, and can express, empathy for what the mentee is going through. Mentors who struggled with EABBs themselves, mentors of similar backgrounds and identities who may be able to relate to certain causes, and those who have an appetite for examining structural or institutional inequities may be particularly well-positioned to do good work here, although other individuals can certainly be effective provided they have a decent understanding of concepts like fairness and equity and can relate to stories of struggle or alienation. The main idea is to find individuals who will really listen openly to the young person, express empathy, and avoid judgment or negative forms of problem-solving (e.g., unhelpful advice-giving, shaming, victim-blaming). The reviewers here do note that expressing care and forming a strong relationship is only part of the battle—instrumental support and evidence-based strategies are also needed here. But it seems likely that any mentor who wants to support a young person in reframing negative EABBs must be able to make those conversations safe, empowering, and caring above all else.
Programs may be able to assess prospective mentors’ ability to express empathy and have supportive conversations on these topics by presenting some scenarios during pre-match interviews or trainings to see how they respond and offer coaching as needed. Some mentors may present serious deficits in expressing empathy and may be screened out, lest they deepen a young person’s disconnection from education through negative conversations and reactions to academic struggles.

**Mentors who can check their own biases and examine their own frames of reference** – Closely related to empathy is the ability of mentors to remember that they often bring a different set of experiences and privileges to mentoring relationships than the youth they are working with. It can be easy, as the review notes, for mentors to project their own struggles onto a youth and recommend solutions that worked for them, but that might be a poor fit for the youth they are mentoring. Adults can often fail to see how their own backgrounds and experiences might shape how they respond to a young person expressing negative EABBs and it can be tempting to rely on abstract solutions such as “grit” or increased “effort” rather than really hearing how the young person is perceiving things and honoring that as a starting point. Mentors who lack cultural understanding, responsiveness, and humility may be especially bad at understanding youth perspectives or seeing institutional problems that need to be addressed to make the learning environment more of a “promoting” one. Trainings and reflection tools, such as the those offered in MENTOR’s Critical Mentoring Toolkit, can help mentors reflect on the biases they bring based on their own backgrounds and offer chances to practice meeting young people where they are at when they view something like educational barriers differently.

**Mentors who can advocate for institutional and system change** – While many of the root causes of EABBs may be tied to the youth’s home or peers, or even the youth’s own thinking and values, many negative EABBs may be directly tied to negative aspects of the learning environment itself: A racist teacher, under-resourced classrooms and equipment, a toxic school climate. An effective mentor may be helpful in helping youth reframe their own internal thinking and values, but the most impactful thing they might do is directly advocate for change within that learning environment. An adult mentor’s voice may carry weight that a student’s does not. All adults involved in a mentoring program can advocate for healthier, better-managed school spaces. They may not be able to directly fix all the issues they encounter, but they should stand up for their mentees and lend their voice to efforts advocating for change where needed. That should be as much of a mentor’s responsibility as anything. Programs should think about how they can empower mentors to advocate around these topics, either through direct communication with their mentees’ teachers and administrators, through dialogue and action with and alongside parents, or through collective action, such as a group of mentors petitioning the school board or other administrative leadership for needed reforms. Training mentors on how to help young advocate for themselves in the school setting can also help.
Many disabilities rights organizations, especially those working in the education space, have trainings and other materials that mentoring programs could adapt to teach both advocacy and self-advocacy to program participants. Not every mentor in every program will be able to directly advocate on behalf of their mentee within the school, but they can help empower the young person, their family, and the program to step in as needed, but only if they view advocacy as part of their role and recognize that many students become disengaged from school for perfectly valid reasons that need to be addressed.

3. CONSIDER MENTORING MODELS THAT EMPHASIZE YOUTH VOICE AND ENGAGEMENT.

We often think of adult mentors as the primary vehicle for using relationships to turn around negative EABBs. But the review here hints at a few models that may decentralize the role of adults in this work. Group mentoring programs, in which consistent groups of youth meet with adult mentors and engage in meaningful activities, may operate under some different pathways to change than the more typical one adult-one child model. These programs may derive their benefit from the collaboration, mutuality, and strengthening of social-emotional skills and peer relationships as much as from any "wise advice" that comes out of the mouths of mentors. Group models may allow youth to openly discuss their EABBs and root causes, share the solutions some may have found for coping or changing with those issues, and create an empathetic environment where youth may overcome feelings of isolation or desperation around their academic goals or performance. Adults are still there to offer advice or to support more concrete problem-solving, but it is the positive and safe interactions and conversations with fellow students around EABBs that might offer the most value. Discussing challenges can normalize struggles and provide potential solutions, if not outright alleviating challenges related to school climate or negative peer culture.

Peer mentoring models and relationships also have a track record of improving things like school connectedness, once again by offering youth something different and rewarding as part of the school day, bringing positive relationships into an environment that may be lacking in them, or simply by de-centering the voices of adults (who youth might rightly blame for creating the negative circumstances of their EABBs in the first place). So, for adults running or volunteering in mentoring programs, know that sometimes the best way to promote positive EABBs is by letting the young people lead and be in relationship with one another in confronting their negative attitudes and beliefs around education. If group or peer models are not possible to implement for a given program, adults can still honor youth voice in some creative ways. The Forum for Youth Investment offers a number of tools that can help adults center and honor youth voice in the design of program activities. And MENTOR’s guide on helping youth find a sense of purpose also offers many tools and tips for honoring youth voice (The Mentor's Guide to Youth Purpose).
4. **DRAW FROM EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS WHEN POSSIBLE.**

One of the stronger suggestions in the main review here is to weave concepts from other successful interventions that address EABBs into mentoring interactions. Obviously, mentors need to form good relationships with the youth they are mentoring, as those relationships not only set the stage for more intensive EABB work but likely have some direct benefit on EABBs through the provision of emotional support, encouragement, normalization of struggles, etc.

But mentoring scholars such as Jean Rhodes and review co-author Sam McQuillin have been increasingly suggesting that mentors need to do more than just build a positive relationship—they need to build in practices and strategies that have been proven to work in addressing the mentee’s needs. In this case, there are strategies and interventions that can promote positive EABBs. Growth mindset work, in particular, may be something that can help students see their academic struggles in a new light and help them unearth new approaches that can get them feeling more positive about learning. MENTOR’s *Growth Mindset for Mentors* toolkit is one such resource that can help mentors ensure that students aren’t giving up on themselves or viewing their struggles in the classroom as inevitable. Motivational interviewing is another approach that programs may borrow from the world of counselling and psychology that may be particularly helpful here in addressing ambivalence about learning or issues around motivation (see the work of organizations like MINT for more information on how to apply motivational interviewing to various contexts). If the root causes of negative EABBs are related to school culture or leadership, any number of anti-bullying curricula or programs addressing school climate and behavior might be sources of mentoring activities or critical conversations. As noted in the review, more specified and prescribed practices by mentors might be more effective and easier for program staff to train on and monitor for implementation fidelity.

It's also worth noting on this front that a program’s mentors don’t always need to be the deliverers of an evidence-based intervention. If mentees happen to be struggling because of learning disabilities or comprehension issues, the best thing a mentor might do is provide emotional support and encouragement while a highly-skilled tutor tackles the root learning challenges that led to those negative EABBs. Or that mentor might advocate on behalf of their mentee for more professional development for teachers or increases in special education staffing that might better get at the primary causes of disengagement from school and learning. The combination of tutoring and mentoring might be a fantastic pairing here, since one of the main causes of youth becoming disconnected and discouraged around their education is simply struggling with the learning content. Whether by partnering with other service providers or training up your mentors to deliver proven interventions, make sure that you are not relying solely on “caring adults” and friendly relationships to address root causes that might need more than that.
5. TRAIN MENTORS ON GOAL-SETTING STRATEGIES AND THE ART OF GIVING FEEDBACK.

One of the most important things a mentor can do is to give feedback in ways that the mentee genuinely hears and internalizes. This is certainly not easy when it comes to issues around EABBs, which may really frustrate adult mentors who understand the value of education and the need to persevere through institutional challenges more clearly than a still-developing young person. It can be understandable when confronted with declarations of apathy, self-doubt, or hopelessness to shower the mentee with advice, warnings, punishments, and all manner of prescribed solutions. But those strategies are likely to frustrate the young person and damage a positive relationship, reducing the mentor to just another adult yelling at the mentee to care/improve.

Training on some specific skills around offering feedback, active listening, reaffirming youth perspectives, and offering praise in addition to constructive criticism will go a long way in helping mentors push their mentees to change their behaviors or thinking without lapsing into what some call “righting reflexes” that often have no or negative results.

Knowing how to set quality goals and track progress in affirming ways will also be helpful to mentors. Often, mentors come into a relationship with ambitious ideas about getting a mentee to college or drastically improving grades. But learning to meet the mentee where they are at, to truly hear their concerns and root causes of disengagement, and then come up with realistic and clear goals (together) to start heading in the right direction can be challenging. Mentors may need practice with staff or other mentors to be able to do this well and anticipate scenarios where the youth pushes back or reacts negatively. So, make sure you set aside training time for these skills this review suggest are critical.

There are a few tools that can help both mentors and practitioners in integrating goalsetting and attainment into their mentoring work. The NMRC’s Measurement Guidance Toolkit recently added a youth-centered goal attainment measurement tool that can be used at the individual match or aggregate level. This might help focus mentor-youth interactions and would allow programs to track how well youth in the program are progressing toward goals at a macro level, offering extra support to matches that seem “stuck.” Online platforms, such as Ascend can also make the experience of supporting youth goals easier, while also teaching youth critical skills they can use long after the mentoring relationship ends.

6. REINFORCE POSITIVE EABBS THROUGH PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT.

The reality for many youth is that their home environment may be the unfortunate source of some of their negative EABBs. A mentor working in the school (or in the community, as it’s important to remember that mentors in community-based programs can tackle many of these issues just as well as those embedded in the school, although some of the direct advocacy may prove more complicated for them) may be able to offset a lot of that. But this work will be much easier if parents and guardians can also reinforce positive EABB messages and strategies that the mentor is attempting to promote.
This may require some additional outreach and engagement effort by program staff, but many of the strategies suggested here (e.g., growth mindset) have parent-specific materials and curricula that can ensure that the mentee is hearing affirming, positive educational messages both at school and at home. Other caring adults can also be brought into this mix. In fact, some studies of youth who left school (for example, Center for Promise, 2015) because of negative EABBs have found that a web of supportive adults is needed to reengage students and get them back on path to graduate. That web can certainly support direct learning and coursework, but the fight usually begins by turning around those EABBs and getting that young person motivated and confident to learn and engage their educational future. So whatever programs can do to get mentors and parents delivering consistent EABB messages may increase positive outcomes.
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