Closing the Achievement Gap: An Investigation into the Efficacy of the Blugold Beginnings College Access Program

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Background

Mentoring programs have grown steadily in number over the past decade and are widely regarded as a valuable tool for closing the achievement gap among students. These programs, which typically involve one-on-one relationships between mentors and mentees, aim to provide students with guidance, support, and role models. Research has shown that mentoring programs can have a positive impact on student outcomes, including increased academic achievement, improved social skills, and increased likelihood of post-secondary education (Conley, 2009). However, the effectiveness of these programs varies depending on the quality of mentor-mentee interactions and the level of support provided to mentors.

Method

Students participate in the Blugold Beginnings program through the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, which is funded by the National College Access Network. The program targets students in grades 5-8 who are at risk of not attending college and provides them with a mentor who meets with them twice a week after school. The mentors and mentees meet independently with students twice a week after school. During this time, they assist their mentees with the skill for that week and complete a worksheet that encourages students to incorporate the skill for that week into their own lives. The program also includes a knowledge binder that guides them, step-by-step, through the processes involved in attaining a post-secondary education.

Results

Among 5th grade students in the program (N = 59), students reported their overall feeling of whether the lesson was helpful for getting into college (M = 4.04), whether the skills would be useful in the future (M = 4.72), whether they understood their mentor (M = 4.09), and whether they felt comfortable asking their mentor questions (M = 4.59). Among 5th grade students in the program (N = 48.52), there were no statistically significant differences in retention of information pertaining to higher education between surveys taken at the beginning of the year (M = 3.96, SD = 0.00) and the midyear surveys (M = 3.92, SD = 0.00), and the surveys at the end of the year (M = 3.94, SD = 0.00).

Discussion

Research on this project failed to find overall significant results for the groups of students who had taken both the pre- and post-surveys. However, some students showed a small improvement in the reported level of comfort and confidence regarding school-related issues.

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References


