

# *Campus Mentors: A New Clinical Practice Model for Teacher Education*

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**ABSTRACT:** Campus Mentors is a unique new partnership between a school district and a local university created to benefit both pre-service teachers and students at risk. The model is an on-campus alternative school targeting youth at risk. It is effective, cost-efficient, and mutually beneficial. Data collected over three years indicate a positive impact on both teacher candidates and participating high school students. This article outlines the background behind the model, describes the model and its outcomes, and provides information on plans for the growth of the project.

*NAPDS Essentials Addressed: #1/A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community; #2/A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants; #3/Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants; #4/An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating the roles and responsibilities of all involved; #5/A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration; #6/Work by college/university faculty and P–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings*

## **Introduction**

Recently, the field of teacher education has undergone a major shift. Pressure from national groups focused on K-12 education, teacher development, and accreditation has mounted for teacher preparation programs to demonstrate the centrality of “clinical experiences” to their work (AACTE, 2010; Blue Ribbon Panel, 2010; CAEP, 2013). Ideally, these experiences link course and fieldwork and are grounded in intensive partnerships between K-12 schools and teacher preparation programs. Because such partnerships have not been the norm, many groups are working to outline principles for reform. For example,

according to the newly-formed Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), such partnerships must be mutually beneficial, and require that teacher preparation programs document the impact of their work on K-12 student learning (CAEP, 2013).

Campus Mentors is an example of a partnership model that fits CAEP principles. It links a university’s teacher education program and a local school district. Located on a university campus, this mutually beneficial partnership takes the form of an alternative school for youth at risk. The Campus Mentors pilot site was established at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and designed to meet two needs: (1) the desire for more

intensive services to meet the needs of local ninth and tenth grade youth identified as at risk of school failure; and (2) a call for additional clinical experiences for secondary education majors at the university. Now in its fourth year, there are two existing programs in operation with an additional two set to open during the 2014–2015 school year, all in the State of Ohio.

## Model Overview

Campus Mentors is defined by four distinct components:

1. it is located in a college or university classroom;
2. it services an student population identified as at risk of school failure;
3. it provides daily academic tutoring by education majors; and
4. it provides one-on-one mentoring, with mentors supported by a college course.

The model takes an existing class of high school students and their teacher and relocates the classroom onto the campus of a local university. The class is a half-day experience for ninth graders (in the afternoon) and tenth graders (in the morning). Because the project relies on an existing class for participants, the only additional expense of the program involves transportation for participating high school students to and from the school and university.

The model is unique in teacher education because it provides universities with multiple, accessible field placements at one site for both tutors and mentors. The structure also allows for close contact between university faculty, classroom teachers, teacher candidates, and high school students. Further, the model is unique in alternative education because it offers a positive placement with more adult support than most schools could afford to provide for any specific population of learn-

ers. Once established, recurring responsibilities for partners include scheduling tutors and mentors, monitoring contact between partners, planning for professional development for involved educators, and collecting data on the program's operation and impact.

## Daily Routine

Campus Mentors serves two groups of fifteen high school students each year. Each of the students attends the program half-day; the other half-day is spent at their local high school. During a typical day, the classroom teacher gathers the students together at the beginning of the day to preview their daily goals. Students take both online and traditional classes. Students progress at their own pace for the online courses they take during their time in the university classroom, while they complete traditional courses with the rest of their classmates at their local high school. The online courses are organized in modules. Students must master one module before they can move on to the next.

For example, at the beginning of the day, the teacher might remind all fifteen students that they should be completing a social studies project for their traditional high school courses. Six might need additional time to complete this project. Eight might need to complete one module to stay current in their online health course, and all of them might need to continue working on their online math course. After the morning preview, students begin work on computers, and tutors and mentors begin to trickle in. Academic tutors are teacher candidates at various stages in their pre-service education, assigned to Campus Mentors for their field experience.

As tutors arrive, the teacher asks each tutor about his/her academic specialty (e.g. mathematics, English), and then assigns that tutor to the student or students who need the most assistance in that academic area. Tutors assist students by encouraging them to stay on task and reviewing necessary steps students

need to follow in order to complete their work. Tutors enrolled in methods classes may be assigned to create their own lessons or supplement the existing lessons with activities instead of relying solely on the online instruction.

While tutors provide academic support to a variety of students, mentors provide one-to-one social/emotional support to the high school students. Mentors are university students enrolled in a one-credit hour course in which they study learning needs and educational characteristics of youth at-risk. Approximately 66% of the mentors are education majors, and others are from fields across the university. As mentors arrive, they assist students in checking and recording their grades from an online system, “Progress Book.” Then, mentors provide support through informal goal setting and problem-solving around these goals (e.g., improving grades, avoiding conflicts with peers or family). Afterwards, each mentor/student pair leaves the classroom for a leisure activity (e.g., throwing a football or getting a soft drink at the dining hall across the street). Sometimes they are able to partner with other pairs for activities. In general, in addition to the classroom teacher, there are between three and five college students in the classroom at any given time.

## Benefits of Campus Mentors

The Campus Mentors model was founded around evidence-based practices in the areas of teacher preparation and dropout prevention. It uses teacher candidates to boost the performance of youth at risk. From the university’s perspective, the model provides accessible, hands-on experiences to future teachers with an important population—learners who are at risk (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). As is now required by accreditation standards, collecting data on pre-service teachers’ impact on K-12 students’ learning becomes part of the natural activity of the

partnership (CAEP, 2013). The district’s incentive to participate is the provision of more assistance with a population of learners with multiple needs than most districts could afford. Use of the model also sidesteps the issue of many districts’ reluctance to work with pre-service teachers due to accountability, because it allows partners to collaborate to determine the nature of tutors’ work in the classroom (e.g., tutoring, teaching Common Core). Furthermore, the costs involved are much less than those of many partnerships, which require travel and significant maintenance. In sum, the model allows for carefully designed and closely supervised field experiences that align with goals of both the school and the teacher preparation program (AACTE, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

## Outcomes

Now in its fourth year, three years of data and two different classroom teachers attest to the effectiveness of Campus Mentors for involved youth, particularly in the area of credit attainment (see data presented in Table 1). Additional data has demonstrated impact in improving student attitude toward school. With respect to outcomes of teacher candidates participating in Campus Mentors, a survey found that serving as academic tutors reinforced the desire to become a teacher in about 66% of participants. Participants shared that through this experience, they learned about the characteristics of an effective teacher and student diversity. (Wasburn-Moses, Kopp, & Hetttersimer, 2012).

A second study was conducted on the one-on-one mentors. Results were triangulated from three sources: a volunteerism scale, learning logs, and focus groups. Mentors mentioned improved communication skills and a greater understanding of the complexity and diversity in their mentees’ lives as a result of the experience. They also emphasized the mutually beneficial nature of the mentoring

Table 1. Student Outcomes, Years 1 through 3

	GPA	Credits	% Qualify as Sophomores		GPA	Credits
Year 1						
Ninth graders	2.1	5.6	85%	Tenth graders	1.6	5.2
Comparison group	1.5	3.5	20%	Last year's performance	1.1	3.7
Year 2						
Ninth graders	2.1	5.8	93%	Tenth graders	1.7	6.4
Comparison group	1.9	5.6	60%	Last year's performance	1.3	3.7
Year 3						
Ninth graders	2.8	6.7	100%	Tenth graders	2.4	6.2
Comparison group	1.6	4.8	39%	Last year's performance	2.0	5.7

relationship (Wasburn-Moses, Fry, & Sanders, 2014).

## Scaling Up

In 2009, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan urged colleges and universities to “get more involved in . . . forming partnerships with local school districts. . . and improving education” (USDOE, 2009). Campus Mentors is a prime example of this type of partnership. It was named a “Promising Practice” by the Association of Career and Technical Education in 2012, presented at accreditation meetings at the request of CAEP, and was one of four programs identified in Miami University’s Presidential Service Award, the highest recognition of community service awarded to a college or university in the United States.

Teacher preparation programs with any of the following needs might consider implementing this model:

- additional placements for secondary teacher candidates
- additional placements with youth at risk
- closer connections between coursework and fieldwork or between university faculty and classroom teachers
- greater accessibility of placements to teacher candidates and faculty
- greater flexibility in the roles of teacher candidates in the classroom

Secondary schools seeking positive placements for youth who are not succeeding in the general education environment might also wish to consider this model.

There are four pre-conditions for establishing a Campus Mentors program: (1) identifying the district partner; (2) identifying a project manager, affiliated with either partner, to coordinate planning and implementation; (3) determining transportation details; and (4) locating a dedicated classroom on the university campus with accessible parking. Common obstacles to implementing this partnership include a lack of funding for transportation, difficulty in scheduling across high school and university calendars, clashing perspectives in determining who the program should be servicing, and conflicts about how data will be collected and disseminated.

Campus Mentors Staff is available to assist with the replication of these partnerships, including guidance regarding timelines, structures, data collection methods, and ongoing planning. Half-day site visits are also available as well as an implementation guide and a previously recorded Webinar. For up-to-date information regarding Campus Mentors training and activities, please refer to [www.campusmentors.org](http://www.campusmentors.org). <sup>SUP</sup>

## References

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