

IMPACT

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KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

Site-Based Mentoring Program:

Summary of 2009 Evaluation Findings

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What:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Honolulu's (BBBSH) Site-Based Mentoring Program, partially funded by Kamehameha Schools (KS), was evaluated by Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) in 2008-2009.¹ The program fosters safe, caring, and supportive relationships between young children and adults who meet with them at schools or other community sites for about an hour each week.

Why:

Site-Based Mentoring is a relatively new approach to the work of Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Recognizing differences and building upon the unique strengths of Hawai'i's culturally rich communities, the Site-Based Mentoring Program draws upon local resources and knowledge to enrich the lives of young people.

Key program facts:

- Launched in 2006 at KS Kapālama Elementary School, the collaboration between BBBSH and KS has grown to 18 sites on O'ahu and Kaua'i
- The program matches "Littles" in elementary or middle school with "Bigs," adults or high school students, from the community
- Bigs receive mentorship training and program sites are supervised by a professional case manager
- In 2008-2009, the program served approximately 430 matched pairs, 200 of whom came from KS-sponsored sites

Findings:

Overall, the evaluation affirms that the Site-Based Mentoring Program is functioning well and meeting its intended outcomes. According to the report submitted by PREL:

"The program is achieving many of its primary goals and sustained program implementation will continue to provide salutary outcomes for mentees, mentors, and the community."

1. The program has a positive impact on Littles' growth and development
2. Safe and supportive relationships help Littles in school and at home
3. Bigs also benefit from the program experience
4. Program satisfaction is high

¹ This summary brief is based on the full report submitted by PREL titled, "Evaluation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring Program" (October 15, 2009).

Background

Big Brothers Big Sisters is a national organization that focuses on providing and facilitating one-on-one mentoring for at-risk youth between the ages of six to 18 years old, with over 300 agencies across the country. The Big Brothers Big Sisters mission is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with mentors that have a measurable impact on youth. Littles and Bigs are matched based on gender, personality, interests and location.

The majority of matches in BBBSH occur in the Site-Based Mentoring Program. The program has focused on supplementing a child's development in areas where the DOE system has recently pulled back: mainly art, music, and physical education. Bigs often use the first half of the time assisting their Little with homework, while the second half is devoted to art, music, and indoor or outdoor games. The goals are to deepen the relationship between Littles and Bigs and build the children's self esteem and resiliency.

Through the evaluation, a theory of change emerged:

Opportunities for positive interaction between Bigs and Littles in fun, safe, community-based sites foster healthy relationships and strengthen children's self-concepts. Over time, these outcomes contribute to healthy, stable communities where adults and children feel a sense of respect interdependence and belonging.

Program participants

The Site-Based Mentoring program served roughly 430 matches in 2008-2009 on O'ahu and Kaua'i. Most participants live in rural areas: on O'ahu, in the Leeward and Windward districts; and, in the East and South areas of Kaua'i. The majority of Littles are in third or fourth grade. They are commonly referred to BBBSH by a teacher or counselor who recognizes the student as needing extra assistance academically or socially. The student will sometimes be struggling through a major life event, such as a divorce or recent move, or simply not performing at full potential. In some cases, the households of Littles are below the poverty level and headed by a single parent, which often places a burden on their development in certain areas.

There is roughly an even split of high school Bigs and adult Bigs in the program. High school Bigs are recruited at neighboring schools through presentations in civic clubs and class rooms. Adult Bigs are recruited from the John A. Burns School of Medicine (Nānākuli Intermediate), UH Law School (Waimānalo Intermediate), Kamehameha Schools (KS Elementary and Middle School, Kapālama), Kualoa Ranch (Ka'a'awa Elementary School), New Hope Diamond Head (Ma'ili Land), and Kaua'i County offices (Wilcox Elementary School). Bigs commit to mentoring their Littles for at least one full school year and many continue beyond that minimum requirement.

Evaluation design & methodology

Three broad goals were agreed upon by stakeholders for the evaluation: 1) identify best practices in youth mentoring programs, 2) assess current program data and monitoring tools, and 3) determine the extent to which intended outcomes are being met.

To complete the first goal, PREL researched the literature on site-based and other mentoring programs, nationwide. Special attention was paid to programs serving indigenous or minority youth in culturally diverse settings. Results from this work are summarized in Appendix B of the full evaluation report submitted by PREL. Key questions included: What outcomes are attributable to different mentoring program models? What core principles and practices guide programs to success?

For the second goal of the evaluation, PREL examined the mission statements and related documents from both BBBSH and KS along with the BBBSH logic model to determine alignment and coherence. Likewise, the Program Outcome Evaluation (POE), the Strength of Relationship (SOR) survey and the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) surveys were assessed. Key questions for this phase of work included: How does the program advance the missions of BBBSH and KS? What are the strengths and limitations of current data collection tools?

The third and most complex goal, conducting a formative evaluation, required unique data collection and analysis. Since the program gathers mostly quantitative data, focus groups were conducted to deepen understanding about impact on Littles and Bigs.² Nine one-hour focus groups were held with Littles and seven focus groups were held with Bigs at different sites. Focus group questions included: What are the most meaningful aspects of the program for participants? Has the program impacted their attitudes, behaviors, and experiences at home and school? If so, how?



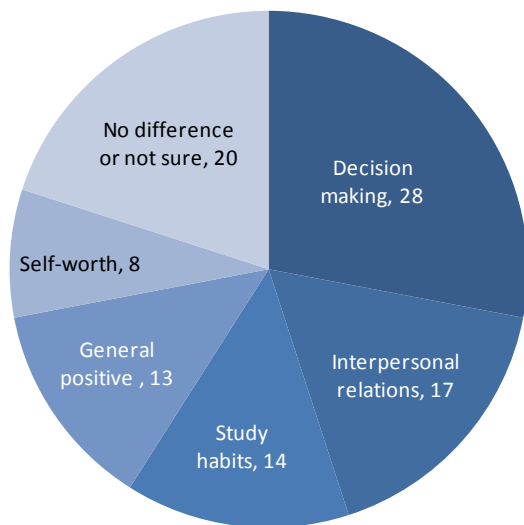
² It was agreed that a group setting would allow young children to better respond to questions about the program. Sites for focus groups were selected on the basis of region, grade level and program type. The interview protocol was developed by PREL and the program staff. Data were coded by two independent reviewers.

Findings

The program has a positive impact on Littles' growth and development

Based on focus group responses,³ changes were observed in Littles, both by themselves and their Bigs. Many comments from Littles (80 percent) indicated that having Bigs makes a difference in their own attitudes and behaviors. Littles believed they made better choices (28 percent), improved study habits (14 percent), and felt better about themselves (8 percent). In addition, Bigs unanimously agreed their Littles grew as a result of the program. The main areas of improvement Bigs saw were Littles' disposition towards Bigs (62 percent), attitude toward school (20 percent) and relationships with family (9 percent).

Figure 1: Focus group responses from Littles about program impact, as a percentage of total comments



Examples of comments from Littles about program impact:⁴

"I talk with my mom more. I can share my feelings."

"I look forward to school."

"[I'm] making better choices."

Examples of comments from Bigs about program impact on Littles:

"My little [was] painfully shy. Now she talks to me a lot."

"My Little did better in school...the teacher said her reading score increased."

³ Percentages reported correspond to comments expressed in the focus groups not the ratio of participants. In such settings, respondents may voice ideas and opinions, which the evaluator may not have anticipated. Similarly, open-ended questions are valuable precisely because responses are virtually unlimited, making groupings of comments especially insightful.

⁴ All comments in quotes are paraphrased from notes taken by PREL's focus group recorders.

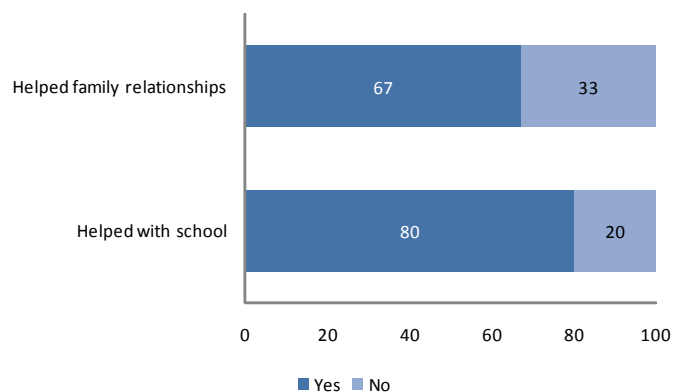


Safe and supportive relationships help Littles in school and at home

When asked what they liked most about having a Big, Littles reported that they appreciated the chance to receive mentorship and help in a safe environment (53 percent). Other popular highlights included: the chance to relax (13 percent), to have fun playing (11 percent), and to participate in program activities (9 percent). As one Little explained, "My Big let me know why it's important to get a job and stay educated." Another participant responded, "[I like] having someone to talk with." Some words Littles used to describe their Bigs were "safe," "fun," "easy to talk to," "cool," and "funny."

Participants in focus groups attributed positive changes in Littles' home and school life to the program. In follow-up questions asking whether or not having a Big helped them get along with family members, 67 percent of Littles' responses registered agreement. Likewise, 80 percent of comments affirmed that the relationship with their Bigs helped them in school. Littles' reported their school experience was enhanced because they were more likely to go to school on program days (40 percent), to be excited about learning (30 percent), and to be inspired by their Big's academic achievements (10 percent).

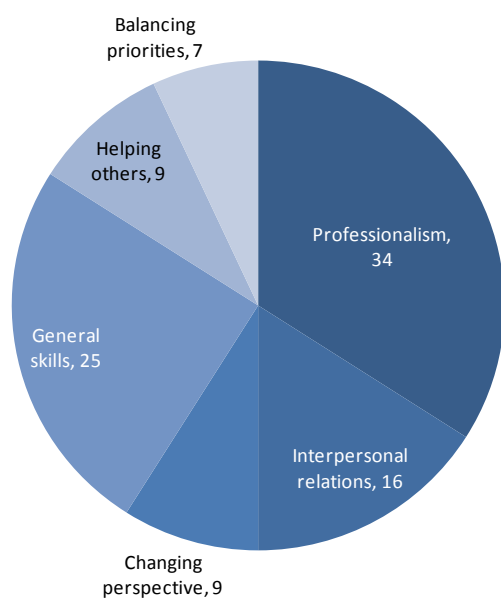
Figure 2: Focus group responses from Littles regarding program impact on family and school, as a percentage of total comments



Bigs also benefit from the program experience

Understandably, the focus of youth mentoring programs is often on the children they serve. However, focus groups uncovered rich data regarding the impact of the Site-Based Mentoring Program on volunteer Bigs. Bonding with their Littles (60 percent), experiencing personal growth (19 percent), and program efficiency (9 percent) were the most meaningful takeaways for them. Bigs collectively agreed that they gained relevant life skills from their relationships with their Littles. Professionalism (34 percent), improved interpersonal relations (16 percent), and appreciation of other perspectives (9 percent), were some of the skill sets Bigs mentioned during focus groups.

Figure 3: Focus group responses from Bigs regarding program takeaways, as a percentage of total comments

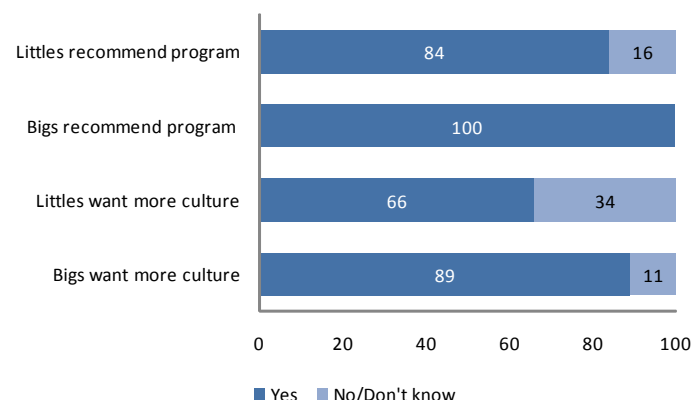


Program satisfaction is high

Participants overwhelmingly enjoyed the program while also expressing gratitude towards the BBBSH staff and their collaborators. Many Littles (80 percent) felt that their friends would enjoy having a mentor and 100 percent of Bigs reported they would recommend the program to peers. When asked how they would improve the program overall, the largest category of responses by Littles (43 percent) was to add more program time. A large number of comments from Littles (66 percent) and Bigs (89 percent) suggested greater integration of Hawaiian cultural activities.⁵

⁵ Some students have opportunities to learn about Hawaiian culture in school, but as one Little put it, “we’re at public school and don’t really respect [the culture]... we should step it up.”

Figure 4: Focus group comments from Littles and Bigs about recommending the program to a peer and desire for more Hawaiian cultural activities, as a percentage of total comments



Recommendations & next steps

Data collected and analyzed by a third-party, professional evaluator (PREL) indicate the Site-Based Mentoring Program is having a positive impact on participants in line with stated goals. Based on the evaluation findings, PREL offered a handful of recommendations to further improve and refine the program. These suggestions are noted below followed by brief explanations of how BBBSH/KS are responding to them.

Revisit and revise the logic model

It was suggested that the logic model be updated to better represent the current state of the program and new understandings of its outcomes. BBBSH and Kamehameha Schools Research & Evaluation (R&E) Division are re-examining the logic model after completion of a Simple Outcome Map, which identifies key drivers affecting short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes.

Continue integrating community organizations

PREL noted the success of collaborations with the University of Hawai‘i and Kualoa Ranch. BBBSH recently hired a marketing specialist to draw attention to existing community partnerships and to identify opportunities for expansion.

Highlight cultural dimensions of the program

Although the program staff are well aware of the salience of culture in their work, current data collection tools are limited in this regard. BBBSH will implement PREL’s suggestions to modify the TANF survey and will consult with R&E on development of a tool to gauge cultural impact.