 brief description of the Village Branch of the Lexington Public Library

The Village Branch of the Lexington Public Library (LPL) is located in the heart of the Hispanic enclave in Lexington, Kentucky. The Village Branch is active within Lexington's Hispanic community, which numbers around 21,000 residents.

The Village has been allotted an operating and maintenance budget of $135,595.00 for fiscal year 2013, which was an increase from the $134,913.00 budgeted for fiscal year 2011. In addition, Library Services Support for materials was $38,000.00 for fiscal year 2011. The Village Branch Library Services Support for materials has been in increased to $44,000.00 in 2013 and $50,000.00 for fiscal year 2014. The increase in finances allotted for Library Services Support reflects the active and growing patron base of The Village. Programs for children and teens are scheduled for every weekday throughout the summer.[1] Also every weekday, a free hot lunch is dispensed to patrons 18 years and younger.[2] The Village is a place for community meetings. For adults, The Village hosts GED testing several weekends a year and weekly English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Currently, ESL classes are held twice a week at The Village Branch, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:30pm to 8pm.[3] The Tuesday night class is taught by a lead teacher, and the Thursday night class—led by a different teacher—is intended to be iterative of the previous class. However, only a percentage of ESL students attend *both* classes on a weekly basis. Others students may attend once a week, and still other students make it to either class episodically. Due to partial and sporadic attendance, many students are behind and have trouble follow the new lesson. Often, the ESL teachers must concede class time to reviewing a prior lesson necessary to

1 See the activity calendar for The Village Branch of the LPL at http://www.lexpublib.org/calendar?branch=Village+Branch&search=

2 The hot lunch program is courtesy of a grant from the 21st Century Learning Center Grant.

3 These classes do not regularly appear on The Village event calendar.

the comprehension of the scheduled lesson. Over time, reversions to prior lessons to help some students compromises the progress of the class as a whole. Important ESL curriculum is not taught and the advancement of regularly attending students may be stifled. Nevertheless, the ESL program at The Village Branch has held together in this manner for years. Despite slow progress and oft absent classmates, each ESL class session is well attended. The community served by The Village continues to show interest in and support for the ESL program.

 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY:

Absences from ESL class are problematic for students at the individual level and for the class as a whole. Class absences on the part of the ESL student often leads to drop-out. Once a student misses a class session, it can be very difficult for the student to study extra to make up for the absence or even to know what should be studied. Often, a student who misses one class session will often miss another due to the fear that he or she will be behind, or even slow the class down.

ESL students class preparedness is affected by the fact that many do not have access to Internet. Problem of absences cannot be resolve through shared sites or online tutorials. Most English Language Learners do not have a computer at home, which obviously precludes access to high-speed internet in the household. Therefore, the use of email or other social media to contact learners or disseminate information is not an option.

Many ESL students at The Village are new to the US. Their linguistic isolation relegates them to tough but menial work in jobs in the agriculture and horse-raising industries around Lexington, Kentucky. Other ESL students work in bakeries or warehouses requiring them to work well outside of the white-collar, 9 to 5 hours upon which much of our society is, rightly or wrongly based. Odd or demanding work hours preclude some ESL students from attending both

weekly sessions. In addition to the complexities of non-traditional work hours, adjusting to a new life in America has its own intricacies to navigate, some of which are the familiar problems of transportation and childcare (Condelli, Wrigley, & Yoon, 2002). However, these problems are exacerbated in the absence of an ability to speak English. Remedying the obstacles to attending ESL classes is far beyond the scope The Village. The best way to serve the patrons participating in ESL classes is to create avenues of opportunity and possibility through programs that are supportive of the students' endeavors.

The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as shared class websites, video chat capabilities or the myriad online interactive tutorials could resolve much of the problem of missed lessons. Unfortunately, the digital divide renders the use of ICTs moot. Most ESL students, due to economic conditions, do not have home access, or even regular access, to a computer or the Internet. Thus, the ESL teacher cannot apprise students of the contents of missed lessons through the web.

However, most of our ESL students do have regular access to a telephone line. One possible way of updating absent students to have the ESL teacher impart the lesson plan and homework over the phone. However, it would be imprudent for The Village to overburden our ESL teachers by obliging them to contact every student who missed class. Yet, student support outside of class is much needed in the ESL community. Could we tap into the LPL community of volunteers as a support system for ESL students?

Many English-speaking patrons of LPL have expressed interest in assisting with ESL classes, but were hesitant to take on the role of a classroom teacher. Up to this point, there has been no other LPL program that would allow interested patrons to help with ESL classes, save becoming a classroom ESL teacher.

However, many LPL patrons will be interested in participating in a structured mentoring program that will pair them with a single ESL student. The virtue of a mentorship program of this kind is that it taps community volunteers who did not want to take on the responsibility of teaching a classroom but were otherwise interested in aiding and encouraging an ESL student.

RESEARCH DESIGN

RESEARCH PURPOSE & RESULTING QUESTIONS

The purpose of this intervention is the implementation of a student support mechanism to help ESL students who have experienced non-consecutive absences from class to keep current with and knowledgeable of the lessons taught during those missed classes. The student support mechanism is a one-to-one adult mentorship program, wherein a native English speaker will mentor a dedicated ESL student. This action research project will test whether of not the intervention, i.e. the mentorship program, can be directly correlated to an improvement in the general attendance of the ESL mentees over the course of the mentorship? And, can the program be directly correlated with an improved the general performance of the ESL mentees' language skills? Although correlation does not equal causation, a directly overlapping correlation with mentoring activities and improved language skills give stakeholders reason to believe that the mentor program has positively influenced ESL mentees.

Subsequent research questions pertaining to individual ESL students participating in the mentor program are: Will the intervention reduce the number of missed classes on the part of the ESL student? Will the ESL student's resolve and commitment to learning English increase as a result of—or at least rise incrementally throughout—the mentorship? Has the ESL student mentee's life goals changed as a result of mentorship?

At the class-wide and programmatic level, the fundamental research question is: Has the ESL class progressed further in the curriculum—as compared to past experiences at the same point in the curriculum—as a result of students' class preparedness? If so, what effect does a continual steady progression within the curriculum have on the morale of the class?

Another proximal class-wide research question may be: Have more students persisted in attending ESL class for this term in relation to corresponding past terms? For example, have more students attended class throughout February, March, and April than the past monthly periods of February, March and April?

Although the fundamental concern with this project is lesson currency on the part of ESL students who have missed a class, the ramifications of implementing this program are three-pronged and thus can be considered in the resulting research questions. First, will this program provide interested LPL patrons with an opportunity to volunteer without the burden of responsibility that comes with instructing and entire class? Will this program provide volunteers with the opportunity to engage satisfactorily with another community? Many library patrons and community members are willing to give their time and energy to helping the ESL cause. However, many self-select themselves out of the actual mentor group because they feel they do not have the teaching skills or are not confident in their own language explaining abilities. Moreover, mentors are sometimes reticent to engage in a one-on-one relationship with a member of a community that is different from them, especially if that community is less economically well off. In other words, volunteers fear entanglement.

Second, will the mentorship program relieve some of the pressure on ESL teachers to support absent students by assigning mentors to help keep the students current with their lessons? If so, the ESL teachers will have more time and energy to invest in crafting lessons.

Finally, if ESL students have an English savvy mentor with whom to discuss missed lessons, to practice speaking English, and to be available to answer orienting questions about the community or help navigate them through government bureaucracy. In many cases, the ESL teacher is the only English-speaking contact they feel comfortable approaching. Will a relationship with heightened obligation to self and peers, foster a commitment to the program on the part of the ESL student due to the stake in the success of the student that the mentor now has?

Up to now, the effectiveness of the ESL program has not been measured. It is unclear, for example, how many Village Branch ESL students have passed the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

ESL standards being addressed

Currently there are no widely-accepted national ESL content standards or core competencies. However, state and local governments, as well as public and private organizations that have developed (or are in the process of developing) content standards for ESL. Should the mentorship program prove successful at the end of the pilot study, adoption and/or development of content standards for the ESL program shall be considered. Until such a time, the ESL program declines to address any association's curricular or programmatic standards. However, as a point of guidance, The Village ESL program encourages interested students to consult to the test preparation materials of the Educational Testing Services (ETS) Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Resources/materials needed to implement research

Although fairly obvious, it is worth noting this intervention is human resource heavy. The

intervention requires at least five volunteers willing to serve as mentors for ESL students. The duties of the mentors consist of aiding the student in self-study and self-learning of missed lessons due to a class absence. In addition to facilitating the learning of lessons, the mentor is encouraged meet with the student for a least one half-hour (in-person or over the telephone) to practice speaking English. The weekly meeting should take place in addition to a make up session of a missed lesson.

In addition to mentor volunteers, the intervention needs a designated program coordinator to oversee day-to-day management of the mentor program. The program coordinator will be responsible for data collection, data transcription and data entry in addition to data analysis. Thus the program coordinator should be skilled in research methods—both qualitative and quantitative. The program manager must also be fluent in English and Spanish with excellent speaking, writing, and listening skills in each. The program manager will also be responsible for organizing orientation and initiation sessions for mentors as well as quarterly mentor training and development sessions for the mentors. The program coordinator will also be responsible for organizing and chairing an action research committee to oversee the implementation and management of the intervention. The action research committee will consist of the program coordinator, the ESL teachers, the director of The Village and two of its employees, interested LPL Board of Trustees members, and three to four select community advisors, including a professor or two from UK's Spanish or ESL departments.

 data collection tools to be used – pre and post ARP implementation

Data collection for this intervention will be time- and labor-intensive. Data collection should occur at the beginning and end of every quarter of the pilot program. Extenuating

circumstances (discussed in the following section) necessitate that pre- and post-tests should be completed with paper and pencil and then entered into a database. Each term, then, the pre- and post-tests will be assessed and an algorithm will be applied that compares the progress of the student objectively and in relation to his or her absences from class. Although the data collection will be flawed due to sample size, a positive correlation with the mentorship program and language ability will yield evidence enough. The same extenuating circumstances necessitate that interviews should be the standard method of data collection from ESL students. If the ESL students consent, interviews should be recorded and transcribed. Recorded and transcribed data can be subjected to data-mining techniques, and can further research in the field of Second-language acquisition.

Data collection requires reliable recording and transcription devices and statistics software. Data-mining software is highly desired.

 DATA ANALYSIS – ANALYZING THE DATA & USING THE RESULTS

Data will be collected from both mentors and mentees. The primary area of assessment is the ESL students improvement and/or enhanced commitment/engagement. However, questions must be asked of mentors as well as mentees in order to gauge the conditions under which a student improves in skill or gains an enhanced commitment to learning English.

ESL students participating in the mentor program will take a written pre-test and post-test on paper at the beginning and end of each quarter of the pilot study term. The content to be assessed will be the same for all tests; however, each test will feature a unique set of problems. The tests will be short, un-timed, take-home exams to be completed without the help of the mentor. In addition to these written tests, near the beginning and end of each quarter, the ESL

teachers will ask participating students questions in class that require more than a yes or no answer. The questions will be designed to elicit a response that allows the ESL teacher to gauge improvement in speaking English.

In addition to the test taking, initial commitment assessment of ESL students to learning English will be measured through individual quarterly interviews (usually scheduled toward the end of the term). Periodic commitment assessments of the ESL student will be measured directly through interviews with the ESL students. The commitment of an ESL student will be measured indirectly through individual interviews with their mentors. The purpose of a commitment assessment is to indicate (1) how well a student may perform without the aid of a mentor (2) a change, positive or negative, in the level of commitment the ESL student has towards learning English and gaining entre into American culture and society. Enhancement of an ESL student's commitment to learning English and "becoming American" is a primary motivation for the mentor program.

Aside from assessing commitment levels, interviews can help gauge the robustness of the mentor/mentee relationship as well as provide information regarding problems with the program. The interview setting is also conducive to establishing a dialog with participants about areas that we can improve and advice from program participants as to *how* we can improve them. Moreover, if interviewees consent to being taped, systematic analysis of transcripts may reveal trends or issues that program participants are not yet aware of themselves. Further, recordings and transcripts would provide a treasure trove of research pertinent to Second-language acquisition studies.

Conducting interviews is a time and labor intensive pursuit. However, there is no other option to obtain consistent, i.e. normalized, data. This is because not every ESL student is literate

in his or her own language. So, although completing a short content-driven test is doable for these ESL students, completing open-ended questionnaires could be beyond the skill level. The mentor program should be open to all ESL students regardless of their starting levels of native-language literacy. Although native language literacy is an indicator of success in learning English, the intervention seeks to measure variations in commitment level due to participation in the mentor program.

Not only should the mentors and mentees be tapped for information, the ESL teachers should complete quarterly questionnaires related to the progress of the class as a whole. Informally, the ESL teacher will gauge the general satisfaction of students with mentors during the bi-weekly classes. Perhaps most important of all, the ESL should take attendance and make note of tardy students for every class.

Secondary, or condition-establishing, questions

The success of this intervention is dependent on volunteers (mentors and ESL students). It is, therefore, important to gauge the level of satisfaction with the program on the part of mentors and ESL students. Collecting information to calculate satisfaction levels with the program can apprise the action research committee of nascent dissatisfaction that may be averted through program-wide adjustment. In addition monitoring satisfaction levels, data regarding interaction between the mentors and mentees should also be collected. Thus, routine interview questions to be asked of both mentors and mentees will consist of, but not limited to, the following:

How often did you meet one-on-one with your mentor/mentee?

How often did you speak on the telephone with your mentor/mentee?

Did you have weekly appointments with your mentor/mentee?

Is it difficult to get in contact with your mentor/mentee?

How often—weekly or monthly—did you try to contact your mentor? How often did you succeed?

Did your mentor help you with any administrative or bureaucratic problems beyond ESL content? How often?

Does your mentor speak your native language?

Did you speak with your mentor primarily in English or in your native language?

After assessments for each participant is collected and analyzed, the action research committee will be study and discuss the results. Each member of the committee will be required to read through all assessments.

The final collection, analysis and summary of data from the mentor program pilot project is likely to continue a few weeks past the official pilot program completion date. During that time—in the absence of definitive information regarding the efficacy of the program—extant mentorships should continue as normal. If the mentor program is qualitatively changed, participants shall have the option to continue on in the new version of the program. If the mentor program is discontinued, participants shall be notified.

Finally, regardless of the success or failure of the mentor program, the final report and analysis of data shall be shared with researchers and interested parties via the LPL website. The report will be available free of charge. All names and any other personally identifiable information will be omitted to protect the privacy of the participants.

Literature/Research Review (75 points)

 brief review of at least 5 studies pertaining to your intervention

In researching interventions pertinent to my particular action research project, I found there is little to no directly connected reports or articles. Indeed, the concept of mentoring adult ESL students who are not in college or bound for college has been rarely, if ever implemented. If ever implemented there have been no reports about the programs successes or failures.

However, there is an abundance of research tangentially relevant to my topic. There are ample publications related to mentoring primary and secondary school youths in ESL programs, as well as adult-to-adult mentoring, especially within professions. Indeed, it was somewhat frustrating to see the vast research on ESL teacher-to-teacher mentorships, but to find nothing on adult mentoring of adult ESL students. This is an under-researched area—I suspect because it is an under-practiced area. Therefore, it is imperative that the experience and the results of The Village mentor program be reported in a be widely available format and free of charge.

As indicated, there is a great deal of information about adult-to-adult mentorships in the professions. Thus, theoretical underpinnings as to how and why adult mentoring works among professionals have been researched. These underpinnings are transferable to the mentor program of adult ESL students at The Village. In her 2001 dissertation, published by ERIC.gov, Bonnie Williams applies Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to adult learning. Vygotsky's ZPD is well-known and well-accepted construct which posits—briefly—that children learn when they are able to receive information that accords with their current knowledge but is slightly more challenging to grasp and thus need the assistance of an educator. Referring to ZPD, Williams claims that "identical processes can be seen operating in the learning adult" (2001, 7-8). Williams then goes on to detail how the stages of ZPD are played out in the adult learner with the help of mentors. Williams is primarily concern with the training and development of

professional teachers. She claims that new teachers gain wisdom about the experience of teaching in a quicker and deeper way under the guidance and assistance of an experienced teacher who acts as a mentor. According to Williams, experienced teacher to new teacher mentorships are most effective when they are based on a shared style of, or approach to, teaching (Williams 2001). This notion of shared orientation by mentor/mentee has proven to be an important aspect of mentor relationships and is noted throughout the field of mentor research, generally. This notion will be further discussed latter in this section.

In her 2007 article, "Mentoring Adult Learners: Realizing Possible Selves," Fletcher explains that mentoring provides an important context for transformation of the self. Using the construct of Possible Selves, which is a thought experiment by an individual in which she not only imagines herself becoming who she wants to be but takes an inventory of skills needed to create the path to that possible self (Fletcher 2007). The Possible Selves construct lends itself to mentoring in that a mentor possesses a quality or skill that a mentee would like to have, and therefore can help the mentee to understand what the path to a possible self entails. In other words, what is the content of the journey towards the possible self. Again, the bent of this essay is towards professional development: mentors assist "adult learners to restructure and reinvent their own *professional* identities"[4] (Fletcher 2007, 83). However, there is no reason that the same cannot be said for The Village program: community mentors assist adult ESL learners to restructure and reinvent their own *English-speaking* identities.

Several articles tout the benefits of adult mentorship. Indeed, "[a]dults who work with mentors grow in their own sense of intellectual competence, as well as in their sense of purpose, their feeling of autonomy, and their personal integrity" (Bova 1984, 16). Mentors help

4 Italics added.

mentees cope with turbulent change and assess new experiences (De La Cruz 2008). One way mentors do this is by providing personalized attention wherein a mentee can receive information about her perceptions and ideas (Lankau 2002).

Despite the resounding benefits of mentoring—adult or otherwise—there are also cautions and important considerations. In formal mentoring programs special consideration should be given to social as well as individual characteristics, especially because in these cases mentors and mentees do not come together naturally but are paired by external forces.

Hansman notes that mentoring's psychosocial benefits vary according to the gender of the mentor and mentee. Male-male mentorships tend to focus on the practical goals of the relationship, whereas female-female mentorships are noted for shared experiences, empathy, and deep emotional bonds (Hansman 2002). Cross-gender mentorships can be problematic for several reasons. According to Hansman, cross-gender mentorships are the target of public scrutiny and suspicion, and sometimes peer resentment (2002). Cross-gender mentoring has also been criticized for not providing mentees with suitable role models or creating trepidation on the part of the mentee that a request for help from the mentor could be construed as a sexual advance (Hansman 2002). Reports have shown that the needs of the mentee are often overlooked in cross-gender, as well as in cross-ethnic mentorships. Black, Hispanic and Asian men often decline to participate in formal mentoring programs offered by their organizations for that reason. These men would rather find mentors—but often do not—of their own color (Hansman 2002).

It is important to note that gender and race are not the only consideration in matching mentors and mentees. Several researchers suggest inventorying both mentor and mentee to establish which have the same values, interests, favored past times and then basing pairings on

those findings. One researcher who limits cross-gender and cross-ethnic pairings also adds, "We hit pay dirt when we have a mentor and [mentee] with common hobbies or skills, for example, fishing, art, or baseball" (Reglin 1997, web article). Those who pair mentors and mentees for The Village's mentor program may have to rely on inventories of this sort because avoiding cross-gender and cross-ethnic mentoring relationships can be difficult among small pools of mentors and mentees.

The greatest challenge for The Village mentor program will be navigating cross-ethnic relationships due to the fact that ESL learners to be mentored are all newcomers to the US from Central or South America, or Mexico. In light of this, the program coordinator may want to consider recruiting specific volunteers and/or subjecting potential mentors to a selection process. The quality of the mentors—most of whom will be white—will be integral to the viability of this program. For, as Fletcher (the Possible Selves construct advocate) points out, mentors "must be in a position to open up opportunities for mentees and to be able to focus on mentoring without fear about their own capacity" (Fletcher 2007, 78). In other words, the mentors must not only be willing to examine and critique their behaviors and presuppositions, but also recalibrate their outlook in such a way as to include or consider the outlook of the mentee. Such an endeavor though easily said, is not so easily done.

That mentors should inspect and challenge their preconceived notions of society and the self is well-represented in the literature. Such attention to transformations of mentors' notions and outlooks is in no small degree related to the fact that a main purpose of many mentorships is the reduction of social distance between the world of the mentees and the world of the mentor which then acts to break down the barriers to opportunities

(Flaxman 1993). Reducing the social distance between Spanish-only speakers and English-speaking American society is one of the most important goals of ESL programs.

One way to help mentors examine there views and prepare for the role of mentor to an adult with a completely different outlook derived from vastly different life experiences is through training. Hansman offers advice on training mentors:

> [D]uring mentor training and orientation sessions, mentors may learn to understand the importance of providing developmental help and support to forge helpful cross-race/cross-gender mentoring relationships. European American mentors need to develop an appreciation for the obstacles women and people of color face and understand that they may need to be sensitive to these obstacles as they mentor their proteges. They can increase their credibility with their proteges by being more culturally responsive (Hansman 50).

The importance of mentor training is well-addressed in the literature. In addition to initial training, researchers such as Reglin, Hansman and Sherman believe that mentor training should be an ongoing process.

The mentor program is first and foremost intended to eliminate absences from ESL class. Thus far, when an ESL student misses a class, it is not at all certain that she will return the following week, generally out of fear that she has fallen behind and will hold up the progress of the class. When those students who have missed a class return, the lesson from the previous week(s) often need to be revisited during class for the benefit of that student. This is a major obstacle in the weekly progress of the class along the curriculum. Theoretically, attendance—or at least class-preparedness on the part of a student who missed a previous class—will help the ESL teacher maintain the learning momentum of the class and move along the curriculum at a steady pace. This in turn will allow ESL students to accomplish more during class and thus achieve more at the end of

the ESL training.

But, unfortunately, the literature is not clear as to whether or not mentor programs resolve the problem of absences. Drawing from studies of youth truancy and adult mentors, there is evidence that mentoring will mitigate class absences. Reglin, in "Mentoring and Tutoring Help (MATH) Program fights truancy," claims that mentors are under-utilized in the prevention of truancy (1997). This claim is borne out by authors of "Getting students to school: Using family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism" who found that connecting community mentors to truant students measurably decreased chronic absenteeism across 39 schools (Sheldon 2004). However, a study published in 2006 "showed no difference in the average number of days students were absent from school, but students were more likely to attend school on the days when they were scheduled to meet with their adult reading partners" (Volkmann 2006). The nature of the connection between mentoring and school attendance is not clear at the primary and secondary school levels. However, both Reglin and Volkmann found that students self-esteem was positively affected by the mentor relationships. In fact, Reglin bases his conclusion on the results of the Culture-free Self-Esteem Inventory (1997). Measurements of self-esteem were outside the scope of the third article.

Importantly, the youth truancy studies and the absences from class of ESL learners diverge almost immediately in that the causes of each are completely different. Youth truancy is a complex matter resulting from low-self esteem, lack of expectation, and disinterest in learning to name a few. ESL students demonstrate weekly that they are

interested in learning by showing up to class. And those that miss class often do so because of emergent needs. Other interventions, such as childcare and sponsored transportation would be more effective in eliminating absences (Brod 1995). However, interventions such as these are outside the realm of solvable for The Village.

As explained above, the problem of students missing class is problematic personally and class-wide. Absences on the part of the ESL learner makes it more likely that she will drop out of the program. As many as a third of ESL students have been reported to leave the programs by the end of the second month (Brod 1995). However, students who return after an absence but are not prepared for class hold back the progress of the entire class.

One finding of the truancy studies can be expected to show up in The Village mentor program: It is likely that ESL mentees will experience a boost in their self-esteem from her relationship with a mentor.

Although there is little to no information that directly addresses the particular topic of community volunteer mentors and adult ESL mentees, there is a great deal of information on mentoring generally, mentoring in professions—particularly for ESL teaching—and adult to youth mentoring. Reviewing some of the literature on mentoring has helped to clarify goals and has tempered what can be expected from this intervention. From my research, I found that there is theoretical support as to why and how adult to adult mentoring is beneficial. I also found that the relationships between mentors and mentees in formal programs must be approached with great care and deliberation. Regarding the mentors themselves, they must be capable of deep introspection and be willing to change based on what they find in themselves. Moreover, they

must be willing to take on the responsibility entailed in mentor/mentee relationships. Focusing on the intentions of the intervention, I found that the mentor program is probably unlikely to eliminate absences but may still make strides in the arena of students' class preparedness and progress as a whole.

Intervention Plan/Plan of Action

- description of the intervention strategy/plan of action

Mentors and ESL students will be introduced at an initiation meeting. Mentors and participating ESL students will meet once a week for the first month of the program (in order to establish trust and become familiar with each other). After the first month, appointments scheduling shall be left to the discretion of the mentor and ESL student.

The intervention will be divided into three four-month long terms, which will correspond to a curriculum. At the beginning of each term, mentor training will be provided. The training will be progressive in content. At the end of each term, mentors will meet with the ESL teachers in order to discuss/prepare for the traditionally problematic areas in the upcoming curriculum. In this meeting, individual skill and ability should not be addressed. Importantly, it is up to the mentor and the ESL student to gauge problems areas and address them. Of course, the ESL teacher may be consulted for best practices or resources to resolve the difficulty. Mentors will also meet to, in the presence of the program coordinator, discuss best practices/effective strategies.

All prospective ESL students are invited and encouraged to attend ESL classes at any time. However, in order to normalize the data collected for the mentor program, newly-accepted mentors and mentees will initiate the program-sponsored relationship at the beginning of each

quarter. No new participants shall initiate program-sponsored mentor/mentee relationships after first day of the final quarter of the pilot year.

The ESL students targeted for this program will be those who have repeatedly missed classes yet still keep a routine attendance and are dedicated to completing the program.

Plan for Future Action

- identify your next step after analyzing the data

The intervention plan is divided into four successive legs each lasting three months. At the end of each leg data will be collected and assessed. By segmenting the year-long pilot project into three month legs, data may be collected on a quarterly basis and systematically evaluated. Both general and precise changes can then be applied to the mentor program based on the quarterly analyses and evaluations. A timeline such as this means that the proposed cost of the pilot mentor program can be included in a fiscal year budget report. The longevity of the budget forecast will allow the program coordinator flexibility enough to adjust the strategy and intentions of the program before submitting a final audit of the overall expenditures. By removing the need for bureaucratic approval of requests for more funding mid-calendar year, the mentor program can operate more fluidly and more quickly respond to problem areas. Thus, the full nature and efficacy of this action research project can be realized.

At the end of each quarter, qualitative and quantitative data will be collected. The action research committee will review the data. Imminent problem areas will be identified and possible obviations or solutions will be discussed. Any program successes will be studied with an eye towards identifying and replicating the favorable components. Quarterly evaluation reports and the minutes of the action research committee meeting will be made available to any LPL employee via the library's Intranet.

In the next section, several program outcomes are considered and next steps are proposed.

potential next steps based on positive statistically significant change

If the results are positive throughout the pilot year, as the mentor program progresses, the results are positive, the action research committee will explore extensions of student support and community connections.

If the ultimate evaluation of the program at year's end proves to be a success, the action research committee will suggest a reiteration of the mentor program, under the continued auspices of the action research committee, for the current year. It is unlikely that every aspect of the mentor program yields positive changes. The mentor program can extend the action research that began with the initial project. Further, adjustments and improvements to the program evinced by the culminating final report could commence immediately if the same action research committee is authorized to oversee the project. By immediately implementing adjustments at the start of the second iteration, there will be more time available for refining best practices.

If the mentor program continues, the coordinator should aim to include more ESL students by actively recruiting volunteer mentors. More importantly, the program coordinator should continue to refine the tools used to pair mentors and mentees, especially because long term success of the program depends on the comradery and attraction between the mentor and mentee. Another plan of action, stated earlier, would be to examine adoption of ESL content standards or core competencies. Finally, the most effective mentors should be identified and asked to share the beliefs and practices that guide their mentoring.

Depending on the success of the program, mentors may also become tutors and/or graders. With any program, there are those who would like to become more involved. The

mentorship program is a perfect way for interested yet reticent volunteers to "wet their toes" for involvement with the ESL program

Although public library is a great place for English training and literacy improvement, there are limits to its involvement. However, a great deal of ESL training is also acculturation and everyday advocacy. To this end, and provided the mentorship program shows positive outputs, the mentorship program will begin to establish contacts with local welfare organizations in order to facilitate relationships among ESL students and community volunteers dedicated to improving societal welfare.

Because this sort of outreach is inherently political, the Village Branch will minimize involvement to brokering relationships by providing means and opportunities for convening.

The basic purpose of the mentor program is for mentors to act as a stop-gap for missed lessons. Thus, the mentor may rarely need to be invoked for this purpose. However, mentors are encouraged to spend time with their mentees on a weekly basis. Again, a telephone conversation counts as spending time.

- BASED ON NO OR VERY LITTLE CHANGE

Mentoring is an energy-, time-, and thought intensive activity. It is quite likely that the program will yield positive changes for some and do very little for others. Not every volunteer will be able to fulfill the role of mentor in a robust way. Problems may arise in the paucity of volunteers willing to take on the mentor role. Volunteer mentors may quit the program if the mentor role is too great a burden. In addition to the problem of insufficient volunteer mentors, total costs of the mentor program—training materials, training sessions, time required—may not justify the continuation of the year-long pilot study or a continuation of the program. Thus the

mentor program may be discontinued.

However, before dismantling the mentor program other types of ESL student and native English speaker partnerships should be investigated as potential program conversions. In other words, a program dedicated to partnering ESL students and native English speakers could be a permutation of the former mentor program less the burdensome role of mentor.

The program costs of a partner program such as this would not be as great as those of a mentor program. While the partner program would need to continue some training for LPL partner volunteers, such as diversity training, costs for mentor training and development would be eliminated. The program may not even need a designated full-time program coordinator. The reduced version of the mentor program, i.e., the partner program, will save LPL significant costs as measured in time and finance. However, the positive assimilation and speaking practice will be retained as part of the program.

Another possibility could be that although the mentor program can be sustained financially, it resulted in little or no change in the attendance habits of ESL students nor did the program demonstrably enhance student commitment to learning English. Worse, perhaps the program yielded deleterious results, i.e. mentored students dropped out at higher rates than prior to the intervention or mentored students performed worse on the written assessments, the mentor program should be will be discontinued. However, it should not be forgotten. The action research committee will be tasked with studying the research design and program implementation for deficiencies. If the damaging aspects of the program design can be corrected, the action research project will be retained for reimplementation at a later date.

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