

Strong mentoring relationships are necessary... but not always sufficient

Mentoring program effects are smaller than you think. Meta-analyses are showing that most mentoring programs produce small overall improvements, which have not budged in 20 years, despite significant investments. Most mentoring programs take “nonspecific” friendship approaches that do not fully address the challenges facing today’s students.

KEY FINDINGS

Follow-up analyses of these evaluations suggest a more effective to mentoring than these nonspecific methods:

-  Targeted approaches are focused on specific challenges, goals, and skill-building, in which strong mentoring relationships are the foundation to work on such goals and skills, rather than the only ingredient.
-  We found that targeted, problem-specific mentoring programs appear to be more effective than their nonspecific, relational, friendship-based counterparts.
-  Targeted approaches showed more than double the effect size of nonspecific, friendship-based ones.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  Findings underscore the need for evidence-based approaches to mentoring to ensure the best youth outcomes.
-  Programs should incorporate targeted goal- and skill-building-focused techniques with mentorships.
-  The common assumption that a strong mentoring relationship alone is an effective intervention for mentees should be debunked

Christensen, K., Hagler, M., Raposa, M., Stams, G. J., & Rhodes, J. (2020). Non-specific versus targeted approaches to youth mentoring: A follow-up meta-analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 49, 959–972.