



CAMP'ING AT A NEW SCHOOL

EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF A CROSS-AGE MENTORING PROGRAM IN GRADE 7 BOYS

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Further Information

This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

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INTRODUCTION

Currently at Belmont Hill, there is no consistent pattern or key to ensure a smooth and successful transition for incoming students. In order to investigate the role that **social connection** and **belonging** play in a boy's perceived adjustment to his new school, I designed my action research project around the creation of a **preemptive support system** that could provide peer, teacher, and administrative support to our new 7th Grade students.

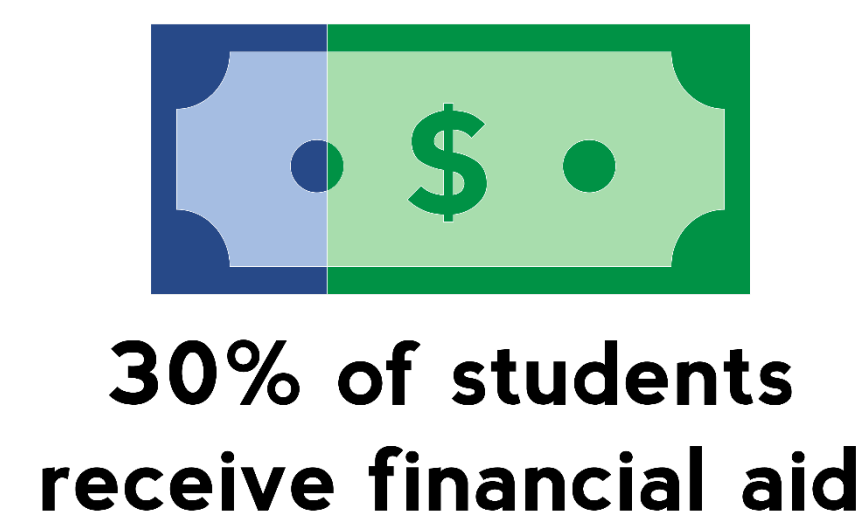
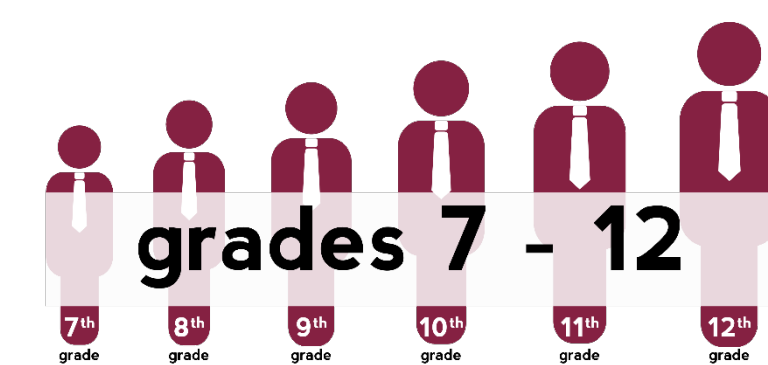
THE RESEARCH QUESTION

How might a peer mentor program assist 7th Grade boys to adapt to a new school environment?

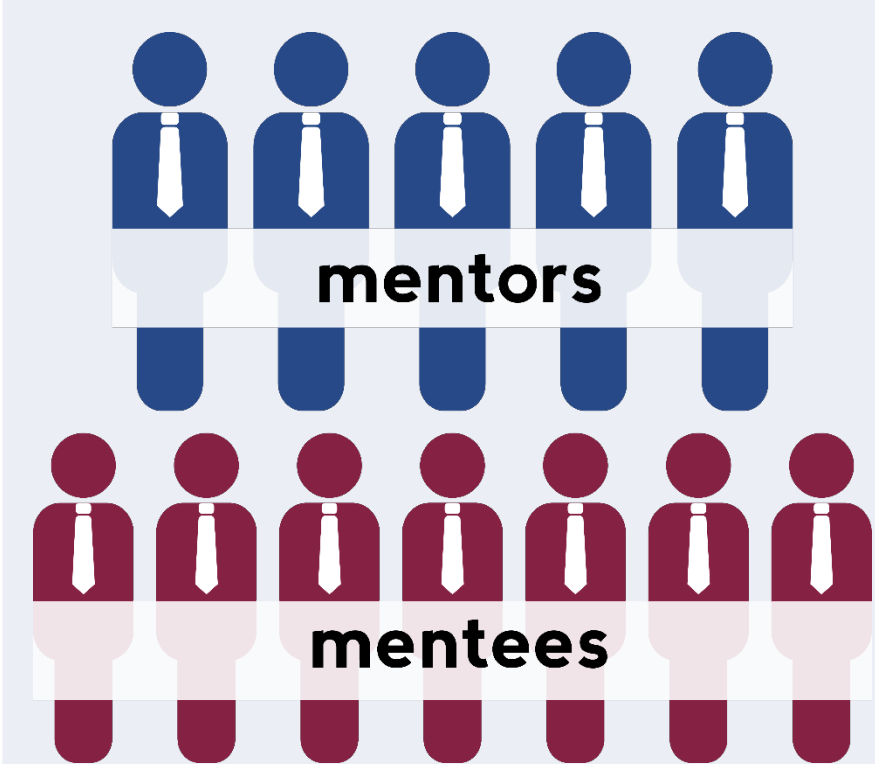
RESEARCH CONTEXT

Belmont Hill School is a highly-selective college preparatory all-boys day school that prides itself on enrolling a diverse group of students from around the greater Boston area who seek a robust curriculum with **high academic standards**, **competitive athletics**, and **cultivating character**. The school's motto of "working together" is embraced in a variety of ways meant to foster a safe, healthy, and vibrant community.

445
students



PARTICIPANTS

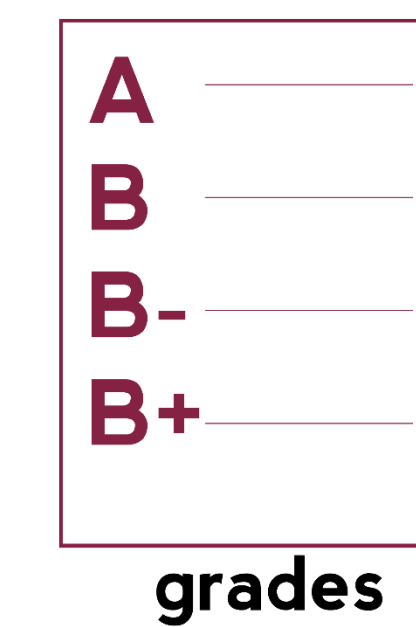


Participants in this study included **eight boys** from my 7th Grade advisory group that acted as the mentees. **Five older boys** from a separate 9th Grade advisory group acted as the mentors.

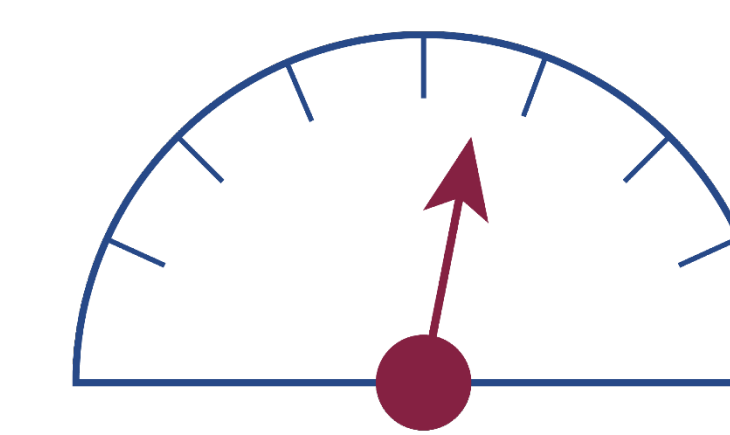
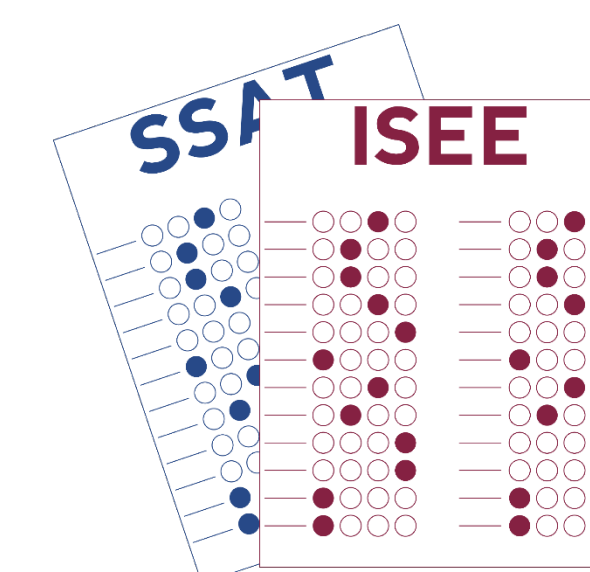
THE RESEARCH ACTION

Within the first two weeks of the school year, I met with both advisory groups (mentors and mentees) in order to outline the new mentoring program and to set expectations. Meetings were held during a **shared 40-minute lunch period** once per week for the first half of the school year. The boys discussed topics relevant to school-related issues such as meeting with a teacher for extra help, how to write an English paper, or study strategies for a Latin test. However, the informality in some of these early meetings led to topics more closely related to items such as socializing on the weekends, trying out for a sports team, or staying in touch with friends not at Belmont Hill.

DATA COLLECTION



teacher comments



DATA ANALYSIS

I collected and grouped responses from surveys into a central spreadsheet in order to measure any changes the boys observed in their academic and social adaptations to Belmont Hill. **Thematic analysis** was particularly useful when examining boys' voices through open response questions and interviews. Since student profiles (academic & social) had already been established from the beginning of the year, **thematic interpretation** allowed for accurate and individualized interpretation of data from each boy.

KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative and quantitative data revealed that all eight boys responded to the mentor program in different ways. Seven of the eight boys felt as though the program helped in some way with their transitions, while five boys were able to identify at least one important lesson learned from the meetings with the mentors. The mentor program also supplemented pre-existing programs designed by the school to help with the transition. While the mentor program did not play an integral role in the transition of these eight boys, **all eight students agreed and acknowledge that the intent behind the program was valuable and that the program should continue next year**. The results of the action reinforce the importance of belonging, sincere mentor guidance, and meaningful cross-age mentoring programs as significant factors when it comes to the 7th Grade transition at Belmont Hill.

CONCLUSIONS

The mentor program did not provide new students with a significant support system, according to the 7th Grade boys. **Most of the boys felt as though they were able to adapt and adjust to their new school rather easily without the support of the mentors**. It is worth noting that seven of the eight boys involved in the program already had significant connections to the school through older siblings, parents, and friends, and that the program would have likely better served a different cohort. Given the level of support and programming the school already provides, it was difficult to find additional time to build the mentor program to include more meaningful interactions between mentors and mentees. I believe this is a reflection of the school's pre-existing commitment to supporting new boys. Most new boys felt as though their transitions to Belmont Hill had been positive, some stating that it was easier than they anticipated. **While it is impossible to pinpoint exactly which programs were most helpful, it is likely the multidimensional nature of the programming that led the boys to make their conclusions.**



"I think the group you did [the action research] with was the best option."

"I feel like just for me [the action research] wasn't as meaningful because I knew the school in some way...for someone who doesn't know the school I feel like it would be more meaningful."



"I think [the mentors] would have played a more significant role if we had a better connection. It would have to be one-on-one."



KEY READINGS

Blackwell, L. S., Trzesniewski, K. H., & Dweck, C. S. (2007). Implicit theories of intelligence predict achievement across an adolescent transition: A longitudinal study and intervention. *Society for Research in Child Development*, 78(1), 246-263.

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Karcher, M. (2009). Increases in academic connectedness and self-esteem among high school students who serve as cross-age peer mentors. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(4), 292-299.

Noell, V. (1997). Cross-age mentoring program for social skills development. *The School Counselor*, 44(3), 239-242.



International Boys' Schools Coalition Action Research Program 2017 – 2018:
Adaptability in a Changing World