

Aspirations Incubator Program and Trekks' 10 Youth Programming Principles

Compendium of Supporting Research

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Introduction and Purpose

In 2016, after six years of making grants to a number of different organizations throughout Maine, and following a year of research, planning, and partnership development, the Rural Futures Fund decided to focus its resources on raising the aspirations of middle school students in rural Maine. To further this effort, the Fund is committed to promoting youth development program models that incorporate mentoring as a central component to program activities, such as Trekkers, based in mid-coast Maine. Research shows that youth who have sustained, high-quality mentoring relationships with competent and caring adults do better in school and have a more positive outlook on their futures. In 2017, the Rural Futures Fund announced the Aspirations Incubator program (AI), a six-year pilot initiative to build the capacity of eight rural youth development organizations. AI partners will develop comprehensive mentoring-based programming for youth in grades 7 – 12, focused on increasing resiliency in young people and introducing students growing up in rural Maine communities to new opportunities that may exist outside the focus of their everyday lives.

As part of the Aspirations Incubator program, the Rural Futures Fund is funding the creation of the Trekkers Training Institute, which will provide leadership development and program implementation training for program staff at the eight partner organizations. The curriculum for the Institute is built around the Trekkers Youth Programming Principles, the foundation of their award-winning youth development model that has positively impacted hundreds of students growing up in the small fishing communities of mid-coast Maine.

Trekkers Youth Programming Principles

1. Designing Intentional Program Delivery Systems for Long Term Engagement
2. Developing a Skilled Network of Caring Adults and Peer Mentors
3. Applying a Comprehensive Approach to Youth Development Strategies
4. Creating Circles of Care
5. Prioritizing Informal Relationship Building with Youth
6. Expanding Worldviews
7. Embracing Student Voice and Choice
8. Encouraging Civic Responsibility
9. Preparing Students for Success after High School
10. Utilizing Validated Assessment Tools to Promote Social-Emotional Development in Young People

The purpose of this research compendium is to provide a short summary of the research foundation behind each principle. The document first presents a summary matrix of the articles and research that was reviewed and indicates which principle(s) are represented in each. The document then includes a brief description of each principle and a short summary of the relevant research. The complete citations for all the relevant research can be found in the list of references.

Matrix of Research by Youth Programming Principle

| AUTHOR | YEAR | 1. Designing Intentional Program Delivery Systems for Long Term Engagement | 2. Developing a Skilled Network of Caring Adults and Peer Mentors | 3. Applying a Comprehensive Approach to Youth Development Strategies | 4. Creating Circles of Care | 5. Prioritizing Informal Relationship Building with Youth | 6. Expanding Worldviews | 7. Embracing Student Voice and Choice | 8. Encouraging Civic Responsibility | 9. Preparing Students for Success after High School | 10. Utilizing Validated Assessment Tools to Promote Social-Emotional Development in Young People |
|---------------------|------|--|---|--|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Balcazar & Keys | 2014 | | | | | | | | X | | |
| Billing | 2000 | | | | | | | | X | | |
| Bird, et al | 2013 | | | | | | X | | | X | |
| Bowers, et al | 2015 | | | X | | | | | | | |
| Bruce & Bridgeland | 2014 | X | | X | | | | | | X | |
| Center for Promise | 2015 | X | | | X | | | | | | |
| Colley | 2003 | | | X | | | | | | | |
| Darling | 2005 | | | | | | X | | | | |
| DuBois, et al | 2011 | X | | X | X | | | X | | X | |
| Garringer, et al | 2015 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Grossman, et al | 2011 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Hamilton & Hamilton | 2005 | | | | | | | | X | | |
| Hart, et al | 2007 | | | | | | | | X | | |
| Herrera, et al | 2007 | | | | | | | | | X | |
| Jekielek, et al | 2002 | | | X | | | | | | | |
| Karcher, et al | 2006 | | X | | | | | | | | |
| Keller | 2005 | | | | | X | | X | | | |
| Keller & Blakeslee | 2014 | | | | X | | | | | | |

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|---------------------|------|--|---|--|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Keller & Pryce | 2010 | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kremer & Cooper | 2014 | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kuperminc, et al | 2005 | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kupersmidt & Rhodes | 2014 | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Larose, et al | 2015 | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Luthar | 2006 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Malti & Noam | 2010 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Masten | 2009 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Masten | 2011 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Noam & Guhn | 2012 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Osterling & Hines | 2006 | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rhodes | 2005 | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rhodes & DuBois | 2006 | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rhodes, et al | 2006 | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Schmidt, et al | 2012 | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Skinner & Mundhenk | 2012 | | | | X | | | X | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Small | 2008 | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stukas & Tanti | 2005 | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stukas, et al | 2014 | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Taylor & Porcellini | 2014 | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Relevant Research by Youth Programming Principle

1. Designing Intentional Program Delivery Systems for Long Term Engagement

A commitment to creating small, purposeful learning communities and designing a multi-year, “step-ladder” program delivery system that works with students during middle school and follows them to and through high school graduation. This long term commitment to relationship building allows for the time and space needed to adapt to the ever-changing developmental needs and interests of adolescents.

There are more benefits to youth when mentor relationships are longer term.^{1,2,3,4,5} Some studies have shown a direct relationship between the length of the mentor relationship and the degree of positive outcomes experienced by youth.^{1,5} Stable support from non-familial adults increases the likelihood of high school graduation, particularly for youth who have faced adverse life experiences.⁶

¹ DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91.

² Garringer, M., Kupersmidt, J., Rhodes, J., Stelter, R., & Tai, T. (2015). Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring: Research-Informed and Practitioner Approved Best Practices for Creating and Sustaining Impactful Mentoring Relationships and Strong Program Services.

³ Grossman, J. B., Chan, C. S., Schwartz, S. E., & Rhodes, J. E. (2012). The test of time in school-based mentoring: The role of relationship duration and re-matching on academic outcomes. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 49(1-2), 43-54.

⁴ Rhodes, J. E., & DuBois, D. L. (2006). Understanding and Facilitating the Youth Mentoring Movement. Social Policy Report. Volume 22, Number 3. *Society for Research in Child Development*.

⁵ Bruce, M., & Bridgeland, J. (2014). The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring. A Report for Mentor: The National Mentoring Partnership. *Civic Enterprises*.

⁶ Center for Promise (US). (2015). Don't quit on me: what young people who left school say about the power of relationships.

2. Developing a Skilled Network of Caring Adults and Peer Mentors

A focus on recruiting and training caring adult volunteers and cross-age mentors (young leaders) to play a critical role in meeting the relational needs of local youth growing up in their community.

The successful recruitment and retention of adult volunteers is central to the success of youth mentorship programs.¹ Generally, leveraging personal relationships has been demonstrated to be the most successful recruitment strategy.² Ensuring that volunteer activities provide the benefits that volunteers seek is a key factor in volunteer retention.² Mentors reported receiving greater benefits from their service when they engaged in more developmental activities than instrumental activities with their mentees.³ Developmental activities are also better predictors of youth outcomes.² Mentor screening with the intent to protect youth from potentially harmful individuals is another critical aspect of mentor recruitment.⁴ Given the connections between mentor training and youth outcomes, mentor programs should include intentional and innovative trainings that are consistently implemented.⁵ Training in the goals of mentoring, the ethical issues facing mentors, and complexities specific to the type of youth being mentored, can reduce the likelihood that these challenges erode the mentor-mentee relationship and lead to negative youth outcomes.⁵

¹ Stukas, A. A., Clary, E. G., & Snyder, M. (2013). Mentor recruitment and retention. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 397-410.

² Stukas, A. A., & Tanti, C. (2005). Recruiting and sustaining volunteer mentors. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 235-250.

³ Karcher, M. J., Benne, K., Gil-Hernandez, D., Allen, C., Roy-Carlson, L., Holcomb, M., & Gomez, M. (2006). The Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment (SMILE): A functional approach to predicting mentor satisfaction from mentoring interactions. In *14th annual meeting of the Society for Prevention Research, San Antonio, TX*.

⁴ Kremer, S. E., & Cooper, B. (2014). Mentor screening and youth protection. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 411-425.

⁵ Kupersmidt, J. B., & Rhodes, J. E. (2014). Mentor training. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 439-456.

3. Applying a Comprehensive Approach to Youth Development Strategies

A dedication to building targeted holistic youth development methods into the overall program design to help young people find success and navigate challenges during adolescence by focusing on proven promotion, prevention and intervention strategies.

Mentor relationships benefit youth developmentally, both preventing negative outcomes and promoting positive outcomes, often in more than one developmental area.^{1,5} Mentoring programs increase healthy behaviors and attitudes, and decrease substance abuse and delinquency.² Youth with mentor relationships more frequently participate in sports, extracurricular activities, clubs, school council, and volunteer opportunities than youth without mentorships.³ Rather than focusing on fixing one or more 'deficiencies,' a holistic mentorship recognizes the various socio-economic elements which impact youth and strives to help youth find individualized ways to move toward positive outcomes.⁴

¹ DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91.

² Jekielek, S., Moore, K. A., & Hair, E. C. (2002). Mentoring Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis.

³ Bruce, M., & Bridgeland, J. (2014). The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring. A Report for Mentor: The National Mentoring Partnership. *Civic Enterprises*.

⁴ Colley, H. (2003). Engagement mentoring for socially excluded youth: problematising a 'holistic' approach to creating employability through the transformation of habitus. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 31(1), 77-99.

⁵ Bowers, E. P., Johnson, S. K., Warren, D. J., Tirrell, J. M., & Lerner, J. V. (2015). Youth–adult relationships and positive youth development. In *Promoting Positive Youth Development* (pp. 97-120). Springer International Publishing.

4. Creating Circles of Care

A practice of assembling support networks for young people by partnering with parents, schools, key stake holders, health services and other youth advocate agencies to with the goal of building high-level supports to assist in meeting the academic and non-academic needs of students.

Youth with a network of supportive relationships comprised of parents, school administration and faculty, health service providers, advocates and other stakeholders are more likely to graduate highschool.¹ Mentoring programs can aid youth in achieving more positive interactions with others, including other nonparent adults.² This is due in part to how mentor relationships improve a youth participant's ability to communicate, which facilitates more effective connections with peers, parents, and other nonparent adults.³ Mentors can connect youth to external support services, including educational and economic support services.⁴ Mentoring has greater benefits to youth when combined with other programs and services.⁵ Mentorships that are able to involve parents⁶ and seek to use and develop a mentee's social network may be more effective.⁷

¹ Center for Promise (US). (2015). Don't quit on me: what young people who left school say about the power of relationships.

² DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91.

³ Skinner, R. L., & Mundhenk, S. E. (2012). Youth mentoring: Program and mentor best practices. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 104(2), 38.

⁴ Osterling, K. L., & Hines, A. M. (2006). Mentoring adolescent foster youth: Promoting resilience during developmental transitions. *Child & Family Social Work*, 11(3), 242-253.

⁵ Kuperminc, G. P., Emshoff, J. G., Reiner, M. M., Secrest, L. A., Niolon, P. H., & Foster, J. D. (2005). Integration of mentoring with other programs and services. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 314-333.

⁶ Taylor, A. S., & Porcellini, L. (2013). Family involvement. *Handbook of youth mentoring*. 457-68.

⁷ Keller, T. E., & Blakeslee, J. E. (2014). Social networks and mentoring. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 2, 129-142.

5. Prioritizing Informal Relationship Building with Youth

A commitment to “showing up” and being present in the lives of young people outside of regular scheduled programming. By designing outreach in the community into the overall program delivery model, staff and caring adult mentors can build even stronger relationships with mentees and maintain relational links to students even when core programs are not in session.

Mentors who make connections with other individuals involved in a youth’s life often make more of a positive impact on youth.¹ Mentor relationships that balance support and guidance with mentee-driven activity and engagement achieve more successful results.² Mentorships that include engaging in social activity build closer relationships between mentors and youth.³ Higher levels of recreational activity is related to higher mentor relationship quality and more effective outcomes for youth.⁴

¹ Small, S. A. (2008). What research tells us about effective youth mentoring programs. *What Works, Wisconsin Fact Sheet*.

² Keller, T. E., & Pryce, J. M. (2010). Mutual but unequal: Mentoring as a hybrid of familiar relationship roles. *New Directions for Student Leadership, 2010*(126), 33-50.

³ Keller, T. E. (2005). The stages and development of mentoring relationships. *Handbook of youth mentoring, 1*, 82-99.

⁴ Larose, S., Savoie, J., DeWit, D. J., Lipman, E. L., & DuBois, D. L. (2015).). The role of relational, recreational, and tutoring activities in the perceptions of received support and quality of mentoring relationship during a community-based mentoring relationship. *Journal of Community Psychology, 43*(5), 527-544.

6. Expanding Worldviews

A priority for introducing students – through outdoor, experiential and travel-based educational opportunities – to the diversity of people, cultures, places and natural resources that exist outside the reach of their everyday lives.

Mentors may help shift a young person’s idea of their future identity by showing them more possibilities than what they would have been exposed to without mentorship, and is associated with a link between young people’s aspirations and expectations for their future career.¹ The relationships that youth have with adults are important for building understanding of the adult world.² Adolescent identity is discovered through the activities that youth participate in, and so activities that expand upon a youth’s experience can expand a youth’s identity.³

¹ Rhodes, J. E. (2005). A model of youth mentoring. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 30-43.

² Bird, W. A., Tummons, J. T., Martin, M. J., & Henry, A. (2013). Engaging students in constructive youth-adult relationships: A case study of urban school-based agriculture students and positive adult mentors. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 54(2), 29-43.

³ Darling, N. (2005). Mentoring adolescents. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 177-190.

7. Embracing Student Voice and Choice

A willingness to share power and give young people input into the overall educational process.

Mentoring encourages identity development in youth and shapes youth understanding of future achievement and goals.¹ Mentoring programs that respect the individuality of youth both in background and ability, have more successful outcomes.² Mentorships that are youth-centered and driven by the interests of the youth (rather than the mentor or other adult) result in higher quality, longer mentor-mentee relationships and more positive development outcomes.^{3,4}

¹ DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91.

² Skinner, R. L., & Mundhenk, S. E. (2012). Youth mentoring: Program and mentor best practices. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 104(2), 38.

³ Rhodes, J. E., & DuBois, D. L. (2006). Understanding and Facilitating the Youth Mentoring Movement. Social Policy Report. Volume 22, Number 3. *Society for Research in Child Development*.

⁴ Keller, T. E. (2005). The stages and development of mentoring relationships. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 1, 82-99.

8. Encouraging Civic Responsibility

A desire to incorporate service into curriculum design and a commitment to enhance civil discourse.

Volunteerism has a positive impact on youth development, increasing feelings of responsibility, social competence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.¹ Regardless of background, youth who participate in community service have better academic outcomes, less delinquency, and expanded worldviews.² Community service during teenage years is associated with increased civic engagement (including voting) as an adult.³ Mentor programs that provide goal-directed activities and service learning have stronger positive effects on youth⁴, and goal-setting strengthens mentor-mentee relationships.⁵ Mentorship programs that encourage citizenship development have multiple positive benefits for youth including increased social capital, pro-social behavior, resiliency, happiness and emotional wellbeing.⁶

¹ Billig, S. H. (2000). Research on K-12 school-based service learning: The evidence builds. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(9), 658.

² Schmidt, J. A., Shumow, L., & Kackar, H. Z. (2012). Associations of participation in service activities with academic, behavioral, and civic outcomes of adolescents at varying risk levels. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 41(7), 932-947.

³ Hart, D., Donnelly, T. M., Youniss, J., & Atkins, R. (2007). High school community service as a predictor of adult voting and volunteering. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(1), 197-219.

⁴ Hamilton, M. A., & Hamilton, S. F. (2005). Work and service-learning. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 348-363.

⁵ Balcazar, F. E., & Keys, C. B. (2014). Goals in mentoring relationships. *Handbook of youth mentoring*, 2, 83-98.

⁶ Skinner, R. L., & Mundhenk, S. E. (2012). Youth mentoring: Program and mentor best practices. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 104(2), 38.

9. Preparing Students for Success after High School

A focus on increasing opportunities for youth to identify, explore and cultivate their future aspirations – whether those aspirations include immediate entry into the workforce or ambitions for college – through hands-on experiences.

Youth benefit from increased interactions with the adult world, especially when those opportunities involve learning from a positive, non-parental adult.¹ Mentorships increase the likelihood that young people will attend college² and increase aspirations for higher education and employment.^{3,4}

¹ Bird, W. A., Tummons, J. T., Martin, M. J., & Henry, A. (2013). Engaging students in constructive youth-adult relationships: A case study of urban school-based agriculture students and positive adult mentors. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 54(2), 29-43.

² Bruce, M., & Bridgeland, J. (2014). The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring. A Report for Mentor: The National Mentoring Partnership. *Civic Enterprises*.

³ DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91.

⁴ Herrera, C., Grossman, J. B., Kauh, T. J., Feldman, A. F., & McMaken, J. (2007). Making a difference in schools: The Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring impact study. *Public/Private Ventures*.

10. Utilizing Validated Assessment Tools to Promote Social-Emotional Development in Young People

An emphasis on collecting social-emotional development and resiliency data as a way to inform individual intervention strategies and influence programming – all with the intention of better detecting barriers to academic achievement in students at an early age.

Youth-focused, evidence-based interventions, whether around violence, bullying, etc., need to be grounded in sound developmental theory that identifies important risk and resilience factors.^{1, 2, 3, 4} The use of early developmental screening tools is an important step to ensure that these risk and resilience factors are identified and utilized in practice.¹ The results from screening tools can then be used to inform interventions that are tailored to the individual and thus more effective.^{1, 5}

¹ Noam, G., Malti, T., & Guhn, M. (2012). From clinical-developmental theory to assessment: The holistic student assessment tool. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)*, 6(2), 201-213.

² Luthar, S. S. Resilience in Development: A Synthesis of Research across Five Decades. *Developmental Psychopathology, Second Edition*, 739-795.

³ Masten, A. S. (2009). Ordinary Magic: Lessons from Research on Resilience in Human Development. *Education Canada*, 49(3), 28-32.

⁴ Masten, A. S. (2011). Resilience in children threatened by extreme adversity: Frameworks for research, practice, and translational synergy. *Development and Psychopathology*, 23(02), 493-506.

⁵ Malti, T., Liu, C. H. J., & Noam, G. G. (2010). Holistic assessment in school-based, developmental prevention. *Journal of prevention & intervention in the community*, 38(3), 244-259.

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- predicting mentor satisfaction from mentoring interactions. In *14th annual meeting of the Society for Prevention Research, San Antonio, TX*.
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- Rhodes, J. E., & DuBois, D. L. (2006). Understanding and Facilitating the Youth Mentoring Movement. Social Policy Report. Volume 22, Number 3. *Society for Research in Child Development*.
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