

# REPORT

## An Investigation of Electronic Mentoring Practice

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## **Preface**

This report provides an overview of best practices in eMentoring, as well as perceptions of key stakeholders and mentoring organizations involved with Mentor Kenosha & Racine (MKR) as to the suitability and viability of eMentoring for their organizations. Funded by the Racine County Workforce Development Center, one important purpose of this report is to support investigation of the viability and value of a potential community-wide shared eMentoring platform which could be developed and managed by the MKR initiative based at the University of Wisconsin- Parkside Center for Community Partnerships.

### **1. Introduction To eMentoring**

Technology-driven initiatives and electronically delivered programs are revolutionizing how we work and learn. Developments in telecommunications, in particular, have led to an explosion in online instruction. Similarly, the technology revolution raises questions regarding mentoring. eMentoring is mentoring that is conducted using discussion boards, chat and email, as the primary means of communication. (Wikipedia, 2008). Modern eMentoring projects tend to rely on highly secure, web-based solutions, particularly if children are involved. Online software allows both mentors and mentees to log into a secure online environment where they can converse under supervision of moderators and coordinators.

eMentoring is currently used most frequently to pair K-12 students with adult community volunteers who provide remedial curricular support and guidance on life skills, frequently focusing on disadvantaged youth or youth with disabilities. eMentoring is often also used to support novice practitioners such as teachers and scientists and to create mentor/mentee relationships between industry leaders and college students to provide the latter with advice and support regarding successful transition into the work world. One notable example of the former type of program is Virtual Mentoring for Student Success (VMSS). VMSS is a partnership that includes the National Science Foundation, the National Science Teachers Association, and over 100 US school districts. The partnership focuses on raising student achievement in science at the middle and high school levels through effective sustained professional development of novice teachers using a content-specific distance-delivery model that is designed to reduce teacher attrition rates and improve student achievement in Science.

In terms of eMentoring directed to K-12 students, one of the most notable and comprehensive examples of this type of eMentoring program support is “Connecting to Success,” developed at the University of Minnesota. Achieve!Minneapolis, an intermediary organization, developed an eMentoring model that has been used successfully by the Minneapolis Public Schools in partnership with Minnesota-based corporations. There are currently more than 1,000 students participating. The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (NCSET) recognized the value of this model and formed a partnership with the Achieve!Minneapolis to adapt the model for students with disabilities. This model is cited as an exemplar in this report as it encompasses all of the following typical formats that can support eMentoring:

- A situation in which various mentors provide guidance to a group of people. Classrooms sometimes recruit experienced professionals to guide complex school projects.
- One-to-one mentoring in which each young person has a mentor.
- Project-based learning in which a mentor works with a student to complete a project.

- Curriculum-based mentoring in which the teacher posts discussion questions relevant to curriculum for the mentor and mentee to discuss.
- Unstructured interaction in which mentor and mentee allow the relationship to unfold in keeping with common interests.
- Any combination of the above.

Industry also plays an important role. MentorPlace (mentorplace.org, 2008) is a sizable volunteer program, funded and administered by IBM, which brings thousands of adult professionals and students together in online relationships, using a proprietary platform. Employee volunteers are charged with providing students with academic assistance and career counseling, while letting them know that adults care about their issues and concerns.

## **2. eMentoring's Advantages and Disadvantages**

### *Relative Benefits of eMentoring*

eMentoring provides for a flexible communication environment independent of time and space extending mentoring opportunities to many more students and allowing mentors otherwise constrained by time and geography to participate (Muller and Single, 1999), thus alleviating a major obstacle to the development of mentoring relationships. (Boyle and Boice, 1998). In addition, because the interactions are not synchronous, the respondents have time to consider message content. The response prepared by the individual can therefore be more reflective because of the time-delayed nature of the communication (Ravet & Layte, 1997).

Online mentoring, however, is occasionally compared unfavorably with face to face mentoring. It is suggested that the medium limits the ability to pick up on visual or social clues, makes immediate feedback difficult and can often be seen as impersonal. eMentoring, however, may decrease initial feelings of intimidation or of discomfort in new or unfamiliar environments because typical symbols of status are often unidentified (Harasim,1998; Palloff & Pratt, 2001). Sproull and Keisler (1991) refer to this as the attenuation of status differences. Although potentially problematic for individuals that are not comfortable with electronic communication, eMentoring allows for equalization in the mentoring relationship (Harasim, 1998; Palloff & Pratt, 2001). As well, once the initial match of the mentor and mentee is made there is sometimes little or no assistance in guiding, training, coaching, or following up on the relationship. eMentoring programs, therefore need a high level of structure to keep the mentee engaged in the relationship. Contact may be needed more often or on a more regular basis than in face-to-face mentoring so that the mentee doesn't become preoccupied with other things and lose contact (Mueller and Single, 1999).

### *Relative Benefits of EMentoring Programs for K-12 aged youth*

In terms of K-12 education, knowledgeable adults have for decades become involved in a variety of ways: visiting to give presentations about their careers, meeting students on field trips, and offering personal tutoring, for instance. While these activities have been significant, they have not always been available for students because of the physical distance or the conflicting schedules separating school children from adults. eMentoring can potentially play a crucial role suggests MENTOR (mentor.org, 2008), the largest national mentoring advocacy, support and research organization in the United States. MENTOR points out that, although nearly 17.6 million young Americans need or want mentoring, only three million are in formal, high-quality mentoring relationships.

Rhodes et al.(2000) suggest that for eMentors in a K-12 program, some of the most common positive effects include:

- Increased self-esteem
- Feelings of accomplishment and creation of networks of volunteers
- Insight into childhood and adolescence
- Personal gain, such as increased patience, a sense of effectiveness, and acquiring
- New skills or knowledge

Employers who engage in eMentoring programs also experience benefits. Mentoring influences the organizational culture, sending a message that the company cares about people, values employees, and accepts diversity among both youth mentees and employees. Additionally, employers benefit from a more motivated workforce, and employees report greater satisfaction in their work (The Connecticut Mentoring Project, 2002).

For K-12 mentees, some of the most commonly reported benefits (Campbell-Whatley, 2001) of eMentoring include:

- Better attitudes toward school and future
- Decreased likelihood of initiating drug or alcohol use
- Greater feelings of academic competence
- Improved academic performance
- More positive relationships with friends and family

Other research suggests that effective mentoring in general can change the course of a young person's life, decrease substance abuse, and improve academic performance (Beier, Rosenfeld, Spitalny, Zansky, and Bontempo, 2000).

In general, eMentoring yields many of the benefits of face-to-face mentoring, increasing students' decision-making skills and self-efficacy. Educational research shows that college preparation intervention programs can double the college-going rates for at-risk youth; positively influence students' educational goals; increase their educational and cultural capital assets; and boost college enrollment and graduation rates. The benefits are often greatest for low-income students with low achievement rates. ([www.icouldbe.org](http://www.icouldbe.org), 2006)

### **3. eMentoring Best Practices**

#### **3.1 Setting Program Objectives**

eMentor program objectives must clearly reflect the needs of all stakeholders and be subsequently measurable. An example of a program mission or vision statement is provided below:

*“Connecting to Success aims to:*

- *Promote a vision of greatly expanded opportunities for people with disabilities*
- *Link eMentoring with the transition process*
- *Create opportunities for career learning, academic learning, and increased self-esteem*
- *Foster high expectations for at-risk students and students with disabilities*

By enhancing students' awareness of the world of work, their perceptions of their own capabilities, and their ability to communicate effectively, we seek to increase the likelihood that at-risk students and students with disabilities will pursue postsecondary education. We also seek

to change perceptions so that students, educators, employers, and citizens will not only envision youth with disabilities transitioning to productive lives; they will expect it.” (Connecting to Success, 2008).

### **3.2 Program Design**

Regarding specific operational concerns, research and practice on face-to-face mentoring programs have suggested that programmatic supports, as indicated by structured or facilitated mentoring programs, maximize the benefits associated with participation in the mentoring programs (Boyle and Boice, 1998). In the specific case of eMentoring, well structured eMentoring programs not only match mentors with mentees, but also provide training, coaching, and assessment to facilitate the development of effective mentoring relationships and to improve future program renditions, often requiring the attention of a mentoring specialist or program coordinator (Single and Muller, 1999). Other areas that should be addressed in a successful e-Mentoring relationship include objectives, administrative support, technical support and communication tools.

In addition, as computers and telecommunications continue to evolve, new forms of “neomillennial” learning styles are emerging which must be considered in design of eMentoring platforms. Research on sophisticated interactive media suggests that the following may emerge as cross-age learning styles (Dede et al, 2005):

- Fluency in multiple media, valuing each for the types of communication, activities, experiences, and expressions it empowers.
- Learning based on collectively seeking, sieving, and synthesizing experiences rather than individually locating and absorbing information from some single best source.
- Active learning based on experience (real and simulated) that includes frequent opportunities for reflection.
- Expression through nonlinear, associational webs of representations rather than linear “stories” (e.g., authoring a simulation and a Web page to express understanding rather than a paper)
- Co-design of learning experiences personalized to individual needs and preferences

### **3.3 Training eMentors**

Scholars have identified training programs and expectation management as integral features of successful mentoring and eMentoring programs (Single & Muller, 2001). The incorporation of training into a structured eMentoring program can be expected to shape individuals’ abilities to maximize the benefits of eMentoring relationships by facilitating skill-building and defining the responsibilities of participants (Single and Muller, 2001). In the adaptation of such programs to electronic format, the content and delivery of the information become important elements. To accomplish this, it is suggested that it is necessary to take the lessons learned from face-to-face mentoring and investigate their application in the e-communication environment.

An additional element identified by MentorNet as increasing the success of an eMentoring program is the frequency of coaching: weekly coaching produced greater satisfaction than bimonthly coaching (Single *et al.*, 2000). In fact, Cochran and Pascerelli (2003) found that engaging in a required training tutorial will increase the number of students who stay involved with their eMentors in a formalized eMentoring program. They also found that engaging in a required training tutorial will increase the overall satisfaction of students who participate in a formalized eMentoring program and that engaging in a required training tutorial will increase the perceived value of participation for the students who stay involved with their eMentors

### **3.4 Matching eMentors and eMentees**

As eMentoring gains acceptance in both the education and business worlds, it is important to begin formalizing the process by which mentors and mentees are matched. Research suggests three different matching components that are noteworthy to consider when making a match:

#### *Matching by Race*

There is little consensus about how to treat race when pairing mentors and mentees. In fact, according to Wallace (1994) there has been little research done to support any practices, and the arguments for and against cultural matching are to some degree “ideological premises based on beliefs rather than research” (p. 25).

Some developers of eMentoring programs argue that mentees should be matched with a mentor of the same race. Thomas (1993) examined mentoring relationships between black and white managers and found that racial similarity helped the mentoring process occur more smoothly. He further concluded that, when white managers felt anxious about cross-racial differences, as a pair they were unable to connect and the protégé, the individual that is supposed to gain the most out of the relationship, loses out on a valuable experience (Thomas, 1993).

Other mentoring program researchers (Southward, 1999) feel, however, that cross-race matching is necessary to benefit all of society and that matching mentors with mentees of different racial backgrounds may help white participants overcome the negative stereotypes of blacks and that black participants may change their conceptions of whites.

A third view is that mentor-protégé matching by race should not be a priority over the individual's development (Furano et al., 1993) and that traits such as understanding, non-discriminatory attitudes and good listening skills were more important. In 1993 the Big Brother/Big Sister Association conducted evaluations of their programs, which are based on the concepts of mentoring, and looked at the issue of race in the relationships. They found that “minority youth in same-race matches and those in cross-cultural matches were equally likely to have met with their Big Brother or Big Sister during the study period, and their rates of interaction were also similar” (Furano et al., 1993)

#### *Matching by Personality*

Daresh and Playko (1992) have devised a scale by which they match up personality types which they believe complementary in mentor/mentee relationships. Participants are surveyed and, based on the results, classified as either supportive, directive, facilitative or scientific personality styles. Optimal matches are then suggested based on the classifications of mentors and mentees. For example, mentoring program facilitators would match a supportive mentor with a facilitative mentee (Daresh & Playko, 1992).

### *Role of Attachment Theory*

Bowlby, an expert on attachment and loss, defines attachment theory as “a quest for a particular kind of affective contact with another” (Bowlby, 1982). If mentors do not establish themselves as permanent roles in the mentees' lives, regardless of other factors, the relationship will not be successful. That permanence doesn't necessarily mean that the mentors are constantly checking up on the mentees and remaining in continual contact, but it creates a relationship that allows the mentees to know that their mentors have a quiet presence in their life. Attachment research presents evidence that in order for attachment to occur, individuals must acquire a concept of the person as having permanence (Ainsworth, 1989). Therefore attachment may not occur if the individuals being mentored do not trust, become acquainted with or perceive their mentors as “permanent” figures in their lives (Wallace, 1994).

### **3.5 Exemplar eMentoring Platforms**

Although existing eMentoring platforms have deployed various features and components to support mentoring online, the majority of them include the following components:

- **Matching mentor/mentee:** match a mentor/mentee according to the information found in mentor/mentee's profiles.
- **Communications between mentor and mentee:** methods that allow mentors and mentees to communicate online (e.g. email, in-person, and web forum etc.)
- **Program and/or curriculum management:** the contents offered by the eMentoring providers to enrich the mentoring experience and effectiveness for both mentors and mentees.
- **Community development/knowledge sharing:** help mentors or mentees to form groups and communities where social ties can be developed. Mentees/mentors can learn the right knowledge from the other mentors/mentees either through email, by posting on web forum or web advisory board, etc.
- **Mentoring support:** the service(s) to ensure a healthy progress of a mentoring process including evaluation report, keeping track of mentor and mentee activities etc.
- **Security and privacy:** a necessary component of any good mentoring program works to ensure mentors meet safety qualification criteria through a security background check., and mentor/mentee privacy rights are protected through a secure platform..

In order to clearly show what functionalities that eMentoring platforms are providing, we investigated several highly visible eMentoring platforms in the market and compared their features. Those platforms examined include :

- **Imentor.org** (<http://www.imentor.org>)
- **Insala.com**(<http://www.insala.com/>)
- **CSV.org**(<http://www.csv.org.uk>)
- **MentorNet** ([www.mentornet.net](http://www.mentornet.net))

- **Mentor Scout** (<http://www.mentorscout.com>)
- **Icouldbe** (<http://www.icouldbe.org/>)

Table 1 shows the similarity and difference of the technique features for the eMentoring platforms investigated. Those features vary by the target users that the eMentoring platforms serve.

**Table 1. A Comparison of Major eMentoring Platforms**

EMENTORING PLATFORM		IMENTOR	INSALA	CSV	MENTORNET	MENTOR SCOUT	ICOULDBE
<b>Matching Mentor/Mentee</b>	Database Search	*			*	*	*
	Online Profile Comparison	*			*		
	email or Other Tools		*	*	*		
<b>Communication</b>	Email	*		*	*		*
	Web Post		*		*	*	*
<b>Program/ Curriculum management</b>	Program Management						*
	Curriculum Management.	*					*
<b>Community Development/Knowledge Sharing</b>	Sharing Through Coordinators	*			*		
	Just In Time Learning/Sharing		*			*	*
	e-Forum	*		*	*	*	*
	Advice Board						*
<b>Mentoring Support</b>	Evaluation Report	*	*	*			*
	Activity Checking:	*	*			*	*
<b>Security /Privacy</b>	Volunteer Screening	*				*	*
	Login Control	*	*	*			*
<b>Target user</b>	Teenagers	*					*
	Primary or Secondary School, University students			*	*		
	Young Employees		*		*	*	

**Imentor.org** (<http://www.imentor.org>)

iMentor is an eMentoring organization established in 1999 and based in New York City. Through the iMentor interactive platform, imentor.org provides other institutions with the tools and resources they need to run quality mentoring programs. To date, iMentor has matched over 5,000 mentor-mentee pairs, partnering with 30 New York City schools and after-school programs in four of city's five boroughs.

*Mentor/mentee match:* creates individualized “best-match” matching algorithms for each user based on preferences from the mentor and mentee applications. The database automatically searches all available users for best matches according to individual needs and competencies while organization maintains the ability to further refine match searches. The platform also allows users to compare profiles of potential matches.

*Communication:* communication can be done either through weekly email or monthly in-person meetings. In-person meetings are held several times a year in New York City. Each personalized email account includes features such as integrated curriculum and pictures, full text editor, and quick view of event calendar.

*Program/curriculum management:* iMentor Core Curriculum is a series of weekly writing prompts that span twenty seven weeks of the program year and facilitate mentor/mentee communication and project work through three (3) nine week components (personal, college and career and community awareness).

*Community/social network:* iMentor provides each organization with its own safe and secure online social network specifically designed for mentoring.

*Security/Privacy:* information collected from Registered Users is stored in databases and servers kept in secure locations under the custody and control of iMentor or its third party hosting services. iMentor also uses technologies and processes such as encryption, access control procedures, and network firewalls to protect such servers. User accounts and profiles are password-protected using industry-standard, commercially reasonable methods.

*Targeted users:* high school-aged youth including those in the most isolated, low-income, and underserved communities.

*Training/cost:* iMentor interactive is a web-based platform, it was designed to be a completely user-friendly platform easily utilized by both youth and non-profit staff. Any technical problems encountered can be solved by the iMentor Interactive Helpdesk. The platform is designed to enable even the smallest staff to manage a mentoring program efficiently and effectively. iMentor will provide an in-depth training of the platform and ongoing support. Each mentor-mentee pair requires iMentor to raise \$1000 (i.e. 50 students would require \$50,000 in fundraising). iMentor asks schools to contribute a small percentage of that cost: \$50 per student, annually (i.e. \$2500 for 50 iMentor students for a full year of screened and trained mentors, curriculum, technology, events, and program support).

Clients: as of 2007, iMentor has 17 member organizations in seven states and four countries including the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women Initiative and many schools. A list of their clients is located on their website: [http://www.imentor.org/imentor\\_interactive/current\\_members.php](http://www.imentor.org/imentor_interactive/current_members.php)

Cost--\$8500/250user/yr; \$16000/500+user/yr

**Insala** (<http://www.insala.com/>)

Founded in late 90s, Insala is a leading global provider of web based software for organizations implementing career development and talent management initiatives. Their products can be used individually or as a solution for an integrated, in-depth, and broad approach to talent identification, growth, and development.

*Mentor/mentee match:* provide tools for matching and pairing mentors and mentees; these tools are part of the solution package called Hi-impact Mentoring.

*Communication:* Insala provides a highly integrated mentoring solution package, Hi-Impact Mentoring®, which has built-in tools for consistent communication between mentors and mentees.

*Program/curriculum management:* Insala does not provide any program or curriculum, the focus of Insala's mentoring product is to link mentoring to career patching, succession planning, and performance management.

*Community development/Knowledge sharing:* the product information doesn't list social networking as part of product's features, but the product description is highly abstract.

*Security/Privacy* secure login controls.

*Targeted users:* Insala products are designed for businesses and industry of all sizes to help them retain, re-deploy, assess, and manage their workforce; the design also addresses business performance and supports organizations that are in need of career management and transition service.

*Training/cost* training can be done either in person or via Webinar. The structure of cost consists of two parts: implementation fee and annual license fee. For 500 users: \$12,500 implementation and \$9,750 annual license fee; for 1000 users: \$18500 implementation fee and \$18,500 annual license fee.

*Clients:* Deloitte, Monster UK, AIG Life, AIU, Woolworths Group, ACCA, LeBow College of Business, Intertek, Ofcom, BBC, Alliant Energy Corporate Services, Career Advantage, OI Partners, Cornerstone Consulting, Career Masters Institute, Executrack, Michigan Health & Hospital Association, Gateway International Group, ACP International, Hudson Human Capital Solutions, and more.

Cost: depends on the number of users. For 500 users: \$12500 implementation and \$9,750 annual license fee; for 1000 users: \$18500 implementation fee and \$18,500 annual license fee

**CSV (<https://www.csvmentoring.org/>).**

Community Service Volunteers (CSV) was founded in 1962 by Mora and Alec Dickson who also founded Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). CSV has 15 years of experience establishing, developing and supporting student tutoring and mentoring projects in more than 150 universities in the UK.

*Mentor/mentee match:* identify potential partners, support volunteer recruitment, and advice on matching.

*Communication:* most go through emails.

*Program/curriculum management:* CSV does not appear to provide any program or curriculum.

*Community development/Knowledge sharing:* CSV provides an e-forum; members can post relative contents regarding their daily life, work, and personal and academic development.

*Security/Privacy:* email addresses are encoded so that neither the mentor nor mentee is aware of the other's actual email address (e.g. john@csvmentoring.org.) The platform filters emails to identify when email addresses, inappropriate words or phrases are sent, and notifies the CSV Coordinator automatically. Emails containing inappropriate words are still sent, but the words are blanked out and a full copy of the email is sent to the CSV coordinator who will decide on how to act upon this. CSV also sends a random selection of emails each week to the school, university and CSV coordinator for inspection. In addition, CSV stores all emails for five years in case they are needed to establish any facts about the mentoring relationship.

*Targeted users:* students at all levels including primary, secondary and university students.

*Training/cost:* training is done through support manuals and emails. The standard costs involved in setting up an eMentoring project for one year are: \$730 for hardware costs, \$1,015 registration and project set up. An additional £130 per mentor per year subject to a maximum charge of \$190. This equates to a maximum cost of \$3,644.

*Clients:* national corporations and many universities.

**MentorNet ([www.mentornet.net](http://www.mentornet.net))**

Founded in 1997, MentorNet provides highly motivated mentees with positive, one-on-one, email-based mentoring relationships with mentors from industry, government, and higher education. In addition, the MentorNet Community provides opportunities to connect with others from around the world who are interested in diversifying engineering and science. MentorNet has numerous partners from corporations, college and universities and government agencies.

*Mentor/mentee match:* when a mentor or mentee register as a member, he/she needs to fill out a profile form with information such as education, work experience, and preference on mentor or mentee. Match is bidirectional, a mentee can choose a mentor, a mentor can also put some preference on mentees. MentorNet can provide up to five mentors for a mentee to choose from immediately after the mentee has finished creating his/her profile; alternatively, a mentee can let MentorNet to match a mentor automatically. After a match is established, MentorNet will connect mentor with mentee emails.

*Communication:* emails are primary tool for communication between mentors and mentees; MentorNet.net also provides a e-forum called MentorNet Communities; this is a forum where members from all over the world can participate and communicate.

*Program/curriculum management:* the target users of MentorNet's service are very diversified in their academic and career goals. MentorNet doesn't provide any program or curriculum; each Mentornet's mentoring term lasts eight months.

*Community development/Knowledge sharing:* MentorNet provides an e-forum called Mentornet Communities where participants can socialize. On the forum, members can click on any of the group topics and follow the threaded discussions, replying to posts or starting new threads if desired. New postings are conveniently highlighted and all the postings can be received from the groups by email. Since the groups are web-based, members can check in as often as desired without ever losing a piece of the conversation.

*Security/Privacy:* MentorNet has strict criteria on who can join the MentorNet Communities; postings on the forum will be monitored, members who post inappropriate materials will be warned, and if the problem persists, the user will be removed from the community. Technically, the industry standard SSL (Secure Socket Layers) software is used to protect sensitive information online.

*Targeted users:* "The MentorNet E-Mentoring Program is designed to provide information, encouragement, and support to community college, undergraduate, and graduate students, postdocs, and untenured faculty" ([http://mentornet.net/documents/about/programs/one\\_on\\_one.aspx](http://mentornet.net/documents/about/programs/one_on_one.aspx)), women and other underrepresented who are pursuing a career in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

*Training/cost:* currently there is no cost to individual members. MentorNet encourages participating institutions to support it through donation; the donation amount for a higher education institution is between \$1000--\$4000 depending on the size of the institution.

*Clients:* currently they are many colleges and universities participating the mentoring program. Details see <http://mentornet.net/partners/campuses/CurrentCampuses.aspx>

## **Mentor Scout** (<http://www.mentorscout.com/>)

Mentor Scout was created in 2003 with the creation of the Mentor Scout software to improve the efficiency and automation of corporate and association mentoring programs. Initially a platform to help match mentors and mentees, the program has grown to include a full mentoring administration system for both self-match and administrative-match employee/member mentoring programs.

*Mentor/mentee match:* Mentor Scout software will facilitate mentor/mentee matching. Mentors and mentees can match themselves through an easy-to-use online interface. Prospective mentors and mentees can perform both simple and detailed searches to assure they are getting the best match for their individual needs and competencies.

*Communication:* communication is based on a secured web-based environment.

*Program/curriculum management:* Mentor Scout does not appear to provide any program or curriculum.

*Community development/Knowledge sharing:* Mentor Scout Talent Networking Edition is a private, web-based social networking system designed specifically for Talent Management/Talent Development for the new generation> It provides employees with a simple and fun way to connect, interact, collaborate, share ideas and receive praise and recognition.

*Security/Privacy:* With Mentor Scout, a filter and background check is conducted; contact information remains confidential while "mentor scouting" contact information is only released once a mentorship has been agreed upon by both mentor and mentee.

*Targeted users:* new employees, young employees.

*Training/cost:* according to the website, it is "affordable".

*Clients:* Brunswick Bowling, The Home Depot, Best Buy Co., Inc, Magazine Publishers of America, General Mills and others.

### **Icouldbe** (<http://www.icouldbe.org/>)

icouldbe.org is an award-winning non-profit organization that mentors teenagers to successfully transition from high school to college and/or their chosen career path. Since 2000, icouldbe.org has grown to meet the educational and career needs of more than 10,000 students, serving more than 2,300 students a year and pioneering programs around the world. As a premiere eMentoring program, icouldbe.org provides a secure online community where adults representing hundreds of careers, and students find each other.

*Mentor/mentee match:* Icouldbe provides a web search function, the place mentees go to search for mentors in careers they are interested, there is also a place where mentors use this search function to find a teen interested in their career field.

*Communication:* communication between mentor/mentee is done through a website area called MEDIAPULSE, this is the place there participants can email each other and schedule activities. A mentee has opportunity to communicate with multiple mentors.

*Program/curriculum management:* Icouldbe provides different activities for the mentor/mentee to choose from.

*Community development/Knowledge sharing:* career sphere and advice boards are available online. They are the online communities where all members of icouldbe share quotes, riddles, ideas, ask questions and post general comments.

*Security/Privacy:* the mentoring is completely virtual, carried out through a messaging system internal to the Icouldbe.org website, a mentor/mentee must log on to the Icouldbe.org site to communicate with mentee/mentor. Members must use Icouldbe.org's email system to read and write email; personal information is not allowed.

*Targeted users:* teenage students.

*Training/cost:* Free to both mentees and mentors to participate, they accept donations. On-going support and technical support needs to be negotiated. There is capacity to develop the site for local use..

*Clients:* thousands of individuals and many corporate partners:  
[http://www.icouldbe.org/standard/companies/company\\_partners.asp](http://www.icouldbe.org/standard/companies/company_partners.asp)

#### **4. eMentoring Program Evaluation**

Few eMentoring projects, such as the Electronic Emissary based at the University of Texas and the career-oriented science and engineering project implemented by the Center for Children and Technology (CCT), have been subjected to extensive and rigorous research. Saito and Sipe (2003) also conducted an evaluation of the Digital Heroes Campaign (DHC), an eMentoring project administered by a partnership between AOL Time-Warner, People Magazine, PowerUP and the National Mentoring Partnership. The research that has been conducted on other eMentoring programs consists primarily of 1) youths' and/or mentors' post-program reports on their experiences in the program, including how they believe they have benefited from participation, and/or 2) summaries based on records of the frequency of e-mail exchanges.

Despite the lack of extensive research, some common themes emerge from the studies that do exist; many of these findings are similar to what we know about face-to-face mentoring. McDonough, Jastrzab, Sipe, and Rappaport (2002) summarized a number of these.

- *Frequent exchange:* Research has found that mentors and youth are most satisfied with their experience and report having closer relationships when communication occurs regularly and frequently. CCT found that 75 percent of the pairs who agreed they had a positive relationship communicated at least once a week.
- *Rapport:* Youth often report that their eMentors have influenced them in some way — such as broadening their horizons or positively affecting their career aspirations. Mentors also report benefits to themselves, including increasing their understanding of what it's like to be a teenager today and feeling good about volunteering with youth.
- *Open-minded and flexible mentors:* An interesting finding from the CCT research, which is consistent with research on what makes face-to-face mentors successful, is whether or not the mentor is open-minded and flexible. The mentors who had the most positive experiences in CCT's program tended to have relatively flexible, open-ended expectations for the relationship. They saw their role as someone who could “be there” for the student. They tended to describe their relationships with the student as one of “new friend” rather than being there to give advice and guidance to the mentee.

Research also suggests some factors that may help to facilitate the development of more positive relationships. The conclusions of researchers examining these programs are being echoed in more recent research on DHC. Some of these factors include:

- *A clear purpose and topic for the exchange:* One of the shortcomings of electronic mentoring is the lack of face-to-face interaction. The parties involved do not have the advantage of being able to read body language and/or hear the other person's tone of voice in their communications. In addition, much of the

time in face-to-face mentoring is spent in “doing” things rather than simply “communicating.” Since eMentoring relies primarily on written exchanges, mentees, in particular, often struggle with what to write about in their exchanges; having a specific task or topic to discuss may alleviate some of the obstacles faced by eMentoring relationships.

- *Motivated youth:* Research being conducted on DHC has found that youth are more likely to develop successful relationships if their participation is voluntary rather than a requirement. Even motivated students often have difficulty maintaining a commitment of weekly exchanges; thus the support and involvement of program staff who monitor exchanges and provide assistance with composing e-mails is critical.
- *Committed mentor:* In reviewing the e-mail exchanges between mentors and youth participating in DHC and in conducting focus group interviews with these youth, Saito and Sipe have found that a major obstacle to the development of positive relationships is the lack of commitment from mentors. One of the ostensible advantages of eMentoring over face-to-face mentoring is the relatively small investment of time required. Mentors, in particular, typically have access to a computer and the Internet virtually 24 hours a day, both at work and at home. However, the experience in DHC suggests that substantial numbers of mentors do not follow through on their commitment to write their mentee at least once a week. The result is similar to what has been found in face-to-face mentoring: for the youth involved in such relationships, the result is disappointment and in some cases, feelings of having done something wrong that made the mentor not want to communicate with them any longer.
- *Personal friendship:* Although the Electronic Emissary, and similar curriculum-based teleMentoring models, have specific academic goals for these mentoring relationships, youth and mentors were more positive about their experiences when they felt they “got to know” the other individual as a person. That is, the exchanges went beyond the “ask questions-provide advice” mode that is the primary goal of the project.
- *Mentor insight into the mentee:* Mentors found it helpful to receive information about and suggestions for working with the students with whom they were communicating online. Again, this is similar to what we have found in the evaluation of DHC. For DHC, both mentors and youth were asked to complete a profile; the profile was used in the matching process, and it was then shared with the other individual in the match. Mentors, however, consistently indicated that they would like even more information about the youth with whom they are matched. In particular, mentors believe it would be helpful to know more about the youth's family situation and whether there are any particular issues the youth is dealing with that the mentor might be able to assist with. Mentors in DHC expressed a strong desire to have some contact with staff of programs in which youth were participants in order to learn more about their mentees. The Electronic Emissary model is one in which teachers (in whose class the students/mentees are enrolled) have some contact with mentors.

Finally, the research on DHC has provided us with some additional factors that seem to be important if eMentoring is going to be a successful undertaking. These include:

- *Comfort Communicating:* Youth cannot develop a relationship with their mentor if they are unable or uncomfortable talking about themselves with another person. Thus, a minimum level of maturity and comfort with talking about one's self is necessary in order for e-mentoring to work.
- *Regular Contact:* Although eMentoring removes some constraints imposed by most traditional mentoring programs — like a four hour per week minimum time commitment — e-mail mentoring does require a commitment to regular e-mailing — at least once a week and preferably more often. More immediate contact formats such as Instant Messaging will create an altogether new dynamic to the availability of mentors.
- *Access to Computers:* Flexible access to computers and the Internet remains a stumbling block for the free flow of correspondence that e-mail can provide. For the most part, youth in DHC (and this is true of most other eMentoring programs as well) had to go to a particular youth program and could only gain access to computer labs on certain days and/or at certain times. This requires a lot of effort on the part of program staff to monitor youth's eMentoring activity and to ensure that computer labs were appropriately available.

## **5 eMentoring - Process and Outcome Measures**

The outputs that are typically examined in eMentoring programs include most of the same measures captured in face-to-face mentoring programs: recruitment/screening of mentors and youth, training and on-going support, number/frequency of exchanges, strength of the mentoring bond, and changed behaviors and attitudes of the youth. However, eMentoring presents new opportunities and issues. McDonough, Jastrzab, Sipe, and Rappaport (2002) have outlined a number of these as summarized below.

### *Contact Monitoring and Content Analysis*

eMentoring gives program developers the ability to quantify and classify exchanges between youth and mentors. Perhaps most obvious is the ability for the online network to capture and analyze contact information. Researchers will be able to create complex models relating contact frequency, initiation, volume, and online activity to the success of the mentoring experience, and utilize these models to determine the optimum amount of interaction with youth.

Perhaps less obvious is the potential for content analysis software, an emerging field that uses word frequency and grammatical structures, to categorize the nature and qualities of mentor exchanges. With this technique, researchers might distill the fundamental social elements of successful relationships. DHC have provided a start to this type of analysis with their study reporting that mentors and youth in the DHC program exchanged an average of 22.5 e-mails, and that they most often discussed how things were going in school, future career plans and things like sports and music. The evaluators also began the process of developing a typology of eMentoring relationships based on the nature of the e-mails that were exchanged.

*Real-time Monitoring*

Real-time process measures may be the most significant eMentoring development. By monitoring the nature and frequency of exchanges program trainers will be able to intervene as issues in the relationship development. Automated prompts could increase mentor and mentee contact; content analysis could alert trainers to growing discontent or conflict with the relationship; training software could flag mentors who are not prepared to work with certain mentees; and the system could provide routine outcome measure reports allowing program staff to measure and adjust their program's performance.

**6. Mentor Kenosha-Racine Stakeholder Perspective**

Three presentations of drafts of this report were conducted during November and December, 2008. Follow-up questions, concerns and suggestions that are specific to local stakeholders attending the first two meetings are summarized in Figures 1 and 2. A survey of 7 key informants (directors/managers affiliated with local mentoring organizations) was conducted at the third presentation at the "Making Mentoring Work" Conference at UW-Parkside on December 5, 2008. The results are summarized in Tables 1 through 5. Interest in eMentoring and intent to participate in an eMentoring program was strong. Respondents viewed most of the suggested academic and societal outcomes as being an important part of their mandate. Most features of eMentoring platforms were found to be desirable.

**Table 2- Respondent Organization Profiles**

Org	# emp.	Region	Type of Business	Provide mentoring
1	1,001+	Kenosha /Racine	Not-for-profit Public Education	Yes
2	200-1,000	SE WI	Not-for-profit Public Education	Yes
3	200-1,000	State Wide	Private Agency	Yes
4	11 50	Midwest	Non-for-profit Charitable	Yes
5	201-1,000	Kenosha /Racine	Not-for-profit Public Education	Yes
6	201-1,000	State Wide	Not-for-profit Public Agency	Yes
7	11 50	Kenosha /Racine	Non-for-profit Charitable	Yes

**Table 3- Respondent Mentoring and eMentoring Profiles**

Org	# mentors	%of mentors age groups	%of mentees age group	Mentee ethnicity	Interest in eMentoring	Mentor PC skilled/7	Mentee PC Skilled/7	Previous eMentoring
1	51-200	16-30= 25% 31-45=	5-9=60% 10-14=35%	White= 36% Hispanic= 28%	Possibly	3	4	No

		40% 46-60= 30% 61+= 5%	15-19= 5%	Black= 34% Asian= 1%				
2	11 50	16-30= 100%	5-9= 33% 10-14= 33% 15-19= 33%	White= 50% Hispanic= 20% Black= 30%	Very	5	4	No
3	1 10	46-60= 100% (only 1 mentor paid)	15-19	White= 70% Black= 30%	Possibly	5	4	Heard about it but not tried before
4	1 10				Very	5	5	More than 1 year
5	11 50	46-61+= Majority retired teacher	5-14=100%		Very	1	5	No
6		16-30= 5% 31-45= 5%	10-14=50% 15-19= 50%	Black= 100%	Possibly	4	4	No
7	11 50	16-30=100%	10-14= 30% 15-19= 70%	White= 1% Hispanic= 95% Black= 4%	Possibly	5	5	More than 1 year

**Table 4  
Respondent Importance of Educational Outcomes of eMentoring (7 highest)**

Organization	Grades	Attendance	Scholastic Competence	Attitude Toward School
1	4	4	5	6
2	7	5	5	6
3	7	7	7	7
4	7	7	7	7
5		7	7	7
6	5	5	5	7
7	7	6	7	7

**Table 5  
Respondent Importance of Societal Outcomes of eMentoring (7 highest)**

Org	Attitude Toward Peers	Attitude Toward Parents	Reduce Substance Abuse	Reduce Anti-Social Activates	New Experience	Workforce Integration	Increased Job Knowledge	Decreased Crime

1	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5
2	7	5	6	6	7		5	6
3	7	7	7	4	6	5	7	7
4	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	
5	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5
6	5	6	5	5	6	6	6	4
7	5	1	7	7	7	7	7	7

**Table 6**  
**Respondent Importance of Platform Features of eMentoring (7 highest)**

Org	Matching	Member Communication	Centralized Management	Knowledge sharing	Online Community Develop.	Security & Privacy	Cost
1	7	7	5	5	5	7	4
2	7	5	5	6	5	7	6
3	6	7	7	6	7	7	7
4	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
5	7	7	7	7	6	7	7
6	7	7	6	5	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7

## 7. Follow-up Research

A study is currently being conducted of the EPALS eMentoring initiative at Frank Elementary School in Kenosha, WI. Now in its second school year, EPALS pairs 70 eMentoring volunteers with 70 5th grade students. As of this writing, a focus group of eMentors and the program administrator has been completed and a survey assessing the program based on best practices literature and participant backgrounds and prior facility with technology is being designed to be administered in early March 2009. Broad results will be available via a paper being presented at the 4th Annual International Conference on E-Learning in Toronto, Canada on July9-10, 2009.

## 8. Conclusions

A review of recent literature on the topic reveals that eMentoring provides a number of the benefits of face to face mentoring as well as many benefits particular to the eMentoring

format. Program design which include careful selection of an eMentoring platform and matching of mentors and mentees, and adequate training and monitoring of both mentors and mentees is essential for a eMentoring program to reach its full potential. This paper outlines many of the current best practices.

An initial survey of key stakeholders in Mentor Racine & Kenosha indicates that interest in eMentoring and a potential community-wide platform is high, but also that many questions need to be answered regarding implementation.

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## Appendix 1 -Survey SURVEY

### PERCEPTIONS OF EMENTORING AND ITS ADOPTION

Dec. 5, 2008

Dr. Will Zheng and Dr. Peter Knight of the School of Business and Technology at University of Wisconsin Parkside are conducting research on eMentoring funded by CCP" to "research funded by the Racine County Workforce Development Center under the auspices of the Center for Community Partnerships' Mentor Kenosha & Racine initiative by CCP.

**eMentoring** is a means of providing a guided mentoring relationship using online software or email. It stemmed from [mentoring](#) programs with the invention of the internet, and began to gain popularity around 1993. EMentoring is currently used most frequently to pair K-12 students with adult community volunteers who provide remedial curricular support and guidance on life skills, frequently focusing on disadvantaged youth or youth with disabilities EMentoring is often also used to support novice practitioners such as teachers and scientists and to create mentor/mentee relationships between industry leaders and college students to provide the latter with advice and support regarding successful transition into the work world. In contrast to face to face mentoring which only typically provides guidance and support from one mentor to one mentee, eMentoring can provide many to one, one to many and many to many interactions. For example:

- A situation in which various mentors provide guidance to a group of people. Classrooms sometimes recruit experienced professionals to guide complex school projects.
- One-to-one mentoring in which each young person has a mentor.
- Project-based learning in which a mentor works with a student to complete a project.
- Curriculum-based mentoring in which the teacher posts discussion questions relevant to curriculum for the mentor and mentee to discuss.
- Unstructured interaction in which mentor and mentee allow the relationship to unfold in keeping with common interests.
- Any combination of the above.

Research suggests that eMentoring has both advantages and disadvantages when compared to face to face mentoring:

- *eMentoring provides for a flexible communication environment independent of time and space, allow for asynchronous exchanges, and provide attenuation of status differences that may facilitate the development of relationships . EMentoring extends mentoring opportunities to many more students and allows mentors otherwise constrained by time and geography to participate, thus alleviating a major obstacle to the development of mentoring relationships .*
- *Online mentoring is occasionally compared unfavorably with face to face mentoring It is suggested that the medium limits the ability to pick up on visual or social clues, makes immediate feedback difficult and can often be seen as impersonal. eMentoring, however, may decrease those initial feelings of intimidation or of discomfort in new or unfamiliar environments because typical symbols of status are often unidentified Sproull and*

*Keisler (1991) refer to this as the attenuation of status differences. Although potentially problematic for individuals that are not comfortable with electronic communication, eMentoring allows for equalization in the mentoring relationship. In addition, because the interactions are not synchronous, the respondents have time to consider message content. The response prepared by the individual can therefore be more reflective because of the time-delayed nature of the communication.*

The goal of this research is to investigate the current problems and challenges in the diffusion and adoption of eMentoring. As a mentoring organization and/or potential beneficiary of an eMentoring program we ask you to complete this short survey to inform our research.

Thank you for your participation!

**The first set of questions deals with your organization**

1. How many employees are in your organization?

1-10            11-50            51-200            201-1,000            1,001+

2. How would you best characterize the region your organization services? (Circle one)

1) Kenosha/Racine County    2) SE Wisconsin    3) State wide    4) Midwest

5) Nationally    6) Internationally

3. What business does your organization do?

- 1) Non-for-profit charitable
- 2) Non-for-profit government
- 3) Service for profit
- 4) Retail
- 5) Manufacturer
- 6) Others(please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

**The second set of questions deals with your organization's mentoring activities and interest in eMentoring**

4. Is your organization providing mentoring services?

Yes No.

4. How many of the people affiliated with the organization are currently mentors? (Consider within regional office only)

0            1-10            11-50            51-200            201+

5. What is your best estimate of the percentage of mentors affiliated with your organization for each of the age groups listed below?

16-30 \_\_\_\_\_%    31-45 \_\_\_\_\_%    46-60 \_\_\_\_\_%    61+ \_\_\_\_\_%

6. What is your best estimate of the percentage of those being mentored with your organization for each of the age groups listed below?

5-9 \_\_\_\_\_%    10-14 \_\_\_\_\_%    15-19 \_\_\_\_\_%    20-29 \_\_\_\_\_%    30+ \_\_\_\_\_%

7. What is your best estimate of the percentage of those being mentored with your organization for each of the ethnics groups listed below?

White \_\_\_\_\_%    Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_%    Black \_\_\_\_\_%    Asian \_\_\_\_\_%    Others \_\_\_\_\_%

8. How would you best characterize your organizations interest in using EMentoring?

No Interest            Possibly Interested            Very Interested            Currently Using

9. Would you say that on average your mentors are comfortable with using a computer?  
(5 being the highest)

1            2            3            4            5

10. Would you say that on average your mentees are comfortable with using a computer?  
(5 being the highest)

1            2            3            4            5

11. How long has your organization used or had experiences with eMentoring in the past 3 years?  
(Circle one)

- No experience at all
- Heard about it but not tried before
- Implemented eMentoring for less than half a year
- Implemented eMentoring for more than a year.

12. Based on any knowledge you currently have of eMentoring what potential outcomes of eMentoring do you think would be valuable to your organization? (Circle one answer)

**Academic outcomes :**

Grades

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7.. Very Important

Attendance

1. Not very important ...2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Perceived scholastic competence

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Attitude toward school

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

**Relationship outcomes:**

Relationship with peers;

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Relationship with parents;

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

**Behavioral outcomes:**

Reducing substance abuse :

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7 . Very Important

Reducing anti-social activities:

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important,

Exposure to new experiences:

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

**Community Outcomes:**

Increased integration into workforce

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Increased job related knowledge:

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Decreased Crime:

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

13. Based on any knowledge you currently have of eMentoring what features of an eMentoring program do you believe would be important to you?

Matching mentors/mentees

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Communications between mentor and mentee

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Program and/or curriculum management

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Knowledge sharing amongst mentors and/or mentees

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Community development (i.e growth of a virtual community that links mentors and mentees)

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Security and privacy

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

Cost

1. Not very important 2...3... 4...5...6...7. Very Important

14. Based on any knowledge you currently have of eMentoring, how valuable do you believe an eMentoring program would be to your employees or volunteers?

1. Not very valuable 2...3... 4...5...6...7 Very valuable

15. Based on any knowledge you currently have of eMentoring, how well do you believe your employees or volunteers would adapt to an eMentoring program?

1. Not very well 2...3... 4...5...6...7 Very well

16. Based on any knowledge you currently have of eMentoring how rapidly do you think you would like to adopt an eMentoring program? (Circle one)

LESS THAN 3 MONTHS    3-6 MONTHS    GREATER THAN 6 MONTHS BUT LESS THAN A YEAR    BETWEEN A YEAR AND TWO YEARS    OVER 2 YEARS

17. Based on any knowledge you currently have of eMentoring how ready do you think your organizations is to adopt an eMentoring program?

1. Not very ready 2...3... 4...5...6...7 Very ready

At last, based on this pilot survey results, we might follow up with a few more questions or interviews. Would you mind joining us for a follow up study?

If yes, please leave your contacts email and people we can talk to below.