The Influences of Peer Mentoring

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From school, every child goes home to something different, whether its family problems or money issues. The homes children go to is the root of their future in education and their lives in society. When it comes to education many children do not function as well as other students for many purposes, one of which is the influences they are surrounded by outside of school. The way a child is treated and punished has lasting effects on the child but the greatest effect on a child’s ability to function at school is the parental influence at home. Children with a poor parental influence at home has the most problematic behavior at school. Although it is hard for adults or school social workers to break the habits the child has picked up at home, peer mentors have shown to have a great influence on a child. Through peer mentoring children with behavioral issues in the classroom, due to an unfortunate parental influence at home, can function to the best of their abilities.

At the early ages of a child’s birth, they are mostly exposed to their parents or a caregiver who spends time with them. At these moments, a parent or caregiver’s view can affect their child’s interest and beliefs in school. A parent’s attitude and expectation in regards to education can affect a child at any stage whether it’s from pre-school or high school. Children whose parents encourage them to do well in school and stay involved in their education tend to do much better than children’s parents who do not (Koppich, n.d.). Every child needs some type of encouragement and motivation to do well in school. Whether a child gets rewarded for good grades, given certain privileges or meets the eligibility rules to play a sport, these motivations keep them active in school and allow them to make goals for themselves. For example, a child who would be awarded a brand-new pair of Jordan sneakers for good grades, would remain active through the marking period setting that certain goal for himself/herself. Although the child’s mindset maybe in the right area, they may not achieve their goal due to the various temptations of school. This is where the parent or caregiver at home can keep the child on track through encouragement. Children need encouragement in tough times and decisions to keep working and achieve the goals set out for them. Families who have more support and aspirations for their child and is involved increases the child’s chance of performing well academically (Koppich, n.d.). A child throughout their middle and high school life needs some type of support and care from an adult in their education. The aspirations a parent has for their child makes them even more motivated to keep working hard to make the parent proud and eventually surmount to something greater than the parents. Everybody has a goal for themselves but without the proper support, motivation and encouragement it is nearly impossible to achieve alone. Children who come from homes with support generally receive A’s and B’s while children who don’t fall into a lower performance. Children who behave maliciously or are ill-mannered generally come from homes with family support, lack of motivation and encouragement and lack of involvement in the education of the child. In homes without all the support, the child either behaves inappropriately or doesn’t perform to their greatest academic ability.

` At any age, socially, children are exposed to their parent’s way of socialization. Adolescents pick up on their parent’s day-to-day behavior, from the way they speak and their tone of voice. Children first learn the behaviors and skills necessary to interact with other people in society from their parents. Parents are their children’s first teacher, and provide them with knowledge that is necessary for survival through direct instruction. They also influence them unintentionally through their own daily actions, such as conversing with other adults while their child is present (Hughes, 2014). When parents converse with other adults while a child is present, the child picks up on how their mother or father is speaking. A family who uses foul language in front of their children and speaks in a foul language to other adults will result in the child speaking the same way to their peers thinking it is norm. A family who also expresses themselves violently or bring about a violent or illegal part of life into the child’s head, the child will have a similar response back. “This was made clear in the Bobo Doll experiment done by Bandura, in which children that saw adults beating up a Bobo Doll did the same things to the doll” (Hughes, 2014). Children listen and follow what they see an adult or parent does because they assume it is normal. When learned from home or by a trusted parent, the habit of speaking and acting like how the parents do are difficult to change. Whether its action performed around other adults or the way they converse with others, parents are the first teachers to their children. If a child sees their parents acting belligerent around their friends the child will mostly likely do the same. Children are like sponges when absorbing information and perceiving action done from their parents. When a child comes from a household with a family who doesn’t set a good example and socializes in a way that is not appropriate, that child tends to bring what they learned from home into school thinking it is normal. This can cause the child to behave poorly in the classrooms towards peers and even towards the adults in the school. Some children lack a respect for authority in school and the root of their disrespect comes from what they learned at home.

Although some parents may socialize in an ill-mannered way, they socialize with their child has a great effect on how the child perceives things. Some parents are aggressive when parenting their child, which can cause a low response from the child. Emily Hughes, a journalist writes about the different types of parenting styles. She writes, “A parent who rates high in both demandingness and responsiveness is considered authoritative. This parenting style is defined by clear limits on the child’s behavior, and the ability to reason and communicate openly with their child” (Hughes, 2014). This type of parenting is considered a good type of balance because the child can communicate with their parent which will allow the parent to motivate them and encourage them to reach their goals. An authority figure parent, an aggressive one, will lack the communication between the themselves and the child which narrows the support the child has for school. If a child feels that all the parent does is yell at them, then they will lack respect towards an authority figure such as a teacher or principal in school. Once they develop this habit, it will become difficult for the child to change, as it will carry onto their high school and./or college life. Hughes also comments on the other two types of parenting that will affect the way the child behaves at school greatly. She writes, “Permissive parents are highly responsive to their children, but neglect the demanding side of parenting” (Hughes, 2014). This type of parent responds well to their child, in fact to well that they let their child behave poorly without consequences. The lack the demanding side, which is poor communication with their child. When a child with this parent sets a goal for themselves and gets completely off track of their goal, instead of encouragement the child receives whatever they desire thus spoiling them. When children come from homes with this type of parenting, they tend to misbehave and not care if they get into any type of trouble because when they go home, they will still receive what they desire. These types of homes create children with real behavioral issues and habits that take a long time to recover from. A more extreme version of this type of parenting would be a lack in demandingness and a lack in responsiveness. Parents who lack this type of communication with their child are considered rejecting-neglecting (Hughes, 2014). Children who come from these homes tend to behave almost always poorly in the classroom and shows a disregard for school. They often are suspended for violence or disruptive behavior and/or expelled from school.

In any of the types of parenting, a child can either benefit from it or take a turn for the worse. There is no such thing as a perfect parent or parenting style but the way the child and parent communicate with each other has a long-lasting effect on the child not only in school but for life. Children of authoritative parents are usually more likely to have an incremental view of intelligence where they associate effort with a positive outcome (Hughes, 2014). Either way, the way a parent socializes with their child and with their peers is absorbed by the child and affects their behavior in school, which subsequently affects their academic performance.

There are many reasons behind why a child misbehaves in the classroom and do not perform to the best their best academic ability. Focusing on solely the parental influences on a child’s behavior, what parents teach their children whether its intentional or unintentional is how they tend to behave. When a child performs bellows his or her academic ability due to poor behavior, it is hard for school systems and social workers to help change the way that these children act and think. Because parents are the first teachers, children are accustomed to the way they behave. Although, parents are the first teachers to a child, the second little teachers are the child’s peers. Today children tend to change their behavior depending on who they are around and who they choose as friends (Familyfacts.org, 2016). Since children are more responsive to some peers and absorbing what they do, the idea of peer mentoring has come to school systems. Mentoring in general serves to help a person in any way they can and keep a person on the right track. The idea of mentoring has been used into workplaces and for employees. Dr. Jean Rhodes, who studied the effects of mentoring, writes, “Virtually every aspect of human development is fundamentally shaped by interpersonal relationships. So, it stands to reason that when close and caring relationships are placed at the center of a youth intervention, as is the case in mentoring programs, the conditions for healthy development are ripe” (Bruce and Bridgeland, 2014).

As Dr. Rhodes states, humans’ development in every aspect is shaped through relationships with others. This is precisely what mentoring is, developing a relationship with a mentee, where the mentee can trust their mentor to help keep them on the correct path. A mentor is a trustworthy, role model that the mentee can feel they can talk and possibly aspire to become like their mentor. This is especially effective in peer mentoring. Mentoring relationships are positives for youth of all backgrounds and abilities, and have been identified as a key tool to help young people reach their full potential. Children come from all types of homes where they pick up either some good habits or bad habits. Regardless, a peer mentor can help their mentee with both their good habits and bad habits helping them change into a role model. To children who have a peer mentor, they value that mentor completely. A student who had a mentor comments on why he values his mentor, “Often is uncomfortable to go to a parent about topics such as friendships, relationships and drinking, but it is easier to talk to a trusted male figure other than my dad” (Bruce and Bridgeland, 2014). This is true with most children in today society. Children will value their mentor because they can go to their mentor about some things that they do not feel comfortable going to their parents about, whether its relationship advice or a decision they are going to make, its more comfortable talking to someone who has almost recently gone through it. Children who come from homes with a poor parental influence can open up to their peer mentor and share their experiences and thoughts about their home life. The emotional support that some of these children need, can be fulfilled by a peer mentor, who can keep their mentee on the right track.

Mentoring has spread throughout the world and is being used for many different reasons. Schools systems are developing mentoring programs to help their troubling students. Mentoring has become so popular because of the effects it has on the children not only emotionally but behaviorally. In America 1 in 3 people will grow up without a mentor (Mentor Impact, 2016).

The impact mentoring has on children is astonishing. The reasons behind why peers or even adults is simple, “mentoring, at its core, guarantees young people that there is someone who cares about them, assures them they are not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges, and makes them feel like they matter” (Mentor Impact, 2016). Research shows quality mentoring relationships has a powerful impact on the youth in academics and behavior. Students with a mentor are 55 percent more likely to enroll in college. Students with a mentor are also 78 percent more likely to volunteer regularly. After having a mentoring for a long period research shows that 90 percent of youth with a mentor are interested in becoming a mentor themselves and 130 percent are more likely to hold a leadership position (Mentor Impact, 2016). Mentoring has long-lasting impact on a child’s life in behavior, academics and professional. Mentors teach their mentors about life and are there to help their mentee whenever they need it. They make their mentees feel like they belong and that they are not alone in anything. When a mentor does that for their mentee the mentee absorbs all the love and care the mentor is putting into their mentees, and begins to aspire to be like their mentor. Therefore, mentees eventually like to become mentors and learn how to become a leader through their mentor which is why they are likely to take on a leadership position. The impact of a mentor on a child with behavioral issues can change the child completely. By being there for their mentees, mentors can share their own life experiences with their child and talk about how the mentor had overcome his or her own struggles. To receive the most benefits from mentoring, the mentor should be consistent in the life of the youth. Youth who meet with regularly with their mentees are 46 percent less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and 27 percent less likely to start drinking. Young adults who face an opportunity gap but have a mentor are 81 percent more likely to participate regularly in sports or extracurricular activities than those who do not (Mentor Impact, 2016). Mentors can have a positive effect on the lives of the youth and help them reach their goals. Wherever the parental influence at home lacks, the mentor can change it. For example, a child who sets a goal of making the basketball team and has parents who do not set a good example in terms of socialization, a mentor will become the support that the child needs to make the team. The mentor can be the one who encourages the child to do well and motivates them to reach their goal and perform to the best academic ability. They can acknowledge when the child does something good but also help correct when the child is side tracking from their goal. By having a mentor like this around, studies have shown that mentored youth tend to trust their parents more, themselves more and communicate better with them. It has also shown that the strongest benefit from mentoring, and most consistent across risk groups, was a reduction in depressive symptoms (Mentor Impact, 2016). Mentoring can help students with issues like signs of depression, anxiety and help even prevent it.

To youth mentoring is very powerful and the impact it has on children, to have a peer or even an adult mentor show interest, care, and love towards them and listens to what they have to say it, makes them feel different. Regardless if they come from a home with a poor parental influence, a mentor can change the behavior of most of the children they work. Successful mentor-mentee relationships create a bond between them thus having the mentor take a big brother or big sister role in a mentee’s life. Mentoring helps students examine their own values and show them how their values effect their relationships with others. They help identify and appreciate the roles of responsibility that the mentees have at school and at home. Mentoring also helps the mentee improve their communication skills, including the ability to express themselves appropriately. It has the capacity to add meaning to learning beyond the normal school environment and promote opportunities to form bonding relationships (Sprague, 2007). A mentor can be just the role in a child’s life that can save them from the streets and an unsatisfactory future. Every child has the potential to do well in school and every child has different needs to help him or her reach that potential. Mentors can fill that role to improve the life of the youth and keeps active in school.

Through peer mentoring children with behavioral issues in the classroom, due to a poor parental influence at home, can function to the best of their abilities. It allows the children to appreciate life more and get connected with school. It gives them a person outside their family that they can confide in to help them navigate their way through difficult situations. It teaches them leadership and responsibility; life lessons which they will go on to spread when they take leadership roles later down the road. Mentors can change the bad habits picked up at home and become the second teachers to the children of many. Mentoring has been identified as a key tool by corporations, nonprofits, and government entities to help young people reach their full potential. The success of mentoring relationships has led to mentoring being able to potentially save a child’s future.

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