



# Seedling’s Promise: A Mentoring Program for Children of Incarcerated Parents, 2012-2013

## Children with Incarcerated Parents

Recent data estimates 2.7 million children under the age of 18 have a parent in a state or federal prison across the United States (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010; Shlafer, Gerrity, Ruhland, & Wheeler; 2013). Approximately 54% of inmates are parents, nearly 120,000 mothers and 1.1 million fathers. A disproportionate number of inmates are from racial minority backgrounds. One in 9 African American children (11.4percent), 1 in 28 Hispanic children (3.5percent) and 1 in 57 white children (1.8 percent) has an incarcerated parent. Researchers suggest these approximations may grossly underestimate the number of children affected by incarceration, as the estimations do not include those held in a county facility or have been in prison in the past.

In addition to the incarceration of the parent, researchers have identified other co-occurring circumstances that can contribute to additional stress and problems for the children. These factors include single parenting, poverty, level of education, parent substance use, parent mental health problems, and prior criminal convictions (Maruschak et al., 2010). Parental incarceration may also trigger foster care placement or the introduction to new partners or family members to the household causing additional disruption for the children.

As a result, children of incarcerated parents often develop problems that need to be addressed as well. They are at increased risk for socio-emotional issues that may be internalized (e.g., depression, anxiety, withdrawal) or externalized (e.g., aggressive behaviors, substance use). Boys are more likely to show externalizing behavior problems, while girls may be more likely to internalize the problems. Children of incarcerated parents also may have trouble with peer relationships, cognitive delays, and difficulties in school that include poor attendance and low academic performance (Eddy & Poehlmann, 2010; Parke, 2001). Incarceration of a parent can threaten a child’s attachment security because of parent-child separation, confusing messages about the incarceration, restricted contact with the parent and unstable caregiving arrangements (Murray and Murray, 2010).

## Support for Children of Incarcerated Parents

Mentoring programs have been proposed as an effective support for children with incarcerated parents. In a study where more than one-third of the mentored youth had a close family member who

### Table of Contents

Children of the Incarcerated	1
School-based mentoring	2
Program Description	3
Theory of Change	4
Evaluation Description	4
Seedling Participants	5
Mentor Description	6
Seedling Match Support	6
Perceptions of Mentors	7
Perceptions of School Contacts and Teachers	9
Perceptions of Mentees	9
Attendance Outcomes	11
Discipline Outcomes	12
Academic Outcomes	15
Summary	17
Conclusions	17
Recommendations for Evaluation	18
Appendices	19
<i>Description of Analyses</i>	20
<i>Mentee Surveys</i>	22
<i>Mentor Survey</i>	24
<i>Teacher Survey</i>	27
<i>School Contact Survey</i>	29
References	31



was incarcerated or often in trouble with the law, researchers (Herrera, DuBois, and Grossman, 2013) found that higher-risk students in mentoring relationships improved in their emotional or psychological well-being, peer relationships, academic attitudes and self-reported grades. In another meta-analysis of 73 mentoring program evaluations (Dubois et al, 2011), mentoring was found to influence the social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development of children. The mentoring relationship provided an environment where children could acquire enhanced thinking or problem-solving skills and become more receptive to adult instruction and perspectives. By modeling caring and providing support, mentors could confront negative perceptions the children may have of themselves and show the possibilities of positive relationships with adults. Mentoring relationships also may provide opportunities to facilitate identity development, which builds a sense of who the mentees are currently and who they may be in the future. The development of social-emotional, cognitive, and identity processes are understood to build simultaneously over time.

As the implementation of mentoring programs has grown over the past 20 years, school-based mentoring (SBM) has been the fastest growing approach and accounts for nearly half of all youth-mentoring programs (Schwartz, Rhodes, & Chan, 2011; DuBois & Karcher, 2005). SBM provides an opportunity for students to participate in the mentoring experience when they might not have the opportunity outside of the school day (Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2011). Mentors participating in SBM tend to be more demographically diverse, compared to mentors in community-based mentoring programs (Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2011). Within this context, mentors and mentees meet at the school during school hours. During this time, mentors and mentees engage in activities together, including talking, playing games, reading, or other academic related activities.

With SBM, a variety of community members are connected with daily academic and social experiences of the students in the school setting (Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2011). Building a relationship within this context communicates the importance of schooling and may improve students' experiences in and outlook on school. Further, school-based mentoring programs are able to capitalize on the knowledge, referrals, supervisions, and support of many of the adults within the school setting. The support of school staff assists program staff in the support and monitoring of the mentoring relationships. Likewise, when mentors are included in the school environments, they may seek assistance as needed and better advocate on the behalf of the child.

Student participation in SBM has been associated with positive outcomes that may include academic, behavioral, and psychosocial improvements. Most documented benefits of SBM are related to behaviors and attitudes that contribute to school success (e.g., school attendance, academic self-confidence, school connectedness) rather than academic performance (Wheeler, Keller, and Dubois, 2010). Often, having a dedicated mentor come to the school provides an "enviable perk" for the mentee, as other students see the mentee in a positive light with a bolstered social standing.

Researchers report the effectiveness of school-based mentoring may be moderated by several factors (Schwartz, Rhodes, & Herrera, 2012). Differences in the amount of time mentors and mentees spent together and how they spent that time have been thought to account for differences in student outcomes. Some studies have found school-based mentoring programs may be more successful at the elementary level, because the school environment is not as administratively complex as it might be in a middle or high school (e.g. scheduling).

---



## Purpose of This Report

Annually, the Seedling Foundation commissions an evaluation of Seedling's Promise, a mentoring program for children of incarcerated parents. The purpose of the evaluation is to identify program areas of strength and challenge. This information will be used to adjust program activities to ensure they are as effective as they can be. The evaluation also will highlight areas of success and progress to communicate the program's impact to others.

## Seedling's Promise

Seedling's Promise is a school-based mentoring program for children of incarcerated parents. The purpose of the program is two-fold:

- To provide the children with a long-term, positive relationship with a trained adult mentor, in hopes they may be better able to navigate the challenges experienced during this period of family separation; and
- To help the children develop or maintain positive attitudes towards and connections to school, so that they may have a clear understanding of the critical need for education to achieve their long-term goals.

In 2012-2013, Seedling's Promise operated on funds provided by multiple sources. Austin Independent School District's Department of School Family and Community Education provided a total of \$293,500 to support the program. This contribution included local school district and grant dollars. Individual donations in support of Seedling's Promise totaled \$184,074.

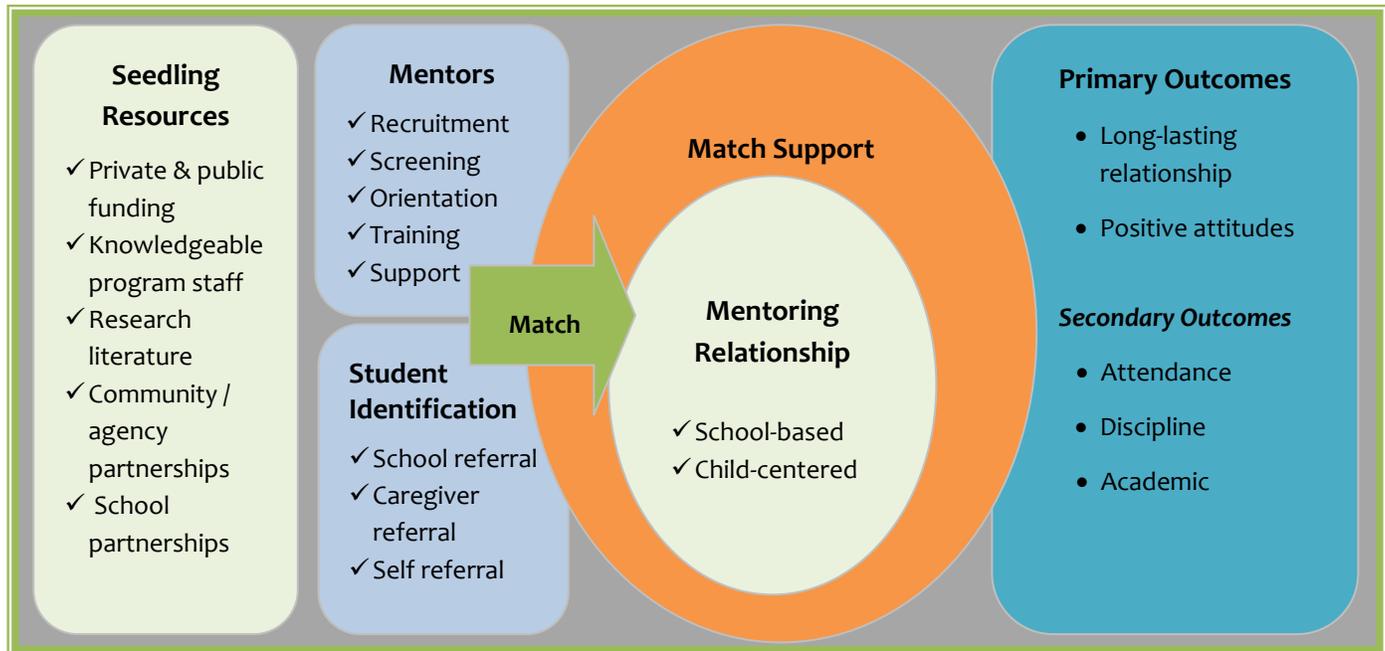
Seedling's Promise program implementation closely follows what is recommended in current mentoring research literature and carefully considers the needs of the children served by the program. The researched-based program components recommended in the *Elements of Effective Practices for Mentoring, Third Edition* (2009) include mentor screening, orientation, and training; customized mentor-mentee matching; well defined parameters for mentoring sessions; ongoing support, supervision, and monitoring of mentoring relationships; recognition of participant contributions; and closure of ending relationships.

The program is characterized by a collaborative service approach where individualized mentoring experiences are provided for the mentees. As a part of this process, the core team of Seedling Mentor Directors, School Contacts, and mentors collaboratively support each mentee. Additionally, they may often communicate with teachers and provide outreach to mentee caregivers.

While the primary expectations of the program articulate that the children will have long-term, positive relationships with their mentors and will develop or maintain positive attitudes towards school, it is also desired that the children will have improved or comparable attendance, discipline, and academic outcomes when compared to themselves prior to participating in the program or compared to their peers. The following graphic displays Seedling's Promise theory of change.



Figure 1. Seedling's Promise Theory of Change



### Measuring Program Outcomes

A variety of quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed for this evaluation. Data included demographic data; state assessment data; attendance data; discipline data; student, teacher, and mentor survey responses.

Due to availability, only data for mentees, eligible students who were on the program waitlist and a matched comparison group who were enrolled in Austin ISD during the 2012-2013 school year were examined in this report. Mentees attending schools outside of Austin ISD were not included in the evaluation. The Seedling mentees (n=479) included in the analyses had participated in the program and were still actively enrolled in AISD schools in the spring of 2013. Seedling waitlist students (n=108) also were still actively enrolled in AISD schools in the spring of 2013. Comparison students (n= 479) were actively enrolled in the same schools with Seedling mentees and were matched based on shared demographic characteristics and school of enrollment.

A variety of data analyses were used in this evaluation. Descriptive statistics (e.g., numbers and percentages) were used to summarize academic and survey outcomes for each group. Inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests and z-tests) were used to determine statistical significance of the results, that is, to find out whether observed differences between the outcomes of interest for the student groups were greater or lesser than would be expected only by chance. Multi-level modeling also was employed to explore the relationships among variables. Multilevel models are particularly appropriate for research designs where data are nested within hierarchical structures (i.e., student program participants attending different schools). Finally, contextual analyses were used to summarize themes that emerged from open-ended survey questions. Additional technical documentation is provided in Appendix 1.



### Seedling Participants

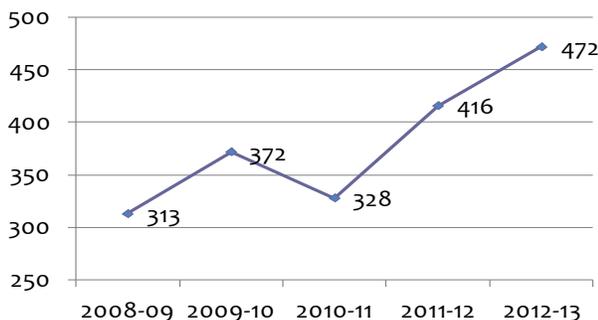
In 2012-2013, the program continued to grow and was officially provided in 36 designated schools (Table 1). All were AISD schools with exception of one elementary in Pflugerville ISD. Additionally, children attending 45 "satellite" schools were supported by the program, as mentors chose to continue the mentoring relationship after a child had moved into a school that was not a designated "Seedling" school.

Seedling participants were in grades Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Figure 3). Almost all of them were low-income (99%) and minority (Figure 2). Almost a third of the students were English language learners (31%) and/or had special education needs (17%). Due to the incarceration of their parent(s), they were often frequently displaced and may not have been consistently enrolled in or attending a single school.

### Seedling Mentors

Each year, Seedling supports a greater number of mentors. With a 74% mentor return rate, Seedling supported 472 mentors who mentored one or more children during the school year (Figure 4). Sixty-six percent of the mentors have mentored more than one year. Mentor commitment ranged between one and eight years with an average of three years of service. The average commitment of mentors to the program is well above the national mentor commitment of one year.

Figure 4. A record number of mentors participated in 2012-2013.



Source. Seedling program records, 2012-2013.

Table 1. The number of children and schools participating in Seedling's Promise increased in 2012-2013.

School Year	# of Participants	# of Program Schools	% Increase
2006-2007	115	15	
2007-2008	178	21	54.8%
2008-2009	320	28	79.8%
2009-2010	408	26	27.5%
2010-2011	369	28	-9.5%
2011-2012	440	34	19.2%
2012-2013	501	36	13.9%

Source: Seedling's Promise program enrollment records, 2006-2013.

Figure 2. Most children served by Seedling's Promise are Hispanic or African American.

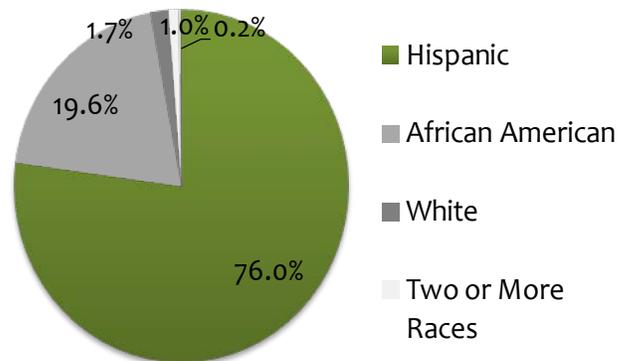
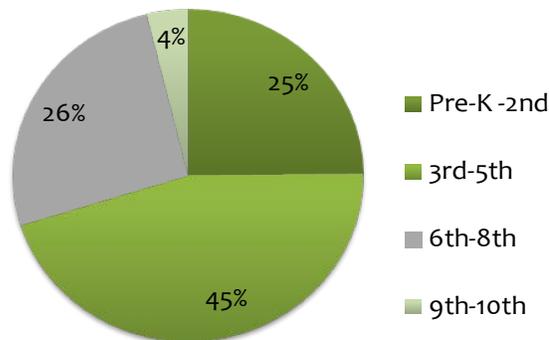


Figure 3. Seventy percent of the children served by Seedling's Promise are in elementary school.

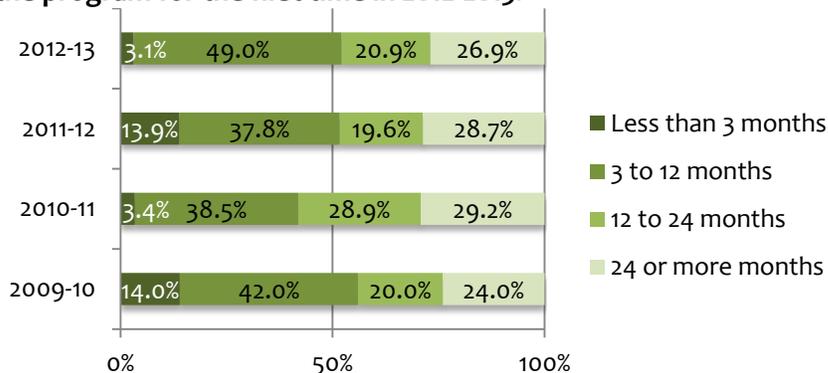


Source. Austin ISD student enrollment records, 2012-2013.



Seedling mentoring relationships appear to be longer-lasting on average (19.3 months), compared with many other school-based mentoring (SBM) programs. Recent evaluations of SBM programs revealed that the average length of a relationship is 5 months (Grossman et al. 2011; Bernstein et al. 2009; Herrera et al. 2007). It is not clear whether the 5 month SBM relationship average is within a single school year or is tracked across school years. If the five month relationship average documented in other studies is within a single school year, the average length of Seedling mentoring relationships still exceeds the average SBM relationship length documented in other studies.

**Figure 5. Just over half of the Seedling mentees are participating in the program for the first time in 2012-2013.**



Source. Seedling program records, 2012-2013.

### Seedling Match Support

#### *What were the contributions and perceptions of the School Contacts?*

As a part of the collaborative support provided to mentors and their mentees, School Contacts assist Seedling Mentor Directors in supporting and monitoring the mentoring relationships. The annual Seedling mentor survey collected information from School Contacts to provide evidence of effective mentoring program practices and quality of the mentoring relationships.

Consistent with survey results from prior school years, School Contacts were highly supportive and complimentary of the program (Appendix 6). School Contacts were asked about effective strategies to identify and recruit children for participation. Most of the time, they communicated personally with caregivers, teachers, and the students themselves. They stressed the importance of involving teachers and sensitivity in conversations with caregivers and children.

School Contacts also described challenges they encountered in the program recruitment process. The most prevalent challenge described across school sites was the process of identifying eligible students and obtaining permission to participate in the program. Several School Contacts described the fear families faced in disclosing this sensitive information, while others reported that families were very appreciative of the support and willing to participate.

#### Research says..

Match length is one of the greatest indicators of program effectiveness. Researchers have reported that mentoring outcomes for mentees were increasingly greater as relationships endured for longer periods of time. When mentoring relationships are caring and supportive, mentors can challenge negative views that the children may hold of themselves. Enduring mentoring relationships have been linked to significant improvements in children's perceptions of their relationships with their peers, family members, and other adults. (Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, and Rhodes; 2011). Mentor attendance also was a positive predictor for mentee changes in social skills, self-esteem, and self-management (Karcher, 2005).



School Contacts described how they were tracking or monitoring the progression of the mentoring relationships in an open-ended question. Almost all of the School Contacts reported they regularly communicate with the students and their mentors. Many School Contacts reported that these conversations are initiated by the students and/or the mentors, giving the School Contact a sense that the relationships are important to both parties. They also described the students' excitement when they were talking about their mentors.

When School Contacts were asked how Seedling staff could improve program services, they overwhelmingly requested more mentors, especially those that were male or Spanish-speaking. School Contacts also suggested more training for counselors and teachers.

### *What were the perceptions of the mentors?*

The annual Seedling mentor survey collected information to provide evidence of effective mentoring program practices and determine mentor satisfaction with their support (Appendix 4). In 2012-2013, Seedling mentor survey responses were highly positive and consistent with survey results from previous years and highlights are described in this section of the report (Looby; 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012). Importantly, 80.5% of new and returning mentors in 2012-2013 reported Seedling Mentor Directors to be *Extremely Helpful*. During the school year, ongoing mentor support and assistance also was provided by designated School Contacts. About 60% of mentors requested assistance from School Contacts and reported them as being *Extremely* (67%) or *Mostly* (22.2%) *Helpful*. As in prior years, the ratings of the School Contacts were somewhat lower than those of the Mentor Directors. However, the ratings of the School Contacts improved in the 2012-2013 school year with 11% of mentors indicating School Contacts were not always helpful compared with 15% in the prior year.

Mentor training and support was provided throughout the year for all mentors. About 36% of all mentors reported attending one or more monthly training sessions and almost all of them reported the sessions to be *Extremely* or *Mostly Helpful*. Of those who did not attend, 51% reported they could not get away from work more than one day a week; 30% could not attend sessions during the lunch hour; 25% preferred training in the electronic newsletter, and 20% preferred online training. Mentors answered a series of survey questions related to specific mentoring materials and training events to assist Seedling staff with ongoing program implementation decisions.

### **Research says..**

Herrera et al. (2007), found that mentors who reported higher levels of staff support and helpfulness and reported receiving more training felt closer to their mentees and were more likely to carry their match over into a subsequent school year than those mentors who received less support. Karcher (2005) similarly found that mentors who reported more contact with school staff felt more important and viewed their relationships more positively than mentors who had little staff contact.

### **2013 Mentor Training**

Mentors were provided with ongoing training that included new mentor orientation, monthly newsletters, and mentor support luncheons. Monthly training sessions also were conducted and included the following topics:

- Orientation and transition to Middle School
- Relationship and Children's Developmental Levels
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Children of Prisoners Bill of Rights
- Healthy Boundaries
- Activities for Mentoring Sessions
- Celebration in Mentoring Relationships
- Issues in Poverty



### Mentoring Relationship Outcomes

#### What did the mentors report about their relationships?

Mentors reported a variety of activities they engaged in with their mentees. Most often, they spent their time talking and listening. They described the importance of letting the child lead the way in choosing activities (Table 2).

Almost 95% of mentors reported excellent or good relationships with their mentees (Appendix 4). Eighty-eight percent of mentors reported meeting with their mentee each week as expected. Of those who reported seeing their mentee less than once a month, 38% saw their mentee three times a month and 35% saw their mentee twice a month. Ten mentors reported seeing their mentee less than once a month. When mentors were asked to explain reasons for not seeing their mentee weekly, work obligations were most often cited.

Student related issues were also factors in how often a mentor could meet with their mentees as student absenteeism, suspensions, or disinterest at the secondary level kept a mentor from meeting weekly with his or her mentee.

In 2012-2013, more mentors (81%) reported the mentoring relationships as Extremely/Mostly Helpful for their mentees (Figure 5), compared with 77% of the mentors who reported the mentoring relationships being Extremely/Mostly Helpful for their mentees the previous year (Appendix). Mentors provided many examples of how their relationships developed and what a positive difference it made for the child, and samples of their comments are provided in Figure 5. Overall, 99% of mentors reported their Seedling experience as Excellent or Good and 80.3% planned to continue their relationship with the mentee in the next school year.

**Figure 5. Most mentors described positive, meaningful relationships with their mentees.**

<p>“One day I was running late, and so when I arrived at the school, my mentee was already in line for lunch. When she saw me, her whole face lit up. She thought I wasn't going to be there, and when she saw that I was, it just made her so happy. It's moments like that that I truly realize what an effect I have on her.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2013 Mentor</p>	<p>“My mentee's counselors and teachers approached me several times towards the end of the school year to tell me how helpful they thought the mentorship had been and how they'd seen significant improvements in my mentee's behavior. For example, lately she has been much more well behaved and less of a bully.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2013 Mentor</p>	<p>“He knows when to expect me and watches for me to come, which I consider a good sign. Also, we both agreed that we'd like to continue with our mentor/mentee relationship next year, another good sign. We enjoy playing cards and Monopoly together. He likes to learn from me things he doesn't learn at home or in school. He didn't know about shuffling cards, and I taught him that.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2013 Mentor</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Table 2. Mentors engaged in a variety of child-focused activities with their mentees.**

	Response Percent
Talking/listening	93.0%
Playing games/ art or craft activities	64.8%
Discussing problems/processing feelings	44.3%
Trying out activities suggested in Future Matters	7.7%
Reading	23.5%
Supporting academic development	28.2%
Engaging in outdoor activities	20.8%

Source. Seedling mentor Survey, 2012-2013.



*What did School Contacts and teachers report about the mentoring relationships?*

While School Contacts were usually school counselors and not able to spend enough time with many of the mentors and mentees to assess specific outcomes for individual students, they were highly supportive of the program and noted the students and mentors were happy with the program. Ninety-seven percent of the School Contacts reported the mentors to be *Extremely Well/Well Prepared*. Approximately 91% of the School Contacts described the quality of the mentors as *Excellent*, and 9% reported mentor quality as *Good*.

Teachers also were overwhelmingly positive about the program, and 94% of them recommended their student(s) continue in the program. Overall, teachers reported students experienced positive changes in their classroom engagement, relationships with others, academic achievement, and classroom discipline during the school year (Appendix 5). At the close of the school year, a very busy time, almost half of the teachers took the time to respond to an open-ended question that asked them to provide "other comments" regarding Seedling's Promise. Many recognized the importance of a consistent and lasting relationship and hoped they would continue into the next school year.

**Research says..**

Rhodes (2002) reported that teachers noted substantial improvements in student attitudes, behaviors, confidence, relationships, and academic performance. These reports were highly correlated with report card data, and their impressions appeared to be consistent with actual progress. Students in longer-lasting relationships realized additional academic benefits.

"Most of the Seedling mentees talk to me about working with their mentors. Our 5th graders are particularly excited to continue working with their mentors at the middle school next year. Our mentors also check in with me frequently, especially if their schedule is off that week. Their attention to those details show me that they know how important their relationships are to their students."

2013 School Contact

"This child is shy and lacks confidence in certain situations. Her relationship with her mentor seemed to help her gain some confidence. I would recommend she continue in the program."

2013 Teacher

"My student received his mentor late in the year. If possible, I feel it would be a great opportunity to continue with the same mentor next year. He has trouble building relationships with adults and has finally built a relationship with his mentor."

2013 Teacher

*What did the mentees say about their mentoring relationships?*

Mentee survey results indicated the presence of a child-centered program where mentees were positively engaged and satisfied with their mentors (Table 6, Appendices 2 & 3). Across all mentees, the mean scores for child-centeredness and satisfaction were significantly higher than the mean score for emotional engagement. An analysis of outcomes revealed student responses at the elementary level to be significantly more positive compared with those in middle and high school. The lower mean in the area of emotional engagement was primarily influenced by responses from mentees in middle and high school. This result is consistent with the outcomes from the Austin ISD Student Climate Survey (2013), where elementary student ratings were significantly higher than the ratings of middle and high school students on every subscale (e.g., student engagement, behavioral environment, self-confidence). While both elementary and secondary students looked forward to seeing their mentors each week, elementary-aged mentees were significantly more positive about the personal outcomes they experienced in the mentoring relationship (Table 7).

**Table 6. Overall, mentees described their mentoring relationships as child-centered and highly satisfying.**

Qualities of mentoring relationships	Elementary (n=90)		Secondary (n=79)		All (N=169)	
	Mean score	% with score of 3 or higher	Mean score	% with score of 3 or higher	Mean score	% with score of 3 or higher
<b>Child-centeredness</b>	3.8	93.4%	3.6*	90.8%	3.6	92.1%
<b>Emotional engagement</b>	3.0	77.0%	2.8*	54.0%	2.8*	66.2%
<b>Satisfaction</b>	3.6	89.0%	3.4*	82.0%	3.5	85.5%

Source. Mentee Survey, Spring 2013.

Notes. The results of this section of the survey are analyzed by question type, as recommended in a technical assistance packet published by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NREL). Scores >3 are considered positive. \*Elementary and secondary mean scores are significantly different (p<.05).

**Table 7. Most mentees reported positive personal outcomes as a result of their mentoring experience.**

Mentees...	Percentage who responded "Very True"	
	Elementary	Secondary
<b>felt good about themselves.</b>	83.5%	85.5%
<b>worked through problems better because of help from their mentors.</b>	85.7%*	58.1%
<b>avoided drugs and alcohol.</b>	94.9%*	84.0%
<b>made better grades because of help they received from their mentors.</b>	66.7%*	44.7%
<b>made better choices about their behavior at school because of help they received from their mentors.</b>	70.5%*	53.3%
<b>looked forward to seeing their mentors.</b>	92.3%*	70.7%

Source. Mentee Survey, Spring 2013.

Note. \*Significantly different (p<.05).



### Research says..

Flexible, youth-centered mentoring programs focused on the needs of the child, rather than having a heavy focus on academics, generally had greater relationship quality and duration (Grossman et al, 2011). Children who felt their mentor recognized their preferences and interests, who had positive feelings about their mentor, and who were satisfied with the relationship were more likely to show improvement in their behaviors and attitudes than those who felt their mentors take less interest in them (NREL, 2002).

Note, close mentoring relationships may be difficult to build, as they may be influenced by the developmental stage of the child and prior relationships with adults. A meta-analysis of research (Dubois et al., 2011) found child developmental status to strongly influence the capacity and willingness of mentees to build close relationships with their mentors. Younger adolescents often reported better friendships and more openness with adults and tended to have longer lasting relationships with their mentors than did older adolescents. Older adolescents, who are often in the process of establishing autonomy and independence, may be less compliant and/or emotionally available. Additionally, peer and romantic relationships often compete for adolescents' attention in and commitment to the mentoring relationships (Schwartz, Rhodes & Chan, 2011). Youths who have had disappointing relationships may be reluctant to trust other caring adults (Schwartz, Rhodes, and Chan, 2011). Specifically, young adults with insecure parental attachments felt relatively less security in their relationships with mentors.



### Attendance Outcomes

The overall attendance rate for Seedling mentees was comparable to the district average of 95.0% and student comparison groups (Table 8). Mentee attendance rates ranged from 48.8% to 100%, with a median of 96.6%. Approximately 70% of mentees had attendance rates greater than 94%.

Attendance rates were compared across student groups. There were no significant differences in the attendance rates among Seedling, waitlist, and comparison students overall or at the secondary level. For Seedling mentees and the AISD comparison group, the attendance rates of elementary students were

significantly higher than of high school students (Table 8). Among the waitlist students, no significant difference in attendance rates was found between elementary and high school students.

Among Seedling mentees, attendance rates were slightly higher for those participating in the first and second year (Table 9), however the differences were not significant. Attendance rates were also examined for mentees who participated in the program for the first time in 2012-2013 and compared to their attendance rates the prior year, and the average attendance was similar in both years.

Further analyses were completed to explore how student-and school- level characteristics may have been related or influenced attendance rates. While Seedling program participation was not a significant factor in predicting school attendance, students who were in elementary school and/or who were English language learners were more likely to have higher school attendance ( $p < .05$ ) than other student groups.

While Seedling mentee attendance rates were found comparable to other students within their schools, this finding is considered positive, given that the mentees were a highly mobile population and have experienced circumstances

**Table 8. Average attendance rates were significantly different at the elementary and secondary levels.**

	Elementary	Secondary	All
<b>Seedling mentees</b> (n=479)	95.9%*	91.8%	94.2%
<b>Seedling waitlist</b> (n=108)	95.0%	94.2%	95.0%
<b>AISD comparison group</b> (n=479)	95.9%*	92.1%	95.2%

Source. AISD student attendance files, 2008-2009 through 2012-2013.

Note. \*Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 9. Average attendance rates were similar among Seedling participants regardless of length of mentoring relationship.**

Seedling Participants, 2012-2013	
<b>Less than 3 months</b>	93.3%
<b>3 to 12 months</b>	94.9%
<b>12 to 24 months</b>	94.4%
<b>24 or more months</b>	92.8%

Source. AISD student attendance files, 2012-2013.

#### Research says...

Research studies have identified factors influencing student school attendance. Data from the Condition of Education (2006) revealed students who were economically disadvantaged were more likely to have lower attendance rates. Periods of transition also can increase school attendance problems for students. These transitions include moving to a new home and entry into a new school or transitioning from one level to the next, for example from elementary to middle school. Additionally, student disengagement can influence school attendance (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008). Students may find themselves in situations where they believe they have little control over outcomes and may feel alienated from school staff, other students, and their families. This leads to student disengagement, and they often do not want to come to school.





that negatively influenced regular school attendance. Further, most mentees at the elementary (92%) and the secondary (71%) levels reported on their surveys that they looked forward to the days their mentors were scheduled to visit. Since school attendance is a widely recognized predictor of academic success and dropping out of school, the regular school attendance of most mentees is an important factor in their overall school success.

### Discipline Outcomes

#### How did teachers describe student behavior in school?

Elementary teacher perceptions and student discipline records were examined to determine disciplinary outcomes for Seedling mentees in the 2012-2013 school year. As in past years, elementary level teachers continued to report positive changes in their students' dispositions and behaviors on the annual Seedling survey of teachers (Appendix 5). When asked about behaviors in class, it appeared that most Seedling mentees were respectful of others and were compliant with classroom expectations. However, a considerable proportion of Seedling mentees were reported to have difficulty managing their behaviors in the classroom (Table 10). Still, 70% of teachers reported their students' general disposition and classroom interpersonal relationships improved throughout the school year as a result of the program. Over half of the teacher surveyed (63.3%) strongly agreed or agreed that their students' behaviors improved throughout the school year as a result of the child's participation in the mentoring program.

As in years past, many teacher comments described challenges their students were experiencing and their appreciation of the mentors' support. In open-ended comments, many teachers described student behaviors and often made recommendations for continued relationships in the next school year. In contrast to comments from prior surveys, the teachers explained student characteristics with increased detail. They reported that many of the students were actually very compliant in the classroom. However, mentee compliance was often worrisome to the teachers, because they perceived the children to be overly reserved, too quiet, or emotionless. Many characterized their students as having low self-esteem or anger issues that were manifested in the classroom in the forms of gossip, negative comments about others, bickering, or lack of motivation. Teachers often reported that the mentoring relationships appeared to have a positive influence on student self-esteem and

**Table 10. Most teachers considered mentees respectful and reported they followed school and class rules.**

The student...	Strongly agree or agree	Strongly disagree or disagree	Not Sure
<b>works without disturbing others.</b>	63.1%	36.2%	0.7%
<b>respects school personnel.</b>	84.4%	14.2%	1.4%
<b>follows school and class rules.</b>	73.6%	25.7%	0.7%
<b>respects others' rights and property.</b>	77.0%	22.3%	0.7%

Source. Seedling Teacher Survey, Spring 2013.

“This mentoring relationship has provided a good role model for my student, and an outlet for some of her strong and conflicting emotions. Thank you so much. I hope very much that she will be able to take advantage of this program again next year.”

2013 Teacher

“I believe the mentor program is an important one. My student has a hard time communicating w/ his peers. His comments are not inappropriate, or dangerous, but odd and not child-like; therefore, difficult to address. Parents are in agreement but quite relaxed about it, so I appreciate the extra attention my student receives from the mentor.”

2013 Teacher



motivation, as they began to see children happier and increasingly more engaged in the classroom. At the same time, some teachers did not see any change in student behaviors but believed the consistent and positive support of the mentor was very important for the child.

*What did the data reveal about mentee disciplinary outcomes?*

An analysis of disciplinary data revealed that Seedling mentees, Seedling waitlist students, and the matched comparison students had similar types of disciplinary offenses (Table 11). Most of the infractions were characterized as being lower-level offenses, and most of these infractions did not require removal from the classroom. While all three student groups had offenses categorized as *physical aggression with other students* and *fighting*, Seedling mentees did not have *physical aggression with adult* appear on their “top ten list” of most frequent offenses.

“The mentor was a very positive influence. She always looked for fun ways to interact with my student and she would encourage her to do her best. If there was a concern she was always willing to address it with the student over time, and I often saw a direct impact on my student’s choices.”  
2013 Teacher

**Table 11. Seedling students had similar types of disciplinary offenses, compared with their peers.**

Top 10 Disciplinary Offense Types, 2012-2013			
	Seedling Mentees	Seedling Waitlist	Comparison Group
1	Insubordination	Insubordination	Disruption
2	Disruption	Disruption	Insubordination
3	Physical aggression w/ student**	Physical aggression w/ student**	Physical aggression w/ student**
4	Fighting**	Rude to adult	Rude to adult
5	Rude to adult	Class cut	Fighting**
6	Leave without authority	Leave without authority	Class cut
7	Rude to student	Fighting**	Leave without authority
8	Violation	Rude to student	Rude to student
9	Threat or harassment of student	Physical aggression w/ adult**	Violation
10	Class cut	Violation	Physical aggression w/ adult**

Source. AISD student discipline files, 2012-2013.  
Notes. \*\*Categorized as aggressive behavior offense.

An analysis of disciplinary offenses including any type, substance abuse, aggressive behavior, suspension, and removals to Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) revealed a few differences between the proportions of Seedling mentees, waitlist students, and comparison students who had discipline offenses (Tables 12 and 13). A significantly greater proportion of eligible program students who were on the program waitlist had some type of disciplinary infraction, compared with Seedling mentees or the matched comparison group. Compared to eligible students who were on the program waitlist, a significantly lower proportion of Seedling elementary students had aggressive behavior infractions. Significantly lower proportions of mentees who had been participating in the program for a year or more had aggressive behavior offenses compared to mentees who were first year participants. Of students who had disciplinary offenses, there were no significant differences in the average number of discipline offenses among Seedling mentees, eligible students who were on the program waitlist, and the matched comparison group (Table 14). Nor were there significant differences among Seedling participants based on length of program participation.



Further analyses were completed to explore how student- and school- level characteristics may have been related to disciplinary outcomes. Two student-level variables were found significantly related to disciplinary outcomes. Students who were in elementary school and/or categorized as English language learners were less likely to have aggressive behavior offenses or receive suspensions. Male students were more likely to have disciplinary offenses for aggressive behaviors or to receive suspensions.

**Table 12. Significantly fewer Seedling mentees in elementary school had disciplinary offenses than other students in elementary school and Seedling secondary students.**

	Seedling			Seedling Waitlist			AISD Comparison Group		
	Elem (n=336)	Second (n=143)	All (N=479)	Elem (n=93)	Second (n=15)	All (N=108)	Elem (n= 332)	Second (n=147)	All (N=479)
<b>Any Type Discipline Offense</b>	21.7%*	55.9%	28.8%	28.0%	73.3%	32.3%*	26.2%	62.6%	30.5%
<b>Substance abuse</b>	--	--	1.3%	--	--	--	--	--	1.7%
<b>Aggressive behavior</b>	9.5%*	36.3%	17.5%	17.2%	46.7%	21.3%	13.9%	37.6%	14.4%
<b>Home or In-School Suspensions</b>	5.9%*	44.0%	17.3%	5.3%	66.7%	13.9%	5.4%	41.4%	13.8%
<b>Removal to DAEP/ JJAEP</b>	--	8.3%	2.7%	--	--	--	--	6.8%	2.9%

Source. AISD student discipline files, 2010-2011 through 2011-2012.

Notes. \*Statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . --Number of students is  $< 5$  and information not reported to maintain confidentiality.

**Table 13. A significantly greater proportion of mentees participating in the first year of the program had aggressive behavior offenses compared to mentees who had been in the program for a year or more.**

	Any Type Discipline	Aggressive behavior	Home or In-School suspensions	Removal to DA JJAEP
<b>Less than 3 months (n=15)</b>	13.3%	--	--	--
<b>3 to 12 months (n=235)</b>	29.8%	21.3%*	19.6%	3.0%
<b>12 to 24 months (n=100)</b>	31.0%	15.0%	14.0%	--
<b>24 or more months (n=129)</b>	27.1%	14.7%	17.8%	3.9%

Source. AISD student discipline files, 2012-2013.

\*Statistically significant at the 85% confidence level. --Number of students  $< 5$  and information not reported to maintain confidentiality.

**Table 14. The average number of discipline offenses were similar among Seedling, waitlist and comparison students.**

	Seedling			Seedling Waitlist			Comparison Group		
	Elem (n=336)	Second (n=143)	All (N=479)	Elem (n=93)	Second (n=15)	All (N=108)	Elem (n=332)	Second (n=147)	All (N=479)
<b>Any Type of Discipline Offense</b>	3.7	7.3	5.6	4.8	10.7	6.5	3.7	7.9	5.9
<b>Aggressive behavior offenses</b>	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.8	2.3	2.0	1.6	2.0	1.7
<b>Home or In-School Suspensions</b>	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.0
<b>Removal to DA JJAEP</b>	--	--	1.0	--	--	--	--	--	1.0

Source. AISD student discipline files, 2012-2013.

Note. --Number of students  $< 5$  and information not reported to maintain confidentiality.



Seedling mentees experienced positive disciplinary outcomes. Teachers reported many instances where their students were becoming more self-confident and engaged. Overall, the percentage of Seedling mentees with disciplinary infractions was comparable to other students within their schools. This finding is considered encouraging, as children of incarcerated parents are more likely to exhibit antisocial behaviors, like disobedience, aggression, temper tantrums, lying or stealing than children who do not have parents who are incarcerated (Eddy & Poehlmann, 2010). At the elementary level, the percentages of Seedling mentees with disciplinary problems were significantly lower than their peers. While the higher percentages of Seedling mentees with disciplinary infractions at the secondary level typically exceeded those at the elementary level, it must be recognized that they often are struggling to develop identities and are peer focused and being comparable to their peers in this respect should be noted. Further, analyses revealed a significantly lower proportion of elementary-aged mentees and mentees in the program for more than one year had aggressive behavior offenses.

**Research says...**  
Mentoring can become a corrective experience for children who have had disappointing or unsatisfactory relationships with parents or other caregivers (Grossman et al, 2011). Mentors provide a safe space for children to express their thoughts and provide a model of effective behavior and communication. This relationship helps children to better understand, express, and regulate their emotions. Even so, children with severe relational difficulties, such as aggressive and antisocial behaviors, were more resistant to behavioral change and may need more comprehensive interventions than volunteer mentors can provide (Schwartz, Rhodes, and Chan, 2011).

**Academic Outcomes**

*How did teachers and mentees describe student academic behaviors?*

On the teacher and mentees surveys, most teachers and mentees described academic outcomes. Teachers perceived most Seedling mentees to be academically engaged in the classroom (Table 15). Most mentees put forth effort on their work, participated constructively, and were receptive to learning. Approximately 66% of teachers reported that mentee academic efforts have improved throughout the school year, as a result of the child’s participation in the mentoring program. Mentees at elementary and secondary levels reported they tried to do their best on schoolwork (Table 16); however they gave mixed reports of whether their grades were better because of the help their mentors provided. Significantly higher proportions of elementary students reported positive academic outcomes.

**Table 15. Most mentees were academically engaged in their classrooms.**

<i>The student...</i>	Strongly agree/agree	Strongly disagree/disagree
<b>does the best he/she can.</b>	64.7%	33.8%
<b>puts forth effort on academic activities.</b>	73.4%	25.2%
<b>participates constructively in class.</b>	72.9%	25.0%
<b>is open and receptive to learning.</b>	77.9%	19.3%

Source. Seedling Teacher Survey, Spring 2013.

**Table 16. Most mentees reported that they tried their best on schoolwork.**

	Elementary	Secondary
<b>I try my best to do well on my schoolwork.</b>	82.1%*	77.6%
<b>My grades are better because of my mentor’s help.</b>	66.7%*	44.7%

Source. Seedling Mentee Survey, Spring 2013. Note. \*Statistically significant at p <.05.

**Research says...**  
Hope, engagement, and feelings of well-being are robust predictors of academic success. Hope drives attendance, credits earned, and grade point average. Engagement, the enthusiasm and involvement in school, distinguishes students from being high and low performing. Well-being, or how an individual’s life is perceived, predicts future academic success (Gallup, 2012).



*What were Seedling outcomes on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)?*

The analysis of STAAR reading and math test results revealed positive outcomes for Seedling mentees. A higher percentage of Seedling mentees met the passing standard compared to Seedling waitlist students and matched comparison students (Table 17). Compared to their passing rates in 2012, a significantly greater proportion of Seedling mentees participating in the program for the first time in 2012-2013 passed the STAAR reading test (Table 19). A significantly higher proportion of Seedling mentees who have participated in the program for more than two years met the passing standard for the STAAR reading test compared to Seedling mentees who participated for shorter periods of time (Table 18).

Further analyses were completed to explore how student-and school- level characteristics may have been related to or have influenced STAAR passing rates. The only variable found to be significantly related to passing the STAAR reading test ( $p < .05$ ) was for students who were categorized as limited English proficient, and they were found to be less likely to meet the passing standard.

The analysis of STAAR math test results also revealed positive outcomes for Seedling mentees. A significantly higher percentage of Seedling mentees met the STAAR math test passing standard compared to Seedling waitlist students and matched comparison students (Table 17). The percentage of students passing the STAAR math test was not significantly different among Seedling mentees participating in the program for various lengths of time.

**Table 17. A significantly higher proportion Seedling mentees passed the STAAR tests compared to Seedling waitlist students.**

	STAAR Reading	STAAR Math
<b>Seedling mentees (n=205)</b>	69.3%	54.6%*
<b>Seedling waitlist (n=39)</b>	53.8%	35.9%
<b>AISD comparison group (n=224)</b>	62.9%	48.2%

Source. AISD STAAR files, 2012-2013.

Notes. \*Statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . Only reading and math test results for third through eighth grades were reported. Cell size results for high school students taking end of course exams and for mentees who participated in the program for less than three months were often less than five students and may be identifiable.

**Table 18. Among Seedling participants, a significantly greater proportion of mentees who were in the program more than two years passed the STAAR reading test.**

	STAAR Reading	STAAR Math
<b>3 to 12 months (n=97)</b>	66.0%	52.5%
<b>12 to 24 months (n=38)</b>	57.9%	52.6%
<b>24 or more months (n=64)</b>	78.1%*	56.3%

Source. AISD STAAR files, 2012-2013.

Note. \*Statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

**Table 19. A significantly greater proportion of Seedling mentees participating in the program for the first time in 2012-2013 passed the STAAR reading test than in the prior school year.**

Seedling 3 to 12 Month Participation, 2013	2012	2013
<b>STAAR reading</b>	20.8%	66.0%*
<b>STAAR math</b>	62.3%	52.6%

Source. AISD STAAR files, 2012-2013.

Note. \*Statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

**Research says...**

Researchers (Schwartz, Rhodes, Herrera, 2012) suggested that academically vulnerable youth may experience significant academic benefits from mentoring in programs that met after school or during lunch. Differences in the amount of time mentors and mentees spent together and how they used that time possibly accounted for differences in academic outcomes. Relationship-focused activities and discussions are associated with greater benefits to youth and greater levels of mentor satisfaction than more goal-oriented or academically-focused activities (Karcher, 2007; Karcher, 2008b).





**What does all of this mean?**

Research clearly shows that children with incarcerated parents face many challenges and need thoughtful, caring support. In this case, Seedling's Promise provides a research-based, well-implemented program that appears to positively influence the lives of the children it serves. Most mentees were provided with long-term, positive relationships with a trained adult mentors. The Seedling match length well exceeds national average for both school and community based mentoring programs. As evidenced in the program surveys, high quality mentoring relationships were developing and being well-supported. Most Seedling mentees reported positively about their mentors, themselves, their peers, and school.

"I have been very impressed with the quality of the mentoring that has taken place through this program. Not only does my student look forward to seeing his mentor, it gives him a time to reflect on his academic and social progress. Without his mentor, my student would really lack a strong male role model, and his mentor is truly a man to look up to! I am so grateful that this opportunity was granted to my student!!"

2013 Teacher

In terms of meeting secondary program objectives, program outcomes were consistently positive, in that, most Seedling mentees realized improvements in attendance, discipline and academic outcomes that were statistically significant. Positive differences also were found among Seedling students based on match length. Table 20 provides an overview of outcomes for Seedling mentees.

**Table 20. Summary of Outcomes for Seedling Mentees, 2012-2013**

Indicator	Desired outcome met among Seedling mentees?	Difference between Seedling mentees by school level?	Difference between Seedling mentees by match length?	Difference between Seedling mentees and waitlist students?	Difference between Seedling mentees and matched comparison group?
<b>Lasting relationship</b>	Yes				
<b>Positive attitudes</b>	Yes	Yes. Elementary significantly more positive.			
<b>Attendance</b>	Yes	Yes. Elementary had higher attendance rates.	No	No	No
<b>Discipline</b>	Yes	Yes. Fewer elementary had disciplinary offenses.	Yes. Aggressive behavior offenses decreased significantly after the first year of participation.	Yes. Significantly more waitlist students had disciplinary offenses.	No
<b>Academics</b>	Yes		Yes. Significantly higher passing rates in reading for first year mentees compared to themselves in prior year and for those in program 24+ months.	Yes. Significantly higher percentage of Seedling students passed in math.	Yes. Significantly higher percentage of Seedling students passed in math.



## Conclusion

Given the statistics provided in current literature, Seedling's Promise addresses a real need in the community, serving just over 500 children in a single year. These children were provided with long-term, positive mentoring relationships. The importance of this should not be dismissed, as research studies, time after time, have shown enduring mentoring relationships have been linked to significant improvements in children's relationships with their peers, family members, and other adults. The children are better able to understand, express, and regulate their emotions and behaviors. Over time, healthier relationships and improved self-esteem or self-confidence may translate to additional academic benefits for the child and the foundation for a bright future. Further, many Seedling mentees experienced positive attendance, disciplinary, and academic outcomes while engaged in their mentoring relationships.

## Recommendations for Continuing Evaluation

In this evaluation, trends across the data indicated that the Seedling program positively influenced mentee outcomes. Seedling mentees often had significantly greater outcomes compared to those on the program waitlist and a matched comparison group, and significance testing revealed that the differences among student groups in this study were not due to chance. With the tests of significance providing a starting point in determining the influences of the program, additional and increasingly rigorous statistical analyses were conducted to explore the relationships among student demographic, school level, and program participation variables. These analyses explained a small portion of the influences on desired outcomes, about 20% on average. The explanatory variables found to influence whether mentees were more or less likely to attain the outcome of interest were being at the elementary school level, gender, and English language learning status.

The observance of mentoring program variables that offer limited in explanation of the results or reveal effects modest in magnitude has been a common occurrence in other research studies (Dubois et al, 2011). When this happens, other variables that might better or additively explain outcomes or alternative measurements should be considered in the study of the program. Thus, it is recommended that the program variables collected undergo further refinement. Case in point, in the multi-level models, the Seedling program participation variable was not found to be a significant explanatory variable, as program "participation" is too broad of a descriptor to effectively capture program influences. In this instance, it is recommended to divide the Seedling program participation variable into smaller components to better capture program features that might explain or help predict student outcomes. For example, much of the research literature highlights the importance of including student social-emotional measurements, the background and skill sets of mentors, and perceptions of closeness in the analyses.

While these types of data are not currently collected for Seedling mentees, it might be feasible to adjust the data collection to further explore program outcomes. Questions on the mentoring surveys could be edited or added to collect perceptions of "closeness" or other mentoring relationship characteristics that might better explain influences of the program. A pre-assessment measuring children's sense of hope and well-being also might be administered as children begin the program and re-administered each year of participation.

**APPENDICES**

---

## Appendix 1: Description of Statistical Analyses

A variety of qualitative and quantitative data were used in this evaluation study. School Contacts, teachers, mentors, and mentees completed program surveys designed to determine the quality of program implementation, describe mentoring relationships, and identify mentee outcomes. Student attendance, discipline, and state assessment data were provided by Austin Independent School District (AISD) to determine outcomes for program participants.

Due to availability, only data for Seedling mentees, eligible students who were on the program waitlist, and a matched comparison group who were enrolled in AISD during the 2012-2013 school year were examined in this report. Mentees attending schools outside of AISD were not included in the student due to data availability. The Seedling mentees (n=479) included in the analyses had participated in the program and were still actively enrolled in AISD schools in the spring of 2013. Seedling waitlist students (n=108) also were still actively enrolled in AISD schools in the spring of 2013. Comparison students (n= 479) were actively enrolled in the same schools with Seedling mentees and were matched based on shared demographic characteristics and school of enrollment.

A variety of data analyses were employed in this evaluation and are described below.

**Descriptive statistics.** Descriptive statistics is the term given to the analysis of data that helps describe or summarize data in a meaningful way that enable patterns in the data to emerge. Descriptive statistics are very important in providing a visual picture and interpretation of the data. Some descriptive measures that are commonly used to describe a data set are frequencies, percentages, means, medians, modes, minimum or maximum values of the variables, and effect sizes. Descriptive statistics do not, however, allow us to make conclusions beyond the data we have analyzed or reach conclusions regarding any hypotheses we might have made.

**Inferential statistics.** Inferential statistics are concerned with making predictions or inferences about a population from observations and analyses of a sample. Inferential statistics enable us to reach conclusions that extend beyond the immediate data alone. The following analyses were utilized in this study:

- **T-tests.** The t-test is a statistical test that is used to determine if there is a significant difference between the mean or average scores of two groups. A t-test asks whether observed differences between the outcomes of interest for the student groups were greater or lesser than would be expected only by chance.
- **Analysis of variance (ANOVA).** ANOVA also refers to statistical tests used to analyze the differences between group means. Doing multiple two-sample t-tests would result in an increased chance of committing a type I error. A type I error leads one to conclude that a supposed effect or relationship exists when in fact it doesn't. For this reason, ANOVAs are used in comparing three or more means (groups or variables) for statistical significance.
- **Z-Tests for the difference between proportions.** The z-test test is used when the variable is categorical (e.g. Seedling or non-Seedling) to answer the question of whether the groups in question differ significantly based on a single characteristic (e.g. attendance, discipline).
- **Multi-level modeling.** Multi-level modeling is a type of regression analysis designed to handle data nested within hierarchical structures. For example, student program participants are nested within

different schools, and the statistical testing should address both the characteristics of the student and of the school. The purpose of this type of analysis is to explain or predict the relationships among multiple variables, often of different types. In this evaluation study, predictor or explanatory variables used in the analyses included student demographic variables (e.g., race/ethnicity, economic status, English language learning, etc.), levels of program participation (e.g. participation or non-participation, length of mentoring relationship), and school characteristics (e.g., school level and percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-proceed lunch). A chart depicting the multi-level models explored in this study is provided below.

**Table. Summary of multi-level models used in Seedling's Promise evaluation, 2012-2103**

Student Predictors (Level 1)	Outcome			
	Attendance Rate	Discipline Offenses	STAAR: Met standard	Length of mentoring match
Race/ethnicity	x	x	x	x
Economic disadvantage status	x	x	x	x
Gender	x	x	x	x
English language learner	x	x	x	x
Special Education	x	x	x	x
Program participation	x	x	x	
Length of overall program participation	x	x	x	
Length of current mentoring match	x	x	x	
School Predictors (Level 2)				
% Free/reduced priced lunch program participants	x	x	x	
School level	x	x	x	x

## Appendix 2: Elementary Mentee Survey, Spring 2013

To elicit feedback on program outcomes for the 2012-2013 school year, 177 Seedling mentees who were 9 years or older and who participated in the program for at least 9 months were asked to complete a survey. The first part of the survey used questions from the *Measuring the Quality of Mentor- Youth Relationships* Survey, originally developed for the evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies. The questions addressed youth-centeredness, emotional engagement, and satisfaction in the relationship. The second part of the survey contains questions designed to describe mentee perceptions of mentoring outcomes. Overall, 95% percent of the mentees completed a survey (n=169), and 90 of them were elementary aged. This response rate was determined to be representative of the group at a 95% confidence level.

Part 1: Measuring the Quality of Mentor- Youth Relationships	Very True (4)	Sort of True (3)	Not Very True (2)	Not at All True (1)
<b>My mentor helps me take my mind off things by doing something with me.</b>	86.5%	12.4%	--	--
<b>Sometimes my mentor promises we will do something, then we don't do it.</b>	4.5%	11.2%	15.7%	68.5%
<b>My mentor is always interested in what I want to do.</b>	86.5%	10.1%	--	--
<b>My mentor makes me feel mad.</b>	0.0%	--	--	96.6%
<b>My mentor and I like to do a lot of the same things.</b>	64.8%	30.7%	--	--
<b>It helps me when my mentor gives me advice.</b>	86.5%	11.2%	--	--
<b>I wish my mentor spent more time with me.</b>	69.7%	18.0%	4.5%	7.9%
<b>When I am with my mentor, I feel important.</b>	85.6%	12.1%	--	--
<b>I do not tell my mentor some things, because my mentor might tell someone else.</b>	--	11.2%	10.1%	75.3%
<b>When I am with my mentor, I feel happy.</b>	86.7%	10.0%	--	--
<b>When I am with my mentor, I feel disappointed.</b>	--	--	--	95.5%
<b>My mentor comes to see me when he or she is supposed to.</b>	76.4%	22.5%	--	--
<b>When I am with my mentor, I feel bored.</b>	--	5.6%	--	87.6%
<b>When something is bugging me, my mentor listens while I talk about it.</b>	94.4%	--	--	--
<b>Part 2: Mentee Perceptions</b>				
<b>I feel good about myself.</b>	83.5%	13.9%	--	--
<b>I go to school events (like carnivals &amp; assemblies).</b>	53.2%	39.2%	--	--
<b>I ask my mentor for help with problems when I need it.</b>	75.6%	16.7%	--	--
<b>When I am not getting along with a teacher, we can work it out together.</b>	74.0%	22.1%	--	--
<b>When I am not getting along with my friends or classmates, we can work it out together.</b>	73.1%	23.1%	--	--
<b>When I am not getting along with my family members, we can work it out together.</b>	77.9%	18.2%	--	--
<b>I can work through my problems better because of the help my mentor gives me.</b>	85.7%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>I stay away from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.</b>	94.9%	--	--	--
<b>I look forward to the day my mentor visits.</b>	92.3%	--	--	--
<b>I try my best to do well on my schoolwork.</b>	82.1%	17.9%	--	--
<b>My grades are better because of the help my mentor gives to me.</b>	66.7%	21.8%	7.7%	--
<b>I try to stay out of trouble in school.</b>	79.5%	20.5%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>I make good choices about my behavior at school because of the help my mentor gives me.</b>	70.5%	23.1%	--	--
<b>When I do something wrong, I am honest about it.</b>	77.2%	22.8%	0.0%	0.0%

Source. Seedling Mentee Survey, Spring 2013.

Notes. -- Responses for less than five students are not reported to ensure confidentiality.

### Appendix 3: Secondary Mentee Survey, Spring 2013

To elicit feedback on program outcomes for the 2012-2013 school year, 177 Seedling mentees who were 9 years and older and who participated in the program for at least 9 months were asked to complete a survey. Overall, 95% percent of the mentees completed a survey (n=169), and 79 of them were in middle or high school. This response rate was determined to be representative of the group at a 95% confidence level.

Part 1: Measuring the Quality of Mentor- Youth Relationships	Very True (4)	Sort of True (3)	Not Very True (2)	Not at All True (1)
My mentor helps me take my mind off things by doing something with me.	70.7%	25.3%	--	--
Sometimes my mentor promises we will do something, then we don't do it.	9.3%	8.0%	16.0%	66.7%
My mentor is always interested in what I want to do.	93.2%	--	--	--
My mentor makes me feel mad.	--	--	--	90.4%
My mentor and I like to do a lot of the same things.	33.3%	50.7%	13.3%	--
It helps me when my mentor gives me advice.	73.0%	21.6%	--	--
I wish my mentor spent more time with me.	37.3%	29.3%	16.0%	17.3%
When I am with my mentor, I feel important.	67.6%	20.3%	--	--
I do not tell my mentor some things, because my mentor might tell someone.	11.0%	12.3%	12.3%	64.4%
When I am with my mentor, I feel happy.	74.7%	20.0%	--	--
When I am with my mentor, I feel disappointed.	--	--	--	85.3%
My mentor comes to see me when he or she is supposed to.	68.5%	20.5%	--	--
When I am with my mentor, I feel bored.	9.5%	6.8%	17.6%	66.2%
When something is bugging me, my mentor listens while I talk about it.	84.0%	12.0%	--	--
<b>Part 2: Mentee Perceptions</b>				
I feel good about myself.	85.5%	11.8%	--	--
I go to school events (sporting events, student programs, dances).	38.2%	28.9%	19.7%	13.2%
I take part in after school activities (clubs, sports, band).	29.3%	22.7%	18.7%	29.3%
I ask my mentor for help with problems when I need it.	63.2%	27.6%	--	--
When I am not getting along with a teacher, we can work it out together.	43.4%	36.8%	13.2%	6.6%
When I am not getting along with my friends or classmates, we can work it out .	39.5%	36.8%	15.8%	7.9%
When I am not getting along with my family members, we can work it out together.	56.6%	26.3%	7.9%	9.2%
I can work through my problems better because of the help my mentor gives me.	58.1%	36.5%	--	--
I stay away from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.	84.0%	--	--	--
I look forward to the day my mentor visits.	70.7%	21.3%	--	--
I try my best to do well on my schoolwork.	77.6%	18.4%	--	--
My grades are better because of the help my mentor gives to me.	44.7%	40.8%	--	--
I try to stay out of trouble in school.	66.7%	28.0%	--	--
I make good choices about my behavior at school because of the help my mentor gives to me.	53.3%	36.0%	--	--
When I do something wrong, I am honest about it.	57.3%	40.0%	--	--

Source. Seedling Mentee Survey, Spring 2013.

Notes. -- Responses for less than five students are not reported to ensure confidentiality.

### Appendix 4: Seedling Mentor Survey, Spring 2013

To elicit feedback on program implementation and outcomes for the 2012-2013 school year, Seedling mentors were asked to complete a comprehensive survey. The survey contained 30 questions, many of which related to specific mentoring materials and training events to assist Seedling staff with program implementation decisions. These questions will not be presented in this document. Instead, mentor survey questions focused on mentor satisfaction and student outcomes will be summarized.

A web-link to the survey was emailed to 475 mentors with verified email addresses in May 2013, and 65% responded as of July 2013. Of those responding, 32% were mentors who just completed their first year in the mentoring program and 68% mentored in previous years. This response rate was determined to be representative of the group at a 95% confidence level.

#### 1. Please indicate how satisfied you were with the following activities:

Please indicate how satisfied you were with the following activities:	Extremely satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Sometimes satisfied	Not at all satisfied
New mentor recruitment process	70.1%	25.8%	4.1%	0.0%
New mentor orientation	77.3%	21.9%	1.0%	0.0%
Support from your Mentor Director in the first few weeks of your match	66.7%	27.8%	5.2%	0.0%

#### 2. Almost 53% of mentors contacted their Mentor Director and rated their helpfulness.

	Response Percent
Extremely helpful	80.5%
Mostly helpful	15.7%
Sometimes helpful	3.1%
Not at all helpful	0.6%

#### 3. Almost 59% of mentors contacted their School Contact and rated their helpfulness.

	Response Percent
Extremely helpful	67.0%
Mostly helpful	22.2%
Sometimes helpful	8.5%
Not at all helpful	2.3%

#### 4. Would you describe your campus as "friendly" to mentors?

	Response Percent
Extremely friendly	70.3%
Mostly friendly	25.4%
Sometimes friendly	4.0%
Not at all friendly	0.3%

**5. Monthly training:** About 36% of mentors reported attending one or more of the monthly training sessions and almost all of them reported the sessions to be extremely or mostly helpful. Of those who did not attend, 51% reported they could not get away from work more than one day a week; 30% could not attend sessions during the lunch hour; 25% preferred training in the electronic newsletter, and 20% preferred online training.

6. As a result of the training sessions I received, I feel more confident in the mentoring experience.

	Response Percent
Yes, definitely	39.7%
Somewhat	18.2%
No, definitely not	0.3%
Not applicable. I did not attend any training sessions.	41.8%

7. How would you describe your relationship with your mentee?

	Response Percent
Excellent	50.8%
Good	43.8%
Fair	4.7%
Poor	0.7%

8. Generally, I was able to see my mentee...

	Response Percent
Weekly	87.7%
Less than weekly	12.3%

9. **Mentoring Frequency:** Of those who reported seeing their mentee less than once a month, 38% saw their mentee three times a month and 35% saw their mentee twice a month. Ten mentors reported seeing their mentee less than once a month. When mentors were asked to explain reasons for not seeing their mentee weekly, work obligations were most often cited. Student related issues were also factors in how often a mentor could meet with their mentees as student absenteeism, suspensions, or disinterest at the secondary level kept a mentor from meeting weekly with his or her mentee.

10. When I spend time with my mentee, we most often engage in the following activities (select all):

	Response Percent
Talking/listening	93.0%
Playing games/ art or craft activities	64.8%
Discussing problems/processing feelings	44.3%
Trying out activities suggested in Future Matters	7.7%
Reading	23.5%
Supporting academic development	28.2%
Engaging in outdoor activities	20.8%

11. Do you believe that your time together was helpful for your mentee?

	Response Percent
Extremely helpful	37.2%
Mostly helpful	43.5%
Sometimes helpful	14.3%
Not at all helpful	1.0%
Do not know	4.0%

12. How do you rate your overall experience with the Seedling Foundation's Mentoring Program?

Response Percent	
Excellent	74.8%
Good	24.3%
Fair	1.0%
Poor	0.0%

13. Do you plan on continuing your relationship with your mentee next year?

Response Percent	
Yes	80.3%
No	8.7%
Undecided	11.0%

14. If you cannot continue your relationship with your current mentee in the next school year, would you be interested in mentoring another child?

Response Percent	
Yes	33.9%
No	15.3%
Undecided	49.2%

### Appendix 5: Seedling Teacher Survey, Spring 2013

Teachers of the children participating in Seedling's Promise were asked to complete a short survey. Considering school-level structures and resulting teacher-student relationships, only elementary level teachers were asked to complete a survey for Seedling participants in their homerooms. Fifty-eight percent of the teachers responded. Overall, teacher responses were highly positive and were consistent with survey results from previous years (Looby, 2009 -2012). Results from the survey follow.

#### 1. In my class, the child...

	Strongly agree or agree	Strongly disagree or disagree	Not Sure
does the best he/she can.	64.7%	33.8%	1.4%
puts forth effort on academic activities.	73.4%	25.2%	1.4%
works only as hard as necessary to get by.	46.8%	51.1%	2.1%
does more than is required of him/her.	36.4%	62.1%	1.4%
participates constructively in class.	72.9%	25.0%	2.1%
is open and receptive to learning.	77.9%	19.3%	2.9%

#### 2. As a result of the child's participation in the mentoring program, his/her academic efforts have improved throughout the school year.

	Response Percent
Strongly agree or agree	66.2%
Strongly disagree or disagree	13.4%
Not Sure	20.4%

#### 3. In my class, the child...

	Strongly agree or agree	Strongly disagree or disagree	Not Sure
works without disturbing others.	63.1%	36.2%	0.7%
respects school personnel.	84.4%	14.2%	1.4%
follows school and class rules.	73.6%	25.7%	0.7%
respects others' rights and property.	77.0%	22.3%	0.7%

#### 4. As a result of the child's participation in the mentoring program, his/her classroom behavior has improved throughout the school year.

	Response Percent
Strongly agree or agree	63.3%
Strongly disagree or disagree	17.3%
Not Sure	19.4%

## 5. In my class, the child...

	Strongly agree or agree	Strongly disagree or disagree	Not Sure
finds it hard to make friends.	20.4%	78.2%	1.4%
has a lot of friends.	72.5%	26.1%	1.4%
is popular with others his/her age.	69.0%	28.2%	2.8%
is confident in communicating with others.	72.5%	24.6%	2.8%
trusts and builds relationships with others.	64.8%	30.3%	4.9%
expresses feelings appropriately.	62.0%	35.9%	2.1%

## 6. As a result of the child's participation in the mentoring program, his/her classroom interpersonal relationships have improved throughout the school year.

	Response Percent
Strongly agree or agree	69.0%
Strongly disagree or disagree	12.0%
Not Sure	19.0%

## 7. In my class, the child...

	Strongly agree or agree	Strongly disagree or disagree	Not Sure
appears happy most of the time.	78.4%	21.6%	0.0%
looks forward to meeting with his/her mentor each week.	92.1%	0.7%	7.2%

## 8. As a result of the child's participation in the mentoring program, his/her disposition has improved throughout the school year.

	Response Percent
Strongly agree or agree	70.6%
Strongly disagree or disagree	12.1%
Not Sure	17.9%

## 9. How often have the child's parents or guardians...

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
come to formal events at school?	8.6%	21.4%	42.1%	27.9%
supported your efforts to work with the child?	22.1%	26.4%	42.9%	8.6%
helped the child with homework or school projects?	12.9%	20.0%	42.1%	25.0%
taken an interest in the child's school behavior and success?	22.9%	27.1%	40.7%	9.3%

## 10. I would recommend that the child or children in my class continue participating in Seedling's Promise mentoring program.

	Response Percent
Strongly agree or agree	94.3%
Strongly disagree or disagree	3.6%
Not Sure	2.1%

## Appendix 6: Seedling School Contact Survey, Spring 2013

To elicit feedback on program implementation and outcomes for the 2012-2013 school year, the School Contact at each Seedling supported school was asked to complete a program survey. Eighty-six percent of the School Contacts completed a survey. This response rate was determined to be representative of the group at a 95% confidence level.

### 1. Did you receive support in a timely manner from your Mentor Director?

	Response Percent
Always	90.9%
Most of the Time	6.1%
Sometimes	3.0%
Never	0.0%

### 2. Was your Mentor Director knowledgeable about the policies and procedures of the mentor program?

	Response Percent
Extremely knowledgeable	69.7%
Knowledgeable	24.2%
Somewhat knowledgeable	6.1%
Not at all knowledgeable	0.0%
I do not know.	0.0%

### 3. Did you experience a sense of partnership with your Mentor Director in the implementation of the mentor program?

	Response Percent
Always	84.8%
Frequently	12.1%
Sometimes	0.0%
Never	3.0%

### 4. Which information sources helped you to identify students eligible to participate in the Seedling Foundation's Mentoring program:

	Response Percent
Parent or caregiver	84.8%
Teacher	97.0%
Administrator	72.7%
Seedling Foundation staff	27.3%
CIS staff	42.4%
Dropout Prevention Staff	9.1%
Parent Specialist	60.6%
Family Resource Center	0.0%
Student self-disclosing or referring other students	78.8%
Other (please specify)	15.2%

**5. Mentee Identification:** When School Contacts were asked about effective strategies to identify and recruit children for participation, School Contacts described multiple strategies. Most of the time, they

communicated personally with caregivers, teachers, and the students themselves. They stressed the importance of involving teachers and sensitivity in conversations with caregivers and children.

**6. Challenges:** School Contacts also described challenges they encountered in the program recruitment process. The most prevalent challenge described across school sites was the process of identifying eligible students and obtaining permission to participate in the program was challenging. Several School Contacts described the fear families faced in disclosing this sensitive information, while others reported that families were very appreciative of the support and willing to participate.

**7. How would you describe the preparation level of the mentors assigned to children at your school?**

	Response Percent
Extremely well prepared	48.5%
Well prepared	48.5%
Somewhat prepared	3.0%
Not at all prepared	0.0%
I do not know.	0.0%

**8. How would you describe the overall quality of the mentors recruited by the Seedling Foundation?**

	Response Percent
Excellent	90.9%
Good	9.1%
Fair	0.0%
Poor	0.0%
I do not know.	0.0%

**9. Do you believe that the time that mentors spent with their mentees was helpful?**

	Response Percent
Extremely helpful	87.9%
Mostly helpful	12.1%
Sometimes helpful	0.0%
Not at all helpful	0.0%
I do not know.	0.0%

**10. Do you have a sense of how the Seedling mentoring relationships on your campus are progressing?**

	Response Percent
Yes	93.9%
No	6.1%

**11. Monitoring Relationships:** School Contacts described how they were tracking or monitoring the progression of the mentoring relationships in an open-ended question. Almost all of the School Contacts reported they regularly communicate with the students and their mentors. Many School Contacts reported that these conversations are initiated by the students and/or the mentors, giving the School Contact a sense that the relationships are important to both parties. They also described the students' excitement when they were talking about their mentors.

**12. Program Improvements:** When School Contacts were asked how Seedling staff could improve program services, they overwhelmingly requested more mentors, especially those that were male or Spanish-speaking. School Contacts also suggested more training for counselors and teachers.

---

## References

- Chan, S., Rhodes, J., Howard, W., Lowe, S., Schwartz, S., & Herrera, C. (2013). *Pathways of influence on school-based mentoring; The mediating role of parent and teacher relationships*. *Journal of School Psychology*, 51, 129-142.
- DuBois, D., Holloway, B., Valentine, J., & Cooper, H. (2002). *Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytic review*. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 30 (2): 157-197.
- Dubois, D., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. (2011). *How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence*. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91.
- Eddy, J. & Poehlmann, J. (2010). *Children of incarcerated parents*. Washington D.C.: Urban Institute Press.
- Grossman, J., Chan, C., Schwartz, S., & Rhodes, J. (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* (2012) 49:43-54
- Grossman, J. B., & Rhodes, J. E. (2002). *The test of time: predictors and effects of duration in youth mentoring relationships*. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30, 199-219.
- Karcher, M. (2005). *The effects of developmental mentoring and high school mentors' attendance on their younger mentees' self-esteem, social skills, and connectedness*. *Psychology in the Schools*, Vol. 42(1).
- Looby, K. (2009, 2010, & 2011). *Seedling's Promise: A mentoring program for children of incarcerated parents*. Annual evaluation reports. Available by request.
- Maruschak, L., Glaze, L. & Mumola, C. (2010). *Incarcerated parents and their children*. In *Children on incarcerated parents: A handbook for researchers and practitioners*. (33-51) Washington D.C.: Urban Institute press.
- Mentoring .Org. (2009). *Elements of effective practices for mentoring, third edition*. Retrieved from [http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_418.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_418.pdf)
- Murray, J. & Murray, L. (2010). *Parental incarceration, attachment, and child psychopathology*. *Attachment in Human Development*. 2010. July, 12(4): 289-309
- Schwartz, S., Rhodes, J., & Herrera, C. (2012). *The influence of meeting time on academic outcomes in school-based mentoring*. *Children Youth Services Review*. 34(12), 2319-2326.
- Schwartz, S., Rhodes, J., Chan, C. & Herrera, C. (2011). *The impact of school-based mentoring on youths with different relational profiles*. *Developmental Psychology*. 47(2), 450-462.
- Shlafer, R., Gerrity, E., Ruhland, E., & Wheeler, M. (2013). *Children with incarcerated parents-Considering children's outcomes in the context of family experiences*. *Children's Mental Health eReview*. Children, Youth, and Family Consortium, University of Minnesota. [www.cyfc.umn.edu](http://www.cyfc.umn.edu)
- The Pew Charitable Trusts (2010). *Collateral costs: Incarceration's effect on economic mobility*. The Pew Charitable Trusts. Washington D.C.
- Thomson, N. & Zand, D. (2010). *Mentees' perceptions of their interpersonal relationships: The role of the mentor-youth bond*. *Youth Society*, 41, 434-445.
- Wheeler, M., Keller, T., and Dubois, D. (2010). *Review of three recent randomized trials of school-based mentoring*. *Sharing child and youth development Knowledge*. 24(3)

## Evaluation Conducted for the Seedling Foundation by

Karen L. Looby, Ph.D.

October 2013

About the Author: After earning degrees in elementary education, curriculum and instruction, and educational administration at Texas A&M University and obtaining certifications for school principalship and superintendency, Dr. Karen Looby began to specialize in program evaluation. Overall, she has over 26 years of experience in education, 15 of which have been in research and program evaluation.

\*Additional information about this evaluation study may be provided by contacting Dr. Looby at [klooby@me.com](mailto:klooby@me.com).