Bannock County Youth At Risk Programming Youth Mentoring

The situation
School District 25 has a high school dropout rate of 16 to 24 percent (depending on source of statistics). Many children begin school failure in elementary grades and the problems worsen until they quit school as early teens. Problems may be academic, social and/or emotional. Research indicates that children may overcome problems if given individual attention and support from a caring adult.

Our response
In 1991, a program was jointly developed by University of Idaho Extension System and Idaho State University Student Volunteers Program to place college students in elementary schools as mentors to youth. Funds for Youth Mentoring were to come from a ES-USDA federal grant through the Extension System and from ISU. Program management and reporting was to be the responsibility of UI, while students and program space was to come from ISU. College students could enroll in Youth Mentoring for credit as an Education class.

Mentees were to be identified by the school system as being at risk because of academic, social or emotional problems. Mentors were to pass a background check, complete 10 hours of intensive training, work in the schools four to five hours per week and attend weekly reflection sessions with the Mentoring Coordinator.

Achievements
Youth Mentoring has been successful. The number of mentors and mentees changes each semester, but the program quality remains high. During 1991-92, eighteen mentors worked with 57 students; in 1992-93, thirty-one mentors worked with 199 students; while in 1993-94, mentors are working in thirteen elementary schools. Currently activities ranging from one-on-one mentoring to total classroom activities on developing self-esteem.

Mentors work with students who have a wide range of problems including suicidal tendencies, early sexual activity, eating disorders, failure to communicate because of abuse, lack of social skills, and academic failure.

Cooperators and Co-sponsors
Idaho State University
School District 25
Bannock County Sheriff's Office
Professionals from within the community who train mentors

The future
Youth Mentoring will remain a cooperative program of University of Idaho Extension System and Idaho State University until 1996 when the grant moneys are no longer available. Each year, Idaho State University assumes more responsibility for program management and financial support.
For more information
Becky Dahl
Bannock County Extension Home Economist
University of Idaho Extension System
Box 4228, 130 North 6th
Pocatello, Idaho 83205-4228
(208) 236-7311