

The Mentoring for Achievement Programme (MAP)

Programme Description

Brenna Bry's Behaviour Monitoring and Reinforcement Programme (BMRP) will be rolled out in Ireland as the Mentoring for Achievement Programme (MAP). MAP is a school-based, early intervention programme with a theoretical base in both behavioural and cognitive psychology. MAP is designed to be delivered in both individual and small group support formats to students identified by school personnel as being at risk of academic failure and early school leaving. The programme builds upon the existing school attendance, behaviour and academic records for each student. Based upon a review of this information students are assigned a community/schools based youth worker specifically trained in behavioural change techniques. Working with the assigned students each youth work professional will provide peer and social skills development strategies, behaviourally-based incentives, achievement recognition processes and rule compliance structures which when applied in a structured and consistent manner lead to enhanced academic and behavioural outcomes for the targeted children. The Mentoring for Achievement Programme is designed to assist children making the difficult transition from primary to secondary level education. Children will be assigned their designated youth support worker in January of their final year in primary school and the work will continue with the target child until the child completes his/her first full year in secondary school.

Programme Procedure and Protocols

The Mentoring for Achievement Programme is designed to complement existing school systems and act as a structured behaviourally-based adjunct service to both the HSCL service and the SCP. Youth work professionals will work within the school setting and their practice will be informed by key personnel within each school service. A referral process will be designed to identify the target children based on academic and school performance measures.

Once a child has been identified as suitable for inclusion, the youth work professional will begin to liaise with designated school personnel to:

- ***Collect up-to-date information about each student's actions***

Youth workers will enter the school each week, record the daily attendance and discipline referrals of programme participants and complete individual 'Weekly Report Cards' for each student based on information gained in teacher consultations. During these consultations teachers will be asked to indicate student behaviour across a number of dimensions including: (a) came to class on time; (b) brought materials needed for class work; (c) completed their class work; (d) exhibited satisfactory behaviour; and (e) completed their homework (if it was assigned).

This information is then coded and organised into a behavioural monitoring checklist designed to meet both school-based and individual needs.

- ***Provide systematic feedback***

Youth workers will meet weekly with students in small groups (3 to 5 students). 'Weekly Report Cards' will be distributed and discussed individually. Positive teacher ratings will be acknowledged praised and rewarded. Negative ratings will form the basis of a monitoring checklist. Clear precise and achievable objectives will be set, targets agreed and contractually set. These targets are then communicated to both the child's teacher and parents (by letter, telephone, and home visits) and simultaneous rewards systems applied across both home and school. Particular focus is placed on instilling behaviours designed to improve that teacher's impression of the child's behaviour. Parents are contacted on a weekly basis (with HSCL guidance and support) to inform them about their child's progress.

The purpose of this structured behavioural monitoring is to produce incremental change within the student. Small achievements developed in a structured system promote a greater sense of personal efficacy, motivation, and

commitment to the school and education process. The Mentoring for Achievement Programme engenders these changes by monitoring and rewarding appropriate behaviour in a structured yet experimental fashion.

- ***Attach value to the student's actions***

Students receive a point for every day that they come to school, arrive on time, and receive no disciplinary action, and for each positive rating they receive on their 'Weekly Behavioural Monitoring Checklist'. At the end of meetings, students are also given points for obeying specific meeting rules, such as not laughing at or criticising other people, not touching other people or their possessions, and not talking while others are talking. Students accumulate their points during the year to earn an extra school trip of their own choosing. Following the two-year intervention, students are invited to bi-weekly booster sessions, which follow the same format as the original intervention. Individual sessions are also made available to students wherein specific issues identified by the school can be addressed, eliminated, or supported as required.

Research overview

The Mentoring for Achievement Programme takes a simple but systemic behaviourally based approach to behavioural management and improvement. The programme has, in a series of evaluations, also been proven to be effective in improving grades and attendance, decreasing substance abuse, and decreasing criminal behaviour.

Specifically in a series of evaluations it was shown that:

- Compared to those in control group, experimental students exposed to MAP had significantly better grades and attendance at the end of the programme;
- Experimental students displayed significantly fewer problem behaviours at school than did controls;
- Experimental students reported significantly less substance abuse and criminal behaviour;
- Five years after the programme ended, experimental youth were 66 percent less likely to have a juvenile record than were controls;
- Experimental students had higher levels of academic motivation;
- Experimental students displayed fewer and less intense classroom behavioural difficulties;
- There was a significant difference between the intervention and control groups in reported anti-social behaviour with control group subjects reporting significantly more instances of such behaviour.