



Language Mentoring

Evaluation 2011-12



Bringing business and schools together to help young people succeed

Dear mentors, business coordinators and school coordinators,

Thank you for your continued support and dedication that has made this year of our Language Mentoring scheme a success. This scheme remains one of Tower Hamlets EBP's most specialised programmes in regards to the skills it develops in students, and without your considerable time and effort this scheme could never benefit the students in the way that the following report will show. This was my fourth full year managing the programme, so I am happy that the programme is stable and reaches a large number of students every year. I am delighted that new relationships between schools and businesses are still evolving, such as BAML volunteers now supporting Swanlea School.

This report summarises the evaluation data that was collected at the end of the academic year from all the students and mentors that took part in the scheme and completed a questionnaire.

Firstly there is an executive summary with the key findings from this year's scheme.

The report then goes into more detail and focuses on the positive outcomes resultant from this scheme from both students' and mentors' perspectives. Most answers were recorded on the following 5-point scale: No Improvement, Little Improvement, Some Improvement, Good Improvement and Significant Improvement.

The final section focuses on specific areas for improvement and suggested solutions so that the scheme next year will offer a better experience for everyone involved.

For more information on all of our projects and for access to our resources, please visit our website www.thebp.org.

Thanks again for your enthusiasm and commitment this year, it really is appreciated.



Megan Hunter
Mentoring and Apprenticeships Manager

Mulberry students were treated to a celebration Spanish tapas meal courtesy of their mentoring partners Herbert Smith.



Bishop Challoner and Mulberry students enjoy a day out at the French Institute with Herbert Smith mentors, featuring a French film showing and a very French baguette lunch.



Executive Summary of Language Mentoring 2011-12

Key benefits of the scheme:

90% of students report an improvement in their **general speaking ability**.

88% of students report an improvement in **pronunciation and intonation**.

85% of students report they have improved in other skills like **reading, writing and listening**.

100% of mentors agree or totally agree that they **feel good about helping young people**.

83% of mentors agree or totally agree that they have **contributed to the local community**.

Key areas that we need to improve for 2011-12:

- Student communication and timekeeping
- School calendar changes
- Advanced information on topics and syllabus to cover
- New materials
- Making the sessions more appealing to students

Background Information on Language Mentoring 2011-12:

The aims of the scheme are to help pupils develop their spoken Modern Foreign Language (Spanish, French, German) by increasing their vocabulary, confidence and awareness of modern foreign languages in the workplace. For students attending a language club where they are learning from scratch, such as Japanese, the sessions practise a wider range of skills such as basic writing and reading too.

Business volunteers meet with a small group of up to 4 pupils in Years 9-13 (ages 13-18 years old) studying a foreign language typically for 1 hour every fortnight.

There were 82 mentors on the scheme this academic year paired with approximately 200 students.

Participating schools 2011-12:

Bishop Challoner School, Years 10 – 12
George Greens School, Years 10 - 13
Langdon Park School, Year 10

Mulberry Girls' School, Years 10 - 12
Oaklands School, Years 10 & 11
Swanlea School, Years 9 - 11

Participating volunteers' organisations 2011-12:

BAML Barclays Capital Citi Herbert Smith Nomura

Students' Feedback on Language Mentoring:

Responses are from surveys completed by 61 students towards the end of the scheme in June and July.

Language Ability Improvements

90% report they have improved their **general speaking ability**. 67% say this is a 'good' or 'significant' improvement.

88% of students report and improvement in their **pronunciation and intonation**. 67% say this is a 'good' or 'significant' improvement.

85% say they are generally more confident in other skills like **reading, writing and listening**. 57% say this is a 'good' or 'significant' improvement.

82% of students report an increase in their **vocabulary**. 45% say this is a 'good' or 'significant' improvement.

69% report that they can use a **variety of tenses** better. 31% say this is a 'good' or 'significant' improvement.

Additional Improvements from Mentoring

83% say they are better **motivated to do well at school**. 53% say this is a 'good' or 'significant' improvement.

80% say they have **greater ambitions for their future**. 57% say this is a 'good' or 'significant' improvement.

70% say they have better knowledge of using **languages in careers**. 40% say this is a 'good' or 'significant' improvement.

67% say they are now better at **communicating**. 35% say this is a 'good' or 'significant' improvement.

Quotes from the students about their experiences of Language Mentoring:

"I would like to thank all mentors for helping improve my French. Their support helped me with my exams as they encouraged me to use different tenses and use a wider range of vocabulary. I have great improvement with my pronunciation."

"I'd like to thank my mentor for the great improvement and extra support he gave me towards the preparation of my control assessment."

"I think other students should do the scheme, because the smaller groups help you get a lot more work done and it helped a lot with confidence when speaking French."

"Our mentor helped us in preparation for the Bouygues language competition and as a result we won (a day trip to Paris on the Eurostar for our group of several mentoring students)."

"Other students should do it because it helps out lots. I do appreciate all that my mentor has done for us and I could not imagine me having the same progress without her help. It helps having someone else that isn't your teacher, teaching you."

Mentors' Feedback on Language Mentoring

Responses are from surveys completed by 18 mentors. This is a very low response rate compared to previous years and may not produce results that are as statistically relevant as desired. When compared with the students' reported improvements there is under-reporting by mentors about their positive impact.

Mentors' feedback on students' skills and personal development

77% of mentors reported that students had improved their **intonation and pronunciation**.

65% of mentors reported that their students had improved in non-speaking areas too, namely **reading, writing and listening**.

63% of mentors reported that their students had improved their **vocabulary**.

56% of mentors reported that their students now could **generally speak more fluently** in the foreign language.

Mentors' feedback on what they have personally gained from mentoring

100% of mentors agree or totally agree that they **feel good about helping young people**.

83% of mentors agree or totally agree that they have **contributed to the local community**.

53% of mentors agree or totally agree that they can now **communicate with wider audiences**.

50% of mentors agree or totally agree that they better **understand the needs of young people**.

Quotes from the mentors about their experiences on Language Mentoring:

"It was a great experience - volunteering in a British school was interesting, and I think the students enjoyed having an American in the classroom. I would definitely do it again..."

"More colleagues should do the scheme as it doesn't take much of their time but brings a lot to the students. The main challenge is definitely to get people to come to a try-out session, as most of people who have tried stay as a permanent mentor. Hence the big challenge is to raise awareness and to get people to come for at least 1 session. Generally speaking, existing mentors are very committed."

"As a general point, I was extremely impressed by the students... They were charismatic, engaged and a pleasure to deal with. Young people, particularly young people from certain parts of London, tend, almost invariably, to be identified as a "problem" by the media. Not everyone who works in the City necessarily has an opportunity to develop a more nuanced view. The students I met - even those who dropped out - reminded me that the general picture is, to a large extent, unfair."

Areas for Improvement and Proposed Solutions

There are seven general themes that emerge from student and mentor feedback which should be improved for the next academic year.

1. Student communication and timekeeping

Students' slow responses to email and poor ability in timekeeping are constant areas in need of improvement in all mentoring schemes. It is a very frustrating experience for mentors to set aside time and not have a session confirmed, or for the student to not turn up. As the scheme manager I have been trying to improve students' responses and reliability over the past four years, and it really is a key area that we still struggle with, as every year students are new to mentoring and can take a long time to understand their responsibilities and be proactive. I have created a new Service Level Agreement contract that school coordinators will need to agree to in order to receive mentors. Each school needs to examine which systems for guaranteeing student attendance and communication would work specifically well for their particular staff arrangements. I will be speaking with all school staff involved for each scheme in September to review their systems, ensure that staff fully brief students on their communication responsibilities, and emphasise that all students must actively volunteer for this opportunity.

2. School calendar changes

For schools where mentors attend set slots in their lunchtimes or lessons, there have been problems with sessions changing times and some volunteers only being told at the last minute. In lots of instances this was due to two schools having extensive buildings works during the school day and having to adapt the school timetable to accommodate these works. This has been thoroughly discussed with both schools affected, and plans are in place for next year which should not be disrupted by any buildings works and should provide mentors with a more reliable volunteering experience.

3. Advanced information on topics and syllabus to cover

Mentors are right to comment that it would be really useful to have topics confirmed before sessions so that they prepare well and so that students get the most out of the sessions as possible. Different schools provide advanced information to different extents, and I will be in touch with each one to get a system going where information to mentors is patchy in order to improve this. All of the syllabus links are already in the handbook and I will be pointing these out again to new mentors in training sessions. A reminder to current mentors via the business coordinator about syllabus information in the handbook will also be put in place.

4. New materials

The handbook for GCSE has been thoroughly updated over summer 2012 with some additional new activities and points for discussion. A brand new handbook for A-level students has also been developed to cater to increasing numbers of students studying language to a higher level, which has not been provided for before.

5. Making sessions more appealing to students

Some students who did the scheme in their spare time commented that they really did benefit from it, but would prefer the mentors to be more 'fun' and that some seemed to be very much like teachers. I am now going to include a discussion point in training for new mentors to consider what techniques can make sessions more appealing to students.

6. Investigate how the mentoring scheme could widen mentors' career opportunities

Only 12% of mentors reported that this scheme had improved their career opportunities. 24% were 'unsure' whether it had or not, and the majority of mentors reported that they disagreed it had helped their careers. I would like to do some work with our partners' corporate social responsibility teams to discuss how we can either get the skills learnt via mentoring to be recognised more, and/or how to explain better to mentors how their new skills could apply to improving their next career step.

7. Improving the volunteers' response rate to the end of year survey

It is crucial that we get more responses from mentors in all upcoming years of this scheme. The results have not been as reliable from this year as per previous years due to low amount of feedback. I will be discussing how to increase feedback with each individual business coordinator towards the end of next academic year.

Many thanks to the following organisations for supporting this scheme:

HERBERT SMITH

