

# Students Serving Students: A Teacher Candidate Examines the Impact of Mentoring with Under-Resourced Elementary Students

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A two-fold investigation of the impact of mentoring by elementary education practicum students with elementary students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

## Field-Based Case Study:

Kindergarten students (n=14) were selected based on three criteria:

- qualification for free or reduced lunch
- performance below grade level in one or more subjects
- evidence of stability in the community (an attempt to prevent attrition).

Students were randomly paired with SFA practicum students.

**Purpose:** To determine the effects of weekly one-on-one mentoring time specifically tailored to the individual needs of the children.

**Methodology:** One case study student was evaluated for growth in both academic and social abilities, identified through anecdotal records and pre and post report card data.

**Results:** The student had an increase in skills related to mathematics, reading, and speech. These improvements can be specifically related back to the activities implemented during weekly interactions, and may have been a factor in the child's improvements.

## Focus Group:

A focus group was held (n=5) from the fourteen teacher candidates approximately six months after the program. The goal was to identify the teacher candidates' attitudes towards the project as well as any perceptions of growth.

## Findings:

- Teacher candidates felt the project created a sense of reality of the different types of backgrounds from which students may come.
- After working with their student they felt more prepared to work with low income students in their first year of teaching.

## Implications:

This study suggests that the project had a positive impact on both the case study student and the teacher candidates. It suggests that weekly interactions with teacher candidates can help children from low SES backgrounds experience success, while simultaneously strengthening teacher candidate's abilities to meet the needs of diverse learners, both of which can aid in creating a more successful education system.

## Selected Students Growth

	Semester without Mentor	Semester with Mentor
Mathematics	Unsatisfactory	Very Satisfactory
Reading Readiness	Unsatisfactory	Somewhat Satisfactory
Conduct	95	97

## Statements from Teacher Candidates

"Teaching's not always about...the curriculum, it's about making differences in [the student's] lives."

"[This project gave me] a sense of reality. Knowing that its not perfect in every classroom and every student is going to be different. I went in thinking that everything was going to be happy and perfect, and it was those things, but it opened my eyes to how people's lives can be different."

"Our social interaction with [the students], is going to help them grow even more than the curriculum will...and they need that."

"[This project made me realize] that I want to be a better teacher...[by making] sure that I make relationships with my kids."



"The key to achievement for students from poverty is in creating relationships with them." – Dr. Ruby Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*