

Middle School Mentorship Interventions Using Considerations of early Development: Engaged teaching techniques and successful program intervention



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Mission

Originally created in response to male students' requests to focus on men's roles in ending gender violence, MLP builds and reinforces authentic and responsible leadership skills within a diverse group of undergraduate men and adolescent boys through group activities and sustained one-on-one mentoring relationships.



History

- Founded in 2009 at the University of Virginia by Claire Kaplan and Chris Wilcox-Elliott as an after-school leadership development program.
- Co-sponsored by the Maxine Platzer Lynn Women's Center and the Curry School of Education and Human Development .



MLP is committed to:

- Understanding a wide range of masculine behaviors.
- Educating mentors about the impact of early development on male identity formation and aggression through academic and practicum classes related to child and adolescent development.
- Introducing and fostering a gender aware perspective on leadership development and mentoring.
- Countering the negative and violent developmental and cultural messages that boys receive as models of acceptable masculine behavior.
- Encouraging the development of respectful, healthy, pro-social and anti-violent roles for men and boys.
- Developing leadership skills in often underserved youth who have the potential to positively influence their peers.



MLP – The Main Thing

- To provide an engaged scholarship opportunity to qualifying uva students
- To provide formative classroom experience for college student mentors
- To support young boys and college students in their formative years
- To support young boys and college students in becoming healthy adults
- To create mentors out of college men
- To teach participants about their radical right to their humanity; to affirm this right; to then hold accountable to promote the humanity of others
- To create inner space/time to contemplate the concept of manhood
- To deal with cultural baggage of the man box
- To show that there is not a one size fits all version of “manhood”
- To engage with the local community
- To be a replicable model for other communities

We focus on three core concepts:



- *Authenticity*
 - *Respect*
 - *Strength*
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Expectations of Big Brothers

All Big Brother mentors commit to MLP for *one full academic year including course work in developmental psychology, mentoring and leadership*

EDHS 2889 - Fostering Leadership in Adolescent Boys

EDHS 2900 - Practice in Youth and Community Engagement



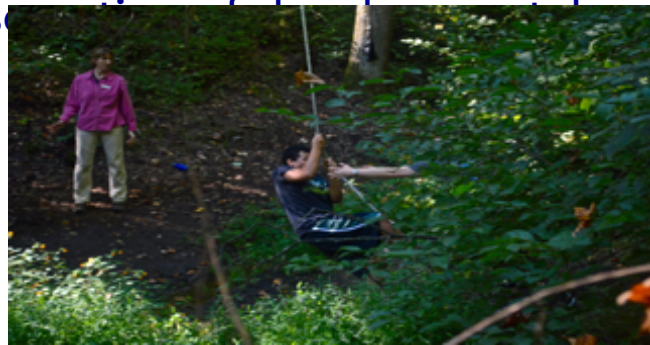
Academic Experience

EDHS 2889 - Fostering Leadership in Adolescent Boys

- Readings and lectures in development from birth to adolescence including neuropsychological, moral, social development and attachment theory.
- Self reflection on their own development in the areas of masculinity, aggression and cultural expectancies.
- Extensive journaling of experience with mentees and developmental insights in their own lives.
- Observation of developmental influences on mentees behaviors.

EDHS 2900 - Practice in Youth and Community Engagement

- Application of personal and academic insights in meetings individually and in groups with mentees.
- Continual observation of mentees' progress in mentees



Expectations of Big Brothers



In addition to the class, the following are mandatory for all Big Brothers:

- Regular one-on-one contact plus structured weekly after school group activities throughout the academic year.
- Participation in special activities, such as the ropes course, field day, Big Brother recruitment week, and celebrations.
- Periodic contact and communication with parents and/or guardians.
- Criminal background checks.



Expectations of Big Brothers

Course readings, weekly journal posts, and projects are designed to complement the mentoring process and enrich each participant's experience throughout the year.

The most important thing I learned was that we have so much learning to do and that learning does not (just) come from books. I felt like my little brother has taught me so much about how I see myself. I think he has made me a better man in these past few weeks.

~MLP Big Brother



“I joined MLP because the program was unlike anything I’ve ever heard of. The novelty of the program is in its ability to analyze critically how masculinity shapes our perception of the world and utilize that understanding in how we interact with our little brothers. We don’t ‘teach’ them per se, but we try to give them the tools to look at their world in a different light.”

~ Carlos

MLP helps the undergraduate men understand how gender is an integral part of their lives, and that their own notions of masculinity may be influenced by cultural hegemony.



"...I have learned a great deal about myself and the society around me. (MLP) provides a unique experience combining University education, community service, and personal relationships. It's often easy for me to take all of these things for granted and simply go through the motions, but ...I have realized how lucky I am to be a part of a program such as this."

~MLP big brother



Expectations of Little Brothers

- Participate in the program for one school year.
- Attend special activities, such as the ropes course, UVA day, and celebrations.
- Participate in MLP community service projects, like HOWS.
- Apply what they learned at home and at school whenever they can.



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- Lack of transportation is not a barrier.
 - Participation in the research evaluation is optional although highly encouraged.



"We learn about respect in this program, and what it means to be a man - like a strong man for your family and to stop violence in our school."

~MLP little brother

Fall Semester

Pillar 1: RESPECT

- Week One: Demonstrating Respect & Group Expectations
- Week Two: Leadership: Something You Do or Someone You Are?
- Week Three: Guest: Carlos Andrés Gómez
- Weekend: Ropes Course for team building
- Week Four: Boys' Peer Groups & Family Relationships

Pillar 2: AUTHENTICITY

- Week Five: People are Diverse: Describing Our Communities
- Weekend: Houses of Wood & Straw Community Service Project
- Week Six: Community & Leadership: Group Service Project
- Week Seven: Media Messages about Masculinity
- Week Eight: Identifying Healthy Self-Expectations
- Week Nine: Body Image

Pillar 3: STRENGTH

- Week Ten: Bullying & Bystander Intervention
- Week Eleven: Gender Based Violence
- Week Twelve: Confrontation & Practicing Problem Solving Skills

Spring Semester

Pillars 1 – 3 Combined

Week Thirteen:	Dating & Healthy Relationships
Week Fourteen:	Stress Relief & Coping Skills
Week Fifteen:	Honor & Integrity in Leadership
Week Sixteen:	Honor & Integrity in My Family Relationships
Week Seventeen:	Family Relationships Continued & Parent Appreciation Dinner
Week Eighteen:	Leading in School & the Community
Week Nineteen:	My Community's Leaders & Role Models
Week Twenty:	My Community's Leaders & Role Models Continued
Week Twenty-One:	Reflections on Masculinity & Leadership
Week Twenty-Two:	Making My Dream Board
Week Twenty-Three:	Bigs' Choice/Bigs' Creation
Weekend:	UVA Day & Parent's Reception
Week Twenty-Four:	Bigs' Choice/Bigs' Creation
Week Twenty-Five:	Closing Celebration



How Did My Understanding of Early Development Impact My Work As A Mentor with 7th Grade Little's?

Here are some interview quips from our most current set of College mentors:

In your mentor training in the Men's Leadership Project you learned a great deal about leadership, but also a great deal about child and adolescent development.

What did you learn about child development that has been most useful to you as a mentor working with Seventh Grade Boys?



Big Brother Recruitment

We accept Big Brother nominations and applications year-round, although mid-year applications will be held until the following year's group. We can accept applications up until the first day of the fall semester.

Upon receipt of applications, potential Bigs are interviewed by a current Big Brother and a facilitator or MLP Intern, who is also a former Big.

Our goal is to have our Bigs selected by the end of the Spring semester so that we can pair them with their Little for the fall.

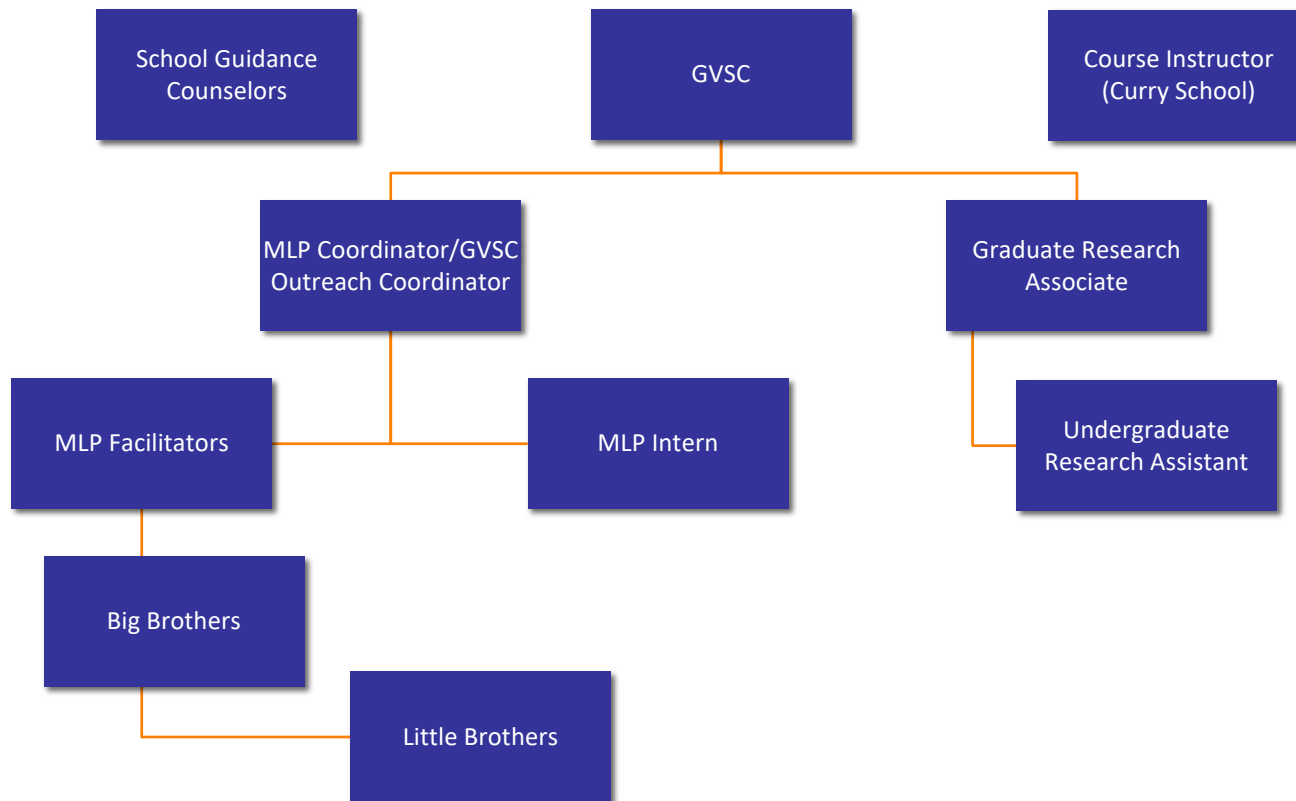


Little Brother Recruitment



- Participating school guidance counselors collect recommendations from teachers and other school staff.
 - Suggested Littles tend to be boys who aren't achieving their potential, who have shown that they are capable of doing well in school and/or leadership yet are struggling.
 - All potential Littles are introduced to MLP in a group gathering with MLP Bigs and the Coordinator.
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- Once they have completed their application forms (including parent forms) and returned it to the guidance counselor, we collect the forms and begin the matching process
 - At the beginning of the school year, we check in with the Guidance Counselor to make sure that the boys are still enrolled.

MLP Structure



2017-2018 Research:

Exploring the Potential Impact of MLP

During the conclusion of the MLP program this year, IRB-Approved research was piloted through the University of Virginia to explore and evaluate potential factors of impact related to mentor/mentee participation in MLP:

Evaluation Design:

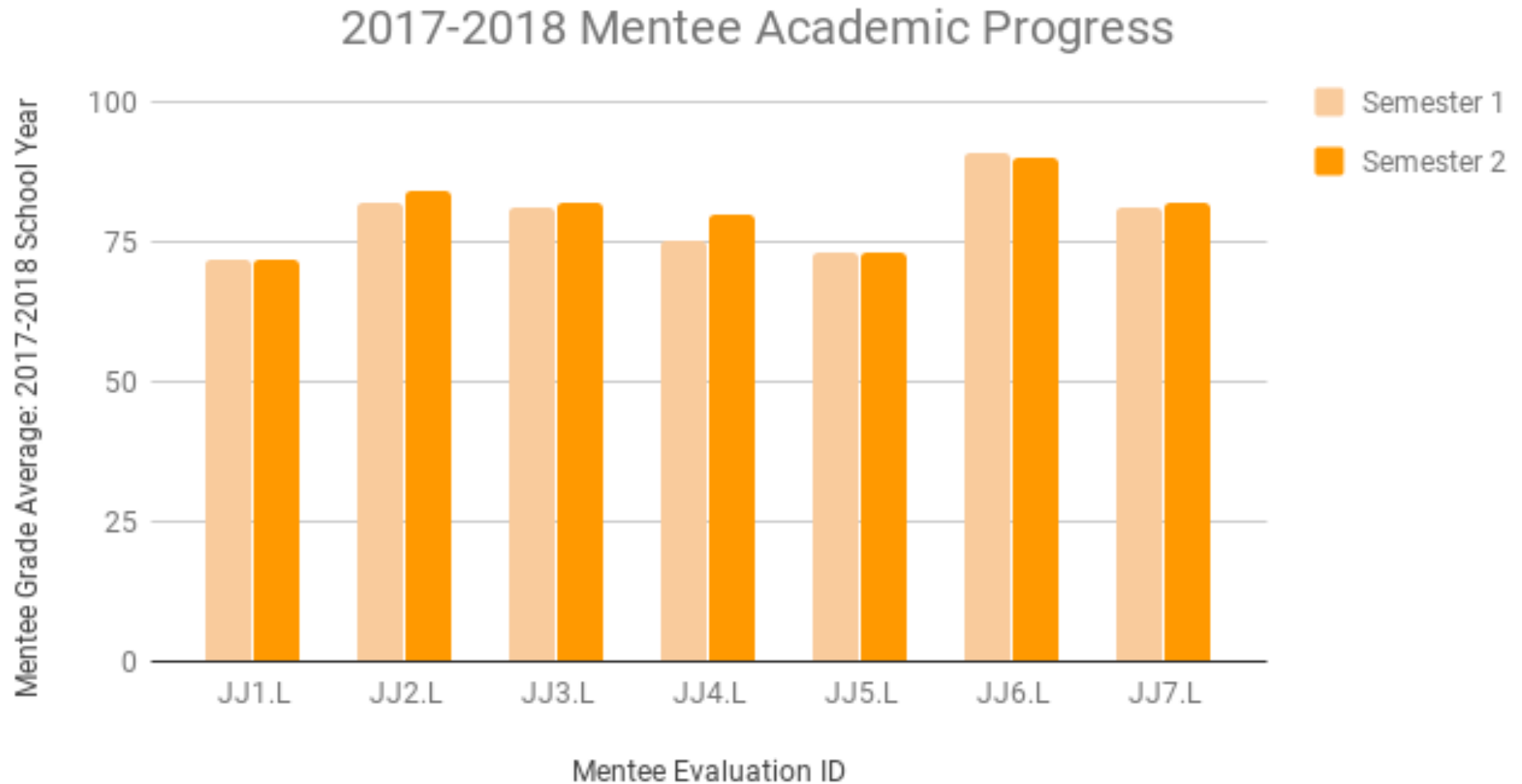
1. **Phase 1:** Big Brother and Little Brother Focus Groups and Feedback Questionnaires
2. **Phase 2:** Big Brother and Little Brother Survey Measures
3. **Phase 3:** Little Brother Academic and Behavioral Records

Phase 1: Interpreting Organized Feedback

During the Focus Group and Feedback Questionnaires, a majority of **MLP Little Brothers** indicated that the presence of a Big Brother provided positive emotional, social, and academic support, independent of the frequency of interaction.

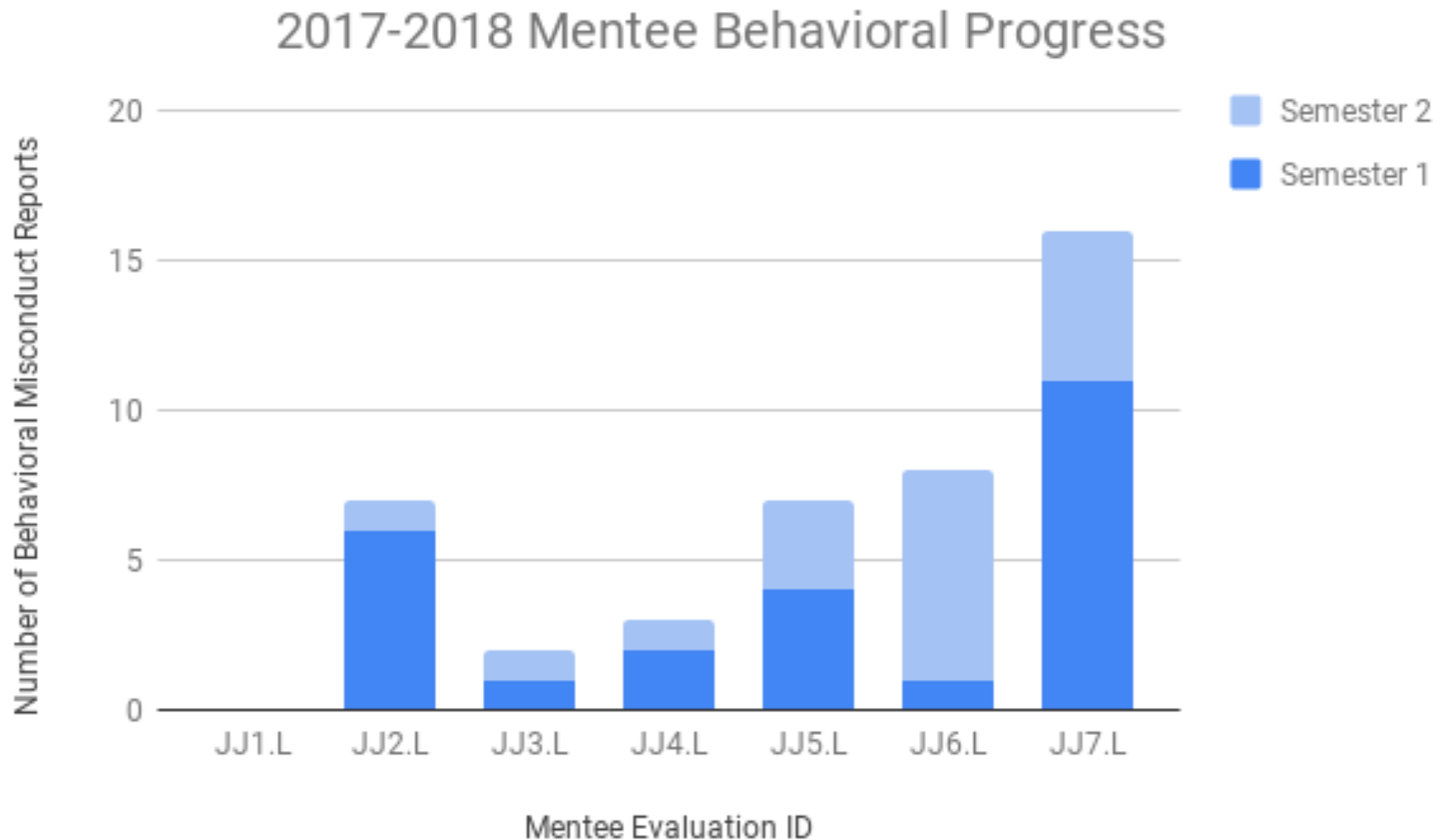
Likewise, the feedback collected from **MLP Big Brothers** indicated that serving as a mentor deepened their sense of responsibility and accountability to others. Many voiced that the process of teaching Little Brothers about healthy masculinity required a great deal of self-reflection and patience.

Phase 2: Interpreting Academic Records



Marginal academic improvement by Middle School (n= 7) mentees from Semester 1 to Semester 2 suggests the potential for a relationship between MLP participation and academic stability and/or improvement.

Phase 2: Interpreting Behavioral Records



A majority of the Middle School mentees ($n = 7$) received fewer behavioral incident reports during Semester 2 than Semester 1, suggesting the potential for a relationship between MLP participation and improved behavioral conduct.

Phase 3: Interpreting Survey Measures

MLP Little Brothers (n = 13) displayed low scores on the *Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale*. As a cohort, their overall mean score of 20.3 out of 48 possible points indicates potential dissent from traditional norms of hegemonic masculinity within the context of interpersonal relationships.

MLP Big Brothers (n = 10) displayed low scores on the *Male Role Attitudes Scale*. As a cohort, their overall mean item score of 1.7 on a 4 point Likert scale indicates progressive attitudes toward male roles.

Research Evaluation Highlights

“(MLP) helped me to become a more respectful kind of man, and now I know what I need to know for the future.” ~ MLP **Little Brother**

“I have learned that you have to give a lot and expect to receive very little in return. Then you understand the role of love. Then you see the largest return.” ~ MLP **Big Brother**



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