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STARTING A LAW SCHOOL YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM

*Brett G. Scharffs*¹

Everyone needs a mentor. Most of us have had a mentor, someone who helped us at a critical time in our life, someone who inspired us to be a little bit better than we would otherwise be. Most of us would like to be a mentor, but it is often difficult to find opportunities to be one and some of us are not sure we have that much to offer.

I have been greatly benefited by many kind mentors in my life and have searched for ways in which I could give back to others in a similar manner. Thus, my interest was sparked upon hearing about a youth mentoring program at the Georgetown Law Center, which brought in a busload of inner city school children to the law school once a week for one-on-one mentoring with a law student. I was immediately impressed with the program's simplicity and effectiveness. It was convenient for law students. They could provide a vital public service without leaving school, and it was particularly suited to first year law students, who did not yet have the legal training to enable them to participate in law-related public service clinics or other programs. The mentoring program did not distinguish between children by focusing on those who were in academic trouble or those who were particularly gifted; rather it brought in an entire class and each child was assigned a mentor. One law student worked with the same child for the entire academic year, creating the opportunity for a genuine mentoring relationship to be established. It brought the children to the law

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school where – some for the first time – the youngsters could begin to feel comfortable with and imagine themselves belonging in a college atmosphere. The mentoring all took place in one room, the largest room at the law school, where there was an electric buzz of collective learning.

I was interviewing for teaching jobs when I learned about the Georgetown program. I was so impressed that I resolved to try to replicate the program wherever I landed as a law professor. When I arrived at the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University, I had momentary doubts whether there was a need for such a program in a small university town that is as homogeneous and middle class as any city in the country. However, I discovered that even in Provo there is a dividing line – Interstate 15 – which splits the city and also seems to split the educational opportunities for children into two groups. On the east side of the Interstate, numerous children grow up expecting to attend college; however, for many children on the west side, the prospect of college is more remote. If a mentoring program is needed in Provo, as it clearly is, then it is difficult to imagine any city in the country where one is not needed.

Upon arriving in Provo, I began to make preparations for the new mentoring program. Naively, I thought initiating the program would be easy. To me, the idea had such immediate and obvious merit that I could not imagine it would be difficult to set up the program and make it work. Three years later, it has worked, and in some ways better than I imagined it would. There have been difficulties along the way; some were expected, some unexpected, some of which we have solved, some of which we are still working on, but after three years of supervising the program many of the early wrinkles have been ironed out and the program is flourishing.

Our program is quite simple. Every Tuesday at noon between October and April, excluding finals and Christmas break, 90 sixth grade students from Sunset View Elementary School arrive at the BYU Law School to meet with their individual law student mentors. The mentoring session lasts for 50 minutes, the same length as a law school class, and is held at a time that does not conflict with any major law school classes. The sixth grade students meet their mentors in the moot court room and immediately begin homework assigned to them in advance by their teachers. Some students stay in the moot

court room to complete their homework, others move to the law library, and many end up at their law student's desk since the sixth grade teachers often assign internet research projects that can be completed with the help of a law student mentor. The sixth grade students who finish their homework before the hour is complete often ask their mentors to take them to the student lounge to play foosball or outside to play Frisbee. At the end of the hour all the students meet back in the moot court room where the sixth grade students line up and head back to school. The program has yielded notable results during its first three years of existence. Constructing a mentoring program has been a very rewarding endeavor for me, the law school, and especially for the law students and elementary school students involved in the program. It is in the hope that others can learn from our experience and be similarly inspired by the Georgetown Law Center's program that this article is written.²

My objective is to explain how to develop a mentoring program from start to finish and share insights and anecdotes from the first three years of the mentoring program at the BYU law school. Section I describes the participants: individuals at the law school, school district and the elementary school involved in creating and maintaining a mentoring program. The initial preparation required for a mentoring program is discussed in Section II. In Section III, I discuss the nuts and bolts of running the program from the first day of the year through the last day. Section IV sets forth the financial needs of a mentoring program. While a mentoring program does not need much money, a small budget is required. In Section V, the benefits of a mentoring program for the elementary school children, the law students, and the community are evaluated.

2. Although I have been unable to locate any articles about operating a law school mentoring program, others have commented on the need for mentors from the legal community. See e.g., Susan Hackett, *Breaking New Ground: How Corporate Pro Bono Can Work*, 7 Bus. L. Today 50 (May/June 1998) (encouraging pro bono work and community service for corporate attorneys, and suggesting lawyers serve as mentors at elementary schools); Kristin Booth Glen, *Pro Bono and Public Interest Opportunities in Legal Education*, 70 N.Y. St. B. J. 20 (May/June 1998) (calling on law schools to teach law students the value of pro bono work before they are admitted to the bar, and commenting positively on a program at the Syracuse law school where law students mentor elementary school children); Colin Powell, *A Call to Action - Where You Lead They Will Follow: The Case for Legal Mentors*, 2 Legal Mgmt. 24 (March/April 1998) (challenging legal community to provide mentoring experiences to the general public).

I. GETTING STARTED: ASSEMBLING A TEAM

While there is not a substantial amount of work that must be done by any one person, organizing a mentoring program requires coordination between the law school, the school district, school teachers and parents. For the initiator of a mentoring program, maintaining relationships between these people is crucial for the success of the program.

A. *The Law School*

When I first broached the idea of a youth mentoring program, an administrator who has been at BYU Law School since it opened its doors over 25 years ago assured me that it would never work. "Law students are too busy," she said flatly, "and too self-absorbed," she added for good measure. "But good luck." Over time, this administrator has become one of the chief supporters of the program. A successful program depends upon the support of certain key people in the law school.

The Dean: It is essential to have the support of your Dean. The program will need some budgetary support, and relies upon the use of law school class space and scheduling. At BYU, the Dean was an immediate and enthusiastic supporter of the program.

The Law School Administrator who Schedules Classes and Class Rooms: The person within the law school whose support is perhaps the most important is the person responsible for scheduling classes and rooms. This administrator has the power to reserve a large room at the law school for the mentoring program at a time when the elementary school classes can come to campus. Additionally, this person can help schedule the room at a time when there are few law school classes in session.

During the second year of the program, there were significant class conflicts that made it difficult to recruit and retain mentors. During fall semester, there was a required first year class that three-quarters of the first year class took, scheduled during the mentoring hour. This meant we had to rely primarily upon second and third year students. While we successfully recruited 90 mentors, it was difficult. Furthermore, during winter semester there was a large class that is recommended for Bar preparation for second and third year students, so we

found ourselves recruiting first year students to fill in for earlier mentors who felt they must take the class.

By the third year of the program, the same administrator who had doubted that the program could work included the mentoring program on the class schedule on her own initiative and avoided scheduling large section classes in conflict with the mentoring hour. Having the mentoring program directly on the class schedule turned out to be a breakthrough in law school support, making it easier than ever to recruit and retain mentors. Students have told me that seeing the program on the class schedule has made a real difference, enabling them to view participating in the program as akin to a class option, even though there is no grade or credit received.

Student Group or Individual Coordinator: One key to our program's success has been the help of a law school student volunteer who has stepped forward to coordinate the program. The student coordinator's primary responsibilities include recruiting and communicating with the law student volunteers and working out the day-to-day logistics of the program.

Initially, I thought it would be important to find a student group that would sponsor the mentoring program, but as the program developed it seemed more natural not to identify it too closely with any particular student interest group, even a group with a service orientation. During the first year of the program, a student who heard me describing how the program might work volunteered to be the original student coordinator. Shortly before he graduated, another student stepped forward to ask if he could help. While there may be advantages to a student group taking responsibility for the program, my sense is that it is helpful to have a faculty member bear primary responsibility and to find a creative, responsible student to help administer the program.

Faculty Sponsor: It is important to have a faculty member who feels a sense of responsibility for the program. Ideally, this person will be a volunteer (perhaps a reader of this article), who works to cohesively maintain the program and can provide institutional memory and continuity as generations of law students, student coordinators, school district mentoring directors and elementary school teachers come and go.

If you are fortunate, as I have been, the Dean may be willing to consider overseeing the mentoring program as a committee assignment that counts towards the professor's citizenship obligation to the law school.

As faculty sponsor, I have found that my presence at the mentoring session is helpful, although not always necessary. I often come by for a few minutes at the beginning to make sure everything is running smoothly. I check in frequently with the elementary school teachers to make sure that they are satisfied with the way the program is running and to receive their ideas and feedback. I also act as advocate for the program with the Dean and others when soliciting funds for special events, such as a year-end pizza party for mentors and their students. I have also volunteered as a mentor, as have other professors and administrators at the law school.

B. The School District

Early on, as I tried to put the pieces of a program together, I discovered that the Provo School District has a part-time professional who is in charge of coordinating mentoring programs in the elementary schools. Her job is to recruit mentors, provide training, match mentors with students, and coordinate and oversee the program. Until our program began, the usual model involved a single mentor being assigned to an elementary school, attending a training session, and then coming each week at an appointed hour to work with an at-risk student, who usually left class and met the mentor in the elementary school library.

When I described the Georgetown program to the district mentoring coordinator, she immediately saw the potential for such a program being adapted to our situation. In fact, with the Law School's program, the district coordinator increased the number of mentors who were providing mentoring on a weekly basis in the school district by 25%.

In our case, this school district liaison found elementary school teachers who were willing to participate in the program. The school district expert also provides training each fall to our mentors, collects information and coordinates a police background check on the mentors, matches up law student mentors with sixth grade students, and acts as a resource for answering the surprisingly broad array of questions that come up. The

first time a training session was held, I was surprised at the range and quality of handouts and instruction that the school district provided. Topics included the appropriateness of contact between mentors and students outside of the mentoring sessions, how to respond if a student raises issues of abuse or neglect, and how to deal with students who claim not to have any academic work to do. We have been most fortunate in that the school district coordinator has become an active and vital part of the program on her own initiative. She comes nearly every week, helps make sure the elementary school teachers remain happy with the program, answers questions, and provides oversight and expertise.

C. *Elementary School Teachers*

To my surprise, one of the biggest challenges was to find elementary school teachers who were willing to participate in the program. In fact, the first year of the program, the district mentoring coordinator sent an e-mail to every principal of every elementary school in the Provo School District asking if any teachers were willing to try the new program. We had only one teacher, Ron Firmage, an enormously creative and innovative sixth grade teacher at Sunset View Elementary, who was interested in participating.

In retrospect, it is easy to understand the teachers' hesitancy. Including travel time, the program takes about two hours per week away from classroom time. Traveling a distance to the University, facing the possibility of parent complaints or concerns and simply the inertia of the status quo make it a real risk for teachers to embrace a program such as ours. For the first year, as a pilot program we worked solely with Mr. Firmage's class – about 30 sixth grade students. The following year, two other six grade teachers at his school wanted to participate, increasing the total number of children involved in the program to around 90. We have considered expanding the program further, but as a practical matter, we would need to double the program to 180 children in order to take full advantage of the capacity of another school bus. While we think it would be possible to find 180 mentors in the law school, with a class of only 150 students per year, we would need almost 40% of the law school student body to volunteer in order to have enough mentors. On balance, we decided for the time being to maintain

the size of the program at 90, a number that the law school student coordinator and I find sustainable.

D. Parents

Another important constituency vital to the success to the program is the parents of the sixth grade students. Each child must have a parental permission slip signed before they can travel on the bus to the law school. Most parents have been eager for their children to participate, and I am not aware of any parents who have withheld their permission, although some parents were initially reluctant. Their concerns seem to fall into one of several categories. Some are concerned about the usual town and gown distrust. Some parents see the University as a distant monolith that is far removed from their world and interests. A few were concerned that the program was not the best use of their child's academic day. At BYU, which is a church-sponsored university, there was concern on the part of a few parents that there would be a religious dimension to the program.

We have tried hard to be responsive to these concerns. Effort is made to match the children with mentors who will be able to relate to them. We are careful in our training and scrupulous in the operation of the program to avoid religious content or implication. And we are constantly assessing how well we are doing in meeting the program's goal of maintaining an academic focus.

To my delight, the parents at Sunset View selected Mr. Firmage as Teacher of the Year at his school during the second year of our program. He was later selected as teacher of the year for the Provo School District and was eventually honored as one of a small handful of teachers in the state of Utah. Mr. Firmage said he believed his participation in the mentoring program was one thing that contributed to his selection. Mr. Firmage is such an innovative, creative, and dedicated teacher that I suspect he may have received that award without being involved with the program, but I am pleased that he attributed part of his recognition to the mentoring program.

II. OPERATIONAL PREPARATIONS

After making all of the preliminary arrangements for the mentor program by assembling a team of participants and coordinating dates and times, the initial groundwork can begin. We start our mentor program in early to mid October each school year so the month of September can be used for recruiting and training mentors.

A. Recruiting Law Student Mentors

To my surprise, recruiting law students to volunteer as mentors has been relatively easy. In large measure this is because serving as a mentor is so convenient for law students. If we were trying to convince law students to travel to the other side of town once a week, it would be a much more difficult task to find volunteers. Instead, the program is designed to fit within the academic schedule of law students. It lasts 50 minutes, just like a law class, and occurs each week at a time when few other classes are scheduled.

The law school student coordinator is primarily responsible for finding 90 law students who are willing to be mentors. The bulk of the mentors have been first year law students, although we have had mentors participate in the program for all three years of law school. First year students are particularly good candidates for mentors since most of them are not working at part-time jobs, nor are they participating in any extracurricular groups at the law school and are thus looking for something during the week to break up the monotony of preparing for class. The student coordinator found that making a brief announcement during the first few minutes of a large first year class and then passing around a sign-up sheet during class was an effective method of recruiting mentors. Additionally, mentors can be recruited through mass e-mails.

B. Training

After enlisting the law student mentors, the Provo School District mentoring coordinator comes to the law school each September to train the mentors. The session is mandatory for mentors and is held the week prior to the commencement of the mentoring program during the same hour the mentoring program will take place. In the training session, a broad array of mentoring pamphlets and brochures prepared by the Provo

School District are discussed. These training materials cover topics such as establishing an effective mentoring relationship, setting goals with the student, helping the child study and form study habits, and being positive and encouraging with the elementary school student. Other topics we address include items such as things to avoid discussing during the mentoring session, contact between the mentor and student outside of the mentoring session, and what to do if an elementary school student tells the law student about abuse or violence.

C. Background Checks

At the training session, each potential mentor fills out an information sheet and release enabling the school district to perform a police background check on mentors. This was an aspect of the program I had not anticipated although upon reflection, the advisability of having a background check of mentors is understandable. In fact, a year ago we had one law student disqualified as a result of the police check, highlighting another reason why it makes sense to have the involvement of the school district.

D. Matching Mentors and Students

The school district coordinator is responsible for matching mentors and students. At the mentor training session, the mentors fill out an information sheet about their background and interests. The district coordinator also has the sixth grade students fill out an information sheet. During the week between the mentor training meeting and the first mentoring session, the district coordinator spends a few hours with the elementary school teachers to match the law students with the sixth grade students. The coordination between the school district and the elementary school teachers is vital to successfully matching students with mentors because the teachers know the particular characteristics of each child in their class, which proves more valuable than the information sheet filled out by the sixth grade students themselves. Students who are struggling with reading and writing are paired with law students who have English degrees, and students who are learning English as a second language might be paired with law students who speak their native tongue.

Due to the time and effort put into matching mentors and sixth grade students, the mentors and students are frequently surprised at the first session to find out how much they have in common. At the law school, minority students are often the first to volunteer, and children are often delighted to find their mentor is someone with whom they can relate. As a matter of Provo School District policy, female students are matched with female mentors and vice versa. At the BYU Law School, where women make up approximately 40% of the student-body, this has meant that we have had to work a little harder to get the necessary numbers of female mentors.

III. RUNNING THE PROGRAM

After completing the preliminary work, the fun part – the actual mentoring – begins. I have found that in general the sixth grade students and their law student mentors need very little supervision. An occasional reminder to stay on task coupled with a few special activities each semester has been sufficient to make the program a strong academic experience.

A. *The First Day*

During the first day of the program, the law students invariably end up sitting on one side of the moot court room and the sixth grade students sit on the other side, each group glancing at the other – wondering with whom they will be paired. The school district coordinator and the sixth grade teachers begin by calling out the name of a sixth grade student and the name of a law student and - in a scene that ends up looking like “The Price is Right” - invite them to “come-on-down” to the front of the room and meet. Usually by the time all 90 names have been read, and any absences have been accounted for, there are only a few minutes left before the sixth grade students must return to their school. Since time is short on the first day, the sixth grade teachers do not assign any homework but rather encourage the children and their mentors to get to know one another. The first week, the children are a little uncertain, but after only a few weeks it is obvious that they are beginning to feel comfortable. Many run to find their mentors as soon as they arrive. By the end of the year the sixth grade

students look like they own the place, and with some of them standing as tall as their mentors, it is sometimes difficult to tell mentor and student apart.

B. Maintaining an Academic Focus

A mistake we made early on was to rely on the children and their mentors to come up with work projects. Some of the elementary school children were very good about bringing work, and in a few cases real progress was made in areas where children were struggling; however, in more cases than I would like to admit, a substantial amount of time was spent just chatting or "hanging out" in the vending machine room. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the children most skilled in avoiding doing their work at school were most skilled in convincing their mentors they did not have any homework and should be allowed to go outside to play soccer. On one occasion, we even had two mentors who took their students in their car to buy fast food. Needless to say, we conducted supplemental training about staying on the law school premises, but the experience highlighted the importance of keeping an academic focus in the program.

We have found that the program works best when the elementary school teachers send particular homework assignments with their students. It may be that a new, difficult concept has just been introduced in math, and the mentors can help make sure that all of the children make the conceptual leap to keep up. On other occasions, the class has been assigned to do a report on a particular foreign country, and the law students are able to help the sixth grade students learn how to do library, and especially internet, research. The sixth grade teachers have even begun to time the introduction of new, particularly difficult concepts to correspond with times their students will be with their mentors, so each child can receive extra help.

C. The Mentors

In the training session, and at other opportunities, we remind our mentors that the last thing many of these children need is another unreliable adult in their lives. The sixth grade teachers also help mentors understand how disappointed some children are when their mentor does not show up and how some take it personally. For the most part, our mentors assume

their responsibility seriously. If the mentors are not able to come, they often write a note to their student and give it to the law school student coordinator, letting the student know where they are and that they look forward to seeing them the following week. The single most effective method to help mentors remember the mentoring sessions has been to have the student coordinator send a reminder e-mail to the mentors the night before each mentoring session.

D. The Student Coordinator's Role

In addition to recruiting mentors and other preparatory work, the law school student coordinator is responsible for most of the day-to-day operations of the program. The responsibilities include attending all the mentoring sessions, answering questions, and often serving as a liaison among the law school, elementary school, and the school district personnel. Further, on any given week, there may be a few mentors who do not show up. Most mentors notify the student coordinator in advance, but occasionally there is a sudden interview opportunity, unforeseen emergency, memory lapse, or oversight by a mentor. On any given day, there will also be a few kids who are absent. The coordinator fills the gaps, matching students with substitute mentors, or asking a mentor to work with more than one student on that day.

During the first year of our program, the student coordinator tried to arrange substitute mentors when a law student could not come. Since then, we have tried to make law students primarily responsible for finding their own replacements if they cannot attend, and the student coordinator assumes more of a backup role. During the first year, the student coordinator also tried to work as a regular mentor, but we found that there was so much for the coordinator to do that it was better if they did not have a full-time mentoring assignment. Occasionally the coordinator steps in as a substitute mentor.

E. Special Events

Some of the highlights of the mentoring program are the special events that are planned each semester, which included two pizza parties, several guest speakers, and a mock trial. We have considered a variety of other special events. One year we tried to arrange a bowling activity at the University's student

center, but the manager of the bowling alley was not willing to give us a large enough discount to make it financially feasible. We have also considered having a lunch for the mentors at the elementary school, which would give the sixth grade students a chance to show the mentors their turf.

Halloween: This past year, the regular mentoring day fell on Halloween. The Student Bar Association planned a law student pizza party and invited the sixth grade students to participate. Unfortunately, the moot court room was not big enough to accommodate the entire law student population plus an additional 90 sixth grade students, so the party ended up occurring simultaneously in two different rooms. The mentors and their students met in one room and played some Halloween word search games and ate pizza that was paid for by the Student Bar Association. Following the pizza, the sixth grade students and mentors who wore costumes paraded across the stage of the moot court room while the rest of the law school student-body cheered them on. Following the parade, a student service organization had arranged for many of the professors to have bags of candy at their offices, and the mentors took their students trick-or-treating throughout the law school building. The Halloween party was such a success that we hope to have a similar event each year – whether or not the mentoring session falls directly on Halloween.

Presentation on the Law: In the past, we have designated one mentoring session to teach the sixth grade students about the law. A law professor volunteered his time to explain the state and federal court systems, discuss how laws are made, and explain some common legal vocabulary that the children might have heard. I must admit that some of children found this discussion somewhat less than invigorating, but I was impressed with many students who listened attentively and asked laudable questions.

Mock Trial: During winter semester each year we have helped the sixth grade students participate in a mock trial. The law school student coordinator writes or condenses a typical moot court/trial advocacy problem down to a two or three page summary. One week before the mock trial is to take place, sixth grade students are assigned roles as the judge, bailiff, defendant, witnesses, attorneys, and jury members and are given the summary of the moot court problem. The sixth grade students then have the remainder of that mentoring session to consult

with their mentors so that they will be adequately prepared for the trial. The following week the sixth grade students, with their mentors close by, actually carry out the mock trial from start to finish including all the formalities of calling the court to order, swearing in witnesses, direct and cross examination, opening and closing statements, jury deliberation and verdict.

The mock trial has become the single most memorable event in the mentoring program each year. This year we carried out three separate mock trials – one for each class of sixth grade students - on subsequent weeks so that more children would have the chance to participate. We ended up with parts for between fifteen or sixteen students, with the remaining twelve to fourteen students in the class forming the jury. We found that things ran smoother when sixth grade students acting as the judge and attorneys were assigned to work with second or third-year law students who had previous moot court or trial advocacy experience.

The elementary school students and teachers were very excited to perform the mock trial. Many of the sixth grade students dressed up in suits and formal clothing for their day in court. Some of the children who acted as attorneys, with the encouragement of their mentors, had drafted their opening and closing arguments during the week in anticipation of the trial. After the cases had been presented and the jury was deliberating, I was amused to watch the young teams of attorneys pacing back and forth and talking with each other while they anxiously awaited the verdict. I stepped into the other room where the jury deliberations were taking place and found the sixth grade students deeply divided and discussing passionately what the verdict should be. Their mentors helped guide the discussion without dominating it.

The sixth grade teachers were equally excited as they watched their students present their cases; in fact, the teachers brought a video camera and filmed every trial. Even a few of the children's parents came to watch them participate in the mock trial. The teachers were intrigued that for the exact same factual scenario one class returned a "guilty" verdict, one class returned a "not guilty" verdict, and one class resulted in a hung jury. To the teachers' further delight, one sixth grade student, who served as the judge for the class that returned the "not guilty" verdict, had the foresight to sentence the prosecutors to 500 hours of extra homework for bringing a frivolous claim.

The conclusion of the mock trial provided an excellent opportunity for the law school student coordinator to encourage the students to remember how well they had done in preparing for the mock trial and to start seriously thinking and planning for college and graduate school.

F. The Last Day

On the last mentoring session of the year, the Dean of the law school provided funds to buy pizza for the sixth grade students and their mentors, and the Provo School District provided the soda. While observing the closing social, it was easy to see that many genuine friendships had been formed between the mentors and the sixth grade students. Many of the law students and the younger students brought thank-you notes and small gifts for each other. This year, one sixth grade student even brought an extra thank-you note and candy bar for the law school student coordinator.

One issue that comes up each year is the permissibility of contact between mentors and students following the completion of the academic year. We have found that a general policy against outside contact is advisable. Mentors have been granted an exception allowing for continued contact only with parental approval. Even with the hurdle of parental approval, some mentors and sixth grade students have continued correspondence for some time after the conclusion of the mentoring program. This past spring, I noticed that several of the sixth grade students had come to the law school graduation ceremony to see their mentor graduate. I found this a touching tribute to the mentors, and also a reflection of one of the primary benefits of the program, namely helping the children begin to imagine themselves belonging in a university environment.

IV. FINANCIAL ISSUES

We have run the mentoring program without a formal budget although there are some significant expenses, and we could operate more comfortably if we had a budget. The primary costs include the school bus to transport the sixth grade students to the law school, photocopying, pizza parties, and other special events.

A. *Transportation*

The bus costs approximately \$35 per week, totaling almost \$1,000 for the academic year. Originally, the school district agreed to pick up this cost on a trial basis. Feedback from students, parents, and teachers was sufficiently positive that the district has continued to foot this part of the cost of the program each year. In fact, I was very pleased when word made it back to me through the grapevine that senior school district officials were speaking glowingly about the law school's mentoring program at a social event, again demonstrating why the support and cooperation of the school district is essential to the success of the program.

B. *Pizza and Soda*

Each semester we have had a pizza party for students and mentors, usually at the end of the semester. We looked into having a lunch catered by the University, but the least expensive option was about five dollars per person, which translated into nearly a thousand dollars for an assortment of cold pastas and salad. We decided that mentors and students alike would prefer pizza and soda, which had the advantage of only costing about \$250 for the pizza and \$50 for soda.

C. *Photocopying*

To date, I have done photocopying for the program on my faculty card, and nobody has complained. This expense has been quite modest, involving primarily a few fliers at the beginning of the school year, Halloween word search games, and copies of the mock trial information.

V. BENEFITS

The success of the mentoring program during its first three years has been encouraging. The initial benefits for the elementary school children that I had envisioned seem to have been attained, along with some unexpected benefits for the law student mentors and the law school itself.

A. *For the Students Receiving Mentoring*

1. *Academic Benefits*

I imagined the primary benefits of the program would be academic, and indeed there have been instances of dramatic scholastic improvements. Because success in learning is in large measure a product of having someone to give you encouragement and celebrate your achievements, having a mentor can make a real difference. Parents have commented that it can only be helpful to have an additional adult who loves and is concerned for the welfare of their child. One student I mentored was struggling with spelling, so each week we would review his words together. I can still remember our shared excitement on the day when he ran into the moot court room, clutching a spelling test, eager to show me that he had achieved a perfect score. Such stories are commonplace.

2. *Social/Behavioral Benefits*

In addition to academic improvements, we have seen some dramatic social and behavioral improvements. One young sixth grade girl who was clearly struggling academically and socially was assigned two mentors – a husband and wife who were both law students. The transformation that occurred in this young girl's life was nothing short of remarkable according to her sixth grade teacher. By the end of the school year, she had gained so much confidence socially that she had dramatically improved her relationships with her sixth grade peers. Her newfound confidence helped her academically, enabling her to tackle new subjects with less hesitation and increasing her willingness to participate in class discussions. Perhaps the turning point in this young girl's year came at Christmas when her mentors, who noticed that much of her clothing was somewhat tattered, bought her some new clothes as a Christmas gift. She proudly wore her new clothes to school and informed anyone who asked that her "mentors" had given her this outfit.

3. *Changing Perspectives*

I did not begin to appreciate a larger impact of the program until mid-way through the first year. Sunset View Elementary is located on the west side of Interstate 15, which I have come

to understand represents a historical division in Provo between the more and less affluent parts of town. The school is located not far from the Geneva Steel Mill. Demographically, the school is less affluent than many of the schools in the Provo School District. There is an above average percentage of minority students, students from single parent homes, and homes with parents on welfare. To be sure, not every child is disadvantaged. In fact, nearly every child comes from a loving home. Indeed, I do not want to over emphasize the significance of the demographic profile of Sunset View because I believe all children, indeed all of us, can benefit from the care and devotion of a mentor.

Mr. Firmage shared a story with me about one of his students who came from a single parent, welfare-mom home. This boy had two brothers, but none of the children shared a father. No one in his family had ever gone to college. This boy had experienced a dramatic turnaround after beginning to participate in the mentoring program. One day, Mr. Firmage overheard the boy talking with the first grade student whom he was mentoring. The older child asked the younger one what he planned to do with his future. The first grade student responded with a puzzled look. "You know, are you going to college?" The first grade student shrugged his shoulders. "Well, you had better start thinking about it. I'm going to study real hard and get good grades, and I'm going to go to college, and if I do well enough there, I'm going to go to law school." Mr. Firmage's jaw dropped. The very idea that this boy was thinking about the steps necessary to go to college would have been almost unimaginable before participating in the program.

Now, I do not consider it a goal of our program to recruit future law students (indeed, I may be hypersensitive about this subject), but I am thrilled that this young boy is thinking and planning for a future of accomplishment. Mr. Firmage reported that this boy continued to apply himself throughout the year and became a solid student.

This, I believe, represents the most significant benefit of the program. Many of the participants, some for the first time, begin to imagine themselves belonging in a university environment. The transformation is obvious and dramatic. On the first few days when the sixth grade students arrive, they have the aura of visitors, slightly hesitant, sticking close to their friends, on their best behavior. Within a month, they start to feel com-

comfortable and begin to move with confidence around the law school and the law library. By the end of the year, it is difficult to distinguish some of the sixth grade students from the law students. Not only have they actually grown an inch or two, but they look comfortable. They belong.

B. Mentors

Law school is an inherently selfish undertaking, not to mention competitive and stressful. Thus, it is particularly refreshing for law students to be thinking about someone other than themselves for an hour a week. Law students sometimes feel overwhelmed and under siege, especially during their first year. It is easy for them to forget how privileged they are. Even the skill of speaking intelligibly with children can be challenged by a legal education.

For many law students, especially first year students, the mentoring program gives them their first taste of lawyers giving back to the community. I believe that it is important to instill a spirit of pro bono activity early in law school and in a young attorney's professional career. Hopefully, the mentoring program begins to foster this attitude in the participating law students; an attitude that at least some may carry forward into their professional lives.

C. The Law School

Although it is difficult to quantify, I think the program also has a beneficial effect on the law school in general. For one thing, it decreases the distance between town and gown, and not just from the perspective of the children. Even in a town as homogeneous and middle class as Provo, there is a remarkable distance between the University and many of the people who live here. Many of the children who participate in our program have never been to the University except to go on a museum tour or to attend a football game. Similarly, a large number of our law students have never driven on the west side of Interstate 15. They drive into Provo from the north or the south, take exit 272 and head east toward the mountains. Admittedly,

the effect is subtle, but I believe participating in the program makes law students more aware of and sensitive to local issues that do not involve the University.

It is also healthy to have an atmosphere of public service at the law school and to have children in the halls and law library on a regular basis. Law students who are not even a part of the program have reported getting to know sixth grade students who come regularly to a neighboring student's desk.

Recently, a senior law school colleague stopped by my office to say that he had been walking through the library earlier in the day and was overcome with good feelings as he saw the school children, sitting beside their mentors, reading or working together on math problems, or snuggled close looking at a computer screen. "It was almost as if the children were encircled in arms of love," he said. Sounding somewhat embarrassed at his sentimentality, before turning to leave he added, "It left me feeling warm and fuzzy."

Make no mistake about it, we remain a competitive and neurotic place, especially in mid-March, when winter hasn't given up its grip and exams loom less than a month away. Warm and fuzzy are not exactly the adjectives that come to mind to describe the collective mental state. But I do think the mentoring program contributes an element of humanity and decency to the school.

D. The Community

Initially, I wanted the mentoring program to focus on younger children, ideally first grade students, so the mentors could really help the children learn to read. In retrospect, I am pleased that the children who come to the law school are a little older. For one thing, they are at an age when they are beginning to think about the future, and the prospect of college is at least something that has meaning for them. In addition, at Sunset View, the sixth grade students have in turn become mentors for the second grade students in their school, creating an opportunity for the children who receive mentoring to in turn serve others as mentors. The sixth grade students learn important skills from their mentors that they put into practice with the younger children that they mentor. So in a sense, our program is providing assistance to younger children as they learn to read, although indirectly. Additionally, I think the spirit of giving, receiving, and giving back is a pattern that is

being taught to the sixth grade students, and in turn, the second grade students. As the second grade students become sixth grade students, and the sixth grade students become college students, the pattern of giving and receiving hopefully repeats itself and the community is benefited.

While, I do not have any quantifiable evidence that the program has had a positive effect on the community, I have heard a few anecdotes shared by the school teachers who have told me about parents who have admitted, with some reluctance, that maybe the University is not so remote and uninterested after all.

VI. CONCLUSION

Speaking recently at BYU Law School's graduation, former U.S. Solicitor General Seth Waxman noted the distressingly large percentage of lawyers who express dissatisfaction with their professional lives. He observed that it is difficult to believe that those lawyers who are unhappy with their work are seeking and seizing opportunities to provide pro bono service to others, either within the law or in non-legal settings. I suspect he is right.

As a professor I sense a real opportunity to help my students catch the vision of public service, which hopefully will contribute to greater professional satisfaction throughout their years of legal practice. I find it encouraging that during their first semester of law school at a time when they are facing tremendous uncertainty about how they will perform in law school, at a time when many have an exaggerated view of how important it is to get good grades and how important it is to spend every possible minute studying, such a large number of our law students are willing to interrupt their busy lives and become volunteer mentors.

Recently I was walking around the moot court room on the last day of the program, thanking students and mentors for their participation. One sixth grade student responded, "No problem. It's the one fun part of my day." Without missing a beat, his law school mentor added, "Mine, too." Even though the law student was in one of my classes, I grinned with delight.