



2024

EMPOWERED REPORT

**Jean
Augustine**

Centre for Young Women's Empowerment



THIS EMPOWERED REPORT IS PREPARED BY:

JEAN AUGUSTINE CENTRE FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The Jean Augustine Centre for Young Women's Empowerment (JAC) is a charitable organization located in Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada that strives to empower girls and young women in the community. Jean Augustine Centre has been supporting girls and women since 2014 through in-person and online after-school programs, camp programs, workshops and events.

JAC collaborates with various community partners, including the University of Toronto's Community Action Program, to ensure that the charity is continuously working to understand and address the needs of girls and women both nationally and internationally.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO'S COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

The University of Toronto's Community Action Program consists of undergraduate and graduate student volunteers working together to support a local community organization. With weekly meetings, Community Action Program volunteers engage in dialogue related to equity and social justice while completing a final project alongside a local community organization.

The Empowered Report was completed over five months, during which students researched, composed, and edited this report for the Jean Augustine Centre. Contributing members which authored the Empowered Report are listed below.

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An empowered young woman can improve her life and have a positive impact on the world around her.



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ABOUT THE JEAN AUGUSTINE CENTRE FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The Jean Augustine Centre for Young Women's Empowerment is a charitable organization that facilitates programming for girls between the ages of 7-17 in the Etobicoke and Greater Toronto Area. JAC was first established in 2014 by the Honourable Dr. Jean Augustine, a former Canadian Member of Parliament and the first Black woman to be elected to the House of Commons in Canada.

OUR MISSION

The Jean Augustine Centre for Young Women's Empowerment is committed to building the self-esteem and self-worth of girls and young women by positively influencing their outlook on life, broadening their horizons, and helping them to empower themselves.

OUR VISION

To enrich the lives of girls ages 7 to 17 years old through mentorship, empowerment programs, and civic engagement with opportunities that place special emphasis on personal development and experiential learning.

OUR VALUES

- 1. EMPOWERMENT** is essential for young women and girls to develop the skills, acquire knowledge, information and the resources they need to achieve a high quality of life and optimum health and well-being.
- 2. MENTORSHIP** is long term, centered in community and built around relationships between positive adult role models and young women facing challenges in their social and personal lives.
- 3. LEADERSHIP** with integrity, from a shared vision that inspires and motivates, and with the capacity to grow through change and deliver sustainable outcomes, perfects the ability to enable others to greatness.
- 4. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT** is working to make a difference in communities. It is essential as young women and girls become empowered that they learn the importance of giving back and helping to build thriving communities.

THE EMPOWERED REPORT 2024: GIRLS AND MENTORSHIP

WHAT IS THE EMPOWERED REPORT?

Each year, the Jean Augustine Centre releases its annual Empowered Report, a research report which uses primary and secondary data to shed light on different topics impacting girls and young women in Canada. This year's report focuses on the impact of mentorship on girls and young women in Canada, drawing on case studies from across Canada and the United States, with a brief look at international mentorship programs in Spain and Ethiopia.

WHY FOCUS ON MENTORSHIP?

In August of 2023, the Jean Augustine Centre launched its inaugural *Look Up! Lift Up! Peer Mentorship Program*, aimed at providing girls and young women from Black, racialized and other marginalized groups with peer support for their mental health and well-being. With this came a desire to expand the organization's knowledge of mentorship, specifically, how mentorship impacts different aspects of the lives of girls ages 7-17 and how challenges faced by young women in our community can be addressed through mentorship programs.

Since the organization's inception in 2014, mentorship has been crucial to its mission to empower girls and young women, forming a cornerstone of many of its programs and initiatives. A strong body of evidence confirms that mentorship is a powerful tool that can help offset the negative effects of marginalization on young people. Many of the girls and young women that attend the Jean Augustine Centre belong to underrepresented communities and face the burden of multiple marginalized identities, such as gender and race. Mentorship can be a powerful tool in alleviating some of this 'double-burden.' Through mentorship, girls and young women from underrepresented backgrounds benefit from a positive, adult role model who can provide support for their emotional and mental well-being, as well as an increase in social capital.

In our research, we found that there is a continued need for mentorship programs tailored to girls and young women, and we hope that this report will highlight how mentorship can benefit girls' and young women's well-being and recommend ways to maximize the effectiveness of mentorship programs designed to support similarly marginalized populations.



REPORT STRUCTURE

PART I will provide readers with a brief introduction to mentorship, with an elaboration on the Jean Augustine Centre’s *Look Up! Lift Up! Peer Mentorship Program*. This will be followed by some key considerations for effective mentorship programs.

PART II of the report will look at how mentorship affects different facets of girls’ and young women’s lives, including: their health and wellness, mental health and self-esteem, academic and career aspirations, as well as their embrace of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) subjects. The last section will pivot to examine the impact of mentorship on mentors themselves.

Finally, **PART III** will highlight key takeaways from our research findings and offer recommendations and best practices for mentorship programs targeting girls and young women and other marginalized populations.

KEY DEFINITIONS

When we use the term “**girls**,” we are referring to individuals between the ages of 7 and 12. When we use the term “**young women**,” we are referring to individuals aged 13 to 17 years and beyond.

WHAT IS MENTORSHIP? A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The Jean Augustine Centre defines mentorship as “long term, centered in community and built around relationships between positive adult role models and young women facing challenges in their social and personal lives.”

Historically, mentorship programs were conceptualized in the early 20th century with the rise of industrial development and growth of cities (Baker and Maguire 2005). These developments brought social change, leading to increased concern for poor and uneducated youth as a vulnerable population (Baker and Maguire 2005). In particular, concerns over “juvenile delinquency,” such as truancy or petty theft and child exploitation, led to the creation of specific juvenile courts and mentorship programs for youth.



COMMON STRUCTURES OF MENTORSHIP INCLUDE:

- **One-on-One Mentorship:** A model where one mentor guides an individual to help them achieve their goals; this relationship is often facilitated by a formal organization or program (Zachary and Fischler 2009, 9).
- **Youth Mentorship:** A model that connects youth to adult individuals that can help support their development, well-being, socialization, skills, and opportunities (Shier et al. 2020, 1).
- **Peer Mentorship:** A model that is less hierarchical in approach, where mentors and mentees are paired who share similar interests or occupy a similar position (Clutterbuck et al. 2017, 379).
- **Group Mentorship:** A model where a self-directed group of people form a support system and help each other work towards common goals and learn in a collaborative setting (Zachary and Fischler 2009, 9).
- **Co-mentorship:** A model where participants seek to help each other through mutual learning (Clutterbuck et al. 2017, 379).
- **Feminist Mentorship:** A model based on a shared commitment between individuals to emotionally support each other in oppressive settings and institutions (Clutterbuck et al 2017, 379).
- **Natural Mentorship:** A model of informal mentoring by neighbours, coaches, teachers, or extended kin (Baker and Maguire 2005).

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA), for example, began as a movement to have volunteers help disenfranchised youth, particularly those in the juvenile court system, in New York City and Cincinnati (Baker and Maguire 2005). At the same time, a group called the Ladies of Charity began to help young girls, eventually becoming the Catholic Big Sisters (“History”). Big Brothers and Big Sisters operated separately until merging in 1977, and starting to operate internationally in 1998 (“History”).

Today, mentorship typically entails pairing a younger mentee with an experienced mentor (Thomson and Zand 2010; 434). Mentors can provide mentees with specific guidance, teach life skills, and help mentees improve their feelings of self-worth (Thomson and Zand 2010; 435). In general, mentorship programs are based on the assumption that positive relationships with a role model will help young people, and that mentors will find this role fulfilling. However, mentorship does not always look the same, and can take place in the workplace, schools, and in community settings.

Multiple studies have corroborated the positive influence mentors provide, with the most significant benefits seen in students who come from low-income families, have weak bonds with their current caregivers, or lack social acceptance from others (DeWit et al. 2016; Dubois 2011). Mentored at-risk youth were found to have lower levels of aggression, delinquency and drug use, and improved academic performance (Tolan et al. 2013); in large part because mentees learn healthy communication skills, prosocial behaviour, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping strategies to better manage stress (DeWit et al. 2016).

IN FOCUS: **THE LOOK UP! LIFT UP! PEER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

In 2023, the Jean Augustine Centre founded the *Look Up! Lift Up! Peer Mentorship Program* for girls and young women living in the Greater Toronto Area. As part of the program, girls aged 7-17 are matched with young women aged 18-30 in 6-month to 1-year long mentorship relationships, designed to support their mental health and personal development through weekly meetings, and other opportunities.

The goal of the mentor-mentee match is to establish healthy relationships based on a sense of belonging, mutual respect, communication, trust, understanding, and accountability. Both mentors and mentees receive training on mental health and leadership, participate in field trips, workshops and events, and benefit from the social and emotional support of one another. Young women and girls from Black, racialized, or other underrepresented communities are encouraged to register.

In February of 2024, we surveyed Cohort 1 of the *Look Up! Lift Up!* program to gain insight into their experience in the program and how it could be improved. Their feedback is reflected throughout this report.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP

For many young girls, mentorship provides an excellent opportunity to build their social, academic, and personal skills while cultivating close relationships with mentors who can model healthy behaviours and encourage their personal growth. This is especially the case for at-risk and underserved youth, as mentorship programs have been shown to improve their **psychological health, social competence, academic outcomes, and career prospects** (Dubois et al. 2011).

Given the significance of mentorship in improving outcomes for at-risk youth, it is imperative to differentiate between effective and ineffective mentorships. This section evaluates current research to determine several factors that substantially impact the quality of mentorship mentees receive, concluding with recommendations to put these insights into practice.

FINDINGS

VARIABLE 1: MENTORSHIP STRUCTURES

Strong mentor-mentee relationships are built through active efforts to develop a relationship. Mentees' feelings of trust and goodwill towards their mentors increase when mentorship sessions are structured, recreational and relational, rather than unstructured, unplanned and casual. Mentees typically perceive planned activities as demonstrating higher levels of dedication and care from their mentors. Furthermore, mentors who engage in structured interactions such as coaching, teaching, and advocacy improve mentees' sense of well-being and personal skills (Goldner 2011).

For instance, an Indigenous-led mentorship program based in Winnipeg led multiple workshops for youth based on the principles of physical activity, cultural teachings, and healthy eating. A study by Leah J. Ferguson et al. (2021) found that these programs increased mentees' use of health services, led to healthy lifestyle decisions, increased awareness of sexual health, decreased substance use, and improved self-esteem. Mentees felt that their mentors were invested in their well-being and made similar efforts to reciprocate by engaging in program activities, participating in the community, and opening up to their mentors (Ferguson et al. 2021).

Ultimately, mentees show the most personal growth when they believe their mentors are invested in their well-being, making them more receptive to mentors' guidance as well as encouraging the emotional vulnerability necessary for mentors to meet their mentees' needs.

VARIABLE 2: MENTOR BACKGROUND

Additionally, mentors' backgrounds impacted the quality of mentorship programs. Limor Goldner and Adar Ben-Eliyahu (2021) identify the following factors as influential in mentors' success:

- 1. AGE:** Compared to their younger counterparts, older mentors felt less overwhelmed from the commitment the role required and were better equipped to manage personal boundaries with mentees and their families.
- 2. PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN A SIMILAR ROLE:** Successful mentors typically possess previous experience in helping roles and allied health professions, enjoy working with children, have strong self-advocacy skills, and effective coping strategies.
- 3. UNDERLYING MOTIVATIONS:** Successful mentors take greater satisfaction in helping others compared to their unsuccessful counterparts, and they value their roles as leaders and role models (Ferguson et al. 2021).
- 4. CULTURAL BACKGROUND:** Mentorship relationships lasted longer and led to better outcomes when both parties came from similar cultural backgrounds or when mentors were effective in bridging cultural differences.
- 5. GENERAL WELL-BEING AND CONFIDENCE:** Mentors who had a higher sense of well-being, self-esteem, and confidence tended to have longer and closer mentorships.

In one study examining mentorship programs for refugees and immigrants in Canada, mentees surveyed stated that their mentors' patience, empathy, and openness encouraged them to take more risks in the classroom and in turn they demonstrated greater improvement in their English skills and knowledge of cultural norms (Pryce et al. 2018). Effective mentorship programs not only developed newcomers' confidence but provided additional opportunities for them to gain valuable language skills. Successful mentors deeply value their capacity to help others and have the inner resources and personal skills to establish close, long-lasting relationships with their mentees.

VARIABLE 3: MENTORSHIP LENGTH

Lastly, mentorship structure influences how long mentors stay and in turn mentees' ability to form positive, long-lasting relationships with them. A study run by Big Brothers Big Sisters found that mentorship relationships that lasted one year or longer were shown to have lasting positive psychological and social benefits, while those lasting less than three months left mentees feeling worse than their unmentored counterparts. Mentees whose mentorships terminated early struggled with feelings of abandonment and rejection, leading to negative effects.

In addition, mentors who leave suddenly due to unforeseen circumstances leave caregivers with the task of explaining their absence to mentees. While re-matched youth can still receive the benefits of mentorship, some results suggest that re-matched mentees show poorer outcomes academically and socially compared to those whose mentorships remained uninterrupted.

ACCORDING TO LOOK UP! LIFT UP! MENTEES, WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?

“Their dedication to listening and understanding their mentee.”

“A good mentor is an active listener who is enthusiastic about helping you achieve your goals. To make sure your mentor is the right fit for you, choose someone that shows you respect, provides honest feedback, and is an expert in your field.”

“A good mentor is honest and kind.”

The same study also suggested that the majority of positive benefits do not emerge until the one-year mark, when mentees have built sufficient trust in their mentors and feel more secure in their relationships. However, many mentorship contracts only last one year, with most mentors choosing to leave after fulfilling the expected time commitment (DeWit et al., 2016).

Mentors' reasons for leaving vary widely, though common reasons include (Goldner 2021):

- **unforeseen circumstances**
- **disappointment or disinterest from either or both parties**
- **unrealistic expectations from either or both parties**
- **mentors' lack of relational skills**
- **parents' interference or lack of support**
- **lack of effort to maintain the relationship**
- **and mentors feeling overwhelmed by mentees' needs.**

Mentors in the **18-to-24 category** and **minority volunteers** were the hardest to retain as many had other obligations such as work, and their schedules were usually too unpredictable for them to fully commit to a one-year mentorship program (Stefanick et al. 2016).

BEST PRACTICES

Mentorship program providers can encourage mentor retention by adhering to the following better practices:

1. ENSURE MENTOR MOTIVATIONS INCLUDE BOTH PERSONAL AND

INSTRUMENTAL REASONS. Instrumental reasons include fulfilling a requirement for school, improving a resume, or networking. Through volunteering as a mentor, mentors gain valuable contacts and experience which can be leveraged in their career search (Stefanick et al. 2016).

2. SCREEN POTENTIAL MENTORS FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE PROGRAM.

Organizations must be careful in screening potential mentors to ensure that volunteers are just as committed to serving their communities as they are invested in their career growth.

3. PROVIDE MENTORS WITH ADEQUATE SUPPORT AND TRAINING.

According to David DuBois et al. (2011), mentors were also more likely to stay when organizations provided adequate support and training.

CONCLUSION

While no two mentorship experiences are the same, successful mentorships are grounded in several observations: similarities between mentor and mentee, whether it includes interests, cultural values, or life experiences; mentors' strong relational and leadership skills, in addition to an alignment of personal values; programs which provide adequate training and support to mentors, encourage long-term mentorship, and provide activities which grow mentees' personal skills; and healthy boundaries between mentees, their families, and mentors.



ACCORDING TO
LOOK UP! LIFT UP!
PARTICIPANTS, WHAT
WOULD IMPROVE THE
PROGRAM?

Having more
in common with
mentor/mentee

Ensuring
participants
are committed
to program

Having more
one-on-one
meetings

Mentorships lasting
over one year

DESIGNING EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS FOR MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

When it comes to young women from racialized or other underrepresented groups, peer mentorship programs must take into account how systems of race, class and gender affect their personal relationships and interactions, in other words, their positionality, to fully address their needs and be effective in empowering them (Clutterbuck et al. 2017, 375).

In every type of mentorship program, good mentoring depends on how open the mentees are to learning (Lois J. et al. 2009, 2). Then, it is crucial to create an appropriate, trusting atmosphere for reciprocal learning. If the mentee relates to the mentor, the bond will have a greater opportunity to flourish (DuBois et al. 2014, 4). The rest of this section will focus on the key role of positionality in three different mentorship programs, enabling us to closely examine how mentorship programs can best serve marginalized groups.

FINDINGS

1. MATCHING MENTEES WITH MENTORS THAT COME FROM A SIMILAR SOCIAL CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT TO FOSTERING AN EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE.

A study conducted in the United States found that mentors better helped young Black girls when they were aware of the ways in which race, class and gender affected them. The two-year school mentoring program aimed to promote wokeness among young Black girls. The term “woke” in this study was used as an expression of being socially and politically aware of the ways in which gender and race affected the personal lives of the girls. As part of the program, the mentors and mentees co-constructed an action research project and created a technological resource, focusing on the arts. The study involved Black girls in 10th and 11th grade, with middle and lower income backgrounds, being paired with school faculty that shared a similar background to them. The study concluded that the mentor’s guidance allowed them to be aware of the personal struggles they face and made them feel empowered to engage in activism (Farinde-Wu, Abiola, et al. 2021, 22).

DID CULTURAL AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND MATTER TO THE LOOK UP! LIFT UP! PARTICIPANTS?

For some of the participants surveyed, talking about shared cultural backgrounds helped mentors and mentees bond. For others, culture and ethnicity were not important factors in their relationship.

2. COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS RESULT IN BETTER OUTCOMES.

In the 2021 study of an Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP), which paired mentors and mentees according to Indigenous values, participants perceived an improvement in their wellness, connections, and leadership skills, demonstrating the importance of a community-specific approach to mentorship (Ferguson et al. 2021, 5-8).

Based on the understanding of mentorship as a circular process of learning, building strong bonds, and a holistic understanding of health, the program paired elementary school students from 9 to 11 years old with undergraduate university students. By tailoring the program to the specific context of the urban area, combined with the social realities and challenges that Indigenous youth face, the program was able to effectively impact participants, as evidenced by highly positive feedback from participants.

3. FINDING A FIGURE THAT INSPIRES LEADERSHIP IS CRUCIAL TO ENCOURAGE SELF-GROWTH, ESPECIALLY FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS.

When mentees establish a strong bond with their mentor, their self-growth benefits. A qualitative study conducted in 2020 explored the challenges that young African refugees face in Ontario schools, specifically at the high school level. The study's subjects indicated that they struggled to find a leadership figure that inspired them to continue their studies and that the school staff fell short in providing further support outside of school activities (Msofe 2021, 14-18). The study concluded that there is a need for increased mentorship programs that empower new refugees in Canada who often have no other support than the school. The study also emphasized the need for the educational system to differentiate the status of migrants and refugees (Msofe 2021, 18-19), in other words, consider the differences in students' positionality that may increase their challenges and educational environment.

ACCORDING TO THE *LOOK UP! LIFT UP!* MENTORS, WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTEE?

“Understanding, knowledgeable, kind, outgoing, relatable, respectful, charismatic, intelligent, dedicated, persistent.”

“Good listening, general interest in getting to know their mentor, open to having a new relationship with a mentor/person.”

CONCLUSION

Awareness of positionality proves to be useful for getting to know mentees and ensuring successful outcomes in their mentorship programs. The best outcomes also depend on how much the mentees are willing to learn, and thinking of the mentor-mentee relationship as a circular process of learning with no hierarchical relation. To keep in mind positionality theory throughout the program's development, researchers David L. Dubois and Michael J. Karcher (2014) suggest the use of assessments of cultural factors to target support. Factors such as cultural mistrust, cultural values, and racial/ethnic identity can be assessed, and cultural competency training can be given to mentors.

MENTORSHIP AND GIRLS' PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

A large body of research attests to the trend of reduced physical activity and poor nutrition amongst Canadian youth. Adolescent girls, in particular, become less active than boys as they age and are more likely to participate in unhealthy weight control behaviours (Spencer, Rehman and Kirk 2015, 1). Existing literature demonstrates that this decline in physical activity and nutrition stem from gender norms and feminine ideals. Young girls often feel pressured to appear feminine and therefore limit activity so as not to be perceived as masculine (Spencer, Rehman and Kirk, 2015, 6). Dieting and weight loss are also very common among adolescent girls due to focus on body size, with "thinness" being prioritized over health. As a result, girls often engage in poor eating behaviours such as fasting or meal skipping instead of nutrition (Spencer, Rehman and Kirk 2015, 7). These factors illustrate the importance of mentorship that targets the lifestyle and wellness of young girls. Using past mentorship programs as case studies, the remainder of this section will examine how mentorship can better the physical and nutritional health of adolescent girls.

BENEFITS OF PEER MENTORSHIP FOR GIRLS' PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL

Structured mentorship programs have shown encouraging results in improving the level of physical activity amongst girls. Peer mentorship, in particular, has many advantages because teenagers prefer to share information among peers and friends (Smith and Petosa 2016, 316). Receiving structured physical activity and exercise information from those in their age range is therefore beneficial. Peer mentors serve as role models who provide personal support and guidance for adolescent girls, causing them to build self-efficacy to engage and continue in physical activity (Smith and Petosa 2016, 316). Here, we use self-efficacy to refer to "an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments" (Bandura 1997). Young girls are motivated to plan, regulate, and evaluate their own activity due to the strengthened social networks provided through structured mentorship programs (Smith and Petosa 2016, 316).



ACCORDING TO THE *LOOK UP! LIFT UP!* MENTEES, THEIR MENTORS WERE AVAILABLE TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND MANAGING STRESS, NUTRITION AND EATING, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE, AND SEX EDUCATION.

FINDINGS

OUTCOMES OF WELLNESS-BASED MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS IN CANADA AND THE U.S.

1. *GO GIRLS! HEALTHY MINDS, HEALTHY BODIES* - NORTH AMERICA

Peer-led mentorship programs have proven to be effective in bolstering the confidence and attitudes of adolescent girls. The “Go Girls! Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies” program aimed to enhance self-regulatory efficacy, bolster girls’ confidence in their abilities to self-manage regular physical activity and nutrition, and targeted the instrumental and affective attitudes towards healthy lifestyle. Instrumental attitudes refer to the perceived health-related benefits of the behaviour. Affective attitudes describe how one will feel during or after engaging in the behaviour (Dowd et al. 2015, 78). Go Girls! wanted to demonstrate how participating in physical activity and healthy eating is good for your health (instrumental) and is also fun (affective). As a result, participants reported enhanced self-regulatory efficacy for healthy eating and physical activity after the program (Dowd et al. 2015, 82).

2. *HEALTHY BUDDIES* - MANITOBA, CANADA

“Healthy Buddies,” a peer-led school program targeted at healthy eating, physical activity and self-efficacy, demonstrated similar results. Twenty schools were selected to participate out of sixty. Findings revealed that the program led to changes in their dietary behaviour (Santos et al. 2015, 334). Younger students were reported to eat fruits and vegetables more frequently, while reducing their intake of sweetened beverages and treats (Santos et al. 2014, 335). Results were more prevalent for schools who engaged in the programs, than those who did not and received the standard curriculum (Santos et al. 2014, 335).

3. ABORIGINAL YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM – MANITOBA, CANADA

Peer-mentorship is crucial for adolescents of all identities and backgrounds, but it may be especially beneficial for those with greater health risks. This program reported that exposure to peer-mentoring reduced body fat and improved knowledge of healthy living among Indigenous children (Eskicioglu et al. 2014, 1624). This is significant because Indigenous youth have one of the highest rates of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) among youth in Canada and are more likely to experience weight gain and obesity than non-Indigenous youth (Eskicioglu et al. 2014, 1625). Indigenous youth also have higher rates of preventable chronic diseases and other health problems due to complex issues stemming from colonization and intergenerational trauma (Ferguson et al 2021, 1). Peer-mentoring programs like the Indigenous Youth Mentorship program aim to resolve these issues. This program, which integrates Indigenous values within the promotion of healthy lifestyles, demonstrated an increase in nutrition knowledge and dietary self-efficacy. Youth also increased their physical activity outside of the program. Participants found the activities to be more enjoyable due to the connections they developed while being active (Ferguson et al. 2021, 7).

4. GO GIRLS – FLORIDA, U.S.

It is important to note that wellness mentorship can also help adolescent girls in other aspects of their life, such as sexual health. While self-efficacy is linked to various healthy behaviours like fruit consumption and physical activity, it is also linked to condom use and avoidance of substance abuse (Santos et al. 2014, 335). For example, “GO GIRLS,” a program located in rural Southern Central Florida, promotes young women’s positive attitudes towards delaying sex, reducing sexual risk, and developing their sex refusal skills. These places tend to have higher rates of teenage pregnancy and poverty, as well as a lower educational attainment average than other states (Hill et al. 2016, 884). Girls who enrolled in the program (both in school and after school) maintained more positive attitudes towards delaying sex than girls who did not participate in GO GIRLS (Hill et al. 2016, 889).

CONCLUSION

Repeated studies have shown a lack of physical activity and nutritional health among adolescent girls. This trend is correlated with an adherence to gender norms and feminine ideals. Indigenous youth are particularly vulnerable to health risks as a result of decreased activity and nutrition, as well as various social issues. Peer-led mentorship programs targeted at the promotion of healthy lifestyles have shown to be effective in increasing self-efficacy and knowledge among youth. Our hope is that more programs that focus on adolescent girls become available to help at-risk populations and contribute to the overall wellness of young women.

MENTORSHIP AND GIRLS' MENTAL HEALTH AND SELF-ESTEEM

Adolescent girls face unique challenges related to self-esteem, mental health, and overall development. However, a considerable amount of research affirms that mentorship is beneficial in offsetting mental health issues from developing in youth, particularly those from vulnerable communities. Here, we use mental health to refer to issues with academic achievement, parental and peer relationships, low self-esteem, exposure to trauma, and overall well-being (Erdem et al. 2016; Kodama et al. 2019). This section will explore past Canadian case studies that demonstrate how targeted mentorship programs can improve girls' mental health and confidence, by identifying the core aspects of mentorship programs that played a role in shaping their overall development.

FINDINGS

1. MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS THAT PAIR YOUNG GIRLS WITH ADULT MENTORS CREATE A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT THAT IS INSTRUMENTAL IN IMPROVING THEIR BEHAVIOURAL DEVELOPMENT

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBSA), which offers a one-to-one community mentoring program pairing youth with a trusted adult for one year, has shown to foster healthy behaviours and improved mental health in adolescent girls. The results from a Canadian-wide study that focused on the outcomes for 859 mentored youths aged 6-17 in the BBBS program revealed that:

- Rematched girls displayed improved and more positive relationships and behaviour, less depressed mood and anxiety, and a more positive relationship with their self-esteem than never-mentored girls (DeWit et al. 2016).

The Go Girls! Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies national Canadian program which pairs women mentors ages 18-25 with girls ages 4-15 had similar findings to those seen in the BBBS program.

- During interviews with girls who took part in the Go Girls! Program in Southern Ontario, participants frequently shared experiencing overall improvements in their confidence, openness, and happiness, and displaying an increase in healthy behaviours as a result of completing the program (Dowd et al. 2015).

2. MENTORSHIP ACTS AS A CRUCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR GIRLS FACING LIMITED ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

The creators of *Amplify*, a Canadian girls-only mentorship program, specifically chose to help girls in rural areas, with systemic barriers such as isolation and limited access to services (Gilham et al. 2020). During their two-year project that lasted from grade seven to nine, Amplify found that:

- Girls who were considered most vulnerable (i.e. those coming from low-income and lower level of education households, ethnic minorities, queer-identifying) had an overall positive and sustained change in their mental health and development (Giham et al. 2020).

WHY DID *LOOK UP!*
LIFT UP! MENTEES JOIN
THE PROGRAM?

To make friends
and get to know
new people

For emotional
and mental
health support

To increase
confidence or
self-esteem

Similarly, girls in the foster care system tend to face challenges in accessing essential services, leaving them vulnerable to poor mental health and lifestyle behaviours. However, mentorship offers fundamental support to girls in the foster care system and can offset the development of these issues. This is seen in a case study involving four foster girls ages 12-16 who participated in the girls-only mentorship program overseen by the *Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society (WECAS)* in Southern Ontario. They found that:

- The girls who participated in this program developed confidence, trust, and new skills (Dufour 2019).
- The program helped with the girls' emotional and mental health issues since they were exposed to other foster girls, making them feel less 'different' from others (Dufour 2019).



3. CULTURALLY-SENSITIVE MENTORSHIP STRENGTHENS THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF RACIALIZED GIRLS, WHICH IS ESSENTIAL FOR ENHANCED MENTAL WELL-BEING

Culturally-appropriate forms of mentorship have shown to be beneficial for underrepresented populations, such as Indigenous communities. *The Fourth R: Uniting Our Nation's Mentoring Program* and the *Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP)* are both Canadian-based, Indigenous led mentorship programs that offer mentoring for First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth using Indigenous values. Key findings from both programs reveal that:

- Youth involved in the IYMP displayed improved emotional and mental wellness, positive self-image and reduced stress (Ferguson et al. 2021).
- Youth who received two years of mentorship from The Fourth R reported having greater positive cultural identity and better mental health compared to those with one year or no mentoring (Crooks et al. 2017).
- Indigenous girls particularly benefited from The Fourth R's program as they demonstrated better mental health and improved cultural identity (Crooks et al. 2017).

CONCLUSION

These studies collectively highlight the importance of mentorship in promoting positive mental health and development among adolescent girls, particularly those facing unique challenges or who belong to marginalized communities. Whether through culturally sensitive approaches or with sustained support, mentorship emerges as a powerful tool for positive change. Mentorship not only addresses specific challenges faced by girls but also contributes to building resilience, self-esteem, and positive behavioural outcomes. By highlighting the importance of mentorship programs, we hope to encourage continued investment in tailored initiatives for adolescent girls that can improve their mental well-being and empower them for a brighter future.



MENTORSHIP AND GIRLS' ACADEMIC AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Over the past few decades, youth mentorship programs have become increasingly popular. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of mentorship in enhancing youth behaviours, social skills, emotional well-being, and academic outcomes. For example, mentored youth have shown positive gains in their development, whereas non-mentored youth demonstrated declines (Dubois et al. 2011). This section of the report will discuss how mentorship programs can help young girls with their future career aspirations and improve academic performance in school.

ACADEMIC AND CAREER CHALLENGES FACED BY GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

Gender stereotypes, a lack of female role models, and unsafe and unwelcoming workplaces play a key role in young girls deciding against pursuing certain fields. Many girls are discouraged from pursuing careers in fields regarded as traditionally masculine, like STEM, due to preconceived notions about their intelligence, ability or suitability. This is concerning, as some of the fastest and highest paying jobs are in STEM and the industry needs the knowledge and skills women can offer. One of the consequences of the absence of women in science and technology is bias in artificial intelligence algorithms, such as granting lower lines of credit to women than men (Guenaga et al. 2022, 2). Having a female role model with a STEM career can increase interest, self-efficacy, and performance in mathematics for both girls and boys (Ashby Plant et al. 2009). Therefore, it is important that young girls have female role models in multiple careers fields, which will challenge these gender stereotypes over time.

IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS ON GIRLS' ACADEMIC AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

FINDINGS

1. THE INSPIRA STEAM PROGRAM - SPAIN

This STEM-based mentorship program aimed to promote scientific and technological work among youth, especially girls 10-12 years old (Guenaga et al. 2022). The program focused on fields with a gender gap, including engineering, mathematics, industrial, and technological fields (Guenaga et al. 2022, 6). The program aimed to address factors that limit girls' access to science and technology, as well as the causes of these limitations (Guenaga et al. 2022, 6).

- Inspira STEAM helped to improve youth's attitudes towards technology, their preferences for STEM related professions and knowledge of female STEM role models (Guenaga et al. 2022, 14).
- Participation improved mathematical self-efficacy (Guenaga et al. 2022, 14).

- Participation helped to modify the career aspirations of young people, increasing girls' interest in STEM.
- Preference for non-STEM professions is 10% higher among girls than boys, indicating a need for more gender specific mentorship programs.

This finding shows the need to raise awareness of STEM professions among young people so they can aspire to pursue these fields and go into careers that are related to their interests

ACCORDING TO THE *LOOK UP! LIFT UP!* MENTEES, MENTORS HELPED THEM MAKE ACADEMIC, POST-SECONDARY, AND CAREER GOALS. ONE RESPONDENT REPORTED,
“She helped me to pass my Math class when I thought I was going to fail.”

2. MENTORSHIP AND PROBLEM SPECIFIC TUTORING - ETHIOPIA

This study explored the impact of tutoring and mentorship programs on female students' academic performance, self-confidence, and future ambitions in Ethiopia. The study revealed that socioeconomic factors such as sexism negatively affect the academic performance and career choices of female students. Other socioeconomic factors, such as low income, also affected young girls' performance in schools due to a lack of access to resources like tutoring or textbooks.

- Social learning occurs through mentors and role models, which can help to improve children's social and economic outcomes that promote upward mobility (Kearney and Levine 2020, 84).
- Results show an increase in average academic scores for those that received mentorship and problem specific tutoring.
- Students that were struggling in academics and participated in mentorship or tutoring showed a significant improvement in their exam scores.

CONCLUSION

Evidently, mentorship programs can help young girls with their future career aspirations and improve academic performance in school. When young girls are educated on careers by a role model, they are more interested in pursuing these careers. This is particularly true for STEM careers where girls are heavily underrepresented. In addition, female students that took part in mentorship and tutoring programs showed significant increase in their average scores and overall better academic performance than those who did not receive mentorship, indicating that mentorships programs can make a tangible impact on girls' academic performance.

MENTORSHIP AS A SOLUTION TO THE GENDER GAP IN STEM FIELDS

It is well established that careers in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math fields, commonly referred to as STEM, often have higher wages and more employment opportunities than other fields (Beauchamp et al. 2021, 317). However, girls and young women are often excluded from STEM education and careers.

- Women in Canada made up only 34% of undergraduate STEM degree holders and 23% of STEM workers aged 25-64 in 2016 (Wall 2019).
- Studies have shown that many girls lose interest in STEM before middle school, and experience low confidence in their STEM skills despite their competency (Young et al. 2019, 9).
- Non-dominant youth (i.e. non-white, low-income, non-English speaking youth, Indigenous, and immigrant youth) also face exclusion from STEM (Mark 2016, 996; Bonny 2018, 14).
- The intersections of these identities can create a ‘double jeopardy’ problem, where girls from non-dominant populations experience multiple forms of oppression simultaneously (Young et al. 2019, 13).

By the time they reach high school, students make choices about their education that dictate their post-secondary options, meaning that their confidence with STEM at a young age has cascading consequences for their future careers.

Beyond gender stereotypes, there are multiple reasons that marginalized populations (i.e. women, racialized, and low-income people) are underrepresented within STEM, including:

- **Peer pressure and lack of support from parents and teachers** (Young et al. 2019, 1)
- **Fewer financial resources and low social capital** (Elliot et al. 2020, 43)
- **A lack of access to career counselling and STEM programs** (Chelberg et al. 2019, 40)
- **Girls and other non-dominant youth are aware of marginalization in the STEM field, and may seek to avoid STEM education as a result** (Mark 2016, 997)

Importantly, a lack of role models is often noted as a key reason why girls, particularly young women of colour, feel excluded from STEM (Mark 2016, 997; Young et al 2019, 1; Beauchamp et al 2021, 317). Mentorship can be a valuable resource for combating underrepresentation in STEM. The remainder of this section will discuss various mentorship programs from North America and their respective results.

FINDINGS

OUTCOMES OF STEM-BASED MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS IN CANADA AND THE U.S.

1. *FUTURE GIRLS OF STEM - INDIANA, U.S.*

For programs aimed at girls at the elementary school level, the goal was to encourage interest in STEM and build confidence for mentees. For instance, “Future Girls of STEM,” a 2019 outreach program for girls aged 7-12 in the United States aimed to encourage participation and self-efficacy in STEM for participants (Essig et al. 2020, 2). Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s perception about their ability to succeed, and high levels of self-efficacy lead to increased perseverance and better performance (Essig et al. 2020, 2).

Female engineers and undergraduate students ran programs which focused on civil, environmental, and industrial engineering, as well as cybersecurity and robotics (Essig et al 2020, 2). When surveyed, 94 percent of participants reported that they had learned about an interesting engineering job, and 78 percent were more interested in becoming an engineer than they had been before participating (Essig et al. 2020, 7).

2. *PROJECT TRUE (TEENS RESEARCHING URBAN ECOLOGY) - NEW YORK, U.S.*

For programs aimed at high school and undergraduate students, the goal was not to increase interest, but instead to ensure students remained confident in their abilities through practical experience. They also focused on offering counterspaces, or safe social spaces where students felt they belonged and could access support (Sutherland et al. 2020, 7).

In “Project TRUE (Teens Researching Urban Ecology),” high school students were paired with undergraduate students to conduct experiments during the summer (Beauchamp et al. 319). Over 80% of the participants reported that they intended to pursue a post-secondary STEM program and remained in the STEM field during their first year, after which results began to decline (Beauchamp et al. 2021, 327). This suggests that the mentorship program had long term impacts, but that continued STEM mentorship programs for undergraduate students are needed. (Beauchamp et al. 330).

3. *PEER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR ENTREPRENEURS - OTTAWA, CANADA*

Similarly, the University of Ottawa’s “Peer Mentorship Program for Entrepreneurs” aimed to promote STEM entrepreneurship amongst young women by having upper year students mentor lower year students, finding that participants felt more confident in their abilities, and that they had viable career options and access to a supportive community (Elliot et al. 2020, 60).

4. SCIENCE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM – SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA

In the University of Saskatchewan’s “Science Ambassador Program,” post-secondary “science ambassadors” were sent to conduct STEM outreach for elementary school students in Indigenous communities (Bonny 2018, 15). The program was based on the Woodlands Cree term “kiskiaumatowin,” or two-way learning between students and teachers who exchange knowledge (Bonny 2018, 15). The science ambassadors benefited from learning how to teach science outside of classrooms and labs, and learning about Indigenous cultural practices (Bonny 2018, 22).

ALL LOOK UP! LIFT UP! PARTICIPANTS SURVEYED WOULD PARTICIPATE IN ANOTHER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM.

CONCLUSION

Overall, mentorship programs have shown promising results in encouraging STEM interest for girls and other non-dominant youth, and helping young women in these fields maintain confidence.

LIMITATIONS:

- Some mentorship programs for underrepresented populations assume that marginalized students lack interest or motivation in STEM, rather than addressing the ways that they are excluded (Sutherland et al. 2022, 3).
- Programs were also found to be more effective if they were long term, and continued into post-secondary education.

Although mentorship cannot necessarily address the root causes for marginalization in the STEM field, it creates more opportunities for young women and girls by increasing their access to STEM, and in turn, their access to career opportunities and financial security.

THE IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP ON MENTORS

When examining the impact of mentorship, researchers tend to focus largely on mentee experiences (Elgharbawy 2023). However, mentorship is not a one-way relationship that only benefits the mentee. Both mentors and mentees positively impact each other in effective mentoring relationships (Anderson et al. 2023; Elgharbawy 2023). Discussing benefits for mentors can help recruit mentors for programs, and perhaps increase mentorship effectiveness. Studying youth mentorship experiences in particular can also be difficult, as many studies focus on professional mentorship. The rest of this section will look at different case studies (with various intersectionalities) from youth mentorship programs to learn more about mentor experiences.



WHY DID MENTORS VOLUNTEER FOR THE *LOOK UP! LIFT UP!* PROGRAM?

To make a positive impact in the community

A passion for working with children/youth

To improve interpersonal skills (i.e. communication, emotional intelligence)

They were in a mentor program as a mentee, and wanted to give back

FINDINGS

1. SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS AND MENTORSHIP

In a mentorship program targeting girls in high school from a low socioeconomic neighbourhood in Toronto, twenty-two female mentors were interviewed regarding their motivations to volunteer as mentors (Sheir et al. 2020). Key findings revealed that:

- How positive their experience was with the organization made a difference - this includes the dynamics and values of the organization as a workplace (Sheir et al. 2020).
- Although organizational dynamics are not sufficient to motivate volunteers to join, they play a vital role in social and psychological propensity (Sheir et al. 2020). This is useful for those recruiting volunteers, as they can promote psychological benefits as an incentive, strengthening their organizational values.
- Moreover, young female community mentors who assist adolescents, also talk about their desire to be a good role model based on their personal experiences as women (Sheir et al. 2020). This also links to a sense of giving back and helping those who were in a similar situation to yourself. For many mentors, this may form their initial motivation to volunteer, but it is their positive experiences as mentors that encourages them to remain with an organization.

2. BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS CANADA (BBBSC)

Another example of youth mentorship practices is from Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada (BBBSC). With the exception of individuals who volunteer for specific programs, like their adolescent mentoring program, which is open to volunteers between the ages of 15 and 18, BBBSC mentors are generally young adults over the age of 18 (Elgharbawy 2023). The organization offers multiple types of mentorship programs including group mentorship and conversation clubs (Elgharbawy 2023). The study had many key discoveries:

- Mentors gain a lot from this relationship, including mental health benefits, knowledge gained from their mentee, increased compassion, and a sense of belonging (Elgharbawy 2023).
- Mentorship is an essential service that has helped reduce the mental health issues of both teens and young adults throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Elgharbawy 2023).
- Mentors felt that their relationships with their mentees were strong despite the pandemic (Elgharbawy 2023). This held true even if mentors and mentees had different opinions about how the pandemic should be handled (Elgharbawy 2023). However, mentors found the shift to virtual mentoring difficult in maintaining their relationships and engaging with mentees (Elgharbawy 2023).
- Mentors also said that they benefited greatly from mentoring during the pandemic as they learned a lot from their mentees; this ranged from how to stay positive during a difficult time to online tools/games (Elgharbawy, 2023). Being a mentor also often helped with handling some of the negative mental health effects of the pandemic (Elgharbawy 2023).

- Although the BBBSC program finishes when mentees turn eighteen, many mentorship relationships continue, and mentees and mentors remain in contact (Elgharbawy 2023). This shows that successful mentorship experiences where both mentors and mentees enjoy benefits last beyond organizational bounds, becoming long term.

3. INDIGENOUS YOUTH CASE STUDY

The Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP) is a community-led initiative with Indigenous principles at its core, encouraging young people to lead healthy lifestyles (Ferguson et al., 2021). In this study, the mentors were either high school or undergraduate university students and the mentees were grade 4 and 5 students (Ferguson et al. 2021).

- Similar to other studies, mentors enjoyed being role models and connecting with mentees. Being able to form a bond with someone younger than them posed a challenge, but they overcame this (Ferguson et al. 2021).
- In interviews, some mentors felt that the program helped them gain leadership experience (Ferguson et al. 2021). This adds a new perspective to skills and experiences mentoring enables.

CONCLUSION

While retaining good mentors can be difficult for organizations, focusing on mentor experiences can help solve this. In fact, there is a fifty percent termination rate of mentorship relationships after 1-2 months (Sheir et al. 2020). Due to expectations not being met and feelings of rejection, this might have negative consequences on young mentees (Sheir et al. 2020). Therefore, it is important for organizations to have values that align with mentors and provide them with an environment where they feel fulfilled. Mentors may be motivated to volunteer for various reasons, but it is their experiences with organizations and mentees that encourages them to remain in mentorship programs.



FINAL REMARKS

Our goal in this report was to explore how mentorship programs can help empower girls and young women, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds. We conducted research on the effect of mentorship programs on mentors and mentees, the impact of programs on academics, career aspirations, healthy living, wellness, mental health, and self-esteem, and explored what factors made mentorship programs most effective. Our research found that there is a continued need for mentorship specifically aimed at young women and girls, and that the structure of mentorship programs is vital to their success.

Our top seven takeaways for designing and implementing mentorship programs include:

- 1. EARLY INTERVENTION** Mentorship can help build self-esteem and improve mental health by providing a support system and creating a nurturing environment for mentees' behavioural development. Earlier age mentorship was most effective in mitigating mental health and self-esteem issues. The sooner and earlier that girls are exposed to mentorship, the more effective mentorship is.
- 2. BALANCING MENTOR & MENTEE NEEDS TO ENSURE LONGEVITY** The most effective mentorship programs lasted over a year. Not only are longer programs more effective, programs that lasted only a short number of months risked having a negative impact on mentees. This suggests that further incentives for mentors may be necessary to keep them participating in programs as they balance other obligations. The challenge for mentorship programs is balancing mentors' needs for flexibility and mentees' needs for consistency.
- 3. EXPANDING PROGRAMS TO THE POST-SECONDARY LEVEL** While having role models in areas where women are underrepresented, such as STEM, was effective at encouraging interest, self-efficacy, and engagement, it is vital that these programs are available at all levels of schooling, including post-secondary education, so that their positive effects are maintained in students until they graduate and when entering the job market.
- 4. UTILISING THE ROLE OF PEERS** Peer mentorship is effective in helping girls and young women feel more comfortable breaking gender norms which negatively impact their health, such as encouraging participation in physical activity, as well as improving nutrition. Young people may prefer sharing sensitive information with their peers, and feel more understood by people their age. Therefore, it is important to consider mentorship structure based on the program's goals.

5. CHOOSING COMMITTED MENTORS Mentors who were most positively impacted by mentoring experienced mental health benefits, learned from their mentees, gained a sense of belonging, and improved their leadership skills. While there are many reasons mentors chose to volunteer, the ones that remain in these programs do so when they are fulfilled by their mentoring relationships. The most successful mentors were often older, had previous mentorship experience, and had strong confidence and well-being. According to our survey, mentees felt the most important features of a mentor were the ability to actively listen and commitment to helping them achieve their goals.

6. POSITIONALITY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY Trust between mentors and mentees was strongest when mentors engaged in their mentees environment and when they were conscious of their positionality. Mentors, who are in a position of authority, should be aware of how race, class, and gender may impact their relationship with their mentee, and should consciously challenge their own biases. Mentorship programs must also be designed with their target population in mind. Programs aimed at Indigenous youth in particular should be designed based on the community's needs and cultural values.

7. MATCHING MENTORS WITH APPROPRIATE MENTEES Our survey results suggest that mentees felt more connected to their mentors when they had shared interests to bond over, and struggled to connect when they did not. Participants expressed that it was important to them that their mentor/mentee was committed to the program, and that they had frequent planned meetings to get the most out of the program.

IN SUM, plenty of research has shown that mentorship is uniquely beneficial in offsetting some of the challenges faced by girls and young women in Canada and abroad. Mentorship program providers should keep in mind the above recommendations when developing mentorship programming to ensure that participants are getting the most out of their mentorship experience, whether the aim of the program is to support participants' mental health and well-being or increase their likelihood of pursuing a well-paying career in STEM.

Ultimately, it is our hope that the insights enclosed in this report can help:


- 1.** youth-serving organizations understand the power of mentorship as a tool to empower youth marginalised by race, gender, ability, or immigration status, and;
- 2.** support the development of more effective mentorship programs that benefit mentors and mentees alike.

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The background of the image is a solid teal color. In the center, there are two dark teal silhouettes of women. They are standing and holding hands, facing each other. The woman on the left has long hair, and the woman on the right has short hair. The text is overlaid on the silhouettes.

“I am where I am today because of role models and mentors I had very, very early in my life, I know how important it is to start very early in a child’s life presenting them with role models and mentors to learn and develop their skills.”

- Hon. Dr. Jean Augustine



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