

Grand Area Mentoring 2015/2016 Annual Report

“Maybe one day when I’m grown up I can volunteer and be a mentor. I’ll tell my mentee that I had a mentor too.” –student who lived part of school year at an emergency shelter (2016)

The Need

Utah’s annual report on intergenerational poverty shows that 52% of children in Grand County are at risk of remaining in poverty as adults. Out of 29 Utah counties, Grand County ranks fourth from last in average income. The jobless rate is higher than the state and national average. Grand County also has the third highest rate of suicide in Utah, a state with the fifth highest rate of suicides in the nation. The 2015 SHARP Survey showed that in 12 of 14 domains, Grand County students face substantially higher risk of substance use than children statewide. Many Grand County students (14%) suffer from chronic absence problems, lag behind students statewide in math and science SAGE scores (2014/2015), and exhibit antisocial behavior at rates higher than the state average.



Our Solution

Grand County School District aims to combat these risk factors through school-based one-on-one mentoring, among other strategies. Research shows that mentored youth are more likely to do better in school and have aspirations to go to college. They’re better equipped to make responsible decisions. According to research, “A mentor who encourages smart daily behaviors – finishing homework, having healthy social interactions, saying no when it counts – has a noticeable influence on a young person’s growth and success.” (National Mentoring Partnership)



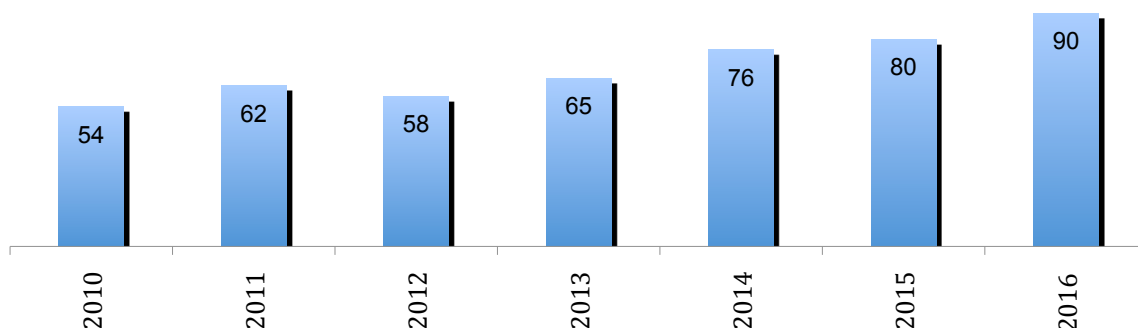
2015/2016 Outcome Summary, Capacity, & Demographics

This chart shows Grand Area Mentoring’s outcomes compared to objectives set by experts:

Measure >>	Reduce disciplinary actions	Increase core academic performance	Reduce unexcused absences	Sustain relationships >12 months
Goal	40%	35%	35%	55%
ACTUAL PERFORMANCE	77%	70%	50%	61%

Program Capacity: Grand Area Mentoring has grown by 67% since 2010.

Number of 1-on-1 Matches



Of the 90 children served by Grand Area Mentoring in 2015/2016:

- 96% qualified for free or reduced lunch, the federal indicator of poverty.
- 48% were female, 52% male.
- 22% were of minority (Hispanic or Native American) ethnicity.

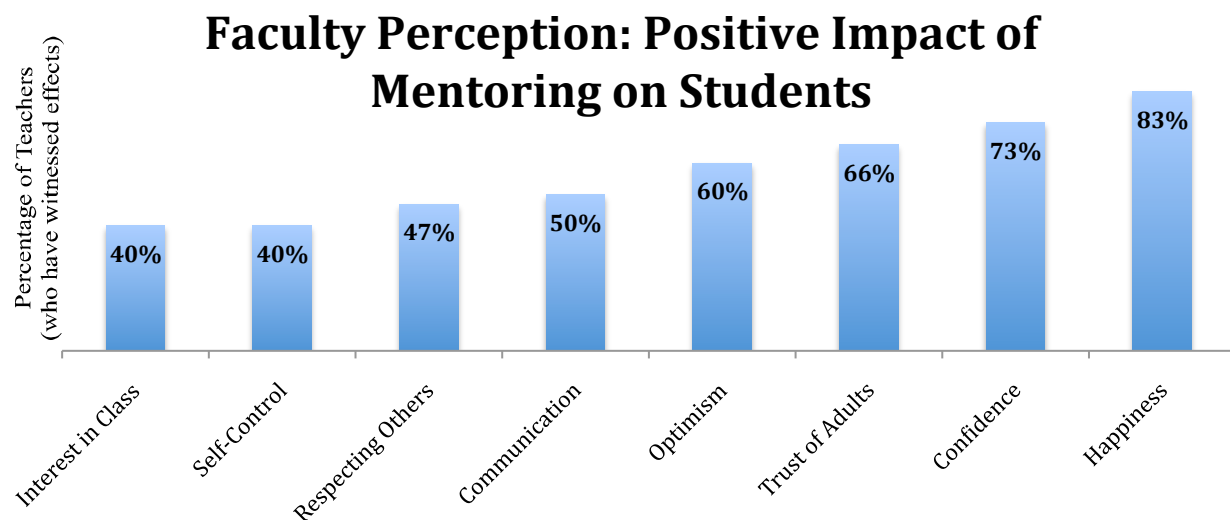
From Death to Determination; Another Mentoring Success Story...

Jason became a mentee after his father died in an accident. Jason's school attendance dropped, he often felt sick to his stomach, and he was unable to focus on schoolwork. Family members struggled with their own grief. Grand Area Mentoring matched Jason with Danielle, an excellent volunteer who had lost her own father when she was in the second grade. For two years, Danielle focused on making Jason happy again. She took an interest in his passion for skate boarding and dance, she talked through difficult feelings with him, and she found books he would enjoy reading even while his interest in school lagged. This year, when Jason had healed enough to focus on schoolwork again, Danielle was ready. She met with him several times each week to help him get his homework done, she coordinated meetings with Jason's teacher to keep track of his assignments, and she offered him rewards for all his hard work. Jason and Danielle's efforts paid off. Jason progressed from failing every class to passing every class – and he earned A's or B's in several classes! When Danielle found out Jason could apply for a scholarship to attend an Outward Bound course to be held over summer break, she helped him through the process. In July, Jason will join a group of his peers and wilderness instructors for two weeks of river rafting, camping, and self-discovery. When we asked Jason what he had learned from Danielle this year, he said: "Determination."

Teacher, Administrator, and Staff Feedback

Teachers regularly compare student performance against standardized academic and behavioral benchmarks. Thus, nobody has more opportunity than teachers to see the effects of mentoring firsthand. Surveys at the close of 2015/2016 showed favorable opinions among teachers, administrators, and staff about the effectiveness of school-based mentoring in GCSD.

- **93%** of teachers, staff, and administrators surveyed agree that mentored students have improved social skills;
- **91%** agree mentored students are less disruptive in class;
- **93%** agree mentored students care more about schoolwork and grades;
- **95%** agree mentored students miss less school;
- **100%** agree that they would encourage a friend interested in helping at-risk children to become a mentor;
- **100%** agree school-based mentoring meets an important need in the Moab community.



Closeness

A study of school-based mentoring supports teacher observations. According to the Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring, “For financially strapped school districts, school-based mentoring has the potential to provide a cost-effective way to assist and support struggling students.” The piece goes on to say: *“It was the relationship closeness, not a focus on academics, which led to greater outcomes in mentees.”*

If ‘relationship closeness’ is so critical to positive outcomes for school-based mentoring...

It’s good to know that 100% of mentored youth in Grand County School District felt their mentoring relationship was close to some degree, and 90% rated their relationship as ‘close’ or ‘very close.’



One parent quote, in particular, from May of 2016 suggests how mentors can become dear to children and families:



“This has been an amazing experience for our entire family. Both our mentors go above and beyond, and we consider them family! Thank you so much for the chance to work with these amazing women. They have been through a lot with us after a very rocky year. They have provided so much love, support, comfort, and friendship.”

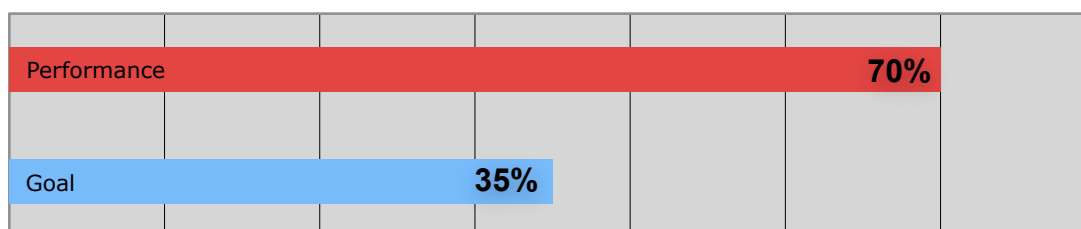
Outcomes

Grand County School District launched Grand Area Mentoring in 2005 with specific academic targets for the region’s at-risk youth. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, the program identified four key benchmarks to gauge student and program performance: 1) academic achievement, 2) social skills, 3) attendance, and 4) match duration. Grand Area Mentoring has met or exceeded lofty objectives in all four categories nearly every year since inception.

Student Academic Performance

This report bases academic performance on core subject report card scores. Grand Area Mentoring met the goal of 35% of mentored students improving their academic score since last year or since being matched with a mentor. Of the students for whom baseline academic data was available, **70% improved their overall academic score.**

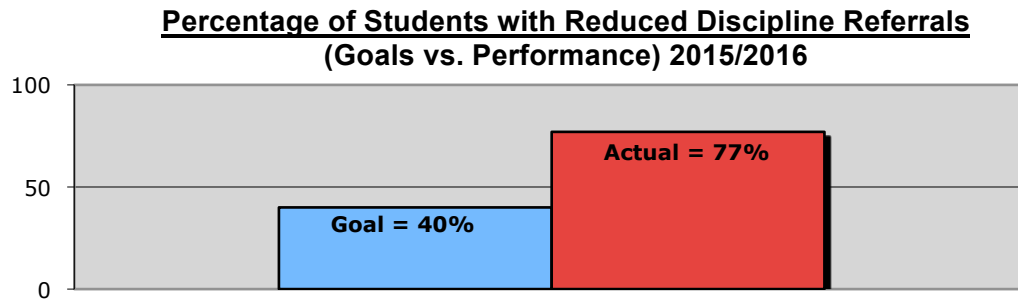
Percentage of Students with Improved Academic Performance **(Goals vs. Performance) 2016/2016**



90% of parents agree that their mentored children seem to care more about schoolwork and grades.

Student Behavior

Of student participants for whom Grand Area Mentoring had baseline discipline data, **77% reduced their discipline referral rate or maintained it at zero.** The chart below illustrates Grand Area Mentoring's performance outcome versus objective:



Parent surveys provide additional support for the link between mentoring and improved behavior. **90% of parents agree that since being matched with a mentor, their son or daughter has improved social skills.**

Studies suggest there is a link between improved social skills and a reduction of behavior problems at school and in the community. Here is a selection of direct quotes from mentees:

QUESTION: DO YOU THINK HAVING A MENTOR HAS CHANGED THE WAY YOU GET ALONG WITH OTHER PEOPLE? IF SO, HOW?

"When I first met my mentor, I was shy. I kind of stopped getting very shy. Mentoring changed me. I would scoot away from people I didn't know before my mentor." (fourth-grade student who struggles with anxiety, witnessed domestic violence, and whose father was incarcerated)

"Yes, I get along better with other kids." (second-grade student who struggles with social skills and anger management)

"I used to not really get along with people because I'm really shy, but I'm not as shy as I used to be." (third grade student who lives with grandparents and has limited contact with mother)

"Mentoring has helped me express myself better." (fourth-grade student with difficult home life who struggles with emotional outbursts)

"Mentoring helps me socialize with other people more. I get along with them better." (fifth-grade student referred for depression and loneliness)

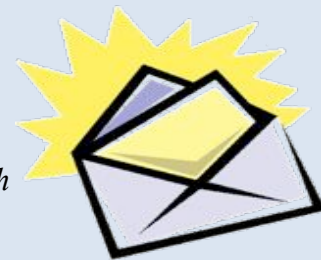
DEAR MENTOR... (excerpts from mentee cards)

"Thank you for being nice to me. You made me feel like I am a flower blooming away." (fifth-grade student)

"Thanks for being my mentor this year. I like when we made fly fish hooks. And I know that I can trust you when I'm sad or mad. Your friend—" (fourth-grade student)

"I wanted to thank you. You made me feel safe, and I was able to be myself around you. You are kind, funny, and one of the only grown-ups I think is cool. You didn't judge me, and I really appreciate it. I hope we can do it again next year." (eighth-grade student)

"Thank you for all you have done for me. You boosted my self-confidence, and I always know I can rely on you for help. And you always make me laugh." (seventh-grade student)



QUESTION: DO YOU FEEL MENTORING HAS CHANGED HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOURSELF? IF SO, HOW?

“When I didn’t have a mentor I was very sad. I kind of wanted someone. On mentoring days, I became happy the whole day. I write about her in my journal – what we do and how nice she is.” (fourth-grade student who witnessed domestic violence and struggles with anxiety)

“My mentor has opened my eyes about a lot of things.” (high school student with traumatic childhood who struggles with mental health issues)

“Yeah, I feel a lot happier.” (fourth-grade student from low-income family and whose mother is battling a life-threatening illness)

“Yeah. It gives me a little more self-confidence and it gives me something to do. I actually look forward to it, so I’m a bit happier.” (seventh-grade student who had stopped doing any school work after sudden death of father)

“It makes be feel different because I haven’t always been really happy, but mentoring makes my brain like rainbows and really excited.” (fourth-grade student with low home support)

I get to stay at school and play outside with an adult. That makes me very happy to actually play with somebody.” (third-grade student with low home support and whose older siblings were incarcerated in early adulthood)

“Mentoring changed my confidence. At first I thought I was stupid, but now I’m thinking I’m not as stupid.” (sixth grade student diagnosed with autism, struggles to make friends)

“Yeah, my mentor makes me feel happy instead of lonely. She’s always here and she gives me good companionship. She’s the best.” (third grade student who struggles with social skills)

DEAR MENTOR... (more excerpts from mentee cards)

“Thank you for listening to my teen problems, for using your time with me. I had a lot of fun with you this year. You make me feel good about myself, and I’m happy I get to spend time with you. I can’t wait for next year.” (seventh-grade student)

“I’m grateful you’re in my life. You’re always building me up and never letting me down, and you’re the only person who can play with me. You’re a great mentor.” (fifth-grade student)

“You are a really good influence on me. I like the way you start a conversation. I liked the times we just sat and talked.” (sixth-grade student)



Student Unexcused Absences

In 2015/2016, Grand Area Mentoring aimed to reduce unexcused absences for 35% of mentored youth. ***50% of mentored students had fewer unexcused absences this year compared with student attendance in 2014/2015.*** Students reported greater affinity for school in end-of-year interviews, and both parents and teachers noted the same.

Percentage of Students with Improved Attendance
(Goals vs. Performance) 2015/2016

Performance	50%				
Goal	35%				

MENTEE INTERVIEW QUESTION: DOES HAVING A MENTOR MAKE YOU FEEL ANY DIFFERENT ABOUT SCHOOL?

"Mentoring makes it more fun to come to school." (fifth-grade student referred for depression and low attachment to school)

"Mentoring makes me feel more willing to go to school on mentoring days. It makes school feel less like torture." (eleventh-grade student)

"It makes me more excited for school, and I wanted to come more – not just on mentoring days either. I got more focused at school, and that made me like it more." (fifth-grade student who went from 60 absences annually to 10 absences this year after being matched with a mentor).

"Mentoring makes me feel happier. I know I can always rely on her to help me with my homework." (seventh-grade student who turned his grades around this year)

"Yes, I have something to look forward to through the week." (sixth-grade student whose mother has struggled with substance abuse)

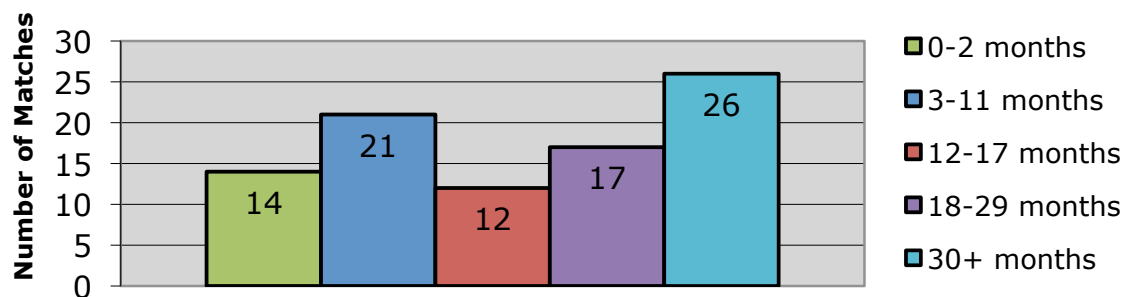
"Yes. When I got a mentor, if I got sick on mentoring days, I would try not to go home. I would just drink water and try to keep the sickness in." (fourth-grade student who struggles with anxiety and depression and had a history of absenteeism)

"It makes me want to come to school because mentoring is fun." (sixth-grade student who struggled with low school attachment and failing grades after the death of her father)

Sustained Relationships

Grand Area Mentoring surpassed the final key objective, the aim to sustain at least 55% of relationships for more than 12 months. For all Grand Area Mentoring matches closed in 2015/2016, **61% were sustained for more than 12 months**. Of those, 59% were sustained between 12 months and 2.5 years, and 41% for more than 2.5 years. The longest match lasted 93 months or 7 years 9 months.

Matches By Duration 2015/2016 (TOTAL: 90)



The Effects of Long-Term Mentoring

Students who have been mentored for more than one year often performed better than their peers mentored for fewer months. Grand Area Mentoring's average match length at close is two years, or about 300% better than the national average.

Match Length at Close (by month)



MENTEE INTERVIEW QUESTION: WHAT HAVE YOU GAINED OR LERANED THROUGH YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MENTOR?

"I've learned about aerodynamics and about the wing span and wings on my mentor's plane." (fifth-grade special-education student with low attachment to school)

"That trust is a powerful thing." (fourth-grade student who lived part of the year in an emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence)

"That if you're nice to another person, they will be nice to you." (third-grade student with low home support)

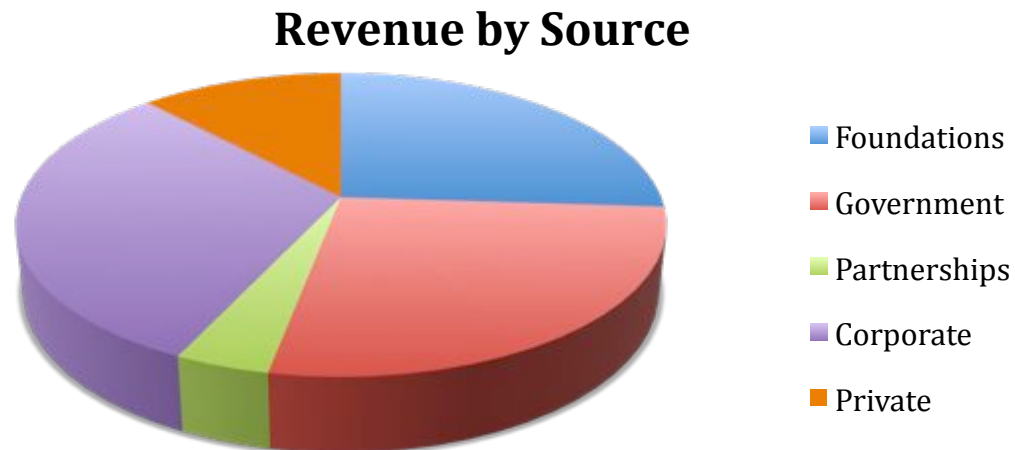
"I've learned it's better to have one more person that's your friend than no one at all." (third-grade student who lives with grandparents)

"I learned more about how to be a lawyer." (third-grade student who is low-income and has witnessed domestic violence)

"I've learned to be a better friend because I was kind of mean and now I'm nice." (sixth-grade student who has no contact with biological father, low-income family, and a little brother with special needs)

Finances

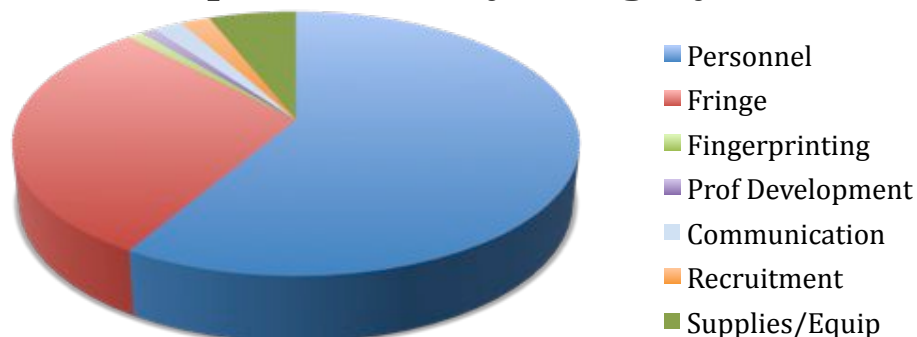
Grand Area Mentoring achieved a strong financial position by raising the full amount of its budget for 2016, which totals approximately \$118,000. Private grants, public grants, partnership contributions, corporate gifts, and small donations accounted for all revenue. This chart illustrates how these revenues break down by category:



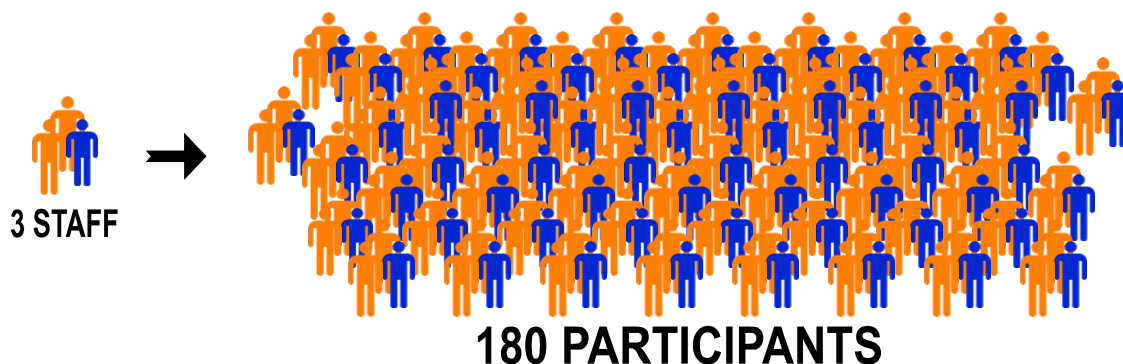
Grand Area Mentoring's major financial or in-kind sponsors included: the George S. & Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, Grand County School District, Laurie Michaels & David Bonderman, Jennifer Speers, Grand County Education Foundation, Red Cliffs Lodge, Four Corners Community & Behavioral Health, Beacon Afterschool Program, Fifth Ocean Consulting, Carl George Bjorkman Foundation, Best Western Plus Canyonlands Inn, Rocky Mountain Power Foundation, HMK Elementary School Community Council, The Synergy Company, Wells Fargo Foundation, WabiSabi, GE Capital Bank and the Community Foundation of Utah, Back of Beyond Books, Moab Points and Pebbles Club, Desert West Office Supply, Moab Regional Hospital, Moab Sun News, Moab Times-Independent, Sweet Cravings, and AWebStudio.

Grand Area Mentoring's cost per student is 35% less than the national average. Grand County School District manages program funds in accordance with all laws and public accounting best practices. The program's expenditures by category reflect spending norms within the school district and school district projects. As in Grand County School District, personnel and related expenses account for about 90% of Grand Area Mentoring's costs.

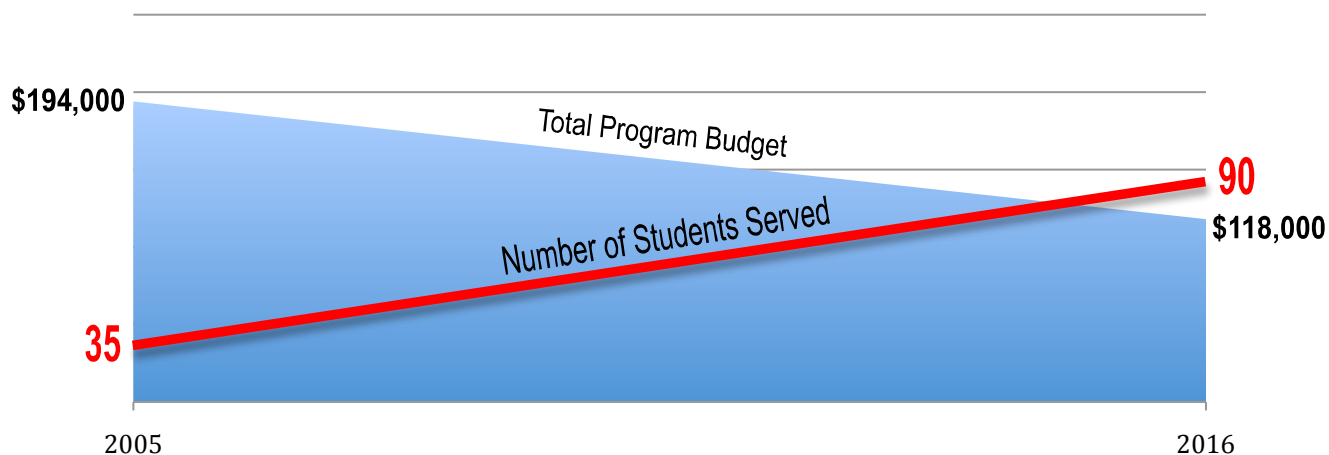
Expenditures by Category



The program's three staff members manage a volunteer corps of more than 70 committed mentors, Moab's largest weekly volunteer team. This streamlined management leverages expertise from the community's most responsible and skilled citizens. By channeling their generosity to the county's vulnerable children, the program puts assets where they are needed most. Grand Area Mentoring's staff to participant ratio is approximately 1:60.



Since 2005, Grand Area Mentoring's budget has shrunk from \$194,000 to \$118,000, or by 39%. Over the same period, the number of students served has risen from 35 to 90, or by 157%.



Administrative Performance

Grand Area Mentoring surveyed teachers, administrators, parents, and mentors about staff performance to provide guidance for program improvement and professional development. A mean response of 8 is the goal for the first four, and 100% agreement is the goal for the others.

PROGRAM SURVEYS (2015/2016)	AVERAGE SCORE on a scale of one to ten (ten=excellent)
Communication with parents :	8.4
Response to parent questions or concerns:	8.9
Communication with volunteers :	9.3
Accessible and helpful to volunteers when contacted:	9.9
Teachers and administration agree that staff are easy to reach and knowledgeable:	100% agree
Teachers and administration agree that mentoring is a good strategy to prevent anti-social behavior, unexcused absences, and academic decline among at-risk youth:	97% agree
Teachers and administrators agree that mentors are well trained and effective:	97% agree
Teachers and administrators understand what mentoring is and how it works in Grand County:	100% agree

Successes & Opportunities

Veteran Mentor Pilot Project – In September 2015, Grand Area Mentoring launched its Veteran Mentor Pilot Project, which aimed to expand mentoring service to children who most need support (those who would otherwise languish on a waiting list due to anti-social behavior, disability, or age exceeding the normal range for new mentoring relationships). High-risk children were matched with an excellent, proven veteran mentor. At the outset, Grand Area Mentoring expected to grow overall program capacity by 8-10%. The Veteran Mentor Project built upon existing infrastructure without adding significant overhead. By the close of 2015/2016, the Veteran Mentor Pilot Project helped the roster grow by 8.4%.

Objective	Outcome	Objective met?
1. Match 7 high-risk students with excellent mentor	7 of 7 matched	Yes
2. Reduce mentee wait list by 25% (as measured against unmatched mentees on waiting list from 2015/2016)	Reduced wait list by 7 of 26 or 27%	Yes
3. Maintain 60% of matches for at least 6 months	6 of 7 or 86% maintained	Yes
4. Improve 35% of mentored youths' school attendance (*for those students with baseline data)	4 of 6 or 67% improved	Yes*
5. Improve 35% of mentored youths' academic performance (*for those students with baseline data)	5 of 6 or 83% improved	Yes*
6. Improve 40% of mentored youths' social skills (as measured by office referral reduction or maintenance at zero – *for those students with baseline data)	2 of 3 or 67% improved	Yes*

Over the course of 2015/2016, Grand Area Mentoring accepted an unprecedented number of mentee referrals. In total, by the close of the year, teachers and others referred 53 students for mentoring. Of these, Grand Area Mentoring matched 27 with standard mentors. Of the remaining 26, Grand Area Mentoring matched 7 with the veteran mentor and therefore affected a wait-list

reduction of 27%. Grand Area Mentoring's average mentor scores very highly in surveys given throughout the school district. Nevertheless, the veteran mentor surpassed ratings of average mentors in the following characteristics: professionalism, proper conduct, timeliness, reliability, friendliness, compassion, appropriate boundaries, communication skills, rapport with youth, enthusiasm, rapport with school staff, and attention to detail. Additionally, 100% of survey respondents agreed robustly (average 9.9 out of 10, where 10 means "absolutely agree") with the following statements:

- ✓ Grand Area Mentoring's veteran mentor project reaches children who may otherwise not be suitable for mentoring due to age, problem behavior, disability, or other high risk factors.
- ✓ Mentoring is a good strategy to prevent anti-social behavior, unexcused absences, and academic decline among at-risk youth; the veteran mentor project achieves even more than the standard mentoring design.
- ✓ I would like to see the veteran mentor project continue.
- ✓ I would like to see Michele or another excellent mentor matched with additional high-risk children.

Program Expansion at Grand County Middle School – Though it was not a stated objective, the Veteran Mentor Pilot Project allowed Grand Area Mentoring to expand service to Grand County Middle School (GCMS) students. Seventh and eighth-grade youth face challenging circumstances in adolescence and with a transition to a new building for only two years. Historically, Grand Area Mentoring has matched a limited number of students at this age-level due to the common mentor preference to start with younger mentees and a natural match attrition as students age. The veteran mentor works with a total of five children at the middle school. Her caseload increases the current number of matches at GCMS from 6 to 11, or by 83% (for a total of 14 served at GCMS this year). The veteran mentor's skill in working with adolescents helped "rebrand" mentoring as something cool or normal. In a population traditionally under-served by mentoring, this shift is a boon to the students of GCMS.

Partnership with Fifth Ocean Consulting – Since 2009, Fifth Ocean Consulting, LLC has helped Utah’s nonprofits build organizational capacity and sustainability, improve service delivery, and demonstrate their unique impact on the community.



Every year, the firm provides its services free of charge to one small nonprofit. In 2016, Grand Area Mentoring won a pro bono partnership that will empower the program to create a strategic plan to manage growth and quality over the coming years. In a year when the program accepted more student referrals and fostered more new matches than ever before, the timing couldn't be better. The partnership will crescendo in November, when Fifth Ocean and Grand Area Mentoring will compile data and bring advisors together for a retreat. The process will produce a strategic plan, a decision-making framework, and a values blueprint that will help Grand Area Mentoring expand and deepen its impact over the coming years.

Policies, Procedures, and Position Descriptions – Grand Area Mentoring has grown since it opened its doors in 2005. During this time, the program evolved, and its mentoring model has been tailored to the Grand County community. Program policies and procedures must be revised to remain relevant and useful. During a Utah Nonprofit Association-sponsored training conducted by U Serve Utah in March, the program director identified several areas where Grand Area Mentoring can revamp and create new policies that will better manage risk while more robustly supporting volunteers, mentees, and families. These efforts will also go on to improve the mentor, mentee, and parent handbook that will be revitalized starting in 2016/2017.