

SYNOPSIS
URBANA SCHOOL DISTRICT 116
BOARD OF EDUCATION
BUSINESS MEETING
JANUARY 17, 2006

January is National Mentoring Month and, as has been the tradition for several years, our community connections coordinator Barbara Linder provided the Board of Education with the annual mentoring update. As a result of the U.S. Department of Education grant we received last March to expand our mentoring program to the elementary schools in Urbana and Champaign, the Urbana School District is participating in a national study conducted by the federal agency. The U.S. Department of Ed is doing a comparative analysis of students who do and don't have mentors. They're looking at academics, attendance, and discipline records and the study will last two years. Additionally, the Rev. Dr. Harold Davis of the TALKS Mentoring Program told the board his program has been the subject of a University of Illinois doctoral student's Ph. D. dissertation. She will present her empirical data on that specific mentoring program Thursday evening at the Champaign Unit 4 Mellon Building.

The good news about these two studies is that at last there will be data – the word that seems to drive everything in public education these days – on the effectiveness of mentoring programs in public schools.

Linder also said the number of mentor/mentee pairs at the elementary level has picked up since receiving the federal grant money last year. Most encouraging is that faculty and staff now view mentoring as a part of school services to be considered for children facing educational or behavioral challenges.

USD Curriculum Coordinator Jean Korder walked the board through the process in developing the proposed "Physical Development and Health Curriculum." A group of teachers from throughout the district, including retired UMS PE teacher Connie Minnes, have been working on the curriculum, which was given to the board earlier this month. Korder's discussion centered mostly on tying our curriculum to specific Illinois learning standards. But she also focused somewhat upon the need for increased resources in terms of space, facilities, support, and especially certified P.E. staff at the elementary level. Funding for needed textbooks for the new curriculum will also be an issue.

The BOE has set a special working session for Wednesday, February 15, at 5:30 p.m. in the board meeting room to discuss the curriculum, as well as listen to public input. Adoption of the curriculum would not come until the Feb. 21 meeting, at the earliest.