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Helping Disadvantaged Urban Youth: Tutoring Lessons from University and Community Partnerships

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Abstract

For the past 20 years, the endowment of philanthropist E. Desmond Lee has supported a collaborative of youth agencies, universities, and school district programs for disadvantaged urban youth. Called the Regional Institute of Tutorial Education (RITE), its focus has been to build community support to counteract the influence of poverty, low tax funding bases, crime, and poorly resourced schools for the children that can't achieve academically and socially because of these conditions. RITE has addressed these deficits by hiring community members and university students to tutor and mentor the students enrolled in provisionally or unaccredited school districts and their after-school programs sometimes conducted in community agencies. The institute located at the University of Missouri-St. Louis has trained, placed, and supervised tutors in mostly academic areas of math and reading to support students in K-12 classrooms. The results of these programs have been successful when there has been consistent student attendance. In the 2017–2018 school year, RITE provided writing tutoring targeting 150 urban youth attending under-resourced middle and high schools. Lessons from these university and community collaborative programs are provided to aid others working with urban youth.

Keywords: urban youth, intergenerational tutoring, community partnerships

1. Introduction

The vision of one man, E. Desmond Lee, became the cornerstone for a university, community, and public school tutoring collaboration. E. Desmond Lee, a St. Louis philanthropist, felt indebted to the African-American soldiers under his command during World War II. He promised himself that if he survived and made any money, he would see that his brave soldiers and their families were rewarded. The E. Desmond Lee Regional Institute of Tutorial Education (RITE) is that reward. Mr. Lee endowed a Chair of Tutorial Education at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, in 1998. Its responsibilities would be to provide academic and social support to urban children whose parents could not afford to give them the resources they should have as citizens of St. Louis and the United States of America.

The endowment Des Lee gave to the University of Missouri-St. Louis has funded a collaborative of universities, public schools, and community, targeting urban

children of St. Louis. The Institute consists of 6 universities and 10 of the largest community and youth service agencies and all of 4 urban school districts in the city.

For the past 20 years, college student or community tutors have given classroom support under teacher direction within classes or within pullout settings for individuals or small groups of students. The tutoring provides intergenerational support to the youth. Most college tutors are close to the secondary students' age and provide them with role models and methods for going to college. Older graduate student tutors have gone to the suspension room to tutor students and advise them on how to manage their behavior. In one school, the community tutors are retired lawyers, businessmen, and caring citizens who live in the neighborhood. And finally, there are the RITE staff members who build a community of RITE tutors and stay in touch with them after they leave school. The RITE staff and facilitators attend tutoring sessions and school events and add to school opportunities as they bring students to the university, obtain guest speakers, and provide scholarships for the tutors and Rotary Youth Leadership summer camp scholarships for high school students. As a result of all these intergenerational tutors, the students understand that there is a community of caring adults who want to see them succeed academically and socially.

2. Background of tutoring

Tutoring is an ancient form of instruction with an older person informing a child in a skill, story, or abstract concept. Such a structure was expanded to include more than one student in what was called learning circles in the Middle East consisting of one teacher and several students gathered around a tribal or religious leader. As long ago as 1000 BC, a young man would have one constant companion or a tutor responsible for his social and cultural instruction called a paidagogos in ancient Greece and a pedagogue in ancient Rome. These men could be aristocratic slaves from another culture or wise men who could no longer work because of age or disability. The "classic ideal" of education between master and pupil resulted in the tutoring of the young through the counsel and example of an older man. An atmosphere of virile camaraderie shaped and molded the young boy's character. The relationship between the two became personal and intimate and lasted for life ([1], p. 7).

In ancient Egypt, China, Europe, and Africa, tutoring was for aristocratic boys who attended "classes" on government, skills necessary to enter the service of the ruler. Girls were tutored by their mothers and rarely used their skills outside the home. Some high-class courtesans such as Aspasia, the common law wife of Pericles, paid for her own tutoring, enabling her to attract many aristocratic men to her house ([1], p. 435). It was accepted in many societies that boys obtained a tutor at 6 and continued under his guidance until 18. As documented in the Jewish writings as early as 80 BC according to the Talmud, Simeon ben Shetach (103–76 BC) established local schools for boys between the ages of 15 and 17. High Priest Joshua Ben Gamla is said to have begun elementary schools for boys from the age of 6. The elementary school education was taught in the bet ha-sefer later known as the heder, which was normally maintained by the community. Later, higher rabbinic education was given in the bet ha-midrash, located in the nearmost temples or synagogues [2].

The effectiveness of the tutor in ancient times was demonstrated by the manly character and expertise of the student. These students were the men expected to become the ruling religious or royal leaders in most cultures, regardless of where they lived. Men's value to their society was found in their manliness, cultural expertise, and knowledge as recognized by memorization of poetry, literature, and religious laws and beliefs.

The tutor's role, in today's world, is to remediate those students whose learning skills do not enable them to keep up with the large classes in public or private schools. In most cases, the tutoring is episodic and knowledge oriented. When a young man is not doing well in English, his parents pay for a tutor to strengthen his skills. When a young girl is unable to play basketball as well as her peers, her mother seeks other older girls to tutor her daughter in how to dribble the ball and shoot the baskets. For the well off, the tutor can be paid handsomely. For the poor, the service is usually provided by a youth service agency such as the YMCA or Boys and Girls Clubs or the school system itself. The tutoring ends when the student reaches the expected math, reading, or writing level established by the school or the parent. For many, transportation to and from the tutoring is difficult and results in poor attendance. Tutoring is not a long-term relationship, and contact is not maintained for any length of time between the tutor and the student. The only exception is music instruction where the teacher will often guide the student for years or until he or she surpasses the skills of the teacher. As it is often episodic and individual, data on tutoring success is not easily obtained.

However, one study conducted a meta-analysis of 65 different tutoring programs. The findings were that tutoring improves the attitude of the student and the tutor toward the subject that is the focus of the tutoring. It also improves the performance of the student. However, tutoring doesn't enhance the self-esteem of either the tutor or the student. This meta-analysis demonstrates the focus of tutoring has not departed from its original intent in ancient times of improving performance, developing a positive attitude toward learning a subject and improving self-esteem [3].

Today, there is increased interest in the delivery of tutoring through the use of computer programs. Developers in instructional technology are calling it an intelligent tutoring system [4–8]. The components focus on the complexity of the content as presented, the expectation of the product as measured by its potential for transfer, and the requirement of the user ([1], p. 435). The keyword in intelligent tutoring is "user friendly." Many companies are producing intelligent tutoring and selling it to schools that can't afford personal tutors or businesses that do not have training departments. The greatest purchaser of intelligent tutoring is taking place in what is called "domestic tutoring" or homeschooling. The computer is replacing the mother in the home as the teacher, tutor, and guide. To quote one homeschooling mother, "I just turn on the computer and sit the kids in front of it." In this way, the tutor becomes the time keeper without the need in some cases to evaluate the student's work or even understand it.

Regardless of its format, tutoring has made a significant contribution in the history of education regarding the evolution of schooling. Today, we view the schools as being synonymous with education. This was not always true. There is much evidence that a sizable amount of education took place in the home using one-to-one instruction by a variety of tutors, including parents. Some of the most important philosophers of the West developed educational theories based upon their experience as tutors, rather than as school teachers. Their tutorial philosophy developed into many of our modern educational principles. What were these ideals? The development of the individual's thinking processes became a fundamental educational goal. The recognition of individual differences guided the instruction of each student. Education became a culturally broadening experience that at the same time recognized the child's own talents and prepared him for a specific life vocation ([1], p. 435).

3. RITE tutoring process

RITE provides training to university and community tutors in tutoring methods, while the schools and after-school programs supply subject area content

and the most needy students. Disadvantaged youth are those who meet federal guidelines for free or reduced cost lunches at school. In most of the schools served by RITE, three fourths of the students qualify as disadvantaged youth. The tutoring methods follow consistent processes used in every session. Lessons begin with signature pieces selected by the student. This motivational procedure is followed by targeted skills instruction determined by the school-administered tests or teacher direction. If requested, RITE will diagnose students using appropriate standardized tests. Instructional feedback sheets are provided to parents, teachers, and students. Common tutoring areas such as math and reading are taught in K-12 with 80-page guidebooks *Blueprint for Reading Success and Blueprint for Math Success* developed by Dr. Myrna Gifford and Dr. Judith Cochran. Results of all programs are provided to the students by school principals and after-school and community agency directors. For example, unaccredited schools have to meet district AYP benchmarks within specific time frames. United Way after-school providers follow specific evaluation guidelines as a part of their funding requirements. In short, the program results are tabulated on different measures to determine the achievement of grade-level expectations, primarily in math and reading.

In reading, the results are demonstrated at Gene Slay's Girls and Boys Club.

> *The total overall reading gain was 2.5 years; stanine was 5.3. (Students with IEPs were not included in this gain; however, each student showed progress.) The grade-level breakdown prior to tutoring was G2, 4 youth; G3, 4 youth, and G4 – 1 youth; two students in grade were exited because of attendance. The average grade point gain was 2.5.*

Executive Director Prescott Benson provided an overall evaluation of the *Blueprint Reading for Success*:

- Meeting with students at least three times a week achieves better outcomes.

- One-on-one tutoring is more effective to improve reading skills.

- The best results were reported for tutoring sessions from 15 to 60 min. Longer sessions did not result in better outcomes.

- Tutor-tutee relationships that were successful were often supported by strong reinforcement of progress, with reading and writing experiences (being fully supported to working independently and with an explicit demonstration of appropriate reading and writing processes).

- A tutoring program's duration is significantly related with positive outcomes; implementation time of at least 20 h was more effective.

- Parent involvement and good attendance is a must in order to achieve better academic success.

Because of the special problems and the potential associated with minority and disadvantaged parent involvement, care must be taken to emphasize the concept of parents as partners of education. Too often, because of the discontinuities between teachers/administrators and the communities in which their schools are located, school personnel tend to view the parents and surrounding community as needing to change and having little to offer. This "deficit model," as it has been called, is

clearly detrimental to the development of positive attitudes about education and good working relationships between the community and the school.

When academic agencies engage families in ways that improve learning and support parent involvement, students make greater gains. Partnerships with families that respond to parent concerns, honor their contributions, and share decision-making responsibilities able them to sustain connections aimed at improving student achievement.

Directors of youth agencies like Mr. Benson are on the RITE Board along with the University of Missouri-St. Louis, St. Louis University, Webster University, Washington University, Fontbonne University, Maryville University, and Harris Stowe University faculty along with the directors from the YMCA, YWCA, youth residential and family services centers, Herbert Hoover Boys and Girls Club, and Mathews-Dickey Boys and Girls Club. In addition, representatives of other community groups and public schools sit on the board. Some of these are AmeriCorps St. Louis, St. Louis Public School District Community and Alternative Education Division, Normandy Public School District, and representatives of the urban professional, athletic, and business community. The RITE board members' charge is to establish, develop, and sustain extracurricular social and academic efforts for under-resourced youth in the St. Louis community. The lessons learned from this unique institute provide insight and guidance for other university, community, and public school partnerships.

4. Lessons from providing extracurricular assistance

How do you learn to play basketball with good sportsmanship when your parent is a single female who works one, two, or three jobs? The answer to that question could be action taken through the Academic Athletic program started by RITE. This program has benefited children living in the Jennings Housing Development and Emergency Children's Home and those going to the after-school programs at Herbert Hoover and Mathews-Dickey Boys and Girls Club. First children read about sports figures from books purchased by RITE and given to the different agencies. Then the sports section of the St. Louis Post Dispatch is used for discussions with the children in their agencies. Tickets to basketball games were solicited from professional teams and local college teams. These tickets were given to the agencies as rewards for academic improvement by the youth. The University of Missouri previous basketball coach, Chris Baker, conducted clinics with his athletes for the children. He even let some of the boys from a residential care center shoot hoops after a game with team members. He was not alone. The tennis, girls' soccer, and track coaches from UMSL held Saturday clinics for RITE agency youth. Once a year, the Cardinals, Blues, and RAMS gave tickets to RITE to disperse to children, families, and agency staff. In many activities, the effort was made to integrate athletics with academics through "adopting" a player. The youth followed the statistics and career of a favorite professional or university athlete. The idea of having the youth adopt a player was questioned during youth attendance at a Cardinals game. One of the boys asked why the player couldn't adopt him instead. With athletic clinics, agency programs, agency athletic supervision, purchase of books, sports equipment, and event tickets, he didn't realize that he had been adopted by the RITE collaborative members.

Scheduling activities considering athletic partner's responsibilities is another lesson to be shared. The extracurricular programs are always dependent upon the sports season, the coaches, and the players themselves. Since many of the university athletes are on scholarships, the former University of Missouri, St. Louis athletic

director, Pat Dolan, suggested that work study could pay the athletes in their off-seasons to tutor at Jennings Housing Authority. Athletes in reading and math tutored children, who lived in the Housing Authority. The results were compared to the Jennings tutoring program conducted by the housing coordinator. Both groups were trained by RITE staff in how to tutor, assess reading and math levels, and select from the materials available in the housing authority and the RITE library. Results on the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory indicated all but 2 of the 30 children who consistently attended sessions improved an average of one grade level in reading and math when tutored by university athletes. This program was successful, as it did not conflict with the practice and game schedule of the athletes. And the youth learned from the athletes that you can play sports and go to college.

Another lesson is that none of the teams have one decision-maker. For example, Cardinal's Tony LaRussa, Mick Malthene, and current interim manager, Mike Shildt, have one game dedicated to disadvantaged youth. For that game, the managers talk to them, order pizza for the children, and have them come out on the field and meet the players. In order to make sure that day happens, managers have to check with other managers, coaches, and the players. In addition, they have public relations staff and professional rules and recruitment regulations to follow. Each manager's different protocol is replicated at all university and high school athletic programs. The learning from this event is that managers are not the only persons responsible for making this successful event take place.

5. Academic assistance

If you can read and have a calculator, you should be able to help children with their homework. If you have a homework help or academic tutoring program, you can call the nearest college and ask for college students to help tutor children. The problem is just who do you call? Many people call the switchboard of a college and ask for whoever is responsible for tutoring. They may get the learning centers that tutor university students, or they may get individuals responsible for retention at the college. Recently RITE received a call from a woman at a junior high who left a message saying she was going to need 15 college students to tutor in her after-school program. Unfortunately, tutoring in any subject is more complex and challenging than most community members believed, even to access university students. Teacher training has also changed to such a degree that it is no longer valid that college students and particularly prospective teachers could use practical experience. Education majors are assigned hours of observation, practicum, and then full-time student teaching. In many cases, university students also have jobs outside of school. Both course requirements and outside employment reduce the likelihood that university students want to or are available to tutor.

Firstly, most college students may not be living on campus or easily available to university staff. Most also have very tight schedules with their own work, families, and schoolwork. They frequently need to make money and can't afford to volunteer. Secondly, education students are now required to observe, tutor, and teach in schools as early as their first education course. From there, they have clinics in schools where they are required to teach children outside their own scheduled class time. Furthermore, college volunteers tend to disappear during midterms and finals leaving children feeling neglected and abandoned. This is not the relationship the universities want to build with the communities. Likewise, the community groups looking for inexpensive help can't expect to build academic programs with students who may not be available the next semester leaving them to find yet another college student. This untrained college volunteer format is no longer the approach to academic assistance

in the RITE program. College expenses have resulted in students like L.M saying, "I wouldn't have been able to stay in school if it weren't for my job as a RITE tutor."

RITE targets academic needs of the children in the St. Louis Public School through a number of collaborative arrangements. These formats provide models for university/public school/community interaction and funding. One model is to become a partner in an ongoing public school grant. RITE has been a partner with the St. Louis Public School District on an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) grant providing tutoring to middle school students in 19 St. Louis Public Schools. RITE hired university students, paid, and trained them. RITE currently has an AVID grant with River View Gardens School District. The RITE recruits and hires the students, and the school district trains them in the AVID tutoring procedures. Their procedures required classroom teachers attend conferences and follow AVID protocol. A second model is where RITE is a grant partner with the school district. RITE then gets a contract to provide training in tutoring methods and communication effectiveness for the new tutors and teachers in the schools. On one such grant, the twenty-first century grant, the school district administers the twenty-first century grants, and RITE staff conducts training, attends grant meetings, and serves on the advisory board. And finally, RITE also finds and writes grants for school districts. In this third model, the university is the administrator and employer and directs the program. The school district identifies staff, notifies children of the programs, and provides the facilities. Other community partners, such as the YMCA, host athletic activities, identify athletic staff for the grant, and supervise programs. In short, the university, public school, and community agency grant collaboratives take many forms, depending upon the grant requirements and school, university, and community education resources.

In another partnership arrangement, RITE collaborates with AmeriCorps members and the St. Louis School District. AmeriCorps member are placed in 18 of the most needy schools addressing literacy and socialization needs within classrooms and during after-school programs. This model demonstrates how a partnership can exist among public school districts, not-for-profit community agencies, and universities. RITE provides ESL training, testing, lesson plan writing, and literacy training for the members. RITE universities also provided training in communication effectiveness and mentoring for middle school tutors. This academic partnership between RITE and AmeriCorps and the resulting video will enable AmeriCorps centers to strengthen their orientation and training of members. AmeriCorps also developed a lesson observation evaluation to standardize tutor's work with underserved students. As a bonus from university partners, the RITE Director, Dr. Judith Cochran, taught courses for AmeriCorps members, awarding graduate and undergraduate university credit. This collaboration enabled AmeriCorps members to obtain college credits that could be used later toward a degree.

Academic help takes many forms in urban schools. RITE has established many successful programs with two profiled here. The first is training teachers and university and community tutors in *Blueprint for Reading Success* and *Blueprint for Math Success* developed for RITE. These programs have been implemented in many after-school programs.

Executive Director Prescott Benson provided an overall evaluation of the *Blueprint Reading for Success* in the Gene Slay's Girls and Boys Club.

His after-school program has been able to raise reading levels an average of one grade level in 10 weeks of tutoring. One of the university students using the program reported on their success using the signature piece of *Blueprint for Reading Success*:

> *During one of my subbing jobs, students were reading a book called, "The Journals of Lewis and Clark." I told the students that if they have any problems reading*

that they can ask me for help. One student (8th grade) said that he didn't really comprehend what was going on one of the assigned reading pages since the language used was a bit "oldey time" to him. I asked him if it would be OK to use him for an assignment and he said it was fine so I had him read a short paragraph for sixty seconds. The first time timing him, he was able to read 74 words as he was getting tripped up on a few of the words. He didn't know the meaning of all the words so this was difficult to him (such as larboard). He also didn't know why Lewis called described the river as handsome. I explained the meaning of the words to him and the adjectives he had in question. I also cleared up those "oldey time" words such as "whence" and "timbered."

I asked him to read again for one minute and after understanding what the words meant, he was able to read up to 83 words. He was quite pleased with himself after improving his words read per minute. He thanked me for my help and said that he'll be able to read over 100 words per minute one day. The whole exchange took only a few minutes and I felt good knowing that I had helped a student better understand the material and increased his motivation for reading.

RITE has also developed a student retention program called Conscious Choice (CC). For the past 10 years, it has been encouraging youth to remain child-free and graduate from high school. CC's Vashon, Roosevelt, and Sumner are "comprehensive" high schools, meaning that they must take all students who apply. These schools have on-site nurseries for students' children and pregnancy rates that are higher than St. Louis city and the state of Missouri averages. An expansion of the CC program into middle schools was implemented to reduce the pregnancy rate. Another modification was that male students were included. One of the requests for programming of the males was for car repair classes. As most live with either their mother or grandmother, the males are called upon to fix the family cars. This after-school tutorial was added to Conscious Choice programming starting with middle school boys attending Gene Slay's Girls and Boys Club. Other middle school CC programs are informational and take place during health classes in collaboration with the Department of Health, SLU's medical students, and other community experts. Each school's students establish their own activity schedule, are given community mentors if they want them, and visit universities for programs and tours. RITE provides money from the endowment for student scholarships to UMSL and a banquet for the seniors and their mentors and parents that includes gift cards and an iPad for the essay winners. In 2018, the CC graduation banquet was held after CC students (male and female) attended a Science Technology Economics and Mathematics Conference at St. Louis University. The last year's winner, T.W., said that it was a good experience for him to read his essay to his fellow students at the conference and to the Clayton Ladue Rotary Club. He said, "Cuz' when I play in the NFL, I will have to deal with the media."

While the success of programs is measured on different academic tests, for the past 2 years, the 80 program graduates from one high school have had no pregnancies. Initiated by RITE facilitator Mrs. Linda Bell and Dr. Cochran in 2009, the program now has a partnership with St. Louis University (SLU) and the Department of Health. As a result of reading the seniors' scholarship application essays, a RITE facilitator and intern piloted a writing program in 2016. UMSL/RITE and SLU's objectives are to assist in the reduction of the district's 55% dropout rate and encourage career planning and/or college enrollment. Endowment funds pay for RITE staff and interns along with grants awarded from Clayton Ladue Rotary Club.

Building upon RITE's piloted writing program and the teachers' requests, the writing program has expanded to include middle school creative writing courses, field trips to summer UMSL writing workshops, ROTC, and College Summit

courses. Under the direction of RITE facilitator, Mrs. Cathy O'Brien, UMSL tutors are assisting with the writing of college applications, Conscious Choice essay competitions, and course work in classes. The journal reflection of one writing tutor, A.C., is quoted below:

> *The essays were the best through-especially seeing the look on students' faces upon completing them (CC essays). They were ecstatic. Many of them never thought they would be able to write an essay like the one they wrote. They did not believe in themselves, but then, they saw how talented writers that they were.*
>
> *Not only were the essays helpful in building students' confidence, it also made students realize how writing can help them learn about themselves. One of my students was writing about basketball and how at first he was terrible. Instead of giving up when everyone made fun of him, he kept practicing and became a good player. When he finished I told him how great of a writer he was and that he should continue since we can learn so many things from it. I asked him if he would have ever thought about why he liked basketball so much if it weren't for the essay. He said "no" so I encouraged him to write more and learn more about himself. I told him he could write and never share it or write it to share. After our conversation he was considering blogging about sports.*
>
> *I have had mostly great moments, but there have also been some frustrating ones. In one of these, I was trying to convince a student why they should stay for their last semester and why drug dealing should not be an option for them to live by. Many teachers and adults hear students talk like this and instead of destroying the ideology that comes with these thoughts, they punish students. Students are not going to realize by themselves why drug dealing in not a good way to make money just by being punished. Instead of ignoring his comments, I wanted to convince him why that's not a good path to take. I began by telling him how I job shadowed my aunt' classroom at NWH when I was in high school and she had a student saying the same things. She was mad about it, but she didn't break apart the ideology that made that student think that it was okay. He graduated, just to be shot in the back of the head assassination style in an alley.*
>
> *When I told the student this his eyes widened. Maybe the story itself hit home but I think it was more relevant considering he was familiar with NWH. I gave him many other reasons why he can't be a drug dealer. I told him he would never be able to buy anything expensive because the IRS would have no proof of income, drug dealing is violent and often leads to death (as it often has in my community) plus he could assume he would have a family one day. He wouldn't want his kids see him dealing drugs. I was not trying to judge him but guide him. The end result was definitely worth the frustration.*
>
> *I've enjoyed this experience and cannot wait to go back next semester to help. My favorite part about this experience is interacting with the students and watching them learn about themselves and how they interact with the world.*

In addition to writing essays for CC, middle school students had their short stories presented to other school students. RITE funded printing a class edition of their work. The stories were then given to the students, the parents, and the school. All writing projects evolved under the leadership of RITE facilitator, Mrs. Cathy O'Brien, who encouraged and found funding for students to attend a summer writing workshop for secondary students at UMSL.

Lessons learned by those helping disadvantaged youth are critical when addressing funding. Money must be secured for community partnerships to begin and be sustained. In RITE's case, E. Desmond Lee donated an endowment to the University of Missouri, St. Louis, which enabled the university to hire some tutors and some staff and establish an office. RITE has written additional grants, administered the funds, provided administration services of payroll, and hired and terminated employees for the institute and for partners who were also awarded grants. The third collaboration has been to contract as a service provider to either the agency or the school district that has the grant. When payment is given to university, they can be hired to assist in the payroll, identifying university employees, and provide academic services. The school district, community agency, and university cannot offer a salary they think the poor university student will accept. Many of the university students work part or full time for companies that pay far more than the minimum wage. Community, university, and school partnerships are in competition with well-paying companies and need to pay accordingly in order to hire the best employees.

6. Community initiatives

No matter how they are initiated, the importance of the individual within the organization should not be ignored. It was Des Lee's vision that resulted in the establishment of RITE and 36 other partnerships among university and community agencies in St Louis. It is the action of UMSL President, Dr. Blanche Touhill, and Vice President Kathy Osborn, who supported Des Lee's vision that continued beyond the establishment of four initial endowed professorships. The first six professorships developed endowments to support two internationally recognized science education professors, one nationally recognized museum studies professor, an art educator, and two urban educators: one for school administrators and one for academic tutoring. Furthermore, it is the willingness of the individuals involved in this community and university collaborative to go beyond their own job descriptions to work with the resources and procedures and other entities. One tutor, P.G., didn't want to be a tutor but needed the money. She wrote the following:

> *I didn't feel comfortable being with high school students. I had always been shy in school. But I found that if I just listened to them, the girls looked forward to seeing me. They started hugging me as they left.*

One of the most important lessons for all community partnerships is to consider the importance of individual stability. University faculty, if tenure track, are expected to meet university and peer expectations in their first 5 years. In many cases, the universities hire nontenured faculty with positions that are renewed yearly. Both conditions cause job insecurity in universities. In community agencies, many of which are not-for-profit, the salaries are not high. Frequently, the positions are not professionally classified resulting in no clear path for upward mobility. Few would knowingly dedicate their future careers in such situations. In public schools, many of the teaching and staff positions are poorly paid. And for many, these low-paying jobs are entry level. Those holding them are expected to leave. Staff turnover is high, particularly in community agencies and urban school districts, resulting in partnership instability, while new staff learn their jobs and the context in which they work. The longer individuals remain as principals, staff, and community members, the more likely the partnerships will be successful. The

nuances of individual relationships are often the bricks upon which stable partnerships are built. Transience in after-school clubs, urban teachers and administrators, and not-for-profit community agencies undermine university, school district, and community agency collaborations.

In order to build stability in university, urban school, and community agency delivery and member management, computers have been adopted as sources of academic content. St. Louis Public School District is no different. In three urban schools, Virtual Academy, a computer-delivered high school credit program, has operated for the past 3 years. High school subjects are available on specially configured computers located in the schools and given to students to take home. The computers are funded through a grant from Sprint, a local telecommunication company. The targeted youth are dropouts, returning students, and those who are unable to come to school because of illness or other difficulties. The home computers only deliver high school content, so they are not of interest to others. In the school locations, RITE provides math and literacy student tutors available for students who drop into the Virtual Academy Centers. The locations are supervised by staff and faculty from the school district. The success of the program is measured by exit tests tied to the common core standards for the content area studied. The data from Virtual Academy is taken from academic credits, grades, and subject mastery tests to demonstrate the success of this program for youth in the three urban school districts served.

Computer courses offered by RITE's university are to start serving after-school programs for the US Department of Education. The first meeting on January 3, 2016, held in Washington, DC, was to assess the needs of after-school program staff throughout the country. The second meeting, May 27, 2017, proposed to develop a network of educational courses and programs to be required for after-school providers who receive funding through the federal government. UMSL was one of the five universities invited to participate. This collaboration could result in utilizing existing distance education courses and programs to increase professional skills of after-school providers. Participants' tuition would be supported by the twenty-first century grants. While this program has not yet begun, it has the potential to nationally link university courses and programs and standardize youth program staff professionalism and salaries.

There is another important lesson for partnership participants. There is no means for individuals to learn how to trust those who are not in their own organization. They have no history with them and do not know of their individual competencies. In the case of the community initiative established in St. Louis, the students were surveyed to learn what they wanted from community members. The largest response was the interest in basketball. Community members could have doubted that in a neighborhood with high crime and truancy, basketball would be the first task for the community, school, and RITE to address. However, the collaborative trusted the students' comments and began to figure a way to find a full basketball court for the students to use, after-school staff to provide supervision and coaching, and transportation for university athletes to conduct clinics. In the process, the university, community, and public school members learn to trust and respect each other's competency. That in itself is a worthwhile lesson learned from a community collaborative.

7. Conclusion

Many lessons have been learned in the last 20 years by the director and staff of the Regional Institute of Tutorial Education. Some of those described are listed below:

- Share a vision of action among all collaborative members.

    Perhaps the vision of having more basketball activities at an urban school is not ideal, but this vision mobilized collaborative members. All youth, organizations, and schools were engaged in the activities.

- Do not assume that other organizations will volunteer their members to help sustain a collaborative.

    Universities are not filled with students who have time on their hands to volunteer in community or public schools. Likewise, volunteers from the community are not waiting to come to a school and perform tasks that teachers do not have the time to do. Volunteers, whether they are teachers or students, cannot be the basis of staffing for any collaborative. They must be paid well enough to commit extra effort and time to the welfare and stability of the partnership.

- Build personal relationships and trust among partner organizations.

    Once trust in the strengths of the participating individuals is recognized, the structure of the partnerships will begin to take shape. As the partners reach beyond their own organizational missions to share resources, they construct a collaborative with unlimited potential for urban youth.

- Funding must be sustainable to continue meaningful academic or social programs for disadvantaged youth.

    Four different funding models were profiled to demonstrate means of economic program stability for youth. In short, professional and collegiate sports teams' missions are not to directly serve and benefit the community. They are revenue-generating operations for both the team owners and the universities. There are athletic directors, multiple coaches, public relations staff, and community outreach people who are all involved in each community and educational action. Calling a sports team will not get a player to sign a baseball for an after-school fund-raiser. Even though these activities are worthwhile for the community, they may not benefit the existing sports partnerships. Grants, endowments, and tuition paying members are means of obtaining sustainable funding for urban programs.

- Provide between 20 and 60 min of tutoring twice a week to get academic growth.

    Attendance and behavioral problems are the most difficult obstacles for programs to overcome in helping students improve their academic skills. Parents need to be involved in the tutoring program and understand it.

- Tutoring must follow a consistent format cemented with positive relationships between the tutor and the youth.

    Academic and social progress can't be expected when tutoring and mentoring is haphazardly implemented by individuals without training or expertise.

- The most important lesson is to think outside each organization to shape multiple partnerships.

A partnership increases the funding and the resources for targeted populations. It does not threaten the prestige, resources, and power of the school district, organization, or university.

The academic and social strength of disadvantaged youth will enhance the future of the urban society. Youth with goals and positive ambitions demonstrate predictable and positive behavior—they attend school and they seek employment experience and practice learning new skills. If urban youth can't see a future where they have the skills necessary to earn a living for themselves and their families and live a quality life, they will be frustrated. Their frustration and related behavior promise a future of protest as a result of their current experiences. Collaborations serving the needs of the disadvantaged through youth-serving agencies and school districts are one answer to preparing youth for a successful adulthood.

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