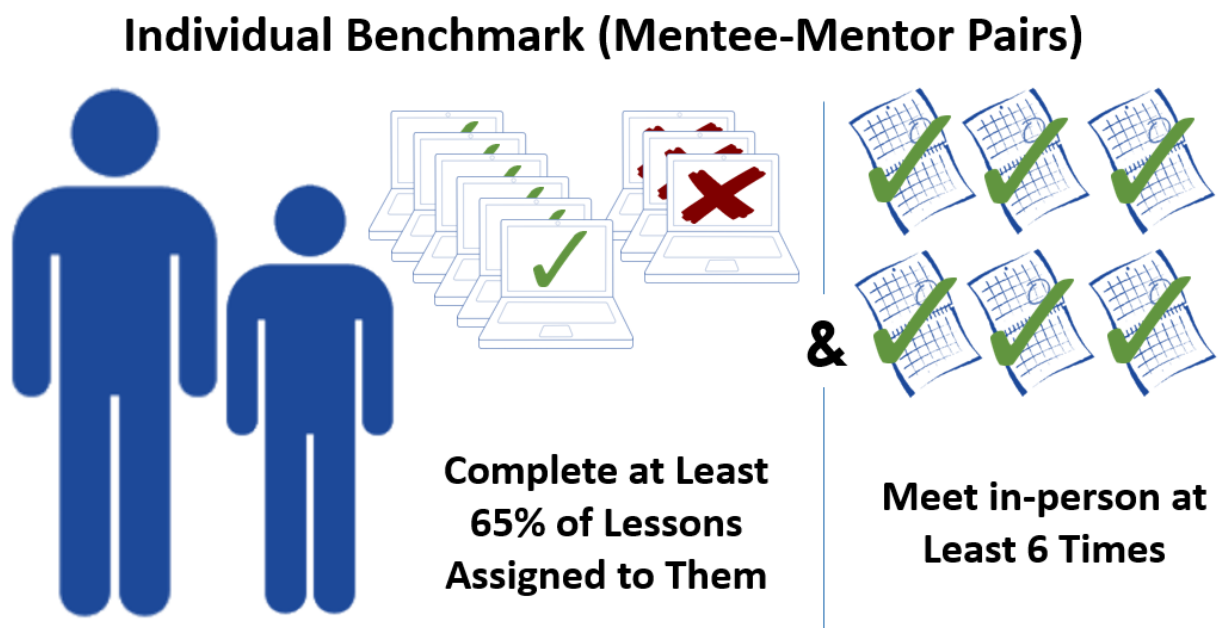


The what, how, and why behind iMentor's engagement benchmarks

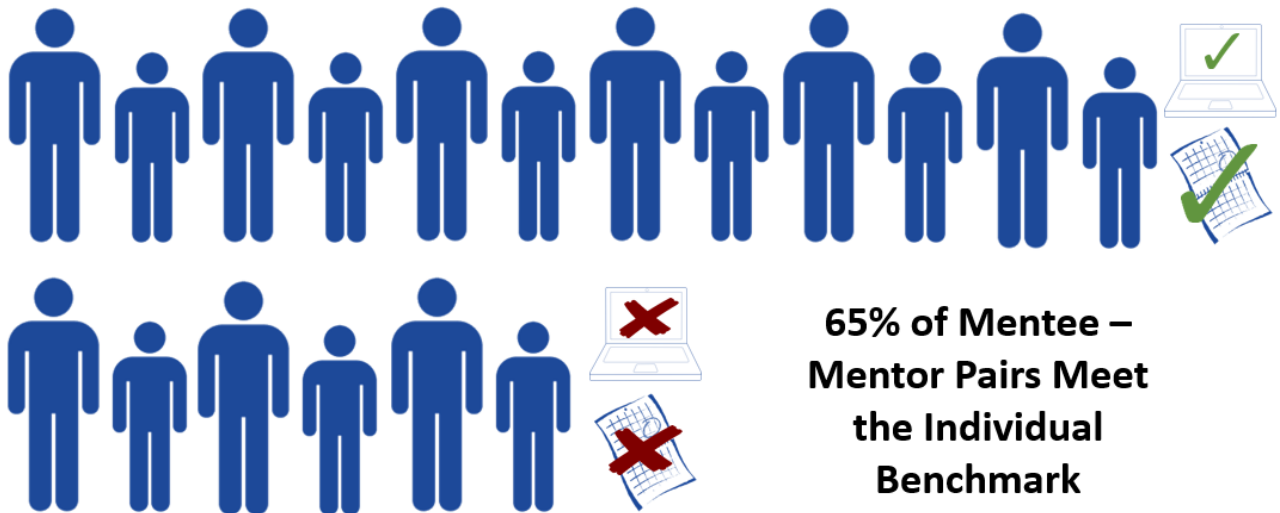
Research has found that relationships characterized by more frequent contact were associated with more positive youth outcomes. Weekly online communication and monthly in-person meetings at iMentor events are a critical component of developing a strong personal relationship and the outcomes iMentor curriculum is designed to address. Benchmarks for engagement with curriculum were initially established to manage toward this consistency. Research conducted by the RE team has shown achievement of these benchmarks to have a significant impact on pair relationship strength. This article describes what the benchmarks for engagement are, how they were set and tested, and a summary of the implications of this work.

Engagement Benchmarks

iMentor's engagement benchmarks are most easily understood in the context of individual (or pair) benchmarks and programmatic (or aggregate) benchmarks to be met by the end of the program year.



Program Benchmark (Groups of Pairs)

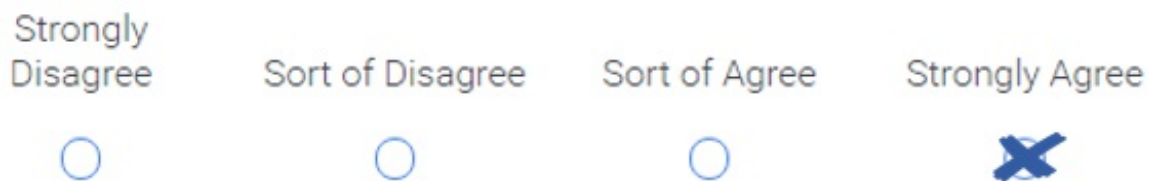


Initially, these benchmarks were an estimation of the amount of engagement necessary to achieve targeted outcomes and served as a tool to manage pairs toward high levels of engagement. The 65% and 6 meeting benchmarks seemed like attainable goals to target each year.

After managing towards these benchmarks, we were able to complete an analysis of both benchmarks during the 2013–2014 and 2014–15 program years, the results of which suggest meeting these benchmarks is – in fact – critical for developing strong personal relationships. Essentially, when compared to pairs who do not meet the engagement benchmarks, pairs who do meet them have stronger relationships.

Strength of Mentoring Relationships

The Strength of Personal Relationships (SPR) scale was created based on valid and reliable instruments that currently exist to assess mentoring relationships in adolescent populations. The scale is comprised of 11 questions, including “I trust my mentor” and “I am open and honest with my mentor.” Mentees to each question by selecting from the following options:

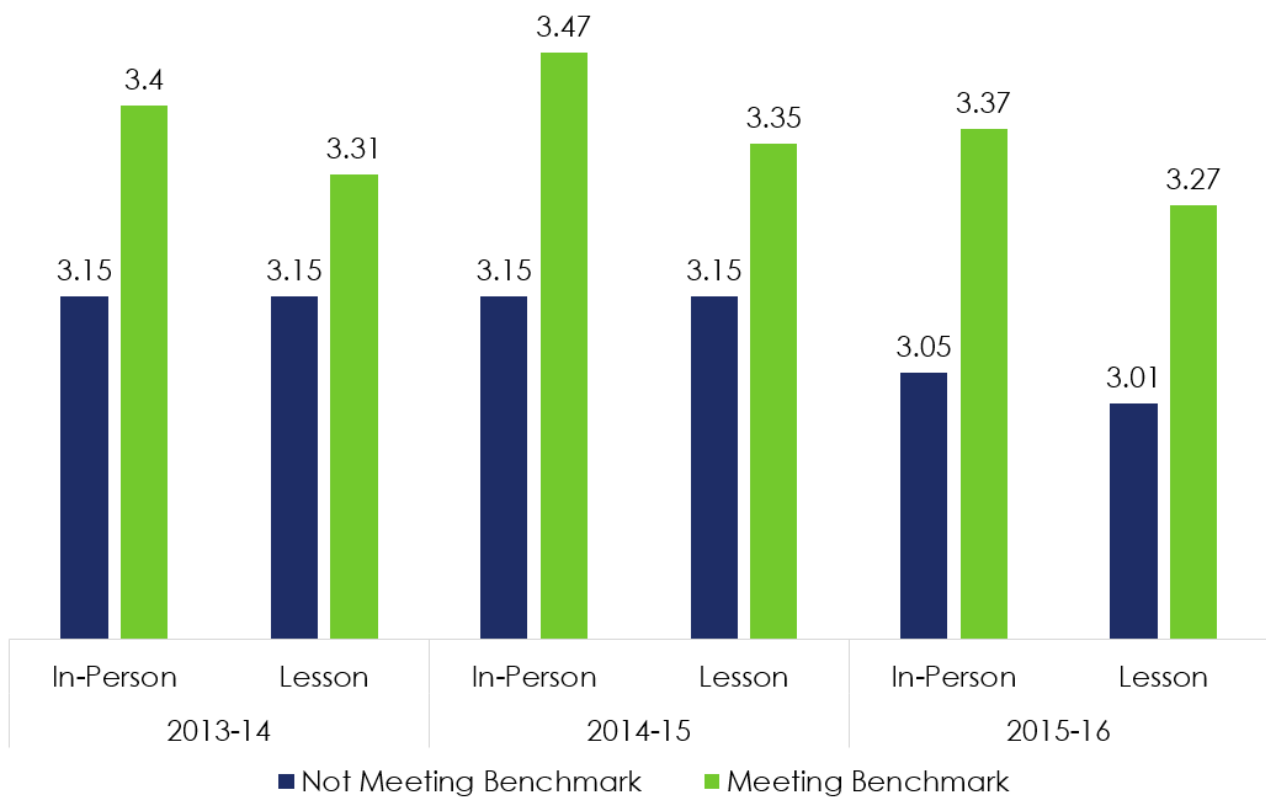


Each mentee’s responses to SPR questions are assigned numerical values (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree) and are then averaged for an SPR score. Click [here](http://partners.imentor.org/help/how-imentor-measures-strong-personal-relationships) (partners.imentor.org/help/how-imentor-measures-strong-personal-relationships) to learn more about the SPR scale.

Engagement Benchmarks and Average SPR

The following graphs depict the SPR difference between pairs who are meeting and not meeting both the lesson and in-person benchmarks. As you can see, mentees in pairs that are meeting both engagement benchmarks score higher than pairs not meeting benchmarks. The differences between the meeting and not meeting benchmark groups are both statistically significant, meaning that the difference is real and not due to chance.

Strong Personal Relationships and Program Engagement Benchmarks



What Does It All Mean?

The knowledge that meeting or not meeting engagement benchmarks has an impact on the strength of a pair's relationship is incredibly powerful.

1. It provides staff supporting pairs with a clear engagement goal to work toward with their pairs in an effort to foster stronger relationships.
2. Furthermore, because engagement data is collected and aggregated in real time, staff has the ability to work toward closing the gap between a pair's current level of engagement and the respective benchmark to set them up for a higher likelihood of having a strong relationship.

3. Additionally, staff reporting engagement levels to external stakeholders can use the programmatic performance against benchmarks to contextualize progress toward creating strong and beneficial relationships.
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