



Marion County **Mentoring Project**



MENTORING HANDBOOK

VISION STATEMENT

Lifting our future together by helping students succeed through offering support, advice, guidance, friendship, affirmation, validation, reinforcement, and positive examples.

PROCEDURES

The school has rules to ensure compliance with a myriad of federal, state and local laws and regulations and school board policy. The rules also are designed to protect and enhance the safety and well being of all individuals on the school campus. Follow the school rules at all times, no matter what your personal feelings may be.

Meeting with students

1. All meetings and/or activities with students MUST take place on the school campus or as part of a school-sponsored activity.
2. All activities with a student or students must take place in a room with an open door or on the school grounds in sight of school staff representatives.
3. Off campus contact is strictly prohibited unless it is under the direct supervision of school officials or with the student's parent(s).
4. NEVER give a student your home phone number.
5. Each time you visit the school, check in with the school's administration office. In addition, please sign in on the Mentoring Sign-in Sheet and wear your mentor identification badge. While on school property, ALWAYS wear your identification badge so that it is clearly visible.

Transportation

Transporting a student in your personal car is strictly prohibited. Students must be transported in a school district bus (activities), in a school official's vehicle or in a parent or legal guardian's vehicle. Do not put yourself in the position of being alone with any student(s) in any vehicle.

Physical Contact

Many of the children we work with have a strong need and desire for positive physical contact with caring adults. You are encouraged to be a positive role model. However, we suggest that physical contact be discouraged. Remember that what you see as simply, friendly affection between the student and yourself, may be viewed as something entirely different by someone else.

Confidentiality

All information you are told about your student is confidential and sharing that information with others may be a violation of the law and result in termination of the mentor-child relationship. Do not allow yourself to make a promise to a student that you will keep confidential information secret. Tell the student that they are free to share confidential information with you; however, there are certain things that you are required by law to tell the principal. There are exceptions to this requirement of confidentiality, and it is critical, not

only for the welfare of the student, but also to protect yourself from violating the law, that you adhere to these exceptions.

1. If a student confides that he or she is the victim of sexual, emotional or physical abuse you **MUST** notify the student's principal or counselor immediately! In Missouri, you may also be required to notify the appropriate agency and may be subject to criminal prosecution if you do not.

Document when this information was reported and to whom it was given. Remember, this information is extremely personal and capable of damaging lives, so **DO NOT** share with anyone except the appropriate authorities. This includes your best friend.

2. If a student tells you of their involvement in any illegal activity, you must notify a school representative as soon as possible. Document when this information was reported and to whom it was given.

The teacher might share with you some of the child's difficulties, but please

REMEMBER

Children and their specific problems should not be discussed outside of school.

WHAT IS MENTORING?

The most crucial role of a mentor is to be an adult who has time for a child, who cares about that child, and who believes in that child. This relationship may provide the only stability a student knows, and the only quality time an adult shares with the child.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines a mentor as a "person looked upon for wise advice and guidance. A mentor has the ability to empower another person." A mentor says, "I am here for you." A mentor is an advocate for the child.

Mentoring is a developing relationship in which an adult provides a student, ongoing support and guidance for their academic and personal growth. The goal of mentoring is to provide the confidence the child needs to be successful in school and in life. In addition, mentoring can help a student achieve the basic skills of reading, writing and math.

A mentor is a positive, caring adult who spends quality time with a child, in order to make a change in the child's life. The mentor must first gain the trust of the child and foster mutual respect. A mentor can become someone who can offer support which the child may not get from other adults. Mentors help young people develop their potential and shape their lives for positive results.

A one-to-one relationship with a mentor can help a young person face challenges such as poor decision making skills, poor academic performance, lack of academic goals, few academic successes, poor work habits and the lack of basic skills. These improvements have been observed by teachers and are often reflected in their year-end evaluation.

A mentor can be any of the following:

- Friend
- Guide
- Encourager
- Coach
- Advocate
- Self-esteem booster
- Sounding Board
- Listener

Being a role model, the true mentor does not ask the student to "be like me." A mentor says, "I will help you be who you want to be, not necessarily become like me". There is no expectation that a mentor will take on the role of parent, professional counselor or social worker. The traits of listening, caring, nurturing and supporting are the most important part of the mentor's role.

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS ABOUT MENTORING

Adapted from the Keeping Kids in School, Norwalk Mentor Program, Norwalk, CT

- Q. What is a mentor?
A. A mentor is a caring adult who provides a student ongoing support and guidance for their academic and personal growth. The mentor's role is nurturer, friend, coach and positive role model. He or she is there to say, "You can make it and I will support you."
- Q. What is my role as a mentor?
A. The primary role of all mentors is establishing a positive, caring relationship with the students. Mentors are helping students to build self-esteem, making the student independent and able to feel "lovable and capable." You can read and write with your student, practice math, talk a lot, play games or other activities. You serve as a listener and a friend.
- Q. How should my student address me?
A. To show respect, formal names are recommended. If this makes you uncomfortable, they can call you by your first name.
- Q. How are students selected for this program?
A. Teachers and counselors recommend students who would benefit from having a caring adult provide them with extra attention. Children who need academic help or need to improve their social skills are candidates for mentor and tutor programs. Also, a list of numerous factors that could be related to poor academic performance is considered in choosing a child for the program.
- Q. What are the students told when they enter the program?
A. The teacher and/or the counselor will meet with each student individually, explaining that a special person will be working with him or her and ask if the child likes the idea. After the first year, students who do not have mentors will often ask, "When can I get a mentor?"
- Q. Shouldn't mentoring be easy for me? I have experience with children.
A. Do not treat your student like your own child. He/she most likely has a parent or two of his/her own, and you are not there to replace them. You are there to provide some support that those parents may not be able to give.

- Q. I would like to know more about my student's background. How do I do this?
A. The school district prohibits releasing information concerning a child unless the mentor and the parent co-sign a parental Student Information Release Form. During the first meeting the counselor and/or teacher will provide student background relevant to the mentor. Two-way communication between the mentor and the teacher and/or counselor is essential in a meaningful relationship.
- Q. Is student information confidential?
A. Yes. All information about your student's personal history is confidential. Please respect your student's privacy. Do not betray his/her trust.
- Q. What if my student will not talk to me?
A. Give it time. In all likelihood, no adult has given this child undivided attention before and the student is overwhelmed. Over time, trust will develop and your student will open up.
- Q. What if I can't answer the student's question?
A. Do exactly what you would do with anyone else - look it up, find an expert, admit your ignorance.
- Q. What shouldn't I do with my student?
A. Do not push too hard at the start. Let a relationship develop based on trust. Do not expect dramatic changes overnight. Do not assume the role of parent or teacher. Relax - be yourself.
- Q. Can I give gifts to my student?
A. Permission should be requested from the school counselor before gifts or treats are given. There will be times when the Mentor program will do things with the students.
- Q. What do I do if my student moves to a different school?
A. Your main interest should be your student and not the school where you began the program. If the child moves, move with him or her if possible.
- Q. What if I have to terminate the relationship?
A. Terminating a relationship is an important, but often difficult task. First discuss your decision with the counselor. If you decide to stop meeting, set a specific date for your last time together, be honest and candid and talk about the reasons for ending the relationship. Talk about thoughts and feelings, be supportive, positive, talk to the coordinator about a possible replacement and do not make promises you may not be able to keep.
- Q. What should the relationship be among mentors, teacher and program coordinator?
A. In order for the mentoring experience to work, it is critical that all parties keep the lines of communication open. Teachers can provide vital input to mentors to help them in working with the students. The teacher does not have the time he or she would like to have to talk each mentoring session. Therefore, you will need to contact the teacher through personal meetings, notes or phones calls to discuss your student and your mentoring sessions. Work with the teacher and the counselor to decide the best ways to keep each other informed.
- Q. What do parents know about this program?
A. Initially, the parents meet with the counselor and are told about the program and what the benefits will be for their child. Parents and mentors have one thing in common - the desire for the child to succeed. Parents have signed a release and have been told who is working with their child.

Q. How will it be determined which child will get a mentor?

A. There may be more students who could benefit from a mentor than available mentors. Therefore, teachers who complete and return referral forms to counselors first, will get priority. Any teacher, counselor or parent is eligible to request a mentor. Student placement also depends on the mentor's availability and desired location of service.

Q. How much time does training take?

A. There is an initial orientation and other training sessions to instruct you about the children with whom you will be mentoring and offer you strategies and techniques to make it a worthwhile experience. There may be follow-up training sessions to share experiences and ask questions or simply meet other mentors.

Q. I travel a lot. Can I still be involved in the program?

A. Schools are flexible. Students are flexible. These students often do not have reliable and consistent adults in their lives. If you have to be gone, be sure to tell the student and to let the school know. When you return it provides an opportunity for the child to trust an adult. They wait eagerly for your arrival each week. Please do not disappoint them or simply stop going without communicating with the school or the Mentor Coordinator.

Q. Do I need to provide activities to do with the student?

A. Although the school may offer things to work on with the student, you have the prerogative to provide individual activities that are educational and/or interesting to them. Many troubled students dislike classroom-associated activities which may jeopardize your efforts to establish and maintain your student's rapport and trust.

Q. What about liability?

A. The school has insurance to cover volunteers that are responsible and are at school or on a school sponsored trip. Contact the office or other personnel if an injury occurs to you or the student. Be sure that you behave responsibly and professionally.

Q. Should I be involved in recruiting additional mentors for the program?

A. Absolutely!! Talk it up. If you enjoy being a mentor, tell your family, friends, co-workers and neighbors about it. Word of mouth is the best way to advertise a good thing. Your enthusiasm will be infectious and there are many children who would benefit from having a mentor.

MENTORING TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

A mentor works with a team of adults to support the needs of students selected to be part of the mentoring program. The following list highlights expected roles, responsibilities and interactions between members of the Mentoring Team.

Guidance Counselors

- Characterize qualifications with teachers to evaluate student candidates for mentoring
- Work with teachers to identify a list of students who are good mentoring program candidates
- Work with the program coordinator to facilitate good mentor matches with identified student candidates
- Initiate and coordinate specific mentoring arrangements with parents, teachers and mentors
- Communicate child-specific information to mentors to define individual issues, needs and goals
- Coordinate signatures for parent permission forms needed to share student information with mentors
- Maintain communications with parents, teachers and mentors as needed for student follow-up
- Coordinate with parents, teachers and mentors to review student status at school meetings/activities
- Submit a copy of parent permission form to FACT once agreement and the match has been made.

Teachers

- Characterize qualifications with counselors to evaluate student candidates for mentoring
- Work with guidance counselors to identify mentoring candidates
- Review student needs and teacher expectations with new mentors before mentoring sessions start
- Communicate with the mentor, counselor, and/or parent as needed to support ongoing student efforts and needs

Mentors

- Meet with guidance counselors as needed to help them select good mentor-student matches
- Meet with teachers and students before committing to weekly mentoring schedules
- Become familiar with school regulations and expectations for mentors
- Develop individualized activities in quiet locations when working with their student
- Develop a trusting relationship to hear, discuss and understand their student's needs
- Communicate with the counselor, teacher and/or parent as required to support their student's efforts and needs

Program Coordinator

- Develop and give presentations to local organizations for recruiting potential mentors-FACT
- Initiate and document background checks for mentoring candidates-Admin.
- Ensure volunteers receive program training manual before they agree to mentor an assigned student-Counselor/FACT
- Maintain a database of approved and active mentors available for assignment-Admin.
- Work with counselors to provide mentors for their student candidates-FACT
- Communicate with counselors and mentors as needed to provide ongoing support and guidance-FACT
- Coordinate annual meeting with mentors and counselors to review program performance for evaluation and strategizing.
- When a mentor stops weekly visits, the coordinator will contact the mentor to determine the cause and to work toward retention and/or exit procedures.

Parents

- Approve mentoring permission forms presented by counselors
- Interact with the school during the year to discuss their child's progress or other issues
- Keep the counselor aware of family situation changes that may affect their student's performance
- Meet with counselor and mentor at least at the beginning and end of the school year for feedback

Students

- Focus on interacting with the mentor during limited session times to minimize distractions
- Develop open communications with mentors (ie. likes/dislikes, home/school situations, problems, friends, etc)

Principals

- Stay abreast of student progress and/or problems by talking to Mentoring Team members
- Provide a mechanism to communicate and address concerns raised by individual team members
- Set a positive school environment by public reinforcement of mentor-student efforts
- Recognize mentors in the halls and thank them for their service

WHAT DO MENTORS DO?

ENRICH the learning environment:

- Dramatize stories (storytelling)
- Share experiences of your life
- Provide different activities from the regular classroom
- Give children a variety of activity choices

EXPAND the resources of the school:

- Add another positive adult in their life
- Explore educational or career opportunities
- Share travel experience
- Display special collections or talents
- Share experiences of interest to you

ENLIST the community as a partner with the school:

- Provide a two-way bridge between the school and the community
- Stimulate greater community understanding and support of the school programs and needs
- Enable citizens and taxpayers to know the school's problems and successes
- Utilize community members in teaching our children

QUALITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL MENTOR

- Dependable and committed.
- Able to listen actively.
- Exhibits patience.
- Realizes that change takes time and celebrates the small accomplishments.
- Always finds something positive to praise.
- Develops a positive relationship with the student.
- Positive role model.
- Non-judgmental.
- Understands the goal of the mentor/student relationship.
- Reinforces student's successes.

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

A mentor often wonders if the program is successful. “Am I making a difference?” Below are some signs that the mentor might see if the program is being successful.

- Improved academic performance.
- The child opens up and communicates freely with the mentor.
- Improved attendance.
- Improved eye contact.
- Paying more attention and raising hand in class.
- Acting more enthusiastic.
- Increased communication.
- Taking more risks in class and with others.
- Improved interactions with peers and teachers.
- Appearing to like school better.
- Smiling and decreased hostility.

PHRASES OF SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT:

What a good idea!	Good thinking!	Thanks!
Good answer!	Excellent response!	Good Work!
Very good!	Way to go!	Nice work!
Terrific!	Much better!	Way to go!
Marvelous!	Great improvement!	Super!
Fantastic!	I appreciate you!	Keep it up!

LISTENING RECIPE

1. Do not be judgmental. Concentrate on the message and not on the person.
2. Do not be insincere in your listening. If your attention is fake, the child will know it.
3. Listen for ideas and not just facts. Look for the big meaning in what is said.
4. Avoid communication killers. Analyze your responses and be sure to avoid any actions or words that will cut off communications.
5. Put what you are hearing into words. After you have listened closely, try to put what the other person is saying and feeling into words and see how they react.
6. Get agreement. Communication involves knowing when and how to listen as well as using words.

PROPER PRAISING RECIPE

1. Be immediate. Catch them doing something right, right now.
2. Be sincere. If you cannot be sincere, say nothing.
3. Be specific. Concentrate on specifically what was done, not generalities.
4. Show the benefit. How does this effort help the student?
5. State your own reaction. People want to know how you really feel.
6. Ask if you can help. Offer your assistance. Do not order it!

ASSET-BUILDING IDEAS FOR MENTORS

While asset building is likely to happen naturally when a mentoring relationship develops, there are some things you can do to ensure that your mentoring relationship is an asset-building one:

- Remember that the focus of mentoring is on forming a relationship and being a positive adult role model. What you do matters less than the fact that you are spending time together and providing the person you mentor with support and care.
- Show your student that he or she is a priority by getting together on a regular basis as coordinated with the school counselor.
- Let your student know that you care about things that are important to her or him. For example, if your student has a special friend or pet, ask regularly about how he or she is doing.
- Be flexible. If your student has ideas about things to do or ways to do them, let them take the lead. You don't need a careful plan to build assets, just the willingness to try.
- Get to know your student's interests and hobbies.
- Talk about and model your personal values. Encourage your student to think about the values that are important to her or him and how those values impact behavior and decisions.
- Emphasize the importance of a lifelong commitment to learning. Read to them, read together. Help your student with class/homework.
- Talk about some of your hopes and plans for the future and ask about your student's vision of the future. Share ideas with each other about how you can make your respective dreams come true. If it seems like your dreams can't or won't come true, work together to come up with ways to deal with barriers. Focus on building H-O-P-E.
- Enjoy your time together and have fun!!!!

Excerpted from "Speaking of Developmental Assets: Presentation Resources and Strategies, *copyright 2001 by Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN, 800-888-7828, www.search-institute.org.*

Interaction Ideas with Asset Building:

1. **ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE** to evaluate friends and heroes in terms of their positive or negative influence. Help children find/identify inspirational, positive role models.
2. **WHEN YOUNG CHILDREN** are excited about something, share their excitement.
3. **SHARE CULTURAL CUSTOMS** and rituals from your own background.
4. **WHEN A YOUNG PERSON** comes to you with a conflict, don't do problem solving yourself. Encourage the student to develop solutions. (For example - simple conflicts with other students, etc.)
5. **TALK WITH A YOUNG PERSON** about the new things you are learning, and ask them to tell you about what they are learning. Always speak positively when talking about education. Don't reinforce negative attitudes by asking questions such as "Won't you be glad when school is out?"
6. **SEND AN ELEMENTARY AGE CHILD** a letter or news clipping on a subject that interests her or him
7. **INTERACT WITH CHILDREN** in loving, respectful and caring ways; even if you are feeling angry or frustrated.
8. **INVITE AN ELEMENTARY-AGE CHILD** to make a "time capsule" about their expectations for the future. Suggest that the child put it somewhere safe and look at the contents a few years later. Suggest that they record their lives through written and visual autobiographies.