



Mentoring Handbook

“A real friendship has blossomed. We could not have asked for a better, more genuine mentor.”

Parent, Vermont



PART I – INTRODUCTION

COLLEGE FOR EVERY STUDENT 3
 OVERVIEW OF MENTORING PROGRAM 3
 WHAT IS A MENTOR? 4
 IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING..... 4
 MEASURABLE GAINS THROUGH MENTORING 4

PART II – DYNAMIC PROGRAMS

FIRST STEPS: GETTING STARTED..... 5
 DOVETAIL CFES PRACTICES 5
 INVENTORY ASSETS 6
 ROADBLOCKS 6
 BACKGROUND CHECKS 6
 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES..... 6
 RECRUITING AND RETAINING MENTORS 7

TYPES OF MENTORING PROGRAMS7-8
 COLLEGE MENTORS, ePALS, COMMUNITY, PEER

COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS/EARLY AWARENESS 9

THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP..... 10
 PHASES AND STAGES, OVERCOMING BARRIERS

GUIDELINES FOR MENTORING 11-12
 TRAINING, CONSISTENCY, COMMUNICATION,
 CONFIDENTIALITY, MANDATORY REPORTING

MEASURING OUTCOMES/EVALUATION 13

PART III – REVISITING AND REFINING

STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS THROUGH
 COMMUNICATION AND NETWORKING 14

PART I / INTRODUCTION

COLLEGE FOR EVERY STUDENT

College For Every Student (CFES) is a nonprofit organization committed to raising the academic achievement and aspirations of underserved youth so that they can prepare for, gain access to, and succeed in college. Because helping students at CFES schools matriculate and persist in higher education is the primary aim of CFES, partnerships with colleges are a crucial dimension of the CFES approach.



Since its founding, CFES has helped 100,000 underserved youth in 350 schools nationwide reach higher academically and personally. Currently CFES programs involve 120 public schools and districts in high-need communities partnering with more than 170 colleges across the country. The essence of CFES is the engagement of each targeted student in three high-impact practices that have proved effective in raising aspirations and student performance in CFES schools nationwide: mentoring, pathways to college, and leadership through service.

OVERVIEW OF MENTORING PROGRAM

Mentoring is the cornerstone of the CFES philosophy. As CFES schools across the nation build and strengthen mentoring programs, they are encouraging students to take the next step in their education: the student at risk of not graduating is encouraged to finish high school; the student likely to graduate from high school is encouraged to pursue college or post-secondary education.

No two schools have identical mentoring programs. Each CFES team designs a program to fit the unique needs of its students.

Mentoring programs utilize various types of mentors—college students, peers, community members, business people—in various types of configurations, from one-to-one to group mentoring. In all cases, CFES encourages students to set goals and develop strategies to achieve them. Mentoring, in concert with the other core practices, can play a big part in the achievement of goals. CFES teams at schools across the nation assure that mentoring, as well as the other two practices, touches every CFES student. Exposed to experiences that expand horizons and a sense of purpose, CFES has found that young people—regardless of the obstacles they face—are ready to take “one more step” toward a high school diploma and college matriculation.

The CFES mentoring initiative has grown in size, scope, and recognition over the past eight years as the organization serves an ever-increasing cohort of students. A growing support network of state and national organizations enhances CFES's ability to provide a range of educational opportunities for students. These collaboratives, combined with the support provided by participating schools and colleges, are essential for long-term sustainability.

WHAT IS A MENTOR?

A mentor is a special person who serves as a positive role model for a younger person, providing friendship, advice, and support. Good mentors are responsible, trustworthy, caring individuals who call upon their own life experiences to provide guidance for mentees. In Greek mythology, Mentor was Odysseus's trusted guide and friend. While Odysseus was off at war, his son was placed in Mentor's care to be educated in all facets of life.

IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING

Both mentors and mentees benefit from the mentoring relationship: older students and adults learn about their capacity for leadership by making a connection with children and helping them set goals and reach higher academically and personally. For mentees, a mentor is a sounding board, confidant, and trusted advisor. "Some of our students don't have adult role models," said one Craftsbury (VT) teacher. "The mentors provide a needed friend to these students."

A mentor can significantly improve their mentee's quality of life. Mentoring is an exciting, worthwhile opportunity to help a student realize their full potential and achieve things they may not have believed possible.

Over the past eight years, CFES mentoring programs have changed the lives of more than 20,000 students with college potential. Initially, these are the students who may not graduate from high school or who do not plan to pursue post-secondary education or training. By providing support, strategies, and a positive role model, mentors help students take that "one more step."

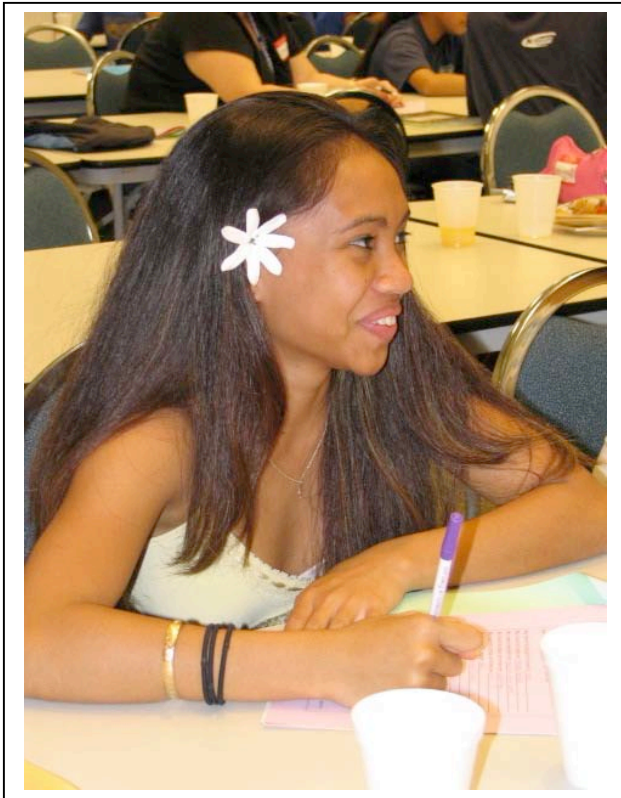
MEASURABLE GAINS THROUGH MENTORING

Students who have mentors make significant academic and social gains. Research confirms that more than 98 percent of students involved in CFES mentoring programs take measurable steps forward. These gains include: improved attendance, better behavior, stronger academic performance, increased motivation, greater self-esteem, successful completion of coursework, and improved relationships with peers and adults. Specific areas of growth vary from student to student, however, the end result is the same: more students graduating from high school and more pursuing college or other post-secondary education or training. The bottom line: When a mentor shows interest, the mentee performs.

PART II / DYNAMIC PROGRAMS

FIRST STEPS: GETTING STARTED

Dynamic mentoring programs take time to create, but they are worth the investment. A well-planned, structured program that fits an individual school will have significant impact on students, programs, and school culture. Begin planning now; in most cases, the earlier a program is launched, the better. Procrastination keeps brilliant ideas from becoming impressive results.



DOVETAIL CFES PRACTICES

As part of the CFES process, each school designs a strategic plan tailored to its particular needs. This plan incorporates the three core practices: mentoring, pathways to college, and leadership through service. As part of the school improvement process, each CFES school designs a strategic plan tailored to its particular needs that incorporates the three core practices. *(Please refer to www.collegefes.org or your training workshop notebook for a description of these practices).*

High-impact mentoring programs often wrap in the other practices. For example, mentors help mentees identify and work toward short- and long-term goals, reinforcing the focus on higher education. College student mentors host mentees (and their parents and other family members) on campus for shadowing experiences, admissions/financial aid workshops, sporting events, or other “pathways to college” activities designed to raise awareness of higher education and how to access it. Mentors and mentees work together to organize and complete community service projects.

Consider your school’s current CFES goals and ask, “How can mentoring help us reach our goals?” Indeed, mentoring can be a driving force behind goal attainment.

INVENTORY ASSETS

It is time to list the school's assets by doing a "backyard" inventory. This is where the fun begins and the school's unique assets are illuminated.

A backyard inventory is created by brainstorming the linkages your school has with the community, colleges (both local and distant), local businesses, church groups, senior centers, and other CFES schools. Look beyond the obvious; there is more in the backyard than first appears. Other assets that can leverage support for mentoring include a community events, public transportation, exchange programs, and community gardens.

The list of assets grows and changes as the work progresses. Keep asking, "What are our team strengths? What are our college partner's strengths? What can we tap into?" These assets can even include something as simple as geographic location.



ROADBLOCKS

Roadblocks are barriers that, given the opportunity, prevent a program from moving forward. They can be real or perceived. The trick is to work around them, with them, or view them in a different way.

A roadblock can be as simple as spending time lamenting why other schools have an easier time implementing their program (because of location, money, or other factors) instead of focusing on one's own assets. Identifying a roadblock is the first step toward addressing it. Successful mentoring programs are backed by teams that see the glass as "half full" rather than "half empty."

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Laws and guidelines for background checks vary by state. Local school boards create school policies, and ultimately it is the school and the school board who bear the responsibility for the individuals who enter the building and under what circumstances. It is critical to involve school administration early in the planning process.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A *school-based mentoring coordinator* is a CFES team member who oversees the school's mentoring program. This person communicates and plans with head mentors, school staff, and the CFES mentoring director.

Mentors work with younger students, serving as positive role models to help

raise aspirations and ultimately enable each student to reach his/her full potential. A mentor can be any age.

Mentees are traditionally seen as the recipients, or the beneficiaries, of mentoring. However, the mentee is also subtly mentoring in return.

The *CFES director of mentoring* serves as a resource to schools leading leads mentor trainings and assisting CFES teams in designing and refining their mentoring programs.

Head mentors are college students who serve as liaisons between the school and the college students. They manage the mentoring schedule, recruit mentors, organize mentor trainings, and facilitate smooth communication between the school and the college student mentors. Head mentors send reminders to college students, pass along school closing information, and share upcoming special events.

The fulfillment,
the sense of achievement,
and the knowledge that
you can make a difference are key.

—A Middlebury College Mentor

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MENTORS

Mentors are attracted to mentoring because it offers a chance to become involved and to have a positive impact on students and learning. Mentors want to be part of a solution and will commit extra energy to a mentoring program that

generates enthusiasm, excitement, and action—where it is fun to volunteer.

Mentors return to schools week after week because of dynamic relationships: the bonds that develop with their mentees, their mentees' teacher, and the school-based mentor coordinator. Mentors who are asked to sit and watch a class have little interaction with students and feel no compelling reason to return. On the other hand, mentors who connect directly with students, whose efforts are appreciated, whom school staff befriend, and who receive regular school communications are the most dedicated and reliable.

When schools are open to scheduling mentors throughout the day, more mentors can fit mentoring around their busy schedules.

TYPES OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

Types of mentoring programs will vary depending on a school's assets and needs. Most mentoring programs will combine several different types of mentoring: one-to-one, small-group, ePals, and/or event-based, group mentoring. The degree to which each type is used is directly linked a school's assets and needs.

In *one-to-one mentoring*, the school identifies students who would benefit from mentoring, then matches each student with a mentor. Both mentee and mentor commit to a regular schedule of meetings over an extended period of time. Weekly meetings are preferable, but the frequency of get-togethers depends on mentor and

mentee schedules, as well as the proximity of the school to its partnering college or other source of mentors. Children with the greatest need benefit from being paired with the most reliable mentors.

The advantages of this model are many. Frequent meetings over an extended period of time enhance bonding and ensure individualized attention to a mentee's particular needs. Mentor and mentee get to know each other and can adapt their relationship to fit each other's personality and expectations.

ePal mentoring offers many program options including individualized mentoring (and tutoring) by email, real-time conversations between mentor and mentees via chat rooms or Web boards, and directed email activities (e.g., sending academic papers to college students to critique).

An invaluable tool for schools that are geographically distant from their partnering college(s) or closest community center, this model increases the frequency of interactions, while also allowing for greater flexibility in scheduling mentor-mentee get-togethers. A major drawback to cyber-mentoring is often the lack of adequate technology on one or both sides of the mentoring relationship. School board policy in some locations may prevent this type of mentoring.

Group mentoring features one mentor working with several mentees at the same time. This can be an effective way to reach a large number of students with fewer mentors. In this model, a mentor comes to the school on a regular basis and works with the same group of students on specific activities or goals. Group mentoring encourages students to create stronger peer connections within the group; however, this model offers less personal, one-to-one interaction and may not meet an individual student's needs.

Another potential drawback of group mentoring is lack of time to build deep personal relationships. On the other hand, this model focuses mentoring activities on a specific type of experience or skill. A group activity can be mentors and mentees participating in a community beautification project, launching a special-interest or gender specific club, crating a bulletin board about area colleges.

As school communities are increasingly concerned about safety and liability issues, the best way to maintain a safe, supervised, and productive mentoring relationship is to conduct it during the school day on school grounds. Within these parameters, a professional faculty or staff member is always available for backup, consultation, and/or supervision.



COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS AND EARLY AWARENESS

CFES encourages school-college partnerships by providing opportunities for the two institutions to work together. CFES invites college representatives to workshops, liaison meetings, and the annual National Conference. College Connect (formerly the Consortium for Educational Excellence through Partnerships, or CEEP) holds an Annual Meeting to which CFES schools and colleges are invited. College Connect is a CFES affiliate that develops and strengthens college partnerships. With a membership of more than 100 colleges, the College Connect Annual Meeting offers informative workshops and panels, as well as an opportunity for schools and colleges to create collaborative mini-grant proposals. College Connect mini-grants provide seed money to support CFES schools' work with colleges that ultimately strengthens articulation and alignment across the K-16 continuum.

No two school-college partnerships are exactly alike; partnerships vary from school to school and college to college. Some relationships are formal with ongoing, regular contact, while others are less formal and may use the partnership to plan a one-time event. Either way, college involvement encourages CFES students to take steps now to fulfill future goals and dreams. This is achieved through early awareness activities such as financial aid informational sessions, college days, and college mentoring programs.

Early exposure to college, in a developmentally appropriate manner, gives students a window on the world of higher education, raising awareness and aspirations and helping to ensure that they attain the dream of college.



THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

A mentor is a special person in the life of a younger student, someone who is there to support and guide the mentee. Because for many students this is an entirely new experience, the mentor-mentee relationship takes time to develop.

PHASES AND STAGES

Mentoring relationships evolve through phases and stages.

In the beginning, building the trust that makes the mentoring relationship successful requires time and patience. Students who most need mentors are often those with whom it is hardest to build trust. Mentees can be slow to show how much the mentor means to them. Mentors who initially perceive a lack of trust should check with the teacher; they often learn that mentoring time is the highlight of the mentee's week and that the mentee is showing signs of growth! Consistency, timeliness, and follow-through build trust and take the relationship to the next level.

Once a relationship has formed, the mentor and mentee see each other as friends; they are committed to the relationship, making plans together and setting goals. They may work on special projects or school assignments. This is a very productive period.

A time will come when goals are achieved, when the mentee is thinking more independently and begins to take healthy risks. The mentor becomes more of a sounding board or advisor than a motivator. During this time, the mentee develops more independence.

The relationship often terminates at graduation or at the end of the school year. Plan it well in advance and discuss it openly. It can be presented as a time of growth and happiness rather than one of sadness. A year-end mentor-mentee celebration is a perfect way to show appreciation, celebrate achievement, and bring closure.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

When obstacles appear in the relationship or things are not going as well as planned, now is the time to take action. Mentors should check in with the school-based mentoring coordinator and share concerns immediately, as this person is in the best position to listen and offer suggestions. Sometimes what appears to be a major problem for a mentor might just be a mentee's concern over an upcoming test or vacation. Ongoing, clear, and open communication paves the way for successful relationships.

GUIDELINES FOR MENTORING

Through work with mentors and schools, CFES has developed some guidelines for both the mentors and the school.

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

CFES recommends that each mentoring program conduct an introductory training workshop to provide clear guidelines, expectations, and responsibilities for mentors. Workshops may cover suggested activities, restrictions, and liability issues, as well as school requirements for background checks, transportation, and other information specific to the school and the program.

At the start of the program, mentors should be given the following:

- ✓ Directions to the school
- ✓ School tour
- ✓ School check-in procedure
- ✓ School handbook
- ✓ School fingerprinting policy
- ✓ School calendar
- ✓ Policies and procedures about visiting the school
- ✓ Schedule of days and times to mentor
- ✓ Name of mentee and where to meet
- ✓ Location of necessary supplies
- ✓ Name and contact information for the school-based mentoring coordinator
- ✓ The phone number and email address of the school
- ✓ How to receive notification of school cancellations

- ✓ Clear expectations and outline of the mentoring relationship
- ✓ Ideas and suggestions for activities

Mentors should share with the school-based mentoring coordinator:

- ✓ College/school calendar and/or class/work schedule
- ✓ Phone number and email address
- ✓ Schedule of times available to mentor
- ✓ Special interests and/or talents

After an introductory mentor training workshop, training continues through frequent check-ins and ongoing communication between the mentors and the school-based mentor coordinator. Clear and frequent communication is the glue that binds the program.

CONSISTENCY

Consistency is integral to successful mentoring. When mentors are unable to come at the scheduled date and time, they should notify the school-based mentor coordinator—and the mentee—in advance, if possible. Mentees look forward to the time with their mentors, and an unexplained disruption may cause a breakdown in trust.

COMMUNICATION

A successful mentoring program, and the mentoring relationship itself, are built on good communication. All parties—school-based mentoring coordinator, head mentor, mentor, and mentee—must communicate frequently and honestly. Telephone and email are the best options, provided everyone involved has access. Mail (notably postcards) can be an effective means for mentors and mentees to stay in touch during holidays, spring break, or other extended absences.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The school-based mentoring coordinator should meet with mentors prior to the first meeting between mentor and mentee, to provide information and answer questions about the program and the potential mentee(s). A school's confidentiality policy will determine how much student information may be shared with the mentor.

Confidentiality is also vital in the relationship between mentor and mentee; a mentee may more readily “open up” if they feel “secrets” shared will be safely kept. However, information that affects the safety and well-being of the mentee (or those around him/her) must be shared with the school-based mentoring coordinator or school staff.

MANDATORY REPORTING

Working with students—especially those most at risk—can be an eye-opener. A mentor may hear shocking or troubling stories that may or may not be true. However, it is not the role of the mentor to determine fact from fiction. A mentee's troubling concern or harrowing experience should be shared with the school-based mentor coordinator. If a mentor believes the mentee is a danger to self or others, by law this perception must be shared with the school-based mentoring coordinator. It is the duty of the mentor to share it with the school-based mentoring coordinator, not an outside agency or personal friend.

STOP AND THINK

Taking a moment to stop and think through possible scenarios ahead of time could save a mentor from getting into a bad situation. A simple hug could be misinterpreted, or an offer to give a mentee a ride home in the mentor's car could have dire consequences. It is best to err on the side of caution to keep both mentors and mentees safe. This involves everyone working and planning together.

MEASURING OUTCOMES/EVALUATION

The hallmark of an effective program is its success in achieving intended results. The only way to know this is by measuring outcomes. Decide how to measure the program at the outset and collect data regularly. This will help to determine if the program is reaching its milestones. Data collection need not be overwhelming but rather should be manageable and completed over a period of time.

Verification and evaluation of learning can be achieved by questionnaires, interviews, observations, or checklists. It can be collected from mentors, parents, students, teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and/or school records. Is there data you already collect that could be applied here? A combination of several different types of data and views will give the most complete profile.

Signs of successful mentoring include:

- ✓ Improved academic performance
- ✓ Improved attendance
- ✓ Improved eye contact
- ✓ Increased communication
- ✓ Increased participation and attentiveness in class
- ✓ Smiling and showing more enthusiasm
- ✓ Improved interactions with peers
- ✓ Improved appearance
- ✓ Decreased hostility
- ✓ Improved self-esteem
- ✓ Fewer discipline referrals
- ✓ Fewer detentions
- ✓ Improved attitude
- ✓ Planning for the future

PART III / REVISITING AND REFINING

STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS THROUGH COMMUNICATION AND NETWORKING

Reach out to other CFES schools and colleges, explore other mentoring programs, and ask, “What can we learn about other mentoring programs? What do we have to share? Are there mentoring projects we can do together?” Networking can be accomplished on the web (www.collegefes.org) and at liaison meetings, conferences, and workshops.

Strong and effective mentoring programs flourish because they are continually revisited and refined. They are not stagnant. Dig for new information and creative ideas to keep programs thriving and on the cutting edge. Evaluate changing program needs, review goals, and collect data to build and maintain a dynamic mentoring program.

Missy Wilkins, CFES director of mentoring, can be reached by calling the CFES office or emailing wilkins@collegefes.org.

