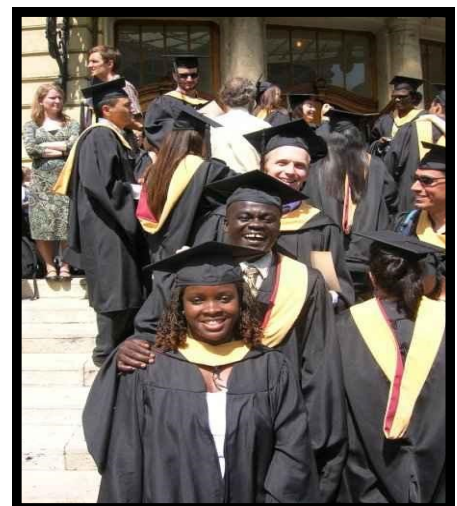


Mooresville Graded School District



Every child. Every day.

Change A Life Mentoring Program





Every child. Every day.

Mooresville Graded School District

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A Mentors Training Manual

Section I What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a one to one caring, supportive relationship between an adult and a youth that is based on trust. This relationship focuses on the needs of the youth and encourages them to develop to their fullest potential based on their own vision for the future.

Mentoring has been a practiced art of developing and maintaining positive and helpful human relationships for hundreds of years, by nearly every culture, in various individuals and groups, and in many different ways. Mentoring has survived the tests of time and has been of enormous value to individuals and societies. Mentoring is accomplished with the support of the business community, faith-based organizations, social agencies, service institutions, and in schools. Mentoring programs have changed thousands of lives, both the lives of the mentees and the mentors.

What is the Overall Goal of the Mentoring Program?

The mission of the Mooresville Graded School District is to encourage and support students to become successful academically, personally and socially.

Why Students Need Mentors

Today's youth grow up having to cope with academic, personal and social issues. Early intervention through a structured mentoring program may be able to provide young people the encouragement, tools and support they need to navigate these challenges.

According to *The Commonwealth Fund Survey of Adults Mentoring Young People*, eight out of ten young people in mentoring relationships have one or more challenges that put their success in the areas of school, health or development at risk. The survey reported the five most prevalent problems faced by young people are:

- negative feelings about themselves
- poor relationships with family members
- poor grades
- hanging out with the wrong crowd

- getting into trouble at school

Additional issues that impact our youth in today’s world:

<p style="text-align: center;">Peer Pressure</p> <p>One of the greatest forces on adolescents is the power of influence from their peers. This outside influence about personal attitudes and outward behaviors can be either positive or negative and should be recognized by the mentor. Mentors cannot force their beliefs upon the mentee, but urge them to make their own choices.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Child Abuse and Family Violence</p> <p>Physical or mental abuse within the family or in any environment, will have both an immediate effect on the mentee and also create long-lasting, negative attitudes and behaviors. A mentor will need to seek the assistance of the school site coordinator if observations indicate that this type of abuse may be occurring.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Substance Abuse</p> <p>The curiosity to experiment with alcohol, tobacco and drugs is a constant threat to adolescents in today’s world. Each mentee will need to make his or her own choice about participation. The mentor is expected to set an excellent example by avoiding the use of alcohol and tobacco in the presence of the mentee. Mentors should encourage discussions about the issues of abuse and be very observant to mentee behaviors. If evidence exists that the mentee may have a problem with substance abuse, the mentor should seek the assistance of the school site coordinator.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">School Safety and Violence</p> <p>Many young people are exposed to bullies or other violent behaviors in the school setting which may result in attendance problems or lower academic achievement levels. An observant mentor should discuss this with the mentee and inform the school site coordinator about the situation being careful not to involve the mentee in the process.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sexuality and Teenage Parenting</p> <p>Many young people may turn to sexual relationships for a variety of reasons. This is a sensitive issue, and great care must be given. The mentor is expected to seek the assistance of the site coordinator.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Depression and Suicide</p> <p>When young people are overwhelmed with issues and situations they cannot resolve, serious depression may develop. When mentors are sensitive and see any indications of extreme depression or suicide, it must be referred to the school site coordinator</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Nutrition and Health Care</p> <p>Many young people feel they are immortal and tend to ignore good health practices. Mentors can provide excellent discussions and model healthy lifestyles.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Faith and Religion</p> <p>This issue is usually within the domain of the family, and mentors should be sensitive to family values and practices.</p>

Responsibilities of Mentors

As a mentor, I agree to:

- Accept my assignment(s) with an open mind and a willingness to learn;
- Accept assistance from social workers and/or school site coordinator in order to do a better job;
- Attend in-service training sessions and advise the school site coordinator if I am unable to attend;
- Keep matters confidential concerning the child and family with whom I work;
- Be responsible for my mentoring assignment and act with proper consideration for those with whom I work;
- Complete quarterly surveys assessing my mentoring experience;
- Ask about things I do not understand;
- Advise the school site coordinator of any changes in my contact information (phone, employment, e-mail, address, etc.);
- Notify the school site coordinator of any extended leave, resignation or desire to change assignment; and
- Attend and arrive punctually for appointments related to my mentoring assignment(s).

As a Mentor, I can expect to:

- Receive prompt replies for any questions or concerns regarding my mentoring assignment;
- Use my mentoring experience as a reference for future job employment;
- Request a review with the school site coordinator of my assignment if I feel it is necessary;
- Obtain school-based newsletters upon request.
- Receive assistance from the site coordinator in assessing my role and specific functions.

Traditional Mentoring

Mentoring programs are designed in a variety of ways. Mooresville Graded School District follows a traditional mentoring program style and has set the following guidelines for mentors to follow:

- **Ratio** - one adult to one youth (with permission, a mentor may have up to two mentees that are seen separately)
- **Contact Hours** - ideally once a week, but a minimum of twice month
- **Length of Commitment** - one school year
- **Activities** - on site, program approved and supported, monitored and supervised.

Impact of Mentoring

Mentoring serves as a powerful human force for our children that can change the vision, health or the economic base of a community. Mentors help enable a generational change in individuals and/or families. Mentors can influence a mentee's positive decision-making skills, support the dreams of the youth and encourage them to stay in school. The impact of a mentor on the life of a youth is boundless and serves as a low-cost, low-tech strategy to help youth in challenging situations. Mentoring is clearly an effective strategy for keeping students in school. Programs across the nation have an abundance of solid evidence supporting this fact:

- **The Illinois State Board of Education** reports that 83% of at-risk students who have mentors graduate from high school (Annual Report)
- **Career Beginnings (Mentoring Works)** also reported that 87% of students with mentors in their sponsored programs graduated from high school
- **The DeKalb (Georgia) School System** reported results from their mentor program showing that 64% of students with mentors improved grades, 61% improved attendance, and 75% improved conduct in school (Journal of Fit-Risk Issues)
- **The South Carolina Youth Mentor Program**, initiated by the Office of the Attorney General in to reduce the increase of juvenile crime, incarceration and recidivism rates, has had good results. They reported that over 90% of the youths who were assigned to this mentor program avoided further arrests or juveniles (Condon & Lorick)

Possible Challenges of Mentoring

Along with the positive aspects of mentoring, some challenges may arise while mentoring a youth and warrant attention and discussion. The four most common challenges mentors encounter are time, social distance, isolation and issues on confidentiality. If these or any other challenges arise, notify the site coordinator for assistance.

Time

The greatest deterrent is the basic issue of time. Individuals who volunteer to mentor have other personal, family and job related commitments in addition to mentoring. The result is that time itself becomes less available and the quality of time is less than what it should be for meaningful interactions.

Social Distance/Connecting

Another possible issue which can pose an obstacle to the mentor/mentee relationships is that of social distance and can include differences in socioeconomic status, culture, language or ethnic background.

Isolation

The feeling of isolation is another potential challenge. In order to meet this challenge we are providing a structured program, ongoing training, face-to-face interaction with the school site coordinator as needed, a mentoring manual, monthly mentoring newsletter and, a school-based newsletter upon request. Training sessions will be provided to obtain new information, ideas and continued support as needed.

Confidentiality

Your relationship with your mentee is based on trust and therefore confidentiality is of the utmost importance. As the mentee gets to know you and becomes comfortable with you, he or she might begin to divulge information and ask for assistance in many areas. It is vitally important that what the mentee discusses with you does not become public knowledge or the topic conversation in any of your social settings with friends, spouses, etc.. You are encouraged to consult with the school site coordinator if you need assistance with how to support your mentee.

Breaking Confidentiality

There are clearly defined situations when you are required by North Carolina State Law to break confidentiality.

These are:

- If the child is being physically or sexually abused or neglected;
- If the youth states he or she is going to harm himself or herself; and/or
- If the youth states he or she is going to harm another person;
- If the youth tells you of his/her involvement in any illegal activity you must tell school site coordinator immediately.
- Note on your calendar when this information was reported and to whom it was given and also all the details as given to you.

Section II

Roles of a Mentor

Mentors are exemplary role models exhibiting positive attitudes and outlooks. A mentor displays a positive image, one that can guide the mentee's behaviors and actions. Mentors will build a trusting relationship, be a good listener, serve as an advocate. Other roles of a mentor may include:

- friend
- coach
- motivator
- companion
- supporter
- advisor
- tutor
- teacher
- advocate
- career model

Qualities of Successful Mentors

Mentoring requires individuals with a high level of caring for others and a keen interest in having others succeed. Balanced with the key factor of knowing how to develop a positive relationship, the qualities sought in each mentor include:

- personal commitment
- consistency
- accessibility
- flexibility & openness
- sense of humor
- persistence
- respect for youth and family
- willingness to listen
- kindness and patience
- ability to accept different points of view
- fairness
- doesn't jump to conclusions
- make informed decisions

Obligations of Mentors

Volunteers agree to be mentors and may have the best intentions and desire to be the greatest role models possible. However, many times their daily routines and outside obligations

Section III

Relationship Building and Establishing Rapport

Establishing a rapport is key to connecting with anyone and thus it is essential in the mentor/mentee relationship. The foundation of the mentor/mentee relationship is built on trust and in order to obtain that trust, a rapport must be established. We encourage taking the following steps for fostering and establishing a rapport and building a relationship with your mentee:

Introduce yourself - Smile and if you are comfortable, shake hands. Take the time necessary for getting comfortable with one another. Mentoring is about creating a meaningful relationship - put that before solving problems.

- **Opening Activity** - One-on-one conversations are difficult sometimes, especially when two people initially meet. An activity or game as an opening activity can help ease tension and allows for getting to know one another without the strain of “having” to talk.

- **Asking Questions** - Avoid asking too many questions or closed questions (yes/no questions). *Note: children from difficult backgrounds are often reluctant to answer direct questions.* Share information about yourself to the extent you are comfortable and appropriate and allow the conversation to flow naturally. Pay attention to their body language and facial reactions, acknowledge the nervousness they may be feeling, but do not minimize it. Do not sit behind a desk or any other barrier and keep the atmosphere relaxed, friendly and non-threatening.

- **Humor** - Appropriate humor is a terrific icebreaker, BUT avoid using sarcasm.

Active Listening

Appropriate and effective communication involves active listening. Active listening lets the mentee know you are truly listening to what they are saying. When you are actively listening, you are intentionally focusing on what the other person is saying and then able to repeat, what they have said in your *own words*. Listed below are key steps for active listening:

- **Clarifying Questions** - asking clarifying questions is a great way to ensure you are understanding what the other person is saying. Clarifying questions work well when preceded with something like “I think I understand you to say.....”, or “could you tell me what you meant when you said.....”

- **Body Language/Facial Expressions** - look for facial expression and body language. Listen to their tone and intensity of their voice. Question contradictions of expression (i.e., you are saying you are happy, but you look very sad).

may interfere. Therefore, mentors need to be reminded of the most basic obligations which include:

- accessibility
- following through on commitments, appointments and training sessions
- trustworthiness
- reliability
- promote the overall mentor program with others
- support the relationship

What Mentors are not

The role of the mentor may be confusing not only for the mentor, but for the mentees and/or the parent too. Individuals outside the mentoring program may not understand the role of the mentor and some may have misconceptions, therefore, it is useful to identify what mentors are ***not***.

- a parent
- a social worker
- a legal guardian
- a probation officer
- a playmate
- a professional counselor
- a financier
- a priest or minister
- a law enforcement officer

In addition, a mentor ***should not***:

- break promises
- talk down to a mentee
- be inconsistent
- expect too much
- cause friction
- condone negative behavior
- force a mentee into anything
- become a crutch
- expect too little
- break confidentiality

- **Remain Calm** - Even if what you are being told is upsetting or troubling, remain calm, do not judge and be mindful of your own facial expression. Validate what they are saying and feeling and do not feel obligated to fill moments of silence. “Take time” in stressful instances to gain composure and respond appropriately.
- **Eye Contact** - Eye contact is not something everyone can do, wants to do, or feels comfortable doing. Some cultures consider eye contact a sign of respect, others a sign of disrespect. Give “soft eye contact” but do not expect the same from the mentee in the early stages of the relationship. Playing a game, looking through a magazine or working on a puzzle are things that can be done to overcome this barrier.

Mentoring is a RELATIONSHIP. Be yourself and respond as you would most naturally.

Feedback

Another aspect of effective and appropriate communication when building a relationship with a mentee is feedback. Feedback can take various forms such as correcting, complimenting, giving directions or suggestions or simply just listening. Here are recommendations for providing feedback to your mentee.

- **Immediate** - Your feedback (impressions) should be immediate. Give feedback for the GOOD as well as the not so good.
- **Sincere** - Even the youngest children know when you do not mean what you say. Silence is better than insincerity.
- **Specific Feedback** - Be specific but not judgmental. Use, “I noticed that you did not say hello to that student just now” rather than, “it was wrong not to say hello to the student who said hi to you.” Saying, “it was wrong” conveys judgment. “Good job cleaning up after our game” has more impact than just saying, “good job”. Saying specifically what the student has done well, will increase the likelihood that the behavior will be repeated.
- **Your Role** - You are there to develop the skills of the student, not to fix everything for them, cover for them or do things for them that they should do for themselves.
- **Correcting** - If you need to correct or comment on negative issues, do so carefully, in a way not to embarrass the mentee and in private. Tell your mentee how you might handle a specific situation; guide the mentee by allowing them to see their options.

Celebrations

Change happens with small steps. Celebrate the effort/achievement your mentee is making, looking for small successes or positive behaviors to encourage and build on. The best reward is the feeling of pride in accomplishment and the development of internal motivation. Small celebrations can help reinforce these feelings. Rewards as motivation can backfire if the goal is not

attained or the reward is out of line with the effort or not meaningful to the student. *If you are considering a celebration of sort, review with and receive prior approval from the school site coordinator before the celebration.*

Section IV Mentoring Practices

The importance and impact of mentoring a youth can never be stated too often. Here are basic, yet highly important practices you should follow for increasing their effectiveness:

- Be sure to keep your appointments. If you cannot make your meetings, the earlier we know the better.
- Do not make promises to your mentee you cannot keep. “Yes” or “No” works better than “I’ll try”.
- Be upbeat and always happy to see the mentee even if what you are “working on” is challenging.
- Include the student in planning activities, while being mindful of different cultures, family practices and circumstances.

**Thank you for making the decision to become a mentor.
Your commitment will “Change A Life”!**

Feel free to contact the school site coordinator when you have questions or concerns.

