

Career Mentoring Guide

Introduction

This guide is designed to support Career Mentoring activities that work for students, employers and teachers. It is part of the Work-Based Learning Toolkit developed for NYS P-TECH that provides quality approaches and strategies to create high-quality, safe and legal Workplace Learning experiences for P-TECH students.

Career Mentoring

Career Mentoring is a Career Exploration activity in which the student is matched one-on-one or in small groups with an adult professional to explore potential careers and related educational issues. The Career Mentor serves as a resource for the student by sharing insights and providing guidance about the workplace, careers and education through formal and informal meetings organized at the school, in the workplace or online. The Career Mentor provides comments on the student's work, problem-solves with the student, and collaborates with the student on activities in consultation with the school and the workplace. The development of a trusting relationship between the student and the mentor is the key to a successful experience. Career Mentoring is a critical component of the range of authentic Work-Based Learning experiences provided for all P-TECH students.

While Career Mentoring takes a variety of forms through P-TECH, there are common characteristics or core design principles around which Career Mentoring programs are organized:

- Career Mentors and mentees make a long-term commitment to each other (generally, at least a year)
- Career Mentors focus on building trust and respect with their mentees
- Mentees and mentors set clear and reasonable expectations for themselves and their mentoring partner
- Career Mentors and mentees meet or communicate with enough regularity to develop a strong relationship
- Career Mentoring evolves in its frequency, form and content over the P-TECH experience

What is a Career Mentor?

A Career Mentor is:

- A role model
- A guide
- A coach
- An advisor
- Experienced
- Reliable
- Approachable
- Relatable
- Invested in outcomes
- An additional resource

A Career Mentor is not:

- Any employer partner a student happens to interact with
- A teacher
- A worksite supervisor or Internship sponsor (Note: a mentor/mentee relationship may evolve after the Internship or Work Experience is completed)
- A counselor
- Paid to be there

“My Career Mentor gives me someone else I can turn to when I have questions, need some advice about career opportunities, or just need to talk about my future.”

For students, Career Mentoring is likely the first course on the P-TECH menu of authentic workplace experiences. It lays the groundwork for future workplace activities and helps students make the connection between classroom learning and the real world. It connects students with an adult who can provide ongoing support and guidance about career possibilities, help them understand the importance of learning in the classroom, explore their options and provide a way for them to practice professional communication skills. Students are often more persistent and motivated as a result of their relationship with their Career Mentor.

P-TECH schools apply one or more of a variety of different models in their Career Mentoring program. By applying a combination of models and adjusting the balance between them, a range of opportunities can be provided for students. Mentors have options to choose from based on the time they have to commit. Some of the different models include:

- Traditional mentoring (one adult to one student)
- Small group mentoring (one adult to as many as four students)
- Team mentoring (several adults working with small groups of students, in which the adult-to-student ratio is not greater than 1:4)
- Large group mentoring (one or two adults to seven to ten students)
- Peer mentoring (older students mentoring other students)
- E-mentoring (mentoring via email and the Internet combined with another model from the list above)

In addition to providing general career advice and context, Career Mentors support classroom activities by commenting on student work, helping the student complete an assignment, providing feedback on projects or presentations, directly engaging with the student or students in a particular activity or exercise or helping students reflect on the connection between academic learning and professional skills.

Career Mentoring provides a simple way to get a number of employer partners initially involved with P-TECH at a low, hard dollar cost, and provides a simple way for employers to begin the “long interview” process. It also helps develop the mentor’s skills in working with young employees.

Career Mentoring experiences are designed to promote:

- Exploration of a field of interest
- Student exposure to jobs, careers and working adult role models
- The ability to practice communication skills
- The development of professional skills
- Self-esteem, self-worth, confidence and flexibility
- The building of occupational knowledge
- Positive life outcomes for students
- Opportunities to build a relationship with a caring and knowledgeable adult

Career Mentoring is a prime example of the benefits to students, employers, teachers and schools described in section one of this toolkit. While Career Mentoring is part of the continuum of authentic Workplace Learning experiences provided to every student, not all P-TECH employer partners need to serve as Career Mentors.

The Importance of Structured Activity

Effective Career Mentoring programs include structured activity before, during and after the experience. These activities help ensure that all involved parties have meaningful, productive experiences that result in enriched student learning. Proper planning and preparation, attention to legal and safety details, maximization of learning potential, and communication and support for the student and employer will help ensure success.

Career Mentoring Support Materials

Tip sheets and checklists for P-TECH coordinators, employer partners, and students and teachers are provided in this toolkit to help design, structure and support Career Mentoring to maximize student learning. Each tip sheet supplements the Work-Based Learning essential elements described in section three of this toolset, and provides a set of success factors and lists of activities or tasks to perform before, during and after the experience. A fact sheet for prospective employers is also provided.

Tip Sheets and Fact Sheets

P-TECH Coordinator Tip Sheet: Career Mentoring Success Factors

A tip sheet for P-TECH coordinators or intermediary partners responsible for implementing and supporting Career Mentoring

Teacher Tip Sheet: Career Mentoring Success Factors

A tip sheet to help teachers support the Career Mentoring in the classroom

Student Tip Sheet: Career Mentoring Success Factors

A tip sheet to help students get the most out of Career Mentoring

Employer Tip Sheet: Career Mentoring Success Factors

A tip sheet for participating employers

- *What's my role as a mentor?*
- *How do I get matched up?*
- *What should I talk about?*
- *How does this work?*

Employer Fact Sheet: Career Mentoring

A fact sheet that describes what's involved in a company providing Career Mentors