

Adult Mentor Handbook

Introduction

The CFES Program helps students, known as CFES Scholars, become college & career ready. Specific objectives for CFES Scholars include raised aspirations, college and financial aid knowledge, gains in attendance and grade point average, Essential Skill (goal setting, teamwork, leadership, agility, perseverance and networking) development, high school graduation, increased awareness of potential careers, and college matriculation and graduation. Additionally, CFES encourages families to become college and career readiness advocates for their student.

CFES Core Practices

The CFES approach is built around three core practices:

Mentoring

We help each school team design and implement a mentoring program. CFES provides support and mentor training so that every student we work with has a mentor. CFES mentors can be community members, college students, teachers, and/or student peers.

Essential Skills™

Students will work on the development of six core competencies needed to help young people succeed in a world of disruptive change - a world like the one we are living in today.

Pathways to College & Career

CFES works to nurture a college-going culture within each school. We provide opportunities for students to visit college campuses, identify college and career options, and participate in financial aid workshops, so that they are well-equipped to achieve their goals.

Mentoring: A Cornerstone

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—teachers, college students, peers, community members, and business people—in various types of configurations, from one-to-one to group settings. 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 and the development of the Essential Skills. By being 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 steps toward a high school diploma, some form of college matriculation, and 21st century work force readiness.

A Positive Role Model

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, and 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.

Consider the following characteristics of good mentors:

- **Mentors are role models.** Through their actions and behaviors they demonstrate and guide mentees in a positive way.
- **Mentors listen.** They maintain eye contact and give their mentees their full attention.
- **Mentors communicate.** They use words and body language to get their message across.
- **Mentors are practical.** They help their mentees set goals and achieve them.
- **Mentors guide.** They encourage their mentee rather than push or tell them what to do.
- **Mentors are kind.** They are nonjudgmental and open-minded.
- **Mentors are supportive.** Their primary purpose is to spend quality time with and be there for their mentee.
- **Mentors are responsible.** They show up on time, follow through, and know to ask questions when they don't have the answers.
- **Mentors are interested.** They show interest in their mentee and take time to learn about their mentee's world.
- **Mentors are true to themselves.** They bring their individual interests and talents to mentoring. They have fun being a mentor!

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 to become college & career ready. While specific areas of growth vary from student to student, the end result is the same: more students graduating from high school, more pursuing college or other post-

secondary education or training, and more students prepared to enter the 21st century workforce.

The Mentoring Relationship

Mentoring relationships evolve through phases and stages. The trust that makes the mentoring relationship successful requires time and patience because for many students this is an entirely new experience. 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 coordinator; 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, presenting it 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, it is time to take action. Mentors should check in with the School-based liaison and share concerns immediately, as this person is in the best position to offer suggestions. Sometimes what appears to be a major problem to a mentor might just be a mentee's concern over an upcoming test or other stressors. Ongoing, clear, and open communication paves the way for successful relationships and an effective mentoring program.

Guidelines for Mentoring

After an introductory mentor-training workshop, training continues through frequent check-ins and ongoing communication between the mentors and the School-based liaison. As noted above, clear and frequent communication is the glue that binds the program together.

- **Consistency.** This 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 time with their mentors, and an unexplained disruption may cause a breakdown in trust.
- **Communication.** A school-based team member should communicate with mentors frequently to gauge progress and address questions/concerns. Telephone and email are the best means of communication. 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.** A school-based team member 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. On the other hand, information that affects the safety and well-being of the mentee (or those around him/her) must be shared with the school-based liaison or, if not immediately available, 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 liaison. If a mentor believes the mentee is a danger to self or others, by law this perception must be shared with the School-based liaison. It is the duty of the mentor to report to the School-based liaison, not an outside agency or personal friend.

Stop & 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.