

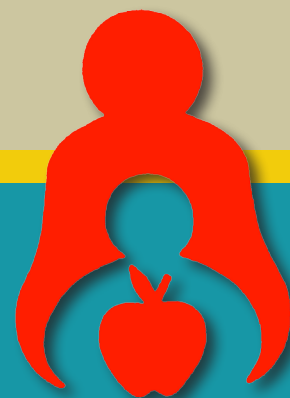
# Mentor Training Handout



*A one hour investment,  
a lifetime of returns.*



Alachua County Public Schools  
School Volunteer Program  
Partners in Education



# What Is a Mentor?

Mentoring is part of the district's school volunteer program. A mentor is an older, more experienced individual who seeks to further the development of character and competence in a younger person. He or she is committed to expending the time and energy necessary to help the student succeed in school. The role of the volunteer is multi-faceted. A mentor is a big brother/big sister, role model, and, most of all, a friend to the student.

## More specifically, a mentor should:

- Be an effective listener. In many cases, the mentor/motivator is the only person that the student has identified as one who will listen to his concerns or problems.
- Help the student set short and long term goals. Convey the idea to the student that if she *fails to plan*, she *plans to fail*.
- Help the student identify the positive things in his life (for example, what does he like about himself or what things can he do well). Concentrate on his strengths and use them as a framework for helping him to overcome weaknesses.
- Convey to the student that there is always "hope" that her situation can be changed or turned around, but that "hope" depends, to a large extent, on her efforts and attitude.
- Employ role playing as a technique for solving a student's problems. Put the shoe on the other foot (for example, place the student in the position of teacher, parent, and so on...) when dealing with the student's problem.
- Encourage the student to develop personal interests or hobbies outside of school.
- Help the student become more involved in all aspects of school.
- Help the student to learn where to go for help.
- Be sincere and committed. A student can sense when you are not being sincere or do not have his or her interests at heart.
- Develop a level of trust with the student. The trust relationship established between the mentor and the student is of utmost importance if the relationship is to be successful.
- Serve as a responsible role model for the student, who may not have many other positive role models.
- Be dependable. Always meet with your student at the scheduled times.

## Program Guidelines

### General Guidelines

- Your commitment as a mentor/motivator is to be matched with an individual student and to meet with that student at his or her assigned school, during the school day, for approximately one hour per week.
- Volunteers are assigned as mentors to individual students, serving as positive role models by demonstrating values of punctuality, dependability, and reliability. The mentor can help the student appreciate the importance of education.
- School-level coordinators will match you with a student and will provide necessary orientation and guidance regarding the student and school policies.
- All mentoring sessions are to be held on school grounds during school hours.
- Each week, sign in and out at the school office and wear a volunteer name badge.





- Dress appropriately! You are, after all, serving as a role model.
- Observe the following general philosophy of helping:
  - All students are deserving of respect.
  - Students can be responsible for their behavior
  - Students are lovable and capable; their actions may not be.
- Model the behavior you desire:
  - If you want respect, loyalty and courtesy from your student, you can bring them about much more easily and quickly by displaying these qualities yourself, rather than merely lecturing about them.
  - A student is impressed and influenced far more by your example than by your words.
  - Imitation is a highly effective and efficient form of learning.
- Coordinators have indicated that gifts to mentored students may result in jealousy on the part of other students. It also sets a standard with which other mentors are uncomfortable. Please LIMIT gift giving to very special occasions (birthdays, holidays) or as small rewards for a job well done.
- Contact the school-level coordinator with any questions or concerns regarding the program or the individual student.
- **Please keep your promise!** Your student will be anxiously awaiting your arrival each week.

### **Mentoring Guidelines**

- If you must miss a mentoring session, please call the school or your program coordinator to leave a message for your student. It is important to let your student know that you did not forget about him.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that the student feels privileged and proud to be chosen for this program.
- Give your student an opportunity to share information about things that have happened during the previous week—family events, sporting or news events, accomplishments, fears, concern, etc.
- Help the student develop a positive self-concept by providing her with positive comments. Let her know that you enjoy her company!
- As a role model, you can help the student improve his attitude toward education and develop an enthusiasm for learning. Liking you and wanting to please you can inspire a student to work harder, although the mentor should emphasize that the student works and learns for himself and his own self-improvement.
- You will be working one-on-one with your student and may, from time to time, be asked to assist the student with class assignments.
- As early as possible, take action to contact the teacher(s) of your student (in person or by phone). They are busy, but willing to talk with you. Share your interest and concern for the student and determine how you can provide help and support through the teacher's guidance.
- You may learn a lot about a different culture, or lifestyle, or age group. Try not to over-identify with your student; he realizes that you will probably never know exactly what he is feeling or experiencing. There is a big difference between the statements, "I know exactly what you are feeling," and "I think I have a sense of what you are going through." It is helpful to paraphrase what you think your student has said or is feeling and to give examples of similar situations which you have experienced.
- If your student reaches out to you with problems which are serious and possibly harmful to her or to others, please contact your school-level coordinator. You are not expected to solve serious problems or to be a therapist!
- Do not expect immediate visible results from your student. In most cases, it takes time to establish rapport and see improvement.
- Be yourself!

*Make a difference by being a mentor.*

## DO'S OF HELPING

1. Do work for gradual progress, not "F" to "A." Most of the students need academic help in at least one subject area.
2. Do take time to establish rapport. You may not get to academics for several sessions.
3. Do focus on one area, subject, or problem at a time.
4. Do keep the student's information confidential, as long as he is not planning to hurt himself or others.
5. Do try to speak with the student's teacher(s), counselor, and/or the program coordinator periodically.
6. Do be aware of limitations. You cannot change the student's home situation.
7. Do remember that everyone has some strengths. You may need to look hard to find them. Remember to give positive reinforcement, when possible.
8. Do remember that everyone needs to feel valued in order to act responsibly.
9. Do remember that listening is the supreme act of caring that we can offer another person.
10. Do be yourself. If you are uncomfortable in a situation, seek help from the school's coordinator.
11. Do be aware that the student's value system may be different from your value system.
12. Do become familiar with the school's calendar so you know when to come. *Especially important during FCAT testing weeks in the spring.*
13. Do realize that you may not be able to affect change. Ultimately, the responsibility for change lies with the student, *not* you.
14. Do help the student see practical and applicable advantages to staying in school.
15. Do let your student know if you will miss a meeting.
16. Do understand that your coming each week and your caring is surely making a difference in your student's life!

## DON'T'S OF HELPING

1. Don't get discouraged if your student's progress does not meet your expectations.
2. Don't get discouraged if you offer caring concern and the student doesn't respond. Sometimes, the student's self-esteem may be so low that he may believe he is unworthy of your concern.
3. Don't be discouraged if the student gets worse before she gets better. She may be testing you.
4. Don't feel awkward with silence. Use silence to allow the student to make choices.
5. Don't take ownership of the problem. The problem belongs to the student.
6. Don't become *overly* involved. Decide in advance how much time (and energy) you are willing to give to your student.
7. Don't expect the student to make quick changes in attitude or academic achievement. These behaviors have been developing over the lifetime of the student.
8. Don't feel you need to have all the answers. Admitting to not knowing an answer does not mean that you have failed your student.
9. Don't wait for the student to initiate conversation or to suggest activities.
10. Don't wait too long before contacting the school coordinator about problems or questions you might have.
11. Don't get discouraged if your student is absent. There may be another student who can benefit from your attention that particular day. Check with the coordinator.
12. Don't forget your commitment to come each week!