

MENTORING 101

Patriot Partners

“Mentor: A caring, adult friend who devotes time to young people to help them achieve their potential and discover their strengths.” National Mentoring Partnership

As we know, mentoring makes a difference in others’ lives. The presence of caring adults offering support, advice, friendship, reinforcement and a constructive example has proven to be a powerful tool for helping young people fulfill their potential. Numerous studies show that mentors help youth improve their social and cognitive skills, enhance their emotional well-being and plan for the future. High-quality mentoring also results in better attendance at school, reduces dropout rates and decreases involvement with drugs and violent behavior (Source: www.mentoring.org). You have the potential to influence significant change in the life of your youth and their academics and to make a difference

Some mentoring suggestions:

- Important qualities for mentors to have: a sincere desire to be involved with youth, respect for young people, are active listeners, display empathy, are able to see solutions and opportunities, and are flexible and open.
- Be present, be mindful, pay attention to the youth and the things they are saying and doing. It takes time to develop the trust needed in a new relationship for it to be effective for both parties and so we must be committed to the process of helping the relationship grow. Youth do not have a good grasp of what mentoring can be in the same way that adults do.
- The developmental versus the directive approach to mentoring: The *directive approach* is a method of guidance in which the mentor dominates and determines the direction of the relationship. The mentee has no influence in the direction of the learning or growth. With the *developmental approach* the mentor understands and appreciates the knowledge and skills a youth already possesses and learns where the youth desires and could use additional support. Growth is mentee-driven/focused and is gradual. The recommendation, of course, is for mentors to apply the developmental model for guiding the relationship between mentor and mentee.
- The onus is on you, as the mentor, to take the ‘higher ground’. What does that mean? You need to be more patient, more tolerant and flexible about your expectations for this relationship, responding to the youth’s needs and goals for their lives.
- Make concrete not abstract plans. Address the ‘who, what, why, where and how’ so that you both know exactly who’s doing what and what happens next.
- Mentors are not parents/guardians or teachers. They do not discipline or make decisions for the youth. Mentors are caring adults who are supporting Patriot Partner’s goals and values in making a difference in the academic success of participating youth.
- It is important for *closure* if circumstances make it difficult for you to continue in this role with your youth. Please let Caren Press know as soon as possible if you need to end the relationship. Part of the process of ending this relationship will be to let them know face to face and to share critical messages about how much you have enjoyed this relationship and that it is “not about

