



*Education  
Support  
Professionals*

# Supporting Our Own

*A Manual for  
ESP Mentoring  
Programs*



*Great Public Schools for Every Child*

The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 2.8 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, Education Support Professionals, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.

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# Supporting Our Own

## *A Manual for ESP Mentoring Programs*

*“Ultimately, the success of individuals depends upon the success of the community as a whole, and the success of the community depends on the growth and development of each member.”*

—Robert J. Garmston and Bruce M. Wellman, *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*

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## NEA Representative Assembly Resolution D-10 Mentor Programs

The National Education Association believes that mentor programs are a means of enhancing the professional expertise of employees and retaining quality educators. The Association also believes that the planning, implementation, and evaluation of such programs must be negotiated or cooperatively developed and maintained by the school district and the local affiliate.

The Association further believes that the duties and responsibilities of all parties must be clearly defined and uniformly administered. Mentors must be selected through a defined process with articulated criteria, be properly trained and compensated, and be provided with adequate time to fulfill their responsibilities. The state or local authority has the obligation to provide hold-harmless protection.

The Association further believes that any documentation that results from the mentoring process must be confidential and the sole property of the person mentored and must not be included in the participant's personnel file. The Association also believes that any verbal conversations that result from the mentoring process must also remain confidential. (1988, 2004)

# Introduction

Public education today is under increasing pressure to deliver more for less. Federal and state laws are mandating results from schools even as funding for public education is being ravaged by budget cutbacks.

Responsibility for these increased demands is falling on Education Support Professionals (ESP) as well as teachers. But, while ESP account for more than 40 percent of today's K-12 public education workforce, they often have had to make do with inadequate or non-existent training and professional development.

The National Education Association has been taking steps to recognize the vital role ESP play as equal and essential members of the team of educators in each school. To that end, it is seeking better training and professional development for ESP members, and mounting a deliberate effort to increase ESPs' involvement in developing their own job definitions and work organization plans.

NEA also has begun a new initiative to assist in the development of mentoring programs for ESP, similar to the long-established mentoring relationships between new teachers and experienced teaching staff. (NEA has officially endorsed mentoring programs at numerous Representative Assemblies. See box on page iv for the language of the resolution outlining the Association's position.)

This manual is designed to assist local Associations and/or school districts to plan and implement mentoring programs specifically for and by ESP. The accompanying training materials, available on CD and on the ESP website, can help program administrators prepare mentors for their important roles.

*“At the end of the day it's not what I learned but what I taught, not what I got but what I gave, not what I did but what I helped another achieve that will make a difference in someone's life...and mine.”*

—Sid L. Scruggs, Lions  
International Director,  
2000-2002

## Who Are ESP?

Education Support Professionals work in nine general job families:

- **Paraeducators**—Instructional and noninstructional support
- **Clerical Services**—Secretarial, clerical, and administrative support
- **Custodial and Maintenance Service**—Building and grounds and repair
- **Transportation Services**—Transportation and delivery services and vehicle maintenance
- **Food Service**—Food planning, preparation, and services
- **Skilled Trades**—Trades, crafts, and machine operations
- **Health and Student Services**—Nursing, health, and therapy support; community, family, parent, and student services
- **Security Services**—School resource, guard, police, and security specialists
- **Technical Service**—Computer, audiovisual, and language technical support; media and public relations

# What Is Mentoring?

The concept of mentoring and coaching is not new to school staff. It usually has been in the context of a one-on-one relationship between a novice teacher and an experienced teacher to develop the new teacher's competencies and skills in the classroom.

Mentoring for ESP is based on the same principle: it is a partnership between two individuals focused on the common goal of developing an employee's personal and professional growth and skills through a strong learning relationship. The mentoring process pairs an employee with a colleague (a mentor) who has the expertise and desire to help the mentee realize his or her work-related goals and objectives. The support offered by a mentor can extend beyond what an employee receives from a certification program, on-the-job training or supervision by a manager, such as help with interpersonal communications, work habits, or other professional issues.

The mentoring relationship is primarily one-on-one, but it also can be thought of as a *mosaic of assistance*, with the mentor calling upon other resources in his or her network of contacts to address specific needs of the mentee. For example, a mentoring partnership of two custodians might be able to consult with other individuals, not necessarily custodians, who can lend support in areas such as health and safety, effective communications, interactions with students, or time management.

While the mentee is the primary beneficiary of the mentoring process, the mentor also benefits by honing his or her skills and adapting them to different situations, becoming involved in the wider workplace community, and deriving satisfaction from helping a colleague. A mentoring program can also strengthen the Association or school district by fostering relationships across job categories.

For mentoring to be successful, both parties must be committed to the process. The mentee is responsible for identifying his or her

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objectives with the help of the mentor. The mentor is charged with guiding the mentee toward realizing those goals. While the length of the relationship is determined by the goals and objectives identified by the mentor and mentee in their first meetings (see page 21), both should be prepared to commit substantial time and energy to the process.

There is no set framework for a mentoring relationship; each relationship is different. The process can last for a few months or a few years. Meetings occur according to schedules determined by the pair: some may meet once a week, others once a month, and others possibly every few months. Some pairs meet in person, while in other situations mentors and mentees communicate by phone and e-mail. These specifics are agreed to by the mentor and mentee at the beginning of their relationship, and can be modified along the way.

## What Mentoring Is NOT

**Mentoring is not a means to a promotion.** For a mentee, involvement in the mentoring process offers no promises beyond personal and professional development. It is not a part of a performance evaluation and has nothing to do with future compensation or advancement (unless specified in a collective bargaining agreement).

**Mentoring is not therapy.** If an employee is having difficulty at work, it is essential to identify why, and decide whether mentoring is the appropriate avenue to solve that difficulty. An employee may have a personality conflict with a supervisor, in which case a mentor might be able to suggest ways to keep that relationship on a professional rather than a personal level. If an employee is experiencing difficulties in his or her personal life that affect job performance, a mentor might be able to suggest counseling outside of school. But the mentoring relationship should not develop into a situation where the mentee expects the mentor to help solve his or her personal or emotional problems.

**Mentoring is not a means to organize employees into the Association.** While a mentoring program may be one of the benefits

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of Association membership, the surest way to discredit it in the eyes of a school district or administration is to use it as a way to recruit new members. The program should exist on its own merits—a way to help new employees. If the Association is seen in a positive light as a result, so much the better.

**Mentoring is not simply a way to earn extra money.** Your Association may have developed a mentoring program that compensates mentors for their time and effort. While you might be able to put those funds to good use, that should not be your primary reason for becoming a mentor. It's not a "second job"; it's an avocation—a source of personal satisfaction and sense of accomplishment.

# Why Should We Mentor ESP?

*“True success comes only when every generation continues to develop the next generation, teaching them the value and the method of developing the next group of leaders.”*

—John C. Maxwell,  
*Developing The Leader Within You*

Education Support Professionals play a vital role in the school community, but often are accorded less than equal status in the staff hierarchy. A mentoring program can help make ESP feel more included in the school culture and bridge the gap between teachers and support professionals.

Education Support Professionals form 40 percent of the public school workforce and yet, except for certification or licenses required by law, receive little or no job training. A mentoring program can help ESP develop the skills necessary to do their jobs more effectively, which in turn can lead to more job satisfaction and less employee turnover.

Most importantly, a mentoring program can further the underlying single mission of the school district as a whole: closing student achievement gaps. A well-qualified ESP workforce can directly benefit all sectors of the school community.

## How School Districts Benefit

The individuals involved in mentoring are not the only beneficiaries—the entire school community gains from the program. In addition to enhancing employees’ professional expertise, mentoring helps orient new or transferred employees to the school, the district, the Association, and the local community. This leads to higher employee job satisfaction and stability, and a higher rate of retention of skilled employees. Mentoring complements existing new employee training and provides opportunities for continuous improvement of job-related skills.

Additionally, mentoring enhances ESPs’ abilities to serve as role models for students. When students can see support professionals performing responsible, demanding jobs and receiving the respect they deserve for the work they do, they may gain a broader understanding of rewarding career possibilities.

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## How Mentors Benefit

While time-consuming and demanding, mentoring is not a one-way street. Mentors can come away from time spent with mentees with fresh insights, new information, and increased appreciation of their own jobs. They often can gain new perspectives on problem-solving, improve their listening and communication skills, and develop new roles and responsibilities in the school setting. Personal interactions with other ESP and an enhanced understanding of other employees' jobs can foster a sense of teamwork and across-the-worksites solidarity.

## How Mentees Benefit

Mentees are the clearest winners in the mentoring process. Mentoring increases their knowledge, both technical and organizational, which improves their job performance and may also hone skills that are not job-related. Working with a mentor can develop a mentee's ability to work collaboratively and cooperatively. It can also help ESP adapt to the changes and evolution of their jobs. While it is not a tool for obtaining promotions, mentoring does provide feedback on a mentee's abilities and potential, increasing job satisfaction and opening his or her mind to possible career alternatives. It can enhance other skills as well, such as leadership or conflict resolution.

Mentoring broadens a mentee's knowledge of the Association and what it can offer, and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of Education Support Professionals in the school district. Finally, it can improve a mentee's ability to help children succeed—the primary purpose of public education.

# Who Should Be A Mentor?

*“All of the certificates of recognition we receive in life will fade. The monuments we build will crumble. The trophies will corrode. But what we do for others will make a lasting impact on our world.”*

—John C. Maxwell,  
*Developing The Leader Within You*

The fundamental requirement is that *an ESP mentor must also be an ESP*. However, this does not necessarily mean someone in the same job category, or even in the same school. A mentoring relationship between two ESP in different job families would be unusual, but it might be the best fit. The participants should be paired based on what they identified as their goals, areas of need, and areas of expertise.

## Experience and Job Credentials

A typical mentor is a veteran professional who wants to take an active interest in the career development of another ESP. The mentor should have at least three years of experience with the school system, and have met all of the qualifications of his or her job category, such as required licenses or certification. Because part of the mentoring role is to familiarize the mentee with NEA, the mentor should be a dues-paying Association member active in the local and state affiliate, such as a building rep, local leader, or committee member. (Retirees form a valuable pool of potential mentors.) The mentor also should be familiar with the state and national laws regarding education as well as the collective bargaining agreement if in a statutory state, or school district policy if in a nonstatutory state.

## Personal Characteristics

An effective mentor...

- Understands the role, purpose, and process of mentoring.
- Has a network of contacts who can help the mentee achieve his or her goals (mosaic).
- Is patient.
- Is a good listener and can also communicate clearly, without sending mixed messages.
- Is able to give and accept feedback in a constructive manner.
- Can freely praise.

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- Is flexible and has a sense of humor.
- Is even-tempered and consistent.
- Has a positive outlook.
- Can think outside the box and make quick decisions if necessary.
- Is trustworthy and discreet.
- Is a model of professionalism, someone others look up to.
- Respects confidentiality (see box below).
- Works collectively and collaboratively.
- Is enthusiastic about his or her own job and the mentoring position.
- Can acknowledge when the mentoring relationship isn't working and is willing seek help.

## Confidentiality is Key

Trust is the cornerstone of all mentoring relationships. Both mentors and mentees should be able to speak freely, knowing that any communication between them is strictly confidential. Mentees must be assured that no personal information will be revealed unless required by law. A confidentiality agreement signed by both partners can help clarify when disclosure of privileged information might be legally or ethically necessary. The agreement should also identify any documents that might be retained by the mentoring program, such as mentee application forms or attendance records. It should be understood that progress reports or reflection logs will not be shared with anyone other than the mentoring pair. See “Letter of Understanding” in the Tools section of this manual.

# Who Should Be A Mentee?

A mentee is any education support professional who seeks support and guidance on the job. A mentee and mentor do not necessarily need to perform the same job function, although that is usually the case. The prospective mentee identifies his or her goals and objectives and the program identifies the most appropriate mentor to be the guide, tutor, or coach.

## Experience and Job Credentials

The typical mentee is a new hire during a probationary period or the first year of employment. However, experienced ESP can benefit from a mentoring program as well. They may need help in their current position or there may be new things they want to learn. They may have been transferred to a new district or school within a district where the culture and procedures are different from those of their old job. There will be differences in mentoring programs for brand-new employees and for those who are only new to the location. These differences will be identified in the needs assessment and the identification of goals and objectives jointly by the mentor and mentee.

## Personal Characteristics

The list of personal characteristics for mentees is much the same as the one for mentors. A successful mentee...

- Is motivated, reliable, and patient.
- Is an attentive listener and intelligent questioner.
- Is flexible and has a sense of humor.
- Realistically appraises his/her strengths and weaknesses.
- Can handle constructive feedback and accept honest praise.
- Is committed to the purpose and process of mentoring.
- Can work collectively and collaboratively.
- Is enthusiastic about his or her job and future possibilities.
- Can acknowledge when the mentoring relationship isn't working, and is willing to ask for help or a change.

# What Are the Responsibilities of Mentors and Mentees?

**B**oth parties in a mentoring partnership should sign a contract at the beginning of their relationship that identifies their acceptance of certain ground rules and assumptions about the process.

## Mentors agree to...

- Take the mentoring commitment seriously.
- Have realistic expectations.
- Participate in needs assessment with mentee and establish a time frame for accomplishing the identified goals.
- Develop an action plan that includes:
  - contract (schedule and goals)
  - journal/reflection log
  - attendance record
  - exit analysis
- Recognize time commitment and be willing to follow through on it.
- Participate in all mutually agreed-upon meetings.
- Be available on an as-needed basis above and beyond agreement (within reason). This contact may be other than face-to-face, such as phone conversations in addition to regular meetings.
- Practice confidentiality (see box, page 9).
- Tailor feedback to provide encouragement.
- Keep a reflection log and review with mentee (see sample log, Tools section).
- Model professionalism—what a good employee should be and do.
- Attend meetings with other mentors if appropriate.
- Refrain from reprimanding or recommending disciplinary actions.
- Recognize that his or her role is not to evaluate the mentee.
- Be prepared to change or end the mentoring relationship if it isn't working.
- Celebrate success and recognize achievement.

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## Acknowledge Time Commitments

A mentoring relationship involves a substantial time commitment from both mentor and mentee. It is essential that participants discuss this issue up front to make sure there is a clear understanding of what each expects from the other. Pledges of time should be part of the written contract signed by both parties.

### Mentees agree to...

- Take the mentoring commitment seriously.
- Have realistic expectations.
- Participate in needs assessment with mentor and establish a time frame for accomplishing the identified goals.
- Recognize time commitment and be willing to follow through on it.
- Be willing to assume responsibility for personal development and success in the relationship.
- Participate in all mutually agreed-upon meetings.
- Ask for additional assistance if necessary.
- Practice confidentiality (see box, page 9).
- Accept constructive feedback from the mentor and provide honest feedback to the mentor.
- Keep a reflection log and review with mentor (see sample log, Tools Section).
- Be prepared to change or end the mentoring relationship if it isn't working.
- Celebrate success and recognize achievement.

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## Anticipate Possible Challenges


By identifying the potential difficulties a mentoring program might face, many problems can be avoided from the outset. Here are a few things to consider:

- **Resistance.** Head off possible objections from the school system, administrators, teachers, or others by proactively touting the benefits of the program for all areas of the school community, especially for student learning and success.
- **Recordkeeping.** The program will need an administrative location: a place to meet (preferably not a lounge) with access to a desk and a phone, and somewhere to keep records. Consider which records should be kept and for how long. Try to determine which data can identify the program's successes or weaknesses. Be sure to keep present and future confidentiality in mind when making decisions about record retention.
- **Relationships:** Carefully consider how to match mentor and mentee, and establish procedures for reassigning duties should a pair be incompatible. Most likely this will be the responsibility of the mentoring program committee.
- **Responsibilities:** Work on how to delineate the roles and responsibilities of mentor and mentee, keeping in mind that each mentoring relationship is unique.
- **Realistic analysis of objectives and demands:** Start with realistic goals. If you set your sights too high, it puts undue pressure on both the mentor and the mentee. Also, acknowledge the emotional demands of the program—possible conflicts over objectives or undue demands on time—and discuss them openly from the outset.
- **Results:** Try to define in advance what would be considered a successful outcome for the program.

# Setting Up A Mentoring Program

There is no one-size-fits-all blueprint for mentoring programs. Each program will have its own identity, depending on a number of factors, including...

- The structure of the state and local Association
- The composition of the unit
- Whether the program is a negotiated contract provision, a legislative initiative, or the result of meet-and-confer sessions
- What kind of relationships ESP have with other school employees and the administration

 *The following points can jump-start a discussion about how to set up your own mentoring program. It is meant to be food for thought, not a prescribed diet.*

## Establish a Supportive Environment

The biggest obstacle an Association might face in establishing a mentoring program is skepticism or outright resistance from the school system, administrators, teachers, or even ESP themselves. Gain support for the program by stressing the benefits to the district, the school, the mentors, the mentees, and ultimately, the students.

Benefits include...

- Professional development and personal growth for ESP, leading to enhanced student learning, improved employee satisfaction, and increased retention of skilled ESP
- Enhanced cooperation and teamwork and increased communication within and across job families
- Progress toward Association goals, such as recruiting and maintaining members, achieving a living wage, and gaining respect for ESP
- Furthering the overall mission of the school community—closing student achievement gaps

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## Mentoring Program Committee


The Mentoring Program Committee is the foundation of any effective mentoring program. It defines the scope of the plan, selects materials and criteria to be used, analyzes applications and pairs mentees with appropriate mentors, keeps records of the progress of each mentoring relationship, responds to complaints about unsuitable pairings, and keeps track of the project over time. There is no one standard definition of such a committee—its composition depends upon many factors: whether or not the program is a joint school district-Association project, whether it is designed for a wall-to-wall unit or a single job family, whether it is located in a statutory or a nonstatutory state.

The following list describes the possible makeup of a committee for a mentoring program that is part of a negotiated contract and is administered jointly by the Association and the administration:

- At least one member from each relevant job family
- Executive committee member from the local Association
- At least one Association staff member
- Representative(s) designated by the superintendent, such as someone from Human Resources or Staff Development

Remember, this is just one model for a possible Mentoring Program Committee. You should design your committee according to the scope and needs of your program.

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 *It will be easier to gain support for and involvement in your mentoring program if you...*

### Develop a Clear Written Strategy

- Define the basics: **What** is a mentoring program for ESP? **Why** set one up? **Who** will benefit? **How** will it work?
- Develop materials that answer these questions, to be used in gaining support for the program as well as recruiting participants.
- Outline an operational plan that includes...

**Set-up:** What will the planning and supervisory body for the program consist of (an advisory board, program coordinating committee, or program coordinator)?


**Ongoing management:** Who will be responsible for regular program operations, such as reviewing applications, matching mentors and mentees, keeping records (staff, volunteers)?

**Budget:** What sort of expenses should be anticipated (promotional materials, stipends)? Where will the money come from?

**Time Frame:** When do you hope to have the program in place? How long will it last? What do you hope to accomplish in that period?

**Goals and outcomes:** What would you consider to be a successful program and how will you measure success? Participation data? Analysis of participants' comments?

**Outreach:** Who will be responsible for producing materials that will tell others about the program, addressing the what, why, who and how (above) as well as telling people how the program has been successful and how they can become involved?

 *When you have answered these strategic questions, you can begin to focus on the specifics, such as...*

### Define a Recruitment Plan and Selection Process for Mentors and Mentees

- Make program known to potential participants (see Sample Notice of Mentoring Program, Tools Section).
- Outline expectations and benefits for both mentors and mentees.
- Develop an application and screening process and describe it to potential participants (see sample Application Forms, Tools).


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- Decide whether to have face-to-face interviews, and if so, who should conduct them. Should the mentoring program committee interview mentors? Should a group of mentors interview potential mentees?
- Decide who should assess mentee's needs and how to identify the best mentor partner to address those needs.

### Plan a Training Program for Prospective Mentors that Includes...

- Advice on listening skills, team/relationship building, conflict resolution, and how to be a good mentor
- Discussions on fostering acceptance of differences—ethnic or cultural, language, gender, age, racial, etc.
- Ideas on how to develop a mosaic of assistance
- Explanation and training on confidentiality issues
- Establishing a mentor support group to discuss issues mentors may need help with and to identify sources of answers to mentors' questions and concerns
- Reading material on relevant topics
- Support from school administrators if offered

Of course, each mentoring program will design its own mentor training program according to its own needs and situation. See the mentor training CD and the ESP Web site ([www.nea.org/ESP](http://www.nea.org/ESP)) for sample mentor training materials.


 *Once you've laid the groundwork, the real process of setting up a mentor-mentee relationship can begin. Here are some possible next steps.*

### Match Mentors with Mentees, Taking Into Account...

- Mentors' skills and knowledge and mentees' developmental needs
- Logistics such as schedules, worksite locations, possible meeting venues, and so forth
- Relevance of job classification in pairing mentor and mentee—does the mentee need help with technical skills that only some-

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one in the same job family would be familiar with or are the needs more general, such as how to develop leadership skills?

 *After the mentors and mentees are paired, the program should continue to oversee and develop their relationship by offering further support. For instance:*

## Encourage Preliminary Agreements Between the Partners, Such As...

- Definition of responsibilities of each participant
- Outline of accountability to each other and to the program

## Appreciating Differences


Whether it's called "cultural competency," "diversity training," or "cultural awareness," the need for cross-cultural understanding is growing as our communities, workplaces, schools, and nation become more diverse. The following are a few suggestions about how to appreciate the differences among groups of people:

- Understand the unique strengths and experiences people bring to a group.
- Encourage people to share their different perspectives and backgrounds.
- Facilitate listening and engaging others in dialogue.
- Remember different learning styles when facilitating or participating in a group.
- Encourage people to take roles that best suit them.
- Take advantage of diversity to increase productivity and creativity.
- Cultivate an appreciation of individuality.

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- Pledges of confidentiality
- Logistics of future meetings
- How to keep track of the progress of the relationship and future steps, such as use of reflection logs or other records.


See Tools Section for sample pledges, reflection logs, and progress assessments.

 *Once the mentoring program has been in place for some measurable time period, supporters and participants must address the question of whether it's a worthwhile expenditure of time and effort. To do that, you should...*

## Develop a Process to Track Each Mentoring Relationship and the Program as a Whole

This could include the following:

- A system for ongoing assessment
- Regular evaluation of program against established objectives
- A process for addressing obstacles and challenges (See box, page 13)
- Private and confidential exit interviews with each participant
- Clear guidelines for measuring success of the program

 *Finally, there are some public relations steps that should be considered, both before the program begins and after it completes each cycle, such as...*

## Plan for Support and Recognition for Mentors, Mentees, Mentoring Program Coordinator or Committee, and Support Staff

This could include the following:

- A kick-off event
- Regular updates about the program
- Articles in Association newsletter and school district publications
- Ongoing educational opportunities

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- Special events (guest speakers from the Association, community groups)
- Annual recognition and appreciation event
- Certificate of completion for mentees
- Certificate of appreciation or thank-you letter for mentors

For more information on planning a mentoring program, see “*What is Mentoring?*” by the American Management Association, 1991.

## Compensation Considerations

Those setting up a mentoring program must address the issue of compensating people who are offering their time and energy, whether as mentors or as program administrators or support staff. Depending on school district and local Association policies, most programs offer some form of compensation for involvement in mentoring, usually as some combination of:

- Comp time
- Organizational leave
- Travel expenses
- Monetary stipend

# The Mentoring Process

At the beginning of their relationship, mentors and mentees should talk about how they want to structure their partnership. The following outline can help partners plan their future work together.

## The First Meeting

- **Get to know each other.** Start with what you might have in common. Break the ice by talking about family, hobbies, interests, and personal histories.
- **Review the mentee's goals.** Make sure the mentor is clear about what the mentee hopes to gain from the process.
- **Review the mentor's reasons for volunteering.** Talk about how the mentor's experience (identified in the mentor application) can help the mentee achieve his or her objectives.
- **Agree on a schedule and ground rules.**
  1. When should you meet and for how long
  2. What location is most convenient?
  3. How can you contact each other?
  4. Under what circumstances should meetings be cancelled?
  5. Are informal sessions via e-mail or phone possible? Desirable?
- **Decide whether and how to use reflection logs or notes from meetings.** For example, should they be shared or kept as personal journals? If shared, should they be filled out together or separately? Should they be reviewed at the beginning or end of each get together? Or after some other time period? Use the sample reflection forms in this manual to tailor a log that works for both partners.
- **Discuss and sign a letter of understanding** that lays out time commitments, goals, and pledges about general rules of behavior understood by both parties.

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- **Discuss the parameters of confidentiality and sign a confidentiality pledge.** Each partner should be clear that their discussions are privileged and private information and will not be shared unless legally necessary.
- **Discuss any reservations you might have about the mentoring process or the partnership.** If either partner has any reservations about the other, now is the time to discuss them. Honesty and frankness are the foundation of healthy mentoring relationships.

## Subsequent Meetings

- **Be prepared.** Mentees should review their reflection logs or notes from the previous meeting and think about what they would like to focus on at the next meeting. Mentors should set a meeting objective and assemble any supplementary materials in advance of the session. Both partners should evaluate the mentee's progress toward the identified objectives and goals.
- **Concentrate during the session.** Try to identify what you want to accomplish at each meeting and orient the meeting toward the mentoring goals. Encourage a free and open exchange of ideas; don't assume that you know what each other is thinking. Avoid interruptions.
- **Summarize the meeting and prepare for the next one.** Review the meeting's effectiveness and share ideas for follow-up. Confirm and commit to the next session. Depending on what the partners have decided, fill out your reflection logs either at the conclusion of each meeting or shortly after you part. The logs or journals can help both partners assess progress and avoid problems.

# Mentoring Program Tools

The following pages contain some sample forms that an Association or school district can consider incorporating into its mentoring program. These forms are designed to be templates; each Advisory Committee should adapt and amend them to suit their particular program. The forms marked with an asterisk (\*) are those that the mentoring program may decide to retain in its archives.

1. **Sample Notice of Mentoring Program Start-Up**
2. **Application Process for Mentors**, including questions that can be addressed in the mentor's cover letter.
- \*3. **Mentor Application Form**
- \*4. **Mentee Application Form** (two pages)
5. **Welcome ESP Mentees**
6. **Letter of Understanding**, including pledge of confidentiality
7. **Mentor's Pledge** (This may be adapted as a mentee's pledge also.)
- \*8. **Attendance Record** (This can be used by the Advisory Committee to quantify results of the program, especially if it is part of the bargaining agreement, or if mentors are compensated.)
- \*9. **Mentor Program Monthly Record** (This can be used by the Advisory Committee to refine elements of the mentoring program and to develop the most useful website for mentors.)
10. **Reflection Forms for Mentor and Mentee** (These forms are not intended for viewing by anyone except the mentor and mentee—they can be kept as each partner's personal record if desired. Each mentoring team can decide how best to use their notes—to share them at the beginning or at the end of each meeting, to fill them out together, or to keep them completely private.)
- \*11. **Exit Forms for Mentor and Mentee** (These forms can be used by the mentoring program administrators to evaluate the overall results of the program. Such an analysis might be necessary if the mentoring program is part of the contract.)
12. **Sample Thank-You Letter to Mentor** (This can be sent to each mentor by the Mentoring Committee at the conclusion of each program term.)
13. **Sample Certificate of Completion for Mentee**



# Sample Notice of Mentoring Program Start-Up

Dear Education Support Professional:

Your Association/school district/school building is initiating a mentoring program for ESP. The following is an overview of the program:

**ESP Mentoring Program Goals:**

- To support Education Support Professionals in the development of personal and professional growth and skills through a strong learning relationship with a peer mentor
- To increase collaboration, employee job satisfaction, and decrease isolation of ESP
- To maximize the retention of quality Education Support Professionals
- To contribute to the overall mission of closing student achievement gaps

The role of the mentor is to:

- Share his/her expertise
- Support and encourage the mentee
- Familiarize the mentee with the National Education Association and with the school district

The role of the mentee is to:

- Identify and articulate his/her personal and professional goals
- Commit to the process and follow through on it
- Accept constructive feedback

The ESP Mentoring Program Committee is accepting applications from Education Support Professionals who would like to participate in the program, either as mentors or mentees.

Please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
(telephone and/or e-mail) for more information or application forms.

Sincerely,

Mentoring Program Coordinator

# Application Process for Mentors

1. Cover letter
2. Application
3. Two letters of reference

## **Cover Letter for Mentor Application**

Respond to the following questions in your cover letter:

1. Why do you want to participate in the mentoring program?
2. What can you offer as a mentor in terms of experience, skills, values, and knowledge?
3. What times would you be available to mentor?

# Mentor Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Application \_\_\_\_\_

School/District \_\_\_\_\_ Position/Job Classification \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone:          Home                  Work                  Mobile                  Fax

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Job History** (please indicate number of years in each position):

\_\_\_\_\_ Years of experience

\_\_\_\_\_ Years of experience

**Association Experience:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Years of experience

\_\_\_\_\_ Years of experience

**Area(s) of Expertise:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about the program?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Please attach a cover letter and two letters of reference. At least one reference should be from the Association.**

# Mentee Application

---

Name

Date of Application

---

School/District

Position/Job Classification

Check all that apply:

New hire

New responsibilities

Other (specify)

New to school

New to job classification

---

Address

---

Phone:

Home

Work

Mobile

Fax

---

E-mail

Goals:

---

---

---

---

**Form continues on page 2...**

FOR MENTORING COMMITTEE USE

Assigned mentor:

Date:

Committee representative signature:

Date:



# Welcome ESP Mentees!

You have been chosen to participate in the \_\_\_\_\_ ESP Mentoring Program. The purpose of the program is to offer support, information, and encouragement to new and veteran Education Support Professionals.

## **Your Mentor**

Your ESP mentor has offered to be available to help you identify your work-related needs and objectives, answer your questions, and help you become familiar with your school, your Association, and your role as an ESP. Your mentor also will be able to pass on other sources of assistance, such as classes, publications, or other individuals who can answer your questions. You and your mentor will determine where and how often you will meet, and together will decide how long the relationship will continue.

Your mentor is: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

# Letter of Understanding

## THE MENTOR AND MENTEE AGREE...

1. Time commitment

We will meet (when?)

We will meet (for how long?)

2. Short term goal(s)

3. Long term goal(s)

4. Confidentiality pledge

We agree that information about our personal or private lives shared in the course of our mentoring partnership shall not be disclosed to any other person, unless required by federal, state, or local laws and regulations. Examples of the types of information that must be disclosed are reports of abuse, threats of suicide, or admission of actions that could be prosecuted as felonies.

We further agree that the only documents and/or written records resulting from this mentoring process that will be kept in the program's archives are the following:

1. Mentor and Mentee Applications, 2. Attendance Records, 3. Exit Interviews

5. Additional pledges:

I will be a good listener.

I will accept constructive feedback.

I will be flexible and open.

I will commit to this mentoring relationship.

6. No one will be held accountable should the relationship not succeed  
(hold-harmless provision).

---

Mentor signature

Date

---

Mentee signature

Date

# A Mentor's Pledge

These are my expectations for our mentoring relationship. As your mentor...

1. I will be available to you.
2. I will help, support, and encourage you in managing and mastering the following areas of work:
  - Quality and quantity of work
  - Work habits and procedures
  - Daily routines
  - Interpersonal behavior
3. We will work together to solve problems regarding issues that are important to you and issues that are important to me for the development of your career.
4. We will treat each other with respect, keeping our commitments to each other, for example, appointments, assignments, and agreed-upon expectations.
5. Although I do not have all the answers for you, I will help you frame the questions that will lead you to your own answers.
6. I will share with you and demonstrate what I have learned about my job and work responsibilities.
7. I will treat everything that transpires in our mentoring relationship with confidentiality, within the reasonable bounds upon which we have agreed.
8. We will learn from and with each other.



# Mentor Program Monthly Record

Mentor's Name

District/School

Please circle month:    Sept.    Oct.    Nov.    Dec.    Jan.    Feb.    March    April    May    June

ESP mentees supported this month:

Name/Position

---

---

---

---

When was support given? (mark all that apply)

before school       after school       break  
 lunch                       early/late dismissal  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

What support was given? (types of support or information shared)

Visited the online mentor site?  yes     no

Average amount of time spent on the online activities \_\_\_\_\_

What information did you find useful?

---

---

---

Were you in contact with the Mentoring Program Coordinator?  yes     no

e-mail     meeting     phone     mail     other \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments, suggestions, questions:

# Reflection Form for Mentor

---

Mentor Name

Date

---

Mentee Name

Site/Location

## Identified Goals

## Observations

## Issues To Be Addressed

## Next Steps

Next Meeting Scheduled For \_\_\_\_\_

# Reflection Form for Mentee

---

Mentee Name

Date

---

Mentor Name

Site/Location

**Overall Goals/Objectives**

**How Is It Going?**

**What Questions Do I Have?**

**What Does Mentor Suggest?**

**Next Steps**

Next Meeting Scheduled For \_\_\_\_\_

# Exit Form for Mentor

---

Mentee Name

---

Mentor Name

Site/Location

Length of time in program: \_\_\_\_\_  Completed program

*Circle the appropriate number:*

1. Mentee progressed toward personal and professional goals and objectives.

**NOT AT ALL**

**SOMEWHAT**

**QUITE A BIT**

**VERY MUCH**

**FULLY**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

Comments:

---

2. Mentee accepted constructive feedback.

**NOT AT ALL**

**SOMEWHAT**

**QUITE A BIT**

**VERY MUCH**

**FULLY**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

Comments:

---

3. Mentoring relationship was successful.

**NOT AT ALL**

**SOMEWHAT**

**QUITE A BIT**

**VERY MUCH**

**FULLY**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

Comments:

---

4. Recommendations:

---



---

Signature of Mentor

Date

# Exit Form for Mentee

---

Mentee Name

---

Mentor Name

Site/Location

Length of time in program: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed program

*Circle the appropriate number:*

1. Program met my needs/expectations.

**NOT AT ALL**

**SOMEWHAT**

**QUITE A BIT**

**VERY MUCH**

**FULLY**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

Comments:

---

2. Mentor encouraged personal/professional growth.

**NOT AT ALL**

**SOMEWHAT**

**QUITE A BIT**

**VERY MUCH**

**FULLY**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

Comments:

---

3. Mentoring relationship was successful.

**NOT AT ALL**

**SOMEWHAT**

**QUITE A BIT**

**VERY MUCH**

**FULLY**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

Comments:

---

4. Recommendations:

---

Signature of Mentee

Date

# Sample Thank-You Letter to Mentor

Date

Name of Mentor

Address of Mentor

Dear (Mentor's Name):

The Local XXX Mentoring Committee thanks you for your participation in the 20\_\_\_\_ ESP Mentoring Program.

Dedicated, experienced Education Support Professionals are essential to realizing NEA's commitment to success for every student in our public schools. Our efforts to help fellow ESP members improve their professional skills and effectiveness on the job contribute to that goal.

Together we are moving toward recognition of ESP as essential partners in all aspects of our primary mission—closing the student achievement gap.

We hope you will continue to be involved in the ESP Mentoring Program.

Sincerely,

for the Mentoring Program Committee

# Sample Certificate of Completion

---

E S P M E N T O R I N G P R O G R A M

This certificate is presented to

Name of Mentee

for successful completion of the Local XXXX ESP Mentoring Program

Dates

---

Name and signature of Mentor

---

Name and signature of Local President

---

(If applicable) Name and signature of Administrator



