

P-TECH 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

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

P-TECH Coordinator Tip Sheet

Career Mentoring: Success Factors

A tip sheet for NYS P-TECH coordinators and teachers

When developing and implementing your Career Mentoring program at P-TECH, keep the following success factors in mind.

- ❑ Apply the Work-Based Learning Essential Elements
 - ✓ Address the elements in the design of your Career Mentoring program.
 - ✓ Check in with the elements periodically to ensure that all ten are being addressed in the implementation of the program.
- ❑ Select the Appropriate Career Mentoring Model
 - ✓ Career Mentoring should focus on career exploration, training and related education.
 - ✓ Career Mentoring should take place at the school, workplace, online or at an approved outing.
 - ✓ Career Mentoring evolves over time and may look differently at the higher grade levels.
- ❑ Define how Much Face-to-Face Time is Desirable
 - ✓ Early on in the experience, the more the better. The first few times, face-to-face connection is important before other forms of meetings and interactions start to happen.
- ❑ Balance Events with Activities
 - ✓ Explore flexible ways to engage mentors and provide opportunities for students to connect—not just through high-stakes, intensive events.
- ❑ Explore Alternative Forms of Connecting
 - ✓ Explore the application of Skype, email and other social media.
- ❑ Address Key Legal, Safety and Health Issues
 - ✓ Follow district policy.
 - ✓ Complete and collect appropriate permission forms when setting up Career Mentoring relationships.
 - ✓ Help employers comply with all rules and regulations related to interacting with students through school-based programs.
 - ✓ Make it clear to both students and employers that there are to be no face-to-face connections outside of arranged activities.
 - ✓ Set/follow policies guiding online and social media interactions.
- ❑ Encourage Mentor Choice and Matching
 - ✓ When possible, allow the mentor and mentee to interview and select each other.
 - ✓ Match students with potential Career Mentors based on career interest, gender, and personality—matching with someone the student can relate to is the most important factor.
 - Sample Activity: Have students prepare and distribute bios to potential mentors.*
 - ✓ Provide multiple connections and exposures before choice.
 - Sample Activity: After a few exposures, have students pick their top three Career Mentor choices.*
 - ✓ Create/identify potential matches out of summer bridge activities.

- ❑ Support the Career Mentoring Experience
 - ✓ Develop clear, written policies and procedures for all parties.
 - ✓ Tailor the Career Mentoring Guide to your program.
 - ✓ Have the student and Career Mentor set and communicate expectations that are assessed on a regular basis.
 - ✓ Provide ongoing support and training for Career Mentors.
 - Update and adapt the Career Mentoring *Employer Tip Sheet* and share/review with your mentoring volunteers.
 - Provide a single point of contact for all mentors (designate a Mentor Coordinator).
 - Support mentors to help them tell their story of the pathway/journey to their present position.
 - Support mentors to help students build their personal traits.
 - Help mentors understand issues of confidentiality and their responsibilities.
 - ✓ Provide ongoing support for students
 - Encourage students to share interests and ideas with their Career Mentor.
 - Suggest that students invite their mentor to school events/activities.
 - Create assignments for students to share with their Career Mentor.
 - Have students share current study topics with their Career Mentor.
- ❑ Develop an Effective Employer Engagement Strategy
 - ✓ Define the ROI for employers.
 - ✓ When possible, get top-down support in the business or company.
 - ✓ Bring four to five people from a single company in to spend time with small groups of students.
 - ✓ Explore connecting Industry Advisors as Career Mentors.
 - ✓ Use employers to recruit other employers.
 - ✓ Cast a wider net than your current industry partners. Identify potential mentors that your students would want to connect with and learn from.
- ❑ Help Career Mentors understand and support the P-TECH WBL approach.
 - ✓ Share the P-TECH Professional Skills Fact Sheet with the Career Mentor.
 - ✓ Share what the focus is in the classroom on a regular basis.
 - ✓ Encourage Career Mentors to talk about the Professional Skills with their mentee, and support and connect to what's going on in the classroom.

Employer Tip Sheet

Career Mentoring: Success Factors

A tip sheet for NYS P-TECH employer partners

What is 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.

How is it structured?

Each P-TECH 9-14 school has designed a mentoring program customized to accommodate the interests and availability of its employer partners. Mentors may be matched with students one-on-one, or work with small groups of students. While there are some differences across the P-TECH schools, all career mentoring programs share some common features. Each begins with a defined matching process, both formal and informal activities are conducted at the school, in the workplace or online (never alone), a set schedule is provided, and mentors and students are supported by the P-TECH team.

What's my commitment?

- Meet or communicate regularly with your mentee. Some activities will be organized by your P-TECH mentor coordinator and some contact will be generated by your mentee or yourself via email or telephone.
- Follow all school and company rules regarding Career Mentoring (your P-TECH mentor coordinator can help you with this).
- Career mentors are asked to make a commitment to stay engaged for a minimum of one year and hopefully will continue through to the mentee's graduation.

How can I make it a good experience for my mentee?

- Make it real. It's all about the relationship you are able to develop with your mentee.
- Hear what your mentee is really saying. Pay attention and show that you are listening.
- Help your mentee focus on learning about and practicing professional skills.
- Review the information on what your mentee is working on at school, and ask questions about what he/she is learning. Provide feedback on the work.
- Actively participate in activities and group projects arranged by the school.
- Be consistent.

Why is this important for the student I'll be mentoring?

- Research shows that career mentors help students stay in school, stay focused and pursue their goals.
- A career mentor lets a young person know that someone cares, that they matter and can have a bright future.
- A career mentor can help a young person see the connection between what they learn in the classroom and the real world.
- A career mentor can help their mentee better communicate with and relate to adults.

What will I get out of it?

- Serving as a career mentor can be a personally satisfying experience.
- Your company may offer incentives for volunteering to be a career mentor.
- You will learn how to interact with the next generation, some of whom you may be working with and/or supervising soon.
- You will meet other mentors and leaders in your community who will enhance your personal and professional network.
- Its Fun!

What if I have a question, a concern or need some help?

Your P-TECH mentor coordinator is there to help you with any question or concern, no matter how great or small. If you have any concerns about your mentee, bring them to the coordinator's attention immediately.

What if I can no longer be involved?

- Provide as much notice as possible to the mentor coordinator and student.
- Try and recruit someone else to step into the Career Mentoring role.
- Make sure your mentee knows why you need to stop (a new position, new responsibilities, relocation, or some other reason) and assure your mentee that the reason you need to stop has nothing to do with him/her.

Go Deeper

- Consider having your mentee shadow you at work for a day.
- Arrange an Internship at your company for your mentee. Check in regularly around progress.

Employer Fact Sheet: Career Mentoring

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

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Career mentors serve as a resource for NYS P-TECH students 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.

Grade Level: Begins in the 9th grade and continues to graduation
Employer/Student Ratio: Typically 1 to 1. May vary by school.
Duration: Minimum one-year commitment
Frequency: Initially monthly (varies over time)
Location: Primarily at the school
Costs: Staff time
Special Considerations: Comply with school policies

Why is Career Mentoring important for students?

- Research shows that career mentors help students stay in school, stay focused and pursue their goals.
- A career mentor lets a young person know that someone cares, that they matter and can have a bright future.
- A career mentor can help a young person see the connection between what they learn in the classroom and the real world.
- A career mentor can help a mentee better communicate with and relate to adults.

What are the benefits to my company?

- Exposes potential future workers to job opportunities and careers with your company.
- Exposes students to the skill needs, educational requirements and career opportunities in your industry.
- Promotes an understanding of the role and contributions of your business in the local economy.
- Introduces P-TECH and its students to your employees and co-workers.
- Helps your employees understand how to communicate with the next generation of workers.
- Provides a way to introduce and engage multiple employees with your commitment to P-TECH and connect your company with the community.

What do I need to do next?

- Contact your P-TECH coordinator.
- Arrange for a presentation to your employees.
- Consider any impacts on company policy.

Resources

- Visit www.ptech.org for materials that support successful Career Mentoring initiatives.
- Distribute the *Employer Tip Sheet: Career Mentoring* to interested employees.
- Review *Employer Options: P-TECH and Your Company* to learn more about how to get the most out of your partnership with P-TECH in your community.