



Career Mentoring Guide for WBL Coordinators, Teachers and Instructors

Introduction

This guide is designed to help design, structure and support Career Mentoring programs that work for students and young adults, employers, teachers and career pathway program staff. It is part of the Earn & Learn East Bay Work-Based Learning Toolset, which provides quality approaches and strategies to create high-quality, safe and legal Work-Based Learning experiences for students and young adults.

Career Mentoring Overview

Career Mentoring is a Career Exploration activity in which a student or young adult is matched one-on-one or in small groups with an adult professional to explore potential careers and related educational issues. Different than the deep, personal relationship developed through mentoring programs such as Big Brother, Big Sister, the Career Mentor serves as a *career* resource for his or her mentee by sharing insights and providing guidance about the workplace, careers and education. This is accomplished through formal and informal meetings organized at the youth program, in the workplace or online, but never in an unsupervised environment or the home. The Career Mentor provides comments on the mentee's work, and problem-solves and collaborates with them on activities in consultation with the sponsoring school or program. The development of a trusting relationship between the student or young adult 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 through a comprehensive Career Pathways approach.

While Career Mentoring may take various forms, there are common characteristics or 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)
- Focus on building trust and respect with each other
- Set clear and reasonable expectations for themselves and their mentoring partner
- Meet or communicate with enough regularity to develop a strong relationship
- Career Mentoring evolves in its frequency, form and content over the Career Pathway 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 young person happens to interact with
- A teacher or instructor
- A worksite supervisor or Internship sponsor (Note: a mentor/mentee relationship may evolve after the Internship or Work Experience is completed.)
- A counselor or case manager
- 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.”

Career Mentoring is an important activity that can support and augment both classroom training and workplace activities. It can help students and young adults make the connection between classroom training and the real world. It connects young people 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 and young adults are often more persistent and motivated as a result of their relationship with their Career Mentor.

Schools and youth programs may 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 and young adults. 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 or young adult)
- Small group mentoring (one adult to as many as four students and young adults)
- Team mentoring (several adults working with small groups of students and young adults, in which the adult-to-student-and-young-adult ratio is not greater than 1:4)
- Large group mentoring (one or two adults to seven to ten students and young adults)
- Peer mentoring (older students and young adults mentoring others)
- 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 training activities by commenting on their mentee’s work, helping complete an assignment, providing feedback on projects or presentations, directly engaging in a particular activity or exercise or helping them reflect on the connection between occupational learning and professional skills. Career Mentoring provides a simple way to get a number of employer partners initially involved with Career Pathway initiatives 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 and young adult 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 and young adults
- Opportunities to build a relationship with a caring and knowledgeable adult



Career Mentoring Support Materials

Tip sheets and checklists for program coordinators, employer partners, teachers, and students and young adults are provided in the Earn & Learn East Bay WBL Toolset to help design, structure and support Career Mentoring experiences to maximize learning. Each tip sheet supplements the Work-Based Learning quality elements described in section one of the 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

Coordinator Tip Sheet: Career Mentoring Success Factors

A tip sheet for intermediary staff, WBL liaisons, connectors and program staff

Teacher Tip Sheet: Career Mentoring Success Factors

A tip sheet for teachers to help students and young adults get the most out of the Career Mentoring experience

Student/Young Adult Tip Sheet: Career Mentoring Success Factors

A tip sheet to help students and young adults get the most out of the Career Mentoring experience

Employer Tip Sheet: Career Mentoring

Tips 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

What's involved in my company providing Career Mentors?

The Importance of Structured Activity

All Career Mentoring should 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 learning. Proper planning and preparation, attention to legal and logistical details, maximization of learning potential, and communication and support for the students/young adults and speakers will help ensure success.

Sustaining and growing Career Mentoring programs and all other Work-Based Learning types depend upon developing and maintaining positive relationships with the employers who are providing opportunities to the students and young adults being served. These employers should be treated as valued customers and partners with frequent check-ins to address participation needs as they arise.