

Great News!

Your child was chosen to receive a mentor!

Thank you for supporting your child and the Creative Mentoring program!

We hope you, your child, and your child's mentor have a great year!

Welcome to the Creative Mentoring Family! This parent handbook was written especially for you. We hope this book will help you get a better understanding of mentoring. We also hope it helps you understand your responsibilities and what you should expect from your child's mentor.

Please visit us on the internet www.creativementoring.org to learn more about the Creative Mentoring® program. You are also invited to contact us at creativementoring@connecting-generations.org or 877-202-9050 if ever you have any questions.

Please use this area to write in the contact information for your child's school mentoring program coordinator.

School Name: _____

School Coordinator's Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

About Our Organization

Connecting Generations is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our mission is to provide creative programs and services that help Delaware's children and adults lead purposeful, fulfilling and self-directed lives. The organization was founded in 1990 by retired DuPont executive Robert Kasey. Connecting Generations currently offers three programs:

- **Creative Mentoring®** offers the only statewide, free mentor training program supported by Delaware's Department of Education. This program also supports more than 80 mentoring programs in Delaware, including the mentoring program at your child's school.
- **Seasons of Respect** offers an in-class workshop series just for fifth graders. The workshops offer interactive experiences where children creatively learn how to behave with respect toward peers and others.
- **Creative Transitions** offers workshops for adults going through life transition. These workshops lead participants through a process of reviewing the past, assessing where they are today, and charting a rewarding future.

Jazz in January- our annual event

Connecting Generations has an annual celebration and fundraising event, Jazz in January, which celebrates both National Mentoring Month and Jazz Education Month.

Learn more about Connecting Generations on our website at www.connecting-generations.org.

Can my child have the same mentor for more than one year?

Yes! The longer the relationship lasts the more impact it has on both the mentee AND the mentor. Mentors who are willing to follow the child, even when the child changes schools, can often be the most consistent part of a child's life.

My child said the mentor gave him a gift. Is that true?

Yes! At times a mentor may give a small gift to a mentee to:

- Represent something special in the mentor/mentee relationship
- Celebrate a birthday, holiday, or the end of year. If your family does not celebrate specific holidays for religious purposes please tell your child's teacher.
- At times, your child may bring home a joint project that was done with the mentor.

Mentors should not buy your child coats, shoes, or other items. If your family has a financial need, please share the need with a local service agency or the child's teacher.

What if my child needs money for a field trip or lunch on a day the mentor is at the school?

The child should discuss this with the teacher, not the mentor.

How can I become a mentor?

We are glad you asked! Mentoring is a wonderful way for you to learn more about your child's school and is a great way to role model volunteerism.

You can complete an on-line application at www.creativementoring.org or you can call us at 877-202-9050 if you'd like an application mailed. There are no age or education requirements.

What should my relationship with my child's mentor be?

This can be a tricky area. Unlike community-based mentoring programs, most in-school and site-based mentoring programs do NOT encourage a direct relationship between the mentor and the parent. Check with your individual program about this issue. In most cases, the program will prefer that the mentor and parent communicate *through* the school or program coordinator. While it's fine if the mentor comes to a school function to support his or her mentee and meets the parents at school, it may be breaking a boundary for the mentor to call the parent directly or vice versa.

The longer the relationship lasts, your child and mentor may want to see each other more often. Each relationship is different and, with your permission, they may choose to cross this particular boundary. It is important, however, to remember that school-based and site-based programs cannot approve or provide liability protection when the relationship moves away from the school or club.

Can my child communicate with his or her mentor over the summers?

Schools discourage meetings over the summer for the same reasons as they discourage meeting off site. Sometimes, if your child attends summer school, there are limited opportunities to meet at the school following the classes.

Other site-based programs, however, may continue to hold sessions throughout the summer. If programs are being held then mentoring may be able to continue. If programs are not going on, it is better for your child to talk with the mentor through postcards or letters sent through the school or program.

Why Mentoring?

You may be wondering what all the excitement is about. Big deal. Your child was chosen to receive a mentor. But it is so much more!

First, let's look at what mentoring is. Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals. These people offer guidance, support and encouragement to build the skills and character of the young person they mentor. A mentor is a person who, along with parents, provide youth with support, counsel, and friendship. The child being mentored is called a mentee.

A mentor is not a foster parent, therapist, parole officer, or peer.

All young people have the ability to succeed in life. However, not all children get the support they need.

In the United States, 17.6 million young people – nearly half the population of young people between 10 and 18 years of age – live in situations that put them at risk of not living up to their potential. Without immediate intervention by caring adults, these youth could make choices that harm their futures.

Mentoring can help by:

- Improving young people's attitudes towards parents, peers and teachers;
- Encouraging students to stay motivated and focused on education;
- Providing a positive way for young people to spend free time;
- Helping young people face daily challenges; and
- Offering young people opportunities to consider new career paths and get much-needed economic skills and knowledge.

-Source www.mentor.org

Mentoring Works!!!

In “Mentoring: a Promising Strategy for Youth Development: a Research Brief by Child Trends Research,” Susan M. Jekielek et al confirmed the following information about mentoring.

1. ***Overall, mentees, when compared to their non-mentored peers, were less likely to skip school than their non-mentored peers.***

They were more likely to:

- Enjoy school
- Go on to higher education
- Avoid substance abuse

2. ***Participating in mentoring may improve a mentee’s relationships with family, peers and adults.***

Because a mentee has a better chance to build a stronger relationship with her parent(s) and is more likely to enjoy school, she will start to feel better about herself and build her self worth.

3. ***Mentoring is the third most powerful relationship for influencing human behavior (after the family and couple relationships) if it is working.***

The benefits of mentoring may be seen immediately but there are other times when the benefits are not seen for some time. That is because the benefits may be small or covered up by peer, family, sibling or environment pressures.¹

Creative Mentors meet with the child once a week during the school year for 30 to 60 minutes. All meetings with the mentor are limited to school or program sponsored activities and events. A half hour a week may not seem like much time.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is a particular youth chosen for the program?

There is no specific answer to this question since each school or community-based organization program is run differently. Some youth need a little extra academic help. Some are from large families and just need some individual attention. Some are shy and withdrawn; others are hyperactive. Some need a positive adult role model; some need a friend.

The main point, however, is that *any* youth can benefit from mentoring. Mentors are not there to “save” the youth; rather they are there to enhance that youth’s growth and development, to discover his unique gifts and talents, and to help him reach his potential.

How is the match made?

The child’s teacher or guidance counselor usually initiates the request. In a few cases, the parent starts the request. The request is sent to the School Mentoring Coordinator who then gives the youth forms to be completed by the parent or guardian. Upon receipt of the completed paperwork, the youth is “interviewed” to find out what things they would like in a mentor. Mentors are also interviewed by the school coordinators to share key interests, hobbies and life experiences that are useful in making the match.

What if my child doesn’t like his or her mentor?

The overwhelming majority of matches work just fine. The mentor and youth develop a wonderful relationship. The relationship doesn’t usually blossom over night; it normally takes about three to six months to fully develop. In those rare cases where the match doesn’t work, it’s important to let your school or program coordinator know so that your child can be considered for a re-match.

¹ The Uncommon Individual Foundation - Three Radnor Corporate Center

Parental Responsibilities

As a parent or guardian your child needs to know that you support the mentoring relationship. You can share your excitement for this new relationship by:

- Completing and returning all required forms.⁴
- Asking your child how his or her meeting with the mentor went.
- Making an effort to meet your child's mentor at mentor events.
- Making every attempt to send your child to recognition activities that highlight the mentor and your child.⁵
- Encouraging your child to attend school EVERYDAY. We understand that emergencies occur but it is disappointing for a mentor to arrive at the school only to learn the child did not come to school.
- Complete the end of the year survey.
- Consider mentoring! There are no age or education requirements. The most important criteria is a desire to positively impact a child's life. If you are interested, please contact us so we can tell you more!

Mentee Responsibilities

The mentee's responsibility is pretty simple—to have fun and enjoy the relationship. Your child doesn't have to do anything special for his or her mentor.

⁴ Samples are included in the Forms section.

⁵ School Coordinators love it when parents attend these events as well!

But, study's show that amount of time makes a huge impact in the life of a child.

Each year, Creative Mentoring collects data related to the effects of mentoring and without a doubt ***the Creative Mentoring Program works!*** Over the past five years our End of the Year Surveys have discovered that:

- **Teachers saw an improvement in their students who were mentored.**
57% saw improved class participation
54% saw a better attitude towards learning
- **Parents saw an improvement in their children who were mentored.**
79% saw better self control
70% felt their child was more cooperative and responsible
- **Mentors saw an improvement in their mentee.**
80% felt their mentee was better able to express feelings
72% saw an improved respect for adults

97% of mentee's enjoy spending time with their mentor

AND

91% of parents and teachers recommended that the mentee continue to be mentored.

Now that is truly making a difference in a child's life! But the benefits don't stop there.

Benefits for Mentees

- Children develop emotional, social and academic skills. This makes them better prepared to deal with the challenges of life.

Expectations and Responsibilities

- Children learn how to better communicate with adults.
- Youth begin to view adult relationships as important and needed.
- Children are exposed to different types of people.

Benefits for Mentors

- Mentors have the chance to “give something back” to society and future generations. They report that they feel better about themselves for having a positive impact on another person’s life.
- Mentor’s have the satisfaction of helping someone else improve their skills.
- Mentors gain real experience communicating with young people and report that they are better able to relate to all children—including children whose backgrounds are different from their own.
- Mentors are happier when they return to work.
- Mentors have a better understanding of the school system.
- Mentors gain a broader understanding of social issues.
- Mentoring destroys stereotypes—both for the mentor and the mentee.

Parental Expectations

You should expect your child’s mentor to be a caring person that has a genuine desire to help your child grow and develop. You should also expect the mentor to role model positive behaviors for your child.

Mentors are dedicated. They are asked to make a commitment of 30 minutes to 60 minutes a week. There are times when a mentoring session has to be missed due to travel or an emergency. These cancellations should be the exception—not the norm.

Creative Mentoring opportunities occur during normal program hours only. For a school, that means during the school day. At an after school program, that may mean the hours of 3 pm - 7 pm. The mentor should not have meetings with your child outside the normal hours unless it is directly related to a school or program activity. If your child is in a school play it is perfectly okay for the mentor to attend the play. It is not okay for the mentor to have the mentee at her home for dinner.³

Although mentoring has been linked to academic improvement it can be hard to directly connect the two. That puts unnecessary tension on the mentor/mentee relationship. Instead look for an increased interest in school, better relationship at home, improved communication skills and a positive attitude.

As a parent you should also expect to communicate with your child’s school coordinator and the Creative Mentoring staff. If you have questions about the program, we encourage you to reach out to the school staff first. If that is not working, you can always call us at 877-202-9050 or e-mail creativementoring@connecting-generations.org.

³ If you would like your child to have after school “out of school time” with their mentor, ask the mentor to become a Big Brother/Big Sister. There are quite a few mentors participating in both programs and it works out wonderfully!

3. Help the mentee succeed academically
 - a. Work with the mentee to develop good study skills
 - b. Help the mentee with long term projects
 - c. Help develop the mentee's sense of curiosity and interest in learning
 - d. Help with academic issues identified by the child's teacher

4. Assist the mentee to obtain additional resources
 - o Work with school staff, library, counselors, etc. to make sure the mentee knows what resources are available in the school
 - o For older children, mentors help the mentee become aware of other resources in the community and how to use them
 - o Be a window: help the mentee explore the world of positive possibilities

Creative Mentors use four key elements to help build and grow the mentoring relationship. Developed by Connecting Generations founder Robert Kasey, the Creative Mentoring Process identifies ways to develop positive and creative interactions between any adult and child.

“The Creative Mentoring® Process” The Four Foundations of Effective Mentoring

Having a higher purpose

Mentors should always have in mind a purpose or goal beyond the immediate task. Whether that goal is enhancing the mentee's self esteem or improve school achievement, the purpose should guide the mentor's activity choices.

Being in the present moment

Being present in the moment means focusing total attention on the interaction that is taking place. Mentoring is a child-centered and child-driven activity. To be fully present, the mentor must listen actively.

Modeling positive roles and universal values

Mentors serve as role models in instilling universal values such as honesty, respect, trust, and responsibility.

Giving unconditional love and acceptance

Mentors love and accept the child just for being, not for what he or she says or does.

What Makes a Good Mentor?

A mentor's most important job is to accept and care for children who may not share their lifestyle and values. Respect (on both sides) is key to the relationship. It is important to respect the child's right to independence.

The mentor agrees to maintain the **confidentiality** of all information learned from the child and the child's family - except in the case where it may be harmful to the child.

Application Process

Creative Mentors don't just come off the streets and enter the classroom! Our mentors complete an application and three hour training session. Let's look at both of these components in greater detail.

Mentor Application²

The application includes:

- Basic contact information
- Employment history
- Personal interest section (to help with making a match)
- Three personal references

The most important requirement of a mentor is:

a desire to positively impact a child's life



- Criminal background check
- Health Screening for tuberculosis (Delaware requirement)

Training

Our three hour training, The Power of One, prepares mentors for mentoring. The training reviews:

- The mentor/mentee relationship
- Recognizing age appropriate behaviors
- Communication components and techniques
- Identifying risky behaviors

Mentors are also encouraged to remain with the same child from year to year. The longer the relationship, the greater the impact upon the child and the mentor.

Mentor Responsibilities

There are four primary responsibilities the mentor will work to accomplish with your child. There may be other responsibilities but these are the most important ones.

1. Establish a positive, personal relationship with the mentee
 - a. The primary role is to be an adult *friend* and establish mutual trust and respect
 - b. Maintain consistent contact
 - c. Make it enjoyable and fun
2. Help your child develop life skills
 - a. Work with the mentee to set and accomplish specific short and long term goals
 - b. Work with the mentee to develop life management skills
 - c. Help the mentee to identify strengths, talents, and interests

² A sample is included in the Forms section.