Introduction

1. What is e-mentoring?

E-mentoring is a partnership in which employees correspond weekly with a student or entire class via e-mail. The mentor offers career and employment information, encouragement and support. Teachers guide the process with a career exploration curriculum.

E-mentoring allows a caring adult to easily support a young person’s career exploration and development, and broaden the student’s view of the work world and employment. Students have an opportunity to explore topics and practice a variety of skills, including:

◆ The workplace and careers;
◆ Required skills for future employment; and
◆ Applying school-acquired skills to work, such as lifelong learning, managing time, positive attitude, teamwork and resolving conflict.

This manual describes the advantages and process of creating an e-mentoring program to help transition-age students connect and easily communicate with a working adult. While e-mentoring was developed for transition-age students with disabilities, this career exploration model can benefit any student transitioning from school to the work world.

2. Who benefits?

Youth and young adults:

◆ Connect to positive work role models and caring adults;
◆ Build motivation for academic learning;
◆ Enhance self-confidence; and
◆ Improve writing, computer/keyboarding, career preparation and social interaction skills.

Volunteer mentors and employers:

◆ Recognize the skills, abilities and employment potential of individuals with disabilities;
◆ Gain satisfaction from mentoring a young person;
◆ Strengthen business, community and school relations; and
◆ Become more comfortable working with a diverse community.

E-mentoring helps teachers and schools support their students’ transition and Individual Education Program (IEP) goals, enhance business and community relationships, demonstrate innovation and leadership, and provide opportunities for students to connect with business for other career exploration activities.
3. Who should read this material?
People who want to learn more about the e-mentoring process and potential partners:
- Teachers;
- Business leaders;
- Parents;
- School board members; and
- Youth-community activists.

4. Promoting Change
Like traditional mentoring, e-mentoring allows a more experienced person to foster a young person’s skills, but innovatively uses e-mail or other social media for convenient, user-friendly communication. This model successfully connects schools with local businesses and creates job shadowing, internship and classroom guest-speaker opportunities. Businesses may also participate in career exploration camps and fairs.

5. Expansion of e-mentoring
With a very successful initial experience, Pathways to Employment (PTE) is reaching for a greater impact:
- Pathways contracted with the Institute on Community Integration (ICI) at the University of Minnesota. ICI developed the E-Connect program under the Minnesota High School/High Tech E-Connect model. The E-Connect program grew from 23 students in two schools in late 2009 to 160 students in 14 programs in early 2010. Business participation increased from 50 mentors from eight companies to 95 mentors from 18 companies.1 The smallest business is a sole proprietor and the largest is a Fortune 500 company;
- Other agencies and potential collaborators are requesting more information, such as school career specialists and career center managers, the Owatonna Youth Leadership/Life Preparation School within a school program, the Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living, and the Project Search-Medtronic and Camps to Careers programs;
- E-mentoring helps expand other career exploration programs. Some Minnesota Camps to Careers offer a modified e-mentoring experience, and former e-mentoring students participate in Camps to Careers to focus their interest on a particular career cluster; and
- In addition to developing the program model the ICI has revised the E-Connect website, rewrote two existing curricula and developed four additional eight- to 10-week curricula.

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1 E-mentoring’s PTE 2009 Fourth and 2010 First Quarterly Outcome Reports.
6. History

In 2007, Pathways to Employment and National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth staff members discussed enhancing students’ transition by incorporating High School/High Tech components into PTE activities. Two Twin Cities schools were most interested in e-mentoring, so it became a PTE priority. Job shadowing, soft skills training and other career activities were already available.

Getting Started

1. Identify an overall coordinator

The coordinator leads a local e-mentoring program and brings together teachers, community partners and employers by:

- Convening interested parties to plan and implement an e-mentoring program;
- Training teachers, mentors, mentees and other participants;
- Building relationships with employers to find mentors;
- Engaging community partners to recruit employers, participate in face-to-face events, and assist with transition planning;
- Maintaining contact with teachers and employers to ensure a successful experience and serve as a resource; and
- Promoting local e-mentoring.

A teacher, business leader, parent, school board member or youth-community activist could serve as a part-time coordinator. Or, a business and school could form an ongoing partnership. Desired skills and attitudes are:

- A sincere interest in well-being of all youth;
- Strong leadership and organizational skills;
- General knowledge of mentoring programs;
- Experience in program and training oversight; and
- A willingness to teach others about disabilities and youth’s challenges.

A comprehensive guide to youth career exploration and activities is available at http://ici.umn.edu/mnhighschoolhightech/teachersguide.html.

2. Recruit teachers

_The teacher is integrally involved by:_

- Encouraging student participation;
- Establishing relationships with employers;
- Matching students with mentors;
- Introducing students to e-mentoring;
- Providing specific e-mail assignments and activities;

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2 NCWD/Youth was the U. S. Department of Labor’s HS/HT coordinator for several years and still supports states on an unfunded, limited basis. More information at http://www.ncwd-youth.info.
◆ Supervising student/mentor e-mail exchanges; and
◆ Arranging group meetings with students and mentors.

**TIP:** A paraprofessional, volunteer, aide or intern can assist the teacher by working one-on-one with students and reviewing e-mails. Students can participate in the e-mentoring experience individually or students may be grouped by age, interest and/or ability.

3. **Assess available technology**

The teacher and coordinator assess the reliability and availability of the school’s computers and e-mail program and resolve problems with technical staff. If student numbers exceed the available computers, schedule a time for each student to use the computer.

E-mail offers the best security and is the preferred communication method. Students draft their letters either in a word document that the teacher sends to the mentor or in an e-mail format with the teacher copied. While untried by existing e-mentoring programs, Facebook, LinkedIn or similar social media networks maybe utilized if participants are comfortable using them and teachers can monitor the exchanges.

4. **Design the curriculum and program guidelines**

The University of Minnesota — Institute on Community Integration offers seven-to 10-week curricula on various career exploration topics, such as “Preparing for Employment” and “Skills for the Future.” Each curriculum presents weekly lesson plans, questions for mentors, classroom activities and online resources.

The teacher may design a course utilizing an individual set or choosing weekly topics from several sets. E-mentoring can be added to an existing career program or become the start of a new one. For example, one school started with e-mentoring and then created other career exploration programs. The student/mentor relationship is limited to the classroom experience with two group meetings.

*The teacher establishes program guidelines and implements them by:*

◆ Sending parents/guardian a letter of introduction and obtaining written consent for the students’ participation, e-mail use, field trip and photo release;

◆ Determining the program curriculum and e-mail content;

◆ Specifying with the parents/guardian and student what personal information is shared with the mentor;

◆ Monitoring e-mails and the process for sending them;

◆ Establishing and articulating guidelines related to inappropriate e-mail content, such as requests to meet in person, use of personal e-mail addresses, offers of gifts or requests to borrow something, and inappropriate language; and

◆ Maintaining responsibility for mandatory reporting of potential child abuse or neglect revealed through e-mail discussions.

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3 [http://ici.umn.edu/mnhighschoolhightech/econnectcurricula.html](http://ici.umn.edu/mnhighschoolhightech/econnectcurricula.html)
5. Timeline

A successful mentoring experience requires a minimum of 10 weeks for the student/mentor relationship to develop and to schedule at least two face-to-face visits. Many classroom e-mentoring programs last a semester, which allows for 10 weekly e-mail exchanges plus further classroom discussion and visits. Camps to Careers has successfully added e-mentoring, with e-mails sent once every two weeks for the camp's duration.

Lead time is required for curriculum development, recruiting and training mentors, and matching mentors with students. For a fall mentoring program, identify a coordinator and start planning with teachers in the previous spring. During the summer, the coordinator and teacher recruit and train mentors.

Engage Employers and Partners

1. Identify potential employers

Excellent e-mentoring partners are employers with a strong community presence, active employee-volunteer program or an interest in future workforce development.

Recruit employers by:

- Asking employers who work with the school on other initiatives;
- Obtaining recommendations from workforce service providers or the school work-based learning staff;
- Contacting the area’s largest employers or ones with many entry-level jobs;
- Accessing employers through community groups such as the Chambers of Commerce and other community organizations; and
- Finding employers who match students’ career interests.

Participating employers commit human and financial resources by appointing an employer liaison, allowing employees to mentor during work time, and participating in the workplace and school meetings.

2. Request an employer liaison

The employer liaison coordinates e-mentoring activities at the employment site and could be a human resource or community outreach staff person, special projects manager or an employee interested in youth and mentoring. Employer liaisons:

- Recruit and sign-up employee volunteers;
- Work with the program coordinator to arrange onsite mentor training;
- Work with the coordinator and teacher to match mentors with students;
- Arrange for initial e-mail contacts;
- Organize mentors’ meeting with students at the employer location and at the school;
Communicate regularly with mentors to assure they remain engaged;
Work with the teacher and coordinator to address any issues;
Inform management of the program’s progress and success; and
Recognize and thank employee volunteers for their participation.

The employer liaison should have a sincere interest in the well-being of youth, leadership, interpersonal, recruiting and planning skills, experience with e-mail communication, familiarity with school programs and strong connections with co-workers and management.

3. Invite other partners
Agencies with specific expertise or local community connections can identify potential employer-partners or assist students with their next career exploration steps.

*Examples:*
- The Vocational Rehabilitation Services-Business Service Specialists have considerable local business-connections and knowledge;
- The WorkForce Center has employer connections and vocational and employment information;
- School-based transition and vocational counselors offer work-related supports and transition-age services;
- Special education cooperatives, business groups, community agencies and local colleges have an interest in youth or workforce development.

**Sign-up Mentors**

The employer-partner’s staff serve as voluntary e-mentors. They should desire to contribute to a young person’s success by offering information, acceptance and support. The mentor attends training and student-mentor events, and corresponds with the teacher and employer liaison about mentoring issues.

*Mentors act as role models and advisors by:*
- Exhibiting good writing and communication skills, promptness, reliability and dependability;
- Providing information on the work world and career-related skills;
- Encouraging students to take responsibility for their own decisions;
- Supporting students who struggle with their own issues;
- Inspiring students to achieve their potential; and
- Expecting students to give their best effort.
**TIP:** Mentors should treat the students as peers and not act like a parent or therapist. Mentors should respect personal boundaries and not give gifts or money.

*Time commitment:*
- Complete mentor application form;
- Attend a mentor training session and review the e-mentoring manual (attached);
- Attend two face-to-face meetings;
- Participate for the duration of the mentoring experience; and
- Promptly read and respond to the students’ e-mail.

**TIP:** Mentors’ schedules must accommodate weekly, scheduled communication with their students. Students may be disappointed if their mentors do not e-mail as expected.

*Requirements:*
- Contact students only through work/school e-mail exchanges and supervised employer or school-sponsored events;
- Be open to different perspectives on life, including those of diverse cultures;
- Immediately address issues concerning confidentiality, boundaries, child safety, and mentoring progress and relationships to the teacher or coordinator; and
- Send all e-mails to the students’ teacher.

**Engage Students**

A transition program’s entire class should experience e-mentoring so all connect with the community and learn more about employment and careers. Teachers should make the necessary accommodations or adaptations. Students who are challenged by basic writing skills may be paired with another student, a parent volunteer, or group of students to write e-mails.

*Students will:*
- Participate in one or more weekly e-mail exchanges;
- Engage in an e-mail dialog with a mentor on topics related to employment and to develop social interaction skills;
- Participate in classroom experiences, e-mailing and visits with mentors;
- Use their skills and creativity;
- Apply good decision making skills and seek help and support as needed; and
- Address problems with the mentor’s support.
Requirements:
◆ Contact the teacher about problems with the mentoring relationship;
◆ Only contact the mentor by school e-mail;
◆ Participate in supervised employer or school-sponsored events with the mentor;
◆ Attend mentee training; and
◆ Be open to different outlooks on life, including those from different cultures.

How e-Mentoring Works

1. Select the one-to-one or group model
   Typically, one student is matched with one mentor, providing individual attention. However, a group of students can share one mentor when:
   ◆ E-mentoring for the first time;
   ◆ More students participate than mentors;
   ◆ Several students are interested in the mentor’s career;
   ◆ Classroom assistance for students is limited;
   ◆ A student has significant challenges with reading and writing; or
   ◆ A students’ attendance is variable.
   With the group model, the students send a group e-mail, and the mentor replies to the group, not to individual students, in most cases.

2. The weekly e-mail
   Each week, the teacher selects a career and work-focused question for the mentor and student’s e-mail discussion. The University of Minnesota – Institute on Community Integration’s curriculum offers weekly discussion questions, such as “What are some tips for finding entry-level employment?” and “What is important to include on a resume?” and tips for students’ and mentors’ e-mail content. The e-mails may also have unstructured interaction around common interests to develop the mentor-student relationship.

   Students send the first e-mails to introduce themselves and describe their personal and career interests. Mentors respond with information about their job, employer and personal interests.

   Each week, the student e-mails the mentor a new discussion question, and the mentor replies. Teachers guide and monitor the process, and integrate the mentoring experience into class activities and into career exploration and awareness. Teachers review each student’s e-mail before it is sent, and receive and review the mentor’s e-mail before forwarding it to the student.

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4 http://ici.umn.edu/mnhighschoolhightech/econnectcurricula.html
**TIP:** Offer mentors ideas or prompts for responding to students’ weekly questions. For example, one ICI curriculum suggests that mentors share their own experiences of preparing for a job interview.

The teacher provides mentors with periodic updates regarding school schedules and student absences and progress. The mentor, student and teacher should always notify each other of expected absences.

### 3. Face-to-face meetings

The first meeting occurs at the business, where the mentors talk with the students about careers in their industry, conduct a tour, and give students an opportunity to see the mentor’s work area and job duties. This visit occurs within the first 3 weeks of e-mentoring. Make the tour and transportation arrangements as soon as possible; businesses require planning time. Create an agenda with an icebreaker group activity, tour and time for each student to talk with the mentor one-on-one. End the meeting with a group discussion on a career topic.

The students host the second meeting at their school, camp or transition program at the end of the e-mentoring experience. This visit allows students to practice social, home, independent living and other transition skills. A closing celebration highlights the e-mentoring program’s successes, and recognizes the employers’ and mentors’ contributions. Set this date at the program’s onset so mentors can arrange their schedules. Celebrations may have student presentations, student-prepared food, group discussions and employment-related games.

### 4. Closure

The mentors’ and students’ final e-mails review their experience and key accomplishments. Students thank the mentors for their time, and mentors give them affirmation and encouragement. These e-mails create a positive closure to the relationship.

A mentor and student who wish to continue communicating can be matched the next year or apply to other community programs offering mentoring relationships.

**TIP:** Ask student, mentor and partner participants to complete evaluation forms to improve the experience and record program successes.
7. **Resources**

1. **Youth and young adults with disabilities**
   - Online tools and information on employment, health coverage, and benefits to plan ahead and learn how work and benefits go together: [http://mn.db101.org/](http://mn.db101.org/)
   - The Disability Linkage Line provides telephone assistance and information about services, benefits, employment, health care, and more: 1-866-333-2466.
   - Online job services and supports directory: [http://www.mndisability.gov/public/content.do?term_id=139&level=1](http://www.mndisability.gov/public/content.do?term_id=139&level=1)
   - State Vocational Rehabilitation Services:
     - [http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/People_with_Disabilities/For_Youth_Young_Adults/index.aspx](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/People_with_Disabilities/For_Youth_Young_Adults/index.aspx) (Transition Services)
     - **E-mail:** VRS.CustomerService@state.mn.us
     - **Toll-free:** 1-800-328-9095
   - State Services for the Blind — VR:
     - [http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/Blind_or_Visually_Impaired/Employment_Career_Services/index.asp](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/Blind_or_Visually_Impaired/Employment_Career_Services/index.asp)
     - **E-mail:** About.Info@state.mn.us
     - **Toll-free:** 1-800-652-9000 (Voice and TTY)
   - Camps to Careers:
     - [http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/All_Programs_Services/Pathways_to_Employment/For_Service_Providers_Community_Partners/Camps_to_Careers.aspx](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/All_Programs_Services/Pathways_to_Employment/For_Service_Providers_Community_Partners/Camps_to_Careers.aspx)
   - Zones for Youth:
     - [http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/All_Programs_Services/Pathways_to_Employment/For_Service_Providers_Community_Partners/The_Zones_for_Youth.aspx](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/All_Programs_Services/Pathways_to_Employment/For_Service_Providers_Community_Partners/The_Zones_for_Youth.aspx)

2. **Employers who want to learn more about hiring people with disabilities**
   - **E-mail:** DEED.CustomerService@state.mn.us
   - **Telephone:** 651-259-7114
3. Career Exploration for Youth with Disabilities

◆ Minnesota High School/High Tech (E-Connect)
  http://ici.umn.edu/mnhighschoolhightech/default.html
  For a complete E-Connect curriculum:
  http://ici.umn.edu/mnhighschoolhightech/econnectcurricula.html
  Joe Timmons, timm0119@umn.edu, 612-624-5659
  Sharon Mulé, ssmule@umn.edu, 612-626-0335

◆ The University of Minnesota — Institute on Community Integration
  http://ici.umn.edu/
  E-mail: ici@umn.edu
  Telephone: 612-624-6300

◆ Guideposts for Success (Youth Transition):
  http://www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts

◆ The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET)
  http://www.ncset.org/
  E-mail: ncset@umn.edu
  Telephone: 612-624-2097

Sample Documents

1. E-Connect Curricula for E-Mentoring
2. Mentor recruiting memos
3. Mentor application
4. Mentee letter to a mentor
5. Mentor’s reply to mentee
6. Participant evaluation questions
e-Connect Curricula for e-Mentoring

1. Preparing for Employment
   This ten-week curriculum will give students the opportunity to begin to explore and prepare for employment and careers through online resources and the mentor relationship. Topics for discussion include resumes, job hunting, interviewing and skills for maintaining employment.

2. Finding and Keeping Employment
   In this ten-week curriculum, students will utilize online resources to explore skills necessary for securing and maintaining employment. Topics in this curriculum include strategies in the job search and developing positive workplace attitudes.

3. Skills for the Future
   This nine-week curriculum will give student the opportunity explore and practice skills foundational to employment, such as positive communication skills, time management, and goal setting. Students will discuss with mentors the critical nature of these skills in employment.

4. Lessons from “7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens”
   This ten week curriculum is based on the book by Sean Covey, and is an opportunity for a mentor and a student to explore the development of positive habits that help secure and maintain employment.

5. Using Personal Interest to Develop Professional Opportunities
   This seven-week curriculum will give students the opportunity to utilize online tools to explore careers based on personal interest and personal strengths. Students will develop a brochure providing information on their selected career.

6. Summary of Performance Portfolio
   This eight-week curriculum utilizes helpful online resources and school staff and mentor input to assist the student in developing a summary of performance portfolio that includes a plan of action for post-secondary education, employment, and community participation.

Minnesota HS/HT is part of the Minnesota’s Pathways to Employment (PTE) initiative, a collaboration of the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development, the MN Department of Human Services and the MN State Council on Disability. The PTE mission is to increase competitive employment of people with disabilities and meet Minnesota’s workforce needs by bringing together people with disabilities, employers, businesses, government and providers. Funding comes from a Competitive Employment Systems—Medicaid Infrastructure Grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The funds for this grant were authorized through the Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-170).
Mentor Recruiting Memos

Sample 1
To: All Employees
From: Mary Davis, Human Resources Coordinator, Ace Software
Date: March 31, 2004
Subject: Opportunity to Participate in E-mentoring Project

We are seeking company employees who would be interested in offering academic support and friendship via e-mail to students at South High School. The students, age 14-15, have mild to moderate disabilities, and all have the potential for productive employment as adults. This e-mentoring project is designed to help them develop some of the employment-related skills they will need in order to pursue their dreams.

E-mentoring has been taking hold at other companies throughout the country and having a positive impact on students in terms of their grades, self-esteem, and attitudes. E-mentors from Ace Software will be matched with students for weekly e-mail exchanges and two school-sponsored gatherings.

E-mentoring is a fun way for employees to make a positive difference in students’ lives. If you are interested in becoming an e-mentor or would like further information, please contact Mary Davis at mdavis@email.com.

Sample 2
To: Employees of XYZ Company
From: Mary Davis, Human Resources Coordinator
Date: March 25, 2004
Re: New Electronic Mentoring Project

Thank you for your interest in the Connecting to Success e-mentoring project. The following is some addition information about the goals of project, plus an application form. Please fill out the form and return it to: Mary Davis, Human Resources Coordinator, Room E399, mdavisson@email.com

Through this e-mentoring project, we seek to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities at South High School by:
◆ Connecting youth to positive role models in the world of work who understand their special needs
◆ Building motivation for academic learning
◆ Enhancing self-esteem
◆ Improving skills in writing, computers, and social interaction

What the project will ask of e-mentors is:
◆ An interest in helping a student learn and grow
◆ Openness to learning about disabilities
◆ A willingness to support the goals of the project
◆ A one-year commitment to participate in:
  ● 3 hours of initial orientation and training
  ● 30-45 minutes per week online
  ● 2-3 face-to-face meetings per year with students
# Mentor Application

**MINNESOTA HIGH SCHOOL/HIGH TECH E-CONNECT MENTOR APPLICATION**

This will be used to help to match you with a student

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<td>Languages: (other than English, including ASL)</td>
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<td>Why do you want to be an e-mentor?</td>
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<td>Have you had any experiences that would help you to understand the needs of youth with disabilities? If so please describe briefly:</td>
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<td>Healthcare/Human Services —</td>
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<td>Other —</td>
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<td>What were your favorite subjects in school?</td>
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<td>Do you have any special skills or talents that you could share with young people?</td>
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Institute on Community Integration University of Minnesota 04-10
Mentee Letter to a Mentor

Mentor,

How I deal with conflict at work is, if I get in a conflict with a coworker I usually walk away, or I get a supervisor and tell them the problem or issue that is going on at work between me or another person. If it’s with a supervisor, I most of the time just go and talk a walk or talk to my case manager about the situation between me and my supervisor/s. Some of the words we came up with at school are: don’t agree, disappointment, angry, controlling, and a neutral word is energy, playful. So them are just a few words that we have come up with to express conflicts.

One time I had got into a conflict with me and my supervisor about me working on the assembly line at my job, and at first she said that I could go on the assembly line, my supervisor talked to my case manager about why I was going down to my case manager’s office, my supervisor had then found out that I had went down there to get my temperature taken by the nurse at my work, my supervisor said that she did not want me on the assembly line that day. After she said that I could go on it she had changed her mind all because I had my temperature taken so that made me really mad and upset at my supervisor so I threw my work on the floor and walked off the work floor. I know that is was something stupid that I was getting mad about, but I have to learn how to control myself when there is a conflict between me and a supervisor.

So this week I had to go and take my permit test, this was my third time trying to pass, and so I said that if I don’t pass this time then I’m giving up on trying to pass this stupid permit test! So when I went on Monday I took the test, and during the middle of it I was starting to get a little anxious and started to panic so I took a couple of deep breaths and I told myself in my head that I can do this I can pass this if I really try, so after I calmed down and told myself that, I passed! In my head I was jumping up and down with joy and happiness.

Your Mentee
Mentor’s Reply to Mentee

Mentee,

Thanks for sharing your experience at work with me. The answer to your question, How I deal with conflict at work, is that I am not sure how I deal with it. Seeing as I haven’t dealt with conflict in the workplace for sometime (maybe a year), the way I would go about answering your question is to describe to you what I think I would do if I was in a situation of conflict. So here goes:

In general, I know myself to act passively in situations of conflict. I do it this way to protect myself from getting hurt further. For instance, if I were in your situation on the assembly line, I would have just said “okay, I’ll get off the floor.” I would have given in to what they wanted me to do because that would have been the easiest route to take. I am not trying to make it sound like I always act passively in situations, but in a situation such as yours I would have chosen not to make a big fuss.

One thing to keep in mind when you are in a situation of conflict is to consider whether or not it is worth it to spend your precious energy arguing. I hate to argue. Sometimes I need too, but it takes a lot of energy out of me that I would much rather spend on something else — like bicycling, or talking with friends. So, just before you think about making a “scene” or arguing with your boss think about whether or not it is worth it to try and prove the other person wrong. Usually when we (humans) act on impulse in bad situations, things tend to become worse for ourselves. It is important to sit back and think about the words before you say them. This is a really difficult thing to do. I have many friends that do not know how to do this, and they end up hurting others and their selves. Specifically at work, it is important to listen to your boss/manager. They are “supposed” to know how to best guide you in the workplace. You might not really know why he/she is telling you to do a certain thing at a certain time, but you need to trust them at least a little bit. If you trust your boss you will most likely think it is alright they are having you do a task you don’t want to do.

So, I am giving you this advice, but I am not exactly sure how much of it I actually used in the workplace. Ideally, I would act like I described in the above paragraph, but you never know, it could possibly happen that I don’t deal with a situation well at work. I think a good rule of thumb in the workplace is to make sure that you try to communicate to the best of your ability why you would like to or not to do something, and then to understand the side of the argument your boss/manager is coming from. In my experience it is those people who can see both sides of the argument that end up doing the best in life — both in their career and personal lives.

The moral of my story to you is that if you are in a situation of conflict at work sit back a take a few deep breaths (just like when you took your driving test and passed!) and evaluate what you are really feeling. After that, consider what the result of arguing your way out of a situation would be. Think about the amount of energy you would spend arguing, and decide whether or not it is worth it to you to invest that amount of energy in the conversation.

Communication is a big thing in all of this. Meaning, that if you communicate why you want to do it in a manner that your boss is able to understand, then they may allow you to do it. But, on the other hand, if you don’t communicate in a good enough fashion what you want to do and why you want to do it to your boss, then he/she will not understand your motives and will automatically go with what he/she wants you to do.

The best of luck, and congrats on passing the driver’s test!

Your Mentor
Participant Evaluation Questions

Key Evaluation Questions for Students
◆ What do student participants like and dislike about the Connecting to Success process?
◆ What are their experiences? Did students accomplish their goals?
◆ Do students “buy into” the Connecting to Success project?
◆ What recommendations do students have to improve the Connecting to Success project in the future?
◆ How has participation in Connecting to Success changed students’ outlook about their future?

Key Evaluation Questions for Teachers
◆ How well did the training help teachers to conduct Connecting to Success activities?
◆ What’s working as expected? What challenges and barriers have emerged?
◆ How have staff responded to the challenges and barriers?
◆ What do teachers who are involved in the Connecting to Success project actually do? What are their experiences?
◆ Were students with e-mentors more motivated in school?
◆ What do teachers like and dislike about the Connecting to Success process?
◆ What are their perceptions of what’s working and what’s not working?
◆ Do teachers “buy into” the Connecting to Success project? Why or why not?
◆ What do teacher’s perceptions of student participants?

Key Evaluation Questions for Mentors
◆ How well did the training support your participation in the project?
◆ What did you like about the project?
◆ What could be improved?
◆ What did you learn from participating in this project?
◆ How has your attitude changed about students with disabilities through participation in this program?
◆ Would you participate in Connecting to Success again? Why or why not?

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