E-Connect Teacher FAQs

What is E-Connect?
E-Connect is a school-based e-mail mentoring program that utilizes e-mail and school-supervised face-to-face meetings to connect local high school students with disabilities with employees from local companies. The purpose of the program is to help young adults connect with a caring adult in their community and explore topics related to careers and future employment.

For a thorough explanation, please review the Overview section of the E-Connect website at [http://ici.umn.edu/e-connect](http://ici.umn.edu/e-connect).

How long does the E-Connect program last?
Typically, the mentoring relationship is established for 10-15 weeks or about one school semester. We suggest that programs run for a minimum of 10 weeks. We have found that programs of shorter duration do not allow enough time for a significant e-mail exchange and the required face-to-face meetings.

How do I use the E-Connect curricula?
The E-Connect curricula, for use by teachers implementing the E-Connect e-mentoring program, provide:

- An easy way for students and mentors to connect;
- Extended opportunities for learning through a weekly classroom focus and classroom activities;
- Resource information and Web links to support and extend learning;
- Relevant, thought-provoking discussion topics; and
- E-Connect activities that can accommodate various learning styles and ability levels.

In addition, several segments of the curricula utilize helpful online resources and classroom activities to help students plan for future careers and postsecondary education.

Teachers typically incorporate the e-mentoring topic of the week into classroom discussion. Most teachers find it useful to spread the e-mentoring process over several days during the week. For example:

- Day One: Students and teacher discuss the topic of the week. At this time, students may also read and share e-mails received from the mentors.
- Day Two: Students draft e-mail to mentors.
- Day Three: Students finish and send e-mail to mentors.

How do I set up a program schedule?
The [Program Dates & Contact Info Worksheet](http://ici.umn.edu/e-connect) (Word document) on the Web site will assist you with scheduling the mentoring program.
What training is involved for mentors?
All mentors are required to attend a one-hour training using the mentor training material. Typically, the E-Connect Coordinator provides this training using the Mentor Training Presentation (PPT). Mentors are also asked to read the E-Connect Program Manual (PDF) and complete a short Mentor Application (Word).

How do I match mentors and students?
We suggest you use the information provided by the mentors on their applications to help you match students and mentors. Things to consider might be background, previous experiences, and interests.

Is there ongoing support for mentors?
A program coordinator is responsible for the ongoing support of the mentors and student mentees. This person may be the classroom teacher or a coordinator identified to implement the program. In some business locations, an employer liaison is identified to support the mentors within that business.

Prior to the start of the e-mentoring, the classroom teacher should send a practice e-mail to each mentor. Include in this e-mail your contact information, the contact information of the program coordinator, the program schedule, and who the mentors should contact with further questions.

What security precautions should I take?
We strongly suggest that all e-mails run through a teacher e-mail account, either by the teacher sending the e-mails or the student and mentor copying the teacher on the e-mails.

All face-to-face visits should be group visits arranged by the school and supervised by program staff.

What if the relationship doesn’t seem to be working?
If problems arise between the mentor and mentee, the first thing to do is to contact the program coordinator, who will work with you to identify the problem and look for a solution.

To date, the only relationships which haven’t worked out in E-Connect have been those where either the mentee or the mentor fails to send timely e-mails or there are excessive absences. Most students and mentors enjoy the E-Connect experience.

For more information, including the curricula, tools, samples, and more, please visit the E-Connect website at http://ici.umn.edu/e-connect.