

Mentorships and Internships

What it is: Mentorships and internships match a student with an expert or professional to explore a strength or intense interest of the student. Mentors can be school staff, parents, or community members. Mentorships can be school-based or can occur outside of school. Internships generally occur outside of school, are more structured, and have a career or vocational emphasis.

Benefits:

- Respond to a student's unique strengths and interests
- Provide opportunities for students to connect their learning to real life applications
- Build student expertise and productivity in an area of strength or interest
- Create networking opportunities for students
- Provide a way for community members to contribute to the local schools

Examples:

- Job shadowing
- Career mentorships
- Independent projects guided by a mentor

Situations where the strategy is useful:

- When a student needs intense individual services because s/he is academically well beyond his/her peers. They're also helpful if the student is self-directed, independent, and motivated to learn, although this might not be evident in under-achievers.
- When a student is ready to explore the implications for his/her strengths and interests beyond school
- For underachieving students with gifts and talents who will benefit from connections to real-life applications

Pointers:

- Match the mentor and student carefully.
- Make sure the expectations for both the student and the mentor are clear. Consider using a contract signed by the student, the mentor, the student's parents, and the educator responsible for the mentorship.
- Mentors from the community should follow all school district procedures for volunteers, including completing all necessary paperwork and going through a background check.
- Meetings with mentors should be well-planned.
- Monitor the meetings and any resultant assignments for the student regularly to ensure both the student and the mentor are honoring their commitments. Students often keep a log of their activities.
- Long-term mentorships and internships are more beneficial than short-term ones.
- Consider electronic ways to connect mentors and students when face-to-face meetings are difficult to arrange.

References/Resources

- Gilman, B.J. (2008). *Academic advocacy for gifted children: A parent's complete guide*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
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