



## **Mentorships for Students in Career Preparation**

### **Introduction**

As far back as ancient Greece, mentoring has provided opportunities for people to learn new trades and skills by working closely with experts in the field. Today, as organizations work to attract and retain young talent, this concept has continued to build and expand across all areas of career exploration and training. A recent Harvard Business Review article reports, “Research on junior to midlevel professionals shows that mentorship programs enable them to advance more quickly, earn higher salaries, and gain more satisfaction in their jobs and lives than people without mentors do.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Background Research**

Mentoring can encompass many different components of a program such as life skills coaching. The relationships formed between mentors and mentees are not only thought to be supportive and healthy, but also provide the following long-term benefits:

- Increased high school graduation rates;
- Lower high school dropout rates;
- Healthier relationships and lifestyle choices;
- Better attitude about school;
- Higher college enrollment rates and higher educational aspirations;
- Enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Improved behavior, both at home and at school;
- Stronger relationships with parents, teachers, and peers;
- Improved interpersonal skills; and
- Decreased likelihood of initiating drug and alcohol use.<sup>2</sup>

A study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program found mentored youth earned higher grades than a similar group of young people who did not have mentors.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, this study found youth in school-based mentoring programs turned in higher quality class work, did better academically (especially in science and written and oral communication) and completed more of their assignments than their peers who did not have mentors.

Mentoring has also been linked in studies to social-emotional development benefits, improvements in youth perceptions of parental relationships, and better prospects for moving on to higher education.

As related to high school students, research shows that students perform better in school and career exploration when they have added psychological and emotional support (listening, identifying problems, providing moral support and establishing trusting relationships); support for setting goals and choosing a career path (exploring students’ interests and abilities, stimulating critical

thinking, developing personal and professional potential); academic subject knowledge support (advancing students' knowledge of their chosen field both inside and outside the classroom); and a clearly identified role model (sharing life experiences and feelings, providing an opportunity to observe the mentor socially and in difficult situations).<sup>4</sup>

*Mentoring, within the context of undergraduate college students, may be defined as: Support provided to college students that entails emotional and psychological guidance and support, help succeeding in academic coursework, assistance examining and selecting degree and career options, and the presence of a role model by which the student can learn from and copy their behaviors relative to college going.*<sup>5</sup>

## **Applying the Research to Mentorships for High School Students**

EEDW supports mentoring for students pursuing their cybersecurity pathways.

1. EEDW team, working with business partners, will develop a series of 5 to 15-minute audiovisual interviews that focus on how digital and IT skills are used in careers at all entry levels. Interviews will highlight what employers are looking for in an employee and provide other tips for what students can do as they prepare for their future career.
2. Monthly, cybersecurity professionals will present real-time question and answer sessions with students to increase their comfort with STEM careers and encourage them to pursue these opportunities.
3. Business partners will develop a capstone project based on their workplace. These will be submitted to New Mexico's Higher Ed ECHS Partners for integration into their course assessments.
4. The ECHS model requires students to engage in authentic workplace experiences each year. To meet this requirement, New Mexico's Higher Ed ECHS Partners will work with business partners to schedule each student's placement virtually or onsite, depending on geographic location and availability of transportation. Of note, because the business involvement is primarily virtual, students can choose to engage in virtual workplace experiences with employers across the state.
5. Employers will schedule small group sessions with a select group of students to provide mentoring related to the development of soft skills.

The result is students will not only build digital and IT skills but also develop personal mentor/mentee relationships with prospective employers to open doors to a fully representational workforce. As literature points out, students that can experience these types of opportunities while pursuing degrees and certificates are more successful and marketable when it comes to entering the workforce.

## **Conclusion**

Considering the benefits of mentorship programs, students can learn both the technical skills necessary for cybersecurity jobs and the soft skills employers expect in the workplace.

## **Endnote**

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<sup>1</sup> De Janasz, S. &. (2015, April 27). CEOs need mentors too. Retrieved from Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/2015/04/ceos-need-mentors-too>

<sup>2</sup> MENTOR, 2009; Cavell, DuBois, Karcher, Keller, & Rhodes, Elements of effective practice in mentoring. Third Edition. Retrieved from [http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_1222](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1222)

<sup>3</sup> Tierney, J. P., Grossman, J. B., & Resch, N. L. (1995). Making a difference: An impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters. Public/Private Venture.

<sup>4</sup> Crisp, G., & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research in Higher Education*, 50(6), 525–545.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.