

# EOP Staff Mentoring Resource Booklet

- *The Power of Mentoring*
- *You're Serving as a Staff Mentor When . . .*
  - *Myths about Mentoring at CSUN*
  - *Developing a Mentoring Perspective*
- *"Mentoring on the Run": CSUN's Special Contribution to Mentoring*
  - *Mentoring Resources for EOP Staff*
  - *Mentor Training Materials for Workshops*

Faculty Mentor Program  
Professor Glenn Omatsu, Coordinator  
[glenn.omatsu@csun.edu](mailto:glenn.omatsu@csun.edu)  
c/o CSUN Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)  
[www.csun.edu/eop/fmp\\_index.html](http://www.csun.edu/eop/fmp_index.html)  
205 University Hall  
Northridge, CA 91330-8366  
(818) 677-4151

# The Power of Staff Mentors

EOP professional staff know something important about student academic success that high-ranking administrators and faculty on our campuses are just now beginning to grasp. EOP staff know about the power of mentoring.

Today, administrators are scrambling to find ways to increase graduation rates and overcome the need for remediation among freshmen. Thus, they create committees to analyze student support services and the availability of resources. They reorganize advising and counseling. They provide faculty with new resources for classroom instruction. Yet, only recently have high-ranking administrators begun to discover the impact of mentoring on student academic success.

In contrast, **EOP professional staff have known about the power of mentoring for a long time.** Some of our best mentors on campus are found in the ranks of EOP professional staff. Yet, these “academic treasures” at CSUN have yet to be discovered by higher administration.

Consider this: For a new student — especially for a student who is the first in their family to go to college — CSUN can be exciting but also intimidating places. Our campuses can also be lonely places, especially for the son or daughter of immigrants or a member of a minority community. Even simple things that experienced students take for granted can be challenging for a new student, such as finding classrooms and offices on campus, understanding school policies for registration for classes, and learning the special language of the university such as “syllabus,” “office hours,” “annotations,” and “prerequisites.”

Based on both his own experience as a student and his conversations with staff and students on his campus, EOP Director José Luis Vargas found that **the single most important factor associated with high retention and graduation rates for low-income, first-generation college students was their ability to find a mentor.** Finding a mentor not only helped students to succeed academically but also with career planning and the development of life management skills such as dealing with personal and family problems.

But finding a mentor at a big university is not easy, especially for a first-generation college student. According to prevailing thinking in the university, faculty are supposed to serve as mentors for students. But will a first-generation college student seek out a faculty mentor? A select few do, but most need the help of

others — i.e., other campus mentors — to understand how to navigate the new and unexplored corridors of the university, including developing a relationship with faculty. So where do students find these “other mentors”?

In the late 1960s, when student and community activists established programs like EOP on college campuses, one objective was to increase access to higher education for underrepresented populations such as low-income students. However, equally important was a second objective: that of providing these students with the necessary academic support services, such as mentoring, to enable them to succeed in the university. In other words, mentoring is built into the mission of EOP, and the practice of mentoring is interrelated to the mission of promoting diversity, educational equity, and inclusiveness at our university.

**A mentor is defined as a knowledgeable and experienced guide, a trusted ally and advocate, and a caring role model.** An effective mentor is respectful, reliable, patient, trustworthy, and a very good listener and communicator. EOP professional staff are among the best mentors at CSUN because we understand that our interactions with students are not simply part of our job descriptions. We see our interactions with students are opportunities **to help students discover the potential within themselves to succeed in the university and in life.** EOP staff mentors help to nurture this potential in other students.

According to Dr. Vicki Orazem, Vice Provost of the University of Alaska, mentors nurture the potential in students by **helping them make a self-assessment** of their strengths and weaknesses, by providing them **challenging new situations** to promote growth, and by **offering support** as they take up these new challenges. Mentors can become better mentors by developing deeper awareness of these three critical functions.

The following sections of this booklet cover ways that EOP staff mentors can develop greater consciousness about the mentoring we are already doing and provide suggestions for ways to educate others about the need to incorporate mentoring into strategic thinking in this period.

# You're Serving as an EOP Staff Mentor When . . .

You help your students achieve the potential within themselves that is hidden to others — and perhaps even to the students themselves.

You share stories with students about your own educational career and the ways you overcame obstacles similar to theirs.

You help students overcome their fear of a professor and help them to ask questions in a class or visit the professor during office hours.

You show a student how you learned time management to succeed when you were a student like them.

You listen to a student describe a personal problem and explore resources at the university to deal with the problem.

You help a new student understand a particularly tough bureaucratic rule or procedure — and you explain it in a way that the student is willing to come back to you to learn about other difficult regulations.

You help a new student understand how to use resources at the university, such as writing labs, tutorial centers, advising offices, and counseling centers.

You know more about a student's academic performance than what they tell you.

Please add your own insights:

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Misconceptions about Mentoring

**Misconception:** In a university, you need to be an older person with gray hair (or no hair) to be a good mentor.

**Reality:** In a university, mentors can be young or old. Some of the most outstanding mentors of students are fellow students, or Peer Mentors, who have been trained by EOP professional staff.

**Misconception:** Mentoring only happens one-to-one on a long-term basis.

**Reality:** At a big university, mentoring occurs in many different ways. Some mentoring relationships are traditional relationships involving a one-to-one setting over a long period of time. But effective mentoring can also occur in a group setting or even through a single encounter with a student. Dr. Gordon Nakagawa urges all of us to see each interaction with students as an opportunity for mentoring and to think about ways to infuse mentoring into our daily work as advisors, tutors and student assistants.

**Misconception:** Mentoring programs at universities only are for high-achieving students, especially those who are on their way to grad school.

**Reality:** All college students need mentors, but according to research faculty in universities spend most of their time working with high-achieving students. In the late 1960s, students and community activists created programs like EOP to open opportunities in higher education for low-income, first-generation college students and to provide students with necessary support services such as mentoring to help them succeed academically and serve their communities. Thus, central to the mission of EOP is the practice of mentoring and to ensure that the university meets this responsibility for all of its students.

**Misconception:** Only the person being mentored benefits from mentoring.

**Reality:** By definition, mentoring is a reciprocal relationship where both the mentor and mentee learn from each other. True mentors are those who have developed the wisdom to learn from those they mentor.

**Misconception:** EOP professional staff already have a lot of responsibilities relating to student advising and do not have the time to take on extra responsibilities relating to mentoring.

**Reality:** Mentoring is not a separate set of activities that is different from advising or other job responsibilities. Mentoring relates to consciousness

about one's work as advisor and trusted ally to students.. Without this consciousness, staff at big universities are perceived by students as bureaucrats focusing on rules, regulations, and procedures. Universities don't need more bureaucrats. Universities do need people who are student-centered and who can see and nurture the potential in others.

**Misconception:** By calling yourself a "Mentor," you become a mentor.

**Reality:** Not all university staff who work with students are mentors, even if they have that job title. Mentors are those who have developed consciousness about mentoring and in their interactions with students demonstrate respect, patience, trustworthiness, and strong communication skills, especially listening skills.

**Misconception:** To become a mentor requires a lot of time and a lot of work.

**Reality:** Becoming a mentor requires a change in consciousness — i.e., how you think about yourself and how you think about others. Workshops and training sessions can help experienced students to develop this consciousness. Mentoring is not a matter of working harder or longer or adding to your job responsibilities but seeing your work differently.

**Misconception:** At a large university, one staff mentor can help only a limited number of students. Although a mentor may want to help large numbers of students, the cold reality is that she or he can only work with a select few.

**Reality:** Each interaction with a student is a mentoring opportunity, even a single encounter with a student. The key is to develop consciousness about the importance of mentoring in your interactions with fellow students and to infuse this consciousness in your daily work as a tutor or advisor. Also, it's important for EOP staff to see themselves as part of a network of other mentors — as part of a Community of Mentors. To effectively help a particular student or a group of students, a staff mentor can draw upon this network or community. Mentoring occurs in a community, not in isolation.

# Developing a Mentoring Perspective

## Mentoring and EOP: A Shared Commitment

The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) involves a large number of people who have different kinds of roles and responsibilities. EOP professional staff provide a range of administrative, advising, and support services. Peer advisors help students access academic resources. Student assistants provide a range of support services in the office and are usually the first office staff that new students encounter. While we may differ in our work and duties, **the one role, responsibility and commitment that all of us share is to serve as mentors to EOP students.**

Although EOP has undergone various changes over the years, one thing that has remained consistent is the emphasis on mentoring. Mentoring is crucial for students' academic success and their development of life management skills. Mentoring is at the heart of the mission of EOP. **As a staff member of EOP, one of your most important roles is to serve as a mentor for EOP students.** Not only are you role models exemplifying what it means to be successful students at CSUN, but you are also potential allies and advocates for all students you encounter.

Does being a staff mentor mean that you will have to do mentoring duties in addition to the responsibilities that you already have? No, not at all. **Mentoring is not a separate set of activities** that are different from advising or working as student assistant in the office. Instead, **mentoring involves how you think and feel about students and about yourself.** Most important, mentoring deals with **how you communicate with students** in your role as EOP staff.

Moreover, mentoring does not necessarily mean that you must spend huge amounts of time with individual students; nor does it mean that you will become a mentor for every student that you meet. **What mentoring does mean is that you make every effort to ensure that every contact that you have with a student counts** — that every interaction matters. It's the quality, not necessarily the quantity, of time that you spend with students that sets apart mentoring from other kinds of activities. You can't and won't be able to be a mentor to all students, but you can **invite the possibility** of being a mentor to each student in any contact with them.

In other words, **every time that you encounter a student is a potential opportunity for mentoring.** Mentoring does not require separate meetings where you purposely act as a role model. Think about it: does it make any sense at all to say that you're going to meet for an hour to serve as a "role model" for a student? What makes more sense is to meet for an hour for advising about a student's schedule and also talking to the student about how well that student is doing in classes. **Whatever the setting or reason for meeting a student may be, through your words and actions you have the opportunity to serve as a mentor.**

**Mentoring means making a sincere effort to communicate with a student with an open heart and an open mind.** But having an open heart and open mind does not guarantee that students will return your good intentions with the same feelings or with gratitude. You will find that it's a lot easier dealing with some students than others. There will be differences in personality, attitudes and values. Sometimes these differences will be obstacles and will seem to get in the way in connecting with a student. But it's vital to remember that just as often, **these differences will be an opportunity to learn about others and about yourself.**

For both the mentee and the mentor, **the mentoring relationship is one of those rare gifts that makes much of what we do in EOP worthwhile and fulfilling.** Mentoring is a **reciprocal relationship**; both the mentor and mentee benefit and learn from each other. As a staff member of EOP, you have the opportunity to make a difference in students' lives by serving as a staff mentor.

We hope that you will welcome this challenge with the same kind of excitement, energy, maturity, and dedication that first brought you to EOP. As a staff mentor, you now have the opportunity to carry on the **legacy of EOP** and to pass this legacy on to the next generation of students.

[Adapted from "Developing a Mentoring Perspective" by Dr. Gordon Nakagawa, CSUN Faculty Mentor Program, 1999]

# Mentoring as the “Giving and Receiving of Wisdom”

- *Learning How to “Mentor on the Run” at CSUN*
  - *Building a Community of Mentors at CSUN*
  - *Promoting a Culture of Mentoring at CSUN*

When we hear the word mentoring, most of us create the following image in our minds: that of an old sage (almost always male and white with long hair and often a flowing beard) sitting for hours in a secluded space and providing advice to a young person. Of course, in the real world, mentors come from all races of people, are both young and old, female as well as male, and have hair or no hair. However, the popular and dominant image of a mentor helps us to become more aware of an even deeper stereotype we have of mentoring. We tend to define mentoring around “big moments.” Specifically, we conceptualize mentoring as one-to-one, long-term relationships involving a wizened sage transferring wisdom to a single disciple in magical moments created over long periods of interaction. In reality, mentors in our lives can be sages, but they are more likely “ordinary” people all around us. In the real world, mentoring is reciprocal and not one-way — i.e., mentoring involves an interactive process in which both the mentor and mentee benefit. Also, in the real world, mentoring is more than an isolated relationship of two individuals; most mentoring occurs in a web of relationships with others (i.e., within a community). And, perhaps most important, mentoring in the real world occurs not only in “big moments” but mainly in “little moments” — i.e., as part of our daily interactions with others. Nevertheless, our understanding of mentoring is often limited by the stereotype of what we believe it to be.

In their small book, *Mentoring: The Tao of Giving and Receiving Wisdom*, Chungliang Al Huang and Jerry Lynch remind us about the mentoring opportunities that are always all around us. They define mentoring as “the giving and receiving of wisdom” within a web of relationships. Through the interactions that mentors have with others, they share the “gift of wisdom and [have] it graciously appreciated and received by others who then carry the gift to all those

within their sphere of influence.” Mentoring, Huang and Lynch further emphasize, occurs within a community, and mentoring activities help to promote a culture of wisdom throughout this community.

According to Huang and Lynch’s expanded understanding of mentoring, each of us daily has many opportunities to serve as both a mentor and mentee with those around us. Yes, mentoring does occur in special “big moments” — those built up through relationships with a few individuals that we have worked with intensely for years — but we need to more fully recognize that most of the most powerful acts of mentoring happen during “little moments.” The “little moments” occur in our day-to-day interactions with others all around us. But to capture the potential contained in these “little moments,” we need to expand our consciousness and overcome our stereotype that mentoring consists of “big moments.”

How can this new understanding of mentoring help us at this time at CSUN? Currently, most of us feel besieged by many impersonal forces: massive budget cutbacks, increasing student fees, and uncertainty about the future. Politicians and CSU officials want faculty and students to accomplish more with fewer resources. In the midst of this turbulence, we frequently hear students and faculty talk about the need for a greater sense of community on our campus, better communication, and more opportunities for interactions. Students want faculty and other campus mentors who not only can help them advance academically but who can understand them as people. This sentiment is keenly felt by students from immigrant backgrounds and by other students who are the first generation in their families attending college. Meanwhile, many potential mentors on our campus feel they have no time to do so.

If there were ever a time to emphasize mentoring at CSUN, now is the time. Of course, the concept of mentoring by itself cannot solve all the major challenges facing our campus, whether these be responding to budget shortfalls, accelerating student graduation rates, or promoting educational equity and diversity. However, an emphasis on mentoring — or more specifically, the creation of a “culture of mentoring” at CSUN — could help to create the conditions necessary to unleash the creativity and energy of students, staff, faculty, and administrators across our campus.

Still, the persistent stereotype that mentoring consists only of “big moments” holds us back from advancing and seeing all the potential “little moments” of mentoring surrounding us.

More than a decade ago, following a series of campus townhall meetings, Dr. Gordon Nakagawa coined the concept of “mentoring on the run” to capture the “little moments” of mentoring already happening on our campus. These “little moments” are embedded in the work of some faculty, staff, and student peer mentors who consciously use each interaction with others on our campus as a mentoring opportunity. Countering the widespread belief that mentoring at a large, commuter campus can only impact a handful of students, Dr. Nakagawa found faculty who had embedded “little moments” of mentoring in their classroom instruction and their informal interactions with students outside the classroom. He found professional staff who had infused mentoring into their work as helpers of students. He found student peer mentors who adeptly helped fellow students access campus resources and maneuver through the bureaucratic maze of the university.

During the past decade, the Faculty Mentor Program has strategically focused on increasing awareness about the power of these “little moments” of mentoring and training faculty, staff, and student peer mentors in this approach. We believe that “mentoring on the run” — rather than representing a stunted or limited form of mentoring — is an advanced form of mentoring that is ideally suited to our large, commuter campus. Moreover, because so much of the existing research on the importance of mentoring focuses on the “big moments,” we at CSUN can greatly contribute to the mentoring literature by developing insight into the power of the “little moments.” Thus, our current efforts to advance understanding of “mentoring on the run” here at CSUN may have implications far beyond our campus.

As we develop our capacity to “mentor on the run,” we will be able to change the deeply ingrained image of mentoring within our minds. Gradually, a new image will take shape — one that is rooted in the reality of the little mentoring moments and the “giving and receiving wisdom” in our daily interactions with others. This new image will not only center on the power of “little moments” of mentoring but the importance of building a “community of mentors” here at CSUN and promoting a “culture of mentoring” on our campus. We can all be part of this change.

# ***Mentoring on the Run:***

## **How CSUN Staff and Faculty Are Responding to the Special Challenge of Mentoring at CSUN**

“Mentoring on the Run” is a concept coined by Dr. Gordon Nakagawa, CSUN Faculty Mentor Coordinator from 1997-2000, to respond to the challenges facing staff and faculty at our campus. At a series of townhall meetings in 1997 and 1998, Dr. Nakagawa asked several critical questions: How can we mentor, given the realities of a mostly commuter campus and concerns about faculty workload? How can we use existing mentoring resources effectively? How can we increase our institutional commitment to mentoring? Here are some of the gleanings from these meetings:

- At a large institution, mentoring works best when it is infused in everyday faculty and staff interactions with students (i.e., teaching and advising) rather than through formal programs.
- Mentoring can and does occur everyday, in many forms and many ways. Mentoring can take place in brief, not only extended, encounters. Brief contacts may have a powerful impact on students (not only first meetings, but incidental contacts).
- Mentoring often works well when it is done with a purpose: developing a portfolio or research project, pursuing a common interest (ranging from the political to the recreational). Just as often, mentoring without a specific purpose can and does work (e.g., being available as a “sounding board”).
- Mentoring can be encouraged by building “learning communities” within disciplines.
- Issues related to diversity and equity are central for mentoring on our campus. Sometimes diversity is seen as a problem rather than an opportunity for enriching teaching and mentoring.
- In the face of a range of competing demands — workload, budget cuts, RTP process — mentoring (and students) may come to be seen as a burden rather than as central to the mission of education.
- The timing of mentoring opportunities is often crucial: mentoring may follow a developmental arc (e.g., mentoring first-time freshmen may be different from mentoring upper-division majors).
- Students most in need of mentoring are those who “fall between the cracks” (e.g., under-prepared students). In fact, research shows that teachers spend the most time with high-achieving students.
- Effective mentoring can be characterized as:
  - a sincere desire to be open to the diverse needs of students;
  - belonging to a village where wise elders teach their children, such as to swim in a river inhabited by crocodiles;
  - requiring the efforts of only one person;
  - student-centered;
  - relationship-building;
  - related to, but not synonymous with teaching, advising, tutoring, counseling;
  - continually growing and open to ongoing learning (both the mentor and mentee);
  - collaborative, not hierarchical;
  - a passionate involvement with the well-being of students;
  - invitational rather than adversarial.

# The Power of Mentoring

By Shelly Thompson, Director of Student Services Center, EOP  
*College of Humanities*

One of our finest “academic treasures” at CSUN is the connection that staff have with students. Some of our best mentors on campus are found in the ranks of our staff. Consider this: For a new student, CSUN can be an exciting but also intimidating place. Even the simple things we take for granted on a daily basis can be challenging for a new student or as students seek assistance. The little things, like finding a classroom, locating faculty offices or campus procedures are often new to many of our students. We often speak our own “university language” and we can periodically forget that students may not have achieved fluency.

You may be asking yourself, “What is a mentor?” A mentor is defined as a knowledgeable and experienced guide, a trusted ally and advocate, and a caring role model. According to prevailing thinking in the university, only faculty serve as mentors for students. While this level of mentoring is occurring across campus, students may not always connect with a faculty member right away. Most students need the help of a team of mentors and this is where we can all play a critical role. We can approach our duties with a mentoring attitude; an overriding desire to guide students that is manifested in our behaviors toward them. We can serve as their “guides” as they learn to understand how to navigate the new and unexplored corridors of the university.

The next question you will ask is, “How can I serve as mentor to students who visit my department or program for assistance?” Once we see the value of mentoring, it takes very little effort to maintain it. Becoming a mentor requires only a change in consciousness. Dr. Gordon Nakagawa termed these types of interactions with students “Mentoring on the Run.” An effective mentor is respectful, reliable, patient, trustworthy and a good listener and communicator. Staff mentors see their interactions with students as opportunities to help students discover the potential within themselves to succeed in the university and in life. This is both empowering for the student and rewarding for the mentor. At its very core mentoring is a reciprocal relationship in which both parties grow and learn.

Here are a few examples of opportunities that are available to mentor students within our daily interactions...

*You help students overcome their fears by educating them about locations, key people such as faculty or professional staff advisors, campus resources or campus procedures.*

*You seek to find out the question the student really needs the answer to.*

*You actively listen to a student and help them connect with campus resources so that they can resolve a need or concern.*

*You help a student understand our bureaucratic rules and procedures-and you explain it in a way that the student is willing to come back to you to learn more in the future.*

*You follow through on a referral and make sure that the student really understands where they need to go and whom they need to see.*

For more information on mentoring, please contact Shelly Thompson at [shelly.thompson@csun.edu](mailto:shelly.thompson@csun.edu) or x4784. This handout is adapted from the *CSUN Staff Mentoring Resource Booklet* from FMP/EOP.

# What Is EOP, and Who Are EOP Students?

By Glenn Omatsu

At CSUN, EOP (Educational Opportunity Program) serves as the conscience of the university and the center for innovation and creativity. EOP has served these two important roles for four decades.

EOP serves as the conscience of CSUN by reminding administrators and faculty – sometimes gently and other times loudly – of their fundamental responsibilities to serve the needs of low-income students, to carry out the university’s mission of advancing diversity and educational equity, and to defend the right of all people in California to a college education.

EOP serves as the center for innovation at CSUN by pioneering initiatives relating to admissions, instruction and pedagogy, student services, community outreach, community service, and other aspects of university life. Today, many initiatives launched by EOP have become standard practices at CSUN. These include student advising, mentoring and tutorial projects, transitional programs to help freshmen succeed in college, pedagogical innovations to improve learning outcomes, and retention strategies to increase student persistence rates for graduation.

For the past decade, EOP is best known for its innovative approaches in working with “special-admit” freshmen through its Bridge Transitional Programs.

“Special-admit” freshmen are a subset of EOP students who were admitted to CSUN by EOP based on their high motivation and capacity to deal with life obstacles despite having low grades and test scores in high school. To help these students succeed at CSUN, EOP during the past decade reorganized its Bridge Transitional Programs to emphasize long-term learning communities and linked and integrated curricula – all built on the foundation of mentoring.

Today, growing numbers of officials in the CSU system are recognizing CSUN EOP as one of the system’s foremost models of a “learning-centered” program. EOP has gained this recognition due to its innovative approach that integrally links together its admission process, its student services, and its classroom academics to promote success for its students.

Officially, here is how EOP defines itself on its CSUN website: “EOP designs, administers, and supports programs that deliver access and retention services to CSUN students. Established in the Fall of 1968 by a legislative mandate, EOP focuses on highly motivated low-income, first-generation college students, a population that not only reflects the diversity of CSUN's feeder communities, but also the diversity of the university itself. Currently the total undergraduate enrollment of EOP students is approximately 2650 students (8% of university population).”

At CSUN in the late 1960s, student activists and community supporters embedded mentoring into the founding mission of EOP. Mentoring permeated all aspects of EOP’s work with students. For example, EOP founders connected the admission of low-income students from historically disadvantaged communities to retention services to enable them to succeed. Moreover, for EOP founders, mentoring did not refer to traditional one-to-one matching programs with designated “mentoring times.” Instead, mentoring was infused into all interactions of staff and peer mentors working with students. These EOP mentors worked together as a community and in the process created a distinct EOP culture of mentoring on this campus. Today, the core principles of the CSUN Faculty Mentor Program – “mentoring on the run,” building a “community of mentors,” and promoting a “culture of mentoring” on our campus – are drawn from the founding mission of EOP and its cornerstone of mentoring.

Who, then, are today’s EOP students? Officially, CSUN administrators define them as low-income students who are the first in their families to attend college. In contrast, EOP leaders define their students as much, much more. First, EOP students are high potential students. They are students who have been admitted into EOP through its holistic and deliberative admissions process involving several steps, including group and individual interviews. Second, EOP students who participate in the Bridge Transitional Programs for freshmen are students who embrace RRAM: the values of Respect, Responsibility, (positive) Attitude and Maturity. Third, EOP students, as a result of working with mentors, want to give back to EOP and the home communities that nurtured them.

Overall EOP is a vital part of our university. All students, all faculty, and all staff at CSUN benefit from the existence of EOP. And all people in California benefit from the accomplishments of EOP students.

*Mentor Training Materials:*

## Who Are Our Mentors?

**Directions:** [1] **Write the names** of any and all individuals who have served as mentors in your life; [2] **circle the name of *one* person** who has been especially important or influential in your academic and/or personal growth; [3] **identify one or two characteristics** that describe your mentor(s).

Who?

Characteristics?

---

Based on your description of mentors and their characteristics, discuss the *process of mentoring*. What does it mean to say that we are engaged in a “mentoring” relationship? What do mentors do in practice?

*Mentor Training Materials:*

**“Mentoring on the Run”**  
**Recognizing the “Little Moments” of Mentoring**

**As an EOP Staff Member working with students, I’m mentoring when . . .**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

*Mentor Training Materials:*

**Learning How to Use Each Interaction with a Student – No Matter How Brief -- as a Mentoring Opportunity**

As a EOP Staff, I already practice “mentoring on the run” when I . . .

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

During this semester, I will enhance my skill at “mentoring on the run” by doing the following small things in my interactions with students:

- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

*Mentor Training Materials:*

## **Working with Challenging Students**

### **Learning How to Use Your Community of Mentors as a Resource**

Identify which of the following types of students will be the most challenging for you to work with (answer “yes” or “no”):

- Hard-headed students (resistant to new approaches)
  - Arrogant students (think they know everything)
  - Very quiet students
  - Students who don't follow up on your suggestions
  - Students who are not doing well but won't ask for help
  - Students who become too dependent on you
  - Class clowns
  - Students with severe personal-family problems
  - Other students, specifically:
- 

In your community of mentors, which fellow Peer Mentor can help you in dealing with students you identified as most challenging?

## *Mentor Training Materials:*

### *Emphasizing a “Culture of Mentoring” in EOP Offices*

Many EOP students describe their visits to EOP offices as different from their visits to other campus offices. They say that EOP staff, peer advisors, and student assistants better help them with problems than people in other offices. Many EOP staff members say that this approach to serving students is due to the “culture of mentoring” that is built into the mission of EOP. Identify three important characteristics of this EOP “culture of mentoring.”

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Based on ideas shared by others in your “community of mentors,” write down at least three more important characteristics that define EOP’s “culture of mentoring.”

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In the next week, hold a follow-up discussion with the “community of mentors” in your office (or work unit) and collectively identify the three most important mentoring characteristics that you want students who visit your office to feel.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## *Mentor Training Materials:*

### **Investigating a “Culture of Mentoring” on Campus**

Visit and quickly observe about three to five offices on your campus to identify both positive and negative examples of a “culture of mentoring.” Find at least one example of an office with a positive “culture of mentoring” for students and only one example of a negative “culture of mentoring.” If you cannot find any positive examples, identify offices that have “mixed” cultures with both positive and negative elements.

Campus offices with a positive “culture of mentoring” have the following characteristics:

- Students hang out in these offices regularly and visit them frequently, even when they don’t need to go there for official business.
- Staff in the office don’t have the mainstream mentoring mindset that believes mentoring of students only occurs formally through one-on-one meetings and designated “mentoring times”; instead, staff have mastered the alternative mindset that mentoring occurs in every interaction with students, no matter how brief.
- Everyone in the offices emphasizes “human interactions” in their encounters with students.
- Staff — especially student assistants — answer the phone with a smile.
- If the office has a reception area for student visitors, the space doesn’t look like a dentist’s waiting room or the DMV waiting area.
- Even though everyone in the office is busy, all staff are still able to answer students’ questions — with a smile.
- There is remarkable consistency in behaviors and attitudes between the highest-ranking person in the office (boss, manager, director, etc.) and the lowest-ranking person (e.g., student assistant).
- Staff interact with each other as a “community of mentors” — they help each other, nurture each other, and provide support without having to be told to do so.
- Visitors often hear warm laughter in the office.
- Staff working in this office — especially student assistants — seem to like working there.
- Based on your brief observations, if you were to ask a student visitor to describe the “culture of mentoring” in this office with three adjectives, what three adjectives would they say?

*Mentor Training Materials:*

## **Avoiding Mentor Burn-out**

### **Appreciating Mentoring as a Reciprocal Activity**

Mentoring is defined as a reciprocal relationship. According to Huang and Lynch, mentoring is “the giving and receiving of wisdom.” Mentors who burn out are those who see mentoring as only giving.

As an EOP Staff mentor, make a list of at least five things that you are giving those whom you mentoring.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

As an EOP Staff mentor, make a list of at least seven things that you are receiving from those whom you are mentoring.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Note: If it is easier for you to identify what you are giving than what you are receiving, take the time to reflect on what you are gaining by mentoring students to avoid “mentor burn-out.”

*Mentor Training Materials:*

## **Avoiding Mentor Burn-out**

### **Appreciating Your Web of Mentoring Relationships**

In western societies, mentoring is stereotyped as a one-to-one relationship involving one mentor interacting with a single mentee. In reality, all mentoring occurs in a web of relationships. This web provides both a network of support and a network of resources. Becoming more conscious of your web of mentoring relationships is one way to counteract “mentor burn-out,” especially when confronted with a particularly difficult problem. In your work as an EOP staff mentor, what is your “web of mentoring relationships”? How can this web help you when you are faced with a particularly challenging situation?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

# **As a Mentor, How Do You Make Students Feel?**

*People will forget most of what you tell them,  
but they will never forget how you made them feel.*  
- Prof. Bridget Sampson

**By Glenn Omatsu**

According to Communication Studies researchers, students quickly forget more than 90% of what their professors say in classrooms. This research finding has enormous implications not only for those who teach classes but also for those who make presentations, those who work as academic advisors, those who are activists in communities, and those who raise children. But before teachers, advisors, parents, and activists despair about the difficult challenge facing them in educating others, another research finding brings hope. According to Communications Studies Professor Bridget Sampson, “People will forget most of what you tell them, but they will never forget how you made them feel.”

Professor Sampson’s statement raises intriguing questions for all mentors: As a mentor, how do you make students feel? Or, more specifically, through your interactions with students, what do students experience? When you meet with students, where do you put most of your attention: on preparing the content of the information you present to them or on reflecting on the factors that influence how students feel about their interactions with you?

EOP Director José Luis Vargas has long emphasized the necessity for all mentors who work with EOP students to be student-centered. Being student-centered means that mentors understand how students experience interactions with them. It means that they show students that they care about them. It also means that mentors are willing to make adjustments – both small and big – to better interact with students. Small adjustments are easy for mentors to make, and these small changes can have big impacts on how students experience mentoring. Consider the following examples and consider how only two or three small changes made by mentors can affect what students experience.

In different classrooms, Professor A and Professor B present the same material through an old-style lectures. Professor A lectures behind his podium. He arrives

to class precisely at the beginning of class and stops lecturing precisely at the end of class when he exits the classroom. He never smiles during his lecture. Professor B arrives to her classroom ten minutes early and chats with a few students who have also arrived early. She smiles at other students as they arrive to class. Although there is a podium in the class, she does not stand behind it. When class ends, she stays for a few minutes to talk to a few students. In which classroom do students feel more connected with the professor? Do students' feelings affect how much they learn in each classroom?

In different offices on a college campus, Advisor A and Adviser B meet with individual students for 15 minutes each to help them set up their schedule of classes for the coming semester. In Advisor A's office, she has students sit across from her large desk. During the 15-minute meeting, Advisor A talks for 12 minutes giving the student advice about which classes to take and detailed information about new university policies. In Advisor B's office, he has the student sit in a chair next to him so that both of them can look at papers on his desk. Advisor B talks for six minutes, and for the remainder of time he listens as the student talks about how he did in his classes during the past semester and challenges in his personal and family life that are affecting his academic performance. How does each student feel about the meeting with each advisor? Do the students' feelings affect what they learn from the advisor? Will these feelings influence whether the student will hold a follow-up meeting or contact the advisor for more information?

In one Peer Mentor Program helping freshmen, two peer mentors are asked to hold weekly meetings with a group of about 12 freshmen. Each meeting lasts about 30 minutes. Peer Mentor A uses the time in his meeting to present important information. He emphasizes college policies, reviews rules and regulations of the program that the freshmen are in, and expresses praise to a few students for doing well in their classes. Peer Mentor B uses her meeting as a time for students to get to know her more and to get to know each other better. She conducts an icebreaker at the beginning of the meeting. She holds a discussion, asking all participants how they are doing in classes and what challenges they are facing. She relates points from the discussion to college policies and rules and regulations in the program. From which meeting do students experience positive feelings? From which meeting do students gain the most information?

In different community groups, two activists are in charge of meetings consisting of about 15 immigrant parents. Activist A knows that the people coming to her meeting are very busy, so she begins her meeting on time and focuses on covering

all the agenda points in 90 minutes. Activist B also realizes that people are busy. Even though her group has been meeting for about six months, she begins the meeting with a short activity suggested by participants on a rotating basis to help them know each other better so they can work together more effectively. Activist B also brings small snacks to her meeting. At which meeting do participants feel more comfortable? From which activist do they learn more?

The above examples point to the importance of very small things that teachers, advisors, peer mentors, and community activists can do to promote positive feelings in the people they interact with. Experienced mentors realize that these kinds of small steps can improve the quality of interactions with people they are helping, and positive feelings can lead to more opportunities for sharing knowledge. More importantly, positive feelings make people – especially students – feel more comfortable, allowing them to reconnect with mentors to follow up with questions and on things they don't quite understand.

The work of teachers, advisers, community activists, and parents becomes more powerful when they learn how to infuse mentoring into their work. And even “little moments” of mentoring can have great impacts by changing how people feel about themselves and about others.

# Discussion: Are You Using All Your Strength as a Freshman?

Some freshmen are having problems in Fall Semester because they are not using all of their strength to do well in their first year of college. Students need to learn how to use both their “inner strength” and their “outer strength.”

## Using All Your Strength

A young boy was walking with his father along a country road. When they came across a very large tree branch, the boy asked, "Do you think I could move that?"

His father answered, "If you use all your strength, I'm sure you can."

The boy tried mightily to lift, pull, and push the branch, but he couldn't budge it.

Discouraged, he said, "Dad, you were wrong. I can't do it." His dad said, "Try again."

This time, as the boy struggled with the task, his father joined him. Together they pushed the branch aside.

"Son," the father said, "the first time you didn't use all your strength. You didn't ask me to help."

This is an important lesson. There are many things we can't do alone, but that doesn't mean we can't get them done. We're all surrounded by resources that can be mobilized to help us achieve our goals including family, friends, and faith.

Sometimes we fail to ask for help because of pride or stubbornness. Sometimes we think it's a sign of weakness to admit we need a hand. And sometimes we don't even think about asking for help. Whatever the reason, it's a waste.

It's important that we learn to use all our strength. This includes inner resources such as discipline, courage, and even love. It also includes outer resources. Just as we should be willing to help others, we should be willing to ask the help of others. It's one of the great things about being human.

*Michael Josephson from "Character Counts"*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### *Mentoring Survey for EOP Staff*

According to one longtime CSUN administrator, the single most important factor for students' academic success on this campus is their capacity to find mentors.

- I agree with this statement.
- I don't agree with this statement.
- I don't know.
- I don't understand what this administrator means.

In your first year of college, did you want to find mentors on this campus?

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

Check the statement that best described you at that time.

- As a new college student, it was important for me to do everything by myself.
- As a new college student, I wanted to learn how to use the help of others.
- As a new college student, I wanted to learn how to do things by myself while also using the help of others.

How could mentors have helped you in your first year of college (check all answers that apply)?

- Meet with me and both listen and talk to me.
- Meet with me and do all the talking.
- Give me advice about career plans.
- Give me suggestions about campus resources.
- Provide guidance to me about dealing with personal and family problems.
- Help me understand academic expectations in college.
- Give me advice about how to work with mentors on campus
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- I am not interesting in having mentors help me.

What are the three most important qualities defining a good mentor for college students?

- |   |  |                                      |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic expertise | <input type="checkbox"/> Good listener | <input type="checkbox"/> Resourceful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kind               | <input type="checkbox"/> Approachable  | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Experienced        | <input type="checkbox"/> Strict        | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic          | <input type="checkbox"/> Patient       | <input type="checkbox"/> Challenging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others: _____      |  |                                      |

For a college student, which of the following people make the best mentors?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professors                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Advisors and other CSUN staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More experienced college students | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other family members              | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends from high school      |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### *Mentoring Survey for College Students*

According to one longtime CSUN administrator, the single most important factor for students' academic success on this campus is their capacity to find mentors.

- I agree with this statement.
- I don't agree with this statement.
- I don't know.
- I don't understand what this administrator means.

In your first years of college, do you want to find mentors on this campus?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Check the statement that best describes you at this time.

- As a relatively new college student, it's important for me to do everything by myself.
- As a relatively new college student, I want to learn how to use the help of others.
- As a relatively new college student, I want to learn how to do things by myself while also using the help of others.

How would you want mentors to help you in your first years of college (check all answers that apply)?

- Meet with me and both listen and talk to me.
- Meet with me and do all the talking.
- Give me advice about career plans.
- Give me suggestions about campus resources.
- Provide guidance to me about dealing with personal and family problems.
- Help me understand academic expectations in college.
- Give me advice about how to work with mentors on campus
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- I am not interested in having mentors help me.

What are the three most important qualities defining a good mentor for college students?

- |   |  |                                      |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic expertise | <input type="checkbox"/> Good listener | <input type="checkbox"/> Resourceful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kind               | <input type="checkbox"/> Approachable  | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Experienced        | <input type="checkbox"/> Strict        | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic          | <input type="checkbox"/> Patient       | <input type="checkbox"/> Challenging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others: _____      |  |                                      |

For a college student, which of the following people make the best mentors?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professors                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Advisors and other CSUN staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More experienced college students | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other family members              | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends from high school      |

The EOP staff who gave you this survey also filled it out. Are you interested in how they answered each of these questions?

- Yes, I am interested
- No, I am not interested

# What Is the Difference Between a “C Student” and an “A Student”?

Most freshmen associate getting A’s in classes with the following things:

- Reading all assigned materials
- Underlining and highlighting important materials in assigned readings and taking notes
- Starting on assignments early and not finishing them at the last minute
- Taking careful notes from professors’ lectures and reviewing the notes regularly
- Knowing how to study for tests
- For essay assignments and research papers, starting early enough to write several drafts
- Studying at least three hours for each hour spent in a class
- Always being well-prepared in classes by having the required books and other materials
- Having some fun in college, but not to the neglect of studying

Most freshmen associate getting C’s in classes with the following things:

- Doing just enough work to get by
- Doing some assigned readings but not all
- Starting on assignments late and sometimes not completely finishing them
- Not always paying attention in class
- Doing some studying for tests
- For essay assignments and research papers, turning in first drafts as final papers
- Not always having all the required books and other materials for classes
- Doing some studying but making sure that studying doesn’t interfere with having fun

**In reality**, freshmen who follow the above guidelines for getting C’s in their classes will end up failing most of their classes.

**In reality**, experienced students know that the difference between getting A’s and getting C’s in classes also depends on learning how to “study smart.” To learn how to “study smart,” turn this paper over.

# Learn How to “Study Smart” to Get A’s Rather Than C’s

Here are some things that experienced CSUN students suggest:

- **Set Goals:** Each semester before your classes begin, set goals. What grades do you want? What do you need to do to get that grade? Remember that no experienced student sets a goal of getting a C. Those who have a goal to “just get by” are freshmen who are usually gone after their first semester of college.
- **Go to All Your Classes — Don’t Miss Classes:** One experienced CSUN student said: “When I was a freshman, I used to think I didn’t need to go to all of my classes all the time. I used to take days off like I did in high school. Now that I’m a junior, I don’t ever miss any classes. Why? When I miss a class, I have really missed more than one session, and I have a lot of work to do just to catch up with everything that I missed that day. I’ve found that it’s a lot easier to go to class all the time so that I don’t have extra work to do.”
- **Spend a Lot of Time on Campus and Use All Campus Resources:** Unlike freshmen who hurry to leave campus right after classes, experienced students spend as much time on campus as possible. Experienced students use all resources on campus, such as advising, writing labs, the library, tutorial services, career counseling, and personal counseling.
- **Learn How to Form Study Groups:** For difficult classes, experienced students participate in study group with fellow students rather than trying to master hard materials by themselves.
- **Find a Mentor on Campus:** EOP Director José Luis Vargas states that the single most important factor determining whether an freshman will graduate is their ability to find a mentor on campus. Mentors can be professors, but they can also be staff members and even experienced students. Mentors are especially valuable for first-generation college students.
- **Visit Professors and Staff in Their Offices:** Experienced CSUN students get to know professors and staff and visit them in their offices. Professors and staff can provide information about job opportunities and can offer advice about career development and life enrichment.

# Talking with Professors:

## *Some Suggestions for EOP Freshmen*

During this semester, how many times have you done the following things in your classes?

Asked questions to professors: \_\_\_ times

Participated in class discussions: \_\_\_ times

Talked to professors before or after class: \_\_\_ times

During this semester, how many times have you visited your professors during office hours?

\_\_\_ Never

\_\_\_ Once

\_\_\_ Two or three times

\_\_\_ More than four times

What are the main reasons that freshmen do not visit their professors during office hours?

\_\_\_ They don't know what to say or do

\_\_\_ They are afraid

\_\_\_ They are too busy to go

\_\_\_ They are doing well in class and don't need to talk to their professors

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Why is it important for EOP freshmen to learn how to talk with their professors and visit them during office hours? Write down at least three important things.

From discussing this question with fellow EOP freshmen, write down three more important things that you heard.

Write down two examples of "lower-level questions" that you can ask in your classes. (See other side for examples)

Write down two examples of "higher-level questions" that you can ask in your classes. (See other side for examples)

# A Guide to Asking Good Questions

## *Lower-level Questions*

**Knowledge** – identification and recall of information

- Who, what, when, where how \_\_\_\_\_?
- Describe \_\_\_\_\_

**Comprehension** – organization and selection of facts and ideas

- Retell \_\_\_\_\_ in your own words.
- What is the main idea of \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Higher-level Questions*

**Application** – use of facts, rules, principles

- How is \_\_\_\_\_ an example of \_\_\_\_\_?
- How is \_\_\_\_\_ related to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why is \_\_\_\_\_ significant?

**Analysis** – separation of a whole into component parts

- What are the parts or features of \_\_\_\_\_?
- Classify \_\_\_\_\_ according to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Outline/diagram \_\_\_\_\_.
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ compare/contrast with \_\_\_\_\_?
- What evidence can you list for \_\_\_\_\_?

**Synthesis** – combination of ideas to form a new whole

- What would you predict/infer from \_\_\_\_\_?
- What ideas can you add to \_\_\_\_\_?
- How would you create/design a new \_\_\_\_\_?
- What might happen if you combined \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_?
- What solutions would you suggest for \_\_\_\_\_?

**Evaluation** – development of opinions, judgments, or decisions

- Do you agree \_\_\_\_\_?
- What do you think about \_\_\_\_\_?
- What is the most important \_\_\_\_\_?
- Prioritize \_\_\_\_\_.
- How would you decide about \_\_\_\_\_?
- What criteria would you use to assess \_\_\_\_\_?

# Appreciating Our Interactions with Freshmen

*By Glenn Omatsu*

Since 1995, I've had the privilege and honor of teaching freshmen. I consider it a privilege because not many faculty have this opportunity. I consider it an honor because not many faculty appreciate the challenge, the excitement and the joy connected with interacting with freshmen daily.

The freshmen that I interact with are members of the EOP Bridge community and are the first from their low-income families to attend college. In addition, most are "special-admit" students with high potential – i.e., they are freshmen with strong motivation to do well in college despite having low grades in high school. The EOP Bridge Transitional Program is built on a foundation of mentoring, and through membership in EOP the freshmen in my classes are part of a powerful, supportive community.

The following are quick suggestions for faculty and peer mentors who work with freshmen. The suggestions are based on my own experiences and from research in the fields of teaching-learning, mentoring, and cognitive science.

- ***Freshmen want to be involved in communities (and relationships) that make learning possible.*** For faculty and peer mentors, it's important to help freshmen forge a community with each other in the classroom and within the overall program they are part of. To promote relationship-building and community-building, faculty and peer mentors need to infuse mentoring into all daily interactions with students, especially the smallest of interactions. For faculty, this means incorporating mentoring into their work as teachers and scholars. For peer mentors, this means realizing that some of their most powerful mentoring moments may occur in small conversations with students outside the classroom. Faculty and peer mentors also need to remember that building positive relationships and a close and supportive community takes time, especially in terms of dealing with issues of trust in a new environment.
- ***Freshmen are very observant and in their early stages as college students learn a lot through their observations and interactions. Specifically, they learn about what a mentor is, not by what mentors say but by observing what mentors do.*** For the first few days (and weeks) in a new class of freshmen, faculty and peer mentors may say that their students don't say very much. However, it's more accurate to state that freshmen are observing a lot and reaching conclusions based on what they see. Thus, for faculty and peer mentors, it's important to transform their observations into teaching moments. For example, most freshmen begin a class with only a vague notion of what mentors are. They learn about mentors not by what faculty and peer mentors say but by what they see faculty and peer mentors do, especially in interactions with students. Students in initial class sessions notice whether peer mentors smile or do not smile, greet or do not greet students, and pay attention or look bored during class sessions. From these observations, students draw conclusions about peer mentors and the meaning of mentoring.

- ***Freshmen want to be treated with respect as young adults and not as “kids.”*** It is not unusual to hear a handful of peer mentors in private conversations refer to the freshmen they’re working with as “kids” even though peer mentors are only a few years older than freshmen. These same peer mentors would be horrified if faculty in their upper-division classes referred to them as children. More often than not, words are connected to mindsets and mindsets influence behavior. Freshmen – like all college students – want to be respected. And freshmen – like other adults – are able to discern which people treat them with respect and which people do not.

- ***Freshmen (and, in fact, all people) don’t learn things linearly.*** Although this may seem self-evident, it’s important to realize that our university (and the U.S. education system as a whole) is structured around a model of linear learning. For example, a college degree is based on the accumulation of units of credit, with each course having specific learning outcomes. Majors involve completing a sequence of courses, which are organized into levels based on linear progression. Of course, in reality, human learning is marked by moving both forward and backward, by experiencing leaps in consciousness, by layering new levels of understanding on previous knowledge, and by both learning and un-learning.

- ***Freshmen are grappling with the contradiction of striving to become independent while also realizing that they are dependent on others.*** Many freshmen believe that they have to deal with this contradiction by themselves and that achieving independence means not asking anyone for help. Mentors can play a powerful role in helping freshmen reframe this contradiction. Mentors can show how independence comes from using the help of others.

- ***Freshmen eagerly want to transform themselves from high school students into college students by developing better thinking skills and new behaviors.*** To help freshmen transform themselves, faculty and peer mentors should watch for teaching and mentoring moments, both small and large. For example, while freshmen recognize that their decisions have consequences, they sometimes don’t see the consequences until after they have happened. Mentors who have been in similar situations can help them improve thinking. Similarly, to deal with dilemmas in their lives, freshmen usually perceive only two alternatives, an “either-or” solution. Mentors can help them explore other possibilities. Faculty and peer mentors should also watch for opportunities to help freshmen develop the higher-level qualities of compassion and empathy, which have been called essential survival skills for human beings in the twentieth century.

- ***Freshmen are strongly influenced by peers.*** According to researchers, freshmen are more strongly influenced by peers than by professors, peer mentors, or parents. Obviously, some peer influence can be harmful for freshmen, such as prioritizing partying above academics. However, faculty and peer mentors can also harness the powerful impact of peer influence to help freshmen. One way is to help freshmen build a supportive community in their classroom and within their program to help all students do well.

It’s also important to recognize that freshman cohorts are dynamic and rapidly changing. Thus, faculty and peer mentors should watch for emerging trends. For example, in the past two years, EOP Bridge leaders have identified three new trends that have reshaped our strategies to help

freshmen succeed. I describe these new trends tentatively, relying on observations from faculty, peer mentors, and leaders in our EOP Bridge Program.

- ***Freshmen spend a lot of time socializing with friends electronically but may need the help of mentors to learn how to socialize in face-to-face settings.*** Perhaps as a consequence of social networking media, freshmen today spend a lot of time interacting with friends electronically. However, freshmen may need the help of mentors to learn how to socialize in face-to-face settings, especially with new people. This summer, one freshman told me that she wanted to talk to a mentor but didn't know how to start the conversation. Another freshman said she was surprised when another student was offended by a comment she made during a group discussion; she said that she regularly texted and posted the same type of comment to her friends and none of them ever felt offended.

- ***Freshmen enter college after spending most of their lives in K-12 schools based on the policy of No Child Left Behind.*** In recent years, there have been numerous reports about how No Child Left Behind has influenced teaching practices (e.g., “teaching to the test.”) However, there have been fewer observations about how this policy shapes students' approaches to learning. This past summer, one of our Bridge faculty stated that several students in his class were only focused on getting the “right answers” to questions he asked in class and became frustrated when he told them that he was more interested in having them explain the thinking behind their own answers. In his classroom, like in other Bridge classrooms, students hear that answers to questions are just the beginning of their quest for knowledge in college. However, this past summer it took longer than in previous summers for some freshmen to accept this perspective.

- ***Increasing numbers of freshmen enter college with a feeling of entitlement, which affects how they initially perceive resources and opportunities.*** EOP Transitional Programs Director Shiva Parsa contrasts recent EOP freshmen with past cohorts in terms of changing attitudes and behaviors. She states that growing numbers of new EOP freshmen – including “special-admit” freshmen – come into the program with a feeling of entitlement, mirroring a developing trend for freshmen in general. This sense of entitlement affects how EOP freshmen perceive resources and opportunities. They initially don't appreciate resources provided to them, including peer mentors. They also believe they will automatically receive more chances if they fail classes. EOP leaders realize that this sense of entitlement is harmful for students, especially in this time of diminishing opportunities. Thus, EOP leaders have begun to think about ways to address this new trend through its student-centered and innovative program design, linking together admissions, student services, and academics – all built on a foundation of mentoring.

# **The Primal Teen: What the New Discoveries About the Teenage Brain Tell Us About Our Kids**

Underneath that baseball cap, there's a brain that's still under construction

**By Michael Valpy**

Saturday, May 10, 2003 - *The Globe & Mail*, Toronto, Canada

Denise arrived home from work to find three letters waiting for her. One said her teenage son had made his school's honour roll, a second said he had been selected to play in an outstanding youth orchestra and the third said he was suspended from school for cutting history class to hang out downtown.

The mother of twin teenage boys was appalled by her sons' tantrums, stomping of feet, slamming of doors, name-calling and fighting. The parents of a 15-year-old were horrified to discover their daughter was sneaking out of the house at midnight to see a 24-year-old man she had just met.

These stories come from a fascinating new book by *New York Times* medical science and health editor Barbara Strauch, titled *The Primal Teen: What the New Discoveries About the Teenage Brain Tell Us About Our Kids*. Ms. Strauch brings a good-news message, so to speak, to parents of teenagers: You aren't imagining things -- your sons and daughters really do have wonky brains and can be periodically, briefly insane.

Recent research in [Canada](#) and the United States is revealing that previous notions of the adolescent brain as a finished piece of work are wrong, and that the shibboleth of attributing teenagers' aberrant and flaky behaviour to hormones is, at the very least, an incomplete explanation. In fact, the adolescent brain goes through a biological remodelling as critical to human development as that which takes place during the first two years of life -- a discovery with profound implications for educators, behavioural scientists, pediatric health professionals and, with luck, bewildered and desperate parents.

Virtually every particle of the teenage brain is under reconstruction: Nodes, lobes, neurons, synapses, the long strings of axons that are the pathways for electrical signals speeding (or, in the case of teenagers, jolting and backfiring) from one part of the brain to another and the itchy-bitsy dendrites that carry chemical messages between neurons. Nature should post "Sorry for the inconvenience" signs on their foreheads.

What the body is doing is rebuilding teenagers' brains so they can be adults. The process makes life trying for adolescents and everyone around them, tossing teens into a cauldron of cognitive mayhem, stormy moods, grunts, bizarre reasoning and the inability to conceive of the future beyond Friday night.

The brain weight of a six-year-old is 95 per cent the weight of an adult's, which is what has led neural scientists in the past to assume the teenage brain was a done deal. But six years ago, child psychiatrist and neuroscientist Jay Giedd of the U.S. National Institutes of Health was looking at the results of teenage brain scans he had had analyzed by the [Montreal](#) Neurological Institute

when he suddenly realized the brains he was studying were undergoing major changes.

The grey matter, their outer layer, was thickening -- going through a period of overproduction of cells, or what neuroscientists aptly describe as "exuberance" -- and then dramatically thinning down, "a level of change that was supposed to be largely over by kindergarten," Ms. Strauch writes.

Dr. Giedd told her, "Basically I thought I was wrong. I thought the numbers were off. "There was so little information out there, and what was there said that this overproduction was over long before teen years. I just kept looking at the data. Then after about six months of looking at more brain scans, I thought, 'Hey, this is for real.' "

Since then, research into the teenage brain has become as exuberant as the object being studied. Every cell and dendrite is being peered at -- from Dr. Giedd's continuing research and the work of Tomaz Paus at the Montreal Neurological Institute, who is examining adolescent neural connections between the brain's important speech areas, to the studies of neuroscientists like University of [Chicago](#)'s Peter Huttenlocher, who's counting teenage synapses.

Teenagers, it is now known, experience short-circuits in the neural wiring to their memory function and have difficulty understanding facial expressions, instructions and jokes (forget about using irony; it's not that many don't get it, they can't get it). One of the reasons for the impaired abilities is that teens use the brain's primal, emotional fight-or-flight centre rather than the brain's rational centre to decode signals from the social world around them, with frequent and fractious misinterpretations. To illustrate, Ms. Strauch describes what happened to teenagers who underwent brain scans while being shown the face of a man in fear.

The part of their brains that lit up the brightest as their minds worked to make sense of the image was not the prefrontal cortex, the centre of rational judgment used by the adult brain to sort out complex nuances of emotions. It was the amygdala, an almond-shaped knot in the middle of the brain that is one of the key areas for instinctual reactions such as fight or flight, anger or "I hate you, Mom."

Research also suggests that the connections between the left and right side of teenagers' brains are incomplete, affecting their abilities to link speech and written language to thought. Synaptic gaps in the brain development of younger teens can render them largely incapable of abstract thinking, and put algebraic equations, puns and the normal, inherent contradictions in life beyond most of their grasps.

Brain chemistry accounts for their preference for staying up late and sleeping late -- useful information for work-whacked parents desperate to get to bed while their teenage offspring are prowling bright-eyed around the house. Sleep researcher Mary Carskadon at Rhode Island's Brown University has discovered that melatonin, the natural hormone that regulates sleep (in this case the explanation *is* hormones), doesn't begin flowing into teenage brains until about 10:30 p.m., after most of their parents' brains have decided to call it a day. Add to this the fact teenagers need about 10 hours' sleep, two hours longer than adults, and you realize they are likely to be in perpetual sleep deficit. Why the late-flowing melatonin? Researchers aren't sure, but they've hypothesized that it has to do with some primal survival mechanism.

Most significant of all, teens' prefrontal cortex -- the brain's executive decision-making function, its CEO, its policeman, its planner, strategizer and centre of judgment -- doesn't work properly (which is why the amygdala is employed to decode the social world, sort of a temporary detour while the main highway is being repaired). The prefrontal cortex is still a work in progress during the time that teenagers need it most, when they begin dewy-eyed forays of exploration into the world on their own. Indeed, the frontal lobes, with their software of reason, risk assessment and impulse control, are pretty much the last region of the brain to reach full development, not until their owners are past 20.

All of which means your teenaged children may be taller than you, have deeper voices (something fathers tend to find difficult) and at times may even sound more reasonable -- as any parent knows who suddenly realizes her son or daughter is persuading her to accept some totally goofy idea -- but much of the time their pilots are missing from the flight deck. Their adult physical appearance is a Potemkin Village sham. Everything inside their skulls is a muddle, as chaotically disorganized as their bedrooms, backpacks and school lockers. Moreover, the research reveals that while the adolescent brain is growing in huge spurts, it's also pruning earlier growth it no longer needs, clear-cutting millions of grey-matter cells in accordance with its modus operandi of "use it or lose it."

The brain is thought to work by overproducing cells, retaining those that are put to use and eventually tossing out the rest. According to this theory (not completely accepted in the world of neuroscience), these periods of rapid, almost explosive growth -- or exuberance -- occur when the brain is being primed to acquire new skills. What this pruning or thinning means, says Dr. Miriam Kaufman, director of the adolescent medicine clinic at [Toronto's](#) Hospital for Sick Children, is that not only does the brain shape behaviour but behaviour seems to shape the brain.

In other words, for the teenager engaged in sports or music or reading, the cells and connectors necessary for those actions will flourish and become hardwired to the brain's scaffolding. And if the teenager's primary activity is playing video games or sofa-flopping, it will be the brain cells enabling those activities that survive, while others wither.

"The research is reinforcing the kinds of things we've been thinking about," Dr. Kaufman says. "But until now, when you've talked to people about improving mental health [of children] there's been so much push on the first two years. Teens have been thought of as geriatric."

Ms. Strauch reports that the research has led at least one neural scientist, Deborah Yurgelun-Todd at [Boston's](#) McLean psychiatric hospital (she did the study with the face of the man in fear), to revamp her parenting techniques: "I used to ask my daughter to put a dish in the dishwasher and brush her hair and pick up her clothes, and then I'd get angry that she only did one of those things. Now I don't expect her to hold so much information in her head. She does one thing, and I expect that now."

Interestingly, many educators have intuitively understood that changes were taking place inside teenage brains, but until now have lacked the substantiating evidence. In the 1980s, when Anne Kerr was a classroom geography teacher, she would take her Grade 9 students on a walking tour of the school's neighbourhood and then ask them to draw a bird's-eye map of it. "One-third of the class could do it," she said. "The majority couldn't. They could draw houses on the street, but not

a bird's-eye view." The expectation at that time, she said, was that all Grade 12 students could discuss theoretical philosophy and do complex algebraic equations. "But in fact only 20 per cent of 18-year-olds could go from concrete to formal [theoretical abstract] learning. This was astounding to me as a classroom teacher. That's what's so exciting about this research."

Ms. Kerr, now principal of Ursula Franklin Academy, a Toronto public high school, found herself with so many questions she couldn't answer about the workings of the adolescent brain that she took a sabbatical in 1992 to study what was then known about it. "I learned so much. It's enabled me to do so much more -- and we still don't know enough about the brain. There's still a tremendous amount of room for research." What Ms. Kerr and her staff try to work with as a teaching methodology is what she calls the zone of proximal development -- figuring out what stage of development a student's brain has reached and tailoring teaching to fit that stage. Needless to say, it is an approach that doesn't fit comfortably with rigidly standardized curricula and grading. "How do you go from concrete to formal learning? There's no straight line," she says. "The brain develops in spurts and plateaus. The spurts require stimulation. The plateaus are a period of consolidation." Ms. Kerr learned to say this to students: "Your head is a jungle, and there's a road crew in there that's working, and we've got to stimulate you to keep that road crew working. You need someone like me to meet you where you're at."

Dr. Kaufman of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children says one of the strongest messages that comes out of the new knowledge about the brain's pruning process is that schools and parents should be pushing music, language and sports skills at teenagers to ensure their brains don't toss out the cells needed for those activities. "We're talking about cycles [in the brain's growth]," she says. "If you're not reading, if you're not learning another language . . . this is going to influence changes in the brain."

Is there a list of do's and don't's for parents?

Certainly yelling at them doesn't help. "Abstract thinking comes and goes with stress," Dr. Kaufman says. "We have to be making sure that all our interactions with teenagers are developmentally appropriate." She refers to parenting guru Barbara Coloroso's model: Set limits and be respectful.

Columbia University child psychiatrist Peter Jensen, the father of five teenagers, says he has learned to replace the parenting jackhammer with subtle nudges and hints at possible outcomes of risky behaviour and then leave his offspring alone to test-drive their newly connecting prefrontal cortexes. "When my oldest child was a teenager, I was always trying to be in control, always trying to be her forebrain. I am trying to raise the fifth one differently -- giving structure, but also giving more choices to her own forebrain, choices she can make herself."

The experts say: Expose them to as many experiences as you can. Those experiences shape the brain. The experts say: When your teenagers grunt and yell at you, remember that you grunted and yelled at your parents. The experts say: Let your teenagers know their brains are works in progress.

Barbara Strauch says: Let them sleep in.

# The Impact of Mentoring on Increasing Students' Academic Achievement

By Glenn Omatsu

What impact does mentoring have on student academic achievement? Why do universities that emphasize mentoring demonstrate higher student retention rates than those that do not?

One of the leading researchers on why students leave college is Vincent Tinto (see Vincent Tinto, *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987 and 1993). Tinto's research also helps to identify critical factors underlying student persistence in college and academic success. In his analysis, Tinto moves beyond past research that has tended to over-emphasize individual student attributes; he examines instead factors relating to what we might be called "institutional culture" — i.e., the academic and social environment of each college, such as faculty-student interactions, student-student interactions, academic interactions in the classroom, the intellectual and social ethos outside the classroom, student support services, etc. Of course, all of these factors deal with mentoring relationships, both formal and informal relationships. In the following summary taken from Tinto's book, I focus on ideas relating to two concepts important for CSUN at this time: the relationship between mentoring and student academic success and the significance of learning communities (or "communities of mentors") for student persistence and achievement.

In his analysis of why students either leave college or persist to graduation, Tinto identifies the key role of faculty interactions and peer interactions and their impact on students. According to Tinto, "the faculty, more than any other group, represents the primary intellectual orientation of the institution. Their actions, within and without the classroom, provide the standards by which individuals come to judge the intellectual ethos of the institution. . . . The classrooms, the hallways, and the offices of the institution become testing grounds for student judgement as to the intellectual character and worth of the college experience" (p. 53). In addition, for students, interactions with their peers are particularly important in the decision to leave or stay in college. For students, "social identity is sometimes as important as intellectual identity, especially in the first year of college" (p. 53). For large, commuter campuses in urban areas, the impact of student contact with others is important for persistence for those students who are regarded as having "marginal" status on campus, such as "high-risk" students (p. 79). Overall, "the degree and quality of personal interaction with other members of the institution (whether with faculty or with peers) are critical elements" in students' decisions to either stay in or leave college (p. 56)

Tinto emphasizes that frequent contact with the faculty appears to be a particularly important element for high student persistence rates in colleges (p. 56). "This is especially true when that contact extends beyond the formal boundaries of the classroom to the various informal settings which characterize social life. Those encounters which go beyond the mere formalities of academic work to broader intellectual and social issues and which are seen by students as warm and rewarding appear to be strongly associated with the continued persistence" (p. 57). Moreover, faculty behavior within the classroom often serves as the "important precursors to

subsequent contact,” according to students. “Classroom behaviors influence student perceptions as to the receptivity of faculty to further student contacts outside the classroom” (p. 57). Thus, according to Tinto, “it is of little surprise to discover that institutions with low rates of student retention are those in which students generally report low rates of student-faculty contact” (p. 58).

Overall, Tinto concludes that student academic success and their intellectual and social development are greatest in those universities “where students interact with both faculty and student peers,” whether through formal or informal mentoring relationships (p. 70).

Tinto’s summary of educational research also highlights the importance of what we can call “communities of mentors” on student persistence and academic success. He emphasizes the role that “supportive relationships” play in “preventing and reducing the harmful effects of stress and enhancing individuals’ ability to cope effectively with stress in specific social settings” (p. 122). According to Tinto, “the establishment of supportive personal relationships — with faculty, peers, and other significant persons — enables students to better cope with the demands of the college environment,” and this, in turn, has positive impacts upon students’ academic success (p. 122). These research findings point to the importance of “collaborative effect of a variety of actors, faculty and staff alike, across the campus” (p. 122).

Tinto’s focus on the importance of collaborative efforts by faculty and staff to promote student success leads to his emphasis on conceptualizing colleges as “learning communities.” He identifies student involvement and integration in college life, especially through contact with faculty, as “a key determinant for a variety of educational outcomes” (pp. 130-131). This involvement and integration is related to the quality of students’ investment in their learning, which, in turn, is related to the amount that they learn. Thus, Tinto argues that faculty need to understand the importance of promoting student involvement in their classrooms through the creation of classroom learning communities (p. 131). Tinto further contends that the first several weeks of college for students are a very critical period. In this period, student social attachments (i.e., their capacity to involve themselves in learning communities) “may be a necessary precondition” for subsequent involvements at their institutions, including academic involvement (p. 134). In this initial period of adjustment to college life, Tinto emphasizes the importance of student contact with faculty, “specifically accessibility and contact with faculty outside classrooms, helpfulness of faculty, and the concern they show for students” (p. 135). According to Tinto, “once social membership has been achieved or at least once concerns over it have been addressed, student attention appears to increasingly center on academic involvements” (p. 134). In short, Tinto advocates for designing students’ first-year college experience around learning communities and mentoring relationships, especially with faculty.

### **Works cited by Tinto:**

Astin, A. W., *Preventing Students from Dropping Out* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975).

Astin, A. W., *What Matters in College: Four Critical Years Revisited* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

Attinasi, L. C., Jr., "Getting In: Mexican Americans' Perceptions of University Attendance and the Implications for Freshman Year Persistence," *Journal of Higher Education* 60 (1989): 247-277.

Boyer, E. L., *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).

Cosgrove, T. J., "The Effects of Participation in a Mentoring-Transcript Program on Freshmen," *Journal of College Student Personnel* 27 (1986):119-124.

Endo, J. J. and R. L. Harpel, "The Effect of Student-Faculty Interaction on Students' Educational Outcomes," *Research in Higher Education* 16 (1982): 115-135.

Friedlander, J., *The Importance of Quality of Effort in Predicting College Student Attainment*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1980.

Goodsell, A., M. Maher, and V. Tinto, *Collaborative Learning: A Sourcebook for Higher Education* (University Park: National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, learning, and Assessment, 1992).

House, J. S., *Work Stress and Social Support* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1981).

Jacobi, M., "Mentoring and Undergraduate Academic Success: A Literature Review," *Review of Educational Research* 6 (1991):505-532.

Kaufman, M. A. and D. G. Creamer, "Influences of Student Goals for College on Freshman Year Quality of Effect and Growth," *Journal of College Student Development* 32 (1991): 197-206.

McCarthy, M. E., G. M. Pretty, and V. Catano, "Psychological Sense of Community and Student Burnout," *Journal of College Student Development* 31 (1990): 211-216.

Merriam, S. B., T. K. Thomas, and C. P. Zeph, "Mentoring in Higher Education: What We Know Now," *The Review of Higher Education* 11 (1987):199-210.

Moffatt, M., *Coming of Age in New Jersey: College and American Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

Neumann, W., "Persistence in the Community College: The Student Perspective," Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1985.

Neumann, Y. and E. F. Neumann, "Predicting Juniors' and Seniors' Persistence and Attrition: A Quality of Learning Experience Approach," *The Journal of Experimental Education* 57 (1989): 129-140.

Ory, J. C. and L. A. Braskamp, "Involvement and Growth of Students in Three Academic Programs," *Research in Higher Education* 28 (1988):116-129.

Ostrow, E., S. Paul, V. Dark, and J. Berhman, "Adjustment of Women on Campus: Effects of Stressful Life Events, Social Support, and Personal Competencies," in S. E. Hobfoll, ed., *Stress, Social Support, and Women* (Washington, D.C.: Hemisphere, 1986).

Pace, C. R., *Measuring the Quality of College Student Experience* (Los Angeles: University of California, Higher Education Research Institute, 1984).

Parker, J. and J. Schmidt, "Effects of College Experience," in H. Mitzel, ed., *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Free Press, 1982).

Pascarella, E. T., "Student-Faculty Informal Contact and College Outcomes," *Review of Educational Research* 50 (1980):545-595.

Pascarella, E. T., "College Environmental Influences on Learning and Cognitive Development: Critical Review and Synthesis," in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, vol. 1, edited by J. Smart (New York: Agathon Press, 1985).

Pascarella, E. T. and P. T. Terenzini, "Patterns of Student-Faculty Informal Interaction beyond the Classroom and Voluntary Freshman Attrition," *Journal of Higher Education* 5 (1977):540-552.

Pascarella, E. t., and P. T. Terenzini, *How College Affects Students* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

Pascarella, E. T., P. T. Terenzini, and J. Hibel, "Student Faculty Interactional Settings and Their Relationship to Predicted Academic Performance," *Journal of Higher Education* 49 (1985):450-463.

Pearson, R. E., *Counselling and Social Support: Perspectives and Practices* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990).

Stage, F., "Reciprocal Effects between the Academic and Social Integration of College Students," *Research in Higher Education* 30 (1989):517-530.

Stoecker, J., E. T. Pascarella, and L. Wolfle, "Persistence in Higher Education: A Nine-Year Test of a Theoretical Model," *Journal of College Student Development* 29 (1988):196-209.

Terenzini, P. T. and T. Wright, "Influence on Students' Academic Growth during Four Years of College," *Research in Higher Education* 26 (1987):161-179.

Terenzini, P. T. and T. Wright, "Students' Personal Growth during the First Two years of College," *Review of Higher Education* 10 (1987):259-271.

Tinto, V., A. Goodsell, and P. Russo, "Gaining a Voice: The Impact of Collaborative Learning on Student Experience in the First Year of College," unpublished manuscript, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, 1993.

Valadez, J. R. and R. P. Duran, "Mentoring in Higher Education," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, 1991.

Wilson, R., J. Gaff, R. Dienst, L. Wood, and J. Bavry, *College Professors and Their Impact on Students* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1975).

Wilson, R., L. Wood, and J. Gaff, "Social-Psychological Accessibility and Faculty-Student Interactions beyond the Classroom," *Sociology of Education* 1 (1974):74-92.

# Students Offer Prescriptions for Teachers

In a new book, teens describe the delicate balance they want from their instructors.

By Duke Helfand, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer  
January 8, 2003

Fixing the nation's urban high schools has become a near-obsession among educators in recent years. Create smaller campuses, many say. Build more charter schools, others urge. Don't let students graduate until they pass a test. Amid all the feverish reform talk, however, the adults might want to listen to what the kids have to say about their teachers. That philosophy is behind an unusual national effort to tap the opinions of American high school students.

"Part of a teacher's job is giving teenagers the practice at ... independence," says Mahogany Spears, 17, of San Francisco. And that means giving students the ability to "try things out for themselves." Vance Rawles, 19, of New York agrees, to a point. "I hate to admit it, but respect and authority are part of the job," he says. "Kids expect adults to give us directions and boundaries, but it's a balance."

And 17-year-old Tiffany Metts of Providence, R.I., says teachers should maintain their distance. "If you are too friendly with the students, when things get out of control and you try to get authoritative, they're like, 'Yeah, whatever,' and don't pay any attention," she says.

The three are speaking to the age-old tension experienced by anyone dealing with teenagers: give them freedom, give them guidance -- sometimes at the same moment.

Such comments fill the pages of "Fires in the Bathroom," a soon-to-be-published book in which 40 high school students from across the country offer advice for the adults who oversee their education. In the book, produced by the Providence-based nonprofit education group What Kids Can Do, students get a rare opportunity to voice their opinions about what works and what doesn't in the classroom. More than anything else, these young people -- from San Francisco, Oakland, New York and Providence -- want teachers who care about them and respect them. They want teachers who can strike the delicate, if difficult, balance between authority and flexibility.

As the book emphasizes, teenagers crave relationships that make learning possible. "What we're hearing from students is that they want partnerships," said Kathleen Cushman, a veteran education journalist who wrote the book along with the 40 students, whom she interviewed at length last spring. "Everyone knows that teenagers can be hard to communicate with," Cushman added in an interview last week. But "people who think of teaching as simply the delivery of information are missing the point."

The book, to be published in April by the New Press (New York) arrives at a time when government and philanthropies are investing tens of millions of dollars to transform oversized American high schools -- some with 5,000 students or more -- into smaller learning communities where students can get more attention and develop closer ties to teachers and campus life.

Among the most prominent of these efforts is a \$350-million project by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The group is donating money to organizations that will create or redesign 570 small high schools around the country that will each enroll no more than 600 students.

Although those efforts are important, they still pay little attention to what's on young people's minds, the book's authors say. "You can restructure schools until the cows come home, but you need to get these relationships right from the start," Barbara Cervone, an education reformer who co-founded What Kids Can Do two years ago, said in an interview. "Certainly smaller classrooms and smaller schools create some of the basic elements for more positive relationships between students and teachers. But that alone isn't sufficient."

The book's title, "Fires in the Bathroom," speaks to the breakdown in order that afflicts some classrooms. As 17-year-old Lauraliz Rivera of New York says in a chapter titled, "When Things Go Wrong," her class gave trouble to her first-year teacher for the whole first semester. "But then, by second semester, we let up on him, because we saw he was doing things right. Another teacher, we kept going on her, because she was still scared." Students would go to the bathroom at times when they were not supposed to and then would "set fires in the bathroom, while she was trying to be so friendly."

Another student, 17-year-old Luis Martinez, felt alienated at the nearly 2,000-student Fremont High School in Oakland, where he says he got little personal attention from teachers in ninth grade. Then, in 10th grade, he moved to a new, smaller public school called Life Academy, which concentrates on science and health studies. There, he says, teachers took an immediate interest in him, even giving out their home phone numbers in case he needed to talk. "The teachers are always there for you, always helping you out," Luis said. "They are like your friends. They tell about their own life experiences. The more you know your teachers, the more they can help you."

Cushman and Cervone originally set out to produce a modest workbook for new teachers at the request of the MetLife Foundation, which supports education and health initiatives. MetLife paid for Cushman's time and travel and for small stipends for the students. The pair found students through their contacts in the four cities. As Cushman began meeting with students, she realized that the teenagers had plenty to say. And so the project evolved into a book.

To help teachers understand the job better, "Fires in the Bathroom" doles out practical advice, much of it from the students. The book, for example, suggests that teachers hand out questionnaires on the first day of school. Among the recommended questions: What do you do after school? What do you imagine yourself doing 10 years from now? What's a fair amount of homework time to expect?

Rawles, the New York student, said he welcomes letting teachers learn more about him as he figures them out, too. The best instructors, he said, have a form of telepathy about teenagers' shifting moods. "They are perceptive. They look behind your activities. They are inquisitive," he said. "The closest thing you'll get to reading a person's mind is being empathic."

# Minority Kids Spend Most of Their Waking Hours Plugged In

By Mary Brophy Marcus, USA TODAY  
June 6, 2011

Minority children spend an average of 13 hours a day using mobile devices, computers, TVs and other media — about 4½ hours more than white kids, says a report out today. The findings, from Northwestern University, are being presented to childhood and telecommunications experts in Washington, D.C.

The results are from an analysis of two Kaiser Family Foundation surveys that tracked media use by kids 6 to 18. Researchers analyzed that data to find out how black, Hispanic, Asian American and white youth use media for homework and for fun, and how long they're plugged in on any given day.

Among 8- to 18-year-olds, Asian Americans logged the most media use (13 hours, 13 minutes a day), followed by Hispanics (13 hours), blacks (12 hours, 59 minutes), and whites (8 hours, 36 minutes.)

Researchers didn't say why, but some experts have theories. "Children may turn to media if they feel their neighborhoods lack safe places to play or if their parents have especially demanding jobs that prevent engagement," says Frederick Zimmerman, chair of the department of Health Services at UCLA School of Public Health.

"It's clear that, overall, American youth spend an enormous amount of time with media, but minorities spend most of their waking hours with media," says study director Ellen Wartella, head of the Center on Media and Human Development in the School of Communication at Northwestern.

The report shows that compared with white children, minority youth:

- Watch TV and videos one to two hours more a day;
- Listen to music about an hour more a day;
- Use computers about 1½ hours more a day;
- Play video games 30 to 40 minutes longer a day.

Black (84%) and Hispanic kids (77%) also are more likely to have TVs in their bedrooms and to eat meals in front of the TV.

"Everyone is using too much media across the board. There are only so many hours in the day. They're going to miss out on a lot of important things, especially face-to-face contact," says Eleanor Mackey, a clinical psychologist with Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. She says kids need more family time, and the fact that so many are eating dinner with the TV on is "alarming."

"Protect family meal times. We know this to be very important for a child's development," Mackey says.

There shouldn't be a rush to blame or exonerate parents, but rather an effort to try to understand the factors that drive such high levels of use, Zimmerman says.

Growing obesity rates among children, especially minority youth, may also correlate to the high screen time, says Michael Rich, professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, and director of the Center on Media and Child Health at Children's Hospital Boston. He says more research is needed to clarify that relationship, however. Rich, who blogs online at [Askthemediatrician.org](http://Askthemediatrician.org), says he is also concerned about the content of media being viewed, and that children are losing valuable sleep hours to electronics, which can affect school performance and behavior.

The research also indicated that among all groups, computer playtime far outweighs computer use for homework in the 8- to 18-year-old age range; only about 16 to 20 minutes a day can be chalked up to school-focused activities, the study shows.

In addition, depending on the primary medium involved, as many as 47% of 8- to 18-year-olds in all groups say that "most of the time" they multi-task with another type of media.

"These findings should be a clarion call to minority communities to protect their children's future health and well-being by insisting on a right to more media-free time," Zimmerman says.

## Mentoring Resources for EOP Staff

CSUN Faculty Mentor Program website

Learn how to “mentor on the run,” how to promote a “culture of mentoring” in your classroom, and how to build a “community of mentors” in your department

[www.csun.edu/eop/fmp\\_index.html](http://www.csun.edu/eop/fmp_index.html)

Promoting good classroom dynamics in a freshman classroom

[www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/bridgedemo/teachings/classdynamics.html](http://www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/bridgedemo/teachings/classdynamics.html)

Power of peer mentoring

[www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/peermentoring.pdf](http://www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/peermentoring.pdf)

Student leadership development booklet

[www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/leadership\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/leadership_booklet.pdf)

### Recommended Books

John Bransford, Ann Brown, and Rodney Cocking, eds., *How People Learn* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000). Comprehensive summary of latest research on teaching and learning; includes practical examples of good teaching practices based on brain-compatible learning.

Chungliang Al Huang and Jerry Lynch, *Mentoring: The Tao of Giving and Receiving Wisdom* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995). The authors define mentoring as “giving your gift of wisdom and having it graciously appreciated and received by others who then carry the gift to all those within their sphere of influence.” To carry out mentoring, the authors contend that we need to move beyond the prevailing Western view of knowledge as only “external” and take the approach that “what we have learned is used not to impress others but rather as wisdom to help others benefit from our knowledge.”

Laurie A. Schreiner, Patrice Noel, Edward “Chip” Anderson, and Linda Cantwell, “The Impact of Faculty and Staff on High-Risk College Student Persistence,” *Journal of College Student Development* 52:3 (May-June 2011): 321-338.

[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_college\\_student\\_development/v052/52.3.schreiner.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_college_student_development/v052/52.3.schreiner.html)

Based on interviews with successful “high-risk” students and faculty and staff from different colleges, the authors identify key themes on how college personnel positively influence high rates of persistence for these students.

Barbara Strauch, *The Primal Teen: What the New Discoveries about the Teenage Brain Tell Us about Our Kids* (New York: Doubleday, 2003). Summarizes the latest research on the teenage brain and ways that parents (and educators) can effectively understand and work with youth.

Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999). Wheatley believes that our thinking about organizational structure and the process of change is mired in the “old science” of Newtonian physics — e.g., concepts of critical mass, entropy, equilibrium, incremental change, etc. She proposes a new paradigm for organizational thinking and change based on the “new science,” i.e., drawing from the insights of quantum physics and the study of complex systems, where “critical connections are more important than

critical mass” and where dynamic disequilibrium, bifurcations in systems, and chaos are not only natural processes in organizations but opportunities for changes in human consciousness.

David Werner and Bill Bowers, *Helping Health Workers Learn: A Book of Methods, Aids and Ideas for Instructors at the Village Level* (Palo Alto: Hesperian Foundation, 20010). The authors use the framework of Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy as their approach to training health workers in the Third World, while cautioning people to adopt Freire’s approach but not his dense language in their work with others. This book is filled with practical advice, stories, and instructional aids such as drawings and puppet shows to help educators (and mentors) “start at the level where people are at,” to value existing knowledge in their students, and to help advance critical thinking skills.

**“The fundamental task of the mentor is a liberatory task. It is not to encourage the mentor’s goals and aspirations and dreams to be reproduced in the mentees, the students, but to give rise to the possibility that the students become the owners of their own history. This is how I understand the need that teachers have to transcend their merely instructive task and to assume the ethical posture of a mentor who truly believes in the total autonomy, freedom, and development of those he or she mentors.”**

***Paulo Freire, Mentoring the Mentor***