## **Best Practices for Mentoring Youth**

**Notes from the September 19, 2025 Employer Workshop**

**“Effectively Mentoring Gen Z: A Training for Direct Supervisors”**

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### Overview​

CTE Foundation hosted an employer workshop for supervisors of youth interns, featuring a panel of experts experienced in working with teens—including a high school senior representing Gen Z. Drawing from their insights and participant feedback, we created this list of best practices to support effective mentoring and supervision of young people.

### Onboarding & Connecting

Set clear expectations, communicate in ways that work best for youth, and create opportunities for collaboration and connection. Support hands-on learning, build trust through patience, and use activities that help interns feel comfortable and engaged.

1. Patience is key.
2. Don’t make assumptions (ex: Young people are lazy and disengaged).
3. Help them discover their learning style and tap into it.
4. Be as specific as possible with instructions and expectations (ex: dress code).
5. Encourage connection with peers.
6. Work on tasks together - either with peers or with mentors.
7. Utilize ice breakers/getting-to-know-you activities.
8. Establish communication methods and styles (text may be better than email).
9. Many learn best by doing.
10. Social media: students use tik-tok and Instagram the most.

### Inclusivity & Equity

Foster an inclusive environment by being flexible, culturally sensitive, and open to different perspectives and definitions of success. Incorporate youth ideas, encourage relationship-building, and recognize that growth and education take many different forms.

1. Be flexible.
2. Be open-minded and curious.
3. Utilize different methods of communication.
4. Be culturally sensitive.
5. Include families when hosting orientations.
6. If hosting multiple youth, allow them the opportunity to connect and build relationships.
7. Young people may not always think linearly.
8. Success looks different for everyone- ask them what their definition of success is.
9. Use the intern’s ideas and suggestions- incorporate their perspective.
10. Youth potential and growth is unlimited.
11. There are many different paths to education- not only in classrooms.

### Wellness & Safety

Provide a safe and supportive space where youth can take risks, grow, and adapt alongside clear boundaries and evolving goals. Show honesty, flexibility, and reassurance so interns know they are supported.

1. Provide a safe space that offers an opportunity to grow.
2. Encourage youth (and yourself) to step out of your comfort zones.
3. Evaluate goals and expectations along the way-make changes as needed.
4. Set clear boundaries.
5. Encourage flexibility from leadership to meet youth needs.
6. Reassure youth that they have your support.
7. Be honest

### Other Words of Wisdom

Give youth autonomy, time, and encouragement to explore passions and future paths, while modeling authentic and positive leadership. Remember that interns want to learn, make a difference, and can bring fresh, innovative solutions when supported.

1. Youth want to grow and learn.
2. Tap into their unlimited potential.
3. Youth want to make the world a better place.
4. Give the relationship time.
5. Allow youth autonomy. They may find new and innovative solutions to problems.
6. Encourage future planning and career exploration.
7. Be yourself.
8. Don’t be afraid to be silly.
9. Be the person you needed when you were younger.
10. Model what leadership can look like.
11. Take risks.
12. Motivation often comes from a spark of passion.