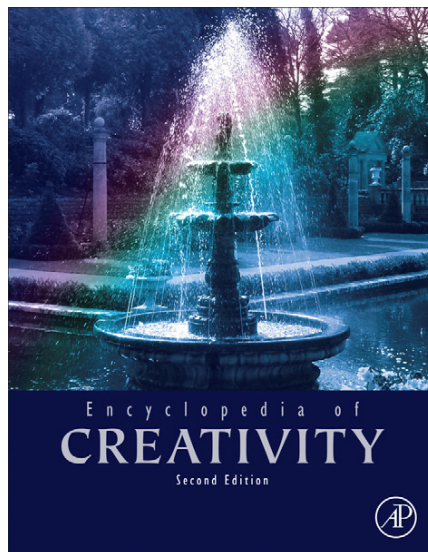


Provided for non-commercial research and educational use.  
Not for reproduction, distribution or commercial use.

This article was originally published in *Encyclopedia of Creativity, Second Edition* published by Elsevier, and the attached copy is provided by Elsevier for the author's benefit and for the benefit of the author's institution, for non-commercial research and educational use including without limitation use in instruction at your institution, sending it to specific colleagues who you know, and providing a copy to your institution's administrator.



All other uses, reproduction and distribution, including without limitation commercial reprints, selling or licensing copies or access, or posting on open internet sites, your personal or institution's website or repository, are prohibited. For exceptions, permission may be sought for such use through Elsevier's permissions site at:

<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/permissionusematerial>

Kim K.H. and Zabelina D.L. (2011) Mentors. In: Runco MA, and Pritzker SR (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Creativity, Second Edition*, vol. 2, pp. 102-106 San Diego: Academic Press.

© 2011 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

## Mentors

**K H Kim**, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, USA

**D L Zabelina**, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, USA

© 2011 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

### Glossary

#### Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

(ADHD) Symptoms include heightened activity, inattentiveness, and impulsivity.

**Creative achievement** The process of original thinking that results in actual creative outcome.

**Creative potential** Possessing the capability to generate ideas that are novel and appropriate, but not yet doing so.

**Mentee** A person who is being mentored, a protégé.

**Mentor** A teacher, guide, or sponsor who serves as an example and can be trusted and relied upon.

### Definition of Mentor

According to Greek methodology, Mentor was a guardian and a teacher of Telemachus, guiding him throughout his life's adventures. Today, the word 'mentor' refers to an advisor or a guide who can be trusted and relied upon. A mentor serves as an example to a mentee. Most mentees admire their mentors, and wish to follow in their footsteps. Synonyms for mentor are guide, sponsor, or teacher. Mentoring is usually an intentional, committed, and nurturing relationship between two persons, with the focus on both professional and personal development. Mentors give moral, and sometimes financial, support to their mentees, and help mentees discover their talents and realize their dreams.

### Mentors and Creativity

#### Needs for Mentoring Creative Individuals

Exceptionally creative students have unusual personalities, which may lead them to experience social and personal difficulties. Exceptionally creative children's thoughts are more divergent, seeing connections where others do not. They may encompass both feminine and masculine characteristics equally. Exceptionally creative students tend to be rebellious and nonconformists, ready to express their creative ideas to peers and adults. At the same time, they may be more sensitive, reactive, and experience deeper and larger range of feelings. Therefore, if their unusual ideas are ignored or ridiculed, they may become disturbed and withdraw, leading them to be more cautious next time they have a creative idea or an unusual question. Eventually, ridicule may discourage their desire to pursue their interests, and result in mediocre knowledge and achievement.

Research shows that teachers' judgments of their favorite students and creativity are negatively correlated. That is, teachers do not like students who possess creative characteristics, seeing them as disruptive and bothersome. Rather, they prefer students who conform to teachers' rules and orders without questioning teachers' authority. If asked for preferences between highly intelligent and highly creative students, teachers choose the students with higher IQ who are more studious, think logically, and are more responsible. This is

not surprising, since these types of students are easier to manage in the classroom, which makes teachers' jobs easier. Finally, teachers' preference for conformity and order is so strong that they may even mistake creative behavior for behavior associated with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

However, a highly creative student will not succumb to the teacher's desire for conformity. In fact, pressure to conform may even drive him/her to express a higher degree of nonconformity (remember, creative children are rebellious), exploring ideas and concepts of interest.

Teachers are not the only ones who influence creative children's attitudes and behavior. Parents are just as likely to play a significant role in impacting their children's creativity. Parents would also prefer their children to be quiet and behave, and may punish them when a child's behavior is inconvenient to them for some reason. But creative behaviors are often perceived just as such: inconvenient and difficult to manage. Constant questioning and wild ideas can be annoying. Creative behavior may even be interpreted as aggressive or hostile. All this makes parents, and society in general, uncomfortable. Stifling creativity in a highly creative child may lead to lack of enthusiasm, nonadaptive behavior, and ultimately to underachievement.

Both typical masculine and typical feminine characteristics are essential to creativity, and creative students tend to be more androgynous. Rather than fitting into society's gender role expectations, creative children diverge from these roles, and exhibit sensitivity as well as independence. In some circumstances, however, expectancy for stereotypical gender roles and peer pressure might influence creative students to conform in order to fit in. This may impact their emotional well-being, and can cause their creativity and academic achievement to plummet.

Creative students often find themselves as part of a minority group – they are different from others, and are either unnoticed, or teased by their peers. They can turn into loners, reluctant to express their original ideas. It is possible that they become completely isolated from their siblings, peers, parents, and/or teachers. A supportive adult can help a highly creative student to accept being different from others, to be comfortable with their independence, and to stand up against group pressure.

### Benefits to Mentees

A study by Christine Bennetts in 2002 found that creative people such as poets, painters, actors, sculptors, writers, musicians, and dancers are aware of their abilities at a very early age, and cannot separate the concept of 'self' with the concept of creativity. Therefore failure by others to recognize the importance of their creativity is seen as denying their 'self.' Mentors play a valuable role in recognizing and accepting creative people's abilities. They push their mentees towards new opportunities, and serve as role models of what it is like to live as a creative individual. Mentors develop a critical aesthetic sense in their mentees by challenging them intellectually in reasoned debate, and acting as exemplars in the field. Mentors can also provide an invaluable model of living and working for those creative people who choose to follow an unusual career path.

Mentor guidance reinforces and enhances the potential for new creative works, and serves as a guide for creative development, self-actualization, intellectual accomplishment, and individual independence and autonomy. It has been observed that there is a meaningful mentor-mentee relationship behind many creative achievements. Mark Twain, for instance, was mentored by the writer Bret Harte, while Sally K. Ride, the first American woman in space, was mentored by Arthur Walker, a Stanford University physics professor.

In 2006, Cropley pointed out new creative ideas can be unappreciated or even ridiculed. Mentors provide examples of how to communicate creative ideas in ways that the society can accept. They offer new perspectives, a safe space where creative ideas can emerge without punishment, offer a positive social perspective on themselves, and help to communicate ideas to others. Mentors help creative people gain courage to pursue their own individual paths, while testing the limits of the acceptable. They learn that their creativity does not make them an outcast, and this knowledge can instill feeling of self-confidence.

Mentees often follow in the footsteps of their mentors, acquiring similar characteristics and leading similar lifestyles. This does not affect mentees' creativity, however. Indeed, many Nobel laureates had Nobel winners as their mentors. For example, George J. Stigler, a Nobel Prize economist, was a mentor to Gary S. Becker, a Nobel Prize economist as well. These mentors provided intensive intellectual and research guidance, increasing mentees' potential for success and creative productivity. It is not necessary, however, that mentees agree with their mentors' philosophy. Rather, they develop their own standards by comparing their own principles with those of their mentors. Mentors are encouraged to help students find their own niche, their own love of a discipline, and not try to turn them into disciples who will directly follow in their footsteps.

Benefits of having a mentorship relationship abound. These include, but are not limited to: creativity enhancement, career advancement, an increase in knowledge and skills, development of known and undiscovered talents, development of a personal ethic, and establishment of friendship. Mentors may also display unconditional belief in the mentee; express ideas freely; and uphold high expectations. These benefits can enhance self-esteem, self-concept, and self-confidence.

Often the process of mentoring is more of an indirect teaching, akin to modeling the courage to express and pursue

creative ideas. Some mentors do not explicitly teach a certain academic skill, but rather attempt to push the mentee to discover his/her own creative talents. Sometimes mentors even help mentees discover talents that they were not aware of or simply never had the chance to use. Outstanding mentors tend to be nonjudgmental and flexible in their interactions with their mentees. Mutual respect is descriptive of a mentor-mentee relationship, where one listens to the other with admiration, and values the other's thoughts and ideas.

Creative unusual ideas require risk-taking, and are often met with ridicule. A safe and supportive environment is essential, therefore, for creative ideas to emerge. Mentors teach their mentees on how to evaluate their creative work and deal with rejection. They respect and support their mentees, while providing support for experimenting with ideas and risk-taking. Errors and mistakes can be made safely within the relationship without fear of being judged as inadequate. Mentors provide valuable experiences to their mentees, such as enriching their career and providing support for their future career goals. Mentees feel comfortable in their uniqueness while with mentors, and this comfort may translate into other relationships. Mentors also provide opportunities for meaningful experiences and share with their mentees joy of creative achievement. In addition, mentors can sometimes provide material support, such as books, computers, laboratory facilities or trips to conferences, concerts, theater, and museums. They may also offer support in getting scholarships, awards or jobs.

Great mentors serve as a channel for guidance and wisdom, always moving out of the way of the growing competence of the mentee, not expecting imitation, but serving as a vehicle for growth in a direction best suited to the mentee.

### Benefits to Mentors

Benefits to mentors may not be as tangible as for mentees, but they are powerful nevertheless. Mentors develop long-lasting meaningful friendships with their mentees, leading to a greater quality of life. They experience lasting satisfaction of contribution, which may result in increased confidence and a sense of well-being. Through their mentees, mentors become exposed to fresh new energy and curiosity, and to a new way of looking at things. With the help of mentees, mentors may become energized themselves, revitalizing their own career and receiving creative stimulation. The process of learning and achieving, as well as creativity, are enhanced for both people in the mentoring relationship. In addition, mentees often collaborate with mentors, leading mentors to higher productivity and future success.

### Implications for Mentor and Adult Leadership for Creativity in Education

Some mentorship relationships happen spontaneously, and others are created. Matching students and mentors requires sensitivity to personal differences in style of working and personality. Parents and teachers are encouraged to seek experts as mentors for the students with whom they work, or to serve as mentors themselves.

In 2004, Davis identified goals for creativity training: raising creativity consciousness and teaching creative attitudes;

improving students' understanding of creativity; strengthening creative abilities through exercise; teaching creative thinking techniques; and involving students in creative activities. In addition, it is important to minimize the use of assessments in making social comparisons while fostering creativity. When students focus on self-improvement, they are more likely to take risks, seek out challenge, and persevere in the face of difficulty. Conversely, students will feel inhibited in expressing their creative ideas if they are being evaluated or monitored. Pressure caused by evaluation can cause anxiety that distracts from the creative task. However, this does not mean that challenges should be completely removed from academics. Meaningful challenges are necessary for development, especially if they take place in a secure environment and are personally relevant.

In 2002, Torrance found that the top 120 talented American people in six professions all had mentors who introduced them to the joys and challenges of their domain while allowing them the freedom to cultivate their personal style. Mentors don't need to be famous or powerful figures. Highly creative school teachers or college faculty members help creative students by allowing a wide choice of topics, welcoming unorthodox views, interacting with their students outside of class, and conducting classes in a more informal manner. Parents and teachers who are supportive give their students the freedom to pursue their interests and encourage the development of questioning, experimentation, and research. Teachers who make a difference help students fall in love with a subject so intensely that it becomes the center of the students' future career image. Torrance also found that future career image and passion are the best predictors of future creative achievement. Additionally, Torrance found that mentors are most helpful in achieving creative individuals' potential. Torrance's 'Manifesto for Children' reflects 7-, 12-, 22-, and 40-year longitudinal studies, and show the importance of a child pursuing his or her own interests. The manifesto is as follows:

1. Don't be afraid to fall in love with something and pursue it with intensity.
2. Know, understand, practice, exploit, take pride in, and enjoy your greatest strengths.
3. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they impose on you – Free yourself to play your own game.
4. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.
5. Don't waste energy trying to be well-rounded.
6. Do what you love and can do well.
7. Learn the skills of interdependence.

Torrance also suggested that the goal of guidance is not to promote individuality and creativity, but to encourage a healthy balance of individuality, creativity, and conformity. Excessive conformity and excessive nonconformity hinder creativity, but a balance between creativity and conformity can enhance one another.

## Mentoring Programs

### Major Components of Mentoring

Individuals who have mentors are more satisfied with their jobs and with their careers in general, and also receive

promotions and compensations more frequently. Successful mentoring has been described by Crisp and Cruz, in 2009, as consisting of four major parts: supporting a mentee psychologically and emotionally, setting goals and choosing a career path, advancing academic subject knowledge in a chosen field, and being a role model.

### *Supporting a mentee psychologically and emotionally*

Psychological and emotional support involves actively listening to the mentee with encouragement and understanding, addressing his/her uncertainties and fears, and providing support in building self-confidence. It also includes paying attention to mentee's ideas, thoughts, and questions, and establishing trust and personal connection. It is important to be have a genuine interest in a mentee's achievement and success.

### *Setting goals and choosing a career path*

Support in setting goals and choosing a career path involves discussing and providing advice to a mentee regarding his/her chosen career path. It is important that a mentee's strengths and weaknesses are assessed and are taken into consideration prior to setting academic and career goals. A successful mentor asks specific questions in order to provide the best possible advice. It is also important to provide detailed advice and explanations of which goals are worth pursuing, and which ones are best to avoid in helping a mentee develop their career.

### *Advancing academic subject knowledge*

Advancing academic subject knowledge in a chosen field involves tutoring the mentee in both academic and life-learning skills. Evaluating, and challenging the mentee academically is important in helping acquire necessary skills and knowledge. It also includes providing a mentee with visibility, nominating him/her for awards and promotions, and discussing mentee's accomplishments. In some cases, taking the blame for a mentee and shielding him or her from negative publicity may be necessary.

### *Being a role model*

A mentee needs to have a chance to observe the mentor in interactions with other professionals in the field. Being a role model involves serving as a guide and as an exemplar to the mentee, discussing not only the mentor's successes and achievements, but also how mistakes and failures were handled. In addition, it is important to understand how a mentor handles professional and personal demands. Such sharing will enrich the relationship.

## Elements of Successful School-Based Mentoring Programs

Several keys to successful school-based mentoring programs as shown by Randolph and Johnson in 2008 are as follows:

1. Expectations for mentors' overall time commitment and contact frequency between mentors and mentees are specified. Most of the programs require mentors to commit to weekly contact for at least one school year.

2. Training for mentors is provided before they enter into relationships with mentees. Some type of monitoring is also conducted after relationships start.
3. A framework is followed, which predetermines structured activities between mentors and mentees, and address the specific goals of the program.
4. Support for mentors is included, such as screening and training before the match, and support and supervision after the match. Post-match monitoring procedures are provided, with ongoing training to monitor the relationships between mentors and mentees. Either a mentor support group, or individual supervision to mentors can be employed.
5. Some programs do not have any formal expectations for parental involvement, and coordinators act as liaisons with parents or between parents and mentors. Other programs promote formal parental involvement by hosting parent activities during the school year, and mentors are invited to attend these meetings in order for parents and mentors to meet each other. However, in 2002, Millar found that there are programs which discourage contact between parents and mentors. In any case, it is important for a mentor to provide a mentee with a different, but noncompetitive perspective from parents.

The studies above examined the effect of mentoring on attitudinal and behavioral outcomes that ranged from school connectedness or academic engagement to involvement in bullying and fighting. Although most of the programs included tutoring as a part of the mentoring activities, only a few programs examined the effects of mentoring on academic performance. In several studies, the effects on outcomes in multiple domains were examined. The primary benefit for students participating in the mentoring programs was increased connectedness at school, in the family, and in the community. Evidence of mentorship on prosocial peer relationships and on graduate point average was inconclusive. The effects of the mentorship may be dependent, however, on the quality and length of the mentoring relationship, as discussed by Randolph and Johnson. For example, in 1999 Lee and Cramond found that only students mentored for longer than one year have significantly higher aspirations than those who mentored for a shorter period.

### Main Process Considerations for Mentoring Programs in Education

There are also eleven key themes that should be considered for successful mentoring processes as shown by Ewing et al. in 2008:

1. **Pairing process.** This is the greatest challenge. Several pre-program meetings with meals are helpful to allow an informal opportunity for the potential mentors and mentees to get to know one another. Paring with a mentor from a mentee's discipline or areas of interest is preferred in some cases. In other cases, paring with a mentor from another discipline or areas of interest is best as it provides the mentee with a different perspective. Thus, making the list of potential mentors with detailed information about each mentor and about each mentee should be available

in order to facilitate pairing. However, mentees must take ownership and control of the pairing process while pairing is facilitated by the program.

2. **Entry participation barriers – recognition and time.** Time constraints of the mentors should be recognized. Support from senior mentors who have less time constraints is helpful. Any mentors, regardless of junior or senior level, should be recognized or rewarded for his or her participation.
3. **Ongoing participation barrier – time.** Flexibility to schedule meetings should be considered and less than five hours a month on mentoring activities is recommended.
4. **Participation incentives – rewards.** Participation incentives and rewards, such as receiving funding for participating in the mentoring process, is encouraged. Although mentors are not usually motivated by external recognition or money, it can seal commitment from the mentor and mentee and prevent them from drifting away.
5. **Cultural compatibility.** When people attempt to get to know one another, there may be many barriers, including age, personality, ethnic or cultural background, etc. Thus, it is important that a mentee has some common ground with a mentor. In 2002, Millar showed that mentors need the facility to celebrate the individuality of disadvantaged or withdrawn students.
6. **Gender.** A mentor's and mentee's preference should be taken into consideration.
7. **Goals.** From the beginning, general and specific goals should be discussed, documented, and shared with other mentors and mentees in order to evaluate progress. Examples of goals include improving time management, balancing different priorities, building an academic or career identity, overcoming fears and other negative emotions in making progress, and being able to refuse to take on additional work.
8. **Intended and unintended outcomes.** Comparing the goals set by individuals in the program to the outcomes achieved is important. Additional positive outcomes not specifically stated as goals may include emotional support, developing broader formal or informal networks, increased sense of direction, taking more time for reflection, etc. Achievement of goals and attainment of concrete and specific outcomes can help shape mentees' future goals.
9. **Nature of relationships.** Some relationships and meetings can be informal, whereas others may have set agendas, action items, and meeting notes. Relationships can provide important personal and individual support for mentees. For some mentees, simply having another senior person to listen and offer support can be rewarding. For others, they can develop strategic goals and processes with the help of their mentors.
10. **Structure of program.** Formal whole-group meetings can add information and ideas to the mentoring process besides a mentee's regular meetings with a mentor.
11. **Mentoring agreement.** It is important to set an agreement between a mentor and a mentee as a means of regulating and monitoring progress. There needs to be structure to the mentoring process. An agreement can help mentors and mentees set aside time in order to meet and take mentoring more seriously.

### Mentors and Mentees' Commitment for Successful Mentoring Programs

Commitment to the mentoring relationship plays a significant role for both mentors' and mentees' satisfaction, as discussed by Poteat and colleagues in 2009. The nature of the satisfaction is similar – the higher the personal commitment, the greater the satisfaction. In addition, commitment leads not only to a greater satisfaction with the mentoring relationship, but it also can lead to the greater effectiveness of the mentoring program and future mentee's success.

Mentors are usually busy people, and mentoring takes time and energy. Therefore, if mentors see a high commitment on the mentee's part, they will be more likely to invest themselves further. Mentee's commitment may enhance mentor's ego justifying the time and energy placed into the relationship. Thus it is best that counselors and educators help their students develop and exhibit commitment to their mentors.

### Summary and Conclusions

Early writings concerning the importance of mentoring in creative achievement were based upon analyses of biographies and autobiographies of high achieving, notable creative people, case studies, or psychometric studies of eminent scientists. Since then, a number of empirical studies emerged including a 40-year-longitudinal study examining the effects of mentors on creativity of their students. Results from Millar in 2002 indicated having a mentor related significantly to improvement of all the measures of creative achievement both in high school and in post high school years.

Creative individuals need a mentor to realize their full potential. Research has shown that eminent creators, including the Nobel Prize winners, have had at least a formal or informal mentor. Mentoring has long been valued in the literature and in practice. It has even become a national priority, as evidenced by hundreds of formal programs and institutional practices that include a mentoring component.

In one mentor program for at-risk middle school students, overall failure rate of students in the program declined from 28% to 12% over a period of three years. This indicates that at-risk creative students also can benefit from having a personal mentor. The psychological dangers are severe if creative needs

are strong and suppression is severe or prolonged. The stifling of creativity cuts at the very roots of satisfaction in living and may ultimately create overwhelming tension and breakdown. Such students experience difficulties with feelings of social stress and estrangement. The power of peer pressure and conformity coupled with a student's wavering sense of being predictable can easily lead to denial of even an already recognized ability. We cannot afford to neglect creative individuals who need a mentor.

*See also:* Education and Creativity; Giftedness and Creativity; Teaching Creativity.

### Further Reading

- Bennetts C (2002) Traditional mentor relationships, intimacy and emotional intelligence. *Qualitative Studies in Education* 15: 155–170.
- Crisp G and Cruz I (2009) Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research in Higher Education* 50: 525–545.
- Cropley A (2006) Dimensions of creativity: Creativity, a social approach. *Roeper Review* 28: 125–130.
- Davis GA (2004) Objectives and activities for teaching creative thinking. In: Treffinger DJ (ed.) *Creativity and Giftedness*, pp. 97–103. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Ewing R, Freeman M, Barrie S, et al. (2008) Building community in academic settings: The importance of flexibility in a structured mentoring program. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 16: 294–310.
- Lee J and Cramond B (1999) The positive effects of mentoring economically disadvantaged students. *Professional School Counseling* 2: 172–178.
- Millar GW (2002) *The Torrance Kids at Mid-life*. Westport, CT: Ablex.
- Poteat LF, Shockley KM, and Allen TD (2009) Mentor-protégé commitment fit and relationship satisfaction in academic mentoring. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 74: 332–337.
- Randolph KA and Johnson JL (2008) School-based mentoring programs: A review of the research. *Children and Schools* 30: 177–185.
- Torrance EP (2002) *The Manifesto: A Guide to Developing a Creative Career*. Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing.
- Whitmore JR (1980) *Giftedness, Conflict, and Underachievement*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

### Relevant Websites

- [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org) – Mentor - expanding the world of quality mentoring.
- <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/chc/wmy/> – Who Mentored You? Thank them... and pass it on. Mentor a child. (Harvard website).