

Telementor®

Journal of the International Telementor Program ■ *Maximizing Youth Potential™*

■ Special Feature

PERSPECTIVES EXPANDING THE WORLD OF A STUDENT

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7 EASY STEPS TO HELP YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT

- FROM THE FOUNDER
- YOUR EMAILS
- CLIPS FROM ALL OVER
- 'SOCIAL CAPITAL'
- DEFINING 'SUCCESS'

"We create opportunities where students and professionals tackle real issues together and actually make a difference. Think *authentic*. Think *high energy*. Think *passion*. We have some of the best professional talent worldwide working as mentors in our program."

—David Neils, Founder & Director
see page 2

www.telementor.org

INSIDE: Teachers, Principals, Superintendents...

From the Founder

Gems Before Us

AFTER REVIEWING THE INCREDIBLE content of this issue, I'm challenged and inspired to refine this program in



a way that will create long lasting benefits for students, teachers, and mentors. This issue includes several gems worth noting. Don't miss the article about

social capital and why it's so important. Most of us can point to a small group of people who showed up at the right time in our lives and steered us in the right direction. Many times it was a great teacher. That's social capital.

The "Defining Success" article provides great feedback from education leaders and also highlights gaps that must be filled. In our letters section, hearing from our mentors is heartwarming and humbling. I count many of our mentors as great friends even though I've never met them face to face. They are incredible human beings. Even during this time of economic stress, we have mentors stepping forward to write their students very detailed, wisdom-packed messages. We're also fortunate to have so many dedicated teachers going that extra mile to participate. We need to support these teachers with everything we have.

But we can't sit back and simply celebrate 15 years of success. Not yet.

Every spring I ask myself and others what this country should expect from a high school graduate. What should they know about the opportunities that surround them? There is no state in the country, or no country for that matter, that can afford a brain drain of our best and brightest. We need to refine our program to where every student can clearly articulate

his or her interests and natural abilities, understand the local and state economy, connect the dots between who they are and those opportunities, and create a workable plan taking advantage of those opportunities. Not every student will end up living where they were raised. However, in some states, like Colorado, a very high percentage of students want to stay. From an economic perspective, we need these youth investing in their own state and paying taxes. Colorado spends tax dollars to educate youth through high school—only to lose them to other states simply because the student didn't know about the opportunities. For those who want to stay, we need to help them learn about career and education opportunities, connect them with top professionals, and engage them in a way where they're actually making a difference before leaving high school. That last point could be a fantastic senior project. In fact, we're working on a proposal to do what I've described. I'm calling mentors, teachers, and other leaders every day to discuss this, refine it and put it into action. We can't afford to let our youth drop off the radar after high school graduation. All youth, regardless of where they live as adults, need this support. For states that want to leverage the best high school talent, we'll soon have a solution. We welcome your help. Join the discussion. Send an e-mail to staff@telementor.org and mention this article.

For youth,

David Neils,
FOUNDER & DIRECTOR
staff@telementor.org



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The International Telementor Program (ITP) facilitates electronic mentoring relationships between professional adults and students worldwide, and is recognized as the leader in the field of academic based mentoring. Since 1995 over 40,000 students throughout nine countries have received support, encouragement, and professional guidance. ITP serves students in K-12 and home school environments as well as college and university settings.

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REACHING US:

Email:

staff@telementor.org



Your Emails

Positive Influence

THE PROJECTS I AM currently working on are the *7 Habits for Effective Teens*, Business Plan Writing Project and Career Directions. I am working with four students in these projects and find it exciting that I learn something different from each individual. Some of the projects move along at a quick pace with the student eager to communicate as often as possible while others encounter lapses of time between messages. I have had the opportunity to message with many students and provide some encouragement and support from afar on their project but also in some instances on their self image. I love to add a positive influence on how these young people feel about themselves and their efforts to reach their goals.

Bev Cross,
Commodity Manager,
Hewlett-Packard Company
TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA

Shifts & Improvements

THIS YEAR I PARTICIPATED IN two projects that were new to me (Success 101 and the *7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* project) and Creative Writing and Publishing. It's been fun to share my advice and help the students understand how the seven

habits can be applied or how critical writing is in many jobs. Seeing the improvements in the messages and the shift in attitude is rewarding. After seven years of mentoring, I still enjoy being a telementor.

Krista Madril,
Product Completion Engineer,
Hewlett-Packard Company
BOISE, IDAHO

Secrets of Life

FOR ME, TRYING TO ANSWER A question like, "Why is mentoring important" is like trying to state why it's important to reach out and reach back to help others that came from a similar background. My childhood was positively impacted by one teacher who took the time to give me positive reinforcement and advice when no one else would. Just collaborating and interacting with children at an adult level is sometimes enough for a child to look at his life and education in a different way—a better way. Encouragement is the foundation of motivation.

Why mentoring is needed and what mentoring is worth are easy questions to answer. Today's world—at school and at work—is just too complex to navigate on your own. To truly excel, and not spend time re-inventing the wheel—a mentor is vital. I look for mentors in every facet of my life, whether it be my career, fatherhood, in education, or

'Encouragement is the foundation of motivation.'

Eric Santiago, A MENTOR FROM THOMSON REUTERS

just for my golf game. There are folks in this crazy world that have discovered secrets of life and a mentor-mentee relationship is the only way to unlock those secrets.

Eric Santiago,
Lead Project Manager,
Thomson Reuters
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Dream Tools

I AM CURRENTLY MENTORING A Louisiana high school senior in a Senior Level Education Plan project. One challenge I encountered was difficulty locating cinematography professionals willing to answer a high school student's "real-world" career interview questions. To address this challenge, I'm working closely with her teacher to identify local professionals willing to answer the questions.

Mentoring to me means having the opportunity to make a difference in students' lives by giving them the tools they need to pursue their dreams.

Kendra Yoder,
GMP Systems Engineering
Senior Analyst,
Merck & Co., Inc.,
WEST POINT, PENNSYLVANIA

What Did You Say? Telementoring?!

What's Telementoring?

THE INTERNATIONAL TELEMENTOR PROGRAM (ITP) facilitates electronic ("tele") mentoring relationships between professional adults and students worldwide, and is recognized as the leader in the field of academic-based mentoring. Since 1995, over 40,000 students throughout nine countries have received support, encouragement, and professional guidance. ITP serves students in K-12 and home school environments as well as college and university settings.

How Does It Work?

Telementoring is a process that combines the proven practice of mentoring with the speed and ease of electronic communication, enabling busy professionals to make significant contributions to the academic lives of students.

Through mentoring by industry professionals, a corporation helps students develop the skills and foundation to pursue their interests successfully and operate at their potential.

Why Telementoring?

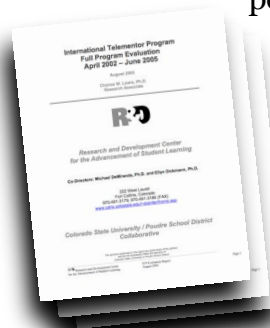
Although research shows that face-to-face mentoring programs can have a variety of positive impacts, many top professionals believe they simply don't have the time to make that kind of

commitment. By spending about 30-45 minutes per week, mentors can help students achieve academic excellence and explore career and educational futures.



What the Data Says...

A study of teacher survey data from a three-year period indicates that telementoring is making a measurable difference for students. A high percentage of



teachers witnessed significant improvement in writing skills (95%), self-directed learning (88%),

critical thinking skills (75%), career and workplace knowledge (57%), desire to go to college (46%), subject grades (45%), and science comprehension and ability (44%). Access the research documents on the Web site: www.telementor.org

7 Easy Steps:

ITP staff encourages you to consider providing this resource for your teachers and students. The general steps to participate include:

1 Visit www.telementor.org to review successful ITP projects from students around the world.

2 Identify teachers who have project-based learning experience and technology skills.

3 Develop ITP projects that meet and enrich existing education goals.

4 Ensure teachers and students have a solid connection to the Internet.

5 Determine whether students will be able to communicate 2-3 times per week with mentors.

6 Secure funding for your students to participate. The cost of the program is \$200 per student.

7 Contact ITP staff with your questions or comments. Contact ITP staff to learn how to server students in your community. Call Toll Free: 877-376-8053 (U.S. and Canada) or 970-481-9795, E-mail: staff@telementor.org



Clips from All Over

An Economic Imperative

IN HIS CONFIRMATION hearings Arne Duncan called education



Arne Duncan is the new U.S. Secretary of Education.

“the most pressing issue facing America,” adding that “preparing young people for success in life is not just a moral obligation of society,” but also an

“economic imperative.

“Education is also the civil rights issue of our generation,” he said, “the only sure path out of poverty and the only way to achieve a more equal and just society.” Duncan expressed his commitment to work under the leadership of President Obama and with all those involved in education “to enhance education in America, to lift our children and families out of poverty, to help our students learn to contribute to the civility of our great American democracy, and to strengthen our economy by producing a workforce that can make us as competitive as possible.” The International Telementor Program aligns with these goals and has been hard at work creating results for the students it serves for more than 15 years. For news about the 2010 education department budget, click: ed.gov

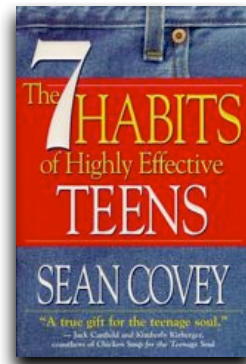
Student Attitudes

NEARLY 60 PERCENT OF STUDENTS in grades 9-12 have either taken a course online or are interested in doing so. Getting extra help in a subject is the most popular reason students in grades 6-8 would consider taking a class online; for both grade groups, math is the course that the largest number of students report taking online, according to Speak Up, a national research project that annually surveys K-12 students, teachers, parents and administrators. The International Telementor Program tightly integrates into any curriculum on a per-project basis, and has been a godsend to countless teachers looking to beef up their instruction with in-depth project-based learning that increases quality and connects concepts to the real world. Speak up is part of Project Tomorrow, a nonprofit organization providing leadership and research to America’s schools. Visit tomorrow.org

“The fact is that we are not just in an economic crisis; we are in an educational crisis. We have to educate ourselves to a better economy.”

—U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION ARNE DUNCAN, AS QUOTED IN US NEWS & WORLD REPORT

MOST POPULAR PROJECT



The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens

By Sean Covey
Fireside Books; 288 pages

WITH CARTOONS, CLEVER IDEAS, USEFUL QUOTES AND incredible stories about real teens from across the globe, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens is used by teachers and students as a step-by-step guide to help teens improve self-image, build friendships, resist peer pressure, achieve their goals, get along with their parents, and more. As they read, students answer questions about the chapters and dialogue with their ITP mentors, creating journal entries, chapter reactions and a final project. They gain an understanding of positive habits that successful teens possess; synthesize reactions from their mentor and form their own hopes and dreams for successful habits in their own lives.

How to Develop Social Capital & Why

There's something missing from the majority of classrooms in this country that most people—students, parents and teachers—*don't even realize is missing...*

BY BILL TOWNS

YOU WOULD ALWAYS HOPE THAT STUDENTS WOULD be clued in enough to be able to leverage the resources out there that are available to them. Too often, students do not have that sort of social capital. The International Telementor Program (ITP) brings social capital to the students, so that when they graduate from high school, they've already begun those invaluable experiences, especially when the telementoring pertains to their educational or planning process or their study habits, as with the Highly Effective Teens or the Entrepreneurial projects. The ITP gives them an edge and helps them to succeed after high school. Simply having a telementor is an incredible advantage, given the quality of mentor the ITP provides.

I've observed student projects and messages back and forth. I've seen students who typically don't write—get *very* involved in writing back to their mentors. There's something there that I'm not even sure I can put my finger on—that engages a student like nothing else can: It's the *personal attention* that the telementor gives. And to the students, that's an incredible gift.

Defining 'Social Capital'

Nothing to underestimate, there exists a form of social capital that comes along with the ITP —“social capital” being defined as professional networking, advice and support given to students. Let me explain.

The typical middle class, upper class kid gets a *lot* of social capital:

- His parents may be professionals.
- He or she may get a lot of advice from his or her parents or his or her parents' colleagues.
- Throughout their young lives, that student may be directed into a particular profession or a course of study.

With a lot of the lower socioeconomic students, that's *completely missing*. They don't have friends and neighbors, or parents to direct them toward professional careers—or even vocational careers. They may not have both parents at home; they may be living with their grandparents. They just don't have that support, advice, networking, etc.,—to help them along life's journey. But the ITP effortlessly brings that sort of social capital to those students.

They might be engaged in an entrepreneurial project. Their mentor, on the other side of the computer screen, might be telling them how to start their small business or how to market to their customers, giving them some very good advice as to what kinds of businesses they should start, careers they should plan on getting into, or courses they should take to achieve their educational goals.

It's not that these students are dumb. In whatever circumstances they find themselves, they simply experience a lack of resources out there to help them along their way.

We've all had help at one time or another when we were forming our careers, whether we ►

went into education, law or whichever field we did. For a lot of these students, *there's no one there to tell them where the resources are.* In that regard, the ITP plays a vital role.

The Education Link

I'm an essentialist. We need to bring essential skills to students through rigorous education... well, through a regular curriculum, actually! So what *are* these essentials? A solid backbone in math, science; of course literacy; we need students that can read, write, add and subtract; that have an understanding of what scientific method is—but also on the liberal arts side of it: our students need to have greater historical literacy beyond just knowing about dates and famous names. They need to develop an historical consciousness so that they might become good voters and good citizens in our democratic society.

Sometimes I think that our educational systems fails us, and that our families fail us in many ways, too—and for a variety of reasons. Parents are often too busy struggling to earn enough money to keep food in their bellies and a roof over their heads. Sometimes a child does not have parents, or there isn't enough social etiquette taught at home.

We fail our students in a variety of ways—and we don't do them any favors by socially promoting them.

What we need is to rigorously educate them. That's a difficult task. I don't know that we're succeeding as well as we could be succeeding. But I do know that, using the ITP, students in Topeka, Kansas have won scholarships. And they've done a great job getting to that point. In Lana Northrup's high school business class on entrepreneurship, excited students create businesses and plan out ventures. Last year, while still in middle school, students learned a lot through a Holocaust project, not just through reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, but by communicating first-hand with real-life people who shared true-life experiences and their own heritage and stories.

'One way to simplify is by putting students first.'

—BILL TOWNS, KANSAS UNIVERSITY

That sort of historical consciousness is precisely what I'm talking about: People gain empathy and understanding when they really dig in, communicate with and learn from other people. This sort of quality exploration doesn't necessarily take more money or more time.

Advice to Leaders

Sort through any similar-seeming initiatives. I know: there are so many options, too much to do, and never enough time. It's often difficult to know where to begin, or to begin at all.

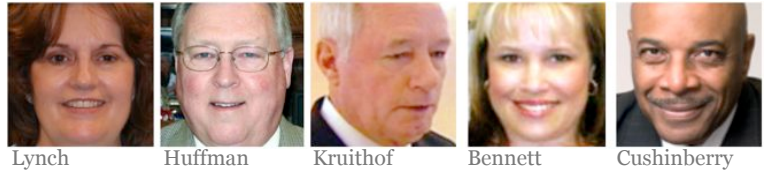
But one way to simplify is by putting students first: consider literacy, numeracy, historical consciousness, math and science—and how best to achieve these.

With help from ITP mentors, teachers can easily facilitate further student involvement with in-depth, quality projects. Mentors not only provide an authentic audience for student work, but they help students raise the bar on what they thought was possible by challenging and supporting the student throughout each project.

The projects, people and structure of the ITP bring out a student's intrinsic motivation, allowing them to seek autonomy. That doesn't mean they go it alone, it means that a student, with the perfect degree of individualized guidance—quickly learns to leverage their resources. The ITP really gives them some insight into how the world works: You go out, work with someone, have a mentor, ask advice, network, connect, learn and actually learn for real. The ITP helps students to better navigate their way through the world. *They need it.* ■

William C. Towns, Ph.D., is Project Coordinator/ Pathways to Success, Center for Research on Learning, The University of Kansas. wct@ku.edu

Defining Success



in & beyond High School

Five dedicated educators. One remarkable program. What do each of these leaders have to say about the vital necessity of using mentors to help their students thrive?

BY VICTOR RIVERO

Vicky Lynch

AS A SPECIAL EDUCATION supervisor for Bossier Parish Schools in Louisiana, Vicky Lynch assesses classrooms and helps to ensure assistive



technology goes in where needed.

Turns out, she does much more than that.

Years before, Lynch had been a stay-at-home mom and didn't work until her children became older, so she'd been around a lot of people who, to make ends meet, headed to work every day but were "miserable at what they do," she recalls. "I made a really strong commitment to myself that I wasn't going to work outside the home and not be happy and enjoy what I was doing," Lynch says. Education, then, was a natural fit. And she wished upon her students that same kind of happiness.

"I wanted all the students I worked with to go to work and feel comfortable that they were going with a purpose and benefit," Lynch says. "To do that,

they have to experience the job that they are interested in to a depth where they have real experience and knowledge of what it entails before they actually take it on," she says. "They must know the pay, the benefits, the challenges, the downsides."

Through the International Telementor Program (ITP), a classroom teacher uses mentors to accomplish just that. "This allows students to talk to people and become very knowledgeable about what skills they'll need, benefits they'll have and so on, so they're not going into a job they hate," she says.

In her travels in and out of the classroom, Lynch met a student a few years back that she'll never forget. "He was in trouble all the time, but also very bright—writing HTML web pages from scratch just figuring it all out on his own," she recalls. This year, he got involved with the ITP. Lynch was taken aback upon reading a letter he'd exchanged with his mentor. "Here was a student who was probably going to drop out when I first met him," she says. "Now he plans on going to college. Engaged in his

courses, he's going to graduate, he'll make it to college; he's making it happen," she says. "His mentor helped him find a career and got him going in the right direction. The ITP is a great program. You can see their interest. That interest motivates them to ... better use their education because then, the student knows how it fits into their goals," says Lynch.

Joe Huffman

JOE HUFFMAN IS THE PRINCIPAL OF Parkway High School, a part of Bossier Parish Schools. One of



his teachers, Joan Turek, has implemented Career Exploration and Education Planning telementoring

projects with gifted education students. Another, Kathy Doyle, works with students with disabilities on Career Exploration and Education Planning projects. "Joan and Cathy are phenomenal, and they are always looking for innovative

ways to expand the horizons of their students,” Huffman says. “My job is to be the best cheerleader and supporter for them that I can. Our mutual enthusiasm has helped the ITP to grow in our school district and to become even more effective for our students.”

Parkway has both school-to-work and college-bound students; Huffman’s definition of success is twofold: “Gainfully employed with a viable career, and students who have entered the college pipeline and are working their way through courses they need for their professions,” he says. “We take pride in both. The ITP gives all these youngsters real-world connections with folks who are engaged in the public arena. Here are live, successful professionals who can share their thoughts and experiences and open up these youngsters’ eyes to the reality of the opportunities and challenges of what it takes to pursue a career.”

Huffman says there is also contact with institutional- and university-level people to help students make technical and professional connections.

‘Keep an open mind, be flexible, don’t stagnate, move with the flow, and find creative ways to stimulate student learning.’

—JOE HUFFMAN, PRINCIPAL

The ITP has been at Parkway four years. “We look forward to many more,” says Huffman. “It’s one of the most exciting opportunities I’ve seen for our students in a long time: Real-world connections that they don’t get in a classroom with just a computer or a teacher. It’s a different source. The real-world of business and professionalism and careers. It’s so important.”

In fact, Huffman was out in the business world for some 20 years before he returned to work in education. “It’s an incredible opportunity to have top professionals willing to work with these students. The teenager picks up on what’s in their world; the collaboration is exciting; during the research process the students understand the relevance of their education—and what it takes to become what it is they are dreaming of.”

These days, working in education is “more dynamic than it’s ever been,” says Huffman. “There’s so much going on. Our world is changing all around us. We’re preparing students for careers expanding faster than we can keep up.” The challenge for an educator, according to Huffman: “Keep an open mind, be flexible, don’t stagnate, move with the flow, and find creative and innovative ways to stimulate student learning.”

In fact, they’ll soon be moving into a brand-new, 21st-century school facility about five miles away, with more than 210,000 square feet of opportunity, taking the ITP with them. “Don’t pass up the ITP,” he says. Get involved. Look into it. See what tremendous value there is for students. If all principals focus on the benefit of students, then the ITP is an ideal part of that package.”

Ken Kruithof

AFTER NEARLY 39 YEARS WORKING in Bossier Public Schools in Louisiana, Ken Kruithof is retiring from his work in education—but not before being



a part of one last program that sends his students forward into their future more engaged, informed and connected than

ever before. “I’ve done just about everything in our system,” says Kruithof, “from a teacher to a principal to a superintendent. I’ve had some experience with students with disabilities, but my deal is this: We have 19,500 students and every single one of them is important. From an academic standpoint, we have to do everything we can to help them be successful in reaching their goals—whatever that may be.”

So does the ITP align with that mission? “It sure does,” Kruithof says. “Because of the ITP, our students have had success that they never dreamed they would have. This is a great venue for giving students opportunities no matter their academic ability; to expand their horizons. We’re delighted it’s a part of our system.”

Kruithof has served as superintendent since 2000, but started his career as a teacher and coach at Parkway High. He later became principal at Elm Grove Middle School. In 2004, Kruithof presided over the passing of a \$70 million bond issue and the construction of W.T. Lewis and Legacy elementary schools, and the new Parkway High School.

How does Kruithof define success? “If they can become gainfully employed and the skills that they’ve learned in our school system have helped them attain those goals, then that’s what we’re supposed to do as a school system: give them the skills necessary to be productive citizens. All of our kids don’t go to college. But our job as an educational system is to give them the skills they need in order to be successful—to eat, if you will; to provide for their families, those things that we want all of our students to be able to accomplish; the goals they have in mind, whatever they may be.”

If it’s helping students, Kruithof says he’ll do anything he can. “This program has helped them reach beyond our city, our parish, our region to go nationwide and sometimes internationally with chances to experience things they just don’t get to experience,” he says. “We’re no longer just competing with folks in Texas or Mississippi. Our students are competing globally for jobs. With this mentoring program you’ve got successful people internationally giving our students advice and helping to motivate them. It’s just invaluable. It gives middle school and high school students a broader chance, opens up their eyes to what they can do to enrich themselves with extraordinary experiences. If your focus is on trying to help students, then look into the ITP. You might be looking at it for those high-achieving, gifted students, but this actually runs the gamut from gifted through to students with disabilities. It helps every level. This program is unique that way. It’s

‘We have 19,500 students and every single one of them is important.’

—KEN KRUTHOF,
SUPERINTENDENT

universal. And it’s win-win: hopefully for the mentors, but obviously, for our students.”

Kristin Bennett

KRISTIN BENNETT NOTICED A dramatic change in one of her young students one day, and



knew she had done the right thing by including the ITP as a vital part of her curriculum.

Bennett is the Assistant Principal of Highland Park High School in Topeka, Kansas, and principal of the Ninth Grade Academy there, a transitional program for students coming in from eighth grade.

The young woman, who Bennett says normally made a lot of poor choices, earned poor grades and really wasn’t connecting with the staff—came back after a holiday break a new person.

“Before the break, her mentor sent her books on empowering girls and strong girls,” Bennett recalls. “They really connected.”

Teachers witnessed a vast improvement in the girl. “Her self esteem just shot up. She was almost like a different person. Her grades increased; her

behavior was markedly better. One of the main things that we could correlate with that was the mentoring program and that experience she’d had.”

Bennett remembers: “She was just thrilled when her mentor took the time to go out and get those books and send them to her, from out of state. That just doesn’t happen for our students very often,” she says.

The mentoring program shows students that resources are available, Bennett points out. “A lot of times, students don’t see what’s out there beyond their neighborhood. When they’re interacting with those professionals, that let’s them know what’s out there because they don’t see professional people every day other than at school.”

The program brings with it academic gains, Bennett says, from written expression and reading comprehension to problem-solving. “They get feedback on what they need to work on. This way, they can understand where it is they want to be,” she says.

In her school, for the students transitioning into ninth grade, Bennett is aware that there’s a bigger transition yet. She defines success for them as “being prepared for life beyond graduation.”

“You do want to have this mentoring program throughout the curriculum and we’re working on that. It’s imperative that our students develop good study skills, good habits now, because if they start off behind, the challenge is much greater later on.”

The relationships built with their mentors “helps reinforce what we’re telling our students,” Bennett says, “that the rest of your life starts now. And this is

what you need to do to be successful and to have the kind of life that you want to have.”

Advice to others looking into the ITP? “It’s a wonderful program,” says Bennett. “When those mentors take an interest in the students, the students just thrive.”

Dale Cushinberry

“WE DEFINE SUCCESS AS: WHEN OUR students fit responsibly and productively in society, whether it’s going to an institution of higher learning or having the skills necessary to fit into the workplace,”



says Dale Cushinberry, principal of Highland Park High School in Topeka, Kansas.

“Putting students in touch with people who know what it takes is very helpful because, in order to have a vision, you have to have a direction in which to look.”

Cushinberry says that those professionals out there being a success are the perfect people to help his students to get and stay on a successful path.

Backing that up, Cushinberry has implemented a portfolio tracking system in his school. Mentoring aligns perfectly. “This just keeps adding information to the student’s portfolio, so no matter who picks it up, they’ll have a picture of the student’s experiences and their involvements.”

Cushinberry says that ITP mentors greatly help his students. “These people can kind of put an arm around them and share with them now—the things they should be doing—to get ready for that profession,” he says.

The ITP allows Cushinberry to not only reach beyond school and local resources, but to teach beyond the test. “In this high stakes game of No Child Left Behind, since some of the measures of school success are based on test scores, we have to be careful that we educate—not miseducate—by not educating the whole person.”

Doing everything he can to see that his students understand the standards to which they’re going to be tested, Cushinberry contends: “We also want to ensure they’re plugged into other aspects of life: whether it’s the fine arts, these mentoring programs, other skills in life such as conflict mediation; learning about etiquette, civics—and these are life skills.”

To hear a student talk about a mentor to whom they’ve been connected and with whom they’re developing a relationship is a true pleasure for Cushinberry. “The benefits are on both sides: for the giver and the receiver.”

Advice to colleagues looking for an effective academic booster shot? “I highly recommend that you implement this type of program,” says Cushinberry, who also recommends finding your own funding like his school has been able to do with a funding sponsor (www.ed.gov/gearup).

Summing up why others should use the ITP, he says: “To put students in touch with people who are out there doing it and being a success in their professional field.” Having spent much of his life looking for ways to help others, Cushinberry’s reasoning is not complex: “When you have a program like this—it benefits your students.” ■

**‘What we do
for ourselves
dies with us.
What we do
for others and
the world
remains and is
immortal.’**

—ALBERT PINE



International
Telemotor Program

**Join our *Winning Team* of
Mentor Organizations!**

**Find out how your group,
organization, company or
foundation might get
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our youth.**

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Heart-to-Heart Learning

“WHAT JARS ME, WHAT moves me ‘out of my rut’ if you will—what gets my attention more than anything else, is to witness something extremely exciting and innovative and virtually unheard of,” says Parkway High School’s principal Joe Huffman in Bossier City, La.

What is this principal referring to? The fact that his students are regularly connecting with professionals in future career fields in which they are interested.

“When I see a young student getting even an hour of a California cardiothoracic surgeon’s time—a professional who has



Behind the scenes. In Bossier Schools, veteran teacher Zac Burson has been a major advocate of project-based learning that connects students to real-world professionals using the ITP.

performed thousands of operations and is willing to spend time *repeatedly* with that youngster in Louisiana whom they do not know, have never met, and yet are sharing real life experiences

with—that is exciting to me!” says Huffman. “I don’t know how any educator could not be fired up about that.” When such professionals normally have little time for anything outside of work, let alone mentoring time to lend to a student, “How does that happen?” Huffman asks. “I mean, you don’t have that opportunity even in *your own community*. That’s

phenomenal!” Huffman’s goal? “To expose more of our regular education students to that concept, that is: connecting to the real world *before* leaving high school.”

—BY VICTOR RIVERO ■

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