

Telementor

MAXIMIZING YOUTH POTENTIAL™

CHANGE YOUR MIND

■ Whenever you get the idea that it all seems impossible—*exactly!*

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INSIGHTS

For Mentors &

For Students

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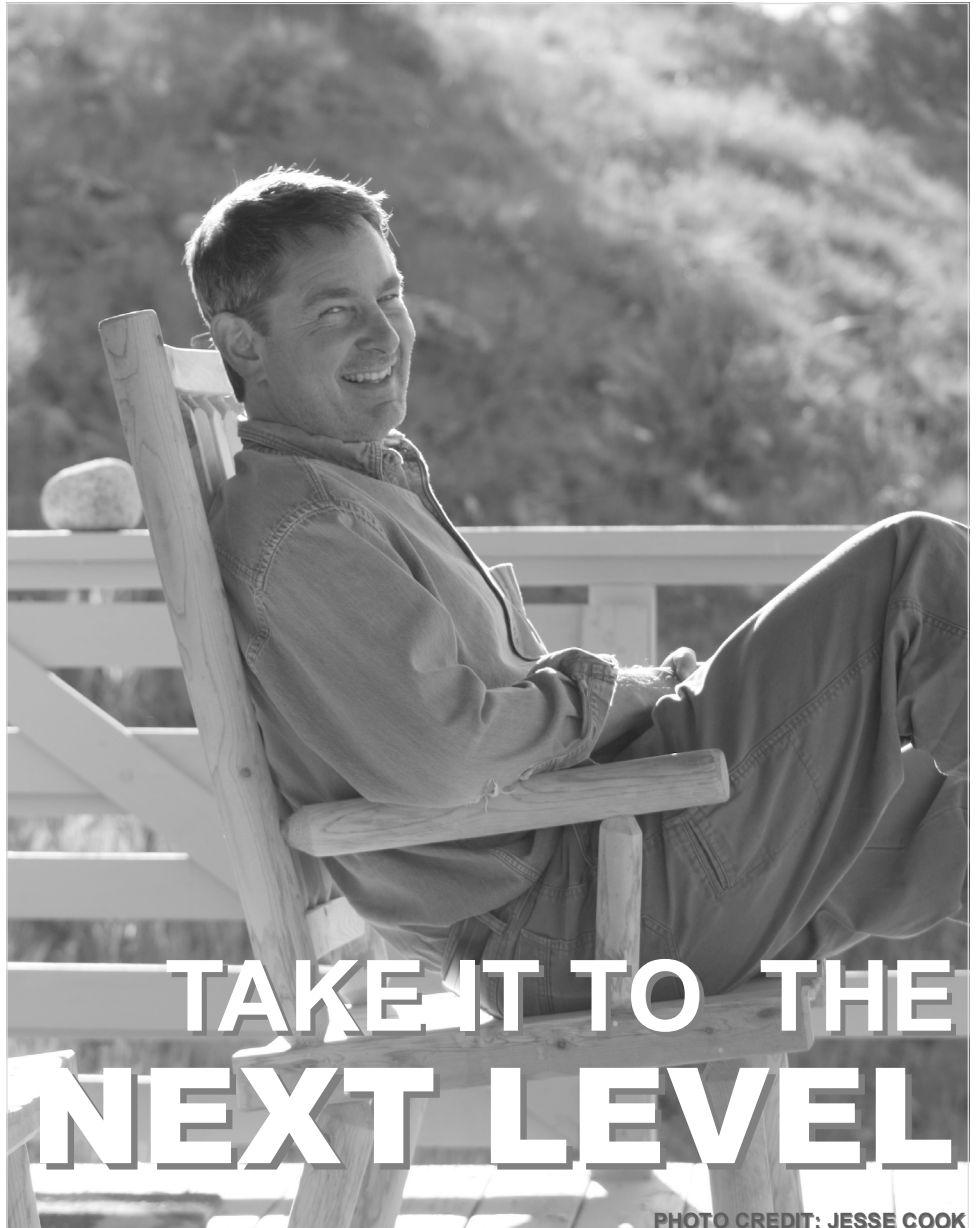


PHOTO CREDIT: JESSE COOK

■ APPRECIATIVE TEACHERS

“The project completion rate went up, students enjoyed the work, took the mentors comments to heart, and overall writing quality improved.” See page 5



CARING MENTORS such as HP's Meredith Allen make a big difference in the lives of the students with which they work.

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TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

On a recent fly fishing trip to the Big Hole River in Montana, I realized it was time to develop a plan to take the International Telementor Program to the next level and create more benefits for students, teachers, and mentors. The break in Montana refreshed my soul to the core and allowed my mind to rest and rejuvenate.

As I sat on the deck of our cabin and watched an osprey and eagle overhead (see cover photo), I knew it was possible for students to soar higher. I also knew there were opportunities for more mentors to participate.

After serving over 40,000 youth throughout the last 12 years, Program Coordinator Zac Burson and I knew there was more that could be done to maximize the benefits of this program. We've been pacing back and forth across this virtual landscape, listening closely to the feedback from students, teachers, and mentors. We're now ready to take action in two key areas:

- Maximize Student Participation.
- Maximize Mentor Participation.

Maximize Student Participation

A few months ago I received a call from an HP mentor in California. She was adamant about wanting to provide support for her students over a longer period of time. I knew that was the right thing to do and she cemented that idea. I loved the fact that she called us and wanted to do more for the students she was mentoring. I pinched myself, knowing how fortunate we are to have so many dedicated mentors and teachers going the extra mile for youth. How do we do that? So far we've limited our thinking and program to mentoring youth in a classroom with a teacher and a project for eight to twelve weeks.

We discussed providing support for that same student as he or she moved from class to class throughout the year. Students benefit from having an authentic audience for their work.

We're going to launch a pilot program this year in Topeka, Kansas where 400 high school students will receive extended services. We're working on the web site during July to facilitate this new service. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

We won't stop refining the program until we have a structure that serves youth beginning in the fifth grade and supports them all the way through middle school, high school, post-secondary, and on into the workforce.

But what happens on the journey is just as important as how long the journey takes.

As ITP was launched in 1995, I wanted to create a new environment where students would retain the proactive passion for learning that is common

among young children. I wanted to help them, as young as possible, in those early grades, to adopt a mindset that, 'This is here for me to pursue my interests successfully' and, 'This is how I can be a successful participant in the process' — rather than simply reacting to what's happening. Although I've witnessed many success stories over the years, we still have too many students who can't articulate their interests, have no clue who the leaders are around them who share their interests (or how to connect with them), and don't have the skills to roll up their sleeves and participate. They *don't know* what they don't know. And yet we have hundreds and hundreds of mentors eager to help.

In addition to serving students over a longer period of time, we also need to actively monitor their progress on the journey of becoming informed about their interests, connected to leaders, and engaged in win-win opportunities.

A student who dreams of becoming a teacher, a chef, mechanical engineer, or bed-and-breakfast owner will never get any traction unless he or she is connected to successful leaders. The dream will never become reality. We can change this common scenario by helping each student, beginning in elementary school, develop academic and interest exploration plans each year that go way beyond the institutional requirements of that school district. We need to help teachers understand that a teacher-pleasing student is a student who needs help moving from a reactive learner to a proactive learner.

I know we can make progress in this crucial area by supporting and encouraging students to develop yearly academic plans that are owned and refined by the student and for which there is an authentic audience. I haven't met a student yet who doesn't need help in this area. We'll create this around the concept of helping all students become informed, connected, and engaged. It's my dream that we'll figure out a way to reward these students upon high school graduation with scholarships from industry and post-secondary institutions. These students won't be dropping out of college and they'll also make great decisions about employment, maximizing employee retention and productivity.

In the next issue I'll discuss ways to maximize mentor participation and give an update on our progress to maximize student participation. Send your comments, suggestions, flames, and questions to staff@telementor.org.

For youth,
David

COVER PHOTO CREDIT: Jesse Cook

Telementor

MAXIMIZING YOUTH POTENTIAL

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The International Telementor Program facilitates electronic mentoring relationships between professional adults and students worldwide, and is recognized as the leader in the field of academic-based mentoring.

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CHANGE YOUR MIND By VICTOR RIVERO

In this in-depth, no holds barred interview with dedicated teacher and veteran ITP participant Melody Head, learn what it takes to charge ahead and truly help students succeed.

“One of the biggest challenges facing students today lies in changing the mindset of educators. As educators, we need to make sure we are preparing students for the world they will be facing—not necessarily the world that we know.”

—Melody Head, Teacher

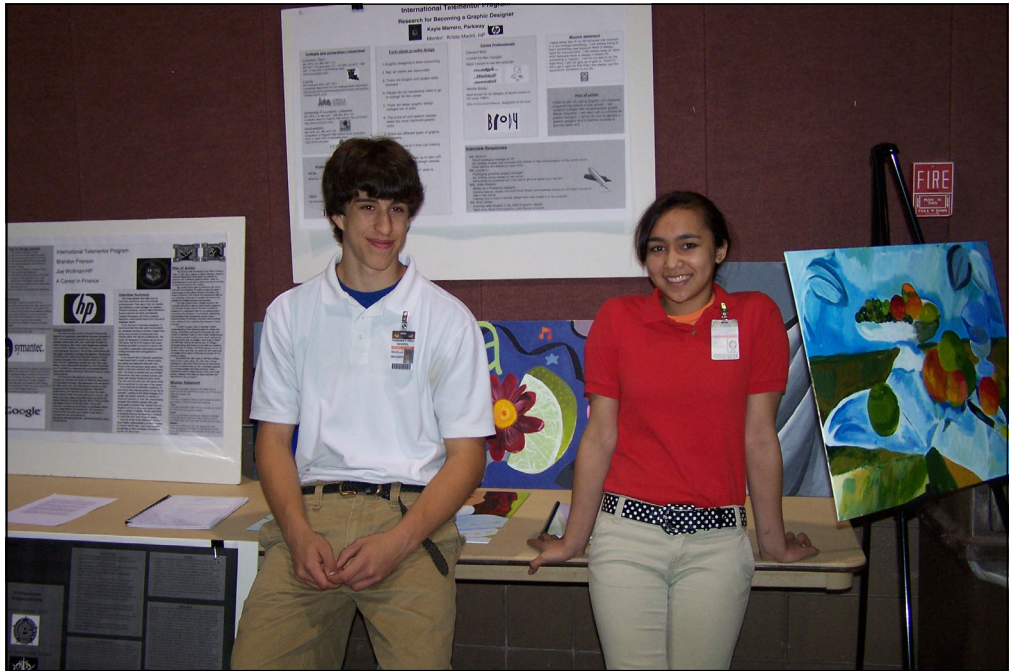
How can educators really help students succeed for the long haul?

MELODY: Educators can make a difference in young people’s lives by giving the students the tools they need to succeed in the real world. These skills would be the ability to think through a situation and have the courage or knowledge to try out their solutions—problem solving. In order for educators to help students build these skills, they must provide opportunities that don’t necessarily have a set answer; there may be many correct responses.

Through performance-based activities, the students will use the knowledge they’re acquiring in a way that will deepen their understanding of content. With this more thorough understanding, the students will have the confidence to challenge the issues that are prevalent in the company they will be working for in the future. As educators, it’s our job to make sure that every student has opportunities to apply the content they are learning in a practical, useable way. We educators must instill in students the importance of life-long learning. The world that we know today will look very different in the next 5-10 years, so we must make sure the students know how to problem solve and think about solutions that don’t necessarily have one right answer.

What is the new Kansas program about? Why are you involved in it and how is it forwarding your purposes as an educator?

MELODY: Our school is using www.careerpipeline.org to help our students develop an education/career plan for their high school and post-high school years. This program allows the students to assess their interests and abilities through a Kuder Career Search and Kuder Skills Assessment inventory. The program is set up in career clusters—sixteen—and allows the students to explore a range of careers rather than just focusing on one specific career. Because the career market is changing, the students in high school now will most likely have between 5-9 different careers in their lifetime. This is a different outlook than what most of the students’ parents have seen, so as educators we must begin planting the seeds for how the students’



Students Nicholas and Kayla bask in the feeling of accomplishment as they competently answer questions regarding their projects, completed with the expert assistance of caring mentors provided by the ITP.

adult life will be different than from their parents.

What is your vision for helping youth?

MELODY: For the students to have the opportunity to expand and learn the skills they will need to become productive citizens in our country.

You have the most experience in our program when it comes to serving students, I’d love to hear more of your thoughts. Anything else you’d like to share?

MELODY: One of the biggest challenges facing students today lies in changing the mindset of educators. As educators, we need to make sure we are preparing students for the world they will be facing—not necessarily the world that we know.

How’d you first get involved?

MELODY: I became involved with the ITP in 2001 with middle school students through the Gear Up program in the school. It was a requirement that the students work with ITP and investigate a career.

What’s the purpose of education?

MELODY: The purpose of education should be to encourage and guide students to become life-long learners and productive citizens.

(continued on page 5)

INSPIRING STUDENTS

HP Mentor Meredith Allen discovers not just what it takes—but what it gives back

By VICTOR RIVERO

Dynamic young mom, wife, inspiring professional and HP mentor Meredith Allen has found through mentoring that *it's the students* who have something to teach.

As a Systems Software Engineer in the Engineering Problem Communication division of Hewlett-Packard, Meredith Allen resolves problems every day. But when she heard co-worker Morgan Sumners rave about her experiences with a company-approved academic mentoring service for schools, she got very curious.



"I love mentoring!" says an enthusiastic Meredith Allen.

Through an agreement with the International Telementor Program, a non-profit organization dedicated to serving youth in a project-based format, and Hewlett-Packard, one of many corporations dedicated to community outreach activities, employees are allowed—encouraged, even—to spend 15 minutes of their workday helping youth succeed in school and in life. There are no visits or driving involved—it's all done over a secure-messaging system. And because it's done via electronic messages, students have tended to love it. In fact, that may be an understatement. Teachers report increased attendance during project periods, interestingly positive changes in behavior for even the rowdiest or most withdrawn students—as well as increased student performance as seen in test scores, science fairs, writing—and even newfound success in statewide academic competitions.

It's no wonder, though. "We help students become informed, connected and engaged," says the program's Founder and Director David Neils. "We help them answer the question, 'What's happening in the world around me related to my interests?' We get them connected to those things, people and resources. And then we help create an environment in which they can learn and make a real difference," he says.

"We communicate engineering problems, advisories for customers, and conduct problem resolution on industry-standard servers," says Meredith. "Morgan sits right next to me at work and I would hear all these stories from her."

Interesting Connections

Through an agreement with the International Telementor Program, a non-

Doing Something About It

In one instance, a student was having trouble in school. During the course of a creative writing project, Morgan saw how talented he really was and helped him excel. "That was really her cup of tea, and I heard how much it had an impact on him," says Meredith. "His writing improved, in fact he had *real* talent—and she really enjoyed it."

As a professional problem solver with a passion for helping others, Meredith followed Morgan's example and made a very natural decision: she, too, would mentor a student.

Currently working with a great classroom teacher has made the experience even easier. "She messages us with weekly project updates, tells us who is behind, who needs extra help and more," says Meredith. "If we need help, we can message her anytime. She's extremely helpful, cares, and is on the ball."

What advice does Meredith have for other would-be mentors? "I have found that what is most important is how the students have inspired me with their perspectives on life, and how important it is to listen to them. Their take on things is much different than ours. The students are what this is about."

So—what are they saying? And how are they saying it?

Midnight Snacks and SUVs

Working with sixth-graders involved in a Global Warming project, Meredith admired how one particular student approached the subject of and expressed her sentiments about the environmental effects of SUVs. While some adults might have their reservations in buying an expensive electric car or a solar-fitted house, the student offered this:

"Really think about the impact it would have, not just on your pocketbook, but on the quality of life in the future. You tell us not to get up and have that midnight snack—that midnight snacks are wasteful, unhealthy and undisciplined. But an SUV drinks and eats gas like a midnight snack. You are being undisciplined and wasteful yourselves."

Meredith laughs but is respectful and clearly humbled. "It's really interesting to hear a student's point of view. It makes you stop and go, 'Oh, wow, I didn't think of it *that* way.'"

"We worry about our jobs," she says. "We don't realize the importance of some of the real things in life that they tend to grasp. They pay attention to some things we don't think about. Simple things."

In Meredith's estimation, being a great mentor involves: giving to these students, being passionate, listening to them, helpfully relating our own experiences and offering encouragement. "It's not really about the grade or pushing them academically. Education is a never-ending journey. It's more about helping them answer the question: Do you have *the desire* to learn?"

As for Meredith's desire to mentor, she may very well inspire students, but it's the students who inspire her.

CHANGE YOUR MIND

(continued from page 3)

How does ITP assist with that purpose?

MELODY: Through the ITP, the students are connected with mentors that help them see the real-world side of education. The mentors are educated people—most with higher education degrees—sharing their experiences with careers and the education world.

Your take on the state of U.S. education these days?

MELODY: On the upswing. With the implementation of NCLB, educators have had the opportunity to learn to use data to make educational decisions concerning student learning rather than just a “gut” feeling. We are now not only analyzing the data, but we are using it to make good, research-based instructional choices on teaching the students. If NCLB (No Child Left Behind federal education law) had not been mandated, the education field would still be teaching as we “always have.” We are now moving from just focusing on the data to providing students opportunities to engage and use the content in many different venues. This will benefit the students in the future and also our country.

Is the ITP a unique program?

MELODY: The ITP is unique in that it allows flexibility for the instructor to adjust the projects and it also consistently provides good, quality mentors to match with the students.

How is the ITP and your classroom “taking students to the next level”?

MELODY: The ITP allows students the opportunity to dig as deep into a project as they want to go. The projects have the basic structure, but the students are able to ask questions to their mentor that are not necessarily a part of the project but that just come up as they are exploring and learning. This type of learning encourages students to learn from within—not just because the assignment was given! Young people are like sponges: they can take in an enormous amount of information, prioritize it, and apply it when given the opportunity. We all retain more information when we are learning something of interest to us personally. The sky is the limit with this mentoring program. I just visited with a former student who has already started reaping the benefits of his mentoring experience. He wasn’t sure where he would be going to college and through this program he began looking at universities a little bit different. He is actually going to Colorado School of Mines in the Fall. His mentoring experience had a lot to do with him stepping out and feeling confident to go and see what a wonderful school like this could do for *him!*

(RELATED READ: “Engineer Your Future “ starting on page 7 of this issue)



Teacher Diane Ferrel with her sons.

“The mentors were absolutely incredible! I can’t say enough about how pleased I was with the program,” she says of her experience with the ITP.

WHY I LOVE MENTORS

By **DIANE FERREL**

The telementoring program added a wonderful element to my eighth-grade reading class this year at Landon Middle School in Topeka, Kansas. Having only taught for two full years, I was not sure I was ready to tackle the telementoring program, but Wendy Meier, my buildings support staff was very convincing and extremely helpful. Together, we put *The Diary of Anne Frank* assignment together. I was unsure what to expect in the beginning, wondering how my students would take to working with mentors over the Internet in writing their journal entries. Each day my students spent in the computer lab I knew I had made the right decision. My students got excited about their writing, loved the individual feedback they received along with all the helpful information that their mentors provided. I was so impressed with the mentoring service, that I spent many late nights reading all the feedback. The mentors were absolutely incredible. I cannot say enough about how pleased I was with the program. The project completion rate went up, students enjoyed the work, took the mentors comments to heart, and overall writing quality improved. I want to personally thank all of the mentors who helped me make this project successful. It was more than I could imagine.

INSIGHTS ::

For mentors...

THE KEY QUESTIONS:

1. **Becoming Informed:** What does a student need to know about his or her areas of interest? Can you offer some insights into the field that he wouldn't get any other way? What would you do if you were in his or her shoes today (given what you know)?

2. **Getting Connected:** Share information about the leaders in his or her area of interest. What's happening at your company that he or she should know?

3. **Get Engaged, Make a Difference:** Helping a young person figure out how he or she can lean in and make a difference while in the process of learning about a particular area can cause a powerful transformation, open up doors, and launch the youth forward. Employers are tired of "entitlement youth" showing up and wanting pay just for breathing.

If you're interested in helping out, pick one or more areas, jot down your thoughts and send them to staff@telementor.org. From there we'll create a Web space where students can discuss these details directly with you.

This is new territory and we welcome your ideas. There are so many youth who could benefit from this process.

—David Neils

For students...

A FEW KEY ANSWERS

A couple big picture ideas here:

For a young person, the software (especially) and firmware market is littered with obsolete technology, obsolete skills, and dead companies.

The first thing to do (if I were starting essentially from scratch in my career) is to look at all the tech trends on the horizon 5-10 years out and avoid the currently fashionable technology 'hot areas' while looking for the next one. It is vitally important to place your bets on a future where you will have the skills in demand.

Let's look at a snapshot of today—which skills are the absolute highest in hourly rate?

I can tell you from experience—and from an "on-the-back-of-an-envelope" diagnosis: SAP (a leading business software company) is paying about \$250/hour.

So, one might ask, "Why are companies willing to pay \$250 an hour for a computer consultant?"

- 1) It is an industry standard.
- 2) It is in a hot area, MRP (manufacturing resource planning), Cost-Analysis, etc.

BUT MOSTLY, IT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD BY THE ACCOUNTANTS in terms of R.O.I. (Return On Investment), in terms of cost analysis.

Accountants will pay for things that they can understand are a good "value".

From this quick analysis, we can make some guesses as to the future "hot" skills, industries, etc.

Which "skills" and careers are difficult to "outsource" to India, Central America, Wyoming, and the next frontier, Africa? As long as there are desperate people, corporations will find a way to "leverage" them.

~

From a really, really big picture, three career paths stand out as head-and-shoulders above the rest:

Law. My brother-in-law, a patent attorney, makes about a million dollars a year. He used to do firmware for DEC. Don't laugh, lawyers never go hungry. When you charge \$500+ an hour, it is all good.

(continued on next page)

ENGINEER YOUR FUTURE

As a high school student, Jason Jones was looking ahead to a blank future. That's when a teacher introduced the class to the ITP.

"The ITP experience helped me to narrow down my focus. I see my friends—you know, they 'kind of' have 'an idea' where they want to go, and they 'kind of' are just 'playing it by ear'—but I'm more of a direction-oriented guy. And I've found what I've wanted and so I will go for it."

—Jason Jones (entering his first year of college)

How'd your mentoring experience "take it to the next level" for you? As a junior in high school, I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do. Going through the steps with my mentor, I narrowed it down. I'll be a freshman this Fall at the Colorado School of Mines, which I never would have found if it weren't for the telementoring program. My mentor helped out a lot and gave me some choices. He was all kinds of help and it just fell into place.

What sort of dreams have you formulated and how are they now unfolding? Before the program, I really didn't know what I wanted. Going through the program, I *learned* what I wanted to do. I figured out that I wanted to do geological engineering and to be in Colorado. Now, I'm going to college in Colorado, so I have a greater chance of working and living in Colorado. My mentoring experience has presented me with greater opportunities.

Geological engineering sounds pretty specific...
Yes, it is.

How did you narrow it down? Doing all this research with my mentor's help, I was able to narrow it down quite quickly. There are a whole bunch of different types of engineering. You've got mechanical, and I really wasn't into that. I'm big with the outdoors and so I narrowed it down even more. I read descriptions of jobs I could have, and then I just found something that I liked and enjoyed.

Do you feel a bit more secure with your future? Yes, I do. The ITP experience helped me to narrow down my focus. I see my friends—you know, they "kind of" have "an idea" where they want to go, and they "kind of" are just "playing it by ear"—but I'm more of a direction-oriented guy. And I've found what I've wanted and so I will go for it. By the time I'm a senior in college, I'll know exactly what job I want and I'll choose from there.

Sales. Most senior management at companies are either there because they worked their way through sales or finance.

I think the Finance guys got there because of a lack of understanding in Deming Quality. When all else fails, companies view metrics based on money, so they seem to think accountants are important. But there is no reason why technical people cannot bridge the gap between sales and geeks. Sales people get paid well for a single reason—American managers are at least smart enough to be able to measure this easy metric—sales people bring in the dough, and the managers will pay for this feature. Even American managers are not so dumb as to miss this fact.

Finance (venture capital). I don't have much to say here, except that "banking", in all its forms, is extremely lucrative. They have an unfair advantage, because they print the stuff. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Never mind that these "careers" are not currently on your radar. Put them there. Or at least one.

Engineers are technical people, we have a long endurance for attention span. Put it to good use, and bury your competition that only majored in business, or arts.

You can, and you should study law on the side, or ask your manager to allow you to go on sales calls.

If you have an aptitude, and any people you can talk to in regards to getting on the right "path", do it.

Stay in school. Keep going to school, even if you are currently working. Keep your eye on the brass ring.

~

Next, the job search.

Try to get out of the "rat race":

- Review job postings.
- Submit resume.
- Continue until you barf.

Work the other way:

- Find a CAREER you want.
- Find a COMPANY you love.
- Find people who can talk with you about it
- Create the position that you want, not what they have available.

Sure, use technology, find out who's got money, who's hiring. But stop reading their requirements first, and seeing if YOU fit their need. Make a need for them where you fit.

That's it for now.

Thank you,
Jim Gasek,
Thomson mentor for the ITP



“We move along so fast in life and make great efforts to reach goals for our families, for ourselves, and places of employment. We sometimes lose sight of what is significant and meaningful.”

WHY I LOVE TO MENTOR

By **VICTOR COUSINS**

One of the greatest assets of the International Telementoring Program is the possibility of making a significant positive impact in a young person's life. Young people deserve opportunities to achieve personal and educational success. Our investment into their development space is the key to the future.

Working with Edward this past year in the telementoring program was an incredible experience. Little did I know how much this experience would mean to his personal and academic growth. Nor did I realize how much it would reward me personally and professionally. It is something I can truly take pride in. I am truly grateful—beyond estimation.

For a long time, I had underestimated the value of being a mentor and, moreover, my potential for being a mentor. I wonder how many other successful people out there feel they are not capable of being a strong mentor or making a significant positive impact in a young person's life.

We move along so fast in life and make great efforts to reach goals for our families, for ourselves, and places of employment. We sometimes lose sight of what is significant and meaningful. What's tremendously understated is how important it can be to pause from what we're doing,

look at our surroundings, and take some proactive accountability for another's future in order to uplift them.

Moreover, it is so easy to take for granted the privileges and blessings life can bring you. As the baby of eight children, I've had the fortune of having a supportive family structure, including a great dad as an immediate positive role model. I can reflect to various experiences and remember those other random individuals and family members who came into my life and shared words of wisdom and encouragement. They asked for nothing in return, other than for me to personally strive to be the best I could be in life. It is so amazing to think of the lasting impact they've had on me. You don't ever forget those moments. No matter how successful you are or how miserably you've failed, those words of encouragement and inspiration stay with you.

It's really difficult to measure the true benefit of a program like the International Telementor Program. How do you measure the personal enhancements a young person has gained? Or the long term benefits to his or her community, family, friends, or classroom? How can you scale the amount of confidence attained? How do you determine the degree to which a person feels more capable than ever before to reach his or her goals and dreams? How do you measure the increase in sense of self worth? Not to mention, how do you calculate the amount of personal benefit a mentor can obtain through these experiences? The answer is you can't. It is not only un-measurable, but invaluable.



Teachers are parents, too! Joan Turek and Ryan, her son. Ryan was a senior at Airline High School this past year and worked with his teacher, Elaine Bradford, and mentor, John Cacioppo, to explore the field of computer science through the ITP. Ryan, his classmates at Airline, and seniors in Joan's classes at Parkway and Benton High worked on the Senior Career and Education Research Project that Joan wrote last summer. The new project is specifically geared to help seniors learn more about their chosen fields of interest and top college choices and helps students as they set education and career goals, explore college options, and make final college decisions and applications during their senior year.

MY TURN

By **JOAN TUREK**

This past year was very rewarding for my students as they explored careers and other topics of interest with their outstanding ITP mentors and shared their work with a variety of authentic audiences.

Two students interested in Entrepreneurship researched related careers with their mentors and developed beginning plans for their future businesses. One of the boys designed a 3-D model of a building for his business using a computer program, and presented his research and ideas to a group of gifted-education teachers and coordinators during the spring semester.

Another student researched the career of Cardiothoracic Surgery and discovered the Women in Cardiothoracic Surgery website. We made wonderful professional contacts through that organization, culminating in interviews from four female cardiothoracic surgeons. Two of them gave hour-long phone interviews to my student and two sent wonderfully insightful written interviews. One offered the opportunity for a summer job-shadow at her hospital—and all four physicians provided a wealth of valuable information to help guide an aspiring young cardiothoracic surgeon on her path to a career in that field.

One student researched the career of Wildlife Management with his mentor last year and this year researched an invasive species that is threatening lakes and fish in our state and others in the region. The species, *Salvinia molesta*, is of particular interest to him because of the problems it causes for boating and fishing and the rapid spread of the plant in the region. His mentor helped him secure

interviews from top wildlife officials in the region and helped expand his knowledge of this serious problem and possible solutions.

Two boys in my class researched the career of Computer Game Design with their mentors this year and were fortunate to receive fabulous interviews from game designers and other employees at Ubisoft and Electronic Arts through the efforts of their mentors. The interviews were insightful, challenging, and informative and the students gained multiple perspectives on the challenges of working in that field.

Several who are interested in Art researched a number of careers in that field with their mentors while working independently to develop art portfolios using a variety of materials. Some other careers researched by my students and mentors this year included: Education, the Military, Computer Science, Medicine, Clinical Epidemiology, Culinary Arts, and the field of Athletic Training.

Each project was patiently, expertly guided by ITP mentors and the end result was authentic student learning, increased self-confidence, and a brighter future for each young person who participated.

As a final note, all of the mentors I've worked with are dedicated, professional, and understand what it takes to motivate and encourage young people to reach for their best. Two of our mentors this year had to evacuate from their homes and offices because of the California wildfires but went "above and beyond the call of duty" when they continued to work with my students during the weeks when they were displaced. Another mentor went on maternity leave during the semester but continued to correspond with her student from home in order to help bring her project to a successful conclusion. Again, a heartfelt thanks!

TURNING IDEAS INTO ACTION

By ZAC BURSON

As David Neils and I spend our summer months refining the ITP web site for the upcoming year, I've been reflecting on my first experiences with telementoring, as well as re-reading some of the works of the educational theorists and researchers who challenged me to engage my students in telementoring.

Initial Connection

In the early '90s, as I read about authentic, project-based methods of teaching, I worked to find subject matter experts to help my students pursue their unique interests successfully. I often set up ad hoc student mentorships with local professionals; however, the results were inconsistent.

Not many adults had the time or the inclination to work with my students in long-term projects with regular interactions between themselves and the students. Moreover, not very many people in my community had the experience or expertise to mentor students interested in specialized subject areas not common to our community. Very few local volunteers then were involved in the information technology and Internet revolution that was affecting how these young people would work and raise their families.

I wanted a structured way to connect my kids to the learning opportunities I knew would benefit them as students and as adults.

Once I found the ITP, I could supplement the pool of generous volunteers in my geographic community with IT professionals doing leading-edge work. My students gained the support of top professional people from around the world, and career exploration and education planning took on new relevance when students had the chance to work with mentors working in the cutting-edge fields they aspired to enter.

With the ITP, David Neils had created an academic, project-based mentoring program which enabled me to be a more effective teacher. It was great fun from the start, and some of my early telementoring projects have been some of my most memorable experiences as a teacher.

Creative Burst

With the *Creative Writing & Publishing* project, we created a virtual writing workshop and had mentors and students writing, revising, and publishing powerful personal narratives.

Each week students read and responded to works that exceeded in emotional intensity (and sometimes quality) the personal narratives available in the textbooks in my classroom.

One mentor wrote of his experience working in Africa with the Peace Corps. A student wrote a moving appreciation of her father, a single-parent who struggled to maintain a peaceful home life for her and her brother.

The students were thrilled! They realized that their ability to communicate clearly was measured not by a grade, but by the quality of the responses they received from the readers who were their peers, their families, and these ITP mentors who were successful professional persons.

Further Reading/References

www.edutopia.org/virtual-mentor

Story on Creative Writing and Publishing Project:

Creative Writing and Publishing Project Plan:

<http://www.telementor.org/projectdetail.cfm?ProjectID=384>

Mentors helped enable students to create work that was authentic and meaningful, and in some instances, students learned lessons that transcended those we had outlined in the project plan.

The *Celebrating the Greatest Generation* project exceeded my expectations. Students from my community and their mentors from the US and Europe interviewed veterans of World War II and other conflicts, and we had contributions from around the world.

I had about a dozen students at four different schools participating in the project at times during the year. Though only a few of the young people came to the project with an interest in history, each student had significant talents to contribute to the effort. Students who loved web design, data collection, or graphics built the web site with the help of their mentors.

Mentors contributed in profound ways. All had many lessons to teach their students about research and project management. Many also had extensive subject matter knowledge or technical expertise to share. Others participated in the project because they possessed a powerful personal interest in telling the story of their uncle, father, or mother. Many students were moved to hear these older adults open up about events that had shaped their lives and the lives of a whole generation. The stories they told, the letters and pictures they shared with their protégés—are priceless.

Further Reading:

<http://www.shreve.net/~bpaim/aimgg/gginterview.html>

Celebrating the Greatest Generation Interview Page:

<http://www.shreve.net/~bpaim/aimgg/vogelsite.htm>

HP Mentor Ed Vogel is still involved in telementoring today

<http://www.telementor.org/projectdetail.cfm?ProjectID=602>

Project Plan for Celebrating the Greatest Generation

Theory Into Practice

Educational theorists who have influenced my work with the ITP include:

- **Howard Gardner.** His conception of Multiple Intelligences and emphasis on using project-based learning to help each child develop his or her particular strengths have affected our thinking about our approach to telementoring. Gardner lists:
 - Linguistic intelligence ("word smart")
 - Logical-mathematical intelligence ("number/reasoning smart")
 - Spatial intelligence ("picture smart")
 - Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence ("body smart")
 - Musical intelligence ("music smart")
 - Interpersonal intelligence ("people smart")
 - Intrapersonal intelligence ("self smart")
 - Naturalist intelligence ("nature smart")

Gardner's work has particularly informed our work with students with disabilities who often struggle with linguistic and logical-mathematical tasks. ITP mentors work with teachers to help these young people value and develop the many gifts they do possess.

From the start, ITP mentors have been altruistic people possessed of multiple intelligences and significant records of accomplishment. They have high expectations for themselves and for their associates.

If students get quality mentor support as they examine their interests and tackle real problems, and if they simultaneously find excellent local resources to draw upon, they'll see more opportunities to pursue and problems to solve, and they'll have the skills to take effective action. They will also be more likely to be intrigued by the challenges and possibilities in their own communities.

A great example of that is taking place in response to Hurricane Katrina's effect on my state. We have actually seen an increase in the number of local top high school students interested in going to college in New Orleans because they feel that they will have opportunities early on to do important work to help with the recovery and prevent future catastrophes like Katrina.

Further Reading/References:

<http://www.howardgardner.com/>

<http://www.goodworkproject.org/>

Gardner's more recent work on learning theory includes The Good Work Project

<http://www.edutopia.org/key-learning-community-cultivating-multiple-intelligences>

(article and a film clip about a school employing his theory of multiple intelligences)

■ **Donald Treffinger.** He challenged me to find mentors for my students. His self-directed learners pursue their interests thoroughly, and that pursuit often involves collaborating with mentors who might also be "subject matter experts." Addressing both the cognitive and the affective aspects of the self-directed learner collaborating with a mentor, he also emphasizes the importance of student's sharing culminating work with an "authentic audience." David Neils and I have spoken with Dr. Treffinger about our work on a number of occasions, and he still very actively conducts research and provides workshops on creative problem solving, project-based learning, learning teams, and creativity.

Further Reading/Reference:

<http://www.creativelearning.com/CoreTeamInfo.htm>

Treffinger's Creative Home

<http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/education/iej/articles/v4n4/vandeur/paper.pdf>

from *International Education Journal Vol 4, No 4, 2004*: An article describing Treffinger's original conception and the ideas that sprang from it

■ **Joseph Renzulli & Sally Reis.** They developed the School-wide Enrichment Model and conceptualized an **Enrichment Triad Model** featuring three intellectual enrichment approaches. To help students pursue their interests successfully, I had to find resources outside my community, and ITP provided me with a supply of mentors with incredible expertise and diverse interests. A snapshot of the Renzulli and Reis approach:

TYPE I - General Interest / Exploratory Activities

Activities providing students with as wide a range of experiences as possible, including excursions, club, interest centers, visiting speakers and brainstorming sessions.

Over the years, ITP mentors have enabled thousands of students to develop their unique gifts and share their best work with people who care about the quality of that effort.

TYPE II - Group Training Activities / Skills Development

Activities that **develop thinking and feeling skills** where students are involved in designing, experimenting, comparing, analyzing, recording and classifying. Skills developed include creative and critical thinking, learning how to learn, using advanced level reference materials and communicating effectively.

TYPE III - Individual and Small Group Investigation of Real Problems

Applying knowledge and skills gained from Type I and II activities, students **investigate real problems**, working on specific areas of study towards presentation to a real audience. Includes researching, debating, surveying, making a presentation, writing a journal article or producing a book or play.

Further Reading/References:

<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/>

Renzulli, J, Sand, J and Reis S S (1986). *Systems and models for developing programs for the gifted and talented*. J S Renzulli (Ed). Mansfield Centre, Connecticut: Creative Learning Press.

Moving from theory to practice is never easy. My first attempts at project-based learning and mentoring revealed how much work we needed to do before we could test out those ideas. However, over the years ITP mentors have enabled thousands of students to develop their unique gifts and share their best work with people who care about the quality of that effort. Thankfully, these volunteers remain committed to seeing that student progress continues. For over 12 years, they have enabled many dozens of teachers around the world to develop telementoring projects aimed at bringing out the best in students.

When I read Nicole Morantz Helprin's comments about being an HP telementor (*see back cover of this issue*), I am surprised to learn that she has been a participant for such a long time. In fact, 93 of the 327 ITP volunteers who mentored students in the 2007-2008 school year have participated for at least five years. Of those 93 ITP mentors, 43 have been participating for over seven years, and we are grateful for their commitment to our students and our communities.

As we prepare to start a new year, these veterans and many new recruits will help us implement new and time-tested approaches to helping youth maximize their potential—and along the way, they'll be helping our students turn their hopes into possibilities, their dreams into realities, and their ideas into action.

FINAL WORD



◀ “I’ve been volunteering as a mentor with the ITP every year for eight years now. Before working at Hewlett-Packard, I was a teacher. This program allows me to stay connected to students. I am so impressed with the students I work with—I love having a part in helping them articulate their visions for their futures and how they will make those visions real. They are committed to their goals and this program gives them the confidence that they can achieve their dreams. It is one of the most rewarding components of my work day.”

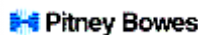
—*Nicole Morantz Helprin, HP Mentor for the ITP*

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