

tele mentor™

journal of the international telementor program

3 Key Questions

any student
must answer
before they
graduate

How to Have an
**Excellent
Year**

What
Students
Won't Say
to Teachers...

**Amazing
Stories** of
TRANSFORMED
TEENS



A Picture of

Success

Why students in Bossier Schools (La.)
aren't waiting for their future
to happen to them...

www.telementor.org

WHY ACADEMIC MENTORING WORKS

Three Key Questions...

HERE ARE THE THREE BROAD questions that all students should be able to answer before



they graduate. I've included key sub questions for each broad area.

I would strongly recommend projects where the

results are tangible and where they help meet clearly delineated goals. Avoid projects that simply expose students to, for example, a college campus—with the hope that they catch the “practical knowledge” virus. We need to move way beyond exposure activities. Our students need and deserve a lot more.

1. What are my interests and natural abilities?

Additional Questions:

1. What do others say about me? What am I good at?
2. What do I find “easy” to do?
3. Which activities do I enjoy most?
4. Which classes at school makes sense to me? Which ones are difficult?

2. What are the broad areas of our [insert local region here] economy that are connected to my interests and natural abilities? (Note: Most students have interests that are represented by multiple broad fields and literally scores of career titles within those fields. It's critical that we help them explore these broad areas first and not allow a student to pick a career title as the first step in

this process. The latter results in weak decision making.)

Additional Questions:

1. Who shares my interests?
2. Which fields are represented by professionals who share my interests?
3. What is happening on the leading edge of these fields?
4. Who is doing leading-edge work?
5. What would the leaders do differently if they were in my shoes?
6. What can I do right now to become an asset in the field I'm pursuing?

3. Where are the educational opportunities, beginning in [insert local region here], that will allow me to compete successfully as a professional?

Additional Questions:

1. What is the placement rate for the post-secondary program that I'm interested in?
2. How do I interview successful alumni from this post-secondary program?
3. What is the difference between having my own plan, versus asking my academic advisor what to do?
4. How do successful professionals rank the postsecondary program that I am interested in?

For youth,

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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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Watch Out, Facebookers

RECENTLY PRESIDENT OBAMA was asked by a ninth grader about getting into politics. “Well, let me give you some very practical tips. First of all, I want everybody here to be careful about what you post on Facebook, because in the YouTube age, whatever you do, it will be pulled up again later somewhere in your life,” the president said. This may be difficult with the openness and sharing between today’s young adults. Nearly 40 percent of young adults have an online social networking profile and 60 percent of all teenagers do, according to research from the Pew Internet and American Life Project. Facebook is the world’s largest online social network with more than 250 million active users. Many students seem well aware of the potential danger lurking online and know how it could affect their futures. “I don’t put any party pictures on my profile at all,” said Taylor Edwards, a freshman at Georgetown University. James Barnes, who has aspirations to get into politics in the future, said there is a simple way for people to make sure they don’t run into trouble with what they post. “I think they should conduct themselves online as they would offline,” Barnes said. —ABCNEWS.GO.COM

Sand Through an Hourglass

IN THE US, ONE STUDENT DROPS out every 12 seconds. That’s 194,400 students so far this year. —BIGPICTURE.ORG

Useful Ed-Stat Website

HOW IS YOUR STATE DOING? That’s what you can find out on this easy to use website (higherinfo.org). With clear, color-coded US maps, as well as a breakdown by graphs, data, policy implications and definitions, there aren’t many education statistic sites this easy to read. —HIGHEREDINFO.ORG

Teens: Write On

TEENS WRITE A LOT, BUT THEY do not think of their emails, instant messages and text messages as writing. This disconnect matters because teens believe good writing is an essential skill for success and that more writing instruction at school would help them. —PEWINTERNET.ORG

“ I want to tell you we are going to be great partners.”

—ISMAEL, STUDENT, IN A FIRST MESSAGE TO HIS NEW MENTOR, BRIAN EGAN, A RETIRED ENGINEER

WHERE TO FIND IT



Bridging the Gap Between High School and College

Want to increase your school's college enrollment?

BIG NEWS! LEADING SCHOOL districts are starting to track college enrollment and retention rates. This measure makes clear to students, parents and staff the purpose of high school education and graduation: a successful life *after* high school. College Summit helps schools dramatically increase the number of students who advance to college, no matter their socioeconomic background. Your school can build a post secondary planning infrastructure to foster a college-going culture. Among the tools provided are: a planning course for all seniors, hands-on teacher professional development, peer training, workshops and college application scorecards for students.

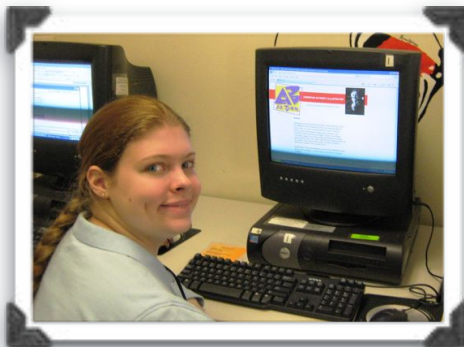
Check it out at:
www.collegesummit.org

Creating a Picture of *Success*

There is textbook and lecture—and then there is simply *doing*; all-out, straight-through, intensive *doing*.

BY VICTOR RIVERO

AFTER 28 YEARS OF TEACHING, CATHEY CAREY has never had it so fun. But when students are obtaining remarkable, tangible improvements in



Clicking with the pros. Emma, a student, conducts research for her Career Exploration class. She is reading up on and connecting with various people with similar interests to her own.

their lives, that's to be expected. In her Career Exploration class at Airline High School in Bossier Parish Schools, Bossier City, Louisiana, Cathey is creating a safe space within which her students

can discover for themselves what their future paths might be. With help from the International Telementor Program, the experience has taken her students from average, well-intentioned teens with vague hopes about their future—to confident, competent individuals on their way to achieving their dreams on a very practical level.

Explosive Results

For 90 minutes a day, five days a week, Cathey Carey's students came together for a class like no other; on any given day, they may have been completing part of a project, sharing what progress they made with each of their mentors, or asking for feedback, constructive criticism or receiving praise



Going places. Cathey Carey, second from left, with a few of her students from the Career Exploration class she teaches at Airline High School in Bossier Parish, La.

for a job well done. Given recommendations, students would go back to their work, make adjustments and send what they'd done back to their mentor.

"They'd collaborate as they built their portfolio. I wasn't lecturing, and they were *doing*. It was very successful," says Cathey. Granted, the teacher's role is vital but, says Cathey,



Working smart. Students at Airline High School move independently through their research projects, propelled by a strong sense of self-directed purpose.

"There is just something about working with a professional adult besides me. I'm like mama. They like what I have to say and I have positive input, but they like—and it's more powerful coming from—the outside adult."

Before the project commenced, one particular student, Michelle, was very certain of everything. "She knew she was going to be a lawyer, what college she wanted—she knew everything," says Cathey.

Great to be certain, but this veteran teacher had seen it before: a student who selects and then holds onto an idea, fixing on it and merely repeating it

WALK TALL

by Jordan S.

I'm young and I'm new
I used to hate this crazy school
I worked harder than ever
I didn't think I'd make it, never
I will because of you all
I can finally hold my head up
I Will Walk Tall

The world is hard you've shown me that
I won't give up because I have a map
You told me it's not on demand
You gave me an action plan
You place my life in my hand
I've got to get off this little kid wall
You gave me the Strength
Now I Will Walk Tall.



The write stuff. Interested in writing as a profession, Emma, through her Career Exploration project scheduled some one-on-one time with a local writer who gives her some insights.

when asked what they want to do or be in the future—but never really delving into it to any degree so as to understand what it's truly all about.

Consequently, as the project got underway, the changes were immediate. Cathey explains:

"We got to doing our research and it was then that she made a discovery. She didn't want to be a lawyer. In fact, she felt she was more suited for criminal justice and wants to be a criminal investigator."

Like a powder trail to a keg, Michelle had struck upon her true purpose and simply ignited a straight line to her dreams—with explosive results. Her production, and subsequently her morale, shot way up.

"She's become very excited, made contacts with the local law agencies here, will do interviews to gather further information, she's completing projects and made contacts with the people at the community college," says Cathey. "She is getting everything lined up and geared to go toward that direction (of criminal investigator). She's even volunteered from our class and is visiting the



Serious shopper.

Michelle enjoys a good look at some great threads, carefully making her suit selections as part of a Dress for Success/Career Exploration mentoring project.

Smiling shopper.

As part of her Career Exploration class, Shikira couldn't hold back the joy she felt in selecting her very own professional attire.



sheriff's station, working at the front desk on a volunteer basis."

The research, and communicating with her mentor, Rachel McClary—made the difference.

"Michelle likes to solve things, to find the answer, and to help people," says Cathey. "Rather than sitting at a desk doing research and then defending and representing people, she really wanted to get out there and do something more hands-on. She had never considered that before. Some of these students have told themselves, 'This is what I'm going to do'—but haven't put a plan of action in

motion. They're just saying it. She actually has a plan."

In communicating with her mentor, Michelle tapped into a connection her mentor had—her husband's best friend was a criminal investigator. With her mentor's help, Michelle created interview questions for the criminal investigator in her area. Her mentor also knew someone who was a dispatcher, and Michelle got some feedback from that person as well.

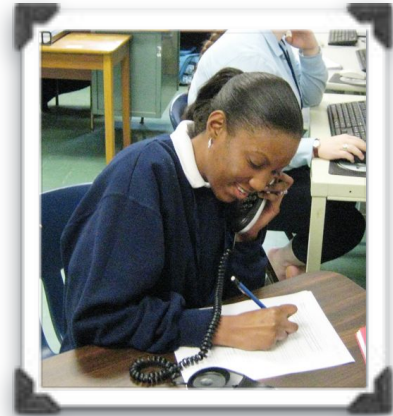
"This just gives her more insight from not just a textbook, but from people doing what she wants to do," says Cathey.

Dressing the Part

The experience that is Cathey Carey's class involves meeting once a week at the local community college. For the project Michelle and the other students were involved in, a guest speaker paid a visit. The director of Dress for Success, a nonprofit organization

contacted through Volunteers of America, advised Cathey's students on "how to dress for an interview, how not to dress, what says you're confident, what the different colors, prints, types of shoes, makeup is; how you present yourself and what impression you are making, and what's appropriate," says Cathey. An invitation was extended to visit the Dress for Success boutique, where the students received not only a free fitting, but free interview suits as well.

"They actually got *two* each," raves Cathey. "It was so much fun and made my students feel so special. They got shoes, a handbag, all that type of stuff so that they were each dressed successfully." When they presented their completed projects to the group at the community college, "They looked beautiful, professional and competent," says Cathey.



On it. *Shikira gently takes the call, but aggressively takes notes when she interviews a working professional about their experiences and advice as part of a Career Exploration project.*

Before, "They weren't really focused. You're going to feel confident when you know what you're wanting to do and where you're going," Cathey says. "The clothes just helped give them an air of confidence. They looked so poised and professional standing there speaking. They were no longer nervous high school students. I was very proud of them. You should have seen how they held themselves. They knew they looked confident."

The students sent photos to their mentors and got feedback. With their mentor's help, the students collected information for a portfolio and powerpoint poster, collaborating as they went. Michelle's mentor was certain that she would do a good job and that she would make a good impression in any interview.

All in All

"It was another successful project," Cathey says. "I definitely want to do this again with some other students. It has been very successful. I love



Talk about success. *The director of the Dress for Success program, through Volunteers of America, addresses high school students from a Career Exploration project class on a visit to the local community college in Bossier City, Louisiana.*



A leader is made. *Students gather their portfolios of knowledge, edit them down with help from their mentors, and then stand and deliver a professional presentation about their area of research.*

the telementor project. I enjoyed seeing and was very proud of how the students had their plans.” When Cathey’s class met at the community college, another teacher, Kathy Doyle, was also doing the same project with her class. “That was interesting, too, because we could share what each

student was doing, what the mentors were telling them and what they were learning about the career they were researching.”

The energy and support generated in that environment was unprecedented. “These two classes really bonded,” says Cathey. “They forged

friendships, exchanged numbers—it was mostly females—only one male. Poor, poor guy! But they all bonded and though they were from different schools and never would have met—they became great

Wow! *These two students address their class with poise and professionalism as part of their final presentations during the mentor-enabled Career Exploration project.*



Smiles of success. *From not-so-sure students to competent, confident individuals already on their way, Career Exploration project students benefit from strong collaborations with their mentors.*

friends and encouraged each other.”

As a high school teacher, Cathey says her entire Career Exploration class was centered around the telementor project. Everything from the research to the interaction with mentors was broken down into easily doable steps, and the mentors all had copies of the syllabus, Cathey explains. “They knew what our objectives were and what they were supposed to be working on each step of the way. Sometimes I communicated back and forth with the mentors as well.”

For those readers curious about creating the same or a similar project, Cathey had this to say: “I would recommend you look into it. It’s very hands-on. The students were very motivated. I’m not standing up lecturing, I’m walking around talking. We’re collaborating, and I’m merely guiding the students. The class flew by. There’s no boredom. It was something they were excited about—they would rush to check their messages from their mentors—and even after it’s done, they are *still* excited by what they learned and how they grew.” ■





BY JOAN TUREK

How to Have An Excellent Year

Limited by the walls of a school building? Look to collaborative projects connecting your students to real-world learning.

THIS HAS BEEN ANOTHER excellent year for my students who have been fortunate enough to work with outstanding mentors through the International Telementor Program. My freshmen, sophomores, and juniors focused on career exploration and developed plans of action designed to help direct them towards their goals.

In-Depth Learning.

Research and collaboration with their mentors helped expand my students' understanding of what it takes to be successful in high school, college, and beyond. Seniors worked on in-depth college exploration projects to explore college and career options, communicate with university advisors and admissions personnel, complete college and scholarship applications, and create an education plan to take them through the next five years.

Accountability Factor.

This is my fifth year working

with ITP mentors and I stay involved because mentoring makes a huge difference for my students. By working with mentors through the ITP, my students learn to articulate their interests, explore and discuss their educational and career goals, communicate effectively both orally and in writing, and understand what it takes to be successful. Being accountable to an adult other than their teacher helps students take more responsibility for their own learning on a daily basis and keeps them on track.

What Teachers Want. I believe that our educational system has some excellent teachers, administrators, and supporters and I see them in action in my school and community on a daily basis. Educators realize that there are limits to what can be done within the walls of a school building and more teachers are looking for collaborative projects that connect students to real-world learning. My school

and district administration understands and supports the efforts of the ITP, and the program is growing in our area.

Mentors for Success. The mentors who work with my students are, without exception, excellent! They are the driving force behind the success of the program as they patiently encourage, challenge, and guide my students through their research and exploration. Their interaction helps increase student learning every day and I know that the skills taught by the mentors will be beneficial throughout the lives of my students. Open-ended questions, interaction with mentors, and projects that connect student interests to opportunities within their communities help drive them to greater achievement. Mentors help provide these learning experiences to students, and I believe that every child would benefit from having a mentor who is interested in his or her success. *continued >>*

In Good Company. The companies that provide opportunities for their employees to work with ITP truly make a positive difference in the futures of all the students who participate in the mentoring process through this program. Professional mentors model collaboration, research, and communication skills and open up windows of opportunity for students in ways far beyond what is possible in the traditional classroom setting.

It is my sincere hope that even more companies will make connections with students within their communities and through ITP so that more young people can have the benefit of

“Every child would benefit from having a mentor who is interested in his or her success.”

—Joan Turek, TEACHER

being involved in organized, constructive, educational mentoring relationships.

Mentors in Action.

Professional mentors help build a more positive future for young people and for our world. I am thankful for each of them and for the opportunity I have to work with my students and with their wonderful mentors. One brief example of the power of a mentor: each year, my seniors compare and contrast college opportunities to find the best fit for them academically, socially, and financially. Students are assigned to research academic programs in their field, discuss options with their mentor, and contact admissions staff and professors at several schools. Through that process and on-campus visits, one of my seniors discovered that the college he always thought would be a perfect fit for him was not at all what he expected. His mentor, Yevgeny Kaplun, challenged him step-by-step throughout the project and the student received a scholarship to a university with an excellent program in his field of choice, computer programming. ■

Joan Turek teaches AIM gifted education classes at Parkway High School in Bossier Parish, La. and is a leading advocate of academic mentoring.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE



“ During my time working with the telementor program, I learned invaluable life lessons. Through my interactions with my mentors I learned to communicate in a professional manner, coordinate schedules, and receive constructive criticism. Being able to interview top professionals also gave me advice on how to put effort into my dreams that I never would have access to otherwise. The telementor program has developed my idea of what career I want and how I want to live—into a more concrete system of actions that I can take to achieve my goals.”

—MITCHELL MARTIN, HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR, STUDENT OF JOAN TUREK, LOUISIANA



BY ZAC BURSON

Amazing Stories of Transformed Teens

With career and education plans done right, students rapidly evolve into self-directed researchers and fluent presenters who are creating new things.

A NUMBER OF THE FEATURED students in this issue of *Telementor* have developed career and education plans over multiple school years with the aid of multiple mentors. Ideally, all ITP students would receive the same support as Cathey's student Emma who needs to collaborate with people in the arts community and Joan's student Mitchell who benefits from collaborating with software development experience. Emma and Mitchell benefit from the different perspectives of adults working in a variety of professions. They're ready to continue collaborating.

In fact, self-directed students who recognize the need to collaborate seek out increasingly complex tasks to accomplish. The community of learners that they join will have specialized knowledge critical to their success. The enhanced rigor of their thinking creates a demand for the formation of new mentor/protégé relationships. I often tell my students (only half jokingly) that

if I can understand their independent research work, then it's not sophisticated enough.

A new version of the Bloom's Taxonomy of Thinking is out,



Terrific at Scientific. Stephanie (left) and Scarlett at Louisiana State University's Junior Science and Humanities Symposium on January 15, 2010.

and where "evaluation" once sat at the apex, "creation" now tops all. In this new paradigm, "creation" subsumes all of the other types of thinking—recall, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. To create, therefore, is to build something new upon a platform of sound thinking and experience.

The action plans that ITP students form are dynamic documents that synthesize

experience and spark new action. In the most interesting manifestations of student self-direction, new thoughts come forth; new networks are created; new actions are taken to address problems by way of new solutions. So really, these multiple iterations of exploration, planning, and acting should lead to increasingly complex "creating" if the young person is to appropriately develop his or her gifts.

Emma, by pursuing her own interests in art as a career, is helping us to create a new relationship with the Bossier Arts Council as she seeks to lend her talents to the work of this nonprofit. She is creating a new opportunity for herself and for those who come after her.

I WAS VERY FORTUNATE THIS week to spend two days with students at Louisiana State University where my daughter and 43 other students from around the state shared their research in the Junior Science and Humanities Symposium. What was most impressive

about this group of students was that they had all had the benefit of working with mentors of exceptional expertise in fields of interest to the students. Part of the program consisted of top researchers, professors and skilled researchers in the sciences. We saw ice from Antarctica and researchers from Germany and India. They represented many different scientific disciplines. Young undergraduate researchers spoke with pride about their summer research experiences in some of the top institutions in the US and around the world. In fact, one young researcher had just returned from an expedition to Antarctica. Each spoke to their evolving understanding of the processes and the topics of research in which they now participated.

Two of the student participants, now high school seniors, were among our first students teamed with ITP mentors in independent science research projects in 2006.

During her freshman year, Scarlett Gray, an empiricist and a skeptic, went to the regional science fair with a project that disproved horoscopes. Three years later, she is studying virology, in a research lab examining integrin signaling in monocyte motility in Human Cytomegalovirus. Scarlett shared that, in her freshman year, she was very reluctant to get any kind of support from a mentor; three years later she is working on a lab team with a highly respected lead researcher. When in ninth grade, Scarlett's classmate, Stephanie Axelson, collaborated quite effectively to

study with HP mentor Julie Wilker how to prevent the "skin rips" that occur when gymnasts practice on the high bar and rings.

The sound research methodology and the openness to collaboration that Stephanie demonstrated back in the ninth grade is amplified tenfold as she now looks at mechanisms affecting DNA transcription of tumor suppressor genes in a cancer research lab.

While I listened to Scarlett and Stephanie present on Friday, I marveled at the sophistication of their thinking. I can't say that I caught everything, and that impressed me.

"In her freshman year, Scarlett was very reluctant to get any kind of support from a mentor; three years later she is working on a lab team with a highly respected researcher."

WE REMAIN FOCUSED ON providing multi-year support for ITP students as they develop and act on their action plans. With such experiences, students become more likely to view collaboration with mentors as critically important to the pursuit of individual goals.

Partnering with ITP to promote academic rigor and innovative thinking in STEM fields, MasterCard and The Merck Institute for Science Education will support the independent science research efforts of students at Parkway High school this year and next. Ideally, students will move from

career exploration and education planning projects and action plans that will spark original academic research in rigorous academic areas. For example, students interested in topics in computer science may be inspired to do student research in those fields. Ideally, students doing research in a field will be inspired to get help from mentors belonging to communities of learners that are part of our work. Students are then inspired to connect with people in the local community and within other communities of learners. Students will ply their talents to directly affect issues with which professional adults already wrestle, and collaborate with their more experienced colleagues to create new opportunities and tackle new and as yet unforeseen challenges.

Because I spend each day with adults and students open to such behavior, I am confident that ITP will lead the way in this work. We remain focused on providing multi-year support for ITP students as they develop and act on action plans. With such experiences, students become more likely to view collaboration with mentors as critically important to the pursuit of individual goals. As students move through high school and increase their capacity to tackle increasingly complex issues with discipline and creativity, ITP mentors will be there with them. ■

***Zac Burson** is the Program Coordinator for the International Telementor Program and a teacher at Bossier Schools in Louisiana. Write to: staff@telementor.org*

Lasting Impressions

CATHY SOWARD IS A mentor from HP. She recently assisted a student from Topeka, Kansas. In her messages, she includes simple yet powerful concepts. Iteration is the act of repeating a process with the aim of approaching a desired goal, with each repetition itself called an iteration. It's a lost art in many schools of today. But not where Cathy is involved. With one iteration's results usable as a starting point for the next iteration, improvement is inevitable. So wherever students regularly turn in works of poor quality week after week without being "called out" on it, Cathy gently insists they keep grooming their drafts. In so doing, she assists sixth graders to accomplish



Getting it right the third time...or fourth.

Whatever it takes, the process of iteration is a way of improving each new version of your work—until you've achieved your goal—and not trashing earlier versions and starting from scratch, but building on them until you have the best version possible.

college-level work. Here's a snippet (already in progress) of her million-dollar advice: (from Cathy, to her student) "It is better, and like you said, a rough draft. I definitely do not think you

should start over, because the second draft is so much better than the first. All the suggestions I made are just to get it to the point where it will be the real deal. Don't give up. Actually, this reminds me of how I think of cooking; I figure I'll be 90 years old before I get everything right, if I get to live that long :). But it's fun to work on. Anyway, just keep trying, you'll get it. Kind of like sports in a way too, you don't start out

a pro, you have to keep working on things. Thanks for writing and talk to you again soon."

Is it possible to realistically maintain such educational

environments? We want to know. Tell us what you think and what makes you think that way. Include your name, company, your city and state. Write to us at: staff@telementor.org ■

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

Find out how your group, organization, company or foundation might get involved in helping our youth. Email: staff@telementor.org or call us toll free at

(877)376-8053



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