The Art of Mentoring: Creating Learning Partnerships
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Kathryn J. Deiss  Director, Strategic Learning Center
Metropolitan Library System   deissk@mls.lib.il.us

“Learning is the fundamental process and the primary purpose of mentoring.”

Lois J. Zachary

Kathryn J. Deiss   deissk@mls.lib.il.us
New Perspectives on Mentoring

- Change from product-orientation to process-orientation
- Change from mentor-centered to protégée-centered
- Viewed as a shared responsibility
- Mentor seen as less an authority than a guide and learning partner
- Change from one mentor to multiple

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.ill.us

The Primary Roles of a Mentor

- Facilitator role
- Helping role

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.ill.us
The Mentor’s Facilitator Role

- Creating a relationship and climate conducive to learning
- Developing a trusting and honest relationship; honoring confidentiality
- Encouraging the protégée to test assumptions and reflect
- Using highly developed inquiry skills

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.illinois.edu

The Mentor’s Helping Role

- Attending to the protégée's needs
- Listening deeply
- Resisting the urge to give advice
- Being in the service of the protégée
- Understanding the impact of any intervention – action or word
- Understanding context

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.illinois.edu
Context for Mentoring

- Protégée is in life’s midstream
- Mentoring occurs in the midst of this so is not a true beginning
- The mentor must seek to understand the point at which she is entering the protégée's picture
- There may also be an organizational context for both mentor and protégée

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.illinois.edu

Structure of Interpretation

- Immediate Concerns
- Commitments
- Future Possibilities
- Personal and Cultural History
- Mood

(from Flaherty, James. Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others)

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.illinois.edu
The Context of the Profession

- Need for effective succession
- Need for retention
- Demand for support of individual development
- Excellence at all levels = organizational excellence & advancement of the profession

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.il.us

Types of Guidance

- Mentors provide many types of guidance:
  - Help protégée explore their vision
  - Help protégée develop options and reach decisions
  - Assist protégée in determining risk/benefit of options
  - Inspire protégée

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.il.us
Arenas of Influence and Guidance in Mentoring

- Knowledge of organizational, social, and political systems
- Technical areas/subject specialization
- Development of professional vision/values
- Accomplishment of specific goals
- Development of character and discipline

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.il.us

Influence and Guidance in Mentoring (cont’d.)

- Ability to self-critique
- Knowledge of leadership practices
- Understanding of publishing venues
- Creating a vital network of both strong and weak connections
- Self-understanding and awareness

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.il.us
Creating Practice Fields

- Allow protégée to develop skills through the use of practice fields
- Create developmental assignments
- Create feedback loops for powerful learning
- Develop a comfort level with practicing

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.il.us

Key Behaviors of Mentors

- Listening for protégée's interests
- Developing rapport with protégée
- Supporting through word and action
- Linking protégée to other people
- Helper in problem-solving
- Providing feedback
- Conveying own passion/interests

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.il.us
Ineffective Mentor Behaviors

- Not listening and inquiring actively
- Betraying trust and confidence
- Avoiding meetings/conversations
- Allowing an over-dependency on self
- Being judgmental re: protégée's ideas
- Assuming a superior/heroic role

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Effective Protégée Behaviors

- Being self-observant
- Communicating both aspirations and concerns to mentor
- Listening actively to mentor
- Testing own assumptions and those of mentor
- Requesting and acting upon feedback

Kathryn J. Deiss  deissk@mls.lib.il.us
Ineffective Behaviors of Protégée

- Inability to see own responsibility for development, learning, and achievement
- Not keeping in contact with mentor
- Neglecting primary work responsibilities
- Playing the supervisor/boss against the mentor

Kathryn J. Deiss deissk@mls.lib.il.us

Ineffective Behaviors of Protégée (cont’d.)

- Developing a rivalry with mentor
- Becoming over dependent on mentor
- Not expressing fears and/or misgivings
- Looking to mentor to solve all problems
- Looking to mentor to create own vision
- Assuming success due to association with mentor

Kathryn J. Deiss deissk@mls.lib.il.us
Learning Styles

- Protégée and mentor may have very different learning styles
- One’s teaching style mirrors one’s learning style
- Be explicit about preferences in learning

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“Virtual” Mentoring Tips

- Pay closer attention to expressed needs and desired outcomes
- Connect more strongly on personal level -- establish ways to indicate self
- Establish a conversation schedule
- Combine communication methods
- Connect in person wherever possible

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Formalizing the Process

- Articulate why you are creating a mentoring program
  - Develop organizational outcomes
- Determine how to approach pairing
- Develop criteria for success
- Collect data on program
- Determine frequency of assessment

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Assessment of Program

- Consider the following elements
  - Protégée satisfaction, learning
  - Mentor satisfaction, learning
  - Organizational impact
  - Cost/Benefit

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Mentor Program Absolutes

- Senior leadership support for program
- Making the program an essential part of other development strategies
- Creating supportive systems for learning relationships
- Allowing for diverse styles and approaches

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“Mind what you learn. Save it you can.”
Yoda

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