

NATE Network Mentoring Program

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a relationship between two people where one is supporting and fostering the professional and personal growth of the other. Mentoring has been used throughout education settings for more than three decades to support teachers new to the field and to facilitate response to new mandates and initiatives. Mentoring differs from networking in that it has a specific purpose of fostering the growth of the protégé. Establishing a mentoring relationship creates an informal contract in which the protégé agrees to ask questions and initiate discussions about specific areas of concern or challenge. The mentor agrees to engage in discussion, provide direction, and give feedback to the protégé. While the protégé obviously learns the most new skills, both the protégé and the mentor benefit from this relationship as they become more self-aware and hone their problem solving and communication skills.

Why Mentoring through the NATE Network?

Many individuals who are providing assistive technology services in schools are the only person in their building or even their school district who are assigned to provide AT services. Others may have a local peer group of people interested in assistive technology but feel that they need new ideas, new input or another point of view to solve problems or address AT in a new way. The NATE Network is undertaking a program to foster the development of mentoring relationships between experienced assistive technology service providers and those new to the field or undertaking new challenges. These relationships are of necessity long distance and will most likely be conducted via email and telephone contact. Later in this section of the website there will be an opportunity to sign up to either provide or seek mentoring. Please consider participating in this mentoring program.

Who can be a mentor through the NATE Network?

Any member of the NATE Network can volunteer to be a mentor to others.

You could be a great AT mentor if you:

- Are knowledgeable in the field of AT
- Are willing to support and counsel another
- Have access to professional resources
- Are motivated and enthusiastic
- Can provide a vision or broad view
- Have specialized knowledge in a particular aspect of AT
- Believe in helping others
- Can explain how and why you do things

Who can receive mentoring through the NATE Network?

Any member of the NATE Network who would like information, assistance, and support from another member can sign up to receive mentoring (i.e., become a protégé).

You could be a great protégé if you:

- Want to learn more about AT

- Can identify and articulate questions and concerns
- Want help to develop new AT skills
- Are able to discuss issues and problems
- Have a high investment in your job
- Can accept and apply feedback
- Value and respect input from another

How will the NATE Network mentoring work?

It is estimated that each mentoring relationship will last from 3 to 9 months. The entire mentoring relationship will be conducted on a long distance basis through email, and if appropriate, telephone contact. The NATE Network has developed forms to be completed by individuals who are willing to serve as mentors and those who are seeking mentors. The NATE Networks Mentoring Program uses a problem-solving paradigm where the Mentor-Protégé pair will work together to:

1. Identify a problem or need
2. Brainstorm potential solutions
3. Discuss those solutions and select one strategy to try
4. Implement that strategy
5. Evaluate progress
6. Evaluate outcomes
7. Begin again by trying another strategy or moving on to a new problem

Mentor and protégé pairs can repeat this process as many times as they wish.

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Protégé Application form

Description of my current job and past experience:

My goal(s) for this mentoring project:

Strengths that I have to contribute to reaching this goal:

Knowledge or skills that I need to acquire to reach this goal:

Steps that I have already taken to learn the knowledge or skills that I need:

What I am hoping a mentor can do:

Times when I am most available:

Best way to reach me:

Hints for protégés

While there are no specific requirements for participation, doing the following can help make the mentoring experience helpful:

- Identify a specific concern or problem on which you can focus.
- Contact your mentor at least once a month.
- Ask questions.
- Engage actively in the process so that you are brainstorming and sharing ideas with your mentor.

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Mentor Application form

Description of my current job and past experience:

Topics with which I am comfortable helping a protégé:

My goals as a mentor:

Times when I am most available:

Best way to reach me:

Hints for mentors

While not required, the following steps can be helpful in moving the mentoring relationship to a mutually satisfactory conclusion.

- **Contact** your protégé at least once a month if you have not heard from her or him.
- Be an **active listener**.
- **Paraphrase** to ensure you understand exactly what your protégé is saying or requesting (e.g. “So, you are thinking that....,” “It seems to be that you are concerned about.....”).
- **Probe for specificity** when you hear vague nouns and pronouns, (e.g., “they”, “everyone”). Exactly who did or said that?
- **Find out the source** when you hear rule words, (e.g. “You shouldn’t...”, “We have to...”). Why does your protégé believe this?
- Presume **positive** intentions.
- Seek a **balance** between proposing suggestions or solutions and inquiring about your protégé’s ideas.