

# **HFTFS PRIZE 2017**

## **APPLICATION PART 1**

### **READING #1**

**HARBOR FREIGHT**  
**TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS**

**Student-Centered Learning for the Skilled Trades**

Adapted from [\*A Model for Work-Based Learning\*](#)

By Belle Alderman and Patricia Milne

The selection of mentors is controlled by many factors, and the final decision is often based on a judgment that is founded on experience. Underpinning the process are strong links between the educators and their professional community. These links must be built on mutual trust and respect. Mentors need to have the same vision for the outcomes of the work experience and be willing to make the required commitment to the program and to the student.

When educators consider the knowledge, skills and professional attitudes that the students have and those that they want to develop, they begin to identify suitable mentors. This process is based on their own knowledge of the possible pool of mentors and their organizations or on recommendations from trusted professional colleagues. This process can be time consuming because there are often factors that preclude a possible mentor, even a willing one. For example, when an organization is experiencing a period of instability, such as a restructure, it is usually not appropriate to place a student in the situation at that time. Sometimes even mentors who are committed may feel that they need a break after having mentored a student, or several students, in the past.

Another issue that impacts the process is the educator's knowledge of the students themselves, including the students' demonstrated attitude to work and their level of achievement. Sometimes even knowledge of the student's personality might affect the decision of whom to select as a mentor. Also, students

should not be placed in organizations where they already know the mentor personally. Such a situation may compromise the mentor's ability to give constructive feedback.

The success of this work-based learning model lies largely in the synergy created by the interaction of three worlds—educator, student and mentor. For this to occur, each person must have the same vision of the program and the expected outcomes. The responsibility for developing this lies with the educator and can be facilitated through workshops for both students and mentors.

A typical mentor training workshop might include sessions on:

- socializing the student into the workplace—a process that often takes about two weeks;
- developing an individualized plan of learning based on the student's goals, the skills they already possess and the new ones they want to develop;
- giving appropriate feedback to the student, including constructive criticism as well as positive comments that can boost confidence;
- and encouraging the student to question, reflect and, even at times, take appropriate risks.

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At its most effective, the mentoring relationship follows the Socratic method. Good mentors will not judge or instruct; they will facilitate or interpret and empower students to arrive at their own decisions and conclusions. They will allow students to take risks, but be there for them to provide ongoing support where necessary. The best mixture, resulting in students achieving growth in learning, is a high amount of support combined with a high amount of challenge.

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