

Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission
Small scale partnership project in vocational education and training
**“Improvement of digital and peer mentoring support skills of
marginalised students to prevent their drop-out from school”**
Project number: 2022-2-BG01-KA210-VET-000092203

Activity 1 Production and customisation of Peer mentoring training materials



Version 2, September 2023



Authors:

| | |
|---|---|
|  <p>BULGARIAN INCLUSION SUPPORT TEAM</p> <p>SDRUJENIE "BYLGARSKI EKIP ZA PRIOSHTAVASHTA PODKREPA" – BULGARIAN INCLUSION SUPPORT TEAM Sofia, Bulgaria (BIST)</p> | <p>Andrean Lazarov Stanislav Georgiev Gergana Arabcheva Victoria Georgieva</p> |
|  <p>WINSS</p> <p>WINSS: World Innovative Sustainable Solutions, Istanbul, Turkiye (WINSS)</p> | <p>Figen Sekin Huliya Karaca</p> |
|  <p>94 СУ Димитър Страшимиров</p> <p>94 High School "Dimitar Strashimirov", Sofia, Bulgaria (94 SU)</p> | <p>Latinka Kovacheva Nevena Apostolova Penka Nikolova Petar Kalpakchiev Rumyana Koserkova Velislava Nikolova Violeta Guyzeleva Vladislava Ubina Zlatka Yaneva Nevena Vukova</p> |



Table of contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction and definitions..... | 3 |
| Peer mentor's roles | 6 |
| Peer mentor' code of conduct..... | 8 |
| Peer mentoring stages | 10 |
| Stage 1 Setting up | 10 |
| Stage 2 Engage | 11 |
| Stage 3 Sustain..... | 12 |
| Stage 4 Evaluation..... | 13 |
| Expectations and Behaviours | 14 |
| Sample of working plan/agenda | 17 |
| References | 18 |



Introduction and definitions

In the context of the “IM-PRO-MENT” project, you have been recruited as a peer mentor. This code of conduct will guide you about the purpose, main roles, and responsibilities, which should be agreed between you as mentor and your peer, who is in situation of potential drop-out from school.

We trust in you as advanced student and we believe that your behaviour and support will lead to academic and life success of the peer, for who you are responsible for.

In the context of this project and its activities, it is important to acknowledge the following terms:



Peer mentoring is a volunteering organised “one-to-one” guidance and support between advanced student and vulnerable/disadvantaged peer student, where these students could become more independent, self-directed learners, freeing the instructor (their advanced peer) to focus on course content and facilitation rather than continue with routine tasks, which may lead to their potential school drop-out.



Peer student/peer mentee is a less experienced or/and disadvantaged student (minority representative, student with disability, learning difficulty or low skills), who is frequently observing difficulties in learning participation, comprehension with the training content, preparation of homework due to problems with engaging in class



discussions, and writing in an academic style or experienced serious challenges during distance or online learning.



Peer mentor is an advanced student (at least one year older than the peer mentee), who is willing to cooperate with the peer mentee for their mutual academic and personal development.

Peer mentors are recruited by the teachers at school based on definite criteria.



They are expected to collaborate with the peer mentee for successful implementation of mentoring process ***for a period of 4 months – 3 times of week for 90 minutes per session.***

What do we expect from you as peer mentor?

- To develop skills as a leader and coach.
- To bring an additional encouragement for participating vulnerable students to realise their academic success at schools and to share life aspirations, which will lead to better social inclusion for these disadvantaged students.
- To help low-skilled students with possible solutions about dilemmas in the field of personal leadership towards success.
- To act as a key factor for success.

Peer mentoring benefits could be:

- better attitudes toward school and the future.
- decreased likelihood of initiating drug or alcohol use.
- greater feelings of academic competence.
- improved academic performance.
- more positive relationships with friends and family.

(Campbell-Whatley, 2001)





Peer mentoring outcomes:

- help both peer mentors and peer mentees to develop skills, knowledge and motivation to successfully transition from high school to adult life (*Moccia, Schumaker, Hazel, Vernon & Deshler, 1989*);
- change the course of a young person's life, decrease substance abuse and improve academic performance (*Beier, Rosenfeld, Spitalny, Zansky & Bontempo, 2000*);
- impact many of the goals that are part of the transition process: succeeding academically, accepting support while taking responsibility, communicating effectively, overcoming barriers in educational process and developing social skills (*Rhodes et al., 2000*);
- in a mentoring relationship, peer mentors and peer mentees both win, resulting in long-term benefits for society at large (*Burgstahler & Cronheim, 2001; Kram, 1985; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Saito & Blyth, 1992*).



Peer mentoring is a powerful and popular mechanism for people to learn many and new things related to their personal, social and professional skills. In fact, mentoring is one of the oldest ways to exercise influence. Therefore, the mentoring is a form of learning familiar as individual relationship between a mentor and mentee.



Peer mentor's roles

We can summarise the six most important roles of the peer mentor as follows:



COACH - giving encouragement and feedback, helping someone to acquire new skills and abilities.



COUNSELLOR - listening sympathetically and helping someone work out solutions to their problems.



NETWORKER - helping someone develop the connections they need to gain experience, get a job and so on.



FACILITATOR - opening doors and opportunities, helping to set and achieve goals.



CRITICAL FRIEND - telling someone the uncomfortable truths that only a true friend can.



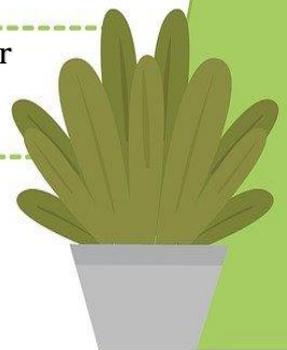
ROLE MODEL - providing an example, from which someone else can learn.



You as peer mentor could:



- Encourage active listening and provision of support from advanced student to peer mentee.
- Be patient and sensitive to mentee's feelings.
- Be able to provide new experiences to the mentee.
- Be able to help mentee see others point of view, self-evaluate, make plans, and solve problems.
- Be able request to the mentee what they think.
- Had the chance to provide new experiences to their mentees.
- Maintain friendship relations as well accepted and trusted.
- Considered that mentees improved their abilities and school performance after the mentoring programme.





Peer mentor' code of conduct

During your intervention as a peer mentor, you can always ask your teachers for help and support. Meanwhile, we are encouraging you to follow these principles during your collaboration with the peer mentee/student:



- Treat the mentee as equal to you.
- Recognize differences in learning process such as speed of learning, ways to reflect on information, speed in writing and comprehension etc.
- Be supportive of mentees' efforts as well as their accomplishments.
- Be hopeful and prompt.
- Make learning process engaging.
- Keep your eye on the significance of the effort in the mentees' lives.
- Do not use bribes or gifts to motivate your mentee.
- Be willing to share their experience when they think it's appropriate.
- Not make empty promises.
- Not forget how important they are – their mentees depends on them.
- Use differences between them and their mentees to open up honest conversations.
- Forgive possible errors and those of their mentees, which could be unintentional.

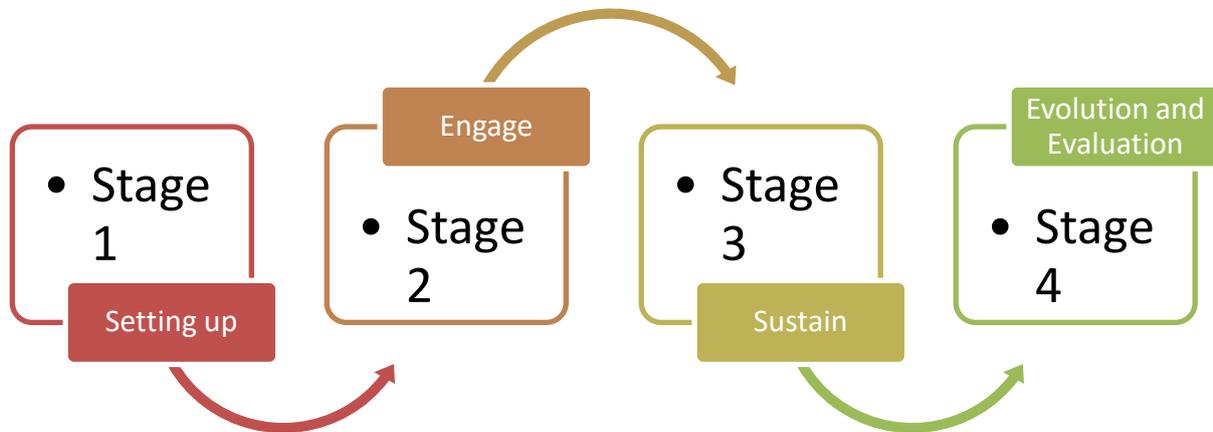


- Be open-minded.
- Be empathetic toward their online peer students and their experiences.
- Be observant and pay attention to what their mentees enjoy and how they learn.
- Incorporate mentees interests into their activities and assignments.
- Be creative and try to think out of the box.
- Help their mentees to reach their learning objectives.
- Be respectful and not discriminative.
- Do not over patronise your mentee.
- Do not forget to keep your collaboration confidential.

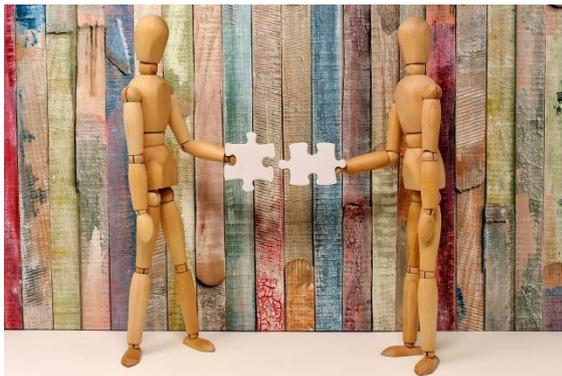
In addition, you as peer mentor should watch out for what the mentee (peer student) grasped or failed to grasp. You can share skills, techniques, methods, directing questions, additional explanations, examples, and even additional support from other students or teachers for help, solely intending for the mentee to get all the details of the needed knowledge, skills, concepts, points of view, etc. The most important is to ensure that the mentee has really grasped what s/he has learned and can reproduce the acquired knowledge and skills with their own words or means.



Peer mentoring stages



Stage 1 Setting up



During this stage, your school principal, teachers, or the pedagogical counsellor will arrange the process of “matching” between you and potential student(s), which you can support as peer mentor. At first, they will make sure that you as a peer mentor will be(come) familiar with the mentoring

scheme. The most important thing for you is to obtain a clear picture from the very beginning. For that purpose, you can be invited to complete an application form and to participate at interview.

The choice of “matching” will be based on similarities in the specialty, which you study, your experience, performance, and personal qualities. It also might be affected by the specific preferences of the mentee, which may prefer for example a mentor in the same gender.

While we selection committee do their best to satisfy each party’s preferences, the “matching” process does require considerable flexibility. After comparing the mentee’s interests and background with the mentor’s profile, the suitable matching peer mentoring couples will be identified and informed accordingly.



Stage 2 Engage



You as a mentor will be asked to meet with the mentee (student). Then, both will be asked to formalise the process by signing a form. If you or the mentee are not happy with this matching, then you should inform immediately the project team at your school to restart the matching process and find a better match.

During this phase the mentee is more interested in getting to know how “real” you are and how much he/she can trust you. You may decide with the mentee how you can reach your mentee: by phone, e-mail, or fax or at a designated meeting location. Experience proves that calling or e-mailing your mentee at school is usually the best way to make contact. Establish a time and phone number where you can usually answer calls or make contact.

Don't try to be teacher, parent, disciplinarian, therapist, Santa Claus or babysitter.

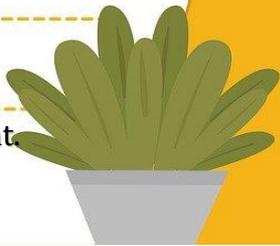
Experience demonstrates it is counterproductive to assume roles other than a dependable, consistent friend. Present information carefully without distortion and give all points of view a fair hearing. Listen carefully and offer possible solutions without passing judgment. Don't criticize or preach. Think of ways to problem solve together rather than lecturing or telling the mentee what to do.

Set realistic expectations and goals for your mentee and make achievement for them fun. Remember there is a big difference between encouraging and demanding. Encourage your mentee to complete his/her secondary education and pursue higher learning or vocational goals; provide access to varying points of view. Assist in making the connection between his/her actions of today and the dreams and goals of tomorrow. Don't get discouraged if the mentee isn't turning his/her life around or making great improvements. Mentors have a great deal of impact; it's not always immediately evident. Look for signs such as increased school attendance, improved grades, showing up for meetings and expressing appreciation.



Stage 3 Sustain

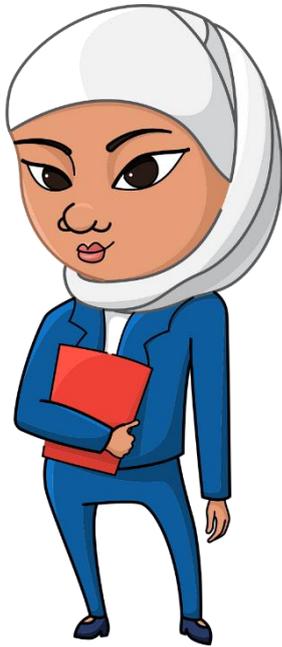
The peer mentoring can be effective if certain conditions are required, namely:

- 
- clear aims and objectives for each session;
 - active involvement of the participants;
 - guidance;
 - motivation;
 - relevance;
 - appropriate activities;
 - effective feedback in positive way;
 - empathy on the part of the mentor;
 - a comfortable learning environment.
- 

Entertainment is not the focal point of your relationship. Do not spend an exorbitant amount of money for activities, birthday presents, and so on. You may always call your mentee before your scheduled meeting or appointment to remind him/her. Be sure you have parental approval for activities that take place away from school premises. You can return your mentee home at the agreed-upon time. If you are unable to or there is a change in plans, always call the parent to let him/her know.



Stage 4 Evolution and Evaluation



As the process is gradual and therefore can take a while to make progress, when we do ask for the peer mentor's feedback, at each point it should be thought of as an opportunity to look back on what has been achieved so far.

Remember, you can always ask for support your teachers, pedagogical counsellor, or the school principal.

The purpose of the evaluation is not to judge you or the mentee, but rather to estimate how the process of peer mentoring facilitation can be improved.

For the purposes of the project and its reporting to the funding body, we may ask you to complete a questionnaire, which will present your opinion as being part of the piloting process.



Expectations and Behaviours



CONGRATULATIONS! As a peer mentor, you are now about to begin one of life's most rewarding and fulfilling experiences. Your commitment indicates that you believe in your young mate, who will become your mentee. We hope you do recognize the magnitude of the responsibility that you accepted in choosing to work with youth and agree to always interact appropriately with your mentee.

Be yourself! Please read the following guidelines carefully:



- You as a peer mentor is responsible for your behaviour when communicating with the student/mentee in person or online, e.g. using appropriate language, not sharing materials that could be considered threatening, bullying, offensive or illegal and dressing appropriately (culturally sensitive, no rude slogans, etc.).
- You are expected to follow the necessary procedures when completing your roles. These procedures are explained by the project team at your school.
- You as a peer mentor do not need to respond to communications from mentee immediately but should do so in an appropriate and timely manner.
- You are expected to make alternate arrangements with their mentees if they are unable to complete mentoring activities due to illness or other commitments.



- If you are unable to continue your role, you are expected to contact project team at school as soon as feasibly possible, so that mentee can be assigned to a new peer mentor.
- You as a peer mentor should establish a mentor/mentee relationship is confidential during the all meeting to reassure the mentee.
- Things that mentee raise should not be shared outside of the mentor/mentee relationship unless there are concerns for their safety.
- You may wish to share personal experiences with your mentee, and you should remind the mentee that these should be treated as confidential too. Any personal data that a mentee shares with them as confidential too. This could include a phone number or personal email given to help mentors and mentees communicate.
- If meeting online, you must not record meetings, using either the record function in Microsoft Teams, or another application. You should make clear to mentee that meetings will not be recorded, and that mentee should not do this either.
- You should find a quiet but not completely private location. If meeting on campus, for instance, this could be a quiet café or a walk around the school yard. If meeting online, this could be a quiet space in the house or classroom.
- The mentee may disclose that they are struggling with their mental health, or instances of harassment, physical or sexual assault, discrimination, bullying or abuse to their mentor. You as peer mentor should actively listen if they feel comfortable doing so, and signpost appropriate support services available.
- If you have any reason to believe, that a mentee is in danger or a danger to someone else, they should raise their concerns with school principle.



A good outcome from the peer mentoring could be the following:

| Your mentee may realize for the first time that she/he... | Good indications: |
|---|--|
| ➤ has a potential. | ✓ setting goals ✓ developing new skills ✓ aware of time management |
| ➤ is confident and self-assured. | ✓ increased cooperation with parents, teachers, and peers ✓ behavioral changes |
| ➤ values education and the learning process. | ✓ increase in school attendance ✓ improved grades ✓ respect for teachers |
| ➤ is a capable young person. | ✓ a willingness to help others ✓ ability to see the future ✓ ability to plan for further stage of education (college, university etc.) |



REMEMBER! Your mentee will reward you through notes, e-mails or simply conversation. He/she may tell you how “great” you are, how you might have helped him/her with a specific problem, and so much more. It may be big or small. Whatever the compliment, know that what you are doing has had a significant impact on the future of this person.



Sample of working plan/agenda

The following sample can be useful for you at the first meeting with the peer mentee. Of course, this is just a flexible example, which can be adjusted based on the individual goals, needs and activities.



1. **Determine strengths and weaknesses** of the mentee (student) and find out what you ‘need to know’ so that you can give assistance in the education areas needed.

2. **Set realistic goals and reasonable timeframes** within which they can be achieved, these might include.

3. **Plan how best to achieve these goals** (who does what and when).

4. **Execute set plan and regularly review it regularly.**

5. **We expect that you can meet at least 90 minutes, 3 times a week for a period of 4**

months.

6. **Please report** upon the implementation and productiveness of set plan to school project team and re-evaluate with their help.

7. **Remember - your mentee’s input is essential.** Some goals may be unrealistic in his or her opinion and these needs to be made clear and understood or he or she could be accused of making false promises. There could also be an opportunity for him or her to be of greater assistance in another area than you had thought.

8. Although every effort will be made to **ensure confidentiality**, it must be accepted that in the case of emailed information, it is not absolute.



References

1. Courtesy of The Connecticut Mentoring Partnership, Business Guide to Youth Mentoring.
2. Alison Morton-Cooper and Anne Palmer Mentoring, Preceptorship and Clinical supervision: A Guide to Professional Support Roles in Clinical Practice. 2nd edition 2000
3. Merriam, S. & Caffarella, R. (1991). Learning in Adulthood. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.