

FROM A MENTORS PERSPECTIVE

- Mentors log on to icouldbe.org on their own time for at least an hour per week to review their mentee's activities and give them in-depth feedback. Because e-mentoring is asynchronous and virtual, they can access the site whenever is most convenient. Becoming a mentor involves registering with icouldbe.org and undergoing a series of criminal and sex offender background checks to protect the safety of the online community. Before getting started, mentors are trained online to better understand how to navigate the site, how to communicate with their mentees, and how to best use icouldbe.org's customized curriculum to guide and support their students.
- Mentors act as year-long mentors or ad hoc mentors. As a year-long mentor, they work with mentees for the duration of the school year as the young people progress through the icouldbe.org curriculum, communicating with them using icouldbe.org's email system and discussion boards. As an ad hoc mentor, they answer questions and carry on impromptu conversations with other mentees.
- Mentors connect with their mentees in different ways. Allowing mentors to choose whether to work one-on-one directly with their students or connect with a larger group of young people in a community setting lets them decide where they can be most effective. The volunteer mentors on icouldbe.org bring a wealth of diverse perspectives and dynamic voices to the relationships they forge with their students.
- E-Mentoring in a Changing World In the last few years, Web 2.0 technologies have revolutionized the Internet, changing the way people interact through social networking platforms and wiki-based dynamic content. Their potential applications to the field of education are immense, but as they optimize the learning experience, they also bring with them added challenges of ensuring online safety amidst changing parameters.
- The icouldbe.org site is a complex, dynamic and conditional website that uses a social networking platform and four distinct user interfaces. Mentors, mentees, teachers and icouldbe.org staff each have their own individualized area designed and styled to meet their unique needs.
- Mentors and mentees have their own customizable homepages and interactive classroom activity areas. Mentees and their mentors spend about 80% of their time working through the curriculum, and students gain access to more social areas of the site by completing assigned tasks.
- On community discussion boards, mentors and mentees problem solve about school, the icouldbe.org curriculum, careers and college, and personal issues.
- There is also a mentor-only space where adults can share their mentoring experiences and discuss how to best engage their students. One-on-one emails help mentors and mentees develop and build their relationship.