

Quality Mentoring Digest

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The Quality Mentoring Digest offers a quarterly summary of the latest mentoring insights, resources, and strategies to help you advance your knowledge and skills. The digest focuses on insights from within Mentor Canada's national Community of Practice and the broader mentoring ecosystem.

Insights from our Community of Practice

Key Insight

Avoid pan-Indigenization

This insight arose during our Professional Reading Group, where we read and discussed “Decolonizing and Indigenizing Mentorship” by Indspire. The literature review synthesized information on how mentoring practitioners can strengthen the quality of their programs by Decolonizing and Indigenizing their mentoring protocols, policies, and practices. According to Indspire, Pan-Indigenization involves “the presentation of Indigenous peoples as a monolithic bloc” (p. 5). Pan-Indigenization is a harmful and insensitive practice because it dilutes and marginalizes the rich and



diverse backgrounds, ways of knowing, and mentoring practices of different Indigenous nations. The reading group resonated with this evidence-informed practice and discussed how they would avoid Pan-Indigenization by creating more respectful, long-term, and collaborative relationships with local Indigenous communities. The reading group discussed how this would increase the quality of their mentoring programs by creating more opportunities for genuine collaboration and the co-creation, delivery, and evaluation of their mentoring programs.

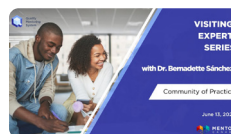
Key Insight

Promote healthy mentee ethnic-racial identity development

This insight arose during our first Visiting Expert Series with Dr. Bernadette Sánchez, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Dr. Sánchez joined us to discuss how race, ethnicity, and culture influences mentoring relationships and outcomes. Helping mentees develop positive ethnic-racial identities was a key strategy that Dr. Sánchez focused on for improving the quality and outcomes of mentoring relationships and programs. Dr. Sánchez defined ethnic and racial identity as the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences a mentee has related to being a member of their ethnic or racial group. In general, mentees can have positive ethnic-racial identities (i.e., feeling proud of their background and who they are) or more complicated ethnic-racial identities (i.e., feeling a lack of pride about their background and who they are). Acknowledging the critical importance of helping mentees develop positive ethnic-racial identities, Dr. Sánchez outlined strategies

that both programs and mentors could use to support this positive outcome:

- **Organizational and program strategies:** Adopting a strengths-based view of mentees, ensuring leadership and staff is representative of the local community demographics, using culturally relevant curricula, and actively learning about mentee’s ethnic-racial identities.
- **Individual mentor strategies:** Acknowledging, confronting, and interrupting racism (e.g., engaging in reflective dialogue with mentees when they personally experience racism or witness it on social media or in the news), showing genuine interest in mentee’s ethnic-racial identity, inviting mentees to explore and discuss their ethnic-racial identity and group, and acting as an ally on issues that affect mentee’s ethnic-racial community.



[Click to watch Dr. Sánchez’s Visiting Expert Series presentation.](#)

Insights from the mentoring ecosystem

Key Insight

High-quality youth mentoring relationships balance goal-pursuit and recreation

This insight arose from a recent academic article that explored the impact (on relationship quality) of two different activities within youth mentoring relationships: goal-directed activities (e.g., mentor helps mentee set and pursue goals) and more recreational activities driven by mentee's preferences (mentor listens to and follows youth's preferences in activities). The article collected data from 2,165 youth (average age of 12, ranging from 9-16) who were participating in 30 different formal mentoring programs in the United States. The study surfaced three main findings:

- **Goal-focused activities increased relationship closeness, but also tension:** The article discovered that when mentors tended to focus more on goal-focused activities, their mentee's reported positive relationships, but also more tension (e.g., more criticism, conflict, and pressure) in their relationship, which was associated with more conduct problems and depressive symptoms.
- **Youth-focused activities increased relationship closeness and reduced tension:** The article discovered that when mentors tended to focus more on youth-focused activities, their mentee's reported positive relationships and reduced tension in their relationship.
- **Relationship closeness reduced depression and emotional symptoms:** Results indicated that both goal-focused and youth-focused activities increased relationship closeness, which was associated with decreased depression and emotional symptoms.

Taken together, the results of this study suggest that quality youth mentoring relationships strike a balance between goal-focused (e.g., mutually setting and pursuing goals) and youth-focused activities (e.g., listening to mentee's and attending flexibly to their needs and preferences).



A screenshot of the Mentor Canada's Community of Practice website. The interface is dark blue and white. It features a navigation menu on the left with options like Home, About, and Contact. The main content area includes sections for 'Start Here', 'Community Events', and 'Feedback'. There are several circular profile pictures of diverse individuals around the interface. A large blue button at the bottom says 'Get started'. The text 'Join Mentor Canada's Community of Practice' is prominently displayed above the button.

Reference: Werntz, A., Poon, C. Y., & Rhodes, J. E. (2023). Striking the Balance: The Relative Benefits of Goal- and Youth-Focused Approaches to Youth Mentoring Relationships. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 52(7), 1448-1458.