Being an ACE Mentor  2016-2017

What is “ACE Mentoring”

The mission of ACE Mentors RI is to engage, excite and enlighten high school students to pursue careers in the integrated construction industry through mentoring, and to support their continued advancement in the industry through scholarships and internships.

ACE is a unique partnership among industry professionals — architects, engineers, construction managers, college and students and faculty, and other professionals from related organizations — who work together to attract young people to our professions. We volunteer to as “mentors” to high school students in a weekly after-school program, to introduce them to our disciplines and to encourage them to pursue higher education and then careers in ACE fields.

Being an ACE mentor:

Mentorship is a responsibility we all experience at many points in our personal and professional lives. Being an ACE Mentor means serving as a role model and providing guidance and advice to young people. ACE Mentors share their professional experience with high school students and advise them as to how to accomplish the education needed to move from high school, into and through college, or into an apprenticeship or internship, ultimately leading to a career in the construction industry.

The Ace Mentoring curriculum includes instruction as much as mentorship. We use group exercises and simple architectural and engineering projects as a vehicle for discussion of the professions and trades that make up the work force of the construction industry. The ACE program also includes field trips to construction sites and professional offices, as well as university visits. While our students volunteer to come to our sessions, they still need thoughtful direction and enthusiastic prompting to accomplish our basic goal of introducing them to the career opportunities available in ACE.

Currently ACE RI operates three introductory programs for new students in grades 9 to 12, one offered at the Department of Architecture at RISD, one in Pawtucket at the Blackstone Academy Charter School, and one at the New England Institute of Technology in East Greenwich. In addition, an advanced curriculum for students who have experienced the introductory year is available for those who wish to continue on to a second or third year. For 2016-2017 we anticipate up to 100 first year students and over 30 advanced students.

The ACE Curriculum Committee provides a comprehensive calendar of activities for sessions that run from mid-October to mid-March. A detailed agenda is created for class sessions held on Wednesdays from 4:00-6:00 PM. Materials and supplies are provided for all students. Mentors work with 2 or 3 professional colleagues with teams of 4 to 6 students. An experienced mentor is assigned as a Team Leader and is responsible for taking attendance and distributing supplies for that day’s activities. Each Mentor/Student team stays together for the entire period. In this way a real mentorship atmosphere can be developed. Mentors are encouraged to connect to one or two students in their team and maintain contact with them via email concerning upcoming events, or homework assignments. Mentors are expected to spend a limited amount of time preparing for class sessions by reading the projects in advance and contacting the Curriculum Committee with any questions.
Just as Mentors have spent a day at work prior to the sessions, so too have the students spent a full day at school. As such, the program attempts to keep students engaged and excited about the various disciplines being discussed, and not load the session with detailed lectures. Only through Mentor enthusiasm is this possible.

Mentor’s come to the ACE program with varied specialized knowledge about the integrated construction industry. Just as we work in our professions as a team, so too we work as a team with the students. Thus, Mentor teams are composed of a variety of experts, reflective of our professional work. Essentially, each Mentor brings his or her individual skills and experiences and commits to attending classes regularly, greeting students with enthusiasm, and being ready to assist in the exercises set up for the session. For its part, the Curriculum Committee works hard to prepare as much detailed information as possible in advance to assure that everyone is prepared.

Any success that the program has achieved is based on the dedication and enthusiasm of those Mentors who have taken seriously the opportunity to help shape the future for young people. Feedback, questions and suggestion are absolutely essential to the furtherance of our goals, and we encourage all to come forth with ways of improving the program. Those interested in shaping the future of the ACE program are encouraged to join the ACE-RI Committees to ensure a successful ongoing effort.

All Mentors need to register online and pass a background check for insurance purposes. A mandatory “Mentor Orientation” will provide guidance as to how to interact appropriately and effectively with our students. The list noted below represents best practices for all volunteers who engage with young people in after school programs.

**Mentor Guidelines:**

- An ACE Mentor must never be alone with a student
- Never administer medication, or medical treatment to a student
- Do not give students any money, ever.
- Maintain Confidentiality
- Maintain a Positive relationship with each student
- Take time to talk, and get to know your students
- Show you are interested and LISTEN.
- Share some of your interests and ask about theirs.
- Praise when appropriate, direct and correct as needed.
- Start each session with a conversation.
- Relax and be patient.
- Keep in mind that there are no Dumb Questions
- Remember that your students may not be native English speakers
- Do not assume that student understand everything you say…ask follow up questions.
- Don’t force eye contact.
- Louder is not better
- Take your time, stop talking once in a while and let student finish what they are saying.
- Ask open ended questions
- Don’t “One-up” anybody…all students ideas have value.
- Give all students equal time and attentions…calm the big talkers in the group, encourage the quiet ones.
- Provide help in projects when needed, but be sure that students take over quickly.
- *Always be enthusiastic, respectful, and team-oriented.*