Frequently Asked Questions

Mentoring serves as an important part of the work-based learning course which is being implemented in January 2021 as part of a U.S. Department of Education grant. Tech professionals from across Rhode Island are being recruited to mentor 10th grade students as they navigate through the processes of ideation, design, implementation, and testing – culminating in a final Google site project. Below are some frequently-asked questions about becoming a mentor in this program.

Will mentors receive training?

Mentors will be on-boarded during a 2-3 hour orientation in October 2020. During this session (in-person or virtual depending on restrictions due to Covid-19), CS4RI team members will address issues including, but not limited to, relationships with students and teachers, roles and responsibilities, time commitment, levels of engagement, logistical details, and use of guiding questions during touch points. Mentors will also be provided with a Mentor Toolkit that will include materials and other resources that can be used throughout the duration of the project.

Will mentoring occur in-person or virtually?

Covid-19 has disrupted every aspect of education. The CS4RI team has moved forward by adapting the program to both in-person and virtual formats. Although mentoring is best when in-person relationships can be nurtured, both schools and industry sites may have restrictions during this time. The CS4RI team is preparing for both onsite and virtual visits for the kick-off event and final panel presentations as well as the mentor touch points and will work with teachers and mentors to ensure that all students have a high-quality experience.

What tech skills are needed to be a mentor?

As a computer science professional, most mentors will already have the basic tech knowledge and skills needed to help students with their projects. Mentors do not have to be software developers but an understanding of the entire tech process (from ideation to final product), experience collaborating in a team setting, familiarity with GitHub and other tools such as Trello, and knowledge of some basic coding will be helpful.

Mentors will have access to the lesson plans for the work-based learning (WBL) course so they can see what students are learning throughout the course. As students learn concepts, mentors will have the opportunity to relate those same concepts to a professional setting. In this way, the
project is placed within a real-world industry context. Mentors supplement the instruction of the teachers. If students are struggling with basic concepts, this issue can be addressed with the teacher either directly or through a CSRI team member.

What is the time commitment?

Mentors can engage with students at a variety of levels. The minimum time commitment is:

- 2-3 hours  
  Kick-off (January 2021)
- 50-60 minutes each  
  Four touch points (January – June 2021)
- 2 hours  
  Project presentations to panel (June 2021)

However, some mentors may choose to be more involved with the students. CS4RI will provide different options and levels of engagement which may include virtual “office” hours and one-on-one meetings. All of this engagement may be in-person or virtual.

How long does the commitment last?

The mentoring commitment lasts one semester from January to June 2021. You may apply to mentor another cohort of 10th grade students in January 2022.

What is the mentor’s relationship with the classroom teacher?

The mentor will be introduced electronically to the teacher before the course begins. CS4RI will provide the mentors (during the Mentor on-boarding) and the teachers (during PD) with an overview of the role of the mentor. The relationship may change during the duration of the course if both the teacher and mentor choose to deepen the level of the engagement.

Will mentors be provided with resources that will help them be successful with all students?

The classroom teacher will provide any assistance mentors need to ensure the same level of support to students who may be English-language learners. During the orientation, CS4RI will share culturally-responsive strategies that can be used when working with students so that ALL students feel included.
Will there be a CS4RI point of contact for support?

Yovanny Vargas will be the point person for questions and support during the project. The rest of the CS4RI team will be available depending on the support needed. Yovanny should be contacted immediately with any concerns or challenges a mentor faces.

What web resources will be available for mentors?

Mentors will be able to access an online Mentor Toolkit which will include support materials that will address working with students, ideas for the kick-off event, guiding questions for touch point discussions, recommendations for activities, and other useful information. As mentioned above, there will be a mentor on-boarding/orientation that will provide a more in-depth view of the materials in the toolkit.

Will there be regular meetings for mentors?

CS4RI will be convening a virtual community of practice every other month where mentors can come together and share ideas and experiences. There will also be online platforms where mentors can post questions to other mentors and discuss strategies specific to a particular lesson.

Is a background check necessary?

All school districts have their own requirements but it is usually necessary to have one especially for in-person school visits. CS4RI will provide information to help mentors navigate this process.