



Best Practices in Mentoring Dental Hygiene Students

Presented by Joanie Bryant



Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

01

Define Mentoring's Role

Explain how mentoring shapes the academic, professional, and personal development of dental hygiene students.

02

Describe Best Practices

Explore mentoring strategies across research, publication, and internship experiences.

03

Differentiate Roles

Clarify the distinct responsibilities of faculty mentors and students within the mentoring relationship.

04

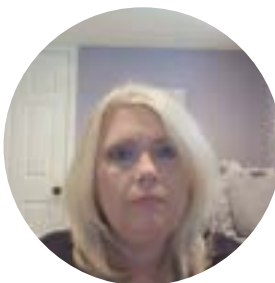
Evaluate Strategies

Assess approaches that support professionalism and a successful transition to clinical practice.

05

Justify Mentoring's Value

Affirm mentoring as essential to the diversity and long-term vitality of the dental hygiene profession.





Why Mentoring Matters

Professional Identity

Mentoring builds confidence, leadership, and a strong sense of professional identity in emerging dental hygienists (*Coplen, 2021*).

Bridging the Gap

Structured mentoring connects classroom learning to real-world clinical practice, reducing the transition shock new graduates often face (*Blanchard & Blanchard, 2006*).

Lifelong Learning

Mentoring instills habits of evidence-based inquiry and continuous professional development aligned with *ADA accreditation standards (2013)*.

Mentoring Through Research & Scholarship



Building Academic Readiness

Faculty-guided research mentoring significantly improves student confidence, critical thinking, and readiness for scholarly work. Students who engage early in research are better prepared for advanced academic roles (*Partido et al., 2020*).

Developing Future Leaders

Early scholarly mentoring cultivates the next generation of dental hygiene educators and thought leaders. Exposure to publication, peer review, and academic discourse shapes lasting professional trajectories (*Nimmons et al., 2019*).

Mentoring Through Internships & Clinical Practice

Easing the Student-to-Practitioner Transition

The shift from student to licensed clinician is one of the most vulnerable periods in a dental hygienist's career. Consistent mentoring during internships reduces anxiety, builds technical competence, and reinforces professional values (*Blanchard & Blanchard, 2006*).

Investing in Mentor Development

Mentors are most effective when formally trained. Structured mentor education improves feedback quality, communication skills, and the overall depth of the mentoring relationship (*Keinänen et al., 2021*).





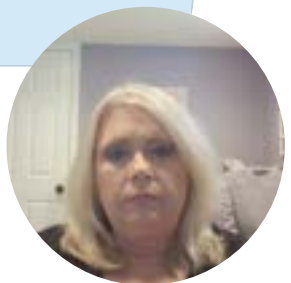
Roles & Responsibilities in the Mentoring Relationship

Faculty Mentor

Provides consistent guidance, constructive feedback, and professional role modeling. Creates a safe space for growth while holding students to high standards (*Keinänen et al., 2021*).

Student Mentee

Demonstrates active engagement, accountability, and reflective practice. Takes ownership of their learning and approaches the relationship with professionalism (*Akinla et al., 2018*).



Mentoring & the Future of the Profession

Cultivating Diverse Leaders

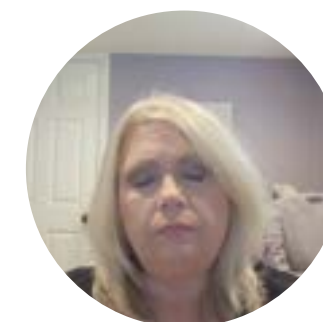
Intentional mentoring creates pathways for students from underrepresented backgrounds to enter leadership roles; strengthening the profession's diversity, equity, and cultural competence (*Coplen, 2021*).

Sustaining the Pipeline

Without dedicated mentoring, academic and clinical pipelines risk attrition. Mentoring is the connective tissue that sustains the profession's future workforce and faculty (*Nimmons et al., 2019*).



What role does mentoring play in shaping the next generation of dental hygiene leaders?





What Makes a Mentor Effective?



Insight & Wisdom

Shares professional experience and honest perspective to help students navigate complex decisions and career crossroads.



Empathy & Support

Recognizes the emotional and psychological demands of training and creates a psychologically safe mentoring environment.



Goal Orientation

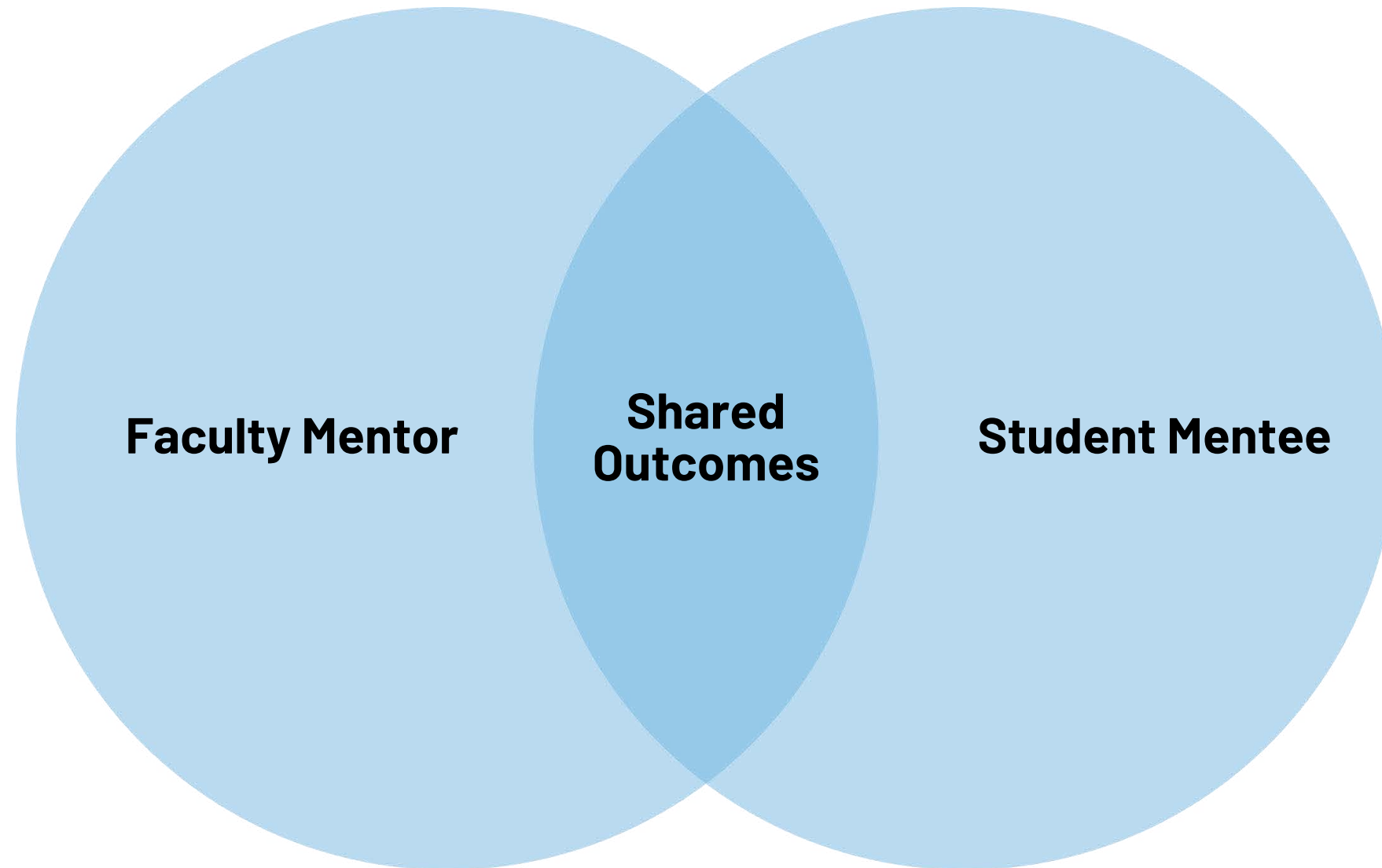
Helps students set concrete, achievable academic and professional goals and holds them accountable with encouragement.



Professional Network

Opens doors to conferences, publications, internships, and collegial connections that accelerate professional growth.

The Mentoring Relationship: A Two-Way Street



The most impactful mentoring relationships are built on mutual respect and active participation. When both parties invest intentionally, the outcomes extend well beyond graduation.



Mentoring Across the Student Journey

Year 1 – Foundation

Orientation to the profession, academic skill-building, and early faculty connections.

1

2

Year 2 – Engagement

Research involvement, scholarly writing, and clinical skill development with preceptor support.

3

Year 3 – Integration

Internship experiences, publication opportunities, and preparation for licensure.

4

Transition – Practice

Ongoing mentoring through entry-level practice, professional organization involvement, and leadership emergence.

Diversity, Equity & Mentoring



Representation Matters

Students from underrepresented communities benefit profoundly from mentors who reflect their own backgrounds and lived experiences. Diverse mentoring relationships build trust and affirm belonging.

Equity in Access

Intentional outreach ensures all students, regardless of background, have access to high-quality mentoring. Programs that embed equity as a core value produce more inclusive, culturally competent practitioners.



Insight: Diverse mentors produce diverse leaders. Diverse leaders transform patient care.

Summary



1

Student Success & Identity

Mentoring is foundational to academic achievement, clinical confidence, and the formation of a strong professional identity in dental hygiene students.

2

Shared Responsibility

Effective mentoring is a two-way commitment. Both faculty mentors and student mentees hold distinct, active responsibilities that together define a productive relationship.

3

Intentional & Future-Focused

Purposeful, evidence-based mentoring is not optional — it is critical to the sustainability, diversity, and excellence of the dental hygiene profession for generations to come.

📌 **Key Takeaway:** Mentoring transforms individual students into future leaders — and future leaders transform the profession.

Shaping the Future, One Mentor at a Time

Great dental hygienists are developed through mentorship, guidance, and collaboration. Professional excellence in dental hygiene is built through mentoring – not isolation.



Thank You

“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.” - **John Crosby**



References

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