



the young
storytellers
...foundation

ADVENTURE
REAL
FANTASY
myth
historical

Beginning
(Character) goal
Scene
Setting
→ conflict ←
middle
Lesson

MENTOR HANDBOOK
2009-2010



Why Mentor?

Because it's fun, easy and incredibly rewarding. All it takes is one hour a week during the day for seven weeks, and one day or evening for The Big Show, and you have contributed greatly to a child's life.

Plus, you'll be joining an active community of like-minded, creative individuals in Los Angeles. The majority of YSF's volunteer base works in the entertainment industry, so mentoring presents a great opportunity to meet and network with your peers.

What is a mentor?

A YSF mentor is somebody who shows up with an open mind ready to guide and support their student. A YSF mentor is actively engaged in all areas of the curriculum and leads by example.

It's simple and fun. You're basically a glorified secretary for the little geniuses. All we ask of our mentors is that they show up and have an open mind. You don't even need to be a writer yourself. Although you just might end up becoming one ...

Every YSF mentor/student pairing is a success story. You cannot fail.

The Young Storytellers Philosophy

The Young Storytellers Foundation uses the art of storytelling to facilitate self-expression, stimulate creative thinking, build literacy skills, enhance self-esteem and thereby promotes the overall academic, emotional, and behavioral performance of some of our most disadvantaged elementary school children.

We do this by combining Gameplay, Storytelling, Council work, and Screenwriting lessons to create a dynamic and interactive experience – not only for the students, but for the mentors as well. The games and exercises YSF uses rely on a child's natural enthusiasm for play and storytelling, which in turn generates cooperation. In addition, we believe that...

Every kid is inherently a brilliant storyteller. Storytelling is a basic element of human communication. We naturally use story to express ourselves in everyday conversations in all areas of our lives. Children's imaginations are relatively free from inhibition and social judgment that often develops as adults.

They have no wrong ideas. If you actively treat each child as a brilliant storyteller, then there is no room for judgment of the young writer's creative impulses. Every idea is valid and valuable and, while you may not understand how it will work in the young writer's story, by the end of the seven-weeks it will make sense... or not. Either way, the story will be perfect.

We are not teachers, but we do have things to teach. Each child naturally knows all the elements needed to create a story. We are not teachers in the traditional sense of the word, but we are there to make learning fun. A mentor can guide them to organize their thinking and give those elements names, like “conflict” or “setting.”

The Young Storytellers room is a safe, creative space. From the moment a young writer enters the Young Storytellers room, they are in a failure-free, creative environment with zero academic pressure. The young writer spends seven hours each day in school, where success is often based on right and wrong answers, and judgment of performance can stifle creative impulses. We aim to be the opposite of that.

You are a mentor, not a writer. You are doing your young writer a great service by being present every week and showing them that they are special people. As a writer, you will constantly be inspired with ideas of your own that could improve your young writer’s story. Do not suggest these ideas to them. Instead, ask open-ended questions. The story they are telling is their own, and if your ideas populate their story the program’s effect on their creative confidence is greatly diminished. The goal of the program is not to create great stories, but to create a generation of inspired, creative, and confident children.

It’s all going to be fine. Put these basic ideas into practice every time you mentor, and by the end of the program you are guaranteed to have an inspired child and an excellent story. Your Head Mentor can help with any questions that may arise. Know that just as your student is already a talented writer, you are already a brilliant mentor with all the skills and knowledge necessary to inspire great storytelling.

Your job is to...

1. Show Up
2. Commit one hour a week during your lunch hour, and a few additional hours in the early evening for the Big Show, over an eight week period.
3. Attend a training session, complete an application, and allow us to perform a background check.
4. Not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while mentoring.

Curriculum

You do not need to be a writer to be a mentor in the Young Storytellers program. Through our mentor training and the guidance of your Head Mentor, you will learn all you need to know to guide your young writer through our curriculum. Just like the children in the program inherently know the elements of storytelling, you do too. We will prepare you for the curriculum, but remember, being there every week for your mentee is as important as your ability to guide their storytelling process.

Here's a basic outline of the 9 weeks:

Before School Session: Meet & Greet

Meet and greet the head mentor and the other mentors on your team.

Week 1: Basic Storytelling Elements

Week 2: Plot

Week 3: Pick Your Story

Week 4: Summarizing

Week 5: Screenplay Format

Week 6: Writing Scripts

Week 7: Finishing Scripts

Week 8: The Big Show!

Week 9: Follow Up

In addition, your head mentor will remind you of specific areas of the curriculum to pay attention to on each day. They will give you prompts and ideas that can help you through any situation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I've never written a screenplay? Our Volunteer Mentors come from all walks of life and are generally creative adults that love to work with children. You do not have to be a screenwriter to be a Young Storytellers mentor.

What if I have to miss a day? As part of your mentoring responsibilities, we ask that you are there for every session. The biggest role you will play as a mentor is that of a dependable adult that is there for your student. However, if circumstances do arise that will cause you to miss a session, please inform your Head Mentor as soon as possible so they can arrange for a substitute.

Who should I invite to the Big Show? Everyone you know! We want the audience to be filled with people to celebrate the kids who have written the brilliant stories.

Child Safety

For the protection of all mentees, staff, volunteers, and visitors, the Young Storytellers Foundation does not allow isolated one-to-one interaction between an adult and child inside any closed room, vehicle, bathroom, or any area that could be considered private. As a friend, you can share and advise your mentee. but know your limitations. Problems that your mentee may share with you regarding substance abuse, molestation and physical abuse are best handled by professionals. Mentee disclosure of any child abuse (sexual, physical, or neglect) *must* be reported *immediately* to your Head Mentor or to the Program Coordinator. Head Mentors will immediately inform the Program Coordinator of any child abuse issues. Abuse of mentees by a mentor or staff member is forbidden. Disregard of this policy is grounds for immediate dismissal and will be reported to local authorities. Any mentor or staff member observing behavior of another that is considered abusive must report this to YSF administration.