

Mentoring of Journal Authors and Reviewers

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This insightful discussion provided opinions and advice on the benefits and challenges of the mentor–mentee relationship between editors and journal authors or reviewers. The experienced speakers Ashley Ketelhut and Justin Schreiber, and moderator Emilie Gunn presented and examined many challenges and provided some solutions.

Perhaps the best way to tackle the mentorship of authors and reviewers is by relying on your previous experiences with managing people. As a former teacher, Gunn pointed out that “learning to manage middle schoolers has helped with the management of adults.” Good teachers must know students well and how to motivate them on an individual level. In the same way, a mentor must become familiar with the mentee’s goals, but unlike a teacher, the mentor should not decide the goals for the mentee. A mentor must know the mentee’s strengths and weaknesses and should “prompt action” and thought within the mentee. Mentees usually arrive with a working knowledge of their own that can be developed and, under proper mentorship, will flourish.

Mentorship is a two-way street. The mentor has work to do, too; they must figure out what questions to ask and what to provide by way of encouragement. They must assess what it is the mentee needs from the mentoring relationship in order for it to be as useful as possible. They also have to be able to dedicate the time necessary to invest in and guide the mentee through the good and the bad.

It is up to the mentor to prompt action and get the mentee to think about things in a different way. For instance, the mentor must take into account what it is the mentee is seeking. Is it guidance on managing a difficult teammate? Do they need to develop a particular skill, or a general ability that isn’t teachable in the classroom or is only learned through experience? Is someone entering a new

career path and just needs to be orientated to procedures, jargon, and roles?

Likewise, there are criteria for someone to meet in order to fit the role of mentee: They need to be teachable; they must identify something that they have to learn; and, most importantly, they must be open to feedback and advice. Specific goals must be established for the mentor–mentee relationship to be measurable in success.

The two managing editors from ASCO shared their experiences with mentoring reviewers for a new journal launched by the society that was not receiving quality reviews. The new journal needed to expand its reviewer pool in order to reduce reviewer fatigue and broaden scope. They looked to younger professionals who had just started out in their careers. Although faced with promising and eager candidates, many of the reviewers lacked experience or reliability. The solution was to create a Journal Editorial Fellowship where five fellows are selected each year and paired with associate editors who they work with one-on-one for a period of six months. Under this fellowship, the fellow is given at least one paper per month to review, on which they are given feedback. The idea is for the fellow to become comfortable with reviewing someone else’s work. The fellowship also requires the completion of two free online courses through ASCO’s community, as well as monthly reading assignments. At the end of the fellowship, the fellows each must complete a final project to demonstrate what they learned.

Assistant Professor Justin Schreiber, and mentee in the McDermott Editor in Residence program with the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, can vouch for the success of mentoring those young professionals who want to become better writers and stronger editors. His experience has been that those who are interested in becoming better writers will go on to become mentors themselves, and to write articles for journals or give presentations at universities on the many aspects of publishing and advantages of being involved in the industry.

It’s important to reward, or acknowledge, the success and growth of the mentee. Certificates of completion and acknowledgment are appreciated and included alongside CVs and applications. But mentorship does not end with the presentation of a certificate—it coincides with life-long learning, and eventually, the mentee will become a mentor to someone else.