



By Bruce Dillenbeck

# Mentoring Tomorrow's Media Makers

Every professional working in today's multi-faceted media industry has had someone in his life that mentored and advised him in his career, opened doors for him or otherwise acted as a friend and confidant. Mentors play a crucial role in guiding a young person towards his personal and career aspirations. The mentor may have been a teacher in high school or college, a professional who took him under his wing as an intern, a colleague at work or at his first real job.

Inner city teens experience greater obstacles in their path to success than their suburban peers such as underperforming schools. The Boston Foundation found that only 25 percent of Boston Public High Schools report offering any significant arts instruction to their students. And a study by the Boston Private Industry Council reported that of Boston Public School graduates in 2000, only 35% had completed a 2 or 4-year degree. Only about 60% of Boston's students graduate high school.

HOME, Inc. ("Here-in Our Motives Evolve"), was founded 30 years ago to develop the talents of inner city teenagers in media and communication and to make a difference in their education. This past year we worked in 11 Boston and Somerville Schools reaching over 1,900 students. Many of our students come from extended or immigrant families working in service or blue-collar jobs. As a result, our students have to work harder to develop additional relationships and access the resources that their middle-class peers growing up in Boston's affluent suburbs have.

According to HOME, Inc. Executive Director Alan Michel, "HOME is making a difference to our students by helping them look at the world analytically, and creatively, helping them to think for themselves." Adds Michel, "Talking about contemporary issues as well as actually producing media that reflects their point of view and analysis has added a new dimension to our student's education. They not only learn important interpersonal skills like working as a team, but they also learn the technical skills required in media production, including internet research, writing, graphic design, and video producing which build confidence that they can excel and succeed."

Somerville High School teacher, Craig Leach, recent alumni of HOME, Inc.'s Media Lab Partnership program is a passionate believer in the integration of media studies within the public school curriculum. "Today's employers expect students who have some experience in social networking, research and communications. When our youth learn these skills at a young age, we're giving them an advantage for higher education and the working world alike. What's been encouraging for me in the classroom is to see students find their niche in school. Some of my brightest students aren't getting straight A's in the rest of their subjects so it's great to see them find an area where they excel."

HOME, Inc. also coordinates, Teen TV, an intensive summer media literacy and media



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Home, Inc. Summer Program provides mentoring to at risk teens.

Craig Leach, Somerville High School teacher is a passionate believer in the integrations of media studies within the public school curriculum.

Staff and Teens participating in making media during HOME, Inc.'s 2010 Summer Program. Research has shown that at-risk young people in mentoring relationships are more likely to stay in school.

Teens learn skills through working together while attending HOME, Inc.'s Media Mentoring Program.

All photos are courtesy of HOME, Inc.

production workshop where the magazine-style program is written, filmed, produced and edited by Boston area teens. Teen TV airs in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and regionally and is available on line at blip.tv.

According to Mr. Michel, "Teen TV is like a job site. Young people collaborate on projects and learn the kinds of skills that you need to work in a creative team. Media is unmasked in this type of environment. It's not magic; it takes hard work. You learn that you have to wrestle with ideas to reach an audience and may need to take multiple takes, revise your script, and resolve lighting and sound issues. Through the fire of experience you learn to be patient and persistent, and learn how to work with others in a stressful environment."

Asked why HOME, Inc. is developing a mentor program for youth now, Mr. Michel replied, "It's a way for kids to connect with someone in the field and get a deeper understanding of the work environment."

Our students are going through the critical years of adolescence and early adulthood, when young people can benefit from adult guidance. Mentors can help students clarify life goals and provide more specific advice as it relates to career paths in the media. Most high school students are unaware of the multitude of career opportunities in the media – both in front of and behind the camera. Mentors who work in these fields can open our student's horizons to the variety of opportunities and the skills needed to succeed in the industry. Beyond just simply educating students about these possibilities, mentors can help them secure internships or even jobs at media companies. These relationships are especially important in an industry where so many opportunities are based on personal connections."

Mentor relationships are important in more fundamental ways as well. Research has

shown that at-risk young people in mentoring relationships are more likely to stay in school and develop positive attitudes toward work and society and show an increase in self confidence and self expression.

Kevin Escobar, who recently graduated from English High, was a student in HOME's media program and is now studying communications at Suffolk University, believes he could have benefited from a mentor while in high school. Kevin was originally drawn to video production while watching the previous season of "ETV", an in-house television show produced at English High. "What really attracted me to media studies were the educational value and the comedy aspect as well. During the three years that Kevin studied under his teacher Xavier Rozas, he learned how to perform before and behind a camera while becoming highly skilled at video editing. Kevin realized that he wanted to pursue a career in media when he saw his schoolmates responding positively to his work. When asked if he could have benefited from having a mentor in high school he told me, "To have had someone who worked in the industry, to give me advice, teach me the ropes on how to handle myself in the industry, and to even just develop a friendship with would have been an amazing experience."

Craig Leach concurred. "Having a mentor is a great benefit for students interested in media, because it can introduce them to people actually working in the industry, living out a student's career goal, which shows that there are opportunities out there in the field that they are interested in."

HOME, Inc. is piloting a mentoring program at English High in Jamaica Plain this year with the assistance of Xavier Rozas, English High School's Media teacher and is actively recruiting mentors to work with students enrolled in English High's media studies classes. Mentors are expected to commit one hour per week over the course of the year and are supported with an orientation and subsequent workshops. HOME, Inc. will also host a number of events where mentors and their matches can come together for some fun activities.

Mentors complete an application and undergo an interview and background check. HOME, Inc.'s Media Mentor Program is funded in part through the Mass Mentoring Partnership's Highland Street Corps Ambassadors of Mentoring program. Ambassadors are AmeriCorps members who are placed at mentoring programs and youth-serving organizations statewide.

For further information please contact Bruce Dillenbeck at 617 427-4663. You can also go to HOME, Inc.'s website, [www.homeinc.org](http://www.homeinc.org), where you can download an application by clicking on the link "Opportunities."

*Mr. Dillenbeck has previously worked for both community non-profits and government. Last August, he joined HOME, Inc. as an AmeriCorp Volunteer to help develop their Media Mentors Program.*