Typology of e-mentoring programs by technology used

Canadian Mentoring Partnership

Technology	E-mail	Forum / Bulletin Board	Video Conference	Live Chat / Text App / Direct Messaging	Multi-Feature Platform
Common match structures	One-to-one	One-to-one, blended, or layered group matching, totally unmatched	One-to-one	One-to-one, small group	One-to-one
Interaction mode	Asynchronous	Asynchronous	Synchronous	Could be either (based on app)	Usually a combination, depending on features
Interaction schedule and frequency	Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program	Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program	Often scheduled, frequency determined by participants unless directed by program	Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program	Often scheduled, frequency often determined by program and use of curriculum
Program observation of interactions	Minimal (if participants use their own accounts)	High	Minimal (if not through proprietary platform)	Minimal (unless program offers app, then high)	High
Common ages served	Middle School, High School, Young Adult	Middle School, High School, Young Adult	High School, Young Adult	Middle School, High School, Young Adult	K–5, Middle School, High School
Common settings for engaging with the technology	Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	Youth and mentor residences, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	School classrooms, workplaces (for mentors), youth and mentor residences
Strengths of model	Easy-to-use and familiar technology, allows for longer messages and file attachments, little tech maintenance by program. Allows mentors and mentees to take time to formulate thoughts, compose response, get external input, or research difficult subjects, relatively easy to monitor if program staff or teachers are copied on messages	Thematic sorting of messages, ability to create subgroups, simple to use, potential access to many mentors, easy tracking of participation, relatively easy to monitor	Real-time interactions and synchronous conversation, putting a "face" on the match, facial expression adds context and non-verbal cues to the communication	Immediate, potentially 24/7 contact, mobile friendly and easy to-use for youth, free (unless program develops app), relatively easy to monitor if program staff or teachers are copied on messages	All features (e.g., ideas for match activities and program rules/ guidance) integrated into user experience, flexible modes of communication, good potential for match monitoring and support

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Adapted with permission from MENTOR (2019), E-mentoring Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring *https://www.mentoring.org/ementoring/*

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Challenges of model	Participants may wait for messages to be read or responded to, not ideal for quick conversations, "outdated" technology to youth, requires constant staff nudging of participation	Access to many mentors may overwhelm individualized support, participants may need reminders to log in and participate, moderation by staff is needed	Limited activity integration, video can exacerbate feelings of distance, data plans can incur monetary costs, difficult to secure and monitor	Limited message length in some apps, not ideal for in-depth sharing of complex feelings or thoughts but youth may feel more comfortable disclosing personal information through text than face to face, limited ability to share files and resources; data plans can incur monetary costs	Expensive to develop and maintain, lots of staff oversight and platform management, need to train participants, daunting for new adopters	
Typical Bandwidth requirements	Low	Low	High	Low to medium depending on whether files or videos are transferred	Medium to high depending on the feature used.	
Common program examples	Program pairing youth with health challenges with adult mentors who have experience with similar challenges to exchange messages of support and perseverance	Program for youth of color exploring STEM careers where they can interact with many STEM professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds and ethnicities	Program providing personalized support to isolated youth who are experiencing mental health challenges and suicidal ideation	Program to support youth during the college application process using frequent check-ins and reminders to take care of specific steps	Classroom-based program for youth engaged in skill-building and project-based learning paired with subject matter experts from local companies	