



A Note from the Executive Director

By: Allison McJunkin,
Executive Director

January is National Mentoring Month! I see the impact of mentoring all year long, but this gives me the opportunity to

share its importance with you. I want you to think about all the adults in your life that helped shape the person you are now. Think about those people who believed in you when others didn't and those that saw something special in you that maybe you didn't even see yourself. Maybe take the time to thank them if you haven't before.

All kids need mentors, especially kids in our poorest communities that are surrounded by violence and drugs. Having a mentor is the number one factor in whether a child can break the cycle of poverty and change negative behaviors. But it's just as important that every child has the opportunity to feel valued and loved. Knowing that SOMEONE believes in you is what makes kids think that they have value and encourages them to be their best.

I am incredibly grateful to all of you for making that happen through your work as Elevators, financial contributions and other support of our program.

The opioid epidemic has hit West Virginia harder than any other state nationwide, West Virginia has the highest number of deaths from overdoses, youth going into foster care and living with grandparents in the nation.

School Perspective

"Our students have benefited from their Education Elevators in so many ways. Some that you can't measure, you just see it in their smiles. All our students with Elevators have become more involved with their peers and really shine in social situations.

Jeffery has come so far since meeting with Lenny. He truly loves his time with Lenny."

- Becca Thomas,
School Counselor,
Kanawha City Elementary



Nurturing Gifts

"Find out what your gift is and nurture it."

-Katy Perry

At a young age it is very important for children to see that they have strengths and weaknesses. It is also important for them to realize that their weakness can also be a strength. Each child is different and has different gifts, abilities and interests. An activity or conversation that one child might love might be boring or difficult for another child. However, it is essential to a child's self-esteem that we show them that we believe in their strengths and challenge them to use their gifts to better themselves.

It's important to realize that all children have weaknesses (just like us). However, challenging a child to see their weakness as a strength can be beneficial. For example, consider a child that cries every time another child says something mean to anyone else and tattles

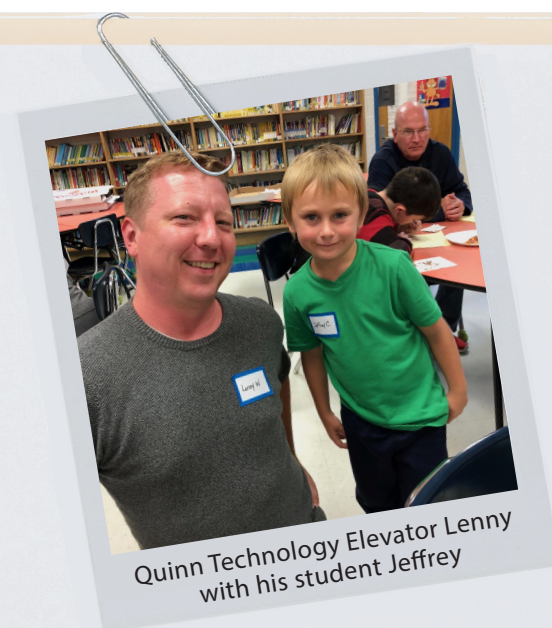
on them. Although this could be seen as a weakness, it can also be an opportunity to encourage strength development. A way this can be useful is to have a discussion with the child and explain that they should be empathetic to others' feelings. Instead of repeating to the teacher every negative statement said to another person, they should use that empathy to show kindness to those children, and use an apparent weakness as a strength.

What we say, and how we handle a situation, shapes what a child believes to be true. Children tend to respond very well to adults that treat them equally and talk to them as if they have the ability to understand seemingly complex conversation. When considering a child's gifts, it is crucial to use positive affirmation to develop a healthy relationship with children and aid in the growth of their character.

You can find tips on how to talk to kids about strengths and weaknesses [here](#).

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR MORE TIPS AND ACTIVITY IDEAS...

ELEVATOR SPOTLIGHT



Quinn Technology Elevator Lenny with his student Jeffrey

Lenny Wilson

How would you describe Jeffrey?

What an amazing child. Jeffrey is very intelligent, inquisitive, and observant. I was worried at first about how to hold a conversation with someone of his age, but that worry was quickly dispelled. He's quite the conversationalist! He's also very outgoing, always stopping to say hello to his schoolmates, and knows them all by name – even those in other grades. Jeffrey is humble, kind, and strives to be a good friend to his peers. All in all, he is a pleasure to be around.

What do you enjoy most about your time with him? I really enjoy just "hanging out" with Jeffrey – whether we're playing with Legos, making paper airplanes, or just running around in circles (that kid is full of energy!), Jeffrey is always laughing, telling stories, and asking questions. He's a good listener and quick to share his view on different things with me.

Have you noticed any changes in Jeffrey since you started meeting with him?

I have! At our first couple of meetings Jeffrey was a little timid – I think he was feeling me out a little before opening up. But now I feel like we're old friends. I look forward to our meetings, and I think he does as well (at least I hope so!). We have a good time together!

What do you like best about being an Elevator? Just having a new friend is enough to make joining the program worth it for me, but there's also a sense of pride found in making a difference for Jeffrey. I can tell his confidence has increased, and I feel like mine has, too. Also, my job can be somewhat stressful at times, and taking a little time out of my week to visit with Jeffrey is a great way to get my mind off of work and chill out with my buddy.