

Beyond Supervision: Building Strong Mentoring Relationships with Student Associates

Our ICA Cristo Rey Student Associates have completed comprehensive training designed to instill professionalism and essential workplace behaviors. With this foundational training and ongoing professional development, our students are actively building the skills and mindset needed for long-term success in the workplace. That said, it’s important to remember: they are still high school students! As a supervisor, you play a pivotal and inspiring role not just in supervising them, but in mentoring them. Your guidance, support, and example have the power to truly transform a student’s professional journey. You have the unique opportunity to shape their confidence, sharpen their skills, and leave a lasting mark on their growth as young professionals.

Developing a successful mentoring relationship with your student

Students are generally more responsive to tasks and communication when they feel comfortable engaging with their supervisor. Building a strong mentor-mentee relationship fosters mutual respect, which in turn can enhance a student’s efficiency. When first getting to know your student, it’s important to demonstrate that you appreciate their presence, recognize the value of their contributions, and genuinely want to support their professional growth.

Speaking with Intent

Students often don’t fully understand the significance of the work they’re contributing to. Whether it’s a large data entry assignment or handling confidential files, they may see it as just another task. To encourage greater engagement, it’s important to establish buy-in by explaining the broader context. When students understand how their work fits into a larger, company-wide initiative, they’re more likely to feel connected to the project and recognize the value they bring to its overall success.

Key Coaching Tips

Here are a few pointers that can assist with speaking with students:

- Focus on growth; let students know that mistakes are prone to happen with growth, and it is important to take accountability and learn from these mistakes
- Encourage attainable goal setting that students can implement when completing projects independently
- Check in frequently with students to ensure projects are being completed appropriately and efficiently
- Establish a system of communication if your student needs assistance (i.e. being accessible via Slack)

Do’s and Don’ts When Interacting with Student Associates	
Do’s	Don’ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set clear expectations ● Provide guidance and structure ● Encourage questions and curiosity ● Give constructive feedback ● Foster inclusion and respect ● Be approachable and accessible ● Promote a learning culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don’t assume prior experience ● Don’t overwhelm or underwhelm ● Don’t be inappropriate or overly familiar ● Don’t ignore unprofessional behavior ● Don’t dismiss concerns or questions ● Don’t forget confidentiality ● Don’t lose sight of the learning goal