Cabot Mentoring is always looking for new mentors to join our program. Maybe you’re wondering what it’s like, or whether you should sign up. To answer that, I’d like to share this article written by one of our mentors.

“Why I Am A Mentor” by Mark Tucker (reprinted from Times Argus, January 2019)

“Why am I a mentor?” That is a question I have been asked many times by folks who know that my day job as superintendent serving the Twinfield Union and Cabot schools already involves me deeply in the work each school does to support its students. And for those who know the scope of my job, the second question always is, “How do you find the time?”

Why is an easy question to answer, now that I have been doing it for a while. My first mentee is a student at Twinfield, but when Cabot reinstituted its mentorship program last spring, I signed up there, too. My mentees come from loving homes, but I know from the work I do every day that, in general, kids today are more isolated. Unlike when I grew up, most of our kids have very few adult role models beyond their caregivers at home; they spend too much time focused one-on-one with a computer screen; they are more inclined to pick up a game controller than a book; often times, they don’t know how to play games that don’t depend on a computer.

I am sure you are hesitating, thinking, “what do I have to give to a child?” I get it — despite having spent many years working with kids, I wasn’t sure at first if and how I would connect with a young child whom I didn’t know. But after a couple of weeks, our new friendship was cemented, and now we both look forward to our next weekly meeting.

As for time, well, time is a precious commodity for most of us, but mentoring does not take a lot of time — 50 minutes a week per child, at the beginning of the day, at the schools that I drive by every morning on my way to the office. It’s the high point of my week — twice a week. I’ll bet you drive by a school, too, on your way to work. You can stop, just like I do.

When you mentor a student, you are giving your time to teach the “soft skills” that children cannot learn from TV or a computer game — conversation, turn-taking, winning and losing at play and being OK with either outcome. When I greet my mentees every week, I always get a smile, and at the end of the session, another smile and a “see you next week.” Who wouldn’t want to start their day like this? The 50 minutes I give each of these children is really a gift I give to myself every week.

Everyone deserves a gift. Give yourself one. Be a mentor. You won’t be sorry.

Mark Tucker is the Washington Northeast Supervisory Union superintendent.