

Whole &  
Healthy  
Children  
INITIATIVE

**Mentor Training Guide | 2009 - 2010 School Year**

Mission Houston  
Changing Greater Houston For Good



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## Introduction to the Program

Thank you for volunteering with Mission Houston in their Whole and Healthy Children Initiative. Your time and effort will make a difference in the life of a child! In the years to come, your investment will prove vital in changing Houston forever.

In this document, you will find overall information about the Initiative and specific information to help you in your role as a mentor.

Use this booklet as a collection of resources that will be offered to you as part of our Transformational Mentor Training (TMT).

Included in this booklet are:

- Introduction to the Program
- Mission Statements:
  - Mission Houston Whole & Healthy Children Initiative
- Goals and Objectives of the Program
- Integrity and Transformation: Cornerstones of the Program
- The Mentoring Timeline
- Job Descriptions and Duties
- Tips from Experts
- Mentor Relationship Builders
- Frequently Asked Questions
- School Rules/Compliance





## Mission Statements

### Mission Houston

Mission Houston is building a community of leaders committed to the transformation of greater Houston. Mission Houston seeks to connect, unite, and mobilize the others to pray and work for the transformation of greater Houston and its communities. Currently, and for the next decade, Mission Houston will accomplish this by focusing our efforts in two areas:

- Personal Transformation through the ministries of Faithwalking;
- Community Transformation through the Whole and Healthy Children Initiative.

### The Whole and Healthy Children Initiative

Mission Houston has made a 10-year commitment to the transformation of the public school systems in the greater Houston area. We will mobilize the Church to mentor children, support schools and faculties, and assist in upgrading facilities. We believe Houston area schools will become world class centers of learning and our efforts will profoundly change the lives of a generation of children.

Mission Houston believes the current problems in the lives of at-risk children and their families affect every facet of our city. However, we also believe in the importance of every child and the promise they hold for our city. Our shared goal with the public schools is to see whole and healthy children become whole and healthy adults.



Goals and  
Objectives of the  
Program



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## Goals and Objectives of the Program

### Maximum Impact: The Cost Benefit to Society

Thousands of children drop out of high schools across greater Houston every year. Experts report that the seeds of that decision take root as early as 1st grade. Children walk out of school at age 16 but they make the decision to drop out of school by the third grade. The cost-benefit analysis of mentoring schoolchildren is compelling. Children who are involved in a school-approved mentoring relationship with an adult for longer than one year demonstrate:

- Dramatically decreased incidents of truancy and dropping out.
- Increased confidence and motivation that translates into attempting and completing university or technical college studies.
- Greatly improved attitudes about others, and abilities to get along with others.

### Why is this so vital?

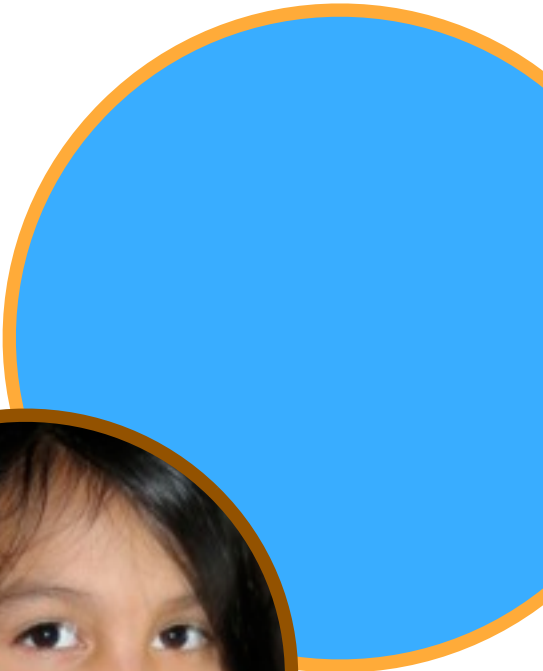
- High school graduates in Texas earn over \$7,000 per year more than their peers who drop out of school without graduating. College graduates earn at least \$28,000 per year more than their peers who drop out of school.
- Since 1986, over 2.5 million students who dropped out of high school have cost Texas \$730 billion in lost tax revenues and in expenses to provide job training, welfare assistance and criminal justice enforcement.

The proof of our caring will be expressed in four ways ... what we call the "**4 M's**":

- **Mentoring:** Up to 100 at-risk students in each adopted school will each be mentored by a trained adult or young adult who spends one hour a week with them each week for an entire school year.
- **Mobilized Prayer:** Two Christians will pray each week for each mentor, mentored student and their families. Additionally, 100 Christians will pray each week for the teachers, administrators and staff in each adopted school.
- **Makeovers:** Volunteers in the community will complete an annual school beautification and improvement project for each adopted school each year.
- **Money:** volunteers and businesses/corporations in the community will raise for each adopted school \$10,000 (or \$10,000 of in-kind gifts) each year to supplement the school's educational programs.

We will increase the number of schools and students incrementally, adopting schools in five or more communities each year until all 45 Community Service Area Teams have adopted and sustained their commitment to three elementary schools in their CSA.

***The impact? The Whole & Healthy Children Initiative could change the lives of 13,500 elementary school children!***



Integrity and  
Transformation:  
Cornerstones of the  
Program

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## A Conversation about Integrity

At the heart of the Whole and Healthy Children Initiative is a call for caring adults to give our word to the transformation of the public schools in the greater Houston area. As Mentors, this also means giving our word and making a promise to a student, and to their school. Today we are inviting you to join a growing number of people who are doing this. In order for us to create this preferred future through our word, we must tell the truth about integrity and about some integrity gaps that we face.

You've heard the saying, "Talk is cheap?" That phrase expresses the profound lack of integrity that exists in the world. Christians and non-Christians alike know it's true: there is a disconnect between what we say we believe and say versus what we actually do.

We know that this is a challenging conversation because we live in a culture that teaches us that it is important to "look good." There is encouragement to hide when we fail and don't live consistently with our word. Combine societal forces with the internal forces that make each of us want to avoid looking bad, and it makes it tough to have an honest conversation about growing in integrity.

Today we will discuss four important components in growing one's integrity.

1. Thinking of integrity as learning to live within our design as human beings.
2. Choosing to exchange "guilt" for "learning" in the integrity conversation.
3. Getting present to the impact of the consequences of an integrity gap.
4. Distinguishing between "keeping my word" and "honoring my word."

### **Thinking of integrity as learning to live within our design as human beings.**

Whenever God speaks, He does what He says. This is how God creates: He speaks (say, "let there be light") and things appear that did not exist before. This is how God heals: He speaks (for example, "little girl: arise") and transforming power makes something whole for that person. When the Bible says that "God is holy" the word used for "holy" simply means "complete." God acts consistent with whom He is. It is consistently who God is to speak and bring newness through His word.

You and I are made in the image of God. He has given us power to create and bring wholeness through our word. When we commit ourselves to Life-giving goals, like "transforming the public schools," God releases power to us and in us to make that happen. So it is consistent with who we are designed to be to make and keep promises that bring something new that doesn't currently exist into existence.

For us to bring transformation to the public schools, to the students and staff, we will have to give our word to make that happen. For this reason, we define "integrity" as "doing what we say



we will do, when we say we will do it” even when it means we make a commitment to do something before we know how we will be able to fulfill our promise.

### **Exchanging “guilt” for “learning” in the integrity conversation.**

Rather than thinking of integrity from a moral perspective, of good and bad, think of it as a learning process. Imagine yourself saying, “I want to create something with my word that I am not capable of creating.” And, let’s say you start trying to fulfill your promise and you fail ... you don’t feel like you’re getting anywhere.

Rather than say “I’m a horrible, guilty person because I’m not doing what I said I would do,” we can choose instead to realize that where we lack integrity is not a cause for self-condemnation. These places simply are indicators that show we still have things to learn. So, we acknowledge our failure, but then ask ourselves, “What else do I need to make good on my word?”

Guilt de-motivates and paralyzes. By choosing learning we energize, welcome new thinking, and allow new resources we hadn’t seen before.

So, we are inviting you to help us create space--safe, non-judgmental space--that embraces learning opportunities that are created by our integrity gaps.

### **Getting present to the impact of the consequences of an integrity gap.**

Things don't work when I don't keep my word. There is a correlation between keeping my word and how things work. The more I keep my word, my relationships and experiences work better. The less I keep my word, my relationships and experiences are worse. This is true in friendships, marriage and family, and business-- and it is true in the public schools.

### **The difference between “keeping my word” and “honoring my word.”**

There is a difference in keeping my word and honoring my word. To engage around integrity, I've got to consistently keep my word. I keep my word when I do what I say I will and follow through. The trouble is (and you and I both know it), sometimes I don't keep my word. When that happens, I honor my word when I tell the truth about my failure.

So, if I make a promise, break or fail to deliver on that commitment, I have now lost integrity. But while I've not kept my word, I can still honor my word and restore integrity. Here's how:

- I go to those who were impacted by my broken promise.
- I acknowledge the broken promise and the consequences to those I failed.
- I do what is needed to make things right. I ask forgiveness for my actions.
- I make a promise again, and work to keep that promise.



I may have to repeat this process multiple times before I master the ability to keep my promise in even one area of my life. The more I honor my word, the more I strengthen my ability to sustain integrity and create a better future.

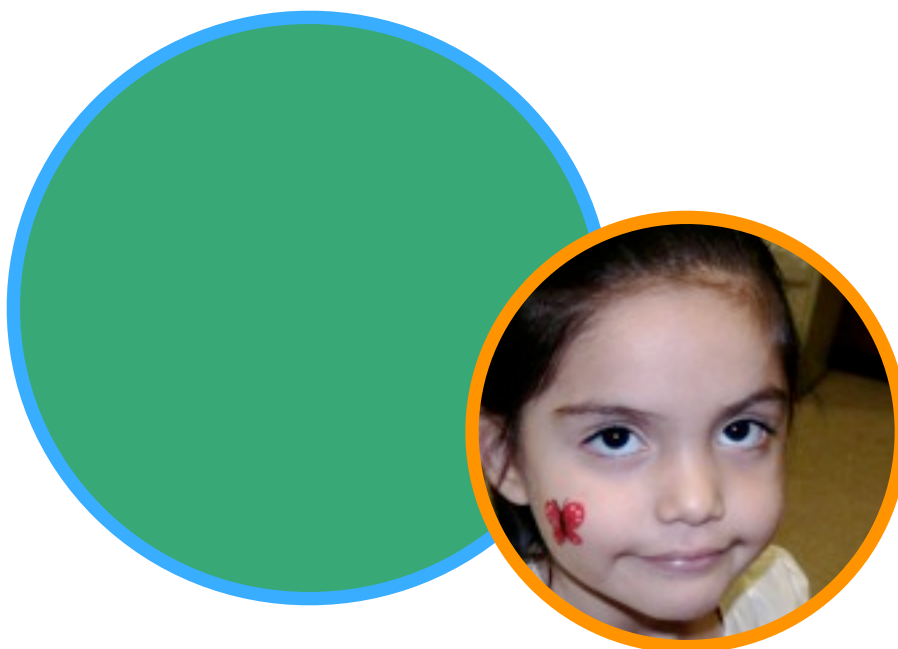
### **An invitation to create a community of integrity for our children**

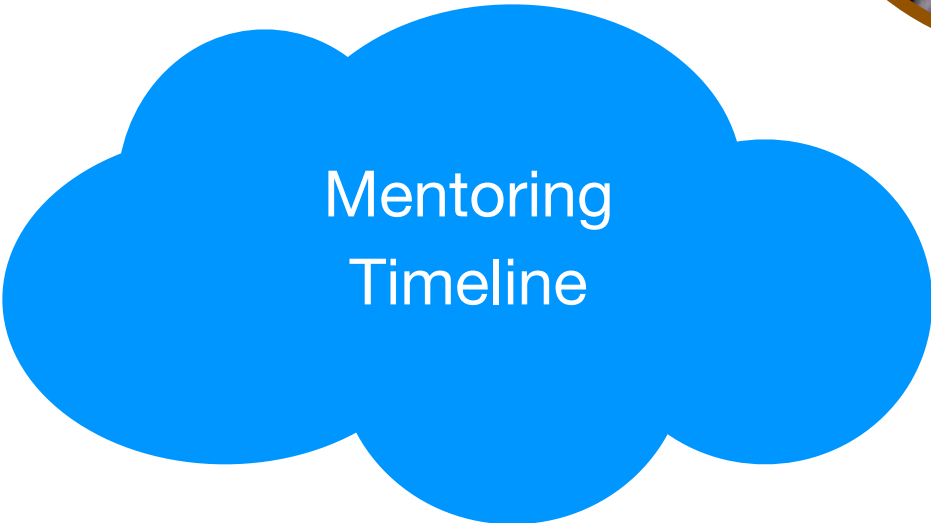
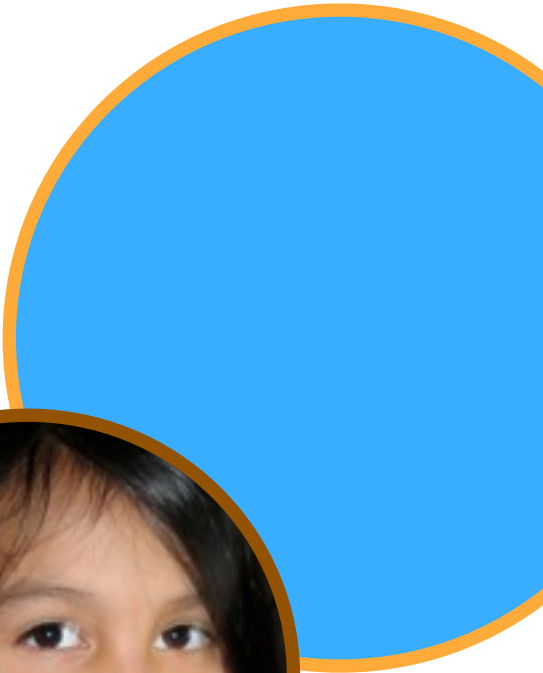
In the Whole and Healthy Children Initiative, it is clear to us that we, Mission Houston, have given our word to create the transformation of the public schools ... and that we are not yet capable of keeping our word. We are prepared to honor our word until we collectively learn to keep it. A significant step forward will be taken when we develop a critical mass of people--mentors, project coordinators, corporate sponsors, work crews--to join us in giving our word to the most vulnerable children in our city that we will create schools where they are valued as individuals, where real learning takes place, and where everyone is expected to succeed.

We invite you to join us. We invite you to give your word to the transformation of the public school by being a transformational mentor. There are three ways that you can express your commitment to be a part of this movement:

1. Give your word to faithfully and lovingly complete your assignments as a mentor.
2. Give your word to participate in future TMT events.
3. Give your word to enrolling others in this movement.

For some of you, you came to our gathering prepared to make this commitment. You have been a part of the conversations about the Whole and Healthy Children Initiative. You are ready to join others in giving your word to the transformation of the public schools. To you, we say "Thank you. We are eager to serve you and to serve the growing community of people who are making this commitment."





Mentoring  
Timeline

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# Mentoring Timeline

## 1. Planning

**Period: 1-2 months / June -August**

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Mission Houston</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilitates a briefing on the Whole &amp; Healthy Children Initiative to CSA team.</li><li>• Facilitates training to the W&amp;HC Mentor coordinator in the CSA.</li></ul>  |
| <b>CSA Team</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determines who will serve as W&amp;HC Mentor coordinator for the school year.</li><li>• Selects targeted school(s) and establishes relationships with it.</li><li>• Convenes a meeting to connect players and set dates.</li><li>• Starts process to recruit volunteers</li></ul> |
| <b>School Administration</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agrees to participate in the W&amp;HC Initiative and to have a mentoring program</li><li>• Proposes dates to launch the program, including orientations for volunteers</li></ul>  |

## 2. Implementing

**Period: 1-2 months / August - October**

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Mission Houston</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides collateral material to CSA team.</li><li>• Facilitates Module 1 of Transformational Mentoring Training (TMT) to Mentors.</li><li>• Establish technology for communications (Virtual Community).</li></ul> |
|------------------------|--|



|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>CSA Team</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruits mentors.</li><li>• Facilitates logistics for TMT.</li><li>• Coordinate mentor training with school district (or third party program).</li><li>• Feed Mentor Database.</li><li>• Initiates and manages communications with mentors -school.</li></ul>  |
| <b>School Administration</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete background checks for mentors and confirm for mentors.</li><li>• Provides ISO mentoring training.</li><li>• Selects children to be mentored &amp; clear parental permissions.</li><li>• Determines a point person/community liaison for communications.</li><li>• Determines schedules for mentors to visit their mentee.</li></ul> |

### 3. *Launching*

**Period: 1-2 months / October**

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Mission Houston</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• With the school's liaison and the CSA Mentor Coordinator, establishes baseline to measure progress.</li></ul>  |
| <b>CSA Mentor Coordinator</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coordinates with school mentor mix as a launching event.</li><li>• Monitor mentor volunteers in their first weeks, making sure communication is open and questions answered.</li><li>• Coordinates with school about specific needs for mentors and/or mentees.</li><li>• Makes sure baseline information is obtained.</li></ul> |



|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>School Administration</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinates with CSA Mentor Coordinator to address specific needs for mentors and/or mentees.</li> <li>• Adjusts the match of mentors with mentees.</li> </ul> |
|------------------------------|---|

#### 4. Sustaining and Growing

**Period: November Ongoing**

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Mission Houston</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates baseline to measure progress.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>CSA Mentor Coordinator</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinates with the school a mentor “mixer” as a launching event.</li> <li>• Monitor mentor volunteers in their first weeks, making sure communication is open and questions answered.</li> <li>• Coordinates with school about specific needs for mentors and/or mentees.</li> <li>• Makes sure baseline information is obtained.</li> </ul> |
| <b>School Administration</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinates with CSA Mentor Coordinator to address specific needs for mentors and/or mentees.</li> <li>• Adjusts the match of mentors with mentees.</li> </ul>   |

#### 5. Sustaining and Growing

**Period: November Ongoing**

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Mission Houston</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates baseline to measure progress.</li> </ul> |
|------------------------|---|



|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>CSA Mentor Coordinator</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinates with school mentor mix as a launching event.</li> <li>• Monitor mentor volunteers in their first weeks, making sure communication is open and questions answered.</li> <li>• Coordinates with school about specific needs for mentors and/or mentees.</li> <li>• Makes sure baseline information is obtained.</li> </ul> |
| <b>School Administration</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinates with CSA Mentor Coordinator to address specific needs for mentors and/or mentees.</li> <li>• Adjusts the match of mentors with mentees.</li> </ul>   |

## 6. *Measuring and Adjusting*

### Period: Ongoing

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Mission Houston</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receives feedback of the program.</li> <li>• Compare and present data.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>CSA Mentor Coordinator</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request data from school, mentors, mentees ...</li> <li>• Provides feedback to MH about school, mentors, mentees ...</li> <li>• Convene a meeting to compare data and feedback between the school, the CSA leadership, and</li> </ul> |
| <b>School Administration</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides feedback to CSA team.</li> <li>• Provides information to compare baseline.</li> </ul>  |



## The Mentoring Timeline

|                | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Planning       |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Implementing   |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Launching      |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Maintaining    |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Measuring      |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Training Dates |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |





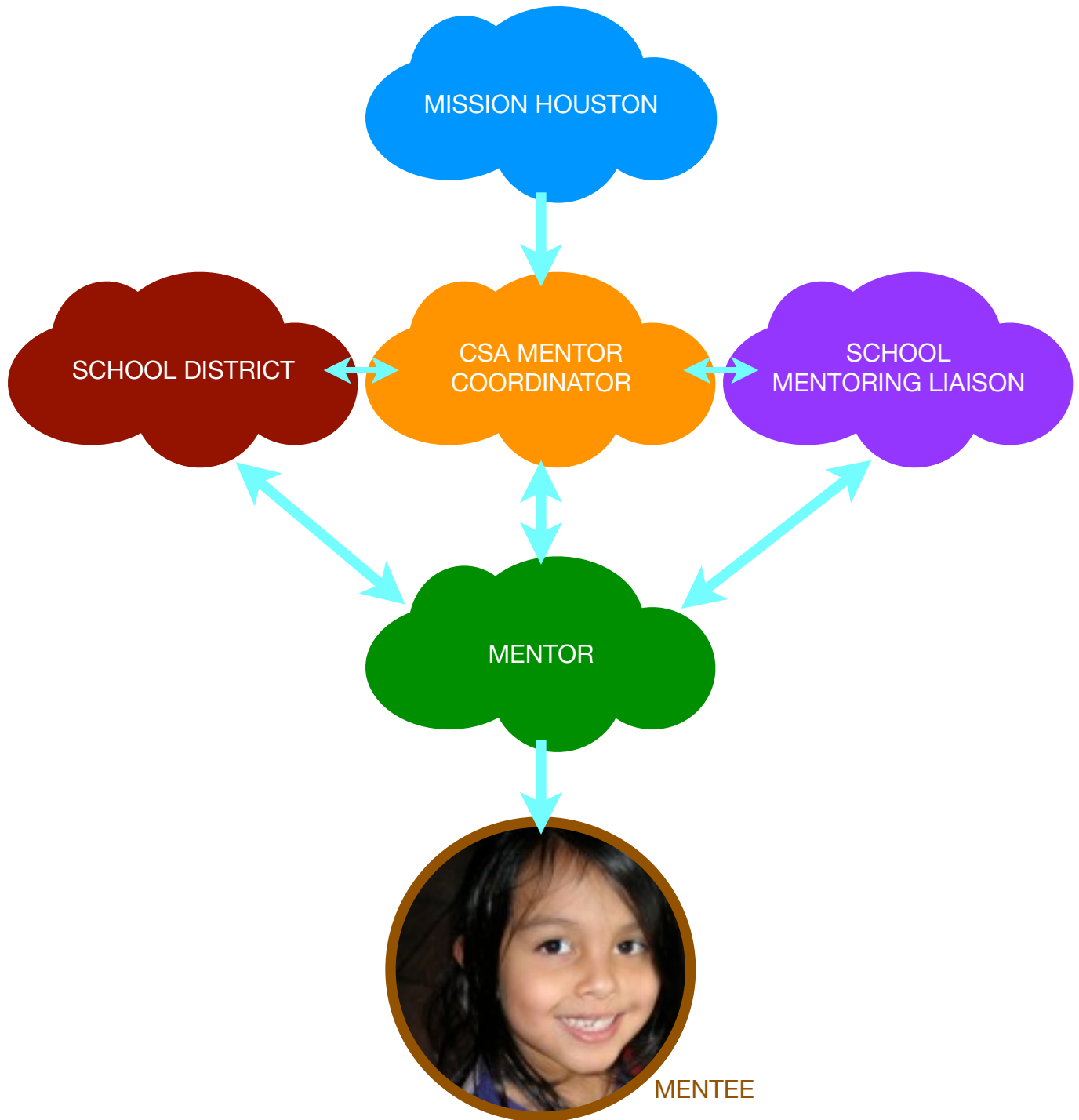
Job Descriptions  
and Duties



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## The Players





## Mentor Responsibilities

### The Mentor performs the following:

- Spends one hour per week, every week of the entire academic year, in face-to-face meetings with his/her mentee.
- Is present physically, emotionally, and mentally when meeting with the mentee. (For example, cell phones, etc. will be turned off.)
- Notifies the CSA Mentor Coordinator and the school/teacher as far in advance as possible when illness, out-of-town assignments, or family emergencies make an absence unavoidable. When the absence is known far in advance, the Mentor Coordinator and school/teacher will be reminded again several days prior to the date of the absence.
- Makes herself/himself available to meet with the mentee outside school hours should the student's family/guardians invite such expanded relationship opportunities.
- Follows the rules, respecting the requirements of the school district, the school, and the W&HC school initiative leadership.
- Attends and completes at least Session One (1) of the TMT (Transformational Mentoring Training.) Will attend subsequent sessions that provide skills and resources the Mentor knows are needed for maximizing the mentoring impact. (Most of these subsequent sessions will offer the option of attending in person or via web technology.)
- Volunteers at the school for at least one event or program during the school year.
- Assists the mentee in educational skill development, when necessary.
- Serves as a role model worth imitating by the mentee.
- Demonstrates the following skills in sessions:
  - Values his/her mentee, regardless of performance, behavior, or progress.
  - Listens attentively.
  - Provides nonjudgmental feedback.
  - Encourages and affirms good choices and attempts.
  - Maintains appropriate confidentiality (except when there is a threat to the mentee or others).
  - Demonstrates cultural sensitivity and respect.
- Participates in meetings held once each semester with the other W&HC mentors serving at your school.
- Communicates promptly with the CSA Mentor Coordinator whenever there are difficulties in fulfilling the Mentor responsibilities, and when aware of the need or desire for additional Mentoring skills

## CSA Mentor Coordinator Responsibilities

### The CSA Mentor Coordinator performs the following duties:



- Recruits of volunteers from among congregations & workers in community sectors within the CSA.
- Manages all communications with the mentors.
- Serves as the point of contact with the school district and local school officials
- Provides logistical support for the Transformational Mentor Training
- Provides logistical support for continuing education for mentors
- Coordinates mentor & school staff appreciation events
- Shares information with Mission Houston staff on outputs and outcomes related to the mentoring relationships

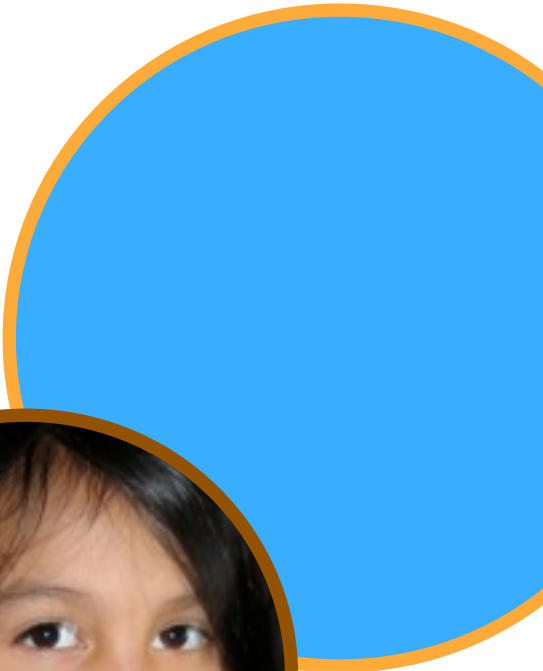
## **The School District and the School Mentoring Liaison Responsibilities**

### **The School District performs the following duties:**

- Provides and Clears background checks for volunteers.
- Provides training for mentor volunteers per ISD and school requirements.
- Selects the mentees and secures parent/guardian permission for the mentoring relationship.
- Matches or assigns mentor with mentee, works in concert with the CSA Coordinator.
- Scheduling designated times and places during the school day and week for the mentoring relationship.
- Helps to establish the baseline and provides feedback for monitoring progress in the mentee.
- Shares information with the CSA Coordinator on the overall performance of the mentoring program.

### **The School Liaison performs the following duties:**

- Coordinates any mentor welcome activities with the school.-Orients new CSA coordinators/mentors to the school (policies, sign-in procedures, location for weekly meetings with mentees, introduces staff, etc.).
- Maintains and monitors weekly attendance sign-in lists.
- Prepares and regularly updates lists of mentors/mentees, in coordination with the Mentor Coordinator
- Communicates with CSA coordinators/mentors on a regular basis to answer their questions and concerns.
- Serves as liaison to school social workers, guidance counselors and other individuals providing support to the program.
- Schedules move of student mentor records from one grade level to the next.
- Works with CSAs regarding mentors who may need to terminate their relationship.
- Introduces parents to mentors through conferences, PTA events at the school, or other means.



Tips from the  
Experts

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## Tips from the Experts

### Culture and Those Living in Poverty

#### What Is Culture?

- Culture is a set of mental rules for survival and success that a particular group of people has developed.
- Culture is that part of the environment made by humans; it includes customs and values as well as material objects. (You shifted from culture to cultures – was that intentional?)
- Culture is learned and communicated consciously and unconsciously to subsequent generations.
- Culture is multifaceted, including factors like family structure, spirituality, language, technology, organizations, law, art, body image, parenting practices, concept of growth, aging and death.
- Culture is dynamic; that is, they are characterized by continuous – though sometimes incremental – change.
- Culture is a way of life that makes a group of people unique.
- We have multiple, overlapping cultural identities. The culture and sub-cultures of my religion, my ethnic heritage, my gender, and the dominant culture of the geographic region where I grew up or live now, for example, may inform who I am, in different ways. Practically speaking, no person is the product of one culture alone.

#### Why is Communicating Inter culturally Difficult?

- Culture provides us with roles, telling us who to be, how to act, what is okay to say – and to whom.
- Actual language differences often prohibit us from reaching shared meaning.
- Our perceptions about people and events are determined by culture, as are our goals and motivations, and our basic notions about human nature and self.
- Prejudice and stereotypes can pop up in communication, often without us recognizing them as such in advance.
- Frustration, hurt, guilt, or anger from previous encounters with the same person or other people with similar cultural backgrounds can stand in the way.
- Assuming similarity when none exists is also a barrier to communication.

#### Our Internal Dialogue

Our internal dialogue of what any given person means, thinks, wants, or needs cannot be fully accurate since...



- No one culture defines any person, but rather a mix of the cultures a person has lived in or learned from informs what we think, feel, want and need.
- We are interpreting the other person's culture, personality, demeanor, words, and actions through a screen of our own cultural values.

Even if our culture and organization call on us to be non-judgmental or open-minded, our minds will naturally still pose the questions “true or false”, “good or bad”, “beautiful or ugly”. We answer those questions in a non-stop, mostly sub-conscious conversation within ourselves. So what does this knowledge help us do that can be useful in cross-cultural interactions?

When we are conscious of our dialogue, we can...

- ACKNOWLEDGE that others will see a situation, person, or event differently.
- UNDERSTAND that reasonable people can and will reasonably disagree about meanings and significance.
- TAKE a conscious and healthy interest in how you perceive the world differently than I do.
- KNOW that each person's reactions and judgments have a legitimate source – they make sense in the context of one's own unique mix of cultural contexts. They help the person survive and succeed there.

## Creating Inclusion

Our goal in mentoring relationships – especially in “cross-difference” mentoring (cross-age, cross-cultural) – is to create “inclusion”. An inclusive environment is one in which you feel valued and respected by me, and I feel valued and respected by you. When we create that mutual, almost physical, feeling of being valued and respected, we'll resonate with our similarities and differences.

***Where better to create this than in a mentoring relationship?***

## Environmental Factors That Affect the Development of Children

A child's environmental circumstances often include a single parent in the home, limited financial resources, and limited parental supervision. Thus, many children must assume responsibilities making them appear more independent than they are emotionally.

Growing up in poverty will often affect a child's developing sense of identity and goals. They may have few role models for success. They see parents, grandparents, and sometimes great-grandparents struggling with the same problems, with little change or progress from generation to generation. This affects the child's ability to picture his/her life or future in a positive way. Some children are motivated and determined to take charge of their lives and develop their potential, whereas some do not have a vision for themselves and may present a frustrating challenge for mentors. There will be children from all along the continuum. Part of the mentor's challenge is to determine where the child fits into the developmental picture. A combination of knowledge,



intuition, and the continued desire to discover more about the child will help mentors help their child.

### **Obstacles for the Urban Poor**

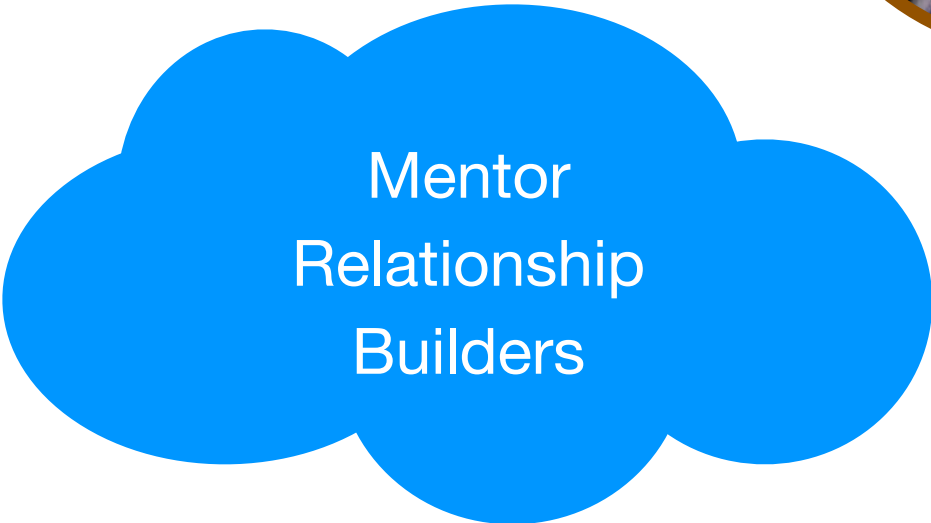
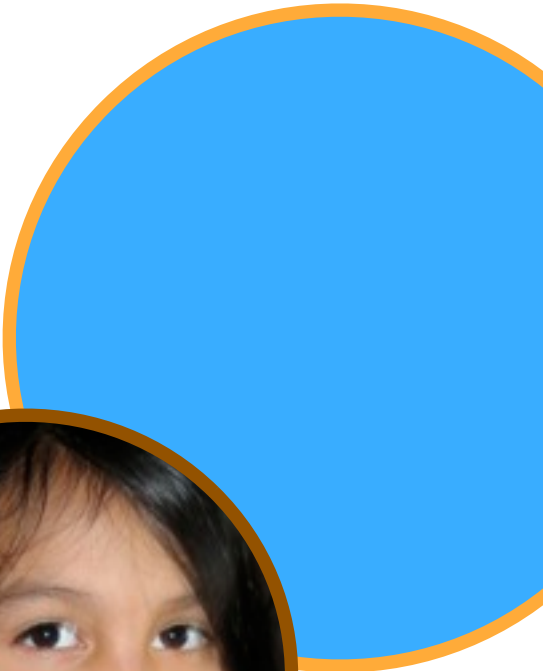
Since many mentor programs deal with children in urban poverty, mentors need to understand the unique problems that arise for because of this environment. In general, children growing up in poor urban areas face problems that would overwhelm many adults:

- Fear of personal safety due to crime in neighborhoods.
- Violence in neighborhoods leads to violence in schools.
- School dropout rate is high: peer culture fosters quitting school more often than graduating. Even with young children, parents and older siblings may set the “quitting school” tone.
- Sexual activity is at an earlier age; and may be viewed as the norm in the mentee’s environment. Unwed older siblings with their own children may be living under the mentee’s roof, which reinforces the “normalcy” of the situation.

In learning to survive in often-hostile environments, many children exhibit caution, mistrust, cynicism, and even hopelessness. Mentors may have difficulty breaking through the tough outer shell to the “real” person inside. Knowledge and understanding will help the mentor to persevere.

Courtesy of [Be A Mentor, Inc.](#)





Mentor  
Relationship  
Builders

Whole &  
Healthy  
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# Mentor Relationship Builders

## Listening Skills for Mentors

### Listening With Both Ears

“Speaking and listening are two skills that are required in order for any two people to communicate with one another. When you speak, your words convey a message with both cognitive and affective components. In other words, what you say has both meaning and emotion attached to it.

Most of us forget that the listening half of communication has the same two skills inherent to it. We usually understand the meaning that the speaker has attached to his words, but often fail to let the speaker know that we are aware of the emotion that he/she is feeling at the time.

Empathy is the art of letting the speaker know you not only understand the words used, but also are sensitive to the feeling that he is expressing. “You sound ‘up’ today” or “what’s got you down lately?” would be a simple way to begin to explore some of the feelings being expressed.

“When two speakers begin to listen with the same enthusiasm with which they speak and to convey to one another that they heard both what was said and how it was said, a powerful bond begins to develop. This bond is friendship and love”.

- James Deary, III, Ed.D. Institute for Urban Family Health, New York City

### Communicating With Children

When children are allowed to express their feelings, particularly their negative feelings, it offers them a safety valve, which like the safety valve on a boiler, prevents it from exploding. Allowing a child to release feelings also prevents exploding. If your child is systematically taught to keep negative feelings bottled up, he or she cannot get them out of his or her system. Children cannot discriminate and hold back only negative feelings without putting down positive feelings as well. If they are not allowed to express negative feelings in words, they will come out in some form of antisocial action. Children who are not allowed to express their negative feelings usually grow up to be adults who cannot express their negative feelings either. Give them the freedom to express all of their feelings as a child.

Children very desperately want us to understand how they feel. Unfortunately, many do not get this understanding from their parents. Not that the parents are cruel or unfeeling. Rather they are not able to let their children know they understand how they feel because nobody taught them how to convey this kind of understanding. Many parents have not learned the importance of LISTENING to their children and empathizing with them.



Mentors can use communication skills to help their mentee overcome these barriers. The essence of the technique is simple. You are doing three things whenever your mentee expresses his/her feelings:

1. Listening carefully to what your mentee is saying.
2. Formulating in your own mind what your mentee is expressing.
3. Repeating back to him/her in your own words the feelings they have just expressed to you.

When a mentor uses this technique, the mentee will really know the mentor understands, because he/she will hear his/her own feelings coming back to them from the mentor. Be careful you don't repeat the exact words your mentee has used so you won't sound like an echo chamber. Paraphrase the child's feelings in your own words.

A dramatic change may not take place in the child as a result of listening to and repeating his or her feelings. However, it is a powerful way for keeping lines of communication between you and your youth open. It lets your youth know that you understand how he/she feels and that their feelings are respected and valued. It also helps to promote a feeling of mutual respect between you and your youth.

### Rules of Communication

1. Make your communication positive.
2. Be clear and specific.
3. Recognize that each individual sees things from a different point of view.
4. Be open and honest about your feelings.
5. Accept your student's feelings and try to understand them.
6. Be supportive and accepting.
7. Do not preach or lecture.
8. Learn to listen.
9. Maintain eye contact.
10. Allow time for your youth to talk without interruption; show that you are interested in what he or she has to say.
11. Get feedback to be sure you are understood.
12. Listen for feelings in tone of voice, as well as the words.
13. Ask questions whenever you do not understand what the child has said.



### Mentor Conversation Tip Sheet

#### Closed vs. Open-Ended Questions

“There are two kinds of questions that you can ask your student: open-ended or closed-ended. Closed-ended questions elicit a yes or no response, which tends to end the conversation. Open-ended questions on the other hand garner more information. Open-ended questions begin with



all the ‘W’ words – **what, who, when, where, why, which** - and how. All of the questions listed here are closed-ended questions. How can you change each one of these into an open-ended question?”

“So, when you are with your student, you are asking open-ended questions, gathering information, and then listening. When you listen to your student you want to listen for the feelings being expressed as well as the content.

Empathy means letting your student know that you not only understand what is being said, but you also ‘hear’ the feelings being expressed. ‘You sound down today,’ would be a simple way to explore this feeling being expressed. Paraphrasing your student’s feelings in your own words is an essential step in the listening process.

It takes practice, but this technique lets your student know that you understand how she/he feels and that their feelings are respected and valued. How can you change these into open-ended questions?

- Do you enjoy your classes?
- What is your favorite subject?
- Do you like your teachers?
- Did you do your homework?

Courtesy of MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership.

### **Conversation Starters for Mentors**

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Do you like school? Can you tell me two reasons why?
3. Tell me a funny thing that happened to you lately.
4. What makes you laugh?
5. What is your favorite sport and why?
6. Do you have a best friend(s) at school? What is it about the person you like?
7. Do you have someone at school you don’t get along with? What is it about the person that bothers you?
8. Did you see the game last night?
9. What is your favorite book and why?
10. What is your favorite TV show and why?
11. Let’s talk music. I listen to. . . .
12. What did you do over the summer vacation? Was it fun?
13. If you could be anyone in the world for an hour, who would it be and why?
14. Let’s tell jokes or funny stories. . . .
15. What do you do for fun?
16. What is the latest movie you have seen?



17. Kids made fun of me because of \_\_\_\_\_ when I was in school. Has anything like that ever happen to you?
18. What do you do when you feel sad? Does that help?

Courtesy of Melvin Morris, Ben E. Mays Hunter's Access Center.

### Suggested Format for a Session

The suggested format for a mentor/mentee hour-long session, once the relationship has been established, is as follows:

- 20 minutes talking about the child and what he/she wants to share, including revisiting and getting updates on items shared in previous conversations.
- 20 minutes helping with academics, if needed, or reading with the student in the absence of other academic work.
- 20 minutes of fun, which can be outside or inside play or game or an activity of the mentor/mentee's choosing. (See also the "School Site Activities" in the following pages for suggestions to offer your mentee.)

The ultimate purpose of Mission Houston's program is to provide a child a relationship with an adult who is a consistent and caring presence and who is a positive role model whose life is worth imitating. Sometimes there may be confusion at the school level as to our mission. Remember there is a difference between tutoring and mentoring. Mission Houston fosters change through the nurturing of whole and healthy children, which may include but is not limited to tutoring.

### Games and Tips for Building a Relationship

Many mentors meet with their mentees without any preconceived plans and let the mentees concerns shape the sessions. They may consider possible topics of conversation or select some materials to use. Still others may thoroughly prepare in advance, by planning each activity. Whether a mentor plans carefully or responds spontaneously, it is helpful to b familiar with possible activities he or she can use during the mentoring sessions.

The following are suggestions for mentor/mentee activities. Current mentors contributed many of these ideas for activities. Choose activities that are appropriate for the age of the mentee:

- **Encourage your mentee to keep a record of meetings.** Ask the child to keep a journal and ask the child to write down his or her thoughts each day after meeting together. Stress that this is confidential unless he or she wants to share it. Girls will probably be more amenable to this than boys since it is similar to keeping a diary. Reluctant boys might at least be willing to record the dates of the meetings with their mentors; the lengthening



number of entries becomes a concrete record of the commitment to them. Writing about their time together, even if sporadic, will help mentees develop reflection skills. It will also be useful to them near the end of the mentoring relationship to see the changes that have occurred. Mentees may come to value the notebook as symbol of friendship.

- **Let your mentee be the expert.** Discover something the mentee is knowledgeable about and let him or her be the teacher. One woman mentor brought a computer football game for her male mentee to play. He explained the rules of the game and the types of plays to her. Another mentor had a Muslim mentee. He encouraged his mentee to teach him about his religion and share the significance of Muslim religious holidays as they occurred during the school year. When the mentee has the opportunity to be the expert, and the mentor shows genuine interest, the mentees sense of competence and self-worth may blossom.
- **Work on skills your mentee would like to improve.** One student was uneasy about her ability to count. The mentor brought paper and coins and practiced with her until she felt capable of managing this skill. Mentors might also show mentees other skills that can help the child feel better about him/her...
- **Discuss a current event from a newspaper or magazine article with your mentee.** Encourage the student to express his or her own opinion about it.
- **Share cultural traditions.** Differing traditions can be fertile ground for conversation and better understanding of one another. Mentors can explain some of the special aspects of their heritage and encourage mentees to share theirs.
- **Find a creative way to deal with an area of concern in your mentee's life.** A student suffered the loss of a treasured dog during a crisis in his life a number of years previously. He still felt sadness about the loss. His mentor helped him make a simple drawing of his dog and write a story about the dog for his writing class.
- **Find mutual interests to share.** One mentor discovered her mentee writes poetry, as she does. They share poetry with each other. Poetry often reveals the internal struggles and concerns of children and can provide new avenues of conversation.
- **Help your mentee develop decisions making skills.** One mentor had her mentee write in a column all the positives that could result from a particular decision and in another column all the negatives. Putting these on paper helped the mentee clarify the issue, sort out the possible consequences of this decision and evaluate whether it would be a wise decision.
- **Create a pictorial life journey.** Show the mountain tops and the valleys, the special events and the meaningful persons along the way. Use symbols of rain, lightning bolts or sunshine, happy or sad faces, or different colors for different emotions. Then continue the



journey into the future. What is on the road ahead? When both the mentor and mentee create and share their journeys, trust and understanding are built. All that is needed is a little creativity.

- **Share the discovery of five new words a week.** The words mentors have to learn might be jargon or slang that the mentee can define for them.
- **Assist your mentee in organizing school work and developing study schedules.** One mentor showed his mentee how to help plan and organize his time.
- **Attend class with your mentee.** Important insights are gained when a mentor experiences the classroom firsthand. Ask your mentee and his/her teacher permission to attend class with him or her.
- **Do something active with the mentee.** Although gymnasiums are usually in use during the school day, mentors and mentees could walk the track, shoot baskets outside court, throw football or toss a Frisbee.
- **Bring something special to share.** Perhaps something special like a hobby or an interesting object. Bring something that has particular meaning such as a treasured item from a grandparent. Share the story behind it. Ask the mentee to also bring something that is of particular interest or significance to him or her. These make excellent entrances to conversation.
- **Help keep your mentee accountable for attendance and work completed (if this has been a problem).** Ask each week if he or she missed any school or did not complete school work. Explore the reasons for the absence of incomplete work, help develop goals for the following week and review progress each week. However, be sure this is done in a friendly, helpful way. Mentors are not teachers or parents, but supportive caring friends.

### **School-Site Activities a Mentor Can Do with their Mentee**

- Read a book, especially in a new genre
- Join (or find more about) a school club, sport, or activity
- Create academic goals (both short and long term)
- Explore the school library
- See if you can use the gym (or get outside) to play active games or exercise
- Talk about what happened during the school day
- Talk about successes (and disappointments) at school
- Create a notebook to organize schoolwork
- Write a story together
- Discuss strategies for taking tests and effective study habits
- Discuss managing time effectively
- Make a collage that illustrates the mentee's values or goals

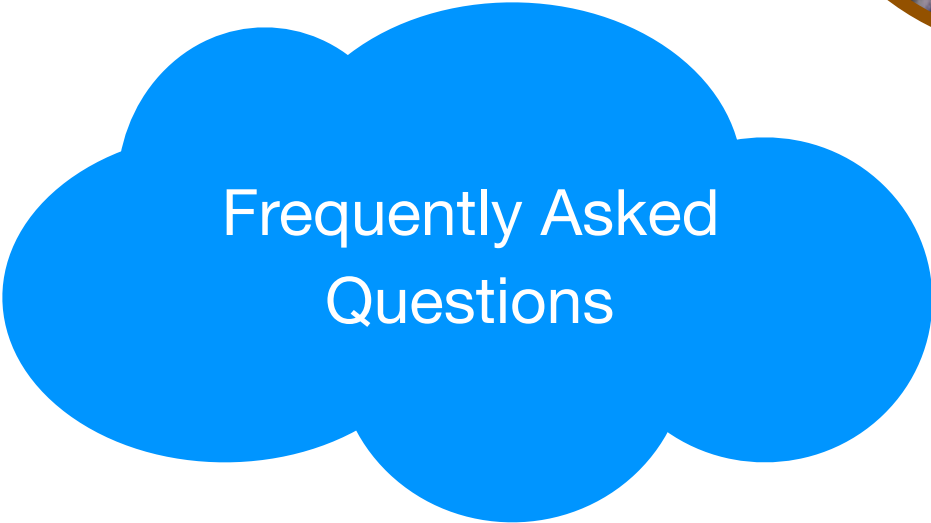


- Plan a service project (either for the school or out in the community)
- Make a mentoring journal about your time together.
- Research some interesting or unusual career
- Learn about a country your mentee would like to visit someday (plan a fantasy vacation)
- Talk about your family heritage and research your roots
- Pick a foreign language neither of you know and learn some basic words and phrases
- Take pictures to create a school “scrapbook”
- Talk about the best (and the worst) parts of their school day
- Work on spelling—and how to use a dictionary and thesaurus
- Study for a test or complete homework (sparingly)
- Review previous tests and homework

### **Community Activities a Mentor Can Do with their Mentee**

Note: Parental permission, mediated through the School Liaison, is required before suggesting, offering, or engaging in any out-of-school activity.

- Visit a museum, aquarium, planetarium, art gallery, natural museum, national park, cemetery, zoo, etc.
- Tour the public library
- Interview someone who has an interesting job
- Take a nature hike
- Visit a farm
- Take a historical tour of the city
- Go to cultural event (concert, play, symphony, rodeo)
- Go to a culturally themed event (MLK celebration, St. Patrick’s parade, etc.)
- Watch an educational special or movie with an educational theme
- Talk with senior citizens about their life story and historical events



Frequently Asked  
Questions



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## Frequently Asked Questions

*How are students selected for this program at their school?*

The CSA Coordinator is the trained individual at the site who is responsible for the coordination of the project. Some students are referred by teachers or counselors. Students must complete an application, return parent authorization forms, and be approved before being selected for the program.

*If I sign up to become a mentor and follow through with all of the necessary requirements, does that guarantee that I will get matched with a student?*

After interviewing and reviewing your application, we may determine that our program does not have a match for you. Staff decisions of this kind in no way reflect upon the personal qualifications of prospective volunteers.

*Can I involve my student in activities or outings?*

Yes, as long as you are present. If your student is comfortable with this idea, it can be an educational and enlightening experience for a student to interact and spend time together.

*What is my role regarding the parents?*

Parents must sign authorization forms allowing their child to participate in the Project. You are encouraged to meet your student's parent/guardian as soon as possible. Your CSA Coordinator will provide opportunities for you to meet your child's parent before and after you are matched.

*I travel occasionally with my job and always take an annual summer vacation. Can I still be a mentor?*

Yes. As long as during your absence you are sure to contact your CSA Coordinator and student's school, you can still be a mentor. Mentors can contact their student in a variety of ways – through mail, email, and of course, the telephone.

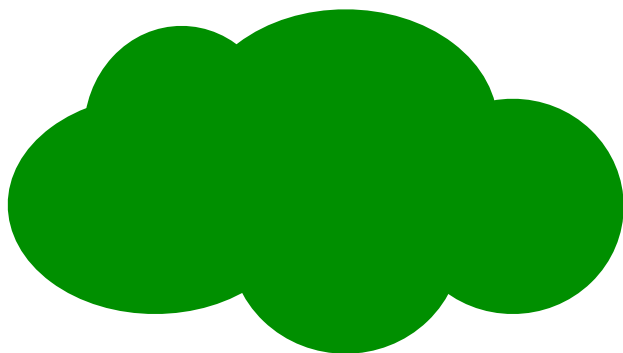


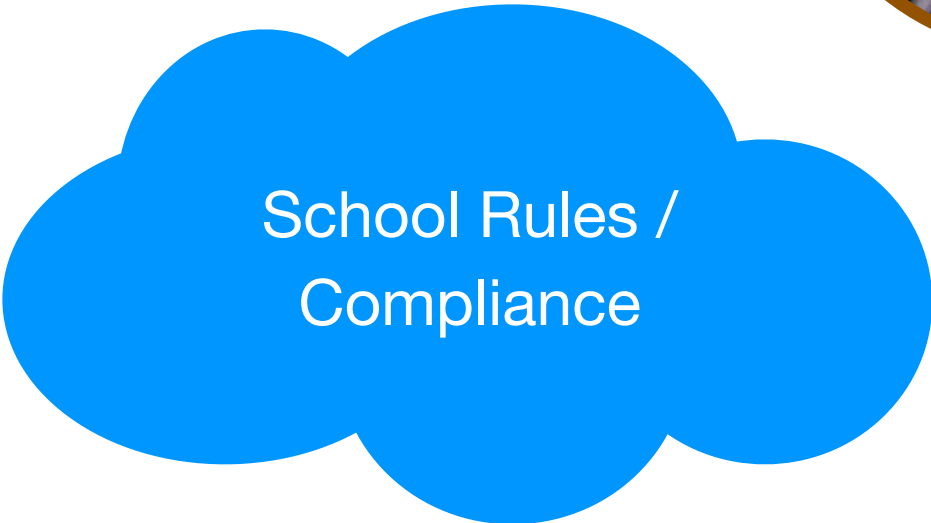
*What if something life-altering occurs in my life such as a job transfer, pregnancy, health issue, marriage, etc. that interferes with my ability to continue mentoring my student?*

Mentors agree to abide by an agreement that either party has the option of discontinuing the relationship for any reason, if it seems appropriate. He or she will discuss this decision with their CSA Coordinator before terminating the relationship.

*What if my student shares confidential information with me that I feel unprepared to handle on my own?*

Mentors must share this information with their CSA Coordinator or School staff person immediately. Mentors are not expected to take on the role of parent, counselor, or social worker. The CSA Coordinator will advise the mentor on how to proceed.





School Rules /  
Compliance

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## School Rules / Compliance

*"The school told me many times, 'William has been asking if his mentor is coming today'."*

**Fast Facts  
2008 - 2009 School Year**

90% of mentors surveyed saw improvement and progress in the academic performance and character of their children

83% of mentors surveyed planned to volunteer to mentor again for the 2009-2010 school year

Over 70% of mentors surveyed were satisfied with the features of the W&HCI: specifically the training and communications from Mission Houston staff and CSA volunteer leaders

Mentors in the W&HCI are as diverse as the students they mentor; we have Anglo, Asian, Black and Latino mentors who volunteer.

*"giving of myself consistently with someone other than those in our church assembly or family"*

*"Seeing his eyes when I told him I look forward to watching him walk across the stage as a HS graduate."*

*"Giving her life to Christ; watching this child blossom in her writing skills; her appreciation for the mentoring program; meeting her mom and both of them coming to church every week."*

*"It was encouraging that my mentee asked if she could add me as a friend on Facebook at the end of the year."*

*"Watching the gradual 'opening up' of a young girl who was painfully shy, and seeing the trust level grow over time."*

*"I was amazed that I cried as though I had actually adopted a child, now that I think about it in a small way I did. Thank you!"*

2009-2010 *Whole & Healthy Children initiative*

**Covenant of Mentor Agreement**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

By choosing to volunteer as a Mentor in the Mission Houston *Whole & Healthy Children initiative*, I promise:

- I will serve as a mentor to a student, in partnership with the staff of the student's school, for the entirety of this 2009-2010 school year.
- I will meet at least weekly with my mentee for up to one hour each meeting.
- I will be on time for scheduled meetings with my mentee, or call the school's liaison as soon as I know that an unexpected conflict means I am unable to make a meeting. In the case of a conflict, I will try to communicate with the school and my mentee not less than 24 hours prior to our scheduled meeting.
- I will try to rearrange our meeting for another time during the same week when I have the conflict.
- I will recruit at least 2 others to be intercessors with whom I will communicate prayer requests and praise reports no less than monthly. I will enlist these intercessors to pray weekly and specifically for me, for my mentee, for my mentee's teacher(s), and for the school.
- I will keep confidential any information that my mentee shares with me unless such information reflects harm that has been caused or may be caused to my mentee or to others.
- I will abide by all of the school's regulations, and by all the guidelines provided in the Whole & Healthy Children Mentor training and Handbook, through Mission Houston, and the CSA Mentor Coordinator.
- I will participate in on-going learning through mentor training sessions during this school year, and in gatherings with the other Whole & Healthy Children mentors from my community when called by the CSA Mentor Coordinator.

My signature serves as my agreement to represent the Whole & Healthy Children initiative, and of my commitment for the 2009-2010 school year.

\_\_\_\_\_

**(Signature)**

**(Date)**

09/3/09