

Mentor2.0 General Information Sheet & Parent Training

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Imagine if every student at in high School had their own personal post-secondary counselor. Your student as the great opportunity to participate in the mentor2.0 program. As part of this program, your child will be “paired” with a pre-screened, trained mentor. The mentor will work with your child, in-person and online, to help him/her graduate from high school, decide on post-secondary life, and achieve life goals.

The mentor2.0 program is a partnership between Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh Brashear, Charleroi Area, & Cornell High School.

Purpose: The mentor2.0 program will teach students new skills and help prepare them for post-secondary success.

How the Program Works: The mentor2.0 program pairs students in one-to-one mentoring relationships with mentors who have been professionally screened and trained. Your child will be matched with a mentor of the same gender, based on career, academic and/or personal interests. During the school year (October/September-May), students will work together with their mentors on the following activities through high school graduation:

- **Classroom Instruction:** One day each week during a specific class, the Program Coordinator will work with the teacher to teach students a new skill and/or lesson.
- **Weekly Communication:** The students will write about what they learned in class each week and send it to their mentors over a secure and professionally-monitored online platform. The mentors will write back to the students before the next week’s classroom session. **Participants are prohibited from exchanging personal email addresses, phone numbers, and/or home addresses.**
- ***Monthly “Event”:** One evening each month (dates/times included below), the students will meet with their mentors for two hours at the High School. During this structured and supervised time, participants will work together on guided activities and projects to apply what they earned through the program. The assignments may include creating a resume, researching colleges, and discussing career opportunities. **Students will stay after school on “Event” days and be entitled to a FREE meal and bus transportation home. As the parent/guardian, you are welcome to attend any “Event” to meet your child’s volunteer/mentor.**

The Value of a Mentor: Mentors are not intended to substitute for the critical role of parents/

caregivers. A mentor is simply another caring adult presence in your child's life. They are dedicated people who can help encourage and inspire your child to achieve educational and life goals. Mentors can also help students perform well academically, discover hidden talents, acquire new skills, apply to college(s), receive internships and scholarships, and even earn good jobs.

Benefits of the Program: The mentor2.0 program offers the following benefits to students, partnering high school, and the surrounding community:

- Helps students achieve and use scholarships
- Designed to improve academic performance and social skills
- Connects high school students with valuable community resources, including mentors

Process: Your child will complete the online application, interview, and questionnaire in class. When the signed and completed parent/guardian permission form is returned, the Program Coordinator will assign a mentor to your child. Typically, we pair students with mentors based on preferences, similarities, and personalities. Before the relationship is created, the Program Coordinator will attempt to contact you to approve your child's mentor. If the Program Coordinator is unable to reach you after three attempts, they will be authorized to create the relationship. You will receive a letter following your child's first meeting with his/her mentor.

Parent/Guardian Partnership: As a parent/guardian, you can help to ensure mentor2.0 will be a positive experience for your child. Here are some guidelines and responsibilities you should follow:

- Allow your child to be an active participant in the mentoring program
- Abide by the policies and guidelines of Big Brothers Big Sisters and the School
- Complete and sign a Permission Form and return it to the School in a timely manner
- Participate in periodic conversations with the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator from Big Brothers Big Sisters will contact you twice per year by phone and an additional twice per year by mail. These interactions are opportunities for you to share your perceptions and feelings about the program.

Parent Training

This "training" document is intended to provide parents/guardians with additional details about the program, including rules and regulations. After reading through these materials, we hope that you will:

- 1) Better understand mentor2.0
- 2) Recognize your critical role in the program
- 3) Have your questions answered

Mentor 2.0 Eligibility Requirements: A student must meet the following eligibility requirements to participate in the program:

- Currently enrolled as a student in a participating mentor2.0 school
- Assigned to a mentor2.0 class
- Completed an online application, questionnaire, and in-person interview
- Is a "willing participant" – meaning that the student is:

- Able to participate in the screening and supervision processes with staff from Big Brothers Big Sisters and/or designated school personnel
- Available to participate in activities with his/her mentor on a regular and consistent basis through high school graduation (or as long as he/she remains a student at the participating mentor2.0 high school)

Ground Rules/BBBS Program Rules: The following rules will help keep everyone safe while ensuring a productive and rewarding experience for all:

- **In general, Mentors and Mentees are not permitted to meet off-site. They may only meet during authorized, professionally supervised sessions.**
 - Big Brothers Big Sisters may occasionally offer off-site events that are subject to approval by parents/guardians and the School. In such cases, the meetings will still be professionally supervised.
- **Mentors and Mentees are not permitted to network through social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).**
 - They are not permitted to “friend” one another on the social networking sites
 - Online exchanges may only occur over the secure mentor2.0 platform, where they will be closely monitored
 - *Due to COVID19 virtual audio/video meetings (including but not limited to Zoom, Google Meet, FaceTime) with BBBSPPGH staff, volunteer mentors, other youth mentees and other participants of the BBBSPPGH program may take place.
- **Confidentiality is very important.**
 - The Mentor will never identify your child by his/her last name
 - Sensitive program information will only be accessible to authorized personnel at Big Brothers Big Sisters, iMentor, and the participating high school.

Expectations for Mentoring Relationships & Relationship Development: In order for the mentoring relationships to be beneficial, the following expectations will be promoted:

- **24 Month Commitment.** We ask our Mentors to commit at least two full school years to their student and the program. Ideally, the relationship will last through high school graduation.
- **Regular Meetings.** In order for the relationship to grow, there must be regular meetings between the Mentor and Mentee. Mentors and Mentees should send weekly prompted emails to one another over the secure online platform and attend the monthly “Events” at the School.
- **Communication with BBBS.** Your child is required to meet with the Program Coordinator from Big Brothers Big Sisters at least every other month. Typically, this meeting will occur in class. The Mentor will also meet with the Program Coordinator every other month.
- **Be a Good Friend & Mentor.** Mentors and Mentees should listen to each other, have fun, and take time to get to know one another.
- **The Relationship.** All relationships have ups and downs. Relationships also do not happen by chance and take time to develop. It is important to keep this advice in mind throughout the mentoring process.

In general, mentoring relationships follow a 5 stage development model. It is important for you to understand the following stages and monitor the status of your child’s relationship:

Stage 1 – Honeymoon (until 4 months): The Mentor and student excitedly learn about each other during this introductory stage. They are generally happy with the match and only show their “good sides.” Neither participant expresses any expectations of the other. Both are “checking each other out” in regards to appearance, manners, expressions of interest, and values. During this time, your child may try to impress your Mentor or solicit their approval.

Stage 2 – Growth (4 months until one year): This is a critical time for relationship development. The Mentor and student begin to establish mutual trust and rapport through reliability and consistency. Boundaries and guidelines will be established so your child knows what is acceptable.

Stage 3 – Maturity (After one year): The relationship becomes more positive and realistic. Interactions and activities may become less formal and scripted.

Stage 4 – Letting Go: This is the beginning of the end – when the relationship nears its conclusion. Hopefully, your child will be graduating from high school with concrete plans for the future.

Stage 5 – Closure: If possible, it is extremely important for your child to meet with his/her Mentor one last time to say good bye and formally end the relationship.

What a Volunteer Mentor is and is not: A Mentor will help support your child in many ways, but it is important to understand that a Mentor is not a parent/guardian, financial support, peer, or therapist. Rather, a Mentor should be treated like a friend, resource, support system, confidante, and role model. A quality Mentor will be open, dependable, patient, loyal, and fun.

The Importance of Professional Support: Big Brothers Big Sisters will work hard to support your child and his/her mentoring relationship. Our ultimate goal is to ensure a safe, positive, and rewarding experience for all participants. Professional staff members play an important role throughout this process.

Your child will be assigned to a Program Coordinator who will provide ongoing support to him/her and the relationship. The Program Coordinator will meet one-on-one with your child every other month during the regular mentor2.0 class period. This is an opportunity for your child to talk about his/her mentoring relationship and share any concerns. The Program Coordinator will also speak regularly with you (the parent/guardian) and the Mentor as well as classroom teachers and guidance counselors. This professional staff member will serve as the link between you (the parent/guardian), your child, the Mentor, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the School.

Big Brothers Big Sisters offers this comprehensive professional support system to ensure child safety, facilitate healthy relationship development, and promote positive educational, social, and emotional outcomes for your child.

Child Safety/Youth Protection: Child safety is the top priority of Big Brothers Big Sisters. We help to ensure your child’s safety and well-being throughout their program participation by:

- Requiring all Mentors to complete a thorough enrollment process, including in-person interviews, screenings, trainings, and background checks

- Administering child safety and child abuse prevention education programs to volunteers – as well as students
- Establishing ongoing professional interactions with every program participant to secure up-to-date information about safety issues and early warning signs of potential problems
- Monitoring the mentor2.0 online platform and reviewing emails from Mentors and students

The Closure Process: Similar to any relationship, there comes a time when your child’s mentoring relationship will end. This can occur for various reasons and under many different circumstances. For example, the student or Mentor might move away from the area or experience a major life change. However, we hope your child will reach a natural ending point when he/she graduates from high school. Regardless of the reason, the Program Coordinator will help to facilitate the final decision-making process and coordinate closure arrangements.