

You're a mentor, now what?

What you need to know to start out right

Sometimes mentors get frustrated when Scholars do not open up right away, don't return phone calls/texts, don't make significant progress, or "test" the relationship. Honoring commitments means not only showing up, but also leading the relationship to success and navigating through rough spots. The mentor, as the adult, will often have to take the lead on conversations, initiate phone calls/texts, set boundaries, and stick with the Scholar when times get tough or progress is slow. The benefits of mentoring may not be evident today but they will be noticed down the road.

Tips for effective communication:

- Ask open-ended questions
- Use body language that is open and not guarded
- Active listening
- Demonstrate empathy
- Avoid "prescriptive" communication
- Use prompts
- Speak with language with which you feel comfortable
- Don't be afraid of silence

Sample texts:

I'm SO proud of you! Now go get 'em!
Good luck on your test! You got this!
That was a really great conversation
Remember don't take life too seriously
Smile! Have fun! Keep life in perspective!
Just be YOU!
No matter what I'll always be here to talk
I'm so proud of how hard you've been working I
know it's going to pay off!
Remember you are BRAVER than you believe,
STRONGER than you imagine and SMARTER
than you think

Texting Matters

1. Punctuation causes a lot of miscommunication and reading between the lines. Avoid using periods, they make your meaning unclear. Avoid using ellipsis, they leave too much for your Scholar to try to figure out. Exclamation points are fine. This is the preferred form of punctuation and usually comes across as positive. Safest bet: no punctuation at all or mirror the way your Scholar texts you.
2. Know your emojis, and use them sparingly – and appropriately.
3. Bitmoji is good! While overusing emojis is bad, it turns out that kids think it's good, and funny, to use a Bitmoji. A Bitmoji is an app that lets you create a cartoon character/avatar that looks like you, and you can add it in text messages.
4. Timing is everything. Texting kids on the weekend may lower your chance of a quick response. Worst days to text is Thursday to Saturday. Some students look at the text and don't respond right away but then forget to go back to it. It's okay to text again a day or so later.