

Mentor Manual



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Welcome to the VOICE Mentor Program!

You have chosen to become an important part of the life of a student in the Issaquah School District. As a VOICE Mentor, you are volunteering your time to become a friend, guide, and advocate for a young person.

Mentoring requires a personal commitment of time and energy for the benefit of a child. Mentoring can also be a rewarding experience for the adult volunteer, providing a sense of service to the community and personal accomplishment in being a positive role model for a student in need of guidance and encouragement.

Thank you for making this choice. We are happy you're here. This handbook will help you learn about mentoring, how our program works, and guide you in your role of making a difference in a child's life.



What is a Mentor?

The word “mentor” has its root in Greek mythology meaning “wise advisor” or “trusted counselor.”

A VOICE mentor is a caring, consistent and reliable community member who takes time to be a friend to a young person. She/he is an active listener and positive role model who provides guidance and understanding to a young person. Our mentors meet with their mentees once a week for up to an hour for a minimum of 1 school year. We encourage mentors to maintain their relationships with their mentees from year to year.

VOICE mentors develop meaningful relationships with students to help them succeed in school and in life. Mentors are not meant to take the role of parent/guardian or teacher. They are not disciplinarians or decision-makers for the student.

A mentor’s primary role is to spend time with the student to build trust and develop a positive, supportive relationship that will nurture and encourage the student in their social interactions, emotional learning and academic endeavors.

A Mentor Is:

- A friend
- An advocate
- Accepting
- Present and reliable
- A confidant
- A positive role model
- A nurturer of possibilities
- A good communicator
- Fun
- Patient

A Mentor Is NOT:

- A parent/guardian
- A disciplinarian
- An authority
- A gift giver
- A social worker
- A counselor
- A savior
- A proselytizer

Why Does a Student Need a Mentor?

Students are referred to VOICE by a teacher, counselor, or other school professional. There are many reasons that a student may need a mentor. School staff who work closely with the student will always take the lead in making that determination.

Our student mentees might be youth who are falling behind in academics, dealing with anxiety, bullying, or limited parental/guardian support. There might be cultural or social challenges and any of these might result in loneliness, inappropriate classroom behaviors, poor grades or truancy.

Some children may be coping with the stress and trauma associated with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are experiences in childhood that are unhappy, unpleasant and even hurtful. Some factors that are considered to be ACEs include poor health or injury of a family member, death of a significant person, unstable housing or food insecurity, divorce, cultural transition/language barriers, military deployment of a parent or guardian, or substance abuse, among others.

Mentoring is considered a positive intervention that can be instrumental in building resilience to help children work through these experiences. For the student, being in a mentoring relationship can provide the trust and encouragement needed to help build confidence and learn social and emotional skills that will help the student thrive and improve their academic achievement.

Every student is unique, with his/her own set of personal experiences and circumstances. By focusing on building and maintaining a positive, supportive relationship, a mentor can show the young person that there is someone who cares about them and makes them feel like they matter. Mentoring can help promote positive social attitudes and relationships and help students feel connected to school.



VOICE Mentor Program
Mission, Vision and Program Structure

VOICE MISSION AND VISION

Vision

All students will develop a meaningful connection with a caring community member to reach their potential and achieve success in life.

Mission

VOICE connects students who need social, emotional or academic support with dedicated mentors who foster hope, resilience and self-advocacy in our students.

VOICE ROLES

VOICE Program Specialist

- Manages VOICE in their respective schools
- Recruits, screens and trains new mentors from the local community
- Collaborates with school district staff to deliver program services by working directly with the Site Coordinator to support mentors in their match relationships
- Provides ongoing communication, support and follow-up training opportunities for mentor volunteers
- Maintains all mentor records in secure online database
- Stays up to date on mentoring best practices and research in the mentoring field

Site Coordinator (SC) at each school

- Typically, a Dean, School Counselor or other professional/certificated staff who has been chosen for the role
- Works with school staff to refer eligible students to the program
- Is responsible for making the mentor-student match
- Coordinates meeting time and space for mentor sessions
- Provides mentor with information about student that is pertinent to mentorship
- Manages matches onsite by providing ongoing communication and support for students and mentors

VOICE Mentor Team

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The Mentoring Process: How Matches are Made

Students (mentees) are referred to the program by teachers, counselors, or other school staff. As part of this process, an online Mentee Referral Form is completed and submitted to the Site Coordinator (SC). This form provides information about the student that is important to making an appropriate mentor match.

Once this form is received, the SC will contact the parent/guardian of the student to explain the program and its benefits. The parent/guardian must complete and sign a permission form allowing the student to participate before a match can be made. It can sometimes take several days to secure signed parental/guardian consent. Our goal is to match an available mentor with a student in as timely a fashion as possible.

The SC will prioritize making mentor matches based on several considerations:

- Student need
- Common interests between mentor and student
- Scheduling preferences and availability
- Special abilities of a mentor that meet a specific need of the student such as fluency in a language other than English.
- Cultural/ethnic/gender similarities between the mentor and student

When a mentor is identified to be matched with a student, the school SC will contact the mentor to set up a time for an initial meeting at the school. This meeting will include the mentor, school SC, and the referring teacher (if applicable). School staff will sometimes provide information that will assist the mentor in successfully working one-to-one with the student. All VOICE mentors are expected to keep student information confidential.

Contact information for the teacher (for elementary students) and office staff will be given to the mentor in case of last-minute changes to availability. School building policies and procedures for volunteers will be reviewed with the mentor and a school calendar will be shared with the mentor along with specific testing dates that might conflict with mentor/student meetings.

When the initial meeting is completed, the mentor may be introduced to the student as a simple “meet and greet” directly after the initial meeting. Or the mentor may be introduced to the student and taken to the meeting space to begin the first match meeting on the regular weekly meeting day.

Where and when does mentoring take place?

Mentor sessions take place on the same day and time each week. The SC, along with the teacher (if the student is in elementary school), will determine the best time for the student to meet with their mentor each week.

The SC will identify a meeting place on the school campus such as the library or a student work area near the classroom. A regular routine for meeting your mentee will be arranged by the SC and/or teacher in order to minimize class interruptions.

Mentors are encouraged to check their mentee's attendance on meeting days by contacting the school office. Mentors are also expected to contact the SC and school office if unable to meet with a mentee.

What happens during the weekly meetings?

Mentors are encouraged to spend the first several meetings getting to know their mentee. Use simple questions to find commonalities such as favorite color, foods, etc. Get to know what your mentee likes to do outside of school as well as in school. Be willing to share things about yourself as well.

Mentor Resources

The VOICE Activity Bag

Each school has a VOICE Activity Bag which includes games and activities to help get to know your mentee. Your SC will let you know where to find the bag.



In the initial meeting with the SC and teacher, you may be given suggestions for age-appropriate activities. You may find it is more comfortable to carry on a conversation while playing a game or other interactive activity (depending on the age level). In addition, the teacher may give you a worksheet, assignment or a book to share with your mentee.

Please note that teacher involvement is typically greater at the elementary level. In the secondary grades, students have multiple teachers. The Site Coordinator will help coordinate communication with teachers as appropriate. Mentors may work on specific projects or issues with their older mentees.

The most important thing to remember when mentoring is that building a strong relationship can be the key to success. Focus on your mentee's strengths, show you are interested, be positive and build on his/her accomplishments.

What support is available?

It can take time to build a strong relationship with a mentee and it is not unusual to encounter struggles along the way.

- **The VOICE team and the Site Coordinator (SC)** are available to provide support throughout your mentorship. Feel free to ask for a meeting when you feel the need.
- **The Classroom Teacher** can also be a valuable resource. Many mentors at the elementary school level may check in with the teacher by email after each meeting. Other mentors choose to check in on an as needed basis or when they may need guidance on activity ideas for the sessions.

- **Mentor Discussion Forums** are held regularly as an opportunity to talk through issues with fellow mentors.
- **Large Group Training Sessions** are held throughout the year covering a range of mentoring topics and providing tools and strategies for improving mentoring outcomes.
- **The VOICE Mentor Program website (found on the Issaquah School District website) and Facebook Group** are both great ways to keep in touch with the program and other mentors.

If you feel like your match isn't working out, contact the VOICE team and relay your concerns. Every attempt will be made to resolve any issues. If this attempt is not successful, the VOICE team and the SC will end the match thoughtfully, making sure that both you and your mentee feel positive about the experience. Re-matching you with a new mentee is an option and will be considered if appropriate.

Mentor Responsibilities

Be consistent

Mentoring is a commitment. The best way to build a strong, trusting relationship is to be reliable and be present. You are expected to communicate schedule changes in advance (if possible) to the teacher, SC, and student (when appropriate).

Build trust

Get to know your mentee – become a friend and advocate to be counted on. Show that you are a willing listener by being present and available – turn off your cellphone to minimize distractions. You are expected to maintain an open mind and be nonjudgmental. Your communication should be open and honest.

Be respectful

The student you mentor may not have a similar background to yours. You are expected to respect and embrace any individual differences. Being a mentor is a learning experience – mentees learn new things from their mentors and you can learn new things from your mentee.

Respect teachers and staff at your mentee's school; honor their time and commitment to all students as well as to your mentee. School districts have specific policies and procedures in place to ensure a safe learning environment for their students. As a community volunteer going into a school, you are expected to follow school procedures and adhere to school policies at all times.

Maintain confidentiality

As your mentorship progresses, you may become aware of confidential information about your mentee and/or her/his family. Mentors are required to maintain student/family confidentiality. The exception to this is if you are concerned for your mentee's well-being, safety or the safety of others. You are required to share this information with the Site Coordinator. (See Mandatory Reporting in the Policy section).

Maintain boundaries

Mentors must follow the boundaries set by the VOICE Mentor program:

- Ensure that you are meeting with the mentee in an area in view of others, with the door open.
- Do not meet or communicate with your mentee outside of school hours or away from the school's campus. This includes texting and emailing.
- Do not post or share information or photographs of your mentee on any social media and do not follow your mentee on any social media platforms.
- Do not bring food/treats or gifts to your mentee. This goes against District policy and changes the dynamic of your relationship. Food or gifts of any kind are prohibited. VOICE does provide a selection of books (provided by the Issaquah School District) during the year for you to give to your mentee.
- Be discreet when sharing your own personal information with your mentee.
- Keep in mind that if you have social media accounts that are open to public viewing, they can be seen and accessed by anyone, including your mentee and their family. We recommend that you make your accounts private as an added measure.

Be positive

You are expected to be a positive person for your mentee; show enthusiasm and interest during your meetings. Your attitude will influence your mentee's behavior. Be flexible and creative if your mentee seems indifferent or detached.

Communicate

Keep the lines of communication between the VOICE team and/or the Site Coordinator and you open at all times. VOICE program staff are here to support you in your mentoring. Communicate questions or concerns about match activities to the Site Coordinator. This includes concerns about mentee behavior during your match meetings.

HAVE FUN!

Smile, laugh and have fun being a mentor. A good sense of humor can be a powerful tool in working with a student.



MATCH CLOSURE

Matches temporarily close at the end of each school year and in the fall. For this type of closure, the final meeting of the school year should be a positive send-off. We encourage you to review with your mentee how the year went, focusing on what both of you have learned. Talk about summer plans and how you will be returning in the fall to meet with them again.

In some cases, mentees may be transitioning into middle school or high school. Talk with your mentee about how things will be different at the new school and let the student and the Site Coordinator know whether or not you will be following them in this transition. ***Because of the strong impact relationship consistency has on mentored youth, we encourage our mentors to follow their mentee to their new school whenever possible and as circumstances dictate.***

Matches do sometimes end prematurely for a variety of reasons: your mentee moves away, your life circumstances change and you cannot continue, or perhaps the match just did not work out. A match that does not work out is a rare occurrence, but it can happen. Please let your VOICE specialist and SC know as soon as possible if your match will end prematurely. Five weeks' advance notice is the gold standard. This will allow time to follow best practices for closing a match and help the mentee in the transition. The VOICE team and SC will give you guidance on the steps you should take as your mentorship comes to a close.



Ending on a positive note is critical for both the mentee and the mentor.

APPENDIX A: VOICE Job Description

VOICE Mentor volunteers work with students in schools to provide social/emotional and academic support.

- Commitment:**
- One hour per week during the school day for the duration of the school year
 - Day & time assignment determined by mutual availability of mentor and student
- Mentor Role:**
- Support a student through an ongoing, positive one-to-one relationship.
 - Serve as a positive role model, advocate and friend.
 - Strive for mutual trust and respect.
 - Build self-esteem, a positive attitude toward learning and a motivation to achieve.
 - Help set student goals and work toward accomplishing them.
 - Be an active, non-judgmental listener
 - Be accepting and respectful of individual differences
- Responsibilities:**
- Be dependable and consistent in meeting time commitments
 - Maintain student specific confidentiality at all times.
 - Communicate with site coordinator/teacher regarding academic and emotional needs of the student as well as progress/concerns and match issues, as needed.
 - Report any student concerns to school staff and/or VOICE Director.
 - Coordinate with staff to support academic and emotional needs of student.
 - Advise staff of changes in schedule or availability.
 - Adhere to all ISD policies and procedures, and those of the VOICE program.
- Training:**
- Attend new volunteer training and orientation session with VOICE staff.
 - Complete the required documents of the Issaquah School District
Adults - VOLUNTEER APPLICATION SYSTEM DOCUMENTS
<https://issaquahvolunteers.hrmpplus.net/>
High school student mentors – Hold Harmless Release form and Volunteer Agreement
 - Attend VOICE training workshops throughout the year, schedule permitting.
 - Attend mentor discussion forums throughout year, schedule permitting.
- Benefits:**
- Opportunity to positively influence a student’s life, and enhance his/her school experience.
 - Opportunity to support our local schools and strengthen the community by connecting with our youth and letting them know their voice counts.

APPENDIX B: VOICE Mentor Agreement

1. I understand that seeing my mentee consistently is one of the most important things I can do as a mentor; therefore, I will see my student mentee once per week (or as scheduled in agreement with the mentee and site coordinator).
2. I understand that all contact with my mentee is restricted to in-person interaction, on school grounds and during school hours. School hours 1) are defined as office closing time, not bell time, 2) must take place in an open area where staff are present or nearby, and 3) conclude on or before office closure (this may extend to Library hours, but needs to be arranged on a case-by-case basis).
3. Per Issaquah School District Regulation 5253, I will not connect/communicate with my mentee on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, email, via text or any forms of social media.
4. I understand that the relationship between my mentee and me is a one-to-one mentoring and professional relationship.
5. I understand that I may hear personal information about my mentee and his/her/their family members. Due to The State of Washington's Child Abuse Reporting Law (RCW 26.44.030), I know it is mandatory for me to immediately report suspected child abuse, or cases where the mentee reports harm to self or others, to the Site Coordinator at the school where I am mentoring.
6. I will maintain regular contact with the Site Coordinator by responding to calls and emails.
7. If a problem arises in my match relationship, I will discuss it only with the Site Coordinator at the school where I mentor and/or VOICE personnel, keeping in mind the Mandatory Reporting requirement stated in Bullet 5.
8. If my place of employment, residence, Email or telephone number changes, I will notify the Site Coordinator and/or my VOICE team contact immediately.
9. I understand that I will be asked to participate in program evaluation through electronic surveys.
10. I will adhere to school procedure for match visits, including verifying my mentee's attendance on match visit days and contacting the school if I am unable to meet with my mentee.

Mentor Name (please print): _____

Mentor Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying

Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying – Regulation 3207

The District is committed to a safe and civil educational environment for all students that is free from harassment, intimidation or bullying. Complaints alleging harassment, intimidation or bullying of parents, guardians or volunteers arising out of District programs will be processed via Regulation 4011.

A. Harassment / Intimidation / Bullying Defined

“Harassment, Intimidation or bullying” is defined for purposes of this Regulation as any intentional written message or image – including those that are electronically transmitted, verbal or physical act including but not limited to one shown to be motivated by race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or mental or physical disability, or other distinguishing characteristics, when the act:

- a. Physically harms a student or damages the student’s property; or
- b. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student’s education (for example, substantially interfering with classroom performance, attendance, or patten of tardiness)
or
- c. Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
- d. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school?

Staff Intervention

All Staff members shall intervene when witnessing or receiving reports of harassment intimidation or bullying. Minor incidents that staff can resolve immediately, or incidents that do not meet the definition of harassment, intimidation or bullying, may require no further action under this procedure.

APPENDIX D: Mandatory Reporting Requirement

When school personnel (classified and certified staff) has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect, he/she shall report such incident, or cause a report to be made to proper law enforcement agency of the department as provided in RCW 26.44.0.40

When possible, the report should be made in the presence of the principal. The principal shall, in all cases, be immediately informed of reports to law enforcement or the department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)/Children's Protective Services (CPS).

This report must be made at the first opportunity, but in no case longer than forty-eight (48) hours after there is reasonable cause to believe that the child has suffered abuse or neglect. The report must include the identity of the accused if known.