



Student/Partner  
A L L I A N C E

# **STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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<h2>My S/PA Contact Information</h2>
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My S/PA In-School Coordinator is \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

My S/PA Staff Contact is **Ms. Margaret Momber**  
[@mmomber@studentpartneralliance.org](mailto:mmomber@studentpartneralliance.org) OR  
Phone Number: (973)-379-5878

**My Partner or Sponsor's Information:**

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

**My Mentor's Information:**

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

**S/PA Staff:**

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Find us online @ [www.studentpartneralliance.org](http://www.studentpartneralliance.org)

Student Handbook @ [www.studentpartneralliance.org/for-students](http://www.studentpartneralliance.org/for-students)

## What is Student/Partner Alliance or “S/PA”?



We are an organization that was started in 1993 to assist inner-city high school students with scholarships and mentoring. Tom Cash, a local businessman, learned that many inner-city high school students in Newark, Jersey City, Elizabeth, and some of the surrounding towns were not attending high school and therefore not achieving a high school diploma. He wanted to do something about it. After some research, he learned that there were strong urban private schools offering great educations that prepared their students to get into college. Many inner city families did not have enough money to afford these schools for their kids, so Tom decided to support 10 students at a private school in Jersey City. When his friends found out what he was doing, some of them wanted to support students too. For the past 20+ years, Tom, his friends, and other concerned individuals have supported over 1,600 students who have graduated and gone on to college. Some of those students have returned to help support students in the program today!

★ *Our mission is to support inner-city high school students in New Jersey with tuition assistance and mentoring to increase their chances for college acceptances and college scholarships to help them lead successful and productive lives.* ★

### What can you expect from us?

A **four-year scholarship** of a minimum of \$1,500 per year (It is not necessary to re-apply every year.)

A **mentoring relationship** with your Partner or Mentor.

**S/PA-organized events** each school year. Some of these include:

- A breakfast with your Mentor at your school
- A fall service day at the Community FoodBank of NJ
- A holiday party in January (at a S/PA affiliated school)
- A spring event (i.e., Greater Newark Conservancy)

## S/PA'S PROGRAM

### What we expect from you:

#### YOUR FAMILY'S FINANCIAL OBLIGATION

Your parent/s or guardian/s must *pay all fees not covered by your scholarship* such as transportation, books, uniforms, activity fees, graduation fees, and the portion of your high school tuition not covered by scholarships. This is often very hard for your parent/s or guardians, so please work hard! They are working hard!!

If you are having trouble meeting your financial commitment or are confused by statements that you are receiving regarding your payment plan:

- contact your S/PA School Coordinator or the Financial Officer at your school.
- DO NOT ASK YOUR SPONSOR/PARTNER OR MENTOR FOR HELP REGARDING YOUR FINANCIAL COMMITMENT. If it is brought to our attention that you have asked your sponsor/partner/mentor for additional money, you may be dismissed from the S/PA program.

#### YOUR OBLIGATIONS

As a member of Student/Partner Alliance, you have two very important obligations to your supporters!

### ★ Work hard at school★

### ★ Establish and maintain a relationship with your Partner/Mentor ★

A note about your academics: It is not unusual for you to have difficulty with one or more classes, especially the first year. If you are having difficulty in any subject, ***DON'T WAIT! ASK FOR HELP IMMEDIATELY*** from your teacher or your *guidance counselor!* We will review your report cards very carefully including tardiness, absences, and teachers' comments. We expect you to work as hard at school as your supporters have to earn the money to pay for your scholarship.

#### YOUR SUPPORTERS

Once you are admitted into our program, we agree to support you during your four years at high school, without the need for yearly reapplication, as long as you work hard and remain at the school where you were admitted. The scholarship you receive from S/PA will be financed by either an individual, a Corporation, or a Foundation.



If you have been matched with a “**Partner**”, he/she will provide you with financial support and will be your “**Mentor**”. A “**Mentor**” is like a friend or a coach.

If you have been matched with a “**Sponsor**” (this could be an individual, a Corporation or Foundation), you will receive scholarship money, but no mentoring *from your sponsor*. In this case, we will work to match you with a “**Mentor**”. A “**Mentor**” is like a friend or a coach.

The individuals supporting you have been promised a relationship with their student. This is something that makes our program unique! The money they are investing is in *an individual* – and that would be YOU!

Therefore, we expect that you will show them your respect and appreciation by responding to their communications.

**Partner** = Tuition Assistance (\$) + Mentoring → STUDENT

OR

**Mentor** = Mentoring

**Sponsor** = Tuition Assistance (\$)



# MENTOR

## What is a Mentor?

If you have been assigned a “Partner”, he/she also functions as your “Mentor”. Therefore, all of the below information pertains to your relationship with a “Partner” as well.

*A mentor is a trusted guide or coach.*

The word comes from a Greek myth in which Odysseus entrusted Mentor, a friend, with the education of his son Telemachus while he was away fighting the Trojan War. Today, over 2,000 years after Homer wrote the story of Odysseus, a Mentor is known to be *someone who shares knowledge and wisdom.*

## What a Mentor is:

- A trusted guide and friend
- Someone who will listen to you
- Someone who will help you explore new opportunities
- Someone who will have good ideas about how to deal with difficult situations
- Someone who supports you
- A Coach
- An Advisor

## What a Mentor is *not*:

- A parent
- Your peer or classmate
- An “ATM” (remember never to ask for money!!)
- Someone to constantly unload upon!

Your Mentor is a person with thoughts and feelings just like you. It is important to remember that and to be aware of how you treat your Mentor. Think about his/her feelings and notice the efforts he/she makes on your behalf. More than anything, your Mentor wants to get to know you, so communication is key!

**★ All successful relationships are built on a foundation of trust and confidence, where both people feel safe to share their goals and concerns ★**

## ★YOUR FIRST MEETING WITH YOUR MENTOR ★



your notes.

You might be a bit nervous; that's normal – your Mentor is probably nervous too! As a new student in the program you are about to enter into a rewarding experience. This mentoring relationship will bring you many exciting opportunities to gain new skills and knowledge. During your first meeting, you will have a chance to begin getting to know your new Mentor. By the time this first meeting ends, make sure that you *exchange necessary contact information and discuss how you both would like to communicate*. Use the first page of this booklet to make

As with all new relationships, you may find moments when things feel awkward, even scary, until you have had a chance to find out what the other person is all about. After a while, this will pass and the time you spend together will feel more natural and comfortable. In the meantime, here are some suggestions that may make it easier to start the relationship during that *first* meeting:

- \*\*\*\* **Share something that you have done during the summer.**
- \*\*\*\* **Ask your Mentor about what he or she has done during the summer.**
- \*\*\*\* **Talk about school, what courses you are taking, what you like, sports, music, plays, or anything else you are involved in.**
- \*\*\*\* **Talk about what you might like to do together.**
- \*\*\*\* **Ask a question about a goal or interest that you have.**

## STUDENT-MENTOR RELATIONSHIP

### TIP 1. COMMUNICATE

- Determine which method (email, phone, text) is mutually convenient
- Determine days/times that are best for speaking
- Share your overall interests, goals, concerns
- Share academic information
  - Successes
  - Concerns
  - Solutions
- Share non-academic information, too!
  - Sports
  - School activities
  - Church or Social activities

**\* If an S/PA event is coming up, ask if he/she will be there \***

**\* Ask questions if you are not sure what was meant; *especially when making plans*\***



**TIP 2. RESPECT YOUR PARTNER/MENTOR'S TIME**

- Attend all meetings that you've agreed to go to
- Confirm meetings in advance of the time
- Be on time (or even a little early!)
- Be certain to cancel well BEFORE the meeting, if you cannot make it

**TIP 3. INFORM YOUR PARTNER IF YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION CHANGES**

- New mailing or email address
- New cell or home phone number

**TIP 4. SAY THANK YOU**

- Verbally, with a handshake and eye contact
- Write an email or handwritten note
- Remember your Sponsor, Partner and/or Mentor on the holidays

**TIP 5. KEEP YOUR PARENTS INFORMED**

- Tell them if your partner/mentor will be attending a S/PA event
- Tell them about your conversations with your partner/mentor
- Introduce them to your partner/mentor

**TIP 6. BE OPEN-MINDED**

- Partners/mentors can be a great help
  - Brainstorming about solutions to problems
  - Listening to a practiced speech
  - Looking over a project
  - Giving job and college hints/suggestions

**★ TIP 7. CALL or EMAIL THE S/PA OFFICE ★**

- If you have been unable to reach your partner
- If your contact information changes
- **If you are having any difficulty with your partner/mentor**

**Things You Can Discuss With Your Mentor:**

- Your goals. Your dreams. Your objectives.
- What culture are you from?
- What are your favorite activities?
- What were you like when you were my age?
- What did you have to do to prepare for and get your job?
- What can this mentoring relationship do for me?
- What were your favorite subjects in school?
- What kind of (movies, books, music) do you like?
- How do you think I should handle this situation (describe a situation or event)?
- What do you think are the most important skills to have for a career in (add your area of interest)?
- What do you think about (add current news event)?
- How do I raise the subject of (add subject) with my parents?
- Do you know any funny stories?

- What was the most important decision in your life?
- Where can I find out more about (add your area of interest)?
- What would you do differently if you could?
- What would you like to talk about?
- Who mentored you?
- How do you spend your time?

**Add some questions of your own here:**

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**★ THINGS YOU MAY NOT ASK YOUR MENTOR: ★**

- How much money do you earn?
- Can you lend me some money?
- Will you buy me.....?

**Boundaries of the Relationship and Confidentiality:**

Your relationship with your mentor is built on trust and confidentiality. This is *really important* in any relationship. You should feel free to share any information you like with your mentor. Your mentor will know that anything you share with him or her is private between the two of you and will not tell anyone else.

THERE ARE SOME LIMITS TO CONFIDENTIALITY. If you tell your partner/mentor information about physical or sexual abuse, or self-harm or violence against another person, the partner/mentor is *obligated by law* to report this information. This doesn't mean that you should not share this information. Your own welfare is of top importance and your mentor wants the very best for you.

***If at any time you feel that your “Mentor” or “Partner” is not behaving appropriately with you, please call the S/PA office right away at 973-379-5878 and ask for Margaret.***



## S/PA EVENTS

We expect you to communicate with your partner/mentor, as you would with any concerned person who is helping you to succeed. To help make this possible, we host several events throughout the year for S/PA students to come together; often with your partner/mentor. We have outlined our policies, rules and some “tips” below, for making your experience as part of S/PA a truly rewarding one for you and your partner/mentor!



Each year, S/PA will host several events for you and your partner

- The **Student/Partner Breakfasts** (at your school in Sept/Oct)
- The **Food Bank** Event (at the Community FoodBank in Hillside in the fall)
- The **Holiday Party** (at a host school in early January)
- Spring events** such as sports activities, Nature Conservancy, etc.

In order to attend a S/PA hosted event that *does not* occur at your school, you must turn in a **Permission Slip** (pg 14)

For legal reasons, if you arrive at a S/PA event un-chaperoned and/or without a permission slip, we will not be able to admit you. Even if your partner is unable to attend such an event, we encourage you and one of your parents to join us (See **Permission Slip** page 14).

Your school may invite your partner/ mentor to various school activities that you and he/she can attend together, (example: school sporting events, school play, talent show, honors assembly, band concert, etc.). If you are participating in an extracurricular activity at school or through another community-based organization, **invite your partner** to come and support you!



**★YOU ARE A LIFETIME MEMBER OF S/PA★**

Similar to your high school, after you graduate, S/PA will consider you an “alumni” of the program. Please stay in touch with us throughout your college years and beyond! You can use our Facebook page or LinkedIn. After you graduate from college, you might consider sponsoring a student of your own or becoming a mentor to a student at your school.

Please notify S/PA promptly in the event of *any change in your e mail, home or cell phone or address* so that we can reach you. Contact us at: (973) 379-5878 or Email us at: [mmomber@studentpartneralliance.org](mailto:mmomber@studentpartneralliance.org)



**★Call S/PA staff to discuss any problems or concerns you may have - We are here, and happy to help! ★**  
**[mmomber@studentpartneralliance.org](mailto:mmomber@studentpartneralliance.org) or (973) 379-5878**

# APPENDIX 1

## SAMPLES AND SUGGESTIONS

### EASY WAYS OF SHOWING APPRECIATION

When someone does something nice for you, what do you do? You say “thank you!” of course. When it’s your partner/mentor, there are lots of ways to do that. Here are a few you can use once in a while and you can add your own:

- ★ Write a note or make a thank-you card or send a text message
- ★ Take a photo and send it to him/her; or forward a photo to him/her digitally
- ★ Call him/her and say “thanks”
- ★ Send a “thank you” e-mail or text

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

### SAMPLE THANK YOU NOTE

*Date*

*Dear Mr. and Mrs.....Or Adam & Jennifer, (Whatever your partner/mentor has asked you to call him/her)*

*Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to attend St. Vincent’s High School. I cannot tell you how happy I am here – it would have never been possible without you! So far this year has been an awesome one – the teachers are so caring, the building is so clean and I have already made some great friends. I know that this is the school for me and I am going to continue to work my hardest in school to make you, my parents and myself proud.*

*I hope you have a Happy Thanksgiving and I look forward to seeing you soon!*

*Thank you again!*

*Sincerely, Your Student,  
Jane Smith*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

### SAMPLE PHONE MESSAGE

Often, you will call your partner at home or work and he or she will not be there to receive the call. If you get your partner’s voicemail or answering machine, DO NOT HANG UP!!! As embarrassing as it may be, leave your partner a message!!

Remember to speak *clearly and slowly*, leaving your name, phone number, and the reason for your call. Use the following sample phone message as a “script” when calling your own partner:

*Hi \_\_\_\_\_(your partner’s first name)! This is \_\_\_\_\_(your name)!  
I was just calling to say hello. I hope you are well!!! Please call me back when you are able. My phone number is \_\_\_\_\_(your phone number).  
Thanks! Bye!*

## APPENDIX 2



### **Student/Partner Alliance Social Media Policy**

This policy governs the publication of and commentary on social media by users the Student/Partner Alliance social media sites. For the purposes of this policy, “Social Media” means any website, application or other online destination that hosts user-submitted content, including networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, blogs and micro-blogs such as Twitter, location services such as Foursquare, review sharing such as Yelp, and content sharing sites such as YouTube or Flickr. Student/Partner Alliance reserves the right to remove any posts from these sites that are contrary to our policy.

Student/Partner Alliance encourages the public to engage in Social Media while being respectful of the work we do with young people in our community. To ensure the appropriate use of Social Media, our guidelines are as follows:

#### **Protecting the privacy of the children we serve**

- Be aware that Student/Partner Alliance’s policy is to gain approval from parents before posting photographs of students engaged in agency activities/events on Social Media platforms. We do not permit the tagging of photos by users unless in an administrative capacity.

#### **Do Not Divulge Confidential Information**

- Confidential information should not be shared on any Social Media sites. Confidential information includes identifying information about students, families, partners, sponsors, mentors, and volunteers.

#### **Setting up Social Media**

- No new Social Media sites or accounts for Student/Partner Alliance or S/PA or using these names may be created.

#### **Respect copyright laws**

- It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others including Student/Partner Alliance’s own copyrights and brands.

#### **Improper use of language and behavior**

Student/Partner Alliance has a zero tolerance policy for any type of profanity, harassment, and bullying on our social media sites.

## APPENDIX 3



### Student/Partner Alliance (S/PA) EVENT PERMISSION SLIP

Dear S/PA Parent or Guardian,

We are having a Student/Partner Alliance event for students, and which also may include parents, sponsors, teachers and/or school officials. It is therefore necessary for your child to be accompanied by an adult, whether that is the sponsor, partner, mentor, parent, or both. Please call your child's sponsor, partner or mentor to see if he or she is able to attend. If your child arrives at the event unchaperoned, for legal reasons, we will not be able to admit him/her.

Date of Event (MM/DD/YY): \_\_\_\_\_

Event will begin at: \_\_\_\_\_

Event will end at: \_\_\_\_\_

Your written permission is necessary for your child to participate in this activity. A phone call cannot substitute for this written form. Please sign this form and have your child return it to the S/PA Coordinator at his/her school, or directly to our office at:  
P.O. Box 566, Millburn, NJ 07041.

\_\_\_\_\_  
I/We the parent(s) or guardian(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ (STUDENT NAME)  
permit my child to participate in the above named SPA event.

I/We hereby release and hold harmless \_\_\_\_\_ (SCHOOL NAME),  
Student /Partner Alliance and any and all of its employees, partners and volunteers from  
any and all liability for any injury or harm that may result to my child as a result of this  
event, including in connection with transportation to or from the event.

If your child has a medical reason that prevents his or her participation in this event, then  
he or she is excused.

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date (MM/DD/YY) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 4



### STUDENT/PARTNER ALLIANCE (S/PA) DRIVING and ACTIVITY PERMISSION SLIP

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear S/PA Parent or Guardian,

If you would like your son or daughter to accompany his or her S/PA Partner or Mentor in connection with S/PA sponsored events or other shared activities (each, an "Activity"), we kindly request your permission.

By signing below, you grant your permission for your son or daughter to accompany \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in any Activity and to be driven by such person in connection with any such Activity during the \_\_\_\_\_ school year. You also acknowledge that neither S/PA nor any S/PA Partner or Mentor is required to provide transportation to and from Activities for your child and that your release below is consideration for any such transportation.

I/We hereby release and hold harmless Student/Partner Alliance and any and all of its employees and volunteers, including my child's Partner and/or Mentor, from any and all liability for any injury or other harm arising to my child as a result of participation in any Activity, including the transportation to and/or from any Activity.

My Child's Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

My Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_