



Student/Partner

A L L I A N C E



2023-2024

Mentor
Handbook

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Welcome



Dear Partners and Mentors,

Welcome to Student/Partner Alliance! We are thrilled and very grateful that you have agreed to become part of our important mission to improve the lives of high school students in our area through the gift of a quality education and your time, advice, and encouragement. We hope that you will enjoy getting to know your student and find your experience rewarding and fun.

Our students face many daily challenges, including financial, educational and social challenges. Your support can make a big difference in the student's high school career or daily challenges.

This handbook will provide you with information about student mentoring through Student/Partner Alliance (S/PA). We are always ready to answer your questions and very much appreciate feedback, so please do not hesitate to call our office with any concerns, comments or questions.

We wish you a fun and rewarding experience with your student and with Student/Partner Alliance.

With much appreciation,

Margaret Momber & the S/PA team

About S/PA

In the late 1980s, Tom Cash informally started what would become called Student/Partner Alliance by providing ten students in Jersey City with tuition assistance at St. Mary's High School. Cash recognized that students attending top quality, college preparatory high schools in their neighborhoods were more prepared to qualify for college admission and scholarships.

Student/Partner Alliance was formally incorporated in 1993, and since that time, has provided 2350 scholarships and mentoring support to students from low-income areas in NJ. Mentoring is an effective way to provide guidance and support to students.



Our students

- Well over 50% are from single parent homes
 - Average income is lower than \$45,000
 - 100% of S/PA scholarship recipients have gained admission to college, post-secondary schooling, or armed forces in the past 10 years
- Represent a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds and religions



Our schools

- 5 main schools located in Newark, Jersey City, and Montclair
- College-preparatory, community-based, structured, committed, nurturing

Students who have mentors are...

- 52% less likely to skip a day of class
- 46% less likely to start to use illegal drugs
- 93% of mentees try harder, improve their attitude about school, and benefit from an improved self- concept



S/PA Mentoring Program

Structure & Events

Student/Partner Alliance

S/PA is affiliated with 5 urban private schools that offer a solid, college-preparatory education in a structured, caring environment. While each school is unique, they all produce an almost 100% graduation and college acceptance rate. S/PA coordinators at each school and S/PA staff work closely together to bring the best student/partner/mentor experience to all involved through a carefully constructed program.

Program

At the beginning of each academic year, incoming students attend a S/PA orientation with their parent(s)/guardian, to learn about S/PA's program and the benefits of having a mentor. The students will also learn about the events that S/PA has arranged for them to meet with their mentors. Each fall, a mentor training workshop is offered for mentors, so that our mentors can learn about the role of a mentor, how to be an effective mentor, S/PA events, their student mentees and expectations of the mentoring relationship. Legal and ethical considerations are discussed in this valuable training.

Events

We have planned in-person mentor/mentee get togethers at the students' schools in the Fall and will be planning additional events in-person and virtually throughout the school year. We welcome your suggestions for future events.

What is a Mentor?

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
- A coach
- An advisor
- Consistent and dependable
- A positive role model
- Someone who always puts your safety and well-being first

A mentor is not:

- A parent
- A peer
- An “ATM” (students are never allowed to ask their supporters for money)
- Someone to constantly unload
- on A taxi-service
- A therapist
- A tutor

Stages of a Mentor Relationship

Stage 1: Getting acquainted

- Like all relationships, the beginning phase can be awkward, that is normal!
- Learn the mentee's style of communication and your best way to stay in contact

Communication tips for stage 1:

- Ask open-ended questions
- Balance the sharing of information by also talking about yourself
- Do not push topics that seem difficult

Stage 3: Real Mentoring

- Trust has been established
- You have a solid relationship that cannot be taken off track
- Mentors can help mentees set short and long-term goals

Communication tips for stage 3:

- Longstanding honesty
- Mutual acceptance- do not try to change who your mentee is

Stage 2: Challenging & Trust

- It is normal for your mentee to start to test the boundaries of the relationship
- many mentees come from difficult home situations, so they may try to act out against adults or sabotage the situation

Communication tips for stage 2:

- Be consistent
- Honesty, respect & reliability are key
- Disclose personal experiences or feelings when appropriate






Stage 4: Redefinition

- While the formal relationship through S/PA comes to a close, many mentors and mentees choose to continue their relationship and to remain in each others lives

The Developmental Relationship Framework

The Search Institute has created a framework chart outlining how developmental relationships influence young individuals. They state, “Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives.

Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.” Search Institute has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people’s lives.

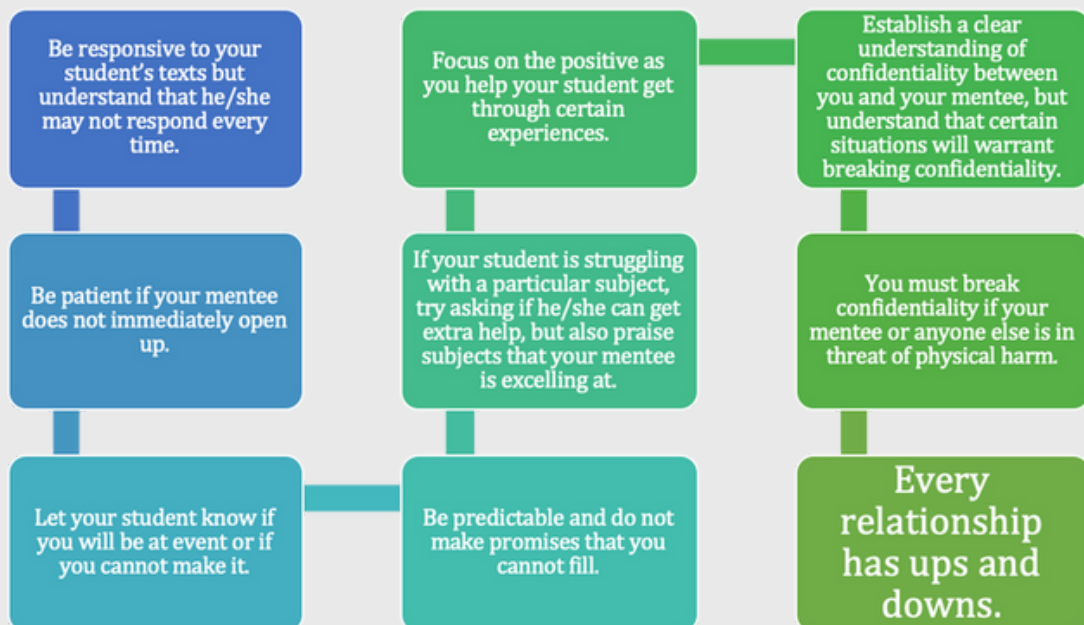
	Elements	Actions	Definitions
	Express Care Show me that I matter to you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be dependable.....Be someone I can trust. • Listen.....Really pay attention when we are together. • Believe in me.....Make me feel known and valued. • Be warm.....Show me you enjoy being with me. • Encourage.....Praise me for my efforts and achievements. 	
	Challenge Growth Push me to keep getting better.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect my best.....Expect me to live up to my potential. • Stretch.....Push me to go further. • Hold me accountable.....Insist I take responsibility for my actions. • Reflect on failures.....Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks. 	
	Provide Support Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigate.....Guide me through hard situations and systems. • Empower.....Build my confidence to take charge of my life. • Advocate.....Stand up for me when I need it. • Set boundaries.....Put limits in place that keep me on track. 	
	Share Power Treat me with respect and give me a say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect me.....Take me seriously and treat me fairly. • Include me.....Involve me in decisions that affect me. • Collaborate.....Work with me to solve problems and reach goals. • Let me lead.....Create opportunities for me to take action and lead. 	
	Expand Possibilities Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspire.....Inspire me to see possibilities for my future. • Broaden horizons.....Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places. • Connect.....Introduce me to people who can help me grow. 	
<p>NOTE: Relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, with each person giving and receiving. So each person in a strong relationship both engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, this framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.</p>			
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Building a Relationship Takes Time

Allow your relationship to develop gradually, but focus on being an attentive listener. The first two years of your relationship should be about listening, getting to know each other, and building trust. Learning to trust is a gradual process that will not start on day one. Communication may be touch and go in the early years, but the most important thing is to be consistent. Showing up at S/PA events, sporting events, or the school play will demonstrate to your student that you are committed to developing a strong relationship.

Do not view mentoring as a way to change your mentee. Successful mentoring relationships rely on supporting youth development and growth as a friend.

Do not expect to have an instant bond, but with time your student will be able to trust you and depend on you. If your mentee is slow to bond, it is likely due to previous experiences; trust is gradually built as the relationship develops.



Reach Out

As your mentee enters junior and senior year, the testing period of the relationship is usually over and your mentee will typically become more engaged and committed to the relationship. You can help establish goals for the future, help your mentee evaluate potential colleges, or brainstorm about possible college essay topics.

From time to time, mentee/mentor matches are not a perfect fit due to outstanding circumstances. If you are experiencing difficulties, contact S/PA or an experienced mentor for possible suggestions on how to improve the relationship. S/PA staff is always available for any questions or issues.



Qualities of a Successful Mentor

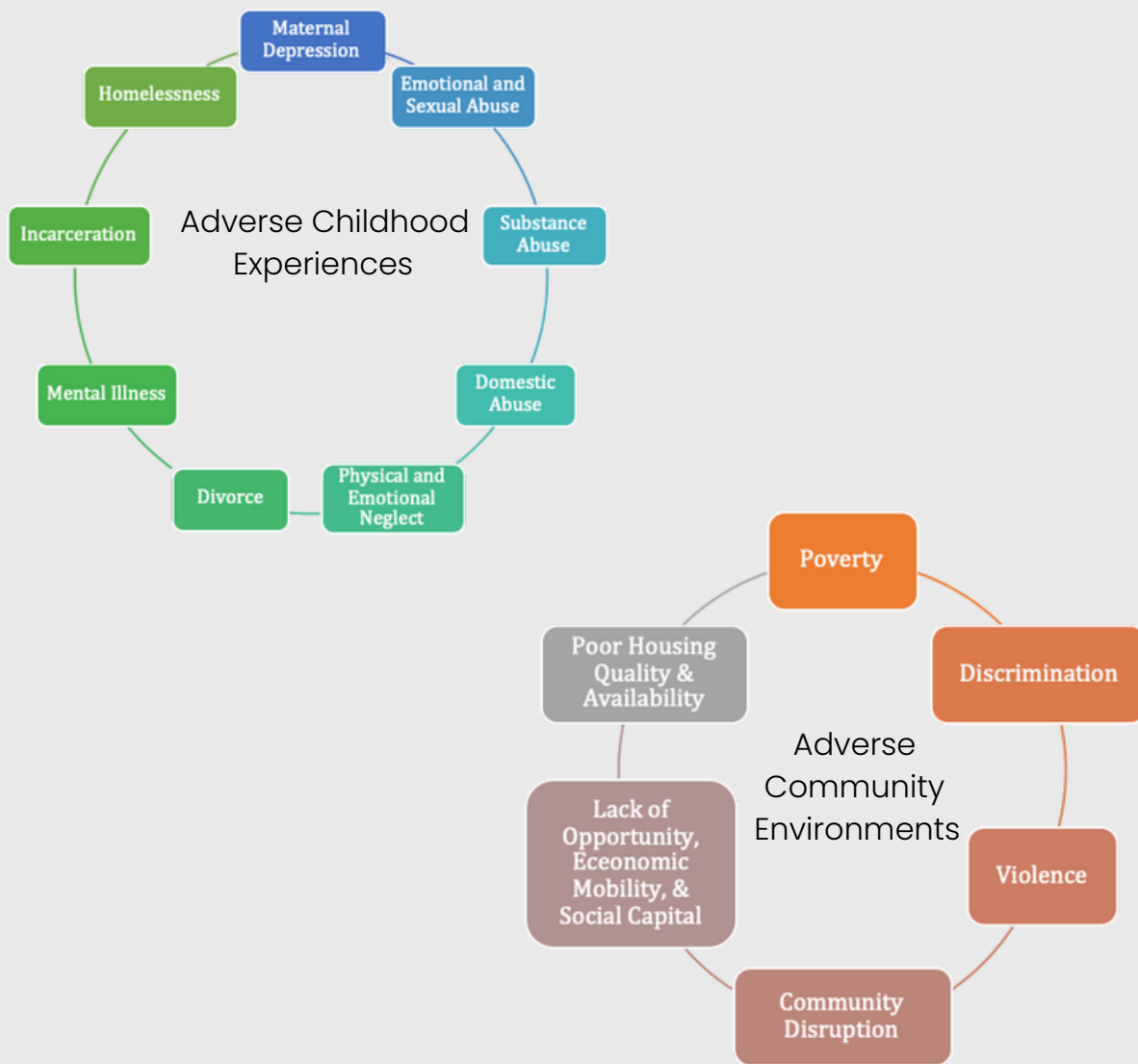


1. Be a friend.
2. Have realistic goals and expectations.
3. Have fun with each other.
4. Be positive – help your mentee develop self- esteem and self-confidence.
5. Allow your mentee to control what you talk about – The communication patterns you establish early on will be key to the relationship’s development over time. Do not push your mentee to discuss things that she/he does not want to talk about.
6. Listen – An effective listener will listen without judgment to make it clear that you care and are empathetic.
7. Respect your mentee’s privacy and trust.
8. Be reliable.
9. When giving advice, focus on the solutions.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

What is an ACE?

Stressful or traumatic events that occur before the age of 18. They trigger unique stress response in the body that disrupts ordinary child development.



*Data taken from the "Adverse Childhood Experiences: Opportunities to Prevent, Protect Against, and Heal from the Effects of ACEs in New Jersey" Report by the by The New Jersey Funders ACEs Collaborative.

ACEs (cont.)

Three Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families

1. Support responsive relationships for children and adults
2. Strengthen core life skills (life emotional regulation and executive function)
3. Reduce sources of stress in lives of children and families



Student/Partner Alliance Procedure for the Mandatory Reporting of Child Neglect & Abuse

How & when to report child abuse/neglect:

In New Jersey, any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or acts of abuse should immediately report this information to the State Central Registry (SCR).

If the child is in immediate danger, call 911 as well as 1-877 NJ ABUSE (1- 877-652-2873).

A concerned caller does not need proof to report an allegation of child abuse and can make the report anonymously.

Source: State of New Jersey, Department of Children and Families (<https://www.nj.gov/dcf/reporting/how/>)

Please feel free to email S/PA at any time to discuss at mmomber@studentpartneralliance.org.

Code of Ethics

1. All Trustees, Partners, Mentors, (collectively, volunteers) and staff shall exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal integrity.
2. All volunteers and staff shall provide an environment that is free from harassment.
3. All volunteers and staff shall not take advantage of any counseling, supervisory and/or authoritative relationship for their own benefit.
4. All volunteers and staff shall not abuse or neglect a minor or an adult. All volunteers and staff shall share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with the Executive Director of S/PA, Margaret Momber at mmomber@studentpartneralliance.org.
5. All volunteers and staff shall adhere to the requirements of the laws of the State of New Jersey regarding the reporting of any suspected abuse of a minor.
6. If the child is in immediate danger, and it is not possible to contact the S/PA office to discuss, please follow the prescribed procedure according to the laws of the State of New Jersey, stated above. If there is no immediate danger, you may contact the staff to discuss.

*S/PA gratefully acknowledges Student/Sponsor Partner, New York City; and The New Jersey Funders ACEs Collaborative, Patrick Fennell, MENTOR – The National Mentoring Partnership; The Archdiocese of Newark, NJ, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson & Union Counties; The Search Institute; and Yvonne Bryant; for their ideas and materials which we have used in this handbook.

Frequently Asked Questions

How should I first initiate contact?

We have planned in-person breakfasts and lunches at the schools your mentee attends for October. We encourage you to meet your mentee at this event as an in-person meeting is easiest for all. If you can't attend the in-person event, please let us know and we will discuss an alternative.

How often should I be in contact with my mentee?

S/PA recommends that you text, email, call, or video chat your mentee at least twice a month.

What should I do if my mentee never returns my texts/emails/calls?

Building a rapport is essential when working with youth. They may be hesitant at first as they are being asked to talk with a stranger. It is important to use the in-person events to build trust and rapport. Ask about your mentee's interests. You can discuss your common interests but also let them tell you about their different interests. Share information about yourself and your different interests so your mentee feels more comfortable sharing with you. It will make your interactions feel more like a conversation and less like an interview. Once you've built rapport with your mentee, you will have better luck getting them to engage with you. It is also important that you ask your mentee how they prefer to stay in touch. Many may not like talking on the phone or they may not check their email often, texting maybe the best way to stay in touch.

What should I do if I cannot reach my mentee?

If you have repeatedly tried to reach your mentee and without success, contact the S/PA staff and we can reach out to the school.

FAQs (cont.)

What should I do if my mentee does not show up or is constantly late for an in-person or virtual planned event?

If your mentee is constantly late to in-person or virtual events, reach out to check in. They may have a good reason for not being able to attend. In the future, ask them to let you or someone else know prior to the event that they can't attend. If you cannot reach them, let S/PA staff know and we will reach out to their school or parent/guardian to check in on them.

What should I do if my mentee is not doing well in school?

If your mentee is not doing well in school, have a conversation with them about what they feel is going on. You can help them identify resources that can help improve their grades such as tutoring or after-school help. Give them praise in areas they are doing well in but also in their effort to seek help and improve grades.

What are S/PA's policies on connecting through social media?

We discourage mentors from connecting with their mentees or their mentee's family on social media

What should I do if something serious happens?

If you feel as though the safety and wellbeing of a youth is in imminent danger, please report it and then let S/PA staff know.

NJ Abuse: 1-877 NJ ABUSE (1-877-652-2873)

Suicide Prevention Hotline: 988

If you have non-emergency concerns, please reach out to S/PA staff.