

RAISING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE MENTOR TRAINING MANUAL



Motivating Students to Perform Well in School

Mission Statement

Raising Academic Performance (RAP) is dedicated to helping students succeed by identifying those in need and providing them with support through trained volunteer mentors. Our goal is to empower students to improve academically, build stronger social skills, and enhance family relationships.

RAP is a 501c (3) nonprofit organization.

Raising Academic Performance
P.O. Box 353
Bellville, Texas 77418

The Story of RAP: Raising Academic Performance, Inc.

A Vision Becomes a Mission

In the spring of 1995, six dedicated Austin County women—Janet Butler, Pat Dalberg, Mary Emerson, Janet Frey, Barbara Levine, and Polly Sefcik—came together with a shared vision: to support the youth of their community. Their idea became a mission when Bellville High School principal Wayne Alexander appealed to the group for help in addressing the growing dropout rate. From this call to action, Raising Academic Performance, Inc. (RAP) was born.

Responding to Urgent Needs

At the time, approximately 20% of students in the area were considered at risk. Factors such as drug abuse, teen pregnancy, crime, poverty, and difficult emotional or educational backgrounds contributed to rising dropout numbers. RAP recognized that these students didn't just need tutoring—they needed guidance, motivation, and a caring adult presence.

Building the Program

The founders traveled across Texas to learn from successful school-based mentoring programs. After months of research and careful planning, they developed a model tailored to the needs of Austin County: pairing trained volunteers with students in one-on-one mentorships.

RAP officially launched in fall 1995 at Bellville High School with 19 mentors working with 21 students. By February 1996, the program expanded to Bellville Junior High, and by the following school year, RAP was active in Sealy ISD. In 1998, an advisory board was established to guide future growth, drawing support from across the county.

Programs and Community Impact

Since its founding, RAP has provided training sessions for mentors covering vital topics like self-esteem, depression, character development, and juvenile justice. In 1997, RAP held a successful community awareness event featuring professional football players and expert panelists focused on drug and alcohol prevention.

Over the years, RAP has partnered with Bellville General Hospital to present joint programs on youth gang awareness, substance abuse, and other important topics facing students today. These events have strengthened community understanding and involvement.

Continued Growth and Student Support

Through generous donations from individuals, local businesses, and community organizations, RAP has awarded academic scholarships to participating seniors and expanded its Extracurricular and Summer Activities program. The organization

also provides targeted tutoring for students needing additional academic support, boosting both their confidence and their performance.

Program Goals

The goals of the program are to:

- ☐ *Inspire Academic Success* - Motivate students to perform well in school and take pride in their education.
- ☐ *Build Positive Self-Image* - Encourage confidence and self-worth in every student.
- ☐ *Reduce Dropout Rates* - Support students at risk of leaving school and help keep them on track to graduate.
- ☐ *Offer Targeted Tutoring* - Provide paid tutors to assist students who meet specific academic qualifications.
- ☐ *Award Scholarships* - Recognize and support select students with scholarships to pursue further education.
- ☐ *Promote Awareness & Education* -Host programs that address critical issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, bullying, emotional well-being, and more.
- ☐ *Strengthen School-Community Connections* -Foster meaningful relationships between students, schools, mentors, and the wider community.

The Heart of RAP

At the center of RAP's success are its mentors. Their time, dedication, and compassion have helped countless students improve their grades, develop better habits, and believe in themselves. While RAP continues to grow and evolve, its core mission remains the same: to build relationships that change lives.

Why Be a Mentor?

Mentors play a powerful role in the lives of students who are struggling academically, socially, or emotionally. These students may lack a dependable adult presence outside of school—someone who listens without judgment, offers encouragement, and believes in them when they're unsure of themselves. Mentorship is not about fixing problems; it's about building relationships based on consistency, trust, and care. It's showing up, week after week, and offering steady support in a world that often feels unpredictable.

Common motivations for becoming a mentor:

- ☐ A desire to make a meaningful, immediate impact in a young person's life.
- ☐ A belief that every child deserves a champion and a source of

encouragement.

- ☐ An ability to recognize potential in students who may not yet see it in themselves.
- ☐ A commitment to giving back in a personal, lasting way.
- ☐ An understanding of how one supportive relationship can spark real change.

Mentorship can lead to profound outcomes:

- ☐ Students often gain confidence and begin to take school more seriously.
- ☐ Strong relationships with mentors help students build trust with others.
- ☐ Mentors offer guidance in setting and reaching personal and academic goals.
- ☐ The mentoring relationship can inspire greater resilience, hope, and motivation—on both sides.

Mentoring may not always be easy, but it is real, lasting, and deeply rewarding. Over time, many students begin to believe in their own potential—because someone else believed first.

What Steps Are Required to Become a Mentor?

- ☐ Attend a RAP mentor training session.
- ☐ Complete and sign the RAP Mentor Profile, Pledge, and Statement of Policy. These forms will be provided during the training session or sent by email.
- ☐ Give written permission for a Department of Public Safety criminal background check. An online link will be emailed to complete this step.

How Do Mentors Benefit?

Mentors:

- ☐ Experience the personal satisfaction of helping others.
- ☐ Build meaningful new friendships.
- ☐ Become more involved in your school and community.
- ☐ Discover the powerful difference one mentor can make.
- ☐ Give back in honor of those who mentored you.
- ☐ Leave a lasting impact—your guidance can live on in the heart and mind of a child.

What Are the Duties of a RAP Mentor?

RAP mentors play a vital role in guiding, encouraging, and inspiring students. Above all, mentors are good listeners—offering support, patience, and a genuine

presence in a student's life.

Mentors Commit to the Following:

- ☐ Participate in the program for at least one full school year
- ☐ Visit with their student once a week for 30 minutes to an hour during school hours
- ☐ Maintain confidentiality in all mentor-student conversations
- ☐ Collaborate with principals, teachers, counselors, and RAP Coordinators when needed
- ☐ Support students in sorting through challenges, goals, and ambitions
- ☐ Build confidence by focusing on each student's strengths, talents, and cultural identity
- ☐ Share knowledge and life experience, drawing from diverse backgrounds in age, profession, and education
- ☐ Help students set and achieve personal and academic goals
- ☐ Offer academic support in subjects like reading or math when able (tutors are also available)
- ☐ Introduce new opportunities and increase awareness of career paths
- ☐ Serve as positive role models, demonstrating dependability, perseverance, and care
- ☐ Help identify and nurture future leaders

Mentors don't have to be perfect—they just have to be present. They are guides, role models, and most importantly, friends.

Qualities of Successful Mentors

Great mentors bring more than time—they bring heart, perspective, and a willingness to walk alongside a student on their journey. Here are the key qualities that define a successful RAP mentor:

Commitment to the Relationship

- ☐ A willingness to be involved with a student for at least one year
- ☐ A genuine desire to help others grow, make tough decisions, and reach their full potential
- ☐ Patience and understanding that strong relationships take time and two-way communication
- ☐ Openness to learning about the student's world—including their interests, values, and experiences

- ☐ Willingness to grow personally through the mentoring relationship

Respect for Others

- ☐ Treats the student with dignity and mutual respect
- ☐ Builds trust by listening without judgment and offering space to explore thoughts and feelings
- ☐ Avoids rushing to give advice—guides through conversation, not control
- ☐ Understands that when people feel accepted, they're more open to learning and growth

Empathy Over Sympathy

- ☐ Can relate to struggles even without having lived the same experience
- ☐ Feels with the student, not sorry for them
- ☐ Provides a safe space for students to share personal challenges without fear of pity or dismissal

Optimism and Problem-Solving

- ☐ Sees possibilities as well as problems
- ☐ Helps students identify realistic, quality solutions while acknowledging real-life barriers
- ☐ Provides clarity when students feel overwhelmed, and offers a steady, thoughtful perspective

Successful mentors are not perfect—they're present, open, and compassionate. If you bring these qualities, you bring something truly powerful into a student's life.

Who Are the Student Participants?

RAP students come from diverse backgrounds and have a variety of needs. Here's what you should know:

- ☐ Students range from kindergarten through 12th grade and reflect a wide variety of personalities, interests, and circumstances.
- ☐ Counselors, teachers, and principals refer students they believe would benefit from additional support and encouragement.
- ☐ Participation in RAP is completely voluntary for both students and mentors.
- ☐ Mentors may request not to be matched with students in the same grade as their own child.
- ☐ While some students may be at risk of dropping out, many simply need someone to listen, provide guidance, or help them feel seen and supported.

What Are the Student's Responsibilities?

Students are expected to engage respectfully and consistently in the mentoring relationship:

- ☐ Agree to meet regularly with their mentor during school hours.
- ☐ Understand that mentors are not expected to give money, gifts, clothing, or provide transportation.
- ☐ Show respect and appropriate behavior, including using respectful language and following school conduct guidelines during visits.

What Are the Parent's Responsibilities?

Parents play an important role in supporting the mentoring relationship:

All communication with parents is managed through RAP or the school.

Parents must give written consent for their child to participate in the program.

Parents may not ask mentors for money, clothing, transportation, or personal favors of any kind.

RAP Mentor Contact Policy

It is the policy of Raising Academic Performance, Inc. (RAP) that all regular weekly meetings between a mentor and their student—referred to as “Regular Visits”—must take place on school grounds, during school hours, and in a location designated by the school administration.

Mentors may not meet with students outside of this setting—known as “Irregular Visits”—without prior written consent from the student’s parent or guardian. *While Irregular Visits are generally discouraged, there may be occasions when they are appropriate and beneficial for the student.*

When an Irregular Visit is Requested

If a mentor would like to schedule an Irregular Visit:

- ☐ The mentor must first notify their RAP Coordinator.
- ☐ If the coordinator agrees the visit is appropriate, a Parent/Guardian Consent Agreement will be sent to the student’s parent or guardian for signature.
- ☐ Once signed, the visit is officially recognized as part of the RAP program.
- ☐ One copy of the signed consent form will be kept on file, and one will be given to the parent/guardian.
- ☐ Mentors must strictly follow all terms outlined in the consent agreement and all applicable RAP policies. Whenever possible, Irregular Visits should be accompanied by another adult who is familiar with the RAP program.

Liability and Personal Responsibility

Any mentor who chooses to visit, counsel, or contact a current or former student outside the guidelines of this policy will be acting as a private individual, not as a representative of RAP. In doing so, the mentor assumes full personal responsibility and liability for their actions and will not be covered or supported by RAP in any way.

Intent of the Policy

This policy is designed to:

- ☐ Ensure one-on-one contact happens only in safe, structured, and approved environments.
- ☐ Allow for limited exceptions with the written approval of a student's parent or guardian.
- ☐ RAP does not restrict communication by phone. Mentors are also welcome to attend public events such as sports games, theater productions, or awards ceremonies. However, if a mentor intends to transport a student to or from any event, they must have prior written consent from the parent or guardian.

Contact with Parents/Guardians

Mentors should not visit or contact a student's home or parent/guardian directly, except for the sole purpose of obtaining consent for an Irregular Visit. If a mentor believes an exception is necessary, they must first seek approval from their RAP Coordinator. Such exceptions will only be granted if the mentor can clearly demonstrate that direct contact is essential to achieving a meaningful benefit for the student.

This restriction is in place to protect:

- ☐ The mentor's personal safety
- ☐ The confidentiality of the student-mentor relationship
- ☐ The organization's legal responsibility

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT AGREEMENT FOR IRREGULAR VISITS

Instructions for Mentors

If you have received approval from your RAP Coordinator to meet with your student off campus or attend an off-campus event together, please follow the steps below to complete the Parent/Guardian Consent Agreement and Authorization Form:

1. **Complete All Blanks on the Form**

Fill in all required information clearly and accurately.

2. Be Specific About the Purpose

Clearly describe the reason for the irregular visit. The more detailed, the better.

3. For Recurring Visits

If the visits are expected to occur regularly over a certain time period, be sure to specify the start and end dates as well as the location(s) of the visits if known.

4. For One-Time Visits

If the visit is a single event, enter the exact date, time, and location of the meeting.

5. Ask for Guidance if Needed

If you're unsure how to complete a section of the form, don't hesitate to ask your RAP Coordinator for help.

6. Review with Parent/Guardian

Discuss the details with the student's parent or guardian to ensure they understand and agree with what is written.

7. Sign and Distribute Copies

Have the parent or guardian sign two copies of the form. One copy should be given to them for their records, and the second should be returned to your RAP Coordinator for the official file.

Mentoring Guidelines

Confidentiality

- ☐ Maintaining a safe and trusting environment is essential.
- ☐ Let your student know that your conversations are confidential, unless someone is in danger.
- ☐ Explain that if they ever talk about hurting themselves or someone else, you are required to tell the school counselor.
"Friends don't let friends hurt themselves or others."
- ☐ Do not discuss the student or their personal issues with anyone outside of the RAP program.

Gifts and Promises

- ☐ Boundaries help build respectful, lasting relationships.
- ☐ Keep any gifts modest—no more than \$10–\$15 for birthdays or holidays.
- ☐ Do not bring food to school on a regular basis for your student or yourself.
- ☐ Do not give or loan money, except in rare situations (e.g., enough for a

phone call).

- ☐ Be cautious with promises. Only make ones you know you can keep.
- ☐ Be reliable. Show up consistently and on time to set a positive example.

Awareness & Sensitivity

- ☐ Approach each student with empathy, flexibility, and care.
- ☐ Keep an open mind and avoid judging a student's background or circumstances.
- ☐ Be respectful and sensitive to the student's emotions and experiences.
- ☐ Don't take it personally if the relationship doesn't click. Let your school coordinator know, and they can help reassign you to a better match.
- ☐ If your student misses two sessions in a row, notify your school coordinator or school director.
- ☐ If you notice your student may need basic necessities (e.g., a winter coat), let your coordinator know.
- ☐ Never give any kind of medication to a student.
- ☐ Before bringing a special treat (e.g., food), confirm with the school that your student does not have any allergies.

Following these simple but important guidelines helps protect the mentoring relationship and ensures a positive, supportive experience for both you and your student.

Confidentiality Exception – Suspected or Reported Abuse

How to Respond to Reports of Abuse

It can be difficult to find the right words when a child shares something painful—especially when it involves abuse. These guidelines apply to all forms of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect. They are intended to help you respond thoughtfully and responsibly.

Your Attitude Matters

- ☐ Stay calm and reassuring. Avoid showing shock or panic.
- ☐ Acknowledge your own feelings—fear, anger, helplessness—so they don't influence your response to the child.
- ☐ If you made a report, remind yourself (or ask someone to remind you) that reporting was the right thing to do.
- ☐ Let the child know you're glad they spoke up, that you're sorry they went through it, and that you know it's hard to talk about.

Your Behavior

- ☐ Assess immediate safety. If you believe the child is in danger at home, take them to the counselor or principal right away.
- ☐ Use the child's own words and speak at their pace. Avoid probing or leading questions.
- ☐ Stay non-judgmental and supportive throughout the conversation.

Your Conversation

- ☐ Reassure the child that it's okay to talk—even about painful things.
- ☐ Emphasize that what happened is not their fault, even if they were compliant or confused.
- ☐ Avoid criticizing the abuser harshly. The child may still care about them. Say something like, "What they did was wrong and they need help to change."
- ☐ Do not promise to keep it a secret. Instead, say that real friends seek help when someone is in danger.
- ☐ Let the child know you're there to listen and support them moving forward.

Your Legal Responsibility

- ☐ By law, you must report suspected abuse or neglect to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) at:
 - ☐  Texas Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400
 - ☐  Online: www.txabusehotline.org
- ☐ If it is an emergency, also call your local police department.

Next steps:

- ☐ Immediately inform the school principal or designated school official.
- ☐ Together, determine whether the situation legally requires a report to DFPS.
- ☐ If a report is made, be sure to document:
 - ☐ The name of the DFPS representative you spoke to
 - ☐ The case number
 - ☐ Request a follow-up status report
- ☐ Remember: Anyone reporting suspected abuse in good faith is legally protected from civil or criminal liability.

Documentation and Support

- ☐ Write down exactly what the child shared—do not investigate further. Your role is to report and support, not to interview or verify.
- ☐ Inform your RAP coordinator so they can stay informed and monitor the

student's well-being.

- ☐ Failure to report suspected abuse is a crime. Do not assume someone else will take responsibility—it is your duty to act in the child's best interest.
- ☐ If it is clearly a life-threatening emergency, call 911 immediately.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

- ☐ Your identity as a reporter is protected by law when you report in good faith.
- ☐ DFPS notifies law enforcement of all reports, but does not disclose your identity unless required by law or court order.
- ☐ You may file an anonymous report by phone, but be sure to request a case number as confirmation.

Being a safe, calm, and supportive adult can change a child's life. Trust your instincts, follow the law, and know that by reporting, you are helping a child begin the path to healing.

Meeting Your Student for the First Time

The first meeting with a student sets the tone for the entire mentoring relationship. It's a chance to build trust, spark curiosity, and show that this connection is something positive and meaningful. Approach it with warmth, patience, and genuine interest. A relaxed, friendly atmosphere helps the student feel safe and seen—and can turn a nervous introduction into the beginning of a powerful bond. Making that first meeting enjoyable lays the foundation for growth, confidence, and mutual respect.

Greeting Your Student

Upon arrival, sign in at the school office and follow all visitor protocols.

Greet your student with a warm smile and a firm handshake.

Introduce yourself clearly using the name you'd like to be called. Decide in advance how you'd like to be addressed.

Repeat both your name and your student's name a few times to help break the ice and remember it.

Stay relaxed—your calm presence helps set a positive tone.

Choosing a Safe Space to Talk

Check with school staff for approved areas to meet.

If the space is enclosed, leave the door partially open so that others can see inside.

Never place yourself in a compromising or private situation. Your safety—and the student's—is the priority.

Getting to Know Each Other

Share a little about yourself—your background, where you grew up, or what you enjoy doing. Keep it friendly and relatable, not overly formal or impressive.

Your student will likely connect more with personal stories than job titles.

Ask them about their siblings, favorite sports or music, hobbies, and any special events they're excited about.

Keep the conversation light and positive—focus on shared interests or fun topics to build comfort.

Setting Expectations Together

Use this first meeting to gently establish some ground rules:

Where and when you'll meet

What subjects or areas you'll be focusing on (if applicable)

How long each visit will be

How you'll communicate if either of you needs to cancel or reschedule

Final Notes

Be yourself. Be patient. Be positive.

Building a new friendship takes time—don't rush the connection.

Change is often slow and not always immediately visible. Trust the process.

Setting Goals With Your Student

Goal setting is a powerful tool in the mentor-student relationship because it gives direction, purpose, and a sense of achievement. Clear, realistic goals help students break down big dreams into manageable steps, building confidence with each success. Working together to set and reach goals not only strengthens the mentor-student bond—it also teaches valuable life skills like accountability, perseverance, and self-motivation. When a student sees progress, they begin to believe in their own potential.

Suggestions for Goal Setting

Helping your student set individual short- and long-term goals is one of the most effective ways to encourage growth and build confidence. Here are a few key principles to keep in mind when guiding this process:

Build Trust First

Before discussing goals, spend time building a foundation of trust and confidentiality.

Start with a simple, achievable goal to build momentum—something like:

"Complete all math homework assignments this week."

Make It a Collaborative Process

Involve the student fully. Goals should reflect their own desires and motivations—not just your ideas.

Act as a guide, helping them articulate their goal clearly and realistically.

The goal should always be their goal, not yours.

Be Specific and Measurable

Goals should be clearly defined and easy to measure.

For example: "Turn in all homework assignments on time next week," is better than "Do better in school."

Encourage Commitment

Goals should be realistic and not overly difficult.

Ask for a small commitment gesture like a handshake or verbal agreement to follow through.

If a goal isn't met, talk about why without judgment. Consider the following:

Was the goal too difficult or unrealistic?

Was the student truly involved in setting the goal?

Is the student afraid of success?

Many students who have faced failure begin to fear success, believing they don't deserve it or can't sustain it.

Setting achievable goals, celebrating progress, and learning from setbacks can help students build confidence, see their own potential, and begin to reframe their self-image in a positive way.

Stages of Mentoring

Mentoring is a journey that progresses through distinct stages. Understanding each stage can help you support your student more effectively and respond with confidence to challenges as they arise.

Stages of a Mentoring Relationship

Stage I: Building Trust and Developing Rapport

This is the foundation of your mentoring relationship. For some students, building trust is easy; for others, it takes time and patience.

Trust takes time.

It may take weeks—or even months—for a student to truly trust you. One of the best ways to build trust is to help them achieve something that matters to them

early on, such as completing assignments, studying for a test, or mastering a skill. Expect testing.

Many students have been let down by adults in the past. They may test your commitment by acting withdrawn, moody, or making unreasonable requests. Sometimes they may lie just to be liked. This behavior is often self-protection against disappointment.

Consistency builds trust.

Be reliable. Show up on time. Keep your promises. Predictability is key to building a stable relationship.

Set clear boundaries.

Explain upfront that your conversations are confidential—except when safety is at risk. Let them know that if they share something that suggests harm to themselves or others, you must seek help from a school counselor or trusted adult.

Be patient with slow progress.

Some students may resist opening up due to painful past experiences. If the relationship seems stalled or strained, contact your RAP school coordinator for guidance and support.

Stage II: Reaching Goals and Building the Relationship

As trust grows, so does the relationship. This is the stage where true mentoring begins.

The connection deepens.

With time, the relationship becomes more natural and progress becomes visible.

The student may begin to succeed academically, socially, or emotionally—often in small but meaningful ways.

Growth is gradual.

Celebrate the little victories. Real change takes time and continued encouragement.

Stage III: The Closing Process

If you or your student must leave the program, it's important to handle the transition with care.

Inform your RAP coordinator as soon as you know the relationship will end. They can help support both you and the student during the transition.

Have an honest conversation with your student.

Explain why the relationship is ending and invite them to share how they feel about it. Be open, kind, and supportive.

Focus on the positive.

Reflect on the progress you made together. Talk about your student's strengths and what lies ahead. If possible, plan a final meeting where you can say goodbye and do something meaningful.

Avoid misunderstandings.

Make sure the student knows the mentoring relationship didn't end because of anything they did wrong. Life changes—like moves, schedule conflicts, or illness—are understandable. But disappearing without explanation can be hurtful. Avoid making promises you can't keep.

Be cautious about promising to stay in touch forever. Instead, end the relationship with encouragement, closure, and hope for the future.

Successful Mentors

A successful mentor doesn't have to be perfect—they just have to show up, care, and keep the goal in sight. It's not about always having the right answers or never making mistakes. What matters most is the willingness to try, to listen, and to be a steady presence in a student's life. The consistency, encouragement, and belief a mentor brings can make all the difference, even on the days when things don't go exactly as planned.

A Successful Mentor...

- ☐ **Seeks help when needed.**

Mentors are not trained counselors. If you believe your student needs emotional or psychological support, contact the school counselor and your RAP coordinator immediately.

- ☐ **Offers consistent praise.**

Celebrate accomplishments—big or small. A “Good job!” can go a long way in building confidence, especially for students who rarely hear praise.

- ☐ **Looks for the good.**

Every child has positive traits. Even if a student is challenging, find and acknowledge their strengths.

- ☐ **Respects confidentiality.**

Trust is key. Keep conversations private unless safety is at risk.

- ☐ **Models manners and respect.**

Teach basic social skills—like how to greet adults, shake hands, say “thank you,” and write notes. These small lessons can make a big difference in school, work, and life.

- ☐ **Establishes clear boundaries.**

Set expectations and ground rules early. Be honest and consistent in upholding them.

- ☐ **Helps students build support networks.**

Talk about the importance of healthy relationships and how to access resources that can help them succeed.

☐ **Encourages extracurricular involvement.**

Inspire your student to participate in school and community activities such as sports, band, Scouts, 4-H, or clubs that match their interests.

☐ **Introduces new ideas and experiences.**

Share your love of books, music, art, culture, and travel. Expose your student to possibilities they may not have imagined

Mentors and Student Self-Esteem

Self-esteem plays a critical role in how children view themselves and interact with the world around them. A healthy sense of self-worth influences nearly every area of a student's life—from how they handle challenges to how they build relationships.

High Self-Esteem Helps Students:

- ☐ Build strong, positive relationships with others
- ☐ Approach new situations with confidence rather than fear
- ☐ Share, express emotions, and ask for help when needed
- ☐ Learn from failure rather than being defeated by it
- ☐ Recognize both their strengths and weaknesses realistically
- ☐ Stay motivated and persistent, even when things get tough
- ☐ Cope with stress and complex emotions in healthy ways
- ☐ Experience joy, laughter, and satisfaction in everyday life

Low Self-Esteem Holds Students Back:

- ☐ Leads to blaming others for setbacks rather than learning from mistakes
- ☐ Creates an unrealistic self-image, either inflated or overly critical
- ☐ Damages relationships due to poor communication or trust issues
- ☐ Makes them overly sensitive to criticism
- ☐ Causes them to give up easily when things become difficult
- ☐ Increases the likelihood of giving in to peer pressure
- ☐ Makes it harder to manage stress or emotional challenges

Why it matters:

When a student believes in their own worth, they are more likely to succeed, form healthy connections, and navigate life with resilience. As mentors, helping build a student's self-esteem is one of the most powerful and lasting gifts we can give.

Ways to Spend Time with Your Student

Building a strong relationship doesn't always mean having deep conversations—sometimes, it's as simple as spending quality time together doing activities that are fun, educational, or both!

Here are some enjoyable ways to support your student's learning:

- ☐ Play games that build focus and thinking skills, like chess, checkers, or card games.
- ☐ Boost vocabulary with word games and crossword puzzles.
- ☐ Practice math skills using flash cards or simple number games.
- ☐ Explore geography and space using globes, maps, or online tools like Google Earth and NASA's website.
- ☐ Ask if they need help with schoolwork. Offer support only in subjects you're comfortable with, and refer to a teacher or counselor if tutoring is needed.
- ☐ Help them stay organized by going through school supplies, notebooks, or calendars to track project due dates.

Improving Study Skills

Students who have struggled in school often feel discouraged and may show it through apathy, acting out, or trying to deflect attention. As a mentor, one of the best things you can do is build trust and encourage them gently as they work on their academic habits.

Start with a conversation

Ask if they're having trouble with any subjects. Really listen to their response, then reflect it back in your own words to show you understand. Let them know it's okay to feel frustrated and share your own experiences with tough classes or grades.

Encourage a consistent homework routine

- ☐ Suggest they choose a quiet, distraction-free space at home for doing schoolwork—away from the TV, phone, or loud music.
- ☐ Talk about setting a regular time for homework each day and how routines can help things feel more manageable.

Help them create a plan for assignments

Teach them how to tackle homework strategically:

- ☐ Start with what's due first.

- ☐ Break big assignments into smaller tasks.
- ☐ Begin studying for tests a few days in advance.
You can even share how you stay on top of responsibilities to give them real-life examples.

Celebrate the small wins

Even little improvements deserve big praise!

- ☐ Offer encouraging words often and sincerely.
- ☐ Ask how they feel they're doing and if they're okay with you checking in with their teachers.
- ☐ If they'd rather you didn't, respect that—it's important to build their confidence at their own pace.

Just for Fun!

- ☐ Spending time together just for fun is a great way to build trust and comfort:
- ☐ Try art activities like drawing, coloring, or simple crafts.
- ☐ Play board games or card games for enjoyment—not competition.
- ☐ Work on mazes or puzzles together.
- ☐ Attend a school play, concert, or game to show your support outside of one-on-one time.

Testing is a necessary part of education, but not all students excel in test-taking environments. Mentors can play an important role by helping students build confidence and develop strategies to improve their test-taking skills, making the process less stressful and more manageable.

Preparing for a Test

- ☐ Create a regular study routine in a quiet, distraction-free space.
- ☐ Keep track of assignments by writing them down in a planner or notebook.
- ☐ Break your notes into outlines or summaries to make them easier to review.
- ☐ Don't be afraid to ask your teacher questions if something isn't clear.
- ☐ Spend extra time on the topics you find most challenging.
- ☐ Always complete your homework—it helps reinforce what you've learned.

Share these 5 quick testing tips to help your student feel more confident before a big test:

- ☐ Get a good night's sleep – Being well-rested helps you think clearly and stay focused.
- ☐ Eat a healthy breakfast – Fuel your brain with something nutritious, like

eggs, fruit, or whole grains.

- ☐ Stay positive – Replace “I can’t do this” with “I’ll do my best.” A confident mindset makes a difference!
 - ☐ Read directions carefully – Don’t rush—take time to understand what each question is really asking.
 - ☐ Check your work – If time allows, go back and review your answers to catch simple mistakes.
-

About 5% of U.S. students ages 16 to 18 have dropped out—that’s over 2 million young people without a diploma or GED. Mentors help change that. With encouragement, academic support, and a steady, positive presence, mentors give students the confidence and motivation to keep going. When a student knows someone believes in them, they’re more likely to stay in school and succeed.

Why Do Teens Drop Out of School?

Teens cite a variety of reasons for leaving school before graduation. These typically fall into social, academic, or financial categories, and may include:

- ☐ Lack of family support or encouragement
- ☐ Peer pressure and negative influences from friends
- ☐ Bullying or feeling unsafe
- ☐ Poor academic performance or repeated failure
- ☐ Unaddressed special education needs
- ☐ Financial stress or the need to work
- ☐ Responsibility for younger siblings or family care
- ☐ Boredom or disinterest in the curriculum
- ☐ A belief that school is irrelevant to real life
- ☐ Excessive absences leading to a sense of being too far behind
- ☐ Substance abuse
- ☐ Physical or mental health issues, including depression
- ☐ Pregnancy
- ☐ Lack of structure and accountability

What You Can Do About It

Mentors play a key role in identifying concerns and offering guidance. Here's how you can help:

❑ **Address Serious Concerns Promptly**

If a student mentions bullying, substance use, depression, or pregnancy, encourage them to speak with a school counselor. If they refuse, you should alert the counselor yourself. These issues require professional intervention.

❑ **Tackle Financial Barriers**

Connect students and their families with the school counselor, who can refer them to financial aid resources, childcare assistance, or community support programs. Let your RAP school coordinator know—local organizations and churches may be able to help.

❑ **Support Academic Success**

Ask teachers or administrators about tutoring or special education services. RAP also provides tutors. If the student is bored or disconnected from coursework, encourage school staff to explore alternatives such as:

- o Career and technical education (CTE)
- o Work-study programs
- o Dual credit or advanced placement courses

❑ **Provide Positive Social Support**

Many students simply need someone to believe in them. Your encouragement, consistency, and interest can have a powerful effect. Be a trusted adult they can rely on—someone who listens, motivates, and helps them see a future worth working toward.

You can't fix everything, but your involvement can be the turning point in a student's life. A caring mentor truly can make a difference.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if my student doesn't like me or I'm having a difficult time with them?

Sometimes, a mentor-student relationship may not be the right fit due to personality differences. If this happens, let your RAP School Coordinator know. They will find another mentor for the student and match you with a different student.

What do I say if a student tells me they are having problems at home?

Avoid criticizing the parents, even if you disagree with their choices. If the issue involves abuse, follow the reporting procedures outlined earlier in the handbook.

For less serious concerns, ask open-ended questions like, “How does that make you feel?” or “How might you handle that?” while listening attentively. Consult the school counselor for guidance.

What should I do if my student doesn’t want to share a problem with a parent or teacher?

Listen carefully. Encourage the student to speak with the school counselor. If they’re still hesitant, speak to the counselor yourself for advice on how to proceed.

What should I do if friends ask me about mentoring?

Feel free to share your experience with the program, but avoid discussing specific students. Encourage your friend to complete the mentor training to learn more about the program’s structure and expectations.

What if someone asks a personal question about my student?

Let them know that confidentiality is a core value of mentoring and you are not able to discuss personal details about your student.

What should I do if my student asks a question I can’t answer?

It’s okay not to have all the answers. Offer to help find the answer together, or connect them with someone better equipped, like a teacher or counselor.

What if my student asks for my opinion on a sensitive moral or religious issue?

Remember, you're not a replacement for a parent. You can gently acknowledge that your opinion may differ from their family’s and ask how they feel. Keep your response simple and avoid going into detail. If you're unsure, talk to your RAP coordinator or a board member.

What if my student needs help with schoolwork?

Mentoring is not the same as tutoring, but you may help if you’re comfortable and both of you agree. If more support is needed, inform the school counselor or RAP coordinator. RAP offers tutors for students who qualify.

What if my student misbehaves during our time together?

You're not expected to be a disciplinarian, but you should set clear boundaries. Explain what behavior is acceptable and what the consequences will be. You might choose to report the behavior, move meetings to a more public location, or end the session early if needed. Be consistent and firm, and do not tolerate disrespectful behavior.

What if my student only gives “yes” or “no” answers?

Try asking open-ended questions that start with who, what, when, where, why, or how. If conversations remain difficult, speak with your RAP coordinator about topics that may be more engaging for the student.

What if my student seems uninterested in school or finishing their education?

Be patient. Try to understand the reason behind their disinterest. You can start discussions about careers, earnings, and the cost of living to help them see the importance of education. Stay supportive and non-judgmental while encouraging them to think about their future options and consequences.

Mentor Recap – Setting Boundaries and Expectations

- ❑ **Refrain from** giving any form of medication or vitamins—not even aspirin. (*The school has a zero-tolerance policy.*)
- ❑ **Avoid** discussing or proposing personal religious beliefs.
- ❑ **Support** the student without replacing the role of parent, teacher, or counselor.
- ❑ **Respect** school procedures and policies without offering criticism.
- ❑ **Maintain healthy boundaries** by encouraging the student to take responsibility rather than taking ownership of their problems.
- ❑ **Stay patient** and encouraging, even if progress is slower than expected.
- ❑ **Step away** from conversations that feel uncomfortable due to language or topic, and speak with the school coordinator if needed.
- ❑ **Embrace curiosity** and the process of learning together—sometimes listening is more valuable than having all the answers.
- ❑ **Understand** that a student leaving the program is not a reflection of failure.
- ❑ **Communicate promptly** with the school coordinator when concerns arise.

Mentoring is one of the most powerful ways to invest in the future. Every conversation, every moment of encouragement, and every visit tells a student, “You matter.” For a young person who’s struggling, that message can be life-changing. Sometimes, all it takes to help a student stay in school is knowing that someone is in their corner. Mentors make that possible. Step in, show up, and help change a life. Become a mentor.

