



**BOSTON
PARTNERS**
IN EDUCATION

Resources for
Independent Learning
Support Mentors

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Virtual Mentoring Resources

Video Calls

ILS mentors have a choice:

1. You can create a **Zoom** meeting link yourself, and share it with the student, proctor, and ILS Partnerships Manager. You can access a guide to using Zoom [here](#).
2. You can request the ILS Partnerships Manager create a **Google Meet** link that is shared with the mentor, the proctor, and the student. You can access a guide to using Google Meet [here](#).

Working With Students Virtually

MENTOR has a series of publications, guides, and recorded webinars on the transition to virtual mentoring. Boston Partners in Education highly recommends exploring this series of resources prior to your first virtual mentoring session.

- [Transitioning to Virtual Mentoring: Responses, Solutions and Practices](#)
- [Coronavirus Tips & Resources for Mentoring](#)
- [E-Mentoring Supplement to the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*](#)

Working With Students' Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

An ILS mentor's relationship with their mentee's parent, guardian, or caregiver can significantly impact student engagement, persistence, and motivation.

Understood has a variety of research-based and teacher-vetted resources available to prepare you for working with a student's family this year.

- [Family Engagement and Student Success: What the Research Says](#)
- [How to Begin Positive Relationships with Families: 8 Tips to Try](#)

Five Core Social Emotional Learning Competencies

Self-Awareness

Self-Awareness May Look Like:

- Identifying emotions
- Having an accurate self-perception
- Recognizing strengths
- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy

Self-Awareness May Sound Like:

- How am I feeling and why?
- When am I at my best?
- When do I feel angry?
- What kind of person do I want to be?
- What stresses me out?

Self-Management

Self-Management May Look Like:

- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Self-discipline
- Self-motivation
- Goal-setting
- Organizational skills

Self-Management May Sound Like:

- I need a break right now
- May I please have space? I am not ready to share.
- I think I need help with _____.
- I don't understand yet, but I will _____ to reach my goal.

Social Awareness

Social Awareness May Look Like:

- Perspective taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others

Social Awareness May Sound Like:

- I wonder how that made _____ feel?
- How would I feel if I were in that situation?
- What is _____ thinking?
- They seem sad right now. Maybe I should _____.

Relationship Skills

Relationship Skills May Look Like:

- Communication
- Social engagement
- Relationship building
- Teamwork

Relationship Skills May Sound Like:

- When you _____ it made me feel _____.
- Can you explain what you mean by that?
- I disagree with you because _____.
- What did you mean by _____?

Responsible Decision-Making

Responsible Decision-Making May Look Like:

- Identifying problems
- Analyzing situations
- Solving problems
- Evaluating
- Reflecting
- Ethical responsibility

Responsible Decision-Making May Sound Like:

- How will this impact others?
- Is it worth it?
- Why do I want to make this choice?
- Was this a strong choice

Tips for Troubleshooting Challenges with ILS Students

Low self-esteem in a student

Monitor your student's self-talk. Does your student say or feel like they can't do math sometimes? If so, you must talk to them about it and help them restate their problems in a positive way. Remind them that real learning comes from making mistakes and encourage them to push back negative thoughts and replace them with affirmations.

Give descriptive feedback

When your student makes progress on a problem or a concept. Don't just say, "good job!" Carefully explain the **ACTIONS** they took that led to their success. Was it their effort, perseverance, practice? Did they read the question carefully and try to draw a diagram to solve it? By reinforcing what they did well, you'll be building their ability to call on those skills again when things get tough.

Practice crucial concepts

Once you grasp what concepts your student(s) are struggling with, spend an extra few minutes of practice each day working on those concepts with them.

English Learners

Getting to Know Your Student

Where are they from? What brought them to the US? What languages do they speak? Have the student show you where they are from on a globe or a map. Have them teach you some words in their native language. Have them draw pictures of their hobbies and interests and work those into the weekly meetings.

Knowing how to navigate a textbook effectively

...is an important part of a student's ability to access new content. Conversely, being unable to read and use a textbook is a major obstacle for students when presented with new material and concepts across the curriculum, especially if a class calls for extended independent reading and review of the textbook. At the beginning of the school year, introduce students to the elements of their textbooks and how they can be used, such as:

- Cover
- Author
- Table of contents
- Glossary
- Index
- Appendices

Each time students begin using a new textbook, review the elements they have already learned and point out any different features or elements of the new book.

(Taken from: <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/teaching-ells-navigate-textbooks-effectively>)

Graphic organizers

...are a great tool to use when teaching English learners. Visual illustrations allow ELs to better understand the material while learning important vocabulary.

Example (can be tailored for content area) :

What do we know?	What do we want to find out?	What did we learn?

Another great resource: 12 Ways to Support English Learners in the Classroom

<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/supporting-esl-students-mainstream-classroom>

Student Engagement and Motivation

- Focus on progress and strategies rather than test scores and grades, this will serve the student well in the long run
- Remind the students that they have the choice to make the most out of this session or not, would they rather try to do this alone, or with their mentor and while they are here?
- Mentors gives choice in where to start with the worksheet
- Ask, would you like me to read the directions aloud to you?
- Bringing in real world examples that relate to them no matter the subject matter
- Mentor can say, “It’s a busy week but if you work hard now, then you have the weekend to have fun and feel good about your hard work.”

Communication Tips for Working with Students

For Working with Adolescents: Framing the Adolescent Experience

Pictures of the brain in action show that adolescents’ brains function differently from those of adults when making decisions and solving problems. That means that teens’ responses to situations are rooted in emotion rather than rationality. In other words, the last part of the brain to fully develop is one of the most important—it’s the area that gives people the ability to make rational decisions. Strategies to support healthy adolescent brain development:

- Encourage teens to have healthy lifestyles and offer opportunities for positive experiences
- Provide meaningful opportunities for teens to exercise logic and apply analytical and decision making skills to build up those brain functions
- Allow teens to make mistakes so that they can learn from them

(Taken from: <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-training/online-learning-modules/adolescent-development/index.html>)

For ALL Ages: Establishing a good relationship

Getting to know your student can provide an informal profile of your student which could help with future assignments. Direct questions like "what are your grades in English?" will put a student on the spot. Instead, ask about their school preferences, activities with friends and family, passions, and preoccupations. Also, you can seek teachers' suggestions concerning learning style preferences and personal needs, and for ideas on appropriate reading and/or STEM teaching materials.

If you accept the student as your guide, you can custom-design activities to raise self-confidence, bring meaning to the subject, and create a satisfying mentoring relationship.

Listen to your student

Be attentive, don't interrupt, and ask follow-up questions. Sometimes the less you talk, the more your student will ask what you think. When you do respond, try sharing with them instead of telling them what is correct or incorrect. Tell them about situations and challenges you faced when you were their age, and how you felt at the time.

Collaboration and flexibility

Choice and control are key issues with adolescent learners. Some decisions must clearly be yours, like what you can and cannot offer and start and end times. If you are prompt and dependable, those expectations will also extend to the student. Collaborate with the student to make a calendar of meetings and check that you both have a copy. Clear expectations on both sides will launch a relationship based on trust.

What are the "learning rhythms" of your student?

Learning rhythms will emerge during mentoring sessions. Does a student go strong for 15 minutes and then feel restless, or do they have a hard time settling down? After a few sessions, this knowledge can help structure your work time. A warm-up conversation about a news event, a school issue, or a recent movie can create a good beginning, especially if you convey personal interest. Good language skills are modeled when you ask questions, listen carefully, and give clear responses.

If your student's attention flags midway in the session, take a break and work on something fun. Sleepy? Asking about favorites often unleashes opinions (favorite movies, hangouts, or types of music). Following up with open-ended questions, such as "What do you like (or think) about...?" spurs students to use their language skills to support their opinions.

Giving students choice

Teenagers who have disengaged from learning often feel they lack control over their lives. This is especially true for students who have negative attitudes towards subjects. At the very least, allowing students some time during your meeting to have control and choice in reading material helps them relate to the topic and find pleasure in the written word.

Encourage independence and engagement

Your most difficult challenge may be to instill in your students a sense of their own power and autonomy. Many discouraged students feel that reading or math is nothing more than a search for the "correct" answer or ability to answer the questions at the end. The subject matter is in control, the student is the passive recipient, trying to figure out someone else's meaning.

Each young person brings "personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition" to the subject. How can students become active players in their education? You might ask them what they see, feel, think, or remember as they are working. Encourage them to relate their work to their own experience, or to that of others.

What connections will make school materials matter?

Resistant adolescent learners often do admit that literacy and STEM skills can be useful in helping to understand or solve real-life problems.

For example, if a student is looking for a job, then you might collaborate on a letter of application and a resume, and role-play in a job interview. Experiencing the payoff of good literacy skills in the outside world can spark an adolescent's desire to become an active reader and writer.

Modeling your own enthusiasm

Think of ways you can model your own love of the subject. What personal reading material can you share in the tutoring session? You might discuss your own reading habits, or talk about where words come from, and how they change through time. Working together on puzzles or word games can also enliven a session. You might also discuss how you use math in everyday interactions. A lesson in tipping or how to save money can be helpful for your students.

What outside resources might help?

Once you know your student's interests, look for a variety of resource materials that promote reading for information and pleasure. Try collecting flyers for musical groups, photographs with text, or short Instagram stories. If your student reads magazines, or might like a particular one, you can find a copy, bring it to the session, read an article together, and give the student the magazine.

If you're tutoring a student in a particular subject, various sources will help her understand the topic, from National Geographic to websites on the Internet. Linking new knowledge to a familiar idea helps a student integrate reading content.

How can conversation develop literacy skills?

Talking can be a powerful tool of self-discovery for a teenager, especially with a sympathetic listener. Many young people with reading difficulties simply haven't had enough experience using words to express their ideas and points of view.

If conversations are a structured part of each tutoring session, barriers will gradually break down. You might schedule five minutes at the beginning devoted to an agreed-upon subject or a casual question such as, "How was the concert last week?" Open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer are the best conversation boosters. Good eye contact, positive posture, and an interested expression may encourage your students to ask you questions.

Focus on the positive

Since you are not responsible for testing or giving grades, you can be encouraging and positive about a student's efforts. If you recognize specific skill development -good thinking, creativity, independent problem solving-praise will help reinforce further development. Just remember that adolescents won't welcome inappropriate, excessive, or false praise. You might notice when they arrive on time, remark that you enjoyed your last conversation, say you've been thinking about what they said, or find an article that supports their point of view. These interactions will create a positive, trusting, and meaningful tutoring relationship.

Evaluating skills and measuring progress are always important, but you can encourage your student to examine their own work, critique strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for improvement.

(Taken from: <http://www.adlit.org/article/27269/>)

Communication Tips for Working with Students

What you can do when the child has difficulty:	What you might say:
Give the child some time to notice the error and work things out. Wait and remain silent.	"I like the way you worked that out."
Encourage them to try if they stop.	"It's OK to try it even if you make a mistake." (Then praise the effort)
Praise the child's efforts at problem solving even if he does not get the word or problem right.	"You are really working hard to sound out these new words OR find the answer to the problem. Making mistakes is good to help us learn these hard words OR math problems."
Pay attention and praise when the child notices and fixes errors for themselves.	"Good job checking your work. I like the way you noticed that and fixed it yourself."
Show that you value partially correct responses (when a child has made a good attempt but has not completely solved the word or math problem).	"You almost got it. Try it one more time more slowly or check your work one more time."
Encourage the child to use what he already knows about the subject.	"What do you already know that can help?"

Adapted from: A Coordinator's Guide to Help America Read: A Handbook for Volunteers, by G. Pinell and I. Fountas