



MENTORING SCENARIOS

Tips from BPIE and our mentoring community



SCENARIO 1

You are new to a school community and the teacher you are working with has not officially introduced you to the whole class and/or any school community members. You're conflicted, as you are only set to be working with one student in the class. For online mentoring, you wonder how you would introduce yourself to the parent/guardian(s) and proctor?



How do you respond to this situation?

Tips from BPIE:

- It's important that you feel comfortable in your match, and not like a stranger. Voice to the teacher that you'd like to introduce yourself to the class.
- Find a time before or after class or your session to fit in a brief introduction. Respectfully inject yourself into the conversation and share.
- If applicable, and when there's time, introduce yourself to other students in the class beyond your mentee.

Tips from fellow mentors:

- "BPIE connects you with the guardian before the initial meeting, via email. Getting that parent involved, at least initially, is important to make sure both the student and the guardian are comfortable.
- "The parent is important to get access to materials, communications on upcoming events, big tests, etc"
- "Assume the teacher is very busy and occupied mentally when you enter the classroom. As the other adult in the classroom, roll with it, and remind the teacher you haven't met the other students yet. Teachers are really busy."
- "In some cases, the student might be taken aback by their mentor joining them today: they might have known that is happening some time this year, but not that day. It's important to know what the student would need to be comfortable and move on from there."
- "If you can interact with a teacher, it's extremely helpful. They're the ones preparing the material. There were two years I mentored in a subject I knew absolutely nothing about. I made an agreement with the teacher to get the materials in advance before class, so that when I went into the classroom, I was prepared. Working with the teacher is key, from my point of view."

SCENARIO 2

It is now week 4 of your match, and sessions with your mentee have gone well. Your student has some exams coming up and asks you for extra support. You're generally too busy to volunteer more, but have some free time that week, so you agree. After the exams, the student tells you that they loved the extra support and want to continue working together 3-4 hours per week. A teacher (or guardian for ILS) overhears and agree they'd like you there more often.

 **How do you respond to this situation?**

Tips from BPIE:

- Establish your role as academic mentor as clearly as possible.
- Reiterate the terms of the yearlong mentoring relationship, and how much time you're able to give.

Tips from fellow mentors:

- “You could offer extra time later in the year. At the beginning your conversation, explain to the student that you're really grateful for the extra time that you had together. Show the student you've enjoyed the experience and convey that you're glad the student felt better about their exams. Frame it positively first, and then share the truth of your scheduling limits.”
- “Maybe let the teacher know that the student needs more help. You can clarify that you don't have the time to provide extra support, but you're glad the student likes the mentoring support they're getting. It could mean that the student needs more than they're getting and the teacher might want to know.”
- “I'm too busy, anyway, so I'd be honest and just say that. An option could be to negotiate maybe 30 minutes extra, but not 3-4 hours. I'd also return to the initial agreement of 1-2 hours per week and reiterate the importance of sticking to that so the relationship remains sustainable on all ends.”
- “If you overextend yourself, it might not lead to a productive meeting, anyway.”
- “If you do have some time, you can compromise. If you might have some additional time in the future, you could let the student know: ‘Maybe we can use that time right before a big test.’ Maybe you don't have time for that every week, but you might have time once or twice.”

SCENARIO 3

You are working with a student who consistently breaks your personal boundaries.

For in-person classroom volunteers, your student likes to hug you, play with your hair, and ask you questions about your personal life. For virtual ILS volunteers, your student continuously asks about features of your living arrangements present in your background and where you live.



How do you respond to this situation?

Tips from BPIE:

- While this scenario mainly focuses on the mentors' comfort and boundaries, it also has a lot to do with your match. It's important to model how to set boundaries for your student and demonstrates that you take them and your mentoring relationship seriously.
- For younger students, whether in-person or virtual, it can help to get creative with how you explain boundaries. Consider a visual representation, like drawing a bubble around you that shouldn't be popped.
- If your student is breaking your physical boundaries, consider introducing a fidget toy as an alternative to touching.
- Especially with older students, be kind, but frank. Let your student know what you are comfortable sharing, and what you're not. Ask for the same from them

Tips from fellow mentors:

- "I shared with my young students that I am a mom and they were shocked! They asked a lot of question. I told them that it's okay to ask some questions and have some time to get to know each other, but also remind them why we are meeting."
- "Ask the student what boundaries they would like to set. This can allow for a better flow of the boundaries conversation. That way, you can model setting boundaries together"
- "Having a conversation about touching with my younger students led to a conversation not just about boundary setting, but also physical consent. They were very curious and wanted to learn more. It was the productive start of a bigger conversation."

SCENARIO 4

The other adults (teachers or guardians) supporting your student want you to guarantee they make at least an B in your match subject. They are counting on you to do what's necessary to achieve their academic goal.



How do you respond to this situation?

Tips from BPIE:

- The main goal, here, is to re-establish your role as an Academic Mentor and focus on progress, not proficiency. Your role is to meet the student where they are and work on progressing from that point, whatever it may be.
- You're not here as a tutor, whose job it is to meet a specific goal and, once met, end the relationship.
- You're here to serve as a caring, supportive adult in your mentee's life; mentoring doesn't end; people don't stop needing mentoring support.
- Focus on the content of your match, not necessarily the outcome.
- Check in with your student about their goals, academic or otherwise, beyond grades. Instead of getting a certain grade, maybe a student wants to really understand a certain subject. Make a plan to achieve those goals together and communicate your work to the adults supporting your student.