



Adopt A Class FOUNDATION

PROGRAM HANDBOOK

2014 – 2015

“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” – Maya Angelou

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Welcome	3
Goals	3
Mission	3
History	3
Program Overview	4
Why Youth Need Mentors	4
Roles & Responsibilities	4
Mentor Role	4
Mentor Responsibilities	5
Classroom Teacher Role & Responsibilities	6
School Resource Coordinator/Program Liaison Role & Responsibilities	7
AAC Role & Responsibilities	7
Program Benefits	7
To the Business or Organization	7
To the Students	7
To the Classroom Teachers	8
To the School	8
To the Community	8
Getting Started	8
Enrollment Form	8
Commitment Form	8
Understanding School Procedures	8
Health Concerns	9
Training	9
Log Your Visits	9
Mentor	9
Best Practices	9
Communication	9
Stay in Touch	9
Ask for Help	9
Getting the Most from your Mentoring Experience	10
Connecting	10
Create a Caring Community: Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity Awareness	10
Discussing Delicate Issues	10
Reporting Suspected Child Abuse	10
Use of Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco and Firearms	10
Nutrition	11
AAC Mentoring Tools	11
Sponsored Programs/Activities	11
Field Trips and Outings	12
FAQ's	12
Who We Are and Contact Information	15

Introduction

Welcome

Thank you for partnering with Adopt A Class (AAC)! As a volunteer mentor through AAC, you can connect with the youth in your community; inspire a child to learn, dream, hope and become a leader; and you can help close the mentoring gap in our area.

Please review this handbook. It gives an overview of the AAC program and provides important guidelines you should be aware of prior to volunteering.

Thank you for providing your precious time, individual talents and expertise as an AAC mentor. With the continued support of our community businesses, civic groups, high schools and colleges, we can provide high quality group mentoring experiences.

Goals

AAC is a program in which students are paired with a caring business, civic group, high school or college mentoring team. The main goal of the program is to provide students with an opportunity to interact with positive role models who will encourage and motivate students to succeed in school and in life.

Mission

AAC is a group mentoring program designed to facilitate personal, sustained connections between members of the business community and civic group and students enrolled pre-kindergarten through 8th grade. AAC facilitates mentoring relationships with the purpose of providing positive role models, developing practical and social skills for the students, and building the culture of philanthropy and teamwork for the business or community.

History

In 2002, Bill Burwinkel and 30 employees at his company, National Marketshare Group, Inc., recognized a need for business involvement at Oylar Community Learning Center, the school just a few blocks from their office in the Cincinnati neighborhood of Lower Price Hill. Bill's idea was for his employees to serve as role models for the students and offer them a vision for what they could achieve upon attaining a high school diploma or college degree. Bill and his employees launched a pen-pal project with the fifth grade class. Over the course of the year, National Marketshare employees found themselves engaged in discussions about workplace expectations, the importance of finishing school, the concept of work ethic and students' visions for their future.

Bill realized that this was a model that could easily be replicated. He sought out other businesses to partner with Oylar and within one year, each of the 670 students had been "adopted" by a business or a community group. Over the past ten years, AAC has expanded into 24 schools in Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, and 4 schools in Portland, Oregon. Currently, over 300 business and community groups are working with over 7500 students to teach social skills and relationship-building.

Program Overview

AAC is a group mentoring experience for pre-kindergarten through 8th grade students in schools where 65% or more of the student population qualifies for free and/or reduced lunch. Currently, the average of students living at or below poverty in all of the schools AAC serves is 92.3%.

AAC facilitates partnerships between businesses and schools, making it easier to fulfill your team's community engagement goals. Your team provides positive role models for students most in need and benefits from the connection to youth in our community and knowledge of the local education system.

Mentors visit their classroom for at least 1 hour a month, during the school day between September and May. A unique component of AAC is our pen-pal program. Mentors supplement their classroom visits by exchanging correspondences with a special mentee, giving mentors both the opportunity to impact a classroom of children and encourage an individual.

Why Youth Need Mentors

History gives many examples of the value of mentoring. Homer in the Odyssey chronicled perhaps the most famous instance. Homer tells us that around 1200BC, the adventurer Odysseus made ready to leave for the siege of Troy. Before sailing, he appointed a guardian to his household. For the next ten years, this guardian acted faithfully as teacher, advisor, friend and surrogate father to Telemachus, son of Odysseus. The mythical guardian's name of Mentor. The Greeks based these relationships on a basic principle of human survival: Humans learn skills, culture and values directly from other humans whom they look up to or admire. *Murray, M. Beyond the Myths and Magic of Mentoring. (1991)*

Young people of today must cope with far more personal and social pressures than any other previous generation of youth. Early intervention through structured mentor relationship may be able to give young people the tools and support they need to deal effectively with these pressures.

Roles & Responsibilities

Mentor Role

- **Role Modeling**
Pointing out, bring to attention, demonstrating and explaining your own actions and values that offer youth the best chances for success and happiness; helping youth see and strive and broader horizons and possibilities than they see in their present environment.
- **Attention and Concern**
Youth do not receive enough from the adults in their lives; mentors can fill these empty spaces with dependable, sincere and consistent attention and concern.
- **Establishing a positive, personal relationship with your class/mentee(s)**
 - Establish mutual trust and respect. Be on time. Follow through with promised visits or email teacher in advance if you need to cancel and visit so she can prepare the class/mentee(s).

- Maintain regular interaction and consistent support. Visit your mentee(s) at least 1x per month with your team members. If you cannot make a visit, make sure you send a note to your mentee(s).
- **Helping develop college, career and life skills**
 - Work with your mentee(s)/class to accomplish specific program goals (e.g. AAC monthly themes and downloadable activities if your team does not have a project in mind).
 - Instill the framework for developing broader life-management skills (e.g. written pen-pal communications, financial literacy lessons and exposure to healthy foods).
- **Listening**

The other adults in the young person’s life may not have the time, interest or ability to listen. Mentors can encourage young people to talk about their fears, dreams and concerns. Staying neutral and not judging, but rather sharing your own values, is important in listening.

Mentor Responsibilities

- **Commitment**
 - Commit to the program for the full academic year: September through May.
 - Visit your adopted class a minimum of 1 hour each month as a Mentor Team.
 - Correspond monthly with your mentee(s) via a structured pen-pal exchange.
 - Fill out an AAC Commitment Form each academic year and return to AAC.
- **Accountability**
 - A commitment made to a youth for a classroom visit, an activity or a response to a letter should be respected. This consistent accountability to your class/mentee(s) has several benefits:
 - Sets a good example for youth to see and emulate
 - Cements trust between the Mentor Team and class/mentee(s)
 - Creates mutual expectations that can be met
 - Please inform your classroom teacher in advance of planned team absences. Individually, if you cannot join your team for a visit and your mentee is expecting you, communicate your absence to your team leader and the classroom teacher so the teacher can prepare the mentee. Students will be disappointed if you cannot come, but will be reassured that you cared enough to call.
- **Communication**
 - Establish the best way for the Mentor Team to contact the classroom Teacher and for the Teacher to contact the Mentor Team at the outset of the relationship.
 - Respond timely to all communication.
 - Recognize that the school culture is different from the business culture. Teachers are working with students all day and don’t have ready access to respond to emails, texts and phone calls. Allow Teachers 48 hours to respond to your inquiry.

➤ **Set Limits**

An AAC mentoring experience is to take place in a group setting at all times under the supervision of the Classroom Teacher or identified school staff person. At no time should an AAC Mentor be alone in a 1:1 setting with a student. If you are interested in developing a 1:1 mentoring relationship with your mentee, please contact AAC for more information.

➤ **Interactions with Mentee(s)**

- Mentors must maintain strict confidentiality concerning information they learn about students and staff, including students' grades, records and abilities.
- Mentors DO NOT discipline students. You may provide "instruction" to students regarding behavior. Report discipline problems to the teacher.
- Mentors must always be supervised with working with students. They may not supervise a classroom or give permission for a student to leave a classroom. These are teacher responsibilities.
- Mentors may not give any medications to mentee(s).
- Mentors may not take photographs of mentee(s), unless given permission by the teacher. Never post any student photographs or student information on social networks without permission from the assigned classroom teacher.

➤ **Appearance and Manner**

Mentors should set a good example for students by their manner, appearance and behavior. They should be well-groomed, appropriately dressed and maintain professional conduct/language.

Classroom Teacher Role & Responsibilities

As a partner and leader in this group mentoring relationship, the teacher will be the Mentor Team's main point of contact for planning and organizing Mentor Team visits, pen-pal letter exchanges and activities.

The teacher is matched to the Mentor Team as long as the relationship continues to be fruitful. Mentors do not follow students when they move to the next grade-level. Mentors remain with their assigned Teach each academic year.

The teacher assists the Mentor Team in executing activities in the classroom, planning field trips outside the classroom/school and always maintains control of the classroom and addresses student behavior concerns.

The teacher plans the school year visit schedule with the Mentor Team and communicates with the Mentor Team any questions that arise in a timely manner regarding class visits, schedule changes and answers.

School Resource Coordinator/Program Liaison Role & Responsibilities

On-site Resource Coordinators provide the critical infrastructure at the school site level to develop, integrate and manage the school's community partnerships. AAC and the Mentor Teams it brings into the school are community partners of the school. The School Resource Coordinator (SRC) is the connector between the school and the community and helps manage these partnerships.

The SRC provides ongoing communication among AAC Business or Civic Group Mentor Teams, Teachers and the Principal to confirm all AAC activities are scheduled and executed and communication is flowing properly.

Additionally, the SRC can answer site-based questions (e.g. Where should I park? Do you have a school calendar? Where is the AAC log book?)

AAC Role & Responsibilities

AAC's role is as the facilitator of the mentoring partnership between the business and school and between the Mentor Team and Teacher/classroom. Our goal is to be an ever-present support system to all branches of the program. If there are ever any questions or concerns, we promise to address those in a timely fashion. AAC strives to:

- Match classrooms and organizations based on need to ability;
- Serve as a liaison between the Mentor Team and School Partners;
- Prepare support materials and activities to supplement the mentoring relationship;
- Train Mentors and provide ongoing support to each Mentor Team.

Program Benefits

To the Business or Civic Organization

- Building support for schools among employees and simultaneously boosting company morale
- Being recognized as a company for your community engagement
- Active engagement with the future workforce and consumers
- Understanding the quality and needs of the local school systems, whose health is vital to the community's economic well-being
- An opportunity to impact lives and provide a vision of hope

To the Students

- Exposes youth to a positive role model
- Encourages emotional and social growth
- Fosters increased confidence and self-esteem
- Helps to focus youth on their future and setting academic and career goals
- Exposes youth to new experiences and people from diverse cultural, socio-economic and professional backgrounds
- Education on the types of jobs in the workplace and how their academic skills and talents apply

To the Classroom Teachers

- Improves morale through a partnership with an understanding partner
- Assistance in the classroom to conduct activities or meet goals
- Additional community resources not provided for in the budget
- More contact with community members and a sustainable partnership with a Business or Civic Organization

To the School

- Assistance in meeting school needs beyond available resources
- Collaboration from the community in accomplishing the goals of the school
- Community engagement in local education system

To the Community

- Strengthened local school systems as a result of community engagement
- Citizenry educated through mentoring and by being mentored
- Well-prepared future work force
- Improved economic development, i.e. lower dropout rates are tied to lower crime rates and less unemployment
- Community growth due to a population that cares for all its citizens through valued volunteerism and philanthropy

Getting Started

Enrollment Form

Each Mentor Team and Classroom Teacher completes an AAC Enrollment Form. The information on this form is used to best match each Mentor Team with the Classroom Teacher based on partnership needs and special requests (e.g. day and time of scheduled visit, age group of students served, class size, field of interest).

Commitment Form

Consistency is so important for the young people we serve that Mentors and Teachers need to take this commitment very seriously. Every program participant is asked to sign a Commitment Form.

Understanding School Procedures

Each school has specific information for the Mentors to learn. Mentors need to know fire drill and lock down procedures, restroom locations, parking areas, where the AAC Log Book is kept, volunteer sign-in and name tag requirements, school hours, cell phone usage policy and general school regulations.

Please be sure to obtain the above information from the SRC or front office staff on your first visit.

Health Concerns

Please do not come to mentor your class if you are ill. You may think you are letting down your mentee(s) and you may want to volunteer even though you are not well, but doing so is not good for you, the children or the teacher. Please call your Team Leader so he/she can explain your absence to your Mentee(s). If you are the only Mentor from your Team going to the school on this particular day, please call, email or text your teacher so he/she can explain your absence to the class. Children learn by example and we are that you, as a role model, use good health habits when you are at the school.

Training

AAC provides mentor training at the beginning of each academic year. If you or your Team miss this training event, the training video and materials can be accessed through the AAC website for your review.

Log Your Visits

Please be sure a member of your Team fills in the AAC Log Book located in the front office of each school.

Mentor

Each relationship between a Mentor Team and classroom/mentee(s) is different. The relationships fit the individual needs of the Mentor Team, School, Classroom Teacher and Mentee(s). Group activities are encouraged as well as spending time with an individual mentee(s) in the classroom (never alone). AAC provides activity suggestions through its website for your review, adaption or implementation. These activities are not mandatory, but a guide and resource, if needed.

Best Practices

Communication

Enjoy a system of exchanging information between the classroom Teacher and Mentor Team to ensure direct communication. Designate two people to be your partner liaison.

Stay in Touch

Direct and consistent communication is a big contributor to successful partnerships.

Schedule regular meeting dates with your school partner (i.e. the second Tuesday of every month, 8 a.m. at the school). Meet several times a year at integral periods during the school year.

Ask for Help

Seek and utilize the help and advice of AAC staff.

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Getting the Most from your Mentoring Experience

Connecting

- A student's name is very important. Make sure you say it and spell it correctly.
- Make sure your mentee knows and can pronounce your name. You might give your mentee(s) a card with your name written on it.
- Listen! Show that you are interested in each student as a person.
- Build the student's self-confidence. Praise your mentee(s) honestly.

Create a Caring Community: Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity Awareness

- You may or may not come from a background similar to your mentee's. How you handle these differences will greatly affect how your relationship develops.
- Learn about the values and traditions of your mentee's culture. Such things as the role of authority, communication styles, perspectives on time and ways of handling conflict vary greatly among different ethnic groups. You might ask your mentee to teach you things about his/her traditions and culture. Discussions with your classroom teacher can help you to better understand your mentee's behavior.
- Your mentee(s) may live very differently from you – or not. He/she may share small living quarters with many people or live with just one guardian. It's important to be supportive of your mentee and not judgmental about the way he/she lives.

Discussing Delicate Issues

Occasionally, a mentee may say something that makes the mentor uncomfortable. It is important to decide first if the comment makes you uncomfortable because it is inappropriate or because it isn't what you would say. Consult your classroom teacher if you are not sure how to handle the situation and for guidance.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Report suspected child abuse to the Principal or other supervising school staff. It is not appropriate for a volunteer mentor to question a child or comment about any suspicious of abuse to the child. NOTE: There are laws that govern the action that schools are required to take if signs of possible abuse are observed. Keep in mind some forms of abuse are not outwardly visible. Types of abuse could include physical, mental or sexual abuse, neglect or threat of harm. More state specific report information can be found at www.aacfoundation.com/memberlogin

Use of Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco and Firearms

AAC mentors are prohibited from using drugs or alcohol or possessing a firearm while engaged in a mentoring relationship. Our school districts have a zero tolerance policy and we ask that you respect this and model good mentor behavior.

Nutrition

AAC encourages its mentors to be a part of the multilevel approach to modeling a healthy lifestyle. Join with our school districts and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center to give our kids the tools they need to live long healthy lives. "Obesity rates have more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the past 30 years. The percentage of US children ages 6 to 11 who are obese increased from 7% in 1980 to nearly 18% in 2012." *US Centers for Disease Control*.

AAC subscribes to the CCHMC theory of 5-2-1-0 in a child's daily diet. That's 5 fruits or vegetables a day; less than 2 hours of TV and computer screen time; 1 hour of physical exercise that breaks a sweat; and 0 sweet beverages and sugars.

Mentors can support health and awareness by bringing healthy snacks and new foods to try to your class, taking your class outside to play games, assembling healthy treats together (e.g. smoothies or fruit kabobs), and bringing water to drink. You can still celebrate with food, but reinforce a healthy lifestyle that will serve our mentee(s) now and in the future.

AAC Mentoring Tools

All enrolled Mentor Teams have access to AAC Member Login Page through www.aacfoundation.com. This page provides exclusive access to activities, upcoming educational and professional networking opportunities, resources for your class and training materials.

Sponsored Programs/Activities

Through the generous support of our sponsors, we are able to provide quality programming that enhances the financial literacy, health and wellness, and self-esteem building skills of the students in our program.

- CCHMC Community Health & Wellness Program



CCHMC provides safety and injury prevention education kits for you to present to your class. The kits are easy to use, interact, fun and age-appropriate. Teams can use these kits to teach students about bicycle safety, pool safety, how to discern between candy and medication or how to recognize safety hazards in the home. Not only does this knowledge empower your adopted class, but it keeps your mentee(s) safe.



- CPD Drug and Alcohol Education and Preventive Program

The Cincinnati Police Department prides itself on community engagement, education and collaboration. With the support of CPD, AAC provides activities that focus on building self-esteem for Mentor Teams to empower the youth in the program. Additional drug and alcohol education programming is also available for our middle-school students. These engaging activities give our students the tools they need to stay strong in the face of peer pressure and to make smart, life altering choices.



- Teach Children To Save: A Financial Literacy Initiative

Teach Children To Save (TCTS) is a national program that helps young people develop savings habit early in life. The program makes savings lessons easy to present and fun for kids. "It's never too early to start saving for the future-saving is one of the best ways to make your dreams come true." TCTS There are activities for every age level with follow up questions. Build a financially savvy community today. Habits form early.

Field Trips and Outings

- **Permission**

AAC encourages Mentors to provide opportunities outside of the classroom for their mentees. It is especially eye-opening and memorable for students to visit your office, school or college campus. Please consult with your Teacher for directions regarding fieldtrips and outings, as AAC defers to the school.

- **Transporting Mentees**

Your school may have policies and procedures in place regarding transportation. Once your fieldtrips or other outing is approved by the school, check with your teacher to understand his/her preferred method of transporting students. You may consider renting a bus through First Student or using Metro. AAC cannot cover transportation costs and often the school does not have the financial means to do so. Transportation is the responsibility of the Mentor Team. Additional bus company information, pricing and contacts can be found at www.aacfoundation.com/memberlogin

FAQ's

Is there a bad time of year to enter into a partnership?

No. In fact, partnerships that begin late in the school year get the advantage of a "test drive" before planning their activities for the next year.

How long do partnerships last?

Most partnerships continue for as long as the relationship is beneficial and effective for all involved. AAC has relationships that have been in place for a decade. Mentor Teams stay with their assigned teacher year after year, fostering a sustained partnership and appreciation for each partner's needs.

Is there a minimum financial investment for Mentor Teams?

There is no cost associated with becoming a Mentor Team through AAC. Financial and in-kind donations are made at the discretion of the community partner. AAC is an independent, local nonprofit and continues to exist through the generosity of our donors and sponsors. It costs approximately \$500 a year to maintain each classroom partnership. We encourage business partners to consider sponsorship of their adopted classrooms.

Do we have to renew our partnerships? How often?

In the spring of each school year, each Mentor Team will be contacted by a member of the AAC Program Committee to verify that the business/organization wants to continue the partnership for the next school year and to confirm who the AAC team liaison for that business is. Notification of any changes will be sent to the school and the business/organization.

Recommitments prevent class partnerships from becoming inactive with time, provide opportunities to strengthen relationships, and encourage additional employees to join the Team or to start an additional Team. Recommitments provide the school and AAC with the most up-to-date partner contact information and offer insight into which schools are in the greatest need of more mentors.

I have a small business, how can I help?

Many small businesses have successful partnerships with schools. The key is to know your limitations going into the relationship and committing to attainable activities that support student achievement. Many activities don't require an inordinate amount of time or, if time intensive, don't require many people. Other activities may require time, but don't necessarily require many people. While the program asks for a commitment of 1 hour per month for the school year, there are no requirements on the number of employees participating. Some partners Skype to stay in touch with their class. Employees who might not otherwise be able to leave work to volunteer are often able to host students at their office and provide them with a unique exposure to the business world. We have had Teams as small as 1, 2 or 3 adopt a class.

How does AAC choose a class for the Mentor Team to adopt?

The AAC staff will assist in identifying the classroom that is the best for your organization. Community partners are generally paired with a school that is located near the place of business or convenient to the members of an organization. The objective of partnership matching is meeting the interests, needs and resources of the organization and the school. If a business/organization has a specific school or teacher in mind, the match can be explored.

Should we track our donations and time spent with our partner school?

Yes. It is important to keep record of your monetary donations, value of donated goods and services, number of volunteers and volunteer hours to your partner school over the course of the year in the AAC Log Book kept in the front office of the school. Your responses will be used to generate a report detailing the actual value of the AAC program, which we will share with you at the close of the year.

What should I do if my classroom teacher isn't responsive?

Don't lose faith in your partnership if your assigned classroom teacher does not return your phone call or email immediately or does not honor every request you may ask of them. Please be patient and keep in mind that teachers are frequently away from their desks. In the meantime, reevaluate the partnership to make sure it represents the best interest of all involved. Examine the frequency and scope of your requests to determine whether they coincide with the commitments that were originally agreed upon between your team and the classroom teacher. Contact AAC staff for advice, guidance and assistance with re-engaging the classroom teacher or to find a better fit for your team.

Can we take pictures of our class/mentee(s)?

Your teacher will let you know if any of the children do not have photo release permission slips on file. Please request permission before posting any photos to social media or public sites.

Can I hug my mentee?

The "Safe Touch Zones" refer to how and where it is appropriate to touch children. Handshakes and high fives are Safe Touch Zones.

How do I offer praise?

Be specific about what you praise. Say "[Child's name], you did a great job of sounding out each word on the page!" instead of a, "Good job!" Praise creates an internal motivation that encourages the child to repeat the behavior.

What if the children are not listening to me?

Begin every activity by explaining the directions. This is the first step in prevention! If the child is uncooperative, inform the teacher. Follow up with the teacher on what the classroom rules are and how you can support those rules. Never administer punishments or threats.

What if the children speak a different language than me?

Ask the teacher the level of comprehension the child has and what language skill techniques are being used to teach the child. Your business or organization may also have a bi-lingual directory to consult. Perhaps someone on your team speaks that child's language.

What should I do if the school has a fire drill or real emergency?

The staff at the front desk may or may not inform you of a practice drill. Whether real or practice, it is important that you follow the instructions of the classroom teacher or nearest school personnel. These drills are another opportunity for you to model good behavior for your students.

Who We Are and Contact Information

Adopt A Class Board of Directors, Advisory Board and Staff

Board of Directors

Rick Chouteau, President
Kathy Schwab, Vice President
Brooke Hiltz, Secretary
Keith Moran, Treasurer
Kevin Armour
Lauren Bosse
Christine Barry
Evan Clinkenbeard
Craig Heldman
Jon Lawhead
Jennifer Reed
Regina Russo
Stephen Taylor
Alex Triantafilou
Jeff Wellens

Advisory Board

Chief Jeffrey Blackwell
Nancy Costello
Darlene Kamine
Buddy LaRosa
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Contact us to:

receive an AAC Program Handbook
report changes in your contact information or partnership
receive school contact information
share your success stories and pictures for possible publication
inquire about school needs
discuss concerns or challenges
just to say "hi".