



Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for taking the next step in exploring what it means to mentor a student at your local elementary. Here are some common Q&A's that may help you prayerfully consider this opportunity.

What is the time commitment? You will meet with your student for approximately one hour, every week, for one school year. The school calendar for mentoring is typically mid Sept – mid May, with time off over the holidays. Additionally, some programs also host an occasional party or outing for their Kids Hope USA students and mentors.

What time of the day do I meet my student? Mentoring takes place during school hours. On your application you will be able to indicate your availability.

Can I pick which day I meet my student? Typically, yes. Each school determines when they allow mentoring to occur. Some schools are more flexible than others, allowing students to be pulled from class, but others only allow mentoring during lunch and recess. You're encouraged to be as flexible as your schedule allows. Work with your director to see how your schedule and the school's schedule coincide.

Will I receive training? Yes, absolutely. The total time commitment is about two to three hours. The first part of training involves watching online videos, which take about an hour to review, and you will watch at home or with other mentors. Your director will then review the material with you, either individually or as a group, giving you the opportunity to ask questions. You will also attend a short orientation at the school for a tour before mentoring begins.

What will my student and I do during our time together? You are there to build a relationship with the child, so you'll be doing things like playing games, doing crafts, having conversations, and learning about the student's interests. We encourage all mentors to read with their students, and to make reading fun. In training you will learn about the Kids Hope USA Mentoring Hour, which you can use as a guide to organize the hour. Each child has different interests and needs, and you will begin to find a rhythm that works for you both. KHUSA provides 'getting-acquainted,' character development, and academic games to enrich your time together.

Will I need to teach academics? A mentor's primary role is to focus on the emotional and social growth of a child, which happens through relationship building. While we always encourage reading with students during your time together, and the teacher may ask for some minimal classwork support, your role is to build a relationship with the child.

Aren't we concerned about academics? Yes, we absolutely are – we know that academics play a huge role in a child's life trajectory. Your time together building a relationship supports the child's

academic growth: studies show that children’s emotional and social needs must be addressed first for there to be academic achievement.

What will my student be like? The child has been referred for a mentor by their parent, teacher, or principal, believing some extra support and attention will benefit the child. You may never know the reason for the referral. It could be that the child has been bullied; the family is going through a hard change, such as a death, divorce, or incarceration; or simply that the child’s single parent is working two jobs and welcomes an additional caring adult in the child’s life. Regardless of the specific situation and the child’s personality, the general response of unconditional love and positivity will help the child thrive.

What if my student doesn’t seem to like me? Some children will engage in the relationship right away, while others may take weeks or even months to warm up as they may not trust a new adult in their life. Know that your presence and commitment are needed and your KHUSA program director is there to support you should you experience any issues.

What if I take lengthy vacations? Volunteers occasionally need to miss a mentoring session, but the most effective way to love and encourage a child is through consistency. Faithfully showing up for a child is foundational to the program and relationship. For lengthy vacations, exceptions may be possible if online mentoring is permitted by the school and supported and supervised by the director. Discuss your schedule with your program director.

Can I follow my student into the next grade level? Yes, absolutely, and you are encouraged to do so. Your commitment is for the completion of the school year which is a natural time for closure. But as the average length of a Kids Hope USA mentor-student relationship is almost three years, chances are you will want to continue.

Can I share the Gospel with my student or bring him/her to church? We are guests of the school and by law must respect the separation of church and state; you may not share the Gospel or pray with the student at school. You may eventually be able to invite the student and family to an event at your church, but it will depend upon the school and the family. Our primary intention is to support the emotional and social needs of the child.

What kind of screening is there to be a mentor? We take child safety very seriously and mentors must go through our screening process, which includes an interview, reference checks, and the church’s criminal background checks. Mentors also need to pass the school district’s requirements. A mentor will never be allowed to be alone with a student.

Do I have what it takes to be a mentor? Thank you for examining your own heart as you explore this opportunity to serve a child. If you can follow program guidelines, be faithful, and have a soft spot for children, you have the makings of a great mentor! Our most “successful” mentors are those that come with an open heart and are growing in the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

I’m interested, what happens next? Great! Please contact your church or director to receive the application, schedule your interview, and discuss the details of training. Your director is also available to answer any questions we haven’t covered here.