

5. What kind of relationship should I have with the parents? What if they're uncooperative?

Try to establish a relationship early on with your student's parents or guardians. Relationships between mentors and parents vary from pair to pair, and like all relationships, evolve with time and depend on the situation. Soon after you are paired with your student, reach out to the parents. Discuss how you'll communicate with each other. Check in with guardians as much as you feel is appropriate. Some families want to collaborate actively with mentors, other families are more circumspect, especially until you've earned their trust.

Unless you get clear signals to back off entirely, continue to make recommendations about your student to the family, but don't expect full cooperation from them in return. For example, you may encourage the family to create a study area separate from any household hubbub. Repeat recommendations as often as you feel comfortable.

Should the family not respond, look for ways to compensate for what's lacking at home. For example, if your student doesn't have a good study environment at home, encourage her to make use of the study tables at East, or to go to the public library together after school. Help your student to understand how effective study habits link directly to better grades.