

read ahead

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Mentor Expectations

Read Ahead connects children from underserved communities with caring, trusted, consistent mentors in a fun, kid-friendly environment. Centered around the foundational experience of reading together, mentors give their mentees the confidence, motivation, and improved skills to succeed in school and in life.

Consistency & Communication

It is important that you are at Read Ahead every week (or every other week if you have a co-mentor) on the same day for your designated time. Please be sure to arrive on time, as program time is limited and students often get anxious when their mentors haven't yet arrived. Elementary school children do well with standardized routines, so we do our best to ensure our program is as consistent as possible for the students.

We do understand that there may sometimes be extenuating circumstances, so if you must be absent or late one day please let the Program Coordinator(s) know ASAP (before the day of or at least an hour in advance, whenever possible). This ensures that the student and teacher can be informed before the start of the program time, so the student is less likely to be disappointed.

Please communicate with Read Ahead staff with any questions or any other information we should know to keep Read Ahead running smoothly.

Photos & Social Media

Read Ahead staff may take photos of students whose guardians have authorized photos for the purposes of promoting Read Ahead. **You may only take a photo of your student, for your own personal use, if his/her guardian has authorized you to do so.** The guardian must sign a release for you to be allowed to take and use photos of your student. Your Program Coordinator(s) will let you know if your student's guardian has not signed this. If a guardian has signed off and you choose to share photos of Read Ahead students on social media, please be smart and safe to protect your student. It's best not to post identifying information about the student, but if you do, only first names and the student's grade are allowed. **Please also tag Read Ahead in your posts!** If you would rather share your photo or video with Read Ahead, we would be happy to post on Read Ahead social media. You are welcome and encouraged to share or repost Read Ahead's posts, provided that no additional identifying information is included. Our first priority is the students' safety, while also wanting you to be able to share your wonderful mentoring experiences with your friends and family!

Being Present & Cell Phone Usage

Being present and engaged with your student during your time together is crucial for the student's self-confidence and the success of your relationship. We ask that you do not use your cell phone or tablet while with your student. Also, please focus your attention on **your student**, not on other students or fellow volunteers, unless participating in a group activity.

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No Individual Gifts

Your time with your student is your biggest gift to them! **Please do not give gifts to your student**, as we want to ensure that all students have an equal and fair experience. If you would like to give a book that you think your student would enjoy, we greatly appreciate that and ask that you donate it **in your student's honor** to the Read Ahead book cart. If you choose to do this, you and your student can inscribe the book with a special message and note that it was given in the student's honor.

No Food

Read Ahead and our partner schools have a **strict no-food policy** for volunteers while in the schools. You **may not** bring food into the school due to allergies and other concerns. Sometimes your student may be eating lunch while you are together, but you may not do the same. Food may be provided on occasion for the whole group as part of a celebratory activity, in which case all are welcome to enjoy!

Relationship with Student

Read Ahead is structured such that mentors and students see each other only during designated Read Ahead sessions in the presence of a Read Ahead staff member, generally at school and during the school day exclusive of infrequent Read Ahead special events. **A mentor should never be in a room alone with a student** or group of students. Read Ahead's capacity and structure does not facilitate or condone out-of-school contact or communication between mentors, students, and/or parents.

Leaving Read Ahead

As a Read Ahead mentor, your commitment to your student is from October – June. However, we understand that unforeseen circumstances (such as a move, significant change in job responsibilities, etc.) may arise that require you to leave Read Ahead before the close of the school year. In these circumstances, **it is extremely important that there is closure for your student so that s/he understands that there is a good reason for your departure** and you both have the opportunity to say goodbye.

Please give your Program Coordinator(s) as much notice as possible regarding your departure, so that ideally you can have a final session with your student. If that's not possible, you and the Program Coordinator(s) can determine another way to appropriately close out your mentoring relationship and say goodbye, such as through a card or a verbal message.

Note: If you become no longer affiliated with the Read Ahead partner organization through which you volunteer partway through the year, we encourage you to finish out the year with your student, if possible.