



<http://ibm.mentorplace.epals.org>

IBM MentorPlace: Mentor training materials

Welcome to **IBM MentorPlace**! Thank you for volunteering!

IBM MentorPlace is a key component of IBM's overall commitment to education and young people. Through this corporate volunteer program, thousands of IBM employees worldwide are providing academic assistance and career counseling to students, while letting them know that adults do care about their issues and concerns.

This program also supports employees like you by providing a structured, meaningful and convenient way for them to contribute time and skills to schools.



Program benefits

IBM MentorPlace provides wonderful opportunities and rewards for IBM volunteers, teachers and students.

IBM volunteers

By serving as classroom resources, positive role models and cheerleaders for students, participating IBMers receive:

- Convenient opportunities to volunteer in schools
- The satisfaction of knowing that they are making a difference in the life of a child -- whether through offering academic assistance, career advice, or a caring ear

Students

Enthusiastic students with committed IBM mentors receive:

- A unique opportunity to learn and practice new academic skills from committed IBM employees
- Exposure to the business world, including an understanding of the values and skills that are important to succeed
- The belief that there are other adults in their world who care about them
- Motivation to succeed
- The opportunity to use technology, practice their spelling, writing and keyboarding skills

Teachers

As they help manage the program and ensure that communication is ongoing and meaningful, teachers receive:

- Added classroom resources
- Community support for their students
- Program support from the MentorPlace coordinator and volunteer mentors
- Exposure and connections to the business world



IBM volunteer requirements

The success of IBM MentorPlace depends on you. In order to participate in IBM MentorPlace, IBMers must:

- Complete a registration form.
- Participate in a training session on the program.
- Participate in a training session on the IBM MentorPlace communications tool (**only** if your site is using this technology as the means of communication between mentors and students).
- Participate in at least one of two structured face-to-face meetings—a program kickoff and an end-of-the-school-year celebration (depending upon your local program).
- Invest **30 minutes per week, every week, without fail** for the duration of the program communicating with your student mentee.
- Comply with all the program rules regarding safety and security.
- Help us improve IBM MentorPlace by completing an evaluation form at the conclusion of the program.



Safety and security

Safety and security are critical in the school environment and must be taken seriously. All students must have signed an IBM parent permission form before participating in IBM MentorPlace (see Appendix A).

Similarly, IBM requires that all IBM volunteers understand and agree to the safety and security measures established by their local IBM MentorPlace program. In addition to the IBM rules, each local IBM MentorPlace program complies with the security measures required by the school district. Some schools are comfortable knowing that IBM employees have been screened upon hiring and are participating in this program under IBM Business Conduct Guidelines, which employees sign each year. Other schools require all IBM volunteers to be fingerprinted and/or go through a background check before participating in the program.

IBM rules for IBM mentors

- You are participating in this program because you care about education and students' learning and well-being. But it is important not to confuse your enthusiasm and commitment with expertise. While we can support students, we are not their teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists or parents. So it is imperative, both for yours and the students' protection, that no IBMer participating in IBM MentorPlace give advice to a student on issue areas best handled by school personnel, parents or guardians.
- If you receive a message from your student on an issue of concern—for example, suicide, depression, substance abuse, pregnancy, harassment—immediately contact your IBM community relations manager

or Core Team leader. This person will then bring the message to the attention of the appropriate school personnel. While messages are monitored on a daily or weekly basis by teachers and/or the IBM program leader, your immediate action can make a difference for a troubled child.

- Remember to keep (archive) all the online communication you receive from your student mentee, as well as all the online communications that you send. This is an important part of the monitoring process. (If you are using the IBM MentorPlace tool, this will be done automatically.)
- All communication between the mentor and student is electronic. **At no time should you arrange to meet your student outside of school.** Don't share your address or phone number. IBM and its school partner will provide structured opportunities for face-to-face contact in a group or appropriate school setting. If your student mentee invites you to meet outside the program, politely decline. Let him or her know that this program revolves around online communication, and that you look forward to continuing to work together via the Internet.
- All IBMers are participating in this program under the IBM Business Conduct Guidelines.



Tips for online communication

Students love to see notes waiting for them when they sign on, and they are counting on receiving messages from you. But if there is one common characteristic among IBMers, it is that we're all busy. So lest we become totally consumed by work, here are some helpful hints for how to keep actively involved in IBM MentorPlace:

- Add a repeating reminder to your Lotus Notes calendar so you will remember to write your student a note. Your MentorPlace program coordinator will let you know when your student has access to a computer, so that you can have a message waiting for them.
- Write often and be consistent—don't let a week go by without communicating with your student mentee. Your notes don't have to be long, but they should be meaningful. Even in the midst of a critical work assignment, you can find five minutes to write your student. For example:

"I'm in the middle of a major customer deal and barely have time to brush my teeth! Will be done in a couple of days and will send you a longer note later with more details. Until then, I hope all is well."

Similarly, it is important to let your IBM MentorPlace Core Team leader or community relations manager and the student know if you are going to be on vacation or away and unable to send a note. (Your IBM coordinator might be able to find a substitute for you.) A brief note such as this will be important to your student:

"I am going to be away for two weeks on a family vacation. We're going to Koh Samui, an island that is part of Thailand, and I will have no access to the Internet! I will let you know what life is like there when I return. In the meantime, can you find Koh Samui on a map?"

- Promptly respond to all messages.
- Remember that you are the adult. Have reasonable expectations. Perhaps your student mentee is responding to your enthusiastic notes with one-word answers or short phrases. Or maybe your student mentee's responses are full of grammatical and spelling errors. Regardless, you must uphold your commitment to quality weekly communication. Even if you are receiving minimal communication, your student may be appreciating and getting more out of your online relationship than you realize. It is not acceptable to decide not to write because your student mentee is not providing you with "quality" communication.
- If for any reason you can no longer participate in the program, immediately contact your IBM MentorPlace program manager.



Hints for good communication

- Be a positive influence: Build a genuine mentor relationship where you encourage, build self-confidence, turn situations into learning experiences, and serve as a role model.
- Be aware of technical and workplace jargon. Remember, these are students!
- Share the importance of workplace skills. For example: knowing how to spell words properly is important; working together in a team is something we need to do every day. Always be professional in your communication.
- Try to reinforce staying safe! This program may be the first time some of the students have been on the Internet. They will be learning about safety issues when signed onto the Internet.
- If you notice something in a note from your student that you feel needs attention, notify your IBM MentorPlace program leader immediately. Be a supportive friend, but don't take on situations that need to be handled by the teacher or school staff.
- Resolve all communications problems quickly! If you haven't received a note back from your student after sending more than one message, contact your IBM MentorPlace program leader.
- Remember the bottom line: the program should be a enjoyable experience for mentors and students! Have fun!



Emoticons

While electronic mail can be like a conversation, it is totally devoid of “body language.” Emoticons, which are characters that are meant to look like a face turned on its side, are an easy solution to the problem. These “smiley faces” are used by millions of people throughout the world every day. Some may be familiar; others may not. You may want to share the following with your student.

:-) or :))	Smile; happy
: (or :-<	Sad
;-)	Winking smile
:\	Undecided
:-o	Shocked
l-l	Boredom (sleepy)
:-#	My lips are sealed.
:-l	Hmmm.....
:-p	Sticking my tongue out
(-:	I am left-handed.
{:-)	I part my hair in the middle.
-:-)	I have a mohawk.
8-)	I wear glasses.
::-)	I wear bifocals.
*<:-)	Party; celebration; happy birthday

Other abbreviations

<g>	Grinning, smiling
<vbg>	Very big grin
<D>	Laughing
<	Sighing
<jk>	Just kidding
<	No comment
BFN	Bye for now
BTW	By the way
LOL	Laugh Out Loud!
TGIF	Thank God It's Friday!
THX	Thanks
TTT	Thought That Too
WBS	Write Back Soon
WTG	Way To Go!



Appendix A: Sample IBM parent permission form

Date:

Dear parent or guardian:

We are delighted to announce a wonderful opportunity between [School] and the IBM Corporation: a program called IBM MentorPlace. It is an exciting way for students to receive one-on-one online mentoring with an employee from the business community. Your child is in a class selected to participate in the program.

IBM MentorPlace gives students the unique opportunity to communicate online with an IBM employee. Through the program, students work on classroom projects with IBM mentors and receive career guidance. They also have an outlet for expressing themselves and the chance to practice keyboarding, punctuation and spelling skills. Through these activities, students learn about the responsible use of technology and, perhaps most importantly, they are introduced to other caring adults in the community who have volunteered to help enrich their education. All this is accomplished safely online.

As a participant in the program, your child will be matched with an employee at IBM and will exchange online messages weekly. In the exchange of online messages, both student and the IBM e-Mentor are encouraged to work together on online classroom activities and discuss career interests. Students will not meet with the mentor outside of class, and they **will only use first names**. [Teacher] will monitor e-mail regularly for content.

We are set to begin the e-Mentoring Program on [Date] with a kickoff meeting at [Place] and [Time]. The program will conclude at the end of the school year.

We are asking four things from you:

1. If you approve, please complete and return the permission slip for your child's participation.
2. You, the parent or guardian, agree to hold the school district and IBM Corporation harmless.
3. Encourage your child to be an active participant.
4. Ask your child to tell you about his or her experience with the IBM MentorPlace program.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Thank you!

School Coordinator/Teacher

Name of School



Permission slip

Please return this bottom section to your child's teacher by _____
(date)

I give my child _____, permission to participate in the IBM MentorPlace program. I understand that IBM employees are participating in this program voluntarily and are not trained youth counselors. Except where prohibited by law, I agree that IBM will not be liable for any particular results or the actions or inactions of its employees, and I will not hold the school district or IBM responsible in any way for any claims or damages known or not yet ascertainable. I further understand the e-mentoring is based on the business experience of the mentor and is not intended to replace or substitute for the guidance provided by teachers and parents.

Parent or guardian signature