



Mentor Coordinator Handbook

Austin Partners in Education (APIE) was created as an independent 501(c)(3) organization through a partnership between Austin ISD and the Austin Chamber of Commerce. Our vision is for the Austin community and classrooms to work together to ensure academic excellence and personal success for all students. APIE realizes this vision through school-coordinated School Connections Programs and through its own Classroom Coaching programs.

APIE Contact Information

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GENERAL/MENTOR QUESTIONS

School Connections Program
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REGISTRATION QUESTIONS

Volunteer Intake Specialist
512-637-0900

BACKGROUND CHECK QUESTIONS

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Roles & Responsibilities

Mentor programs are most successful when Austin Partners, the school and volunteers work together to build a community of support for the students.

Austin Partners in Education

School-based mentor programs are facilitated by the School Connections Program Manager at Austin Partners in Education. APIE works with the Mentor Coordinator at each school in Austin ISD to build programs that meet the needs of the students and mentors.

Austin Partners in Education will support the Mentor Coordinator by:

- Providing criminal history background checks for volunteers, in accordance with federal regulation and AISD policy.
- Training mentors on policies and procedures for mentoring children.
- Providing opportunities for additional training and development for mentors.

Mentor Coordinator

Each school interested in participating in the Mentor Program must identify a Mentor Coordinator. This person must be an Austin ISD employee. Mentor Coordinator may coordinate with a Lead Mentor or other AISD employees to facilitate the program.

Mentor Coordinators will:

- Collect Student Referrals for the mentor program from staff and parents.
- Collect Parent Consent forms from students before assigning a mentor.
- Ensure all participating mentors have applied or re-enrolled mentor for the current year and have been approved through a criminal history background check within the last 3 years.
- Provide training for mentors who do not go through APIE training.
- Communicate with mentors within one week of APIE or IN SCHOOL training.
- Assign mentors to a student within two weeks of training.
- Send Mentors who you are not able to assign back to APIE to be redistributed to other schools with need for mentors.
- Contact mentors in advance when students are absent during regular meeting days or when other school events prevent meetings from occurring.
- Notify APIE if mentors are no longer needed at the school.

Timeline

Mentors are more likely to return to your school if they feel a connection to your campus and have a good experience with their student.

August: Preparation

- Return signed MOU and School Information Sheet.
- Attend Mentor Coordinator workshop
- Set a realistic goal for the number of mentors you want this school year.
- Communicate with your staff the procedures for mentors and recognize a designated area for mentors to meet with their students each day.
- Ask staff and parents to submit Student Referrals for mentors.

August: Returning & Transitioning Mentors

- Send Parent Consent forms to students who will participate in the program this year.
- Contact returning and transitioning mentors to communicate expected start date. This should be no later than the 3rd week of school
- Contact APIE if students of your current mentors are no longer enrolled at your campus.
- Follow up with parents as needed.
- Communicate with APIE and mentors if you cannot get Parent Consent form right away.
- APIE will begin training new mentors in September

September: New Mentors

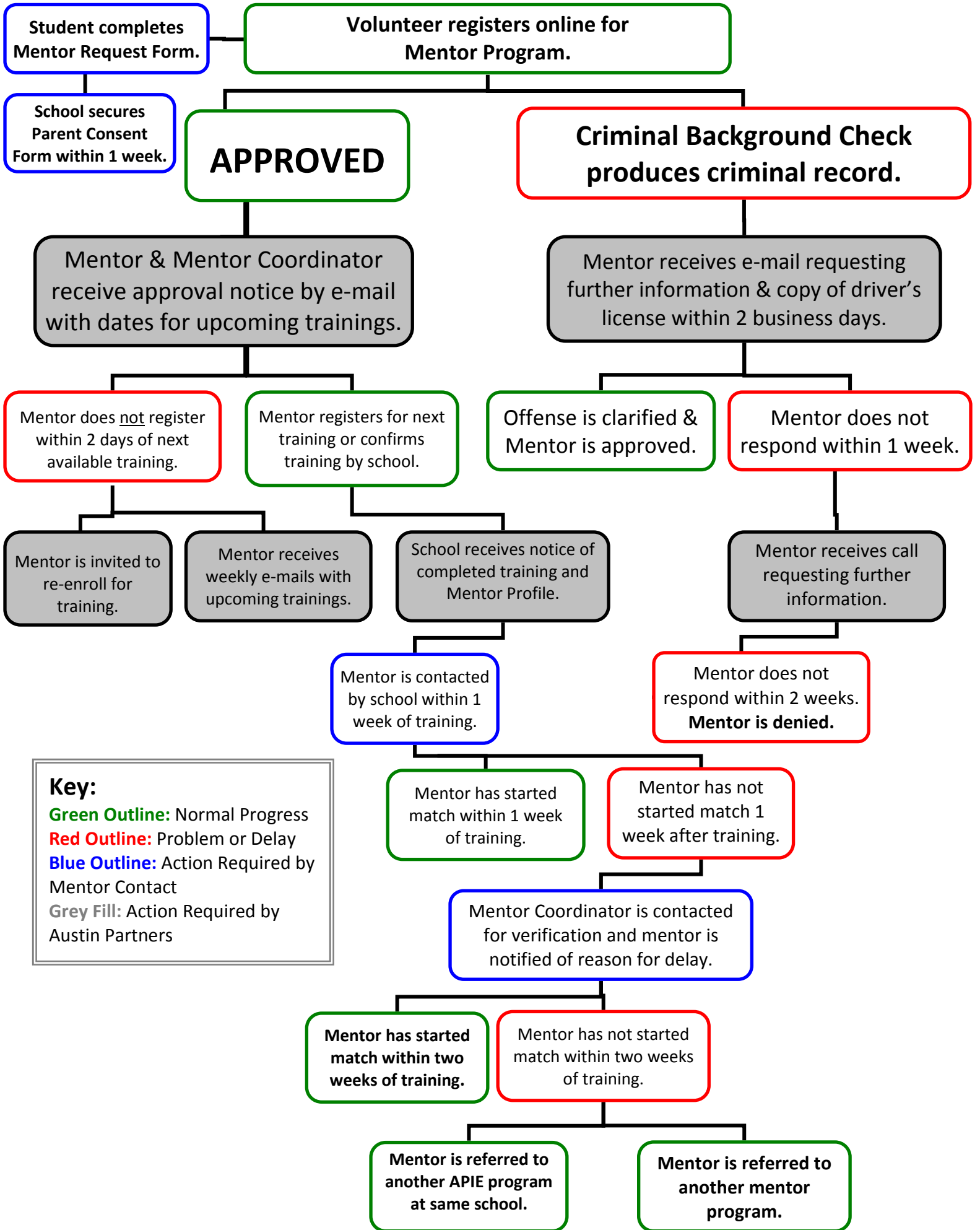
- Ensure newly recruited mentors are approved and trained before matching.
- Notify APIE of any mentors you have trained and placed

August - March

- Continue to match new mentors.
- Maintain a small pool of students who have submitted Parent Consent forms.
- Update Mentor Status reports weekly with placed, in process, or dropped statuses

March: Reassess Mentor Needs

- APIE will stop registration and training for new mentors in March unless otherwise notified by school Mentor Coordinators.
- Students should only be matched with mentors in very special circumstances.



Key:
Green Outline: Normal Progress
Red Outline: Problem or Delay
Blue Outline: Action Required by Mentor Contact
Grey Fill: Action Required by Austin Partners

Background Check Procedures

All mentors must be screened by a criminal history background check.

Registering or Re-enrolling Online

Each year all mentors must register or re-enroll in that year's mentor program to appear as approved mentors on the Mentor Coordinator's list. All new mentors must submit to a background check by registering at www.austinpartners.org. By choosing "Volunteer" from the top menu, mentors can view opportunities by program, by area of town or for a specific school.

It is important for ALL returning mentors to register so that APIE can ensure to update background checks as required as well as being able to recognize their commitment to the program in Volunteer Appreciation Events.

To register or re-enroll, mentors should:

1. Go to www.austinpartners.org.
NOTE: You may enter a registration for a mentor if you have all of their relevant contact and personal information.
2. Select "Volunteer" from the top menu.
3. Choose "Volunteer Center" from the drop-down menu.
4. From the Program menu, choose the "Mentoring" volunteer opportunity and click Search.
 - a. You can minimize your search by two methods:
 - i. Select an area of Austin from the "Neighborhood" drop down menu **OR**
 - ii. Select your preferred school from the "School" drop down menu.
5. Input their e-mail address. *Volunteers must submit an e-mail address to receive notice of the background check results.*
NOTE: If a volunteer does not have an active e-mail address, they should input name.birthdate@noemail.com and a valid phone number.
Example: bradpitt122884@noemail.com
6. If a volunteer's e-mail address is already in the APIE system, they will be immediately signed up for the volunteer opportunity. If they are due for a background check, the system will automatically notify APIE and we will rerun the volunteer's information for an updated background check status.
NOTE: If a volunteer has registered in the APIE system before and has a new e-mail address, they should contact APIE directly at (512) 637-0900 to update their registration.
7. If a volunteer's e-mail address is not in the APIE system, they should click on the "Volunteer Registration" button and complete all required fields.

See appendix for more information regarding background checks.

Austin ISD Employees

Current Austin ISD employees do not need to submit to a background check. AISD employees who will be mentoring will register at www.austinpartners.org and choose not to authorize a

background check. There is a field in the registration process that requests employment information. AISD employees will still attend training.

How long do background checks take?

Volunteers with no criminal history should receive an approval notice by e-mail within 2 business days. The Mentor Coordinator can select to be copied on these approval e-mails (see below).

If a volunteer has a criminal history, APIE will contact the volunteer directly by e-mail to request further information. If a volunteer does not respond within 1 week, APIE will contact the volunteer by phone. If a volunteer does not respond within 2 weeks or does not provide accurate contact information, he/she will be denied and a notice will be sent to the school.

Verifying Volunteer ID

A volunteer's background check is NOT complete until their legal name and birth date have been verified by an AISD employee at the school where the person is to volunteer. Because APIE uses an online background check system, it is essential that additional steps are taken to ensure the accuracy of the information used for the check.

Before allowing a volunteer to meet with students, your school MUST confirm that the legal name and birth date used on the volunteer's driver's license, passport, or other government-issued picture ID matches the information provided for the background check. In situations where a picture ID was instrumental in determining that a background check result was attributable to the applicant, your school must verify that the ID used matches the ID presented in person. ***APIE accepts no responsibility for misrepresentation or inaccurate information submitted during registration.*** It is the responsibility of the school to verify this information before allowing volunteers into your program.

What if information on an ID is different from information used for a background check?

If the information is inconsistent, please notify APIE so that a new background check can be re-processed. Requests for background check updates will be sent via email to APIE at apie@austinpartners.org. Phone requests will not be accepted, and background check re-processing will take 2 business days to 2 weeks.

Do volunteers approved by APIE need to check in through Raptor?

All visitors to a school campus will continue following regular school processes, including complying with office check in procedures through the Raptor system.

Training

APIE offers training for all mentors. In-person trainings will be offered 1-2 times a month depending on demand. Trainings are scheduled at the APIE location and usually last 1.5 hours. New mentors are not eligible to meet with students until training has been completed.

If you would like to train your own mentors, please incorporate the information in the APIE Mentor Handbook with your training. Also, please give the mentors a copy of this handbook at their training.

It is very important that mentors bring a valid driver's license, passport, or other government-issued picture ID to training to verify the accuracy of the background check.

Please submit all training sign-in sheets to APIE immediately following training with confirmation of the legal name and birth date.

Student Referral Process

Student Referral Form

The Student Referral Form is for teachers and parents to communicate with you about their recommended students for the mentor program. You can make Student Referral Forms available throughout the school with directions for submitting the form to the Mentor Coordinator upon completion. This can be an opportunity for collaborative conversation on your campus.

Masters of this form can be found at www.austinpartners.org/forms

See the appendix for a sample Student Referral Form.

Eligibility Criteria

Below are some suggestions for referring a student as having need for a mentor:

- Needs assistance developing social skills
- Needs a positive role model
- Has few friends his/her own age
- Lacks adequate support and attention from a stable adult
- Is not reaching their full academic potential
- Has a family history of problems with social and/or community adjustment
- Exhibits low self-esteem or signs of depression
- Has been traumatized by a significant event in his/her life and is receiving, or has received, supportive counseling
- Is economically or socially disadvantaged

Students Who Should Not Participate

There are 3 situations when a student would not be assigned a mentor:

- Student has explicitly stated that he/she does not want a mentor.
- Parent/guardian has not given written consent for participation.
- Student has significant emotional and/or behavioral issues that require professional counseling or medical interventions.

Mentor Request Forms

We value the confidentiality of your students. As you gather information about the needs of your students and the appropriate mentor match, we recommend having a completed Mentor Request Form for each participating student. This will ensure the appropriate mentor connection is made.

Parent Consent Form

Every student who participates in the mentor program must submit a signed Parent Consent form every school year before meeting with a mentor.

Because mentors meet individually with students, it is necessary that parents/guardians are notified of the student's referral for participation and are allowed to decline permission. Students cannot be assigned a mentor without parent/guardian consent under any circumstances.

Invitations for Participation and Parent Consent forms are available in English and Spanish on the Austin Partners in Education website at <http://www.austinpartners.org/forms>.

It is important to note that there is media release permission that require responses on the Parent Consent form. Parents do not have to allow media release. They do need to grant or deny permission on this form. The form offers the following items for media release to APIE:

- Student data for evaluation purposes
- Photography and/or video for public relations, recruitment or other media purposes
- Student's name and grade level to be included in print with his/her image

Parents/guardians will be made aware that their child may still meet with a mentor and their student may still meet with a mentor with the signed Parent Consent Form even if they do not authorize the media requests.

Participation and Parent Consent Forms for all students can be submitted to Austin Partners in Education throughout the school year.

Mentor Matches

Mentor relationships are most successful when the student and mentor have complimentary personalities or shared interests.

Mentor Profile

Consider the Mentor Profile carefully before matching a student. Mentors are encouraged to be honest about their personalities and expectations of their student and experiences. Mentors should not be matched with students who do not align with the interests expressed on the profile or students who do not reasonably meet their preferences. Referring to a student's Mentor Request Form will help you when matching mentors and students with one another.

Gender Guidelines: Male mentors will **only** be matched with male students. In elementary school, female mentors can be matched with female or male students with consideration of the student's needs and experiences. In middle and high school, female mentors should **only** be matched with female students.

** Opposite gender matches may occur in middle and high school when mentors have transitioned with a student from elementary school.*

Cross-Cultural Matches: Some of the best mentoring relationships develop between students and mentors who come from very different backgrounds. Take into consideration preferences listed on the Mentor Profile and the student's preferences before making cross-cultural matches.

The First Meeting

Contact mentors as soon as possible to schedule the first visit. If you are a half-time counselor, schedule mentor visits for days when you will be at the school so that you will be available to answer questions.

Before the mentor and student meet each other, it is important to brief each of them on the expectations of the relationship. Students should understand the role mentors play in their life and the expectation that they will meet every week at the same time.

Mentors will be given some background information regarding their student before the first meeting. Share as much information as permitted to prepare the mentor and provide any suggestions for activities the mentor should try with their student.

Warning Signs

Mentor Visit Log

Check the to make sure mentors are meeting weekly with their students. Follow up with mentors who have missed meetings with or without notice. Mentors applied with the

understanding that mentoring is a weekly year long commitment. Make sure you reaffirm the expectation of weekly visits with the mentor and discuss any reasons for inconsistency with the mentor and student. Troubleshoot with mentor to see if another day of the week is better for meeting their student. Austin Partners in Education can provide further support on these difficult situations.

Student Resistance

If you know that you have matched a mentor with a student who may be resistant to the relationship, make sure to follow up over the course of the first month to ensure that both parties are having a good experience.

Warning signs that the relationship is not developing include:

- Meetings are not taking place regularly.
- Mentor is unsure of what activities to do with the child.
- Child does not enjoy his/her time with the mentor.
- Child implies that the mentor makes all the decisions regarding activities.
- Mentor complains that the child doesn't talk during meetings.
- Mentor is overwhelmed by the child's problems.
- Mentor feels that he/she is not making a difference in the child's life.
- Mentor is breaking program ground rules.
- Student is breaking program ground rules
- Meetings are not taking place one-on-one.
- One or both parties are losing interest in the program.
- Mentor complains of getting conflicted messages about his/her role.

Inappropriate Behavior

If you or anyone else at the school ever has concerns regarding the conduct of a mentor, please report this immediately to Austin Partners in Education.

Mentors can be asked to leave the mentor program for any reason at the student's or school's request. Austin Partners in Education will collaborate with the Mentor Coordinator and/or the mentor to arrive at a communication plan.

Re-Matching Mentors

Mentors may discontinue a match and start a new match for the following reasons:

- Student has requested to stop meeting with mentor for reasons other than inappropriate behavior or disregard for program rules.
- Student has left school and mentor is unable to transition to new campus.

Mentor Retention

Office Staff

The way mentors and volunteers are greeted when they come to your school will directly influence their feelings towards the program. Discuss the mentor program with the front office staff. Explain sign-in procedures and how to direct mentors to the appropriate places.

School Holidays & Field Trips

It is important that mentors are kept up-to-date about events that will prevent or change their weekly meetings with their students. Mentors are encouraged to call the school before each meeting to make sure their students are available. Mentors who are meeting with their student during class time will have the respective teacher's contact information, so the mentor can communicate with the teacher directly if needed. Please provide such mentors with the teacher's contact information.

Let mentors know when their students will not be able to meet with them before the mentor comes to the school.

Continuous Support

Many mentors return each year because they have developed strong connections with their students. While the percentage of mentors who are satisfied with their experience has increased over the years, many mentors still do not feel personally connected to their school. Regular communication with your mentors allows them to feel like they are a part of the community at your school. This will not only encourage mentors to return each school year; it will encourage mentors to become involved in other ways

Appreciation Events

Holding a breakfast or luncheon for your mentors at the beginning and/or end of each semester is a great way to show mentors and volunteers how much you appreciate them. Austin Partners in Education can provide you with appreciation certificates. Please allow 1-2 weeks to receive these materials.

Mentor Match Information

The success of the mentor program is heavily dependent on communication between the Mentor Coordinators and Austin Partners in Education. After a mentor is trained, APIE will send mentor profiles to the Mentor Coordinator of the mentor's school of choice.

Best Practice Referrals

Austin Partners in Education wants to ensure as many students possible are meeting with mentors each week. The majority of Mentor Coordinators have reported that it is reasonable for mentors to meet with their students within 2 weeks of training. If mentors do not receive any communication from the school regarding their match within 2 weeks, they will be offered the opportunity to be referred to another school.

Mentor Transitions

Students in Austin ISD are especially transient, so it is possible that a student can transfer to another school during the academic year. It is very important to let the mentor know if their student has left your school. Some mentors may be able to transition to their student's new school or they may be interested in starting a new match at your school. You will need to keep each mentors will in the loop regarding these changes with their student.