

# BIGS

---

Welcome brave mentors! You've been chosen (volun-told) to guide the next generation—tiny humans armed with glitter, wild imagination, and an uncanny ability to lose one of their shoes in less than five minutes. This is not just mentoring...it's a quest! One that will test your courage, your patience, and your ability to answer deep philosophical questions like, "Is pizza a vegetable?"

You're about to become a "BIG" to our younger students—which means you'll be part teacher, part role model, and part human jungle gym. They may be small or sticky and have endless energy and questions, but these kids will be looking up to you (literally and figuratively). They see you as the cool older student who knows everything—from how to tie their shoes to why Pluto got demoted.

Tighten your shoelaces, brush up on your knock-knock jokes, and get ready to be a BIG kid who makes a big impact. Good luck BIG's, and may your juice boxes be ever full!

## How To Get Started:

- 1) Introduce yourself to some littles – shake their hand, give a high five, whatever suits your fancy.
- 2) Play our ice breaker game – this is your chance to prove how cool you are by showing that you **care** about littles in the Co-Op. Listen to their answers and ask at least one follow-up question. Answer the questions yourself and tell your little why you chose your answer. Find some common ground!
- 3) If you have a little you want to claim as your own, introduce yourself to that little's parent and exchange contact info. Most (if not all) of your contact with your little will go through their parent. Be sure you have a way to get in touch!

## How To Keep It Going:

- Check in with a few littles at least once per month-just say hi or share a joke. A little effort goes a long way! If you would like to know the birthday of a specific little, ask the Co-Op Director.
- Work to send (email or text) or say at LEAST one encouraging thing to a new little each month.
- If you have claimed a little and you know you will miss an event, let that little know when and why. Littles are interested in you and your life too!
- Show interest in your little's interests...even if it isn't very interesting. **ASK THEM QUESTIONS!**
- Be a good role model-you are their example of kind and responsible behavior!

## Want More Ideas?

- Work together on an activity or craft—even if it is just coloring a picture together
- Sit by each other for one of our group picnic lunches
- Invent a secret handshake or nicknames

## Remember!

- Create an appropriate relationship with your little-no inappropriate touching, never insult or make fun of your little, do NOT encourage your little to act contrarily to their parent's direction, and only spend time with your little under appropriate supervision.
- Have an open line of communication with your little's parents, especially if your little does or says something concerning.

## **Why Have a little at All?**

- 1) Build Trust and Connection-you are helping to create a supportive environment where kids of all ages feel comfortable in their skin and are encouraged in their interests. Wouldn't it have been amazing when you were little to have an older student do this for you?
- 2) Model and Practice Servant Leadership-being a mentor is actually very good for you as well! You'll learn how to relate and interact with someone that is very different from you, how to be a good leader, and see how other families live and learn.
- 3) Inspire Others-you and these littles have all year to get to know each other and, even if this year passes quickly or your claimed little moves away, it is amazing how much an older student can impact a younger student in a short amount of time. You will be an influential force in your little's life and in the lives of your peers...so be a good one!
- 4) Mentorship also looks good on your high school transcript/resume. Just sayin'.

## **Troubleshooting:**

- If you are having trouble connecting with your little, talk with their parents or yours. If all else fails, go to one of the Valley Co-Op Leaders or teachers.
- At a loss for what to do with these tiny people? Ask for help or advice if you need it! Parents, volunteers, leadership, and other BIGs are great places to go for advice.
- This program is designed to NOT have any cost associated with it—joining a little for one of our Co-Op events is easy and free, but if you want to get or make a card for their birthday, that is a great idea! Check with your little's parents before giving a little any gift or anything edible.