



Teacher Frequently Asked Questions

1. What students are best suited for Big Brothers Big Sisters?

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is a one-on-one mentoring program. It can benefit students struggling in school, dealing with issues at home, suffering from low self-esteem, behaving poorly in the classroom, low attendance and a variety of other challenges. We also work with children who have an incarcerated parent, or a parent who is either on probation or a habitual offender. Any child who needs extra one-on-one support is appropriate for the program.

2. How do I refer a student?

If you have a student you feel could benefit from participating in BBBS, the first step is to supply us with a referral form. These forms are located in your individual BBBS packet or you can download them on our website at www.bbbsstjohns.org/schools.html. We ask that you explain the reason you believe the student could use a mentor – this is our first introduction to the student and we use this as a guide. It is important to include the best times the student is available to meet with a mentor (please be as specific as possible).

The second step is to obtain a parent permission slip. We cannot speak with the student until we have parental consent. These are also located in your individual packet as well as on our website. Please send the application/consent form home and return the signed form to the BBBS mailbox (Crookshank) or give them to the School Guidance Counselor (Osceola).

3. What activities do the matches do when they meet?

Mentors support students in their greatest area of need. They also have fun with their Littles and form friendships. Many matches spend time eating lunch, playing on the playground, working on homework, talking, coloring, etc. Some mentors choose to bring lunch or games for their Littles but it is not a requirement. There is an Activity Book located in the front office that mentors can utilize. It includes worksheets on various topics and is organized by grade level. Please feel free to send a student home with work they could use an extra hand with. On your referral form there is space for you to list activities you would like to see the match do as well.



4. How are volunteers selected?

Volunteers go through a very thorough screening process which includes a face-to-face interview, criminal background check and reference checks. Child safety is our primary concern. If for any reason we do not feel a volunteer is suited for our program, we do not approve him or her for volunteering.

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5. Why do you need report cards?

We use report cards to track academic and behavioral progress as well as attendance. Each student is given a baseline score that correlates with the lowest grade on their report card. We then develop a match plan that is based on academic needs, feedback from teachers and the child assessment.

6. When a student is referred, how long will it take to match him/her with a mentor?

Bigs are specifically selected for each child. Both Littles and Bigs have the opportunity during the initial interview to be specific about their interests and what they would like to do with their mentor/mentee. Once an appropriate Big is selected, they can begin meeting immediately. Our main focus is choosing the right mentor for each student in order to foster a successful match with positive outcomes.

7. What is my role in the match?

As a teacher, you know the students better than anyone. By making us aware of areas the students are lacking in, potential challenges, obstacles the match may encounter, etc. we can better prepare the volunteer. When you first refer a student, it is helpful to let us know the times he/she is available. Throughout the school year, we depend on your feedback to support the match and foster success.

8. Why do matches require a full hour to meet?



The one-hour meeting time is per our grant requirements. We ask that mentors dedicate at least 12 hours to their mentees per year. This has been proven the most effective in improving students' grades, attendance and overall attitude. Matches that have met for shorter than an hour have commented that it was not enough time. If the match meets during lunch or recess, an hour allows them time to talk and have fun as well as work on school work or discuss more serious issues.

9. How can I help the Big?

In previous years, feedback from Bigs has been positive regarding the teachers they work with. The most common request was that they had more information from you about what areas they could help their Littles in. This information can be given directly to them or to BBBS staff.

10. One of my students has a Big but lately has been acting up. I don't think he/she should be allowed to see his/her Big until this improves. What do I do?

Please contact us so that we can develop a plan of action together. Using the privilege of a Big as punishment is frustrating to the child and the volunteer. We can shift the focus of the match to help encourage resolution of the problem. We work with the most vulnerable children and we do not give up on them. If the child is misbehaving, we provide the volunteer and/or parent with resources in order to help the child get back on track. If you have any concerns regarding a match, please contact us as soon as possible.

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11. One of my Littles hasn't seen their Big in a while. What do I do?

Contact us immediately if you feel there are problems occurring with the match or if the volunteer hasn't been meeting with his/her student consistently. Each volunteer signs a contract, agreeing to meet their Little every week for one hour. We also ask that mentors commit to mentoring a child for a minimum of 12 months. We track meeting times through our log book located in the front office. Please keep in mind that during the holiday season Flagler College students are out of school from mid-December to mid-January. Many of them return home for the holidays but will resume meeting with their Littles when they return to St. Augustine. During this time it may be necessary for some volunteers to change their meeting time and/or day as their class schedules will change.

12. One of my student's Big is always late to arrive, disrupts my class or returns the student late.

Again, please let us know who the volunteer or student is so we can speak with them. We can then remind them of the importance of promptness and courtesy. It is very important that they lead by example.

13. What do I do if I feel a match is not working out?

Let us know immediately! We want every Little to be in the best match possible and we want to address any problems early and thoroughly. If it is a safety concern, please let us know immediately and we will suspend the match until the issue is discussed and resolved.

14. What happens to a student after 5th grade?

If a 5th grade student is interested in continuing with his/her match, we will either transition the match to middle school or refer the Little to our community-based program which serves youth up to 18 years of age. In this case, the parent must contact us before we can make the transition. A community match requires an in-home interview with the Little and the family as well as the volunteer.

15. How many children are served by Big Brothers Big Sisters?

We typically serve between 100 and 125 children per year.

16. How can I get in contact with you?

You can contact us at the office (904) 829-9986 or by cell phone at (904) 501-5098 or (904) 315-4067. You may also email us at bbbs@bbbstjohns.org. We really prefer to speak with teachers face-to-face so feel free to schedule a convenient time to meet in person (we can work with your schedule).



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