

HIGH SCHOOL BIGS MENTORING

About the Organization

The mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie, Niagara and the Southern Tier (BBBS) is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth. It is our goal that our children achieve outcomes and develop skills that increase their ability to make positive decisions, avoid risky behaviors and succeed academically. For almost 50 years, we have provided mentoring services to more than 12,500 children in WNY using evidence-based, best practice mentoring.

High School Bigs Mentoring Program:

COVID-19 has caused a large amount of adversity in the educational and personal lives of students that will continue impact them well after the pandemic has ended. In an article titled *A New "New Deal" for Education: Top 10 Policy Moves for States in the COVID 2.0 Era*, Linda Darlin-Hammond, the President and CEO of The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) and Tara Kini, the Chief of Staff and Director of State Policy at the LPI, discuss evidence-based educational policies to respond to the lasting effects of COVID-19 on students. The article states that educators will need to address a wide range of learning needs, both social-emotional and academic—needs that will remain in a future that promises to disrupt schooling further. One of the solutions to mitigating this impact is to develop strong, trusting relationships and opportunities to develop social and emotional learning (SEL) skills within the school setting. The High School Bigs Mentoring Program provides a unique opportunity to build strong relationships and SEL skills between different generations of students.

The High School Bigs Mentoring Program provides a carefully developed and planned curriculum with the support of a BBBS Staff Member for one-to-one mentoring matches that meet once every week in a district setting. There are three goals for High School Bigs Program activities: to increase the academic performance; to reduce the student's behaviors that have a negative influence on their academic performance (i.e. truancy); and to increase the student's pro-social behavior. Any activity that is planned for the matches must build skills and competencies towards achieving these three goals. The mentoring relationship provides both the younger and older student with a healthy friendship within their school community and an opportunity to grow and learn from one another.

Benefits for Bigs/High School Students:

- Increased awareness and commitment to community
- Opportunity to be a positive influence and mentor
- Increased pro-social behavior, attendance, academics and involvement in school community
- Participation in extra-curricular activity in a school-based setting
- Opportunity to acquire community service hours required for graduation

Benefits for Littles/Elementary or Intermediate School Students:

- Having a positive role model
- Building and maintaining healthy friendships
- Learning how to make positive life choices
- Increased pro-social behavior, attendance and academics
- Participation in extra-curricular activity in a school-based setting