Adopter Handbook

Welcome

Thank you for partnering with Adopt A Class (AAC)! As a volunteer Adopter through AAC, you will connect with the youth in your community; inspire a child to learn, dream, hope and become a leader; and, you can help close the mentoring gap in our area.

Please review this handbook in its entirety as it gives an overview of the AAC program and provides important guidelines you should be aware of prior to volunteering.

It is important to know our term "Adopter". This is a term we use when referring to adult volunteers and mentors in our program. We also use this term when referring to a sponsoring organization in our program as well. For example, Children's Hospital is an "Adopter" in our program and they currently have 18 "Adopter Teams" who each adopt a class for a school year. Members of each team are called "Adopter" and each Adopter Team has at least one "Team Lead".

Thank you for providing your precious time, heart, and expertise as an AAC Adopter. With the continued support of our community businesses, civic groups, high schools and colleges, many children in our community will realize their future possibilities.

Table of Contents

Our Story

In 2002, Bill Burwinkel and 30 employees at his company, National Marketshare Group, Inc., recognized a need for business involvement at Oyler Community Learning Center, the school just a few blocks from their office in the Cincinnati neighborhood of Lower Price Hill. Bill's idea was for his employees to serve as role models for the students and offer them a vision for what they could achieve upon attaining a high school diploma or college degree. Bill and his employees launched a pen-pal project with a fifth grade class. Over the course of the year, National Marketshare employees found themselves engaged in discussions about workplace expectations, the importance of finishing school, the concept of good work ethic and students' visions for their future.

"Many children in our community do not know what they can aspire to"
Bill Burwinkel, Adopt A Class Founder

Bill realized that there were many more children in need so he sought out other businesses to partner with Oyler. Within one year, each of the 670 students had been "adopted" by a business or a community group. 14 years later, AAC has expanded into 31 schools across Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. Currently, over 240 business and community groups are working with over 4000 students to teach social skills and relationship-building.

Program Overview

Our Vision: A Greater Cincinnati where all students have access to caring adults who expose them to a breadth of life and career experiences so they can unleash their full potential.

Our Mission: AAC connects businesses and civic groups with students in our economically challenged schools. By pairing teams with individual classrooms, our adult mentors expose the students to a breadth of experiences and training to be job and career ready. For the organization, this engagement fosters a culture of teamwork and increased knowledge of our community's needs & the challenges faced by our youth.

How We Achieve our Mission:
- We **RECRUIT** teams of mentors, we call "adopters", all from the same organization, to "adopt" a classroom for a school year.
- We **INVITE** schools to join our program as they are the connection to the children.
- We **TRAIN** all adopters and to ensure a quality program
- We provide on-going **SUPPORT** to all adopters
- We **CAPTURE** volunteer experience and impact through surveys and anecdotes.

Who We Serve: Elementary students (Pre-K – 8th grade) in schools where at least 65% of the students are Federal Title 1, also known as Free & Reduced Lunch status (the education system's way for measuring income levels of each student).

On average, 92% of the students we serve are eligible for free or reduced meals. Presently over 65% of students served live in single family homes and just under 5% have no permanent address.

How We Work: Adopting teams visit their classroom for 1 hour once a month, during the school day between September and May, where they engage in educational activities (focused on college & career or building soft skills). They also do field trips and pen palling to spur conversation, build awareness and deepen learning. Through this experience, students are exposed to a breadth of life experiences, caring adults & a wide variety of careers to get them excited about their future.

Role and Responsibilities

It is AAC's policy to provide a safe and positive experience for all program participants. It is thus vital to the organization that all volunteers be aware of the following roles and responsibilities and speak up if there are any questions or concerns. All volunteers must sign up for volunteer projects through their Adopter Team Lead or, if a new Adopter Team is to be established, the AAC staff. All Adopter Team Leads are responsible for ensuring that all volunteers participating in any volunteer project have read and acknowledged the policies and procedures contained in this Handbook. Volunteers may not bring a guest on a project unless the AAC has given prior approval and guests have received a copy of this Handbook and have acknowledged its contents by signing the Volunteer Acknowledgement

Program Key Roles

Our program's success is possible through 5 key roles:

Adopter Teams
Time Commitment: up to 12 hrs/school year

Each team has at least 8-10 members who:
- Has 6+ members who visit the classroom (enough for a 4:1 ratio in the classroom) once a month for an hour through out the school year– average 7 visits a year

- Works together with Team Lead and Teacher to plan calendar of visits

- Writes pen pal letters at least once in between each class visit

- Accompanies students on a field trip either to office or local place of interest (park, aquarium)

- Actively participates in AAC trainings, offerings, events and surveys

- Understands AAC program and follows Safety Guidelines

- Communicates concerns with Team Lead

- Pledges to be responsive to all correspondence within 48 hrs

- Be on time. Follow through with promised visits or email teacher in advance to cancel a visit so she can prepare the class/mentee(s).
    *Volunteers will not be compensated.

Adopter Team Lead
Time Commitment: up to 24 hrs/school year

- Participates as mentor during each class visit

- Acts as point of contact and liaison

- Meets with Teacher at beginning of school to set curriculum goals and create calendar of visits for the year

- Plans group activities in advance of classroom visits including at least 1 college/career focused activity and 1 field trip

- Logs monthly visits in AAC Mobile App

- Distributes pen pal letters, organizes responses to students, and sends to school (hard copy)

- Actively participates in AAC trainings, offerings, events and surveys

- Understands AAC program and follows Safety Guidelines *(signs document attesting self and all team members agree and will follow guidelines)*

- Communicates concerns with AAC

- Pledges to be responsive to all correspondence within 48 hrs

ADOPT A CLASS

Classroom Teacher
Time Commitment: 12+ hrs/school year

- Meets with the Team Lead at the beginning of the school year to review curriculum goals and create calendar of visits for the year

- Recommends activity and field trip ideas to Adopters

- Remains with students at all times and manages classroom behavior

- Facilitates pen pal exchange and any other exchange between students and their families

- Helps arrange transportation and permission slips for field trips

- Actively participates in AAC events, offerings and surveys

- Provides Adopters with a positive experience in the school, including expressing appreciation

- Understands AAC program and group mentoring

- Communicates concerns with AAC

- Pledges to be responsive to all correspondence within 48 hrs

School Resource Coordinator
Time Commitment: up to 10 hrs/school year

- Recommends and manages list of teachers participating in program

- Understands AAC program and group mentoring

- Provides Adopters with a positive experience in the school, including expressing appreciation

- Actively participates in AAC trainings, offerings, events and surveys

- Communicates concerns with AAC

- Pledges to be responsive to all correspondence within 48 hrs

Adopt A Class

- Partners with local businesses and schools to facilitate classroom adoption each year

- Onboards new Adopters and Teachers

- Provides trainings and learning opportunities for Adopters throughout the year

- Provides individual support to each team

- Shares activities ideas that are in line with school curriculum and goals

- Offer field trip opportunities (e.g. Reds Game)

- Assists in resolving issues

- Uses data from school visits, mobile app and surveys to provide quality experience for all partners and students

- Pledges to be responsive to all correspondence within 48 hrs

- Answer and respond promptly and appropriately to any and all questions, concerns, or reports regarding appropriate behavior of any volunteer or circumstances surrounding a volunteer project.

ADOPT A CLASS

Getting Started

AAC facilitates partnerships between businesses teams and schools, making it easier to fulfill your team's community engagement goals. Below are key steps for becoming an Adopter:

Enrollment - 3 Steps for Signing Up*

All returning Adopters, AAC will reach out the summer before the upcoming school year to renew your membership

1. Form a team of 8-10 employees that can commit to visiting the classroom at least once a month for an hour through out the year – average 7 visits a year, about 12 hours of time
    - Each Adopter Team will have a designated point person or a "Team Lead".
    - All volunteers must sign up for volunteer projects through their Team Lead or, if a new Adopter Team is to be established, the AAC. Volunteers may not bring a guest on a project unless the AAC has given prior approval and guests have received a copy of this Handbook and have acknowledged its contents by signing the Volunteer Acknowledgement. All Team Leads are responsible for ensuring that all volunteers participating in any Adopter Team volunteer project have read and acknowledged the policies and procedures contained in this Handbook.
    - While AAC typically does not require background checks for volunteers, AAC reserves the right to require a background check, including a criminal background and sexual offender registration check as a precondition to a volunteer's ability to participate in a volunteer project. In addition, a school may have such a requirement.
2. Participate in New Adopter Orientation
3. Each Adopter team supports AAC through a $500 membership fee. Community groups may not apply.

Classroom Matching

The AAC staff will assist in identifying the classroom that is the best for your organization. Once signed up, Adopter Teams are paired with Classroom Teachers in schools that are in close proximity to their place of business. Your team's preference in student population, grade and school will help determine where you volunteer.

Designing Your Program

Each Team Lead should work closely with their Classroom Teacher and team members to plan out a calendar of visits and curriculum goals. To ensure every student in our program has the same kind of experience, we've identified **4 Keys to a Quality Program**: Monthly Visits; Educational Activities; Field Trips; Pen Palling. This framework was created to provide consistency across the program though we want you to bring what makes you and organization unique to classroom. Think about ways you can expose your class to the many careers your company offers and skills they can build to become better prepared for life.

Adopter Teams are responsible for coming up with curriculum/activities as well as all costs. AAC offers a variety of resources to help you design a fun and quality program for your students.

The **Adopt A Class App** captures your visits and all of the great work you are doing in the classroom. The app also allows us to stay better connected with you and, at the end of the year, share a report highlighting all of the time and resources contributed throughout the program. Additionally, tracking your visits helps our schools meet their goals. See instructions for downloading the app to a mobile device below:

Apple Users: How to Install Adopt A Class App on your iPhone
Using the Safari browser on your iPhone go to: http://aacmentors.org/login/
Click the "share" button on the bottom row to bring up the sharing options. *See Figure 1*
Select "Add to Home Screen". (Shorten app name to "AAC if you want) Select "ADD". This will create an icon on your home screen. *See Figure 2 & 3*
The next time you visit the classroom, just click the AAC icon from your home screen to bring up the app. *See Figure 4*
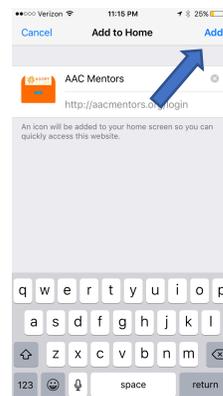
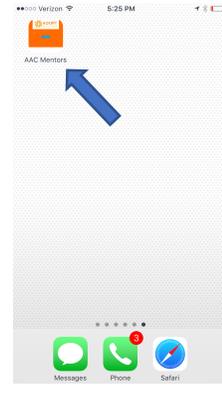| Figure 1 | Figure 2 | Figure 3 | Figure 4 |

Android Users: How to Install Adopt A Class App on your phone
Using the Chrome browser on your Android phone go to: http://aacmentors.org/login/
Click the three vertical dots on the top right of your browser to bring up the menu. *See Figure 1*
Select "Add to Home Screen" then select "ADD". This will create an icon on your home screen. *See Figure 2 & 3*
The next time you visit the classroom, just click the AAC icon from your home screen to bring up the app. *See Figure 4*
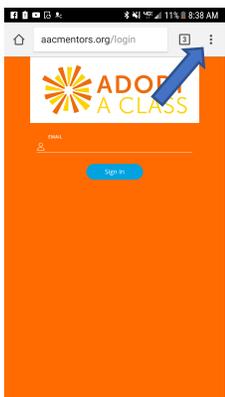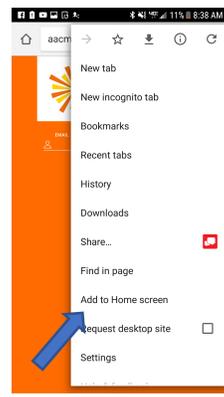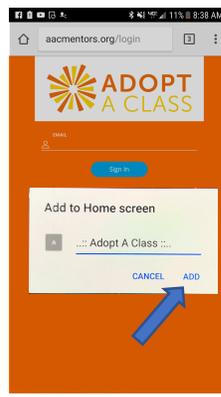
| Figure 1 | Figure 2 | Figure 3 | Figure 4 |

Please know the app is a webpage that can be accessed from both your mobile device and computer. Because this app is a webpage, it cannot be found in your Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

Best Practices & Safety

Consistency is so important for the young people we serve that mentors and teachers need to take this commitment very seriously. Many youth do not receive enough from the adults in their lives; mentors can fill these empty spaces with dependable, sincere, and consistent attention and concern.

Establish a positive, personal relationship with your class/pen pals by:
- Establish mutual trust and respect. Be on time. Follow through with promised visits or email teacher in advance if you need to cancel a visit so she can prepare the class/mentee(s).
- Maintain regular interaction and consistent support. Visit your mentee(s) at least 1x/month with your team members. If you cannot make a visit, make sure you send a note to your mentee(s).
- Make your time together enjoyable and fun.

Help develop college, career and life skills! Work with your class to accomplish specific program goals (e.g., AAC monthly themes and downloadable activities if your team does not have a project in mind).

Encourage Your Students to Reach High. Adopters can encourage young people to talk about their fears, dreams, and concerns. Staying neutral and not judging, but, rather, sharing your own values, is important in listening.

Be mindful of communication. Do not make comments of any kind that relate to a student's physical appearance or development.

Avoid physical contact. Encouragement and friendship should be conveyed through words and gestures, not through touching. Physical contact may be appropriate in limited situations such as when safety requires it, when a student needs help with physical activities that they cannot perform without physical help, or during recreational activities.

Set Limits. An AAC mentoring experience is to take place in a group setting at all times under the supervision of the Classroom Teacher or identified school staff person. At no time should an AAC Mentor be alone in a 1:1 setting with a student. **Do not:**
- leave the room with a student
- Transport student in car, school bussing should be the only form of transportation
- escort a student to the restroom alone
- Be alone with a student for any reason
  - If you are interested in developing a 1:1 mentoring relationship with your mentee, please contact AAC for more information.

ADOPT A CLASS

Interactions With Students

- Adopters must maintain strict confidentiality concerning information they learn about students and staff, including students' grades, records, and abilities.
- Adopters DO NOT discipline students. You may provide "instruction" to students regarding behavior. Report discipline problems to the teacher.
- Adopters must never be alone with the individuals receiving services in the volunteer project or wander away from the group. Adopters must always be supervised when working with students.
- They may not supervise a classroom or give permission for a student to leave a classroom. These are teacher's responsibilities.
- Adopters should set a good example for students by their manner, appearance, and behavior. They should be well-groomed, appropriately dressed, and maintain professional conduct/language.
- Adopters may not give any medications to mentees.
- Adopters may not take photographs of mentees, unless given permission by the teacher. Never post any student photographs or student information on social networks without permission from the assigned classroom teacher.
- Adopters shall not interact with any student outside of the volunteer project unless parental permission has been obtained.
- Adopters shall not give their contact information (e.g. telephone number or email) to any student nor shall they take contact information from students.
- Adopters shall not transport students in Mentor's vehicles, unless pre-approval from the school has been obtained and transportation is strictly to carry out the purposes of the volunteer project.
- Adopters may not use their participation in the project to promote partisan politics, religious matters, or other personal affiliations not related to the volunteer project.
- Adopters must not engage in the following:
    - Discriminatory or racist statements or behaviors.
    - Sexual harassment, for example jokes, innuendos, insults, sexist remarks, the display of derogatory or pornographic pictures, leering touching or kissing.
    - The use of alcohol or illegal drugs.
    - Any unlawful or inappropriate activity.
- AAC mentors are prohibited from using drugs or alcohol or carrying a fire arm while engaged in a mentoring relationship. Our school districts have a zero tolerance policy and we ask that you respect this and model good mentor behavior.

ADOPT
A CLASS

Interactions With Students
(cont)

Appearance and Manner
Adopters should be well-groomed and dress professionally. Adopters set a good example for students by maintaining professional conduct and language. Be positive! Model and reinforce positive behavior.

Volunteer Dismissal
AAC will reassign or dismiss volunteers when such action is in the best interest of AAC, the volunteer, the project, the student and/or the school. Possible reasons for dismissal may include:
*   Refusal to attend required training.
*   Excessive lateness.
*   Disclosure of confidential information.
*   The use of alcohol or other inappropriate substances while on the project.
*   Involvement in any illegal activities.
*   Failure to adhere to any AAC or school policies, guidelines or procedures.
*   Any inappropriate behavior.

Reporting Process
If any Adopter has any questions or concerns about a volunteer project, questions about appropriate behavior of another volunteer on a project, or any complaints about inappropriate behavior by another volunteer, a student, teacher, or AAC representative, they should first speak with an AAC staff member. If the volunteer is unable to speak with an AAC staff member during the project, or has a complaint concerning the AAC staff, he or she should contact the Julie Shifman, AAC Executive Director, at julie@aacmentors.org

ADOPT A CLASS

FAQs

Should we track our donations and time spent with our partner schools?
Yes.   It is important to keep record of your monetary donations, value of donated goods and services, number volunteers and volunteer hours to your partner schools over the course of the year in the *AAC Mobile App*. Your responses will be used to generate a report detailing the actual value of the AAC program, which we will share with you at the close of the year.

What should I do if my Classroom Teacher isn't responsive?
Don't lose faith in your partnership if your assigned classroom teacher does not return your phone call or e-mail immediately or does not honor every request you may ask of them. Please be patient and keep in mind that teachers are frequently away from their desks. In the meantime, reevaluate the partnership to make sure that it represents the best interest of all involved. Examine the frequency and scope of your requests to determine whether they coincide with the commitments that were originally agreed upon between your team and the classroom teacher. Contact AAC staff for advice, guidance, and assistance with re-engaging the Classroom Teacher or to find a better fit for your team.

Can we take pictures of our Class/mentee(s)?
Due to legal requirements, photos are not permitted unless your teacher has indicated that the student has a photo release permission slips on file. Posting any photos to social media or public sites is strictly forbidden unless prior written approval from the student's parent/guardian has been obtained.

Can I hug my mentee?
The "Safe Touch Zones" refer to how and where it is appropriate to touch children. Handshakes and high fives are Safe Touch Zones.

How do I offer praise?
Be specific about what you praise. Say, "[Child's name], you did a great job of sounding out each word on the page," instead of a, "Good job!" Praise creates an internal motivation that encourages the child to repeat the behavior.

What if the children are not listening to me?
Begin every activity by explaining the directions. This is the first step in prevention! If the child is uncooperative, inform the teacher. Follow up with the teacher on what the classroom rules are and how you can support those rules. Never administer punishments or threats.

What should I do if the school has a fire drill or real emergency?
The staff at the front desk may or may not inform you of a practice drill. Whether real or practice, it is important that you follow the instructions of the classroom teacher or nearest school personnel. These drills are another opportunity for you to model good behavior for your students.

ADOPT
A CLASS

FAQs

Is there a bad time of year to enter into a partnership?
No. In fact, partnerships that begin late in the school year get the advantage of a "test drive" before planning their activities for the next year.

Is there a minimum financial investment for Adopting Teams?
There is **no cost** associated with becoming an Adopter through AAC. Financial and in-kind donations are made at the discretion of the community partner. AAC is an independent, local nonprofit and continues to exist through the generosity of our donors and sponsors. We encourage our business partners to consider a $500 donation per adopted class with an exception granted to community groups, government entities and non profits. As a non profit, we depend on this fee for half of our annual income (the rest is raised through our annual fund and grants). It allows us to create activities, train teams, and host events like our Team Lead Symposium.

Do we have to renew our partnerships? How often?
Each summer, AAC will contact each Adopter to verify that the business/organization wants to continue the partnership for the next school year and to confirm who the AAC team liaison for that business is. Notification of any changes will be sent to the school and the business/organization.

Recommitments prevent class partnerships from becoming inactive with time, provide opportunities to strengthen relationships, and encourage additional employees to join the Team or to start an additional Team. Recommitments provide the school and AAC with the most up-to-date partner contact information and offer insight into which schools are in the greatest need of more mentors.

Things to Remember During the School Year:
-Keep in communication with your assigned AAC Staff member and invite us out to your visits.
- Actively participate in AAC events, offerings and surveys
-Log all visits in the Adopt A Class App

ADOPT
A CLASS

Meet the Team Behind the Work

Julie Shifman
Executive Director
julie@aacmentors.org

Melanie Ervin
Director of Communication
melanie@aacmentors.org

Marie Rusincovitch
Director of Programming
marie@aacmentors.org

Paola Rivas
Program Manager
paola@aacmentors.org

A: 3805 Edwards Rd, Suite 550, Cincinnati, OH 45209
W: aacmentors.org
Follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter using @AdoptAClass

ADOPT A CLASS

ADOPT A CLASS FOUNDATION ("AAC")

VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

AAC is committed to making a positive difference in the community. AAC appreciates all the time and effort that each volunteer contributes to helping children in pre-K-8th grade by mentoring students with the purpose of providing positive role models, helping the students to developing practical and social skills, and building the culture of philanthropy and teamwork in our community. As such, AAC has provided you with a copy of AAC's Volunteer Handbook, which outlines AAC's Volunteer Policies and Procedures.

After reading the Volunteer Handbook, please sign and date below to indicate your and all team members' agreement to the following statements:

I acknowledge that I have received my copy of the Volunteer Handbook, which includes AAC's Volunteer policies and procedures. I have read the Handbook and understand that if I have questions I will ask someone on staff at AAC for assistance. I understand how the Handbook relates to my participation in any AAC volunteer program and I agree to abide by all Handbook requirements. I acknowledge that I have a duty to report violations that I become aware of in accordance with the Handbook. I acknowledge that my duty to make such prompt disclosures is a vital part of my responsibilities and that my failure to report known or reasonably suspected unlawful or improper conduct may be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Organization_____

Date _____