



Dear Community Leader:

Thank you for thinking about mentoring a YES student.

The Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program provides high school students from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia with the opportunity to live and study in the United States for an academic year. This Program is sponsored by the U.S. State Department, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and administered by a consortium of organizations that includes Youth For Understanding USA (YFU), one of the world's oldest, largest, and most respected international exchange organizations. Each year YFU arranges exchange experiences for more than 2,500 high-school students between over 50 nations, including the countries involved in the YES Program. YES students were selected for their academic excellence, commitment to community service and desire to share their countries and cultures with Americans and, in turn, share their experiences upon returning home. Cross-cultural exchange, interpersonal development and civic education are important components of the YES experience.

As part of their scholarship, all YES students are required to identify and interact with a mentor on a regular basis; this interaction adds depth and breath to the student exchange experience. We realize that you are very busy and if you are able to be a YES student mentor, we ask only that your interaction be consistent throughout the year. Meeting monthly either in-person, or over the phone, and communicating via email would add a lot to a YES student's exchange year.

Your encouragement is a valuable component of student growth. Together, mentors and students can discover and cultivate talents and interests. As you discuss career opportunities, you will likely help your student to develop long term plans and build self-confidence.

Mentoring is especially beneficial to exchange students. As they navigate their way through a foreign world of language, culture and ideas, exchange students are introduced to educational and career opportunities they might not have previously thought possible.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope you are able to mentor a YES student!

Sincerely,

Michael Finnell
President
Youth For Understanding USA

Frequently Asked Questions

How much time should I plan to spend with the YES student?

Youth For Understanding USA asks mentors to commit to spending 1-2 hours per month meeting with their YES student mentee.

How long is the time commitment?

Mentors should plan to meet with their YES student once per month from now until June when students return to their home countries.

Where does the mentoring take place? At my office? At the home of the host family? At school?

Students, mentors and host families can work together to find a location and a time that accommodates everyone's schedules and needs. Meeting at the office or workplace of a mentor is one option, as is meeting at the home of a host family. Schools may have regulations about who is allowed on the grounds, so be sure to check with the principal's office if this option is being considered.

What resources does YFU USA provide for mentors?

People new to mentoring and experienced mentors alike will benefit from the online *Learn to Mentor* course made available through Mentoring.org website at:

<http://apps.mentoring.org/training/TMT/index.adp>

This course is designed to give you all the information and tools you will need to become a great mentor. Also, you can download the [*Learn to Mentor Toolkit*](#) which is a great resource for both mentors and mentees. This toolkit includes worksheets that will help inspire conversation topics. The Learn to Mentor Toolkit can be downloaded here:

<http://apps.mentoring.org/training/TMT/tmt10010.adp>

With some patience and planning, a mentor relationship can be extremely beneficial to both students and mentors alike. One of the goals of the YES program is to foster leadership skills, so students will be especially interested in learning more about your trajectory into your current position of leadership. This is also a great opportunity to learn about the student's home country and his or her experience of being an exchange student in your community.

If the student is having a problem, who should I contact?

If in the course of your conversations you learn that the student is struggling to overcome some challenge, YFU USA encourages you to talk to the host family about the issue. If you feel the need to bring in outside help, contact the YFU USA District Office at (800) 4-YFU-USA and ask to speak to the Support Services Manager.