



# frequently asked questions

There are **four** sections of related questions contained in this document:

- *mentor/student relationships*
- *mentor criteria*
- *programming*
- *parent involvement*

## mentor/student relationships

*It is our goal for every middle school and high school student to be paired with a mentor.*

### **What happens when new students come to Wednesday nights after the registration deadline? How do they get paired up with mentors?**

After the registration deadline of September 30, we can't guarantee that new students will be paired with a mentor because of recruitment limitations. However, we want students to be able to invite friends, so we have a process in place for new students.

Members of the Next Gen staff and mentors whose students can't attend on a given Wednesday night facilitate small group discussions with new students in groups of three during the one-on-one time each week. This way, students are able to connect both with other students and a leader while processing their experiences. If a new student comes consistently and wants to be a part of the program next fall, we will be sure to recruit a mentor for them in September.

### **How are the mentoring relationships monitored throughout the year?**

Each middle school or high school student involved in Open Door's mentoring program will have a mentor. Every mentor will be directly overseen by a mentor coordinator (a mentor coordinator is an adult from Open Door who oversees one-three mentoring relationships). Each mentor coordinator will be in a peer supervision group of other mentor coordinators and will also have a Next Generation staff contact.

### **What are the attendance expectations for mentors and students?**

Because consistency plays a significant role in building trust, we ask mentors and students to commit to attending Next Gen together at least twice a month. Ideally, attendance would be maintained every week with the exceptions of illness and other special circumstances.

### **What are the guidelines for mentors who interact with students outside of regular programming (transportation, getting together for coffee, etc)?**

Mentors who invite students to participate in outside activities *must* have permission from the student's parents. In addition, students will be matched with a mentor of the same gender and we will not allow mentors to spend one-on-one time with students of the opposite gender in any environment.

### **What happens to a student whose mentor does not show up on a given night?**

Students will be able to engage in any large or small group activities as normal. During the one-on-one time, they'll spend time with a Next Gen staff person and other students whose mentors couldn't attend.

### **Given the focus on the one-on-one mentoring relationship, in what specific ways will relationships between students be promoted?**

In addition to natural time spent together in large groups, small groups and service environments on Wednesday nights, we have a mentor/student "split night" every six weeks or so. Besides one-on-one time, students are together without their mentors and have a chance to meet new people and build relationships.

### **What happens if a mentoring relationship is not a good fit?**

We will do everything we can to set up both mentors and students for success. However, we realize that certain relationships may not be a good fit. In the event that a student and/or mentor reports a problem in the mentoring relationship, we will facilitate conversations so that the student and mentor can both discuss their concerns with their mentor coordinator and/or a staff member. If it is determined that a new match needs to be made, we will make sure there is healthy closure between the student and mentor, and will try to

find a new mentor for that student. However, it is likely that the student would go into a small group (one leader and three students) for the remainder of the year and be paired up with a new mentor the next fall.

#### **What if a student doesn't want to have a mentor?**

Because our programming is based on one-on-one mentoring relationships, a student's decision to not have a mentor would be a decision to not be involved in our Wednesday night programming. This is consistent with how many student ministries operate, only with different mandatory criteria.

For example, in many student ministries every student is in a small group and every student participates in large group (worship and teaching). For students that want to be involved, those activities are not optional.

### **mentor criteria**

*Mentors are young adults who range in age from 19-35.*

#### **How are mentors screened and selected, and where are they from?**

Mentors must fill out an application, go through an interview and criminal background check, provide references, and fulfill the mentor criteria outlined in our training materials. They come from local colleges, Open Door and relationships with other mentors.

#### **Why do the mentors have to be between the ages of 19-35?**

The ministry to the Next Generation at Open Door is not only for middle school and high school students but for young adults as well. Our "ministry" for that age demographic is to give them an opportunity to be a mentor. We are targeting people in this age range because we think one of the best ways to grow is to be stretched by having to mentor a younger person. We also believe we need to engage people of that generation, who seem to be less and less involved in the church. It doesn't mean that we think that those over the age of 35 have nothing to offer to middle school and high school students.

#### **How will we make sure that college students, who are typically very busy, follow up on their commitment to be here every Wednesday night?**

During the interview process, potential mentors are asked to describe their activities and class load, after which the staff will determine if they are likely to be able to commit to weekly programming at Open Door. The mentor coordinator will monitor the mentor's attendance and if they cannot consistently attend, the student will be given a new mentor.

#### **How will college students make it to Open Door every week?**

It is a mandatory part of the mentor criteria that mentors have adequate, reliable transportation to and from Open Door on Wednesday nights. The Next Gen staff also helps to organize carpools where possible.

#### **Can Open Door seniors be mentors the fall after they graduate from High School?**

Yes. They simply need to go through the mentor application process.

### **programming**

*The Next Gen mentoring program takes place on Wednesday nights from 7-8:30pm.*

#### **What is the curriculum that will be used?**

There isn't a formal curriculum being used. The two primary environments that take place on Wednesday nights – learning environments and service environments – are shaped around five core competencies that were developed in order to be intentional about the ways students are invited to grow and change during their time in the mentoring program: Identity, Interpersonal Relationships, Conflict Resolution, Social Awareness and Critical Thinking.

The learning environments are structured to engage students and mentors in a variety of different ways. For example, a staff person might share a biblical teaching or personal example, students and mentors might be able to choose from several options that are all tied to the theme of the night, or a staff person might facilitate an activity that allows for interaction and debriefing in a small group setting. Afterward, students will meet one-on-one with their mentor, to discuss their life and how it relates to what was presented in the learning environment. Because each student is different, has different needs and levels of development, each

of these conversations will be uniquely suited to each student. In that sense, the student's life is the curriculum and the mentor is there to help them walk through their life.

In service environments, the experience is focused on serving others in a variety of settings. Afterward, students will gather in small groups with other students and their mentors, or one-on-one with their mentor, to interpret what they have just experienced, ask questions, and integrate what they have learned into their lives.

### **How will biblical teachings and spiritual disciplines be incorporated into programming?**

Frequently on Wednesday nights the central thought or theme will be a biblical teaching designed to help students and mentors learn to integrate it into their lives. Therefore, the teachings will be thought provoking and highly experiential, like parables. Because we believe that the way of Jesus is the best way to live, the teachings of Jesus will be the central guide post to all that we do.

Spiritual disciplines will be included in this program, but not as ends in and of themselves, but rather as means to help students and mentors learn to love God and love others more and more naturally. We will resist the temptation to determine the quality of someone's spiritual life based on what spiritual disciplines they are practicing. We'll determine the quality of someone's spiritual life based on how they are living and relating to God, themselves and others.

### **How do I find out what Service Environment shift my student should attend?**

Below are the steps to find your student's Pod assignment, service site and departure time. Please be sure to confirm the meeting time and try to arrive five minutes early so your student can check-in and find their mentor.

1. Go to [www.nextgeninfo.thedoor.org](http://www.nextgeninfo.thedoor.org).
2. Click on the relevant date's "Service Environment" link.
3. In the "Attachments" field, open the Service Environment PDF document.
4. Names are listed alphabetically by last name.

### **Will there be any activities outside of Wednesday night programming so that students can connect outside of weekly programming?**

Because this is still a new program, we spend most of our time facilitating the mentoring relationship. However, we recognize the importance of students being together and building community with one another outside of church. We are in the process of determining which occasional student events would be most effective at fulfilling this purpose.

### **Will there still be Sunday morning programming?**

There are currently two Sunday morning electives available to students: E3 and Extreme Life. E3 is offered to 7th and 8th grade students every Sunday morning (except Communion Sundays) at 9:20am. Extreme Life is available to 9th graders and meets at 11am from January-May. The cost is \$85 and includes a retreat in April.

## **parent involvement**

*We believe our role is to partner with parents in loving and supporting students. We also need parent participation in order for the mentoring program to happen.*

### **How are parents involved in Next Gen?**

Volunteers are key to making Next Gen happen and parents play a huge role, so we have a variety of avenues for parental involvement. Parents can help with prep for Wednesday night, student registration, mentor childcare, take-down of the night's experience, driving to and from service environments, and other tasks. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Jen Lindwall at [jlindwall@thedoor.org](mailto:jlindwall@thedoor.org).

### **Can parents interact with mentors?**

We hope that all parents get to know their child's mentor. This can happen in a variety of ways, but will be dependent upon the initiation of the parent. However, because we want to respect the time commitments of the mentor the main contact for parents will be the mentor coordinator.

Also, because we value confidentiality between the mentor and student, parents should not go to mentors to try to get information about their children. Mentors will be trained to not give this information. There are urgent issues that will be shared with parents if it involves self-injury, abuse or talk of suicide.