

Ten Important Things To Do First

1. Learn how to use the online Infinite Campus software program and check out your mentee's online data. The interface with Infinite Campus has changed this year, but I have included last year's instructions under the GW Info tab. Go to the Portal Site at <https://myportal.dpsk12.org/Pages/Default.aspx>, log in with your mentee's username and password and become familiar with the invaluable information that is available to you. **Your mentee's user name should be his or her six digit student number. Your mentee's password should be your student's birthdate, in an eight digit format (mmddyyyy). If this login doesn't work, your mentee may have changed his or her password. Ask him or her what it is.** *This is information about Infinite Campus prior to it being revised, but I think at least most of it is still applicable.* You can see the information available listed in the tabs on the left side of the screen including the following: (1) the Dashboard summarizes the information about your student, (2) the District and State Test Results tab allows you to see your mentee's standardized test scores over the years, (3) under the Grades tab you can see each class that your mentee is taking, and the name of his or her teacher for that class. If you click on a teacher's name, you will be provided with that teacher's email address. This tab also shows the six-week grading period and semester grades that your mentee has earned in each class, (4) under the Attendance & Behavior tab you can see if your student has had any absences or serious behavior incidents, and (5) the Schedule & Assignments tab takes you to an electronic gradebook that should be updated, at least weekly, by each of your mentee's teachers. You can see each class that your mentee is taking and the name of his or her teacher for that class. If you click on a teacher's name, you can directly email the teacher from this site. If you click on a class, you will see whether your student turned in each assignment for the class and how your student did on each assignment. If you see that a teacher is not keeping the electronic gradebook up-to-date, please email the teacher to tell him or her that you are concerned because you cannot see how your mentee is doing. If there is a continuing problem with a teacher not updating the electronic gradebook, please inform Caren. For more instructions on how to use Infinite Campus, refer to the GW Info tab.
2. E-mail your mentee's teachers: (1) introduce yourself, (2) explain that you are a mentor with the Patriot Pairs Mentoring Program and that you have parental permission to discuss your mentee's academic and other school-related issues with the teacher, (3) explain that you will be monitoring your mentee's progress in this class and that you may be contacting the teacher for updates or with questions, (4) ask the teacher to send you a copy of the syllabus for the class (each teacher is required to have one), (5) ask the teacher how to access his or her class materials online (each teacher is required to do this) and (6) ask the teacher to contact you immediately if he or she has any concerns about your mentee. A sample email is included under the Patriot Pairs Info tab. If you have any trouble with a teacher, please let Caren know right away.
3. Discuss with your mentee the best way for the two of you to communicate, especially about meetings that must be missed. Many teenagers do not read

emails or listen to voicemails. If your mentee texts, exchange cell phone numbers and have him or her teach you how to text if you do not know how.

4. Confirm that your mentee's Advisory teacher has gotten him or her set up with an organization system that will work for him or her and set him or her on track for success. Go over with your mentee how he or she plans to keep track of assignments and papers to be turned in or that are handed back. GW is a large school and each teacher sees many students. Sometimes teachers lose papers or record grades inaccurately. It is important that your mentee keep everything so that he or she has evidence of the work done. Also, papers and tests handed back are useful for studying for tests and finals. Help your mentee get in the habit of keeping notes, work that has been handed back and old tests and quizzes in an organized way.
5. Each student will receive a student planner from GW. The Advisory teachers will be working with the students to learn how to use the planners. Please confirm with your mentee that he or she has a planner and knows how to use it. Work with your mentee to get in the habit of writing down homework assignments, meeting times with you, sports practices, and other activities in the planner. This is a good thing to reinforce at every meeting with your student.
6. Discuss with your mentee where and when your mentee can study and do homework. Help your mentee to see that he or she or needs a plan for this. Your mentee may not have a stable home environment or space at home for studying quietly and without distraction. The GW library or the public library may be options to consider.
7. Explain to your mentee the requirements for graduation from high school. In summary they are:
 - ✓ Language Arts: Four full years including (1) one year of Introduction to Literature and Composition 1 & 2, (2) one year of American Literature 1 & 2, (3) one year of World Literature or an upper division writing course and (4) two semesters of other Language Arts classes
 - ✓ Math: Four full years including (1) one year of Algebra or its equivalent, (2) one year of Geometry or its equivalent, (3) one year of Algebra 2 or its equivalent, and (3) two semesters of another kind of Math higher than Algebra 1
 - ✓ Science: Three full years, two of which years must come from Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry or Physics
 - ✓ Social Studies: Three full years including (1) one year of U.S. History, (2) one semester of Civics, (3) one and one half years of other Social Studies
 - ✓ Physical Education/Dance, Citywide Marching Band, ROTC, or DPS Athletics: One full year. An exemption can be obtained by participating in sports
 - ✓ Electives: Eighteen semesters of electives including (1) two semesters of Fine Arts which may include art, dance, drama, and music, or Career & Technical Education, (2) two semesters of academic electives, which may include English/Social Studies electives, World Languages, AVID, Gear-Up, and AP/IB courses.
 - ✓ Credits: At least 240 total credits are required

You may need to explain to your mentee the ramifications of these requirements, which are totally different than what your mentee is used to from middle school. Many mentees do not understand, for example, that if they fail (a D is a passing grade) a semester of American Literature, they cannot graduate unless they make it up somehow. This will require going to summer school, taking two language classes in one semester in a later year, or doing an online credit recovery program. Mentees often do not understand that they will not graduate unless they pass every single semester of every single required class. GW does not allow students to repeat classes. If your student fails a required class he or she will need to make it up in summer school or through online credit recovery. This costs \$25 per class.

8. Explain to your mentee the math of calculating grades, and how he or she can use Infinite Campus to figure out what needs to be done to improve grades. Please note that only semester grades are used in calculating a student's GPA, and that semester grades usually are determined by averaging the three relevant six-week grading period grades. Show your mentee the 0's that show up in Infinite Campus when he or she fails to turn in a homework assignment on time and how many 70's it can take to make up for one 0. Show your mentee that a test may count more than a quiz and he or she can do poorly in a class if he or she bombs a test, even if there are a lot of 90's on homework. Each teacher is required to give each student a syllabus explaining how grades are calculated. Go over each class syllabus with your mentee to make sure that he or she understands the grading policy. Explain to the mentee how well he or she must do in the other two six-week grading periods to pass a class if he or she gets an F in the class during one six-week grading period. Also, explain that GW teachers have many many students and that some assignments get lost or improperly graded or entered. Encourage your mentee to monitor his or her Infinite Campus account to ensure that it is correct and to keep all returned papers and copies of all assignments.
9. Explain to your mentee that in a big bureaucracy like a public high school he or she must learn how to advocate for himself or herself and that you are going to help him or her learn how. Also explain that some rules in high school (as in life) are fluid. If your mentee gets a 0 on an assignment, a teacher often will give the student an opportunity to make up all or part of the lost credit if he or she respectfully discusses the situation with the teacher, demonstrates that he or she cares about learning and is a serious student and promises to try harder. Many students do not care how well they do in school and often teachers will bend over backwards to help a student who shows that he or she cares.
10. Set up a meeting with your mentee and his or her advisor. The list of advisors and how to determine who your mentee's advisor is is available behind the GW Info tab. It is a great idea for you and your mentee to set up an appointment to meet with his or her advisor near the beginning of school. This is advantageous because: (1) the advisor will get to know your student, which is advantageous in a big high school, (2) you will be modeling for your student how to make an appointment with and conduct a meeting with his or her school advisor, and (3) you will establish a relationship with the advisor which you may end up needing to call upon later.