

Working with a Student who is Learning English

While the curriculum is designed to support all mentees and mentors in their communication, you might need to use additional resources when working with a student who is learning the English language. Below are some tips from a mentor in the iMentor program on how to better support an ELL mentee.

- **Communication**
- **Writing**
- **Practicing**
- **Patience**
- **Enabling**
- **College Programs**

Communication

Try to keep your communication short/crisp. I used to write longer messages to my mentee, but he was struggling to read my response and write his own in the time. Now I try to keep them tighter and more brief.

Writing

If your student is significantly constrained in how much they can write in the class period, I would suggest not pushing them to focus too much on the prompt. I did this with my mentee because I thought that writing about his week and what was on his mind would be more valuable for building our relationship than just writing about the prompt and then running out of time. I still talk about the prompt in my emails to him and sometimes, when it's something that catches his attention, he writes back to me about that.

Practicing

Encourage your mentee to practice their English and to understand why that's important. My mentee is at a level now where he can make himself understood when he needs to, but still has difficulty expressing complex ideas and writes very slowly. Since all of his friends also speak Spanish, he doesn't have a strong incentive to push himself to get to a higher level.

Patience

Be patient! Your mentee might not be having regular conversations with other adults in English, so you can't expect a huge improvement from week to week. By modeling good writing skills on a weekly basis, you are helping your mentee to grow.

Enabling

If you speak the same language as your mentee, they need to be careful not to over-rely on that. It is much easier in the short term, but in the long term, the mentee's English won't improve without the challenge and without the regular adult conversation in English.

College Programs

It's common for mentors to get worried about their mentees being able to access and persist in higher education. Programs exist that fit your mentee's ambitions, based on their English levels. Programs exist throughout the country that your mentee can enroll in. If you are in the NYC area, check out the programs below:

- **CLIP** (<http://www2.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs/model-programs/cuny-college-transition-programs/cuny-language-immersion-program-clip/clip-students/>)
 - **CUNY ASAP** (<http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/>)
 - **CUNY Start** (<http://www2.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs/model-programs/cuny-college-transition-programs/cuny-start/>)
-