

# CLOUD COACH



MENTOR TRACKS

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Cloud Coach is designed to provide mentoring support to all ninth graders in the Minneapolis and St. Paul Public School Districts, recognizing the diversity in student experiences and academic levels. The program's four tracks are tailored to address the varying needs of students, ranging from those facing significant barriers to those excelling academically. At its core, Cloud Coach emphasizes the importance of showing up for students each week, even if conversations are one-sided, to model dependability and offer consistent encouragement.

Students begin in Track 2, but mentors can shift between tracks at any time to find prompts that best suit their student's needs:

- Track 1 is for students who may struggle to respond or write consistently due to challenges they face, such as homelessness, limited English proficiency, or balancing school with family responsibilities. This track focuses on relationship-building and provides mentors with resources to maintain meaningful communication despite limited student engagement.
- Track 2 is designed for the typical student participating in Cloud Coach. It offers a balanced approach that fosters mentor-student connections and helps guide students who are producing grade-level work.
- Track 3 supports accelerated learners who are already planning their future and career paths. This track delves deeper into specific topics and encourages students to explore detailed discussions about their goals and aspirations.
- Support Resources are available to all mentors to ensure they can navigate one-sided conversations effectively and continue encouraging students regardless of their circumstances or engagement levels.

Cloud Coach provides mentors with flexibility and guidance to adapt to the unique needs of each student, ensuring every ninth grader receives meaningful support as they navigate this critical stage of their academic journey.

**Support Track**

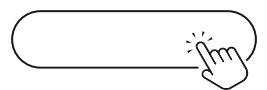
**Track 1**

**Track 2**

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**Research & Rationale**

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# Support Track

Cloud Coach is designed to provide a mentor to all ninth graders in the Minneapolis and St. Paul Public School Districts. This means that a mentor may support a student who is excelling at school, a student who is producing grade-level work, or a student who may not graduate due to barriers they are facing inside and outside of the classroom. While we do not know why a particular student does not write, we do know that students may struggle with homelessness or may be unsure of where their next meal is coming from. They may be working a part time job to support their family and have little time for schoolwork. They may be new to the country and have a limited English vocabulary. They may also be experiencing mental health challenges or are uneasy about talking to someone they don't know. We hear from teachers that students read your messages whether or not they are responding. With this in mind, it is important to show up for your student each week to provide support and model dependability. This resource is meant to provide support to mentors who are having a one-sided conversation due to their student not responding. Thank you for continuing to write to your student each week!

Note: If you have not heard from your student after two weeks, we suggest using the resources below when writing to your student each week.

## **Week 3**

Exploring Strengths

## **Week 4**

Life After High School

## **Week 5**

Lifelong Skills

## **Week 6**

Setting Short-Term Goals

## **Week 7**

Review Key Themes

## **Week 8**

Validate and Affirm Your Student

## Support Track | Week 3 - Exploring Strengths

### Objective

Help your student identify their strengths

### Week 3 Main Question

I'm interested in learning what things you are really good at. What do you think is your greatest strength?

### Week 3 Talking Points & Tips

Keep your message on the shorter side.

Ask open ended questions.

Maintain an interest in getting to know your student.

- Warm Welcome: Thank your student for reading your message, ask them how their weekend was, or wish them the best.
- Share Your Story: Share your greatest strength with your student. How did you realize this was your greatest strength?
- Ask a Question: What are you really good at? What is your greatest strength?
- Expect Engagement: Let your student know you are looking forward to hearing from them!

### Week 3 Example Message

Good morning, Leng!

I hope you are having a good week so far! What did you do this weekend? This week I'm looking forward to learning about what you are really good at.

When I was in high school, I played a lot of video games and I still do today. Through playing video games, I realized I was really good at problem solving. I use problem solving every day as a Project Manager. If a project isn't going as planned or we are at a roadblock, I am able to creatively think of different solutions in order to move forward.

What are you really good at? I'm looking forward to hearing more about your strengths!

Take care,  
Troy

# Support Track | Week 4 - Life After High School

## Objective

Explore your student's ideas about their future.

## Week 4 Main Question

I'm interested in what life looks like for you after high school. What would be your dream job if you could do anything?

## Week 4 Talking Points & Tips

Keep your message on the shorter side.

Ask open ended questions.

Maintain an interest in getting to know your student.

- Warm Welcome: Thank your student for reading your message, ask them how their weekend was, or wish them the best.
- Share Your Story: Share your greatest strength with your student. How did you realize this was your greatest strength?
- Ask a Question: What are you really good at? What is your greatest strength?
- Expect Engagement: Let your student know you are looking forward to hearing from them!

## Week 4 Example Message

Hello Radwan!

How is your week going? Thanks for taking the time to read my message last week. This week, I'm looking forward to hearing more about your plans after high school.

When I was in high school, I really wanted to be a nurse because my aunt is a nurse and I really admired her. However, I didn't really enjoy my science classes. I enjoyed my math classes more, so I decided to look into math related careers like finance and accounting.

I'm interested in learning more about what you want to do after high school. What's your dream job?

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Gloria

## Support Track | Week 5 - Lifelong Skills

### Objective

Encourage your student to think about skills that will be needed in a future career.

### Week 5 Main Question

I'm interested in talking about lifelong skills. What are some skills you think could be used in any future career?

### Week 5 Talking Points & Tips

Keep your message on the shorter side.

Ask open ended questions.

Maintain an interest in getting to know your student.

- Warm Welcome: Thank your student for reading your message, ask them how their weekend was, or wish them the best.
- Share Your Story: Share your greatest strength with your student. How did you realize this was your greatest strength?
- Ask a Question: What are you really good at? What is your greatest strength?
- Expect Engagement: Let your student know you are looking forward to hearing from them!

### Week 5 Example Message

Hello Nevaeh!

Thanks for taking the time to read my message last week! Writing a message to you has been the highlight of my week! This week I thought we could talk about skills that are needed in any future career.

As an Inventory Analyst, the top skills I use every day are multi-tasking and attention to detail. I have to balance looking at multiple spreadsheets while working on a couple of bigger projects. I also read and analyze data daily, so it's important to pay close attention to the details.

I'm interested in hearing your thoughts! What skills do you think are needed for a future career?

I hope you have a great week!

Jayla

# Support Track | Week 6 - Setting Short-Term Goals

## Objective

Help your student identify a short-term goal.

## Week 6 Main Question

Everyone has goals or things they want to accomplish. Do you have any goals you're working on this semester at school or at home, or anything you're looking forward to finishing?

## Week 6 Talking Points & Tips

Keep your message on the shorter side.

Ask open ended questions.

Maintain an interest in getting to know your student.

- Warm Welcome: Thank your student for reading your message, ask them how their weekend was, or wish them the best.
- Share Your Story: Share your greatest strength with your student. How did you realize this was your greatest strength?
- Ask a Question: What are you really good at? What is your greatest strength?
- Expect Engagement: Let your student know you are looking forward to hearing from them!

## Week 6 Example Message

Hello Javier!

Did you enjoy the warmer weather this weekend? I was able to get outside and go for a hike with my dog named Milo! This week, I would love to chit chat a little bit about goals.

When I was in high school, I had a goal to make "first chair" in the band. "First chair" means you are the leader of your instrument section (I play the trumpet). In order to achieve my goal, I signed up for extra practices with my band teacher and talked to her about the qualities of a good leader. While I did not make "first chair" when I was in 11th grade, I did become "first chair" in 12th grade, and I was so excited!

Is there a goal you are currently trying to reach? I would love to hear more about it!

Take care,  
Rebecca

## Support Track | Week 7 - Review Key Themes

### Objective

Review the key themes covered during the Cloud Coach program and explore what you have learned.

### Week 7 Main Question

We've talked about your interests and strengths, goals in life, and skills for success. I'd like to know your thoughts about our time together. Can you think of something you learned about yourself?

### Week 7 Talking Points & Tips

Keep your message on the shorter side.

Ask open ended questions.

Maintain an interest in getting to know your student.

- Warm Welcome: Thank your student for reading your message, ask them how their weekend was, or wish them the best.
- Share Your Story: Share your greatest strength with your student. How did you realize this was your greatest strength?
- Ask a Question: What are you really good at? What is your greatest strength?
- Expect Engagement: Let your student know you are looking forward to hearing from them!

### Week 7 Example Message

Hello Sydney!

Do you enjoy watching movies or TV shows over the weekend? This weekend I went to the movie theater and watched the newest Marvel movie! Do you have a favorite movie?

Over the course of the Cloud Coach program, I've enjoyed reflecting about my time in high school and about my job as a Human Resources Manager. I especially enjoyed the week that focused on setting goals. It was a good reminder to set goals in both my personal and professional life. I'm now working on a personal goal of starting a blog!

Is there anything you've learned during this Cloud Coach program?

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Abdi



# Support Track | Week 8 - Validate & Affirm Your Student

## Objective

Acknowledge and validate your student. Express your belief in your student's ability to achieve their goals and dreams.

## Week 8 Main Question

I really enjoyed having the opportunity to write you a message each week! I appreciate you reading my messages, and I wish you all the best for the future.

## Week 8 Talking Points & Tips

This is your final message to your student.  
Keep your message on the shorter side.

- Warm Welcome: Thank your student for reading your messages or wish them the best.
- Validate and Affirm Your Student: See Week 8 Lead Statement above.

## Week 8 Example Message

Good morning, Isabel!

Thank you so much for reading my messages throughout the Cloud Coach program! I can't believe this is already the last message I will be sending you.

I truly wish you the best! I am excited for you as you navigate high school and think more about life after high school. You have the ability to reach all of your goals and dreams. You are a valuable person and I am thankful for being able to write to you each week.

Take care!  
Padma

# Track 1

Track 1 Gateway Prompts are designed for students who might struggle to write each week, or are struggling to provide responses to you (the mentor) that move the dialogue forward. For these students, graduating high school may or may not be in the future. Track 1 is designed to be shorter than Track 2, focuses mainly on relationship building, and helps you know what to say if you're having a one-sided conversation. You can move between the tracks at any point to find the right message to send your student.

Note: All students begin Week One in Track 2.

## **Week 2**

Areas of Interest/Passion

## **Week 3**

Future Goals

## **Week 4**

Exploring Learning Styles

## **Week 5**

Setting Short-Term Goals

## **Week 6**

Learning From Failures & Mistakes

## **Week 7**

Review Key Themes

## **Week 8**

Validate and Affirm Your Student

## Track 1 | Week 2 - Areas of Interest/Passion

### Objective

Get to know your student and find out their interests or hobbies.

### Following Up from Week 1

- If your student didn't respond to Week 1: Start your message by sharing that you're excited to be partnering with your student and hope they get a chance to read and respond to your Week 1 message.
- If your student responded, but the message was short and not related to the prompt: Ask any follow up question you can think of related to what they shared with you. For example, if they shared their name, you might ask if they have a nickname. If they shared that they live in Minneapolis, you might ask if they've always lived there or if they've lived elsewhere.

### Week 2 Talking Points & Tips

- Share a hobby that you have outside of work: Explain to your student how you practice this hobby and what you like about it.
- Keep your message to two paragraphs: A short paragraph responding to Week 1 with a follow up question for them to answer, and a paragraph about you and your hobbies that ends with the Week 2 Main Question.

### Week 2 Main Question

I'm interested in learning more about you. What do you like to do with your time outside of school?

## Track 1 | Week 3 - Future Goals

### Objective

Explore your student's ideas about their future.

### Following Up from Week 2

- If your student didn't respond to Week 2: Acknowledge that it can be awkward and difficult to get to know someone new. Share with your student why you are participating in this program.
- If your student responded, but the message was short and not related to the prompt: Ask any follow up question you can think of related to what they shared with you. For example, if they shared that they don't have any hobbies but they like watching Netflix, you might ask which shows/movies they like to watch.
- If your student says they don't have any areas of interest: Ask them to share with you what they do once they get home from school. Maybe they have a job, babysit their siblings, play video games, etc. Dig deeper to find out where their time goes.

### Week 3 Talking Points & Tips

- Share Your Story: Tell your student about your dream job when you were growing up. If you didn't end up in that career, what led you to turn in a different direction?
- Keep your message to two paragraphs: A short paragraph responding to Week 2 with a follow up question, and a paragraph about you and your high school dream job that ends with the Week 3 Main Question

### Week 3 Main Question

I'm interested in what life looks like for you after high school. What would be your dream job if you could do anything?

## Track 1 | Week 4 - Exploring Learning Styles

### Objective

Help your student begin to envision learning as a lifelong skill by finding out how they like to learn.

### Following Up from Week 3

- If you didn't get a response: Remember there may be outside factors affecting your student's ability to write. They may be tired, stressed, overwhelmed, or intimidated by the program. Continue to express enthusiasm for participating.
- If your student isn't sure what their dream job is: Ask them if they know what their dream life would look like – where would they like to live? What type of house? Do they want a family?
- If your student has a vague idea of their dream job: Consider asking them what they like about that area specifically. For instance, if they say they like sports, is it because they enjoy being active, team camaraderie, cheering for favorite teams, etc? Their interest in sports could turn into a career in sports marketing, sports medicine, or many other career paths.

### Week 4 Talking Points & Tips

- Share how you learn and what you like to learn about: Give your student a sense of how you continue to learn. When you need to learn a new skill, what avenues do you take personally and professionally to learn it? Give your student an example of something you recently learned.
- Pick one soft skill and share how you learned it (or are working on it now). If necessary, share with your student the difference between “soft skills” (interpersonal, character-related) and “hard skills” (technical, expertise-related).
- Keep your message to three paragraphs: A short paragraph responding to Week 3 with a follow-up question, a paragraph about you how you learn, and a paragraph about a soft skill you learned that ends with the Week 4 Main Question.

### Week 4 Main Question

I'm interested in finding out how you learn new things. What was the last new thing you learned how to do in school or at home, and how did you learn it?

## Track 1 | Week 5 - Setting Short-Term Goals

### Objective

Help your student identify a short-term goal

### Following Up from Week 4

- If you didn't get a response: Stay positive! Know that most students do read and internalize their mentor's messages, even if they are not responding. Consider starting with a comment on a recent seasonal, cultural, weather, or holiday-related event that a 9th grade student would be aware of.
- If your student couldn't think of an example or their message response was not related to the prompt: Ask them which class they do the best in and why they think that is. Is it because of the teacher, the subject, or the type of learning activities?
- If your student shared something they recently learned: Validate how cool it is that they learned that! Share excitement/validate in how they learned it. For example, if they share they learned it through YouTube, you might share a new skill you'd like to learn and how you might use YouTube now that they have suggested it.

### Week 5 Talking Points & Tips

- Share Your Story: Think back to high school and share a goal that you had at the time. Explain how you followed through. It's okay if the goal seems small to you now (for example, your goal was to learn how to do a flip on your skateboard). They will likely relate to this type of goal.
- Keep your message to two paragraphs: A short paragraph responding to Week 4 with a follow up question, and a paragraph about a high school goal you had that ends with the Week 5 Main Question.

### Week 5 Main Question

Everyone has goals or things they want to accomplish. Do you have any goals you're working on this semester at school or at home, or anything you're looking forward to finishing?

## Track 1 | Week 6 - Learning From Failures & Mistakes

### Objective

Help your student prepare to persist through challenges and see the opportunity to learn from failures and mistakes.

### Following Up from Week 5

- If you didn't get a response: Start your message by saying that you hope they get a chance to read and respond to your Week 6 message. Tell your mentee why you think this topic (or another week's topic) is interesting.
- If your student was unable to identify a goal: Move on from this topic and focus on the Week 6 Lead Question and Talking Points.
- If your student shared a goal: Validate their goal! Ask them how they would go about reaching it. If it's something they can't wait to finish, for example, they can't wait to finish 9th grade, help him or her identify a particular class in which he or she would like to do better. The more specific the goal, the better.

### Week 6 Talking Points & Tips

- Share Your Story: Tell your student about a time when you made a mistake or failed at something but learned a valuable lesson from the experience that later benefitted you in some way.
- Keep your message to two paragraphs: A short follow up paragraph to Week 5, a paragraph sharing a story about a mistake/failure you had, and then end your message with the Week 6 Lead Question.

### Week 6 Main Question

As I look back, I realize that the times when I wished I had a time machine and could go back and do something over – those were my moments of biggest learning and growth, like the example I just shared. Can you think of a time recently when you wished you could go back and redo something?

## Track 1 | Week 7 - Review Key Themes

### Objective

Review the key themes covered during the course of the dialogue. Explore what they have learned from the program.

### Following Up from Week 6

- If you didn't get a response or your student responded off topic: Acknowledge what your student said and ask appropriate follow up questions. If they did not respond, continue to this week's message text.
- If your student shared their ideas about Failures and Mistakes: Acknowledge failing to reach a goal can be disappointing and discouraging. Ask your student how they cope with mistakes and failures. Ask your student to share their thoughts on this.

### Week 7 Talking Points & Tips

- Share what you learned about your student: Point out something positive that you have learned about your student.
- Share what you learned about yourself: Share something positive that you learned about yourself. This could relate to your role as a mentor or to your home/work life.

### Week 7 Main Question

We've talked about many different topics during the Cloud Coach program. I'd like to know your thoughts about our time together. Can you think of something you learned about yourself?



## Track 1 | Week 8 - Validate & Affirm Your Student

### Objective

Acknowledge and validate your student. Express your belief in your student's ability to achieve their goals and dreams.

### Following Up from Week 7

- If you didn't get a response: Move directly to the Week 8 Lead Statement
- If your student did not have a thoughtful response: You can mention how you hope some of the things you talked about will help them in their future.
- If your student responded about something they learned about themselves: Commend your student for being self-reflective and taking something from the experience.

### Week 8 Talking Points & Tips

- Be Specific in your Encouragement: Refer to the information your student shared with you on their interests, goals, challenges and plans.
- Reinforce the Importance of Sustained Effort: Acknowledge the efforts your student has made and encourage them to continue working hard to achieve goals for a career and other aspects of life.

### Week 8 Lead Statement

I really enjoyed getting to know you through the Cloud Coach program! I know connecting with someone through messages can seem weird at times, and I appreciate you sticking it out and connecting with me. I wish you all the best for the future. Keep up the good work!

## Track 2

Track 2 Gateway Prompts are designed for the typical student participating in Cloud Coach. You may find after Week 1 that your student might be a better fit for Track 1, designed for students who may need more support or a better fit for Track 3, designed for accelerated learners. At any point, you can move between the tracks to find the right message to send your student.

This is the default starting track for all students.

### **Week 1**

Perspectives on School

### **Week 2**

Areas of Interest/Passion

### **Week 3**

Future Goals

### **Week 4**

Exploring Skills Aligned to Goals

### **Week 5**

Setting Short-Term Goals

### **Week 6**

Learning From Failures & Mistakes

### **Week 7**

Review Key Themes

### **Week 8**

Validate and Affirm Your Student

## Track 2 | Week 1 - Perspectives on School

### Objective

Get to know your student by first learning how they feel about school. Knowing this early will help you decide which track to take in future conversations.

### Introducing Yourself

- Share basic information: Start by sharing your name and pronouns. Consider including where you grew up, if you have a partner, children, or pets, and what you like to do in your free time.
- Share more about your job: Share your title and brief description of your role. Avoid technical language and acronyms. Remember, students may not have a strong concept of your field. Consider including the following:
  - An example of a task you perform regularly
  - A way your role is similar to schoolwork or extracurricular activities
  - An invitation for any questions they may have

### Week 1 Talking Points & Tips

- Share your story: Tell your student about your 9th grade/high school experience. Were you involved in any activities, sports, or work? What was your favorite subject? Share more about the type of high school student you were – were you highly motivated? Did you hate school? Was 9th grade a stand-out year for you in any way?
- Keep your first message to three paragraphs or less: Some students will be overwhelmed by a long message, while others will be excited for the challenge – stick to three paragraphs (or less) until you learn more about your student. If you have more than three paragraphs of material, choose which content is the most important and edit down to three paragraphs.

### Week 2 Main Question

I'm excited to be paired with you in the Cloud Coach program and am looking forward to getting to know you. How are classes going? Which one do you like the most? What do you like about high school so far?

## Track 2 | Week 2 - Areas of Interest/Passion

### Objective

Continue to get to know your student and find out their interests, passions, and/or hobbies.

### Following Up from Week 1

- If your student didn't respond or the response is too short: Start your message by sharing that you're excited to partner with your student for this program and hope they get a chance to read your Week 1 message. This may be a good time to move to Track 1 until your student responds or their responses get longer.
- Validate your student's thoughts on school: Share your reaction to their comments. Are you impressed? Do you empathize? Do you have a follow up question? If your student talked about how hard school is, validate those feelings. If your student seems to be thriving, provide a way-to-go message about being able to adjust to the new environment.
- Find common ground: If you can relate to their experience in any way, share your story. Your example could be current and work-centric or relate back to your high school years. (Example: if they are struggling to get along with a teacher, maybe you've struggled to get along with a supervisor).
- If you get a detailed, thorough response from a student who loves school: You may consider moving to Track 3, which is designed for accelerated learners.

### Week 2 Talking Points & Tips

- Share your own interests, passions, and/or hobbies: Explain how this interest helps you or has made you stronger in your job or everyday life. (For example, if your interest is a sport, this may have made you more of a team player.) Share how you first became interested in this.

### Week 2 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Main Question). This week, you might ask:

- What is your favorite sport, movie, or band and why?
- What is the best part about your life right now?

### Week 2 Main Question

I'm interested in learning more about you. Tell me more about yourself. When you're not working on school, what are you mainly spending your time on? What do you like to do with your time outside of school?

## Track 2 | Week 3 - Future Goals

### Objective

Explore your student's ideas about their future, including possible careers, interests, and lifestyle.

### Following Up from Week 2

- If your student didn't respond or the response is too short: Start your message by sharing that you're excited to partner with your student for this program, and hope they get a chance to read your Week 2 message. This may be a good time to move to Track 1 until your student responds or their responses get longer.
- Validate your student's interests & passions: Affirm how cool/exciting/interesting their passion is. If you know a lot about their area of interest, share what you know. If you don't know much, ask follow-up questions. For example, if your student is into a video game you've never heard of, you might ask more about how the game is played.
- If your student says they don't have any areas of interest: Ask them to share with you what they do when they aren't working on school. Perhaps they have a job that takes up their free time, or they may do a lot of babysitting. Dig deeper to find out where their time goes.
- If you get a detailed, thorough response and they've already identified a clear career path: You may consider moving to Track 3, which is designed for accelerated learners.

### Week 3 Talking Points & Tips

- Share your story: Tell your student about the careers that you were interested in when you were growing up. Share what made those careers interesting to you. If you didn't end up in that career, what led you to turn in a different direction? If you learned about something you didn't want to do, how did you come to that conclusion?

### Week 3 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Main Question). This week, you might ask:

- What jobs/careers do you know about? Could you see yourself doing any of those?
- Why did you pick that as your dream job?

### Week 3 Main Question

During our first two weeks we talked about what you like to do for fun and how you feel about school. This week I want to talk about what life after high school might look like for you. What do you want to do for a job or a career? If you're not sure exactly what job you want, what would be your dream job if you could do anything?

# Track 2 | Week 4 - Exploring Skills Aligned to Goals

## Objective

Help your student begin to envision the knowledge, skills, and experiences they will need to succeed.

## Following Up from Week 3

- If your student didn't respond or the response is too short: Start your message by sharing that you hope they get a chance to read your Week 3 message. This may be a good time to move to Track 1 until your student responds or their responses get longer.
- If your student isn't sure what their dream job is: Ask them if they know what their dream life would look like – where would they like to live? What type of house? Do they want a family?
- If your student expresses an interest in college or a career that will need higher education: Tell them about the relationship between education and potential earnings, but be careful to tailor your message to your student. For example, a student who's interested in but unsure of attending a 4-year college could feel motivated by hearing about a jump in income. A student with no plans to attend college may feel unsupported by an explicit push to do so but can still be reminded that even with a high school diploma, their earning potential rises
- If you get a detailed, thorough response and they've already identified their higher education needs: You may consider moving to Track 3, which is designed for accelerated learners.

## Week 4 Talking Points & Tips

- Share your story: Tell your student about the careers that you were interested in when you were growing up. Share what made those careers interesting to you. If you didn't end up in that career, what led you to turn in a different direction? If you learned about something you didn't want to do, how did you come to that conclusion?

## Week 4 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Main Question). This week, you might ask:

- What do you think are your most developed skills? What do you want to work on?
- Can you think of some ways you might improve those skills?

## Week 4 Main Question

Now that we've talked about your dream job or future career, what kind of education or training do you think you will need for this career? What skills do you need to be successful in this field?

## Track 2 | Week 5 - Setting Short-Term Goals

### Objective

Help your student identify a short-term goal that will support the future they want. Help your student identify the benefits of achieving their short-term goal.

### Following Up from Week 4

- If your student doesn't know what it will take to enter the career path they've shared: Three possibilities for responding to your student in this situation are: (1) brainstorm ways your student could learn more about the requirements for success or (2) share what you know (or could find out) about the requirements for success in that field. (3) Mention any relevant clubs or activities that you've participated in that may be available to your student.
- If your student knows what it will take to enter that career: Acknowledge their efforts to learn more about their chosen career. If you are familiar with the career they mentioned, briefly share what you know (or could find out) about the requirements for success in the field.
- Highlight the importance of education: Ask your student how performance in school today might influence their ability to develop the knowledge and skills that will be necessary to achieve their goals. Convey to your student that although 9th grade seems like a long ways away from graduation and post-secondary education/work, how hard you work in 9th grade will influence what you learn, which will influence what you can do in 10th grade, 11th grade, 12th grade and beyond. It is tempting to think you can always get serious about school later, but that's very difficult to do if you are not learning what you are supposed to learn along the way.
- Reinforce the importance of soft skills/networking: Suggest soft skills that may be useful in their career or relate to their goals. Mention resources, clubs, activities, networking events, etc. they can use to help practice these skills.

### Week 5 Talking Points & Tips

- Share your story: Tell your student about a goal that you achieved in high school (or recently) that brought you closer to the future you want. What did you need to do to accomplish it? Were there any obstacles standing in your way, and if so, what did you do to overcome them?

### Week 5 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Main Question). This week, you might ask:

- Have you seen or heard of anyone else attempting this goal? How did their story turn out?
- What obstacles do you think might stand in the way of accomplishing your goal?

### Week 5 Main Question

We've been talking a lot about the future – let's talk a bit about right now. Can you think of a goal you can accomplish this semester that will help you get closer to the future you want?

## Track 2 | Week 6 - Learning from Failures & Mistakes

### Objective

Help your student prepare to persist through challenges and see the opportunity to learn from failures and mistakes.

### Following Up from Week 5

- If your student shared a goal: Help your student sharpen their short-term goal(s). For example, if your student says their goal is to “get better grades,” help them identify a particular class in which they would like to do better. The more specific the goal, the better. Make sure to encourage your student to keep you updated with the progress of their goal.
- If your student was unable to identify a goal: Think back to your conversations in past weeks to see if you might be able to suggest an area of growth. For example, if your student mentioned they like to write, you might ask if they’ve ever considered journaling their thoughts.
- If you’re not sure where to take the conversation because your student did not identify a goal or was unable to articulate anything in past messages to guide your conversation, move to Track 1 to keep the dialogue flowing.

### Week 6 Talking Points & Tips

- Share your story: Tell your student about a time when you made a mistake or failed at something but learned a valuable lesson from the experience that later benefited you in some way.

### Week 6 Main Question

We have talked about your short-term goals for the future and some things you can do today to work toward achieving those goals. Along the way, you might make a mistake or have a setback that feels like a failure. Can you think of a time where someone you look up to or admire made a mistake or had a setback? How did they handle it?



## Track 2 | Week 7 - Review Key Themes

### Objective

Review the key themes covered during the course of the dialogue. Explore what they have learned from the program.

### Following Up from Week 6

- Acknowledge your student's response on to the previous week's theme of Learning from Failures and Mistakes.
- Failing to reach a goal can be disappointing and discouraging. Ask your student how they cope with mistakes and failures. Ask your student to share their thoughts on this.

### Week 7 Talking Points & Tips

- Share what you learned about your student: Point out something positive that you have learned about your student.
- Share what you learned about yourself: Share something positive that you learned about yourself. This could relate to your role as a mentor or to your home or work life.

### Week 7 Main Question

We've talked about your interests, goals in life, skills for success, and your failures and mistakes. I'd like to know your thoughts about our time together. Can you think of something you learned about yourself?

## Track 2 | Week 8 - Validate and Affirm Your Student

### Objective

Acknowledge and validate your student's reflection on the program. Express your belief in your student's ability to achieve their goals and dreams.

### Following Up from Week 7

- Validate insights your student has gained: If your student identifies one or more conclusions that he or she has reached through the process, commend your student for being self-reflective and taking something from the experience.
- If your student did not have a thoughtful response: You can mention how you hope the discussion throughout the weeks has been helpful in some way. Encourage your student to reflect on this experience in the future.

### Week 8 Talking Points & Tips

- Connect Future Goals to Current Actions: Find a way to encourage your student to pursue their goals for the future. Remind them that what they do each day will play a role in whether or not they realize those goals.
- Be Specific in your Encouragement: Refer to the information your student shared with you on their interests, goals, obstacles, challenges and plans.
- Reinforce the Importance of Sustained Effort: Acknowledge the efforts your student has made and encourage them to continue working hard to achieve their goals in 9th grade, graduate high school, and accomplish their dreams.

### Week 8 Main Question

I really enjoyed getting to know you. I appreciate all you shared with me about your life and goals. I know connecting with someone through writing can seem weird at times, and I appreciate you sticking it out and connecting with me. I hope you enjoyed our discussions as much as I did and I wish you all the best for the future. Keep up the good work!

## Track 3

Track 3 Gateway Prompts are designed for students who are accelerated learners. These are students who have already started to plan out their future and career path. For these students, Track 2 might be too basic. Track 3 allows these students to take a deeper dive with you, their mentor, into detailed specifics about their future. At any point, you can move between the tracks to find the right message to send your student.

Note: All students begin Week One in Track 2.

### **Week 2**

Aspirations

### **Week 3**

Future Goals

### **Week 4**

Exploring Learning Styles

### **Week 5**

Setting Short-Term Goals

### **Week 6**

Learning From Failures & Mistakes

### **Week 7**

Review Key Themes

### **Week 8**

Validate and Affirm Your Student

## Track 3 | Week 2 - Aspirations

### Objective

Continue to get to know your student and find out their aspirations for the future.

### Following Up from Week 1

- Validate your student's thoughts on school: Because you're on Track 3, your student likely shared that they enjoy school or see the value in it. Validate these thoughts. Share your reaction to their story. Ask a follow up question to gain even more insight into their lives.

### Week 2 Talking Points & Tips

- Share your own aspirations: Share with your student more about what you wanted to be in high school. If it's not related to what you're doing now, explain the path that led you to where you are. If you're doing what you've always wanted to do, share examples of when you knew for sure this was the career path for you.

### Week 2 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Main Question). This week, you might ask:

- What is your favorite sport, movie, or band and why?
- If you never had to work in your life, how would you spend your time?
- What is the best part about your life right now?

**Encourage your student to ask questions. Students in this track will get the most value out of getting their questions answered by a business professional.**

### Week 2 Main Question

***I'm interested in learning more about you. Do you have aspirations for what you want to do after high school? If so, tell me more about why you've chosen this career path. If not, do you have any areas of interest that you're thinking of pursuing?***

## Track 3 | Week 3 - Future Goals

### Objective

Explore your students' specific ideas about their post-secondary goals

### Following Up from Week 2

- Validate your student's career interests: Affirm how cool/exciting/interesting their passion is. If you know a lot about their area of interest, share what you know. Ask follow up questions. For example, if your student wants to go to veterinarian school, you might ask if there's a specific animal they would specialize in.
- If your student says they don't have any areas of interest: Consider going back to Track 2 this week. Your student likely could use your help in finding an area of interest.

### Week 3 Talking Points & Tips

- Share your story: Tell your student more about your post-secondary journey. Be specific – did you go to a private or a public school? Did you stay in the dorms, rent, or stay at home? Did you switch majors at any point? Did you consider going in-state or out-of-state? Were you involved in anything outside of classes?

### Week 3 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Main Question). This week, you might ask:

- What are you looking for in a college? Big, small, rigorous academics, location, weather, sports, etc?
- Where are you in the college search process? Have you started researching or even visiting schools?

**Encourage your student to ask questions. Students in this track will get the most value out of getting their questions answered by a business professional.**

### Week 3 Main Question

***We've been talking about what you want to do in the future. Have you thought about the type of college or post-secondary institution you want to attend after high school?***

## Track 3 | Week 4 - Exploring Skills Aligned to Goals

### Objective

Help your student begin to envision the knowledge, skills, and experiences they will need to succeed.

### Following Up from Week 3

- If your student was able to articulate goals and details about their post-secondary education: Acknowledge and validate their goals, Ask follow-up questions to help them further picture themselves in the future.
- If your student isn't sure about college or unable to identify their next steps: Consider going back to Track 2 this week. Your student could likely use your help in picturing their future.

### Week 4 Talking Points & Tips

- Share what it takes to succeed in your career and/or company: Give your student a sense of the knowledge and skills that are necessary for success in your job and/or at your company. In addition to sharing things like the types of educational programs and degrees that are required to enter and succeed in your organization, be sure to highlight “soft skills” like: (1) sticking to tasks through distractions and difficulties and (2) managing time well. If possible give personal examples of how these skills are not always easy but are extremely important.
- Share any soft skills you picked up in high school (or later): Tell your student about the soft skills that have been useful in your career and life (e.g. teamwork, persistence, flexibility, etc.). If you think it necessary, define “soft skills” for your student.

### Week 4 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Main Question). This week, you might ask:

- What skills do you have that make you a good student? Can you imagine yourself using these same skills in the workplace?
- Can you think of a peer (in or out of school) who you respect or admire? What behaviors are they showing that you admire? Do you think these are innate or learned behaviors?

**Encourage your student to ask questions. Students in this track will get the most value out of getting their questions answered by a business professional.**

### Week 4 Main Question

***Now that we've talked about your future career and how you want to get the education you need, what skills do you already have that will help you in this career? What skills are you hoping to develop before you get to college?***

## Track 3 | Week 5 - Setting Short-Term Goals

### Objective

Help your student identify a short-term goal that will support their long-term goals. Help your student identify the benefits of achieving their short term goal.

### Following Up from Week 4

- If your student doesn't know what skills it will take to enter the career path they've shared: Two possibilities for responding to your student in this situation are: (1) brainstorm ways your student could learn more about the requirements for success in the career or (2) share what you know (or could find out) about the requirements for success in the career your student has mentioned.
- If your student knows what skills it will take to enter that career: Acknowledge/validate the skills they mentioned that they already possess. Provide any additional thoughts for consideration on how they could work to develop these skills.
- Reinforce the importance of soft skills: Suggest soft skills that may be useful in their career or relate to their goals.

### Week 5 Talking Points & Tips

- Share your story: Tell your student about a goal that you achieved in the past that brought you closer to the future you want.

### Week 5 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Main Question). This week, you might ask:

- Think ahead to how you will try to achieve your goal. What obstacles do you think you might encounter? How will you handle them?
- A SMART goal stands for Specific-Measurable-Achievable-Relevant-Timebound. Just by looking at those words, do you think your goal qualifies as a SMART goal? If not, what would you change?

**Encourage your student to ask questions. Students in this track will get the most value out of getting their questions answered by a business professional.**

### Week 5 Main Question

***We've been talking a lot about the future, now let's talk about right now. Do you have any goals you're trying to reach this semester that can help you get closer to the future you want?***

## Track 3 | Week 6 - Learning from Failures & Mistakes

### Objective

Help your student prepare to persist through challenges and see the opportunity to learn from failures and mistakes.

### Following Up from Week 5

- If your student shared a goal: Help your student sharpen their short-term goal(s). For example, if your student says their goal is to “get better grades,” help them identify a particular class in which they would like to do better. The more specific the goal, the better. Make sure to encourage your student to keep you updated with the progress of their goal.
- If your student was unable to identify a goal: Think back to your conversations in past weeks to see if you might be able to suggest an area of growth. For example, if your student mentioned they like to write, you might ask if they’ve ever considered journaling their thoughts.
- If you’re not sure where to take the conversation because your student did not identify a goal or was unable to articulate anything in past messages to guide your conversation, consider moving back to Track 2 to keep the dialogue flowing.

### Week 6 Talking Points & Tips

- Share your story: Tell your student about a time when you made a mistake or failed at something but learned a valuable lesson from the experience that later benefitted you in some way. Help them learn that mistakes are encouraged.

### Week 6 Supporting Questions

Make sure to keep your exchanges conversational by asking at least one question (in addition to the Main Question). This week, you might ask:

- Can you think of someone you admire who’s made a serious mistake or failed at something? How did they handle it?

**Encourage your student to ask questions. Students in this track will get the most value out of getting their questions answered by a business professional.**

### Week 6 Main Question

***We have talked about your short-term goals for the future and some things you can do today to work toward achieving those goals. Along the way, you might make a mistake or have a setback that feels like a failure. Can you think of a time recently where you had a setback, made a mistake, or failed at something? How did you handle it?***



## Track 3 | Week 7 - Review Key Themes

### Objective

Review the key themes covered during the course of the dialogue. Explore what they have learned from the program.

### Following Up from Week 6

- Acknowledge your student's response on to the previous week's theme of Learning from Failures and Mistakes.
- Failing to reach a goal can be disappointing and discouraging. Ask your student how they cope with mistakes and failures. Ask your student to share their thoughts on this.

### Week 7 Talking Points & Tips

- Share what you learned about your student: Point out something positive that you have learned about your student.
- Share what you learned about yourself: Share something positive that you learned about yourself. This could relate to your role as a mentor or to your home or work life.

### Week 7 Main Question

***We've talked about your interests, goals in life, skills for success, and your failures and mistakes. I'd like to know your thoughts about our time together. Can you think of something you learned about yourself?***

## Track 3 | Week 8 - Validate and Affirm Your Student

### Objective

Acknowledge and validate your student's reflection on the program. Express your belief in your student's ability to achieve their goals and dreams.

### Following Up from Week 7

- Validate insights your student has gained: If your student identifies one or more conclusions that he or she has reached through the process, commend your student for being self-reflective and taking something from the experience.
- If your student did not have a thoughtful response: You can mention how you hope the discussion throughout the weeks has been helpful in some way. Encourage your student to reflect on this experience in the future.

### Week 8 Talking Points & Tips

- Connect Future Goals to Current Actions: Find a way to encourage your student to pursue their goals for the future. Remind them that what they do each day will play a role in whether or not they realize those goals.
- Be Specific in your Encouragement: Refer to the information your student shared with you on their interests, goals, obstacles, challenges and plans.
- Reinforce the Importance of Sustained Effort: Acknowledge the efforts your student has made and encourage them to continue working hard to achieve their goals in 9th grade, graduate high school, and accomplish their dreams.

### Week 8 Main Question

***I really enjoyed getting to know you. I appreciate all you shared with me about your life and goals. I know connecting with someone through writing can seem weird at times, and I appreciate you sticking it out and connecting with me. I hope you enjoyed our discussions as much as I did and I wish you all the best for the future. Keep up the good work!***

# Research & Rationale

The Gateway Prompts were developed in partnership with Search Institute, a leader in youth development research, with input from educators, professionals, and mentors like you. These Prompts are meant to guide, not standardize, your interactions with mentees. While three paragraphs are the standard message length, feel free to adjust based on what best conveys the weekly topic's spirit. Remember our motto: Think Forward, Act Now.

The Prompts encourage asking thoughtful questions to foster a two-way conversation. Not all students will respond weekly, as Cloud Coach serves entire 9th-grade populations with varying engagement levels. Even if responses are slow, your messages are impactful—students do read them. Your participation matters!

You can switch Tracks anytime to match your mentee's needs. Track 3 offers more rigorous content, while Track 1 provides extra support. For questions, contact your BestPrep coordinator or email us at [cloudcoachemails@bestprep.org](mailto:cloudcoachemails@bestprep.org). Thank you, and enjoy the journey!

## **Week 1**

Perspectives on School

## **Week 2**

Areas of Interest/Passion

## **Week 3**

Future Goals

## **Week 4**

Exploring Learning Styles

## **Week 5**

Setting Short-Term Goals

## **Week 6**

Learning From Failures & Mistakes

## **Back to Beginning**

# Research & Rationale

## Research & Rationale | Week 1:

Understanding how a student feels about school can shape the tone of future messages. If a student is struggling in school, you will probably offer different advice than you would to a student who is excelling. For example, if a student mentions school being difficult, you may want to think about how you can connect their interests and the effort they put into that interest, to school. Also, instead of focusing primarily on post-secondary education, you may want to talk about more immediate goals, like passing the 9th grade and even graduating high school.

If a student is excelling in school, you may want to talk about post-secondary education more frequently than graduating high school. After week 1, you'll get a sense for the type of student you're working with to determine if your messages should be longer and more detailed, or shorter and more to the point. This will also clue you in as to which direction the conversation will take.

## Research & Rationale | Week 2:

Research conducted at Search Institute has shown that when a young person has a deep interest or passion in their life (what Search Institute calls the young person's spark), they are much more likely to succeed at school and much less likely to participate in risky behaviors such as using drugs or alcohol. Search Institute's national studies have shown that the most common sparks of teenagers today are sports, performing arts, and technology, but sparks also come in many other forms, like taking care of animals, reading, working, or improving the environment (Benson and Scales, 2009).

Knowing your student's interests is a great way to build a relationship and to acknowledge an area of their life in which they work hard and feel a sense of accomplishment. Knowing their spark could provide insight into their lives and can give you a better idea of the person they are or hope to become. In future message exchanges, their spark can be leveraged to connect school and their future goals.

# Research & Rationale

## Research & Rationale | Week 3:

An extensive body of research shows that helping young people develop powerful visions of their possible future selves can enhance motivation, effort, and educational outcomes in the present (Oyserman, Terry, and Bybee, 2002; Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry, 2006; Dweck, Walton, Cohen, 2011). Studies also find, however, that while many teenagers today – more than in prior generations – have high goals for the future, they are often unclear about what they need to do to achieve those goals and passive about working hard in the present to achieve them (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999; Rosenbaum and Person, 2003; Damon, 2008). The good news is that other studies have shown that when people are helped to see how their present actions are likely to influence whether or not they achieve their goals (such as getting into a particular type of college or enjoying a relaxing retirement), it can produce significant and positive changes in behavior in the present (Oyserman, 2013).

Other researchers have shown that it is especially important to help students who struggle in school understand how educational success will help them achieve their goals for the future – even if those goals don't seem closely connected to the work that students are doing in school at present (Dweck et al., 2011; Hulleman and Harackiewicz, 2009). While these are strong findings from extensive research, it is important to remember that they may not reflect your student's approach to future goals and objectives. Be attentive to what they say in responding to your questions this week so that you are providing feedback that will resonate with your student. This will also be the beginning of the discussion on how they will achieve their goals for the future.

# Research & Rationale

## Research & Rationale | Week 4:

In many American schools today, the emphasis is on mastery of the type of academic knowledge and skill that can be measured on a standardized achievement test. While those abilities are unquestionably important, a large body of research in economics and other disciplines is now demonstrating that what were once thought of as “soft skills” are essential for success in all aspects of life. For example, Nobel Laureate in economics James Heckman and his colleagues have demonstrated that character strengths such as perseverance, sociability, conscientiousness, and curiosity are as influential as IQ in determining performance not only in school but also in the labor market, health outcomes, and incarceration rates (Heckman and Kautz, 2012). In this exchange, you have the opportunity to convey the importance of character strengths to your student, which is a message they may not often receive. It will be particularly valuable for your student to hear from you about the ways that “soft skills” matter in the workplace.

## Research & Rationale | Week 5:

During the second half of the program the students will be asked to think about how they can act now to achieve the future goals that they identified earlier. The process of identifying a short-term goal and the benefits of achieving that goal is part of a specific research methodology called WOOP. The letters in WOOP stand for Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, and Plan.

- Wish: A wish or goal in your life that is challenging but possible within a span of time
- Outcome: The best thing that could come from fulfilling the wish or goal
- Obstacle: Something that holds you back from fulfilling the wish or goal
- Plan: A step you could take to remove or overcome the obstacle

WOOP was designed to help people achieve short-term goals that take weeks or months rather than days or years to complete. These goals can be the building blocks of success in school and in life. A variety of studies have found WOOP to be effective in enhancing student motivation and perseverance. Angela Duckworth and colleagues (2013) found that using WOOP significantly improved grades, attendance, and conduct in a group of fifth graders. In this week’s prompt, the focus will be on the Wish and the Outcome.

# Research & Rationale

## Research & Rationale | Week 6:

Information from a large body of research has shown that the way that students view failure and mistakes has great influence on the effort they put into school and other areas of their lives (Dweck et al., 2011). While some students regard failure or mistakes as confirmation of their limited abilities (what psychologist Carol Dweck has called a fixed mindset), others regard failure and mistakes as opportunities to learn and improve (a growth mindset). Studies by Dweck and other researchers have shown that students with a growth mindset are much more likely to work hard in school and in other areas of their lives and to keep working toward their goals when they encounter problems and setbacks. In contrast, students with a fixed mindset are more likely to exert low levels of effort from the outset of a task and to give up more easily when they encounter difficulty. Fortunately, numerous studies have also shown that it is possible to help students with a fixed mindset develop a growth mindset and, as a result, improve the effort they put into school and increase their achievement and other outcomes. One of the most effective ways to do that is to help students see mistakes and failures not as confirmation of their limited potential but as opportunities to learn and grow. That is the focus of this week's message exchange.

# Research & Rationale

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# Research & Rationale

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