

**BEYOND
SCHOOL WALLS**

**EQUIPPING TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE:
THE CASE FOR BEYOND SCHOOL WALLS**



**Big Brothers
Big Sisters®**
OF AMERICA

AUGUST 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
EQUIPPING TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE	2
CURRENT STATE OF BSW PROGRAMMING.....	5
CHARACTERISTICS OF BSW PROGRAMS	7
INNOVATIONS	7
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPANIES	9
REFERENCES.....	11
APPENDIX.....	12

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EQUIPPING TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

Problem: Worldwide, about 40% of employers find it difficult to recruit people with the skills they need for their businesses (*The Learning Generation: Investing in Education for a Changing World 2016*).

Solution: Mentoring can be an integral part of the solution in both better preparing youth for high-demand careers and offering employers a means of engaging and retaining their talented staff.

Since 1904, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) has been the national leader in developing high-quality, meaningful, one-to-one mentoring relationships between youth and caring adults. Traditional Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) programs offer youth many benefits, including gains in academic performance and reductions in serious school infractions (Herrera et al., 2007); however, traditional programming may be insufficient in preparing youth for careers if there is not an intentional focus on professional development.

Workplace mentoring (referred to in this report as "Beyond School Walls" or "BSW," which is the name BBBSA uses for all workplace mentoring programs, in honor of our ten-year partnership on this project with Comcast NBCUniversal) addresses this gap by engaging a cohort of youth (typically middle- or high-school aged) in an office setting for regular, one-to-one meetings with their Big, a professional from within the partner company. Youth learn firsthand the skills (e.g., financial literacy, STEM, social-emotional skill development) they would need to succeed in the partner company and can explore career options that may have otherwise been unknown to them.

FEATURED PARTNER: COMCAST NBCUNIVERSAL



Comcast NBCUniversal partners with BBBS on Beyond School Walls (BSW), the network's largest workplace mentoring program. Started in Philadelphia in 2008, the program has grown to serve over 350 youth annually across 14 markets. Through their involvement with BSW, youth learn digital inclusion and workforce readiness skills in the context of one-to-one mentoring relationships. The partnership has brought BBBS media exposure, board support, and national event sponsorship, while Comcast has benefited from additional opportunities to engage employees and develop the future workforce.

What motivated you to become a Big? (Source: Comcast BSW employee survey)

"I was...motivated by the change I saw in other Bigs. The Littles aren't the only ones that are positively impacted by BBBS."

"[BSW is a] good way to give back to the community as part of my company program."

"At the recommendation of my colleagues I decided to apply at the beginning of this year, and I am so glad I did!"

BENEFITS TO THE EMPLOYER

Once employers do find their ideal candidates, they must then contend with the facts that the number of employees voluntarily leaving their jobs has grown year-over-year, and the global costs of employee turnover will increase to \$680 billion in 2020 (Mahan, Nelms and Bearden 2018).

Turnover costs for U.S. companies will increase to \$680 billion in 2020

(Mahan, Nelms and Bearden 2018)

Among the millennial population (those employees born between 1979 – 2001), the stance their employer takes on corporate social responsibility factors significantly into their decision to start working with—or continue working with—a particular employer. In fact, 56% of millennials are likely to refuse working with a company that is not socially or environmentally responsible, and 64% reported that working for companies that were socially or environmentally responsible strengthened their loyalty to their employer (The 2006 Cone Millennial Case Study 2006).

- *Employee turnover is 39% lower among employees who volunteer time (Benevity, 2018).*
- *Employees who give or volunteer with the greatest intensity are the least likely to leave their job (Benevity, 2018).*
- *For every additional 100 hours of volunteering, the number of skills employees report acquiring increases by 17% (Booth, Park and Glomb 2009).*
- *Employers can help prepare the future workforce (the Littles) and give their exceptional staff members a chance to develop key leadership skills. They can also begin training their future workforce by partnering with the BBBS agency to create a curriculum that focuses on the competencies necessary for success in their industry.*

BENEFITS TO THE YOUTH

The structure of workplace mentoring speaks to an unmet need for many of our youth: the ability to explore the plethora of career opportunities that could be available to them with education, training, and support. Far too often, young professionals enter the workforce lacking the requisite knowledge their chosen professions require. A recent report from ACT, an organization that develops a widely-administered standardized test used for college admission in the U.S., found that only 26% of students taking their test are likely to have the work readiness skills needed for more than nine out of 10 jobs profiled in their JobPro database (ACT 2018). Additionally, while 78% of students surveyed indicated that they wanted to go to college, **just 45% felt they were ready for college or a career** (Learning from Student Voice: Most High Schoolers Feel Unprepared for College and Careers 2016), and 39% reported that their formal schooling did not prepare them for the job they wanted (Preparing Tomorrow's Workforce for the Fourth Industrial Revolution 2018).

- *Over 50% of high school juniors report schools do not adequately help match their interests to potential jobs or advise on steps to secure a desired career (U. S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2016). BSW can show youth career options that they may be unaware of and immerse them in a workforce environment where they can learn what they must do to prepare for jobs in their industries.*
- *Mentors guide youth to early career jobs that are rewarding (McDonald & Lambert, 2014).*
- *Youth perceive themselves as gaining high confidence and successfully developing both hard and soft skills as a result of formal work-based mentoring (Hagler & Rhodes, 2019).*



Through the Beyond School Walls program, I was paired with Nafis. During one of our many conversations, we discussed his dreams, and he told me he wanted to be a boxer. We talked a lot about how he plans to achieve that goal and the sacrifices he needs to make. We also talked a lot about other avenues he could pursue, like college or the military, and I was able to open his eyes to other options.” **-Big Brother Roger, BBBS of Metro Atlanta**¹



I would come to a realization that he wanted me to have options so I wouldn’t close myself from other opportunities. He knew my mind was set on only one thing and I was blind and couldn't see what could happen if my life doesn't go into that lane. In life anything could happen; maybe I don't get what I want. That's why I should have a plan B ... This taught me that maybe my obsession on one thing could have other doors closed for me.” **-Little Brother Nafis, BBBS of Metro Atlanta**

FEATURED AGENCIES:

BBBS OF NEW YORK CITY | BBBS OF ORANGE COUNTY & THE INLAND EMPIRE

BBBS of New York City (New York, NY) partners with 70 corporate partners to serve approximately 900 youth. Leading partners include American Express, Bloomberg, and Moody's. The agency has been at the forefront in developing and implementing innovative programming in the after-school space through a curriculum emphasizing social-emotional skills, leadership development, teamwork, and communication.

In 2018, BBBS of NYC reported that 98% of BSW Littles graduated high school on time (the city-wide average is 74%). In addition, 96% reported being more comfortable working with people and 85% reported improvement in their public speaking skills (BBBS of New York City, 2019).



Moody’s is proud to foster a culture of community service and civic engagement, and this program was driven from its inception by Moody’s employees seeking to help eliminate the achievement gap for young men of color [...] We hope that the dedication of Moody’s employees will have a positive impact on the lives of the participants and help build a pipeline of future leaders in our community.”

-Frances Laserson, Former President of The Moody’s Foundation

BBBS of Orange County & the Inland Empire (Santa Ana, CA) partners with seven corporations in the Southern California region. Students begin as sophomores and go on to complete a three-year program focused on engagement and personal development. Graduates have the option of continuing their involvement through the Destination Future program, a college and career readiness program.



We spend most of our days working long hours, so having these children come to our building helps us feel like we are a part of the community. For those of us who do not have children yet, it makes us feel like we are helping add positivity to a child's life.”

-Olivia Albrecht, Head of ESG Business Strategy, PIMCO²

¹ (Source: <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/blog/post/beyond-school-walls-combining-mentorship-job-learning>)

² (Source: <https://patch.com/california/newportbeach/pimco-employees-become-bigs-to-needy-oc-kids>)

CURRENT STATE OF BSW PROGRAMMING

This section includes data from the [2020 BBBSA Network Snapshot Survey](#). The survey was released in January 2020 and includes responses from 162 agencies, representing 60% of our entire BBBS network. Results from the 2020 BBBSA Network Snapshot Survey indicate that BSW initiatives have become increasingly popular within our network. In the 2017 innovation survey, 44 respondents indicated their agency offered workplace mentoring. Now, four years later, that number has grown to 52 agencies (an 18.2% increase), indicating nearly one out of every five of our agencies has a workplace mentoring program.

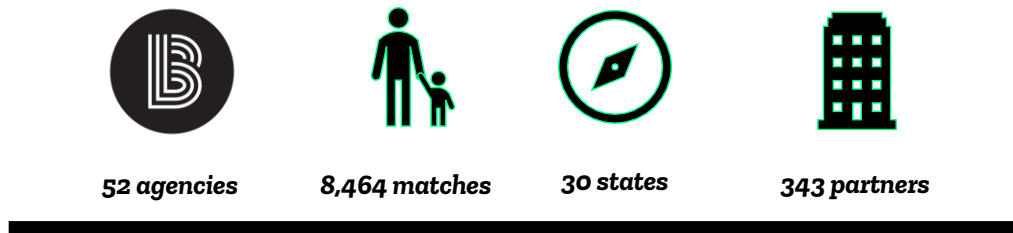


Figure 1: BSW Programs by Agency Size

Most agencies (43.4%) offering BSW programming are considered “large” (serve at least 1,500 children annually).

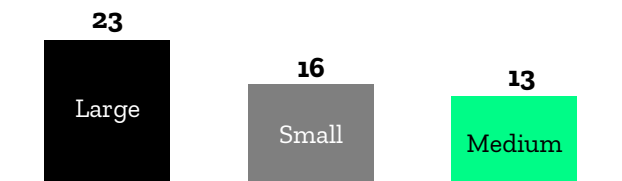


Figure 2: Number of Youth Served by Agency

Half of the agencies offering BSW programming are serving 50 or fewer youth annually through BSW. Only five agencies (10%) reporting serving more than 500 youth through these programs. In some instances, BSW programming is provided through a group mentoring model.

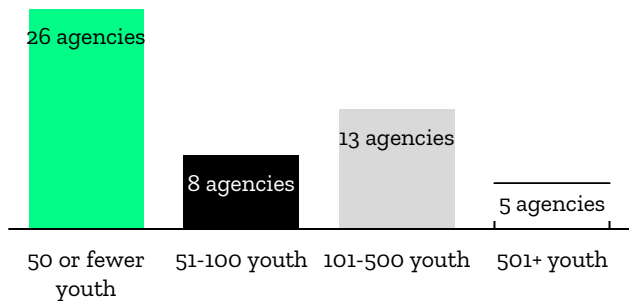
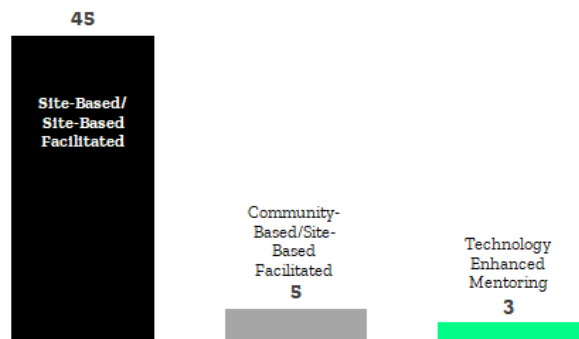


Figure 3: Program Delivery Model

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority (84.9%) of BSW programs are Site-Based or Site-Based Facilitated.³ The cohort model and the emphasis on college and career readiness make school partnerships ideal for delivering this program format.



³ Youth in Site-Based matches meet their mentors at a specific location for the duration of their match (e.g., school, workplace, community center). Their interactions are not always guided by a BBBS staff person. Site-Based Facilitated programs involve the BBBS staff member, who is usually responsible for planning sessions or activities for matches.

Figure 4: Industry of Workplace Partners

Across the BBBS network, a total of 343 employers are engaged in BSW programming, including 29 Fortune 100 employers (refer to Appendix A for a list). Such programs involve employers from a variety of different industry groups, including the financial sector (98 employers), travel and leisure (49 employers), public sector (49 employers), business services (47 employers), and healthcare (42 employers). The largest national BSW partner is Comcast NBCUniversal, which supports 350 matches across 14 sites annually.

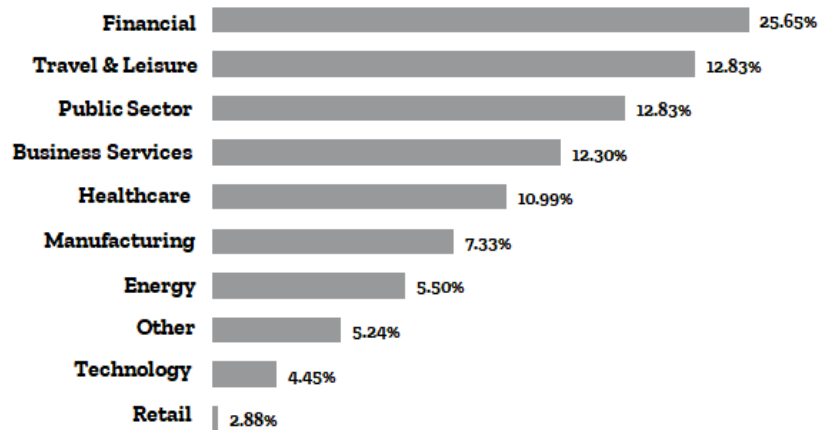
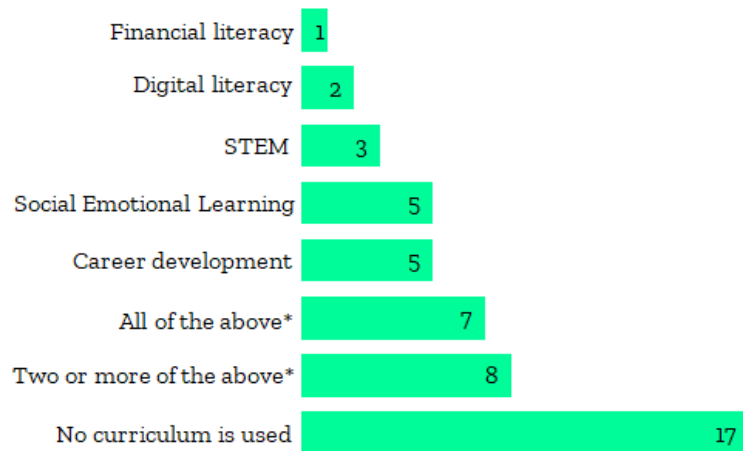


Figure 5: Curricula Used in BSW Programs

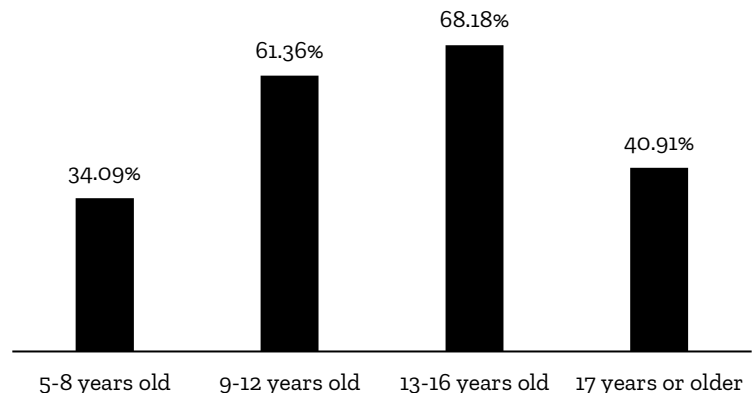
Among agencies that do use a specific curriculum, career development and social-emotional learning skills are the most popular.



* recoded from write-in responses

Figure 6: Intended Age Groups for BSW Programs

When asked the age group(s) that agencies tended to recruit for BSW programming, the most popular answer was youth ages 13 – 16 years old, followed by youth ages 9 – 12 years old.



CHARACTERISTICS OF BSW PROGRAMS

BSW is a flexible model that allows agencies to create or adapt curricula that align with the strategic direction of partners. This requires a collaborative effort among the corporate partner, the school, and the BBBS agency. BSW programs share the following characteristics:

- Littles (mentees) are engaged in a one-to-one mentoring relationship with a business professional
- Matches tend to participate in a cohort model with their peers and eventually “graduate” from the program
- Match meetings occur on at least a monthly basis during the school year, typically where the Big (mentor) works
- The Big and Little participate in educational programming focused on workforce development, including career exploration, professional skill development, and teambuilding activities

INNOVATIONS

To align their programming with the strategic priorities of both their schools and corporate partners, many BBBS agencies have developed innovative activities or pursued creative ideas that are tailored to the specific needs of both partners. Some examples are included below and may be adapted by agencies looking for ways to utilize the resources available to them within their communities.

NETWORK

BBBS Independence (Philadelphia, PA) currently has 27 workplace mentoring partners serving over 600 matches. The agency has developed decade-plus partnerships with Comcast NBCUniversal, Urban Outfitters, and Wawa. Employers benefit from the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit program, which encourages employers to invest in local educational programming. More recently they have worked with VideoRay, a manufacturer of underwater camera equipment on a middle school program. Participants build and test their own underwater camera through this interactive STEM program.



I have known my Big Brother for 2 years. Since I met George, I haven't been shy meeting new people. My Big Brother helps me do my homework. He tells me to do the right thing. The best thing about George is that he's a great guy and cool to hang out with. I would never want to leave George. He's like my real brother.”

-Little Brother Raquon⁴

BBBS of the Capital Region (Harrisburg, PA) partners with Capital Blue Cross and Deloitte to provide workplace mentoring to high school aged youth. The program operates in a cohort format, with a group of classmates remaining involved with the program throughout their high school years. The program utilizes a base workforce development curriculum with the flexibility for adaptation to meet the priorities of individual employers. It has generated continued interest among local schools, as it meets their state mandated requirement to offer workforce development programming.

⁴(www.videoray.com/bbbs#!BBBS_Group)

“ Beyond School Walls has been a wonderful opportunity, not only for the students, but also our employees who volunteered to be part of this unique program. The mentoring relationships they have built with the students has been a positive, rewarding experience.”

-Gary D. St. Hilaire, President and CEO, Capital BlueCross

BBBS of the Central Carolinas (Charlotte, NC) partners with employers in the healthcare and financial sectors to serve 150 matches per year. They have successfully leveraged this expertise by developing customized industry specific curricula (for example, financial services partners use their specialized financial literacy content).

“ Quicken Loans is a for-more-than-profit company, meaning we reinvest our success back into our communities, that's why we're focused on educating youth, driving job growth and increasing opportunity for all in Charlotte. Our team members are passionate about working with Big Brothers Big Sisters to mentor local children. We value this organization as we continue to live at the intersection of doing well by doing good.”

-Dave Schroeder, Senior Vice President, Quicken Loans Mortgage Services⁵

BBBS of Southwest Michigan (Kalamazoo, MI) serves 100 youth through partnerships with 12 employers. They have found that the program provides an attractive option for employers who want to provide social responsibility programming without leaving their worksite. They provide matches with a self-directed curriculum to work through during their time together.

“ Working with BBBS is our way of creating an ongoing legacy. Plus it is a great team engagement tool and it's fun!”

-Andrea A. Montecchi, Director of Supply Chain Relationship Management, Stryker Instruments⁶

BBBS of Northeast Florida (Jacksonville, FL) currently has 10 workplace mentoring partners serving 250 youth. The agency has enjoyed success partnering with career academies to connect students with mentors at employers of interest. Through their relationship with Florida Department of Law Enforcement youth attending a public safety academy participate in a mock crime lab. The agency works with General Electric employees to facilitate a bridge building project activity with matches that spans the entire semester. They also work with the defense contractor LSI to host a helicopter simulation with Air Force ROTC students enrolled in the program.

“This is an exciting program not only for my students ... but for the community. Again, it allows them to get more into critical thinking skills, more communication, more collaboration. It allows them to look beyond the school walls and see what's out there for them to do after they are finished high school, going to college, and then decide what career choice they want to go into,”

-Dr. Gregory D. Bostic, Jean Ribault Senior High School Principal⁷

BBBS Columbia Northwest (Portland, OR) has 11 corporate partnerships that serve 141 youth. The agency views workplace mentoring as an opportunity to develop relationships that translate to higher levels of giving (e.g., gala sponsorships). Partners include Nike, Comcast NBCUniversal, Kaiser Permanente, and Wells Fargo.

“ When corporations connect with Big Brothers Big Sisters, it helps with recruitment because people want to be involved with organizations that want to give back ... It helps with retention. People want to stay in organizations that give back. And it helps with team building. When you have people from different parts of an organization in this room that would normally never work together, it strengthens the organizational culture.”

⁵https://bbbscentralcarolinas.org/wp-content/uploads/BBBSNews_Nov2017_WebLayout.pdf

⁶<http://www.bbbsmi.org/2017/11/08/stryker-employees-interns-champion-bbbs-cause/>

⁷ <https://www.news4jax.com/positively-jax/2020/01/24/ribault-high-school-takes-mentoring-beyond-school-walls/>

-Beach Pace, CEO, BBBS Columbia Northwest⁸

BBBS of Metropolitan Chicago (Chicago, IL) serves 800 matches through 34 workplace mentoring partnerships. The agency has had success collaborating with the financial sector, where companies such as Bank of America and Wells Fargo are required to meet annual Community Reinvestment Act goals. They are currently exploring opportunities for multiple companies to partner together on programming



Beyond School Walls fits well with Comcast's community investment focus, which includes promoting community service, expanding digital literacy, and building tomorrow's leaders."

-Matthew Summy, Vice President of Government and Community Relations, Comcast Greater Chicago Region

VIRTUAL MENTORING

The ongoing COVID-19 epidemic has forced BBBS agencies to transition to virtual mentoring. This has resulted in an influx of new innovations, as agency staff have leveraged technology to facilitate match communication during a time of physical distancing. Additional efforts were made to keep matches connected through a variety of enrichment activities (see Appendix B). Following are examples of innovative virtual mentoring practices from across the BBBS network.

BBBSA (National Office) has served as an innovation incubator through the development of TheApp, a constituent engagement (e-mentoring technology) platform, released in summer 2020. The current iteration provides for monitored one-to-one match communication, activity tracking, and broadcast agency announcements to all account holders. As funding is secured, specific training topics and targeted curriculum will be included. TheApp represents the first phase in a concerted effort to fully integrate e-mentoring into our service delivery model.

BBBS Independence (Philadelphia, PA) is encouraging matches to maintain communication through email, phone, and video. The agency began offering virtual programming to BSW matches in May through the Zoom platform. Agency staff continue to provide regular match support calls and are vigilant about identifying the needs of their Littles during these uncertain times. They have developed a [webpage](#) with a comprehensive list of resources to support matches and their family members. Through their weekly newsletter to matches they are sharing educational resources and tips on staying connected.



"Thank you ... for your weekly messages. It does help me feel more connected to the program in this virtual setting, and it's the perfect reminder each week to reach out to my Little in the midst of the chaos that is home schooling and home working! I miss seeing your smiling faces, and I look forward to us being together again" (Big Sister Jezebel)

BBBS Nutmeg (Hartford, CT) was quick to recognize the need for COVID-19 match resources. The agency compiled a [Virtual Mentoring Toolkit](#) with suggested activities, educational resources, and support for Bigs as they transition to an online relationship with their Littles. The agency has adopted the Big Neighbors program to support under-resourced and medically vulnerable families by running critical errands (e.g., picking up groceries or prescriptions).

BBBS Twin Cities (Minneapolis, MN) started a Pen Pal program and facilitated virtual hangouts to encourage match communication. The agency has shared [44 virtual activities](#) with matches, including

⁸ (<https://www.columbian.com/news/2019/may/21/kaiser-big-brothers-big-sisters-match-staff-with-students-to-mentor/>)

physical games at a distance and shared learning activities. The agency developed and shared a detailed list of [COVID-19 resources](#) with their families.

BBBS of Greater Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh, PA) has kept their BSW matches connected through virtual meetings and a letter writing campaign. The agency has worked with Sto-Rox School District to create a Google classroom to host virtual events, weekly activity suggestions and wraparound service recommendations, resulting in increased engagement among both youth and their parents.

"It is greatly appreciated and with my being currently laid off it definitely helps relieve a little stress! Please pass my sincere gratitude on to everyone involved!" (BSW parent).



BBBS of Southern Arizona (Tucson, AZ) has encouraged matches to schedule regular check-ins. One match has a set time to connect every Monday at noon and the Big Brother even reminds his Little Brother to charge his iPad so they can play games together. Another Big talks to her Little Sister every Tuesday at 3 pm. The regularity of these connections is so important in keeping the Bigs and Littles connected throughout this unprecedented time and allowing Littles to feel some sense of normalcy in their lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPANIES

1. **Adopt a Classroom or School** – It is recommended that companies work with students from a single grade or classroom (referred to as a cohort) who have the potential to be mentored over multiple school years.
2. **Make it Convenient** – This program should be offered at a time and location that is convenient to employees. Where possible, employees should have the opportunity to volunteer during work hours without incurring additional personal expenses.
3. **Multiple Liaisons** – Divide oversight of the program among multiple employees. It is recommended that a senior employee serve as the champion for the program. This individual would serve as a liaison to the executive team with responsibility for securing funding and access to employee volunteers. Another employee, typically from Human Resources or Community Relations, should manage program related logistics (e.g., reserving meeting space).
4. **Share Your Expertise** – Companies are encouraged to integrate their employees' areas of expertise as a part of the overall curriculum. For example, a sales team could include lessons on communication-related topics such as public speaking. Refer to Network Innovation: BSW Programming section for examples.
5. **Partner with Career Academies** – Employers are encouraged to seek out partnerships with schools and other educational programs where students are pursuing careers in related fields. This allows employers the opportunity to identify and train the next generation of employees.
6. **Cost Share** – If the costs associated with mentoring an entire cohort are prohibitive, consider partnering with another employer in your area. This is ideal in situations where multiple companies share an office building with joint meeting space.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: PARTNERSHIPS WITH FORTUNE 100 COMPANIES*

AbbVie	Ford Motor Company	Morgan Stanley
Amazon	General Electric	New York Life
American Express	General Motors	Nike
Bank of America	Goldman Sachs	PepsiCo
Capital One	Humana	Pfizer
Cardinal Health	Johnson & Johnson	UPS
Cigna	Lockheed Martin	Verizon
Comcast NBCUniversal	Marathon	Walt Disney Company
Exelon	Massachusetts Mutual	Wells Fargo
FedEx	MetLife	


* [Fortune's list of companies \(2019\)](#)

For a full list of BBBS workplace partners contact foundations@bbbsa.org

APPENDIX B: VIRTUAL MENTORING: TIPS TO ENHANCE MATCH INTERACTIONS

WAYS TO CONTINUE COMMUNICATING*	VIRTUAL ACTIVITIES FOR MATCHES	SUPPORT FOR BIGS
<p>Phone/Text Rocket.Chat, Ez Texting, Facebook Messenger Kids, What's App</p> <p>Postal Mail Pen pals, mail activity packs to matches</p> <p>Email Pen pals</p> <p>Videoconference Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting</p>	<p>Make a meal (America's Test Kitchen) Homework help (List) Scavenger hunt (Education World) Craft activity (Happiness is Homemade) Read a book (Libby, Hoopla) Concerts (List) Museum visit (List) Zoo visit (National Zoo, San Diego Zoo) Online games (PBS, Gamesgames.com) Exercise (National 4-H, We Are Teachers) Watch a movie (Kanopy) Write a cooperative journal (Storybird) Digital photography (National 4-H) Puzzles (The Spruce Crafts) Learn to dance (CLI Studios) Learn to draw (Lunch Doodles) Learn a new language (duolingo) Learn coding (Code.org) Post curriculum/activities to Google Drive</p>	<p>Continued match support Check-in reminders Online mentor training Virtual support group</p>
<p>* These are pending parental permission. In instances where agency policy forbids contact outside of sessions for Site-Based matches, three-way phone calls with the Match Support Specialist and supervised virtual hangout sessions are options.</p>		

Special thanks to the Comcast Beyond School Walls sites (BBBS Columbia Northwest, BBBS of Greater Pittsburgh, BBBS Twin Cities, BBBS Independence, BBBS Lone Star, BBBS of Metropolitan Chicago, BBBS of Metropolitan Detroit, BBBS of Middle Tennessee, BBBS of Northeast Florida, Nutmeg BBBS, BBBS of Snohomish County, BBBS of Southern Arizona, and BBBS of the Sun Coast) for their assistance in developing this resource.

A graphic element consisting of a solid blue building silhouette on the left, a dotted blue building silhouette in the middle, and a solid blue vertical bar on the right.

BEYOND SCHOOL WALLS

Beyond School WallsSM is the official workplace mentoring program of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. To learn more visit www.bbbs.org.

