



**LINK Unlimited Scholars  
2017-2018  
Scholar/Parent Handbook**

Attention Parents and Scholars:

LINK Unlimited Scholars is committed to the education and holistic development of young, Black men and women. The primary focus and purpose of every LINK program, event, and activity is to positively impact the lives of the leaders of tomorrow. With that in mind, there are standards and rules for academic achievement, program participation, and appropriate behavior. From the day they are accepted as scholars until they graduate from college, all scholars are bound to obey and all parents are expected to support the rules. Most of these rules are contained in this handbook, or announced to the scholars and parents. LINK reserves the right to make and enforce rules it believes necessary for the good of the organization, scholars, and community. Scholars' enrollment in and receipt of LINK support imply that parents and scholars are responsible for adherence to all rules and policies contained in the Scholar/Parent Handbook, as well as any other policies adopted by the Program.

## Table of Contents

	Mission Statement	4
Section I	The LINK Unlimited Scholars Story	5
Section II	Expectation, Core Values, Academic, Conduct and Dress Policies	6
Section III	Responsibilities, Programs and Events	11
Section IV	General Information	15
Section V	Scholar/Mentor Relationship	16
Section VI	Helping the LINK Mentor	17
Section VII	Helping your Child be a Successful LINK Scholar	18
Section VIII	Responsibility Compliance & Fine	20
	Staff Roster	22

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

LINK Unlimited Scholars' mission is to connect economically disadvantaged African American high school students with mentors, resources, and foundational skills required for success as they advance into, through, and beyond college.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

LINK Unlimited Scholars is Chicago's only college and career success organization focused solely on African American youth. LINK's mission is to connect economically disadvantaged African American high school students with mentors, resources, and foundational skills required for success as they advance into, through, and beyond college.

The mission of LINK is achieved through impactful programming, dedicated mentors and financial support from individual donors and corporate and foundation partnerships. LINK's collective impact to develop scholars into lifelong learners and socially responsible citizens positions the organization as a premier provider of college and career success programming for African American youth in the Greater Chicago area.

Each year of the High School program framework is executed in two levers: College Success and Career Success. LINK proactively provides academic support to scholars through the transition to high school and continues that support throughout. These enrichment offerings bridge gaps in academic preparation and is the foundation ensuring scholars have more options and opportunities for career success. The **community-based program model** (out-of-school) is 8-10 years beginning the summer after 8<sup>th</sup> grade through to college graduation. The program administers a year-round calendar of workshops and experiences. Families only pay fees associated with the Summer Learning Program (3 consecutive summers). Those fees are on a sliding scale/per scholar basis and are established according to programmatic logistical costs.

We **selectively partner with high quality, college preparatory high schools** that have a proven track record of adequately preparing students for college success. Specifically, we ensure that all LINK partnering high schools offer academic rigor, academic and social supports, and leadership experiences that provide the tools needed to thrive in top-choice higher education institutions. Our partnerships ensure our history of 100% admittance to four-year institutions continues.

## **SECTION I: THE LINK UNLIMITED SCHOLARS STORY**

LINK Unlimited Scholars was founded in 1966 in response to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s hopeful message that "children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." This hopeful message led John and Carolyn Parmer to mentor an African American child through four years of high school and enlist their friends to do the same.

LINK has been the keeper of Dr. King's dream and continues to be guided by his principles, focusing on educational equality and addressing the crisis facing economically disadvantaged African American youth. LINK remains Chicago's only college and career success program focused on African American youth. Our number one goal is to provide every opportunity that will afford our scholars with a concrete blueprint by which they can confidently and successfully change the trajectory of their lives. LINK boasts a 51-year track record of transitioning youth from the margins to mainstream, and more than 2,400 scholars have already been transformed through LINK's mission.

### **Vision**

LINK's vision is to transform our scholars into committed leaders who – by exceeding national college acceptance, persistence, and graduation rates and acquiring sustainable careers – will serve the LINK and larger community by modeling lifelong social responsibility and civic engagement for future generations of young people.

## SECTION II: EXPECTATIONS, CORE VALUES, ACADEMIC, CONDUCT AND DRESS CODE POLICIES

### A. LINK EXPECTATIONS

1. All LINK scholars are to be in contact with their mentors **at least twice a month**
2. All LINK scholars are to show two acts of gratitude to their mentors each year
3. All LINK scholars must maintain a MINIMUM unweighted GPA of 3.0 **ALL A's and B's**
4. All LINK scholars must enroll in a **strong college preparatory curriculum** at his/her respective high school (i.e. 4 core classes, foreign language, and honors/AP classes when appropriate)
5. All LINK Scholars must attend all mandatory programs/workshops—should extenuating circumstances arise, parents must ensure at least 24-hour notification
6. All LINK Scholars arrive early to mandatory events/programs/workshops/meetings. **Early is on time, on time is late and late is unacceptable.**
7. All LINK scholars must be involved in at least **2 extracurricular activities** by his/her sophomore year (one must be a non-sport related activity)
8. All LINK scholars must hold at least 1 **leadership position** in a school, church, and/or community organization by his/her junior year
9. All LINK scholars must **apply to at least five 4-year colleges that all stakeholders (LINK partners, parents, etc.) agree on** in his/her senior year
10. All LINK Scholars must commit to the six core values: Drive, Resilience, Accountability, Selflessness, Integrity, and Intellectual Curiosity

### B. LINK SCHOLAR CORE VALUES

The LINK Unlimited Scholars **Core Values** are positive attributes that LINK scholars should possess or strive to possess. Core values are the defining characteristics that distinguish LINK scholars from their peers.

The 6 Core Values are:

**Integrity** – Integrity is living by an uncompromising set of moral and ethical principles. It is your commitment to practice these positive values in every aspect of your personal, academic, and professional life. Core value in action: Stand against peer pressure, Be bigger than gossip, Follow through on your commitments.

**Resilience** – Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity or change. It is your capacity to recover by seeking resourceful ways to adapt to a situation and move forward. A resilient person is flexible, optimistic, and strong. Core Value in action: Reflect and learn, Be strong but flexible, Focus on results, not excuses.

**Accountability** – Accountability is your obligation and willingness to accept responsibility for your own actions and conduct. It means you must account for the outcome of a decision you've made good or bad. You own it! Core value in action: Reach out for help often and early, Your word is your brand, Apologize when wrong and forgive when right.

**Drive** – Drive is your ability to build momentum, sustain effort, and finish with strength. A driven person shows initiative and approaches all tasks with determination. Core value in action: Be Early, Be prepared, Be ready to engage others.

**Selflessness** – Selflessness is the ability to put your own interests aside and work towards the well-being of others. This attribute is demonstrated through service, empathy, and other charitable acts. Core value in action: Help those in need, When in doubt choose kindness, Build up the people around you.

**Intellectual Curiosity** - Intellectual curiosity is your desire to invest time and energy into learning more about a person, place, thing or concept. It is your life-long commitment to be open to new challenges, experiences, and opportunities. Core value in action: Go beyond the requirement, Ask questions, Learn from a difference in opinion.

## C. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

### Academic Probation

If a scholar's GPA drops **below 3.0 (unweighted) for the semester**, he/she will be placed on **academic probation**. Scholars on probation must show improvement by earning a GPA of 3.0 (unweighted) or above in the following semester and will be required to attend tutoring/study skills programming at LINK and/or their respective school. All stipulations associated with the probation period will be provided in writing (we reserve the right to customize scholars' probation requirements based on the needs of the scholar). **Failure to meet any stipulated requirement may result in immediate expulsion from LINK Unlimited Scholars and loss of all elements of program participation.**

High School Scholars who have GPA's below 3.0 (unweighted) for more than two semesters may face immediate release.

Parents and/or scholars may request a probation hearing to determine whether continued participation is warranted. This request must be initiated by the parent/scholar. Not all requests will be granted.

### Staff Conferences

A staff-conducted conference is required for first-time scholars who receive a GPA below 3.0 (unweighted) in any marking period. Mentors will be contacted and invited to attend. A CONFIDENTIAL written record will be kept for every conference.

### Mandatory Tutoring/Guided Study Skills Program

All scholars who receive a GPA below 3.0 (unweighted) in any quarter will be **required** to attend academic support programs at LINK and/or their respective high school. Additionally, weekly academic logs must be submitted to LINK staff. Failure to satisfactorily meet these expectations may result in a scholar's release.

### Transfers

When a scholar transfers from one high school to another, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the LINK office prior to the transfer. A transfer may or may not affect the scholars good standing in the program. As a reminder, we recommend transferring to another **LINK Partnering High School**. If the school is not a LINK partner, please consult the Director of Educational Programs.

## D. DISCIPLINARY POLICY

As a part of LINK Unlimited Scholars, you are a representative of our organization and a role model to your peers and the young children in the community. We have created a code of conduct to which all LINK scholars must adhere. Further, **LINK scholars are evaluated in four major areas: Academic Performance, Program Participation, Mentor Relationship, and Behavior**. A serious infraction in any of these areas could result in **expulsion**. **Poor performance in more than one of these areas will result in review and probation or expulsion.**

## Code of Conduct

- § Scholars may not possess or consume alcoholic beverages and/or drugs/cigars/cigarettes at any LINK event. It is unlawful to possess any controlled substance (i.e., marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine, etc.). Any knowledge of such possession will be forwarded to the appropriate authorities. Violation of this rule may result in immediate expulsion from LINK Unlimited Scholars.
- § Scholars must conduct themselves in a manner befitting LINK's core values. This includes respecting the space and privacy of all others. Fighting, sexual harassment or misconduct, stealing, defacing LINK/school property and any other behavior deemed unsuitable by the LINK staff may result in immediate expulsion from LINK Unlimited Scholars.
- The LINK Code of Conduct applies to information posted on social media. Scholars should use good judgment in the type of information shared on these websites. Scholars should avoid posting language, pictures, or any content that is degrading to the self, family, or LINK Unlimited Scholars.
- Scholars are responsible for their own personal property. LINK's staff and representatives assume no responsibility for lost or stolen items. For certain events, a list of restricted items will be provided.
- **Scholars must live up to the commitment to engage in meaningful relationships with their mentors. Failure to return phone calls/e-mails within 48 hours, communicate at least twice a month, demonstrate appropriate attitude, or be otherwise responsive and/or proactive will result in a conference to determine whether continued participation in LINK Unlimited Scholars is warranted. Scholars who do not make the necessary efforts to make the relationship work may be placed on disciplinary probation or expelled from LINK Unlimited Scholars.**
- § All scholars are expected to be punctual for all LINK events. Repeated tardiness will result in disciplinary action.
- § All scholars are expected to make the appropriate arrangements to attend mandatory/required activities and events. However, we do understand that emergencies arise. Any request for an excused absence must be made before (and no later than 24 hours after) the event. Such requests should be submitted in writing by a parent to the Program Managers. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in a financial penalty. Repeated truancy will result in further disciplinary action and potential expulsion from the program. (See "Special Notes on Attendance" page 20-21).
- § All scholars are expected to be attentive and respectful at all LINK events and to abide by the rules set forth by the staff and/or its representatives (i.e. retreat facilitators, service site supervisors, etc.) Appropriate attire is required at all LINK events (see Dress Codes on page 9-10).
- § It is important to note that the school day and all school functions are considered LINK activities. Consequently, all LINK policies apply to scholar behavior at these events.

**Communication Code of Conduct**—It is imperative that LINK scholars express themselves in a manner that is professional, scholarly, and effective across all cultures. Thus, we have the following expectations as it relates to the various forms of communication both written and verbal:

- **Professional Written Communication**—any communication with a LINK staff member, mentor, school or college professional must include the following:
  1. Salutation (i.e. Dear Mr. Jones)

2. Full and correct sentences (no slang, acronyms, incorrect grammar, etc.)
  3. Sign-Off (i.e. “Sincerely”, “Warm Regards”, “Thanks” followed by your name)
- Professional Spoken Communication—When communicating with others, all LINK scholars are expected to adhere to the following:

1. Good eye contact
2. Firm handshake
3. Clear voice
4. Articulation and voice projection
5. Professional body posture/language

#### Disciplinary Probation

**LINK Unlimited Scholars has full liberty to expel a scholar at any time.** If a serious and/or repeated infraction occurs, the scholar may be granted a disciplinary hearing at the discretion of the LINK staff. Not all requests will be granted. After review, the scholars may be released immediately or placed on probation/contract, the terms of which may include, but are not limited to letter/essay writing, community service hours, more stringent participation requirements, and a period of full compliance with LINK policy (i.e. no additional academic or disciplinary infractions whatsoever.) The contract will outline the specific terms and period of probation. Both scholar and parent will be required to sign it thereby demonstrating their understanding and agreement. If a scholar on probation/contract fails to meet stated stipulations, he/she will forfeit scholarship and membership in LINK Unlimited Scholars. Scholars who refuse to sign a disciplinary contract will be immediately dismissed.

LINK has no obligation to render any normal LINK service or program element (i.e. services, scholarship, etc.) to any scholar who has been dismissed (released).

#### DRESS CODE

You never get another chance to make a first impression. Dressing for success may seem superficial at first, but in certain situations, it is essential. Of course, when hanging out with friends or staying at home, there is nothing wrong with jeans, a T-shirt and gym-shoes. However, special events such as Teen Worship, the Summer Learning Program, Senior Photo Sessions, and the End-of-Year Celebration will require that special attention be paid to your personal hygiene and physical appearance.

When you have an opportunity to shine, a polished appearance shows people that you can be professional. Knowing how and when to let the “formal you” shine will serve you well as you advance in your academic and professional career. Specific LINK Dress Code requirements are listed below:

#### **STANDARD DRESS CODE (SDC)**

##### Boys

- Dress slacks worn at the waist.
- Dress belt/dress suspenders required.
- Collared long/short sleeved or polo shirts (no writing) that button down the front; turtleneck may be worn underneath a collared shirt or a cardigan sweater. Shirts must be tucked in at all times.
- Dress shoes and socks (NO GYM SHOES).
- No jeans, fleece pants, sweatpants, pants with drawstrings or jogger-style pants.

##### Girls

- Dress belt/dress suspenders required
- Dress slacks with a relaxed fit worn at the waist (no jean style slacks, velour, fleece, lounge pants, sweatpants, pants with drawstrings or leggings).

- Skirts or dresses that are knee-length or longer.
- No backless styles, low necklines, or high splits
- Collared long/short sleeved blouses or polo shirts (no writing) that button down the front and cover the midriff at all times; turtleneck can be worn underneath a collared blouse or a cardigan sweater.
- Dress shoes with either socks or nylons (NO GYM SHOES)
- No jeans, fleece pants, sweatpants, pants with drawstrings or jogger-style pants.

**RELAXED DRESS CODE (RDC):**

- Jeans, casual shirts and gym shoes are permitted for boys and girls (scholars are NOT allowed to wear shorts, tank tops, or halter tops).
- All other rules stated above apply to relaxed dress code

The relaxed dress code is in place for more casual LINK events (ex: Retreats, informal meetings, etc.). **The relaxed dress should demonstrate modesty and decorum.**

**FORMAL DRESS CODE FOR ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET**

**(FDC):**

Boys

- Suit & Tie or Dress Slacks with Jacket, Shirt & Tie
- No Earrings
- Dress shoes (No gym shoes)

Girls

- Dressy Dress, or Skirt/Pants Suit that comes to appropriate length and covers the body modestly.
- No backless styles, low necklines, high splits or bare midriffs.

***On all occasions:***

- No Earrings\*,
- No “Do Rags/Wave caps”
- No Headbands
- No Hats in any building
- No earphones in the building
- Make-up and jewelry must be conservative.
- \*For girls, earrings are limited to 1 pair.

***Strict adherence to the LINK dress code is expected.***

### **SECTION III: STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES, PROGRAMS & EVENTS**

When you decided to become a part of the LINK Unlimited Scholars family, you committed yourself to participating in certain activities and conducting yourself in a way that will help you achieve your goals and aspirations. The following list may seem like a lot; however, what you receive in return will make your dedication, hard work and sacrifice worth the effort.

#### **SPECIAL NOTES ON ATTENDANCE:**

- § Scholars who demonstrate a lack of commitment to the standards and policies of LINK Unlimited Scholars will be held accountable. Those with three (3) or more unexcused absences in any given year will be required to attend a disciplinary conference and will be placed on disciplinary probation for at least one semester. This may be extended at LINK's discretion.
- § Hospitalization and death in the family are **the only automatically recognized excuses** for missing mandatory/required LINK events.
- § School activities such as sports and other extra-curricular activities as well as family and community events not approved by LINK are not permitted as excused absences. Families must make arrangements with the event organizer to remain compliant with attendance policies at LINK.
- § **Parents, not scholars,** must submit written requests for excused absences **before** the scheduled LINK event. **Voicemails are not acceptable. If calling after business hours and a voicemail is necessary, the parents must follow up the next day to ensure the message reached the proper LINK staff member.**
- § A reminder call/text, email or post card about an event is a courtesy only. **It is the responsibility of the scholar and parent to know when events are scheduled.** Therefore, **the absence of a reminder is no excuse.** See the paper and online versions of the program calendar for upcoming events.
- § LINK limits its responsibility to supervise scholars to the specified start and end times of its events. Scholars who arrive before or leave after given event times potentially may not be supervised. **Parents are expected to make arrangements to pick up their child on time for all events.** Adult supervision ends at the end-time of LINK programs. LINK is not responsible for the actions of scholars after the conclusion of LINK programs. For the safety of each scholar, parents must be on time.  
Excessive late pick ups may result in a scholar's expulsion.

#### A. **LINK PROGRAM DETAILS**

LINK offers programming in three main areas: Academic Enrichment, College Readiness and Success, and Personal Development.

##### 1. Academic Enrichment

Specific academic supports are provided and encouraged depending on the needs of the scholar. LINK received student report cards at each marking period. At times, we must rely on parents to provide the latest report card for our records. Bases on scholar achievement, an academic counseling session may be required. In these sessions, LINK staff will counsel scholars and parents on the academic behaviors that are likely to lead to success. Topics of discussion include study habits, homework completion, positive academic behaviors, teacher interactions, time management, etc. Additionally, each summer of high school, scholars are expected to participate in LINK's Summer Learning Program which prepares scholars for the next school year's core classes.

### Summer Learning Program (SLP)

The Summer Learning Program implements activities, which help the scholar obtain and maintain exemplary academic skills. Summer Learning helps to: 1) enhance foundational skills in preparation for the rigorous environment of private school; 2) provide supplemental academic instruction to ensure scholars avoid knowledge loss (summer slide) from the previous school year, 3) immerse scholars in cultural, college and career exploration activities. It is expected that all scholars participate in summer learning for four consecutive summers. Exceptions may be made if an equally rigorous option is available to the scholar that offers programming and experiences not included in the LINK Summer Learning Program.

#### Summer Learning Program Penalties

Summer Learning courses should be taken very seriously. Scholars must apply themselves and not take enrichment opportunities lightly. To ensure that scholars understand the importance of the Summer, the following penalties are in place:

##### Rising Freshman Summer Bridge Program:

§ **Final decisions regarding scholarship awards and acceptance into LINK will be based on the review of a scholar's performance during summer learning. Failure to satisfactorily complete the SLP may result in rescission of the LINK offer. Successful completion involves achievement of A's and B's, acceptable attendance and daily citizenship. LINK reserves the right to make these decisions internally.**

##### Rising Sophomore Summer Enrichment Program:

§ **If a scholar receives a "D" or "F" in a course, he or she will be assessed a \$75.00 fine per course.**

##### Rising Junior Summer College Program:

§ **If a scholar receives a "D" or "F" in a course, he or she will be assessed a \$75.00 fine per course.**

##### Rising Senior Summer Travel Program:

§ **If a scholar fails to complete an approved summer learning experience, he or she will be assessed a \$150.00 fine.**

## 2. College Access and Success

The LINK goal of College Readiness and Success seeks to assist scholars and parents in making informed college selection decisions by providing information and guidance to help ensure excellent college placement and degree completion with little educational debt.

Programming will provide in-depth exposure to higher education. This is facilitated through campus visits, motivational talks from LINK collegiate scholars, interaction with college recruiters at a college fair, information sessions, college essay writing workshops, financial aid workshops, and one-to-one college counseling.

**ACT Prep:** All juniors will participate in a 6-week ACT prep course during the spring semester (February—April) of their junior year. The purpose of this comprehensive course is to provide scholars with ACT-based content review and proven test taking strategies, helping them perform their best on test day. All LINK scholars are required to take a standardized test by April of junior year.

**College Application Boot Camp:** All seniors will attend a 3-day conference to receive information to successfully complete the college application and financial aid process. Workshops and active learning make up the experience. At the conclusion of that program, all scholars will have a real head start on their college application process.

### 3. Personal Development

LINK expects its scholars to demonstrate leadership skills by engaging in groups, clubs and organizations both in their schools and communities. This involvement is enhanced through LINK's programs, which stress personal growth, human relations, kindness, charity and moral and ethical values. LINK's leadership initiative develops leaders while providing training and opportunities to apply their leadership skills in the following activities:

- Retreats
- Schmitt Leadership Institute
- Public Speaking Training and Opportunities
- Teen Worship Service
- Service Project Opportunities
- Study Abroad
- Personal Development Workshop Series

Integral to one's personal development is the understanding of various perspectives. To achieve this goal, the scholars are exposed to different backgrounds through their relationships with staff, mentors, and fellow scholars, which lead to new experiences. LINK provides opportunities for all members of the LINK family to become more knowledgeable about, and sensitive to, other cultures through personal contact and informational exchanges.

#### **Retreats**

Over the course of four years, LINK scholars attend a series of retreats that are relevant to their varying developmental stages. At these overnight experiences, each class learns a new lesson and shares in moments of reflection and group sharing regarding personal experiences in high school. A moral frame of reference is central to these retreats. Scholars explore their personal belief systems, goals, behavior, and their relationships with others.

#### **LINK Schmitt Leadership Institute**

The Schmitt Foundation Leadership Institute provides Schmitt scholars with an additional series of workshops and experiences that introduces the scholars to areas of personal and professional development. Schmitt scholars participate in real-world immersion experiences that bridge their current leadership skill level broadening awareness and mastery of important softskills necessary to thrive in leadership positions in high school, on college campuses, in career and community. This application-based group provides opportunities for scholars to learn and cultivate leadership skills while gaining additional experience in communication, teamwork, and group cooperation. Scholars apply for Schmitt during the freshman year of high school.

- Leadership Training
- Career Preparation Workshops
- Networking
- Group Projects

#### **Teen Worship Services**

The purpose of Teen Worship is to grow spiritually and fellowship together as the LINK family.

LINK scholars, under the direction of Schmitt Scholars, participate in the planning and implementation of the services. They serve as hosts, ushers, commentators, readers, singers, actors and dancers. The services, in no way replace regular Sunday morning worship, but serve to enhance the spiritual

experience of the scholars and their families. The service takes place in the afternoon so as not to interfere with scholars' regular church attendance.

### **Service Project Requirements**

Since its founding in 1966, LINK has always been an organization that believed in building a better and more just society. To that end, scholars are expected to be contributing members and active servants in their schools, communities, churches, and the LINK Unlimited Scholars organization. We expect each LINK scholar to participate in local, domestic, and/or international service opportunities each year. We realize most schools have a service hour requirement, and scholars can use these hours to fulfill their expectations. LINK provides several opportunities for service learning throughout the year. Scholars must attend the year's designated required number of group service outings.

### **Study Abroad**

Approximately 15-20 scholars study abroad through a partnership with American Field Services (AFS) and The Road Less Traveled. Abroad trips range from 2-6 weeks. Though the study abroad experience is unique to each scholar, the overall benefits include the discovery and development of personal strengths of self-reliance, resourcefulness, adaptability and confidence. Some scholars note their broadened global perspective and understanding of social responsibility while others have dealt with cultural conflicts that lead to enhanced communication skills.

### **Personal Development Workshops**

This workshop series is focused to develop and enhance scholars' confidence in and demonstration of a variety of life skills. Workshop topics vary and are based upon scholar needs and program objectives. Topics include: Public Speaking, Mental Health, Self-identity, Social Justice, and Youth Empowerment.

## **SPECIAL LINK EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

In addition to program activities, you will be required to participate in the following events and activities which are integral parts of the LINK program.

### **Freshmen Initiation**

LINK's traditional induction ritual, on this night, freshman scholars and family are matched with their mentor. The evening includes dinner, icebreakers and testimonies from experienced mentors who share reflections on their first time meeting their scholar. All parties take oaths of commitment and dedication to seeing the relationship between mentor and mentee blossom.

### **Scholar/Parent/Mentor Meetings**

These LINK Family Workshops help us to achieve our success by working through the challenges of the scholar-mentor relationship. These meetings are designed as penalty-free environments for sharing with others who have similar experiences.

### **Career Brown Bags**

Involving LINK alum and community partners, these conversations allow scholars to gain a better understanding of the day-to-day realities of specific careers as told by young professionals. Panelists work in fields ranging from STEM, finance, marketing, human relations, etc.

### **Annual End of Year Celebration**

The annual LINK End of Year Celebration showcases the achievements of all LINK scholars and especially honors the high school and college graduates, Alumni. This is a chance for mentors, scholars, parents and friends of LINK to enjoy a night in fellowship and pride.

### **College Transition Workshop Series**

In preparation for the transition from high school to college, this 5-series workshop covers topics relating to belonging; involvement; academic expectations; developing a college vocabulary and how to best support your child while in college (aimed at parents). This workshop is the precursor to the support offered to the collegiate scholars of LINK.

## **SECTION IV: GENERAL INFORMATION**

LINK is a non-profit tax-exempt organization and receives no government funding. To meet the cost of tuition scholarships and the various programs, LINK solicits individual corporations and foundations. We are often asked, "How do the beneficiaries support the organization?" This support is realized through parent volunteerism and some joint cost.

### **A. Parent Volunteer Requirement**

**Parents of freshman scholars are required to volunteer 1 hour during that freshman year.**

Volunteer hours can be completed by chaperoning retreats, field trips, social activities and recruitment events. Assistance in the LINK office with mailings, front desk work and greeting visitors is also welcomed. Participation in the PAC committee is encouraged for all parents. To learn more about the PAC, contact April Day-Mason.

### **B. Payments to LINK**

Parents share the expense of the Summer Learning Program (\$300) for the first three summers with LINK. More details will be given at the summer school registration meeting.

Any money orders for summer tuition or fine payments are to be made payable to LINK Unlimited Scholars. LINK **strongly discourages** any families sending cash through the mail or dropping it in the mail slot. If you wish to make cash payment, please bring it to the LINK office during regular business hours so that you can obtain a receipt. We prefer either of above payment options over personal checks.

### **Financial Aid Applications to High Schools**

**Parents with scholars attending private, tuition-based schools are required to submit a financial aid application to high school on time each year.** We cannot stress enough that failure to apply only hurts you. Without this application, your school will not award financial aid regardless of partnership with LINK Unlimited Scholars. (Please note that most schools begin this process in January for financial aid to be distributed the following Fall.). Any parent/ guardian who fails to submit their financial aid application (or who is denied financial aid at their school based on need) may immediately forfeit the remainder of the LINK scholarship monies; and your family may be required to re-apply for scholarship eligibility through LINK Unlimited Scholars. Information submitted will be used to determine the scholar's future status in our program — particularly the financial support LINK provides.

## B. CHANGE OF INFORMATION

Please notify the LINK office in writing of all name, address, telephone number, work information, e-mail address, or other contact information changes as soon as possible. Maintaining accurate records allows LINK to stay in touch with our scholars, parents, mentors and alumni members. Not receiving communication from LINK after a span of a few weeks is rare and could be an indication that the contact information we have for you is not correct.

## C. CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Each year a calendar of events is distributed to LINK families. The calendar is also available on the LINK website. While every attempt is made to avoid changes, please note, the calendar is subject to change during the school year. If changes occur, LINK will notify its members by email and/or by telephone.

## D. LINK COMMUNICATION

We realize that LINK Unlimited Scholars is a comprehensive program with numerous required activities throughout the year. We expect parents and scholars to keep up with required events by managing their calendars and **regularly checking and responding to email communication from LINK.** As a courtesy, we make a concerted effort to provide reminders about upcoming events.

We will be utilizing the following methods to provide reminders:

- **WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER (delivered every Sunday)**
- **EMAIL DISTRIBUTION LISTS**
- **AUTOMATED PHONE SERVICE (voice calls and text messages)**
- **OCCASSIONAL FLYERS (When more information needs to be shared)**

Therefore, it is IMPERATIVE to have correct phone numbers and email addresses.

Your decision to opt out of receiving these messages places you at a disadvantage regarding updates and opportunities.

**It is also the expectation that you reply to all LINK correspondences (This includes mentor communications) within 48 hours unless another date is specified.**

## SECTION V: SCHOLAR/MENTOR RELATIONSHIP

One of the most important relationships that will develop as a result of your involvement with LINK is the one with your mentor. LINK mentors not only contribute to our organization costs, they also impart wisdom and guidance that will prove useful for you as you pursue your dreams and aspirations.

Both parents and scholars must be committed to developing this relationship and keeping it alive. This effort will not only ensure the mentor/mentee pair interacts with each other regularly, it also gives the scholar the opportunity to develop life skills along with a healthy relationship that will serve the scholar well in the academic and professional career. The tips below will help you in your efforts to develop a good relationship with your mentor.

**Maintain regular contact.** Scholars are required to contact your mentor(s) **at least twice a month** through short letters, e-mails, or telephone calls. Texts are acceptable, but should not be the exclusive form of contact. Keep your mentor informed of your progress, and take the time to discuss activities that you and your mentor might enjoy together. Remember, in some ways, the mentor is taking cues from you on how to proceed with the development of this relationship. By maintaining regular contact, you build the foundation to a great and potentially life-long bond. If you think that your mentor is not interested and does not return your calls or make contact with you, **please contact the LINK office** so that we may address the concerns with your mentor.

Show your appreciation. A short note or thank-you card for their support can go a long way in developing this relationship. It is nice for you to let your mentor know that you appreciate the contribution he/she is making toward your future. Small acts of kindness will make a wonderful impression on your mentor for years to come. **You are required to write at least 2 notes of appreciation to your mentor each year.**

Keep an open mind. As the relationship between you and your mentor(s) develops, they may want to include you in hobbies in which they are interested. Don't feel threatened if they mention things that you have never done before. By trying something new and perhaps finding some common interests with your mentor, you will be on your way to developing a relationship that may last a lifetime.

Keep your parents/guardians involved. As you and your mentor develop the relationship, let your parents know how things are going. This is an easy way to keep your parents involved in the process and show them that you are beginning to trust your mentor. When your parents see your comfort level, it will make them feel better about the relationship, and they may be more active in supporting its development.

## SECTION VI: HELPING THE LINK MENTOR

Parents, in LINK Unlimited Scholars, we believe in working together to help our scholars achieve their goals. When parents, mentors and LINK staff work together, students are provided with a continuum of care, giving them the support they need to excel in the rigorous academic environment of a private school. **The partnership between parents and mentors is the oil that greases the wheel.** Without involvement from the parents, scholars miss motivation and inspiration from the most important people in their lives. Without mentors, a critical resource would be missing from the LINK program. Keeping that in mind, it is important for parents to help mentors be successful at their job. We think that the following tips will help:

- § Remember, LINK mentors are committed to working with you to determine how your child can achieve personal, academic and professional success. **They are not involved to take over your child rearing responsibilities.**
- § **Talk with your child's mentor.** Take an active role in helping to facilitate the development of a healthy relationship between your child and his/her mentor. Share your family motto/values with the mentor. If you find that the mentor is unresponsive after attempting to develop a good relationship, please contact the LINK office.
- § Remember that the mentor is working with you to help your child. **Share with the mentor aspirations and dreams that your child has and that you have for your child.** Communicating these feelings will help the mentor to feel included, creating a bond between you and the mentor, which will ultimately make the relationship between your child and mentor stronger.
- § **Know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate requests and behavior.** LINK Unlimited Scholars clearly explains the responsibilities and expectations to those who choose to be mentors. If you believe that some inappropriate situation has presented itself, please notify a LINK Unlimited Scholars staff member immediately. Also, LINK Unlimited Scholars clearly explains the type of resources, which LINK mentors contribute to the students. In the past, we have had instances where parents or students have put mentors in inappropriate and uncomfortable situations by asking them to provide financial support for situations that are not LINK related (i.e., household and medical expenses.) These types of requests are inappropriate and **strongly discouraged.** If you need assistance or special services, please contact a LINK staff member who will make the appropriate referral.

## **SECTION VII: HELPING YOUR CHILD TO BE A SUCCESSFUL LINK SCHOLAR**

Parents, as you already know, you are the **key**. You are the driving force behind the success we know your child is capable of achieving in this program. Without your constant support, guidance, love and care, the LINK Unlimited Scholars program would not be the success that it has become. However, in addition to this emotional support, there are specific things you can do to help your child be successful in LINK Unlimited Scholars.

**Get involved with LINK** – Make LINK Unlimited Scholars a family affair. Become an active participant in LINK programs and activities; do community service with your child; volunteer your time at LINK and attend as many LINK events as possible.

**Make sure your child participates** – LINK has specially designed program opportunities to help your child develop a broad range of skills and abilities to help them navigate the challenges they will meet in college and beyond. From academic enhancement and to community service, all LINK program activities are relevant to helping your child be successful. As the parent, we look to you to make sure that your child attends all the mandatory LINK activities and events **as well as receives supplemental academic support when needed**. Encourage your child to **build relationships** in the high school as well as with LINK staff and other LINK scholars.

**Help nurture the relationship between your child and the mentor** LINK mentors are invaluable resources to your children. They can serve as additional role models. Encourage your child to make regular phone calls updating mentors on their academic progress as well as extra-curricular activities. A strong relationship takes time to build. You play a major role in establishing the bond, and keeping the relationship on track. The investment of time and energy pays major dividends after four years.

**Talk to your children** – Help them make the connection between what’s happening now and where it will lead them. **Encourage them to see the value in LINK membership, the mentor relationship, and the programs/activities**. When students see the big picture and light at the end of the tunnel, they are empowered to make the right choices for themselves and to firmly plant their feet on the road to success. Help them understand what privilege it is to be a LINK Scholar.

**Reinforce the LINK formula** – Our program has very high expectations of our scholars. We expect achievement across the board despite the personal challenges that may exist. Your willingness to uphold our expectations and help your child develop the ‘LINK’ mindset, positions them to achieve and excel in our program and beyond. Scholars are selected based on our understanding of the prominent importance the family has placed on achievement and success. Our formula supplements your hard work and is not a substitute.

We pride ourselves on being an advocate for the LINK family. Know that LINK is happy to serve as a resource should you need guidance on maintaining a positive learning environment at school and home. **Early** communication places us in a position to adequately advocate for your family.

**Scholar Attendance and Participation Responsibilities Summary**

<b>Requirement/Expectation</b>	<b>Class Year</b>	<b>Penalty for NonCompliance</b>
Initiation Ceremony	Freshman	\$100
Scholar/Parent/Parent Meeting	Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior	\$50
Attend and Successfully Complete Summer Learning Programs. Scholars allowed no more than three absences. After specified absences, scholar is fined.	Rising Freshman, Rising Sophomore, Rising Junior, Rising Senior	<b>Dismissal for rising freshmen</b> \$150 per "D" or "F" for rising sophomores \$75 per "D" or "F" for rising juniors *\$150 for rising seniors
Maintain a GPA above 3.0 (ALL A's and B's)	Each grade level	Conference/Probation/ Expulsion
Mandatory Academic Support/Study Skills/Tutoring Sessions	All Scholars with a GPA below a 3.0 at any marking period	\$25 per session / Conference/Probation/ Expulsion
Class College Visits	Freshman, Sophomore, Junior	\$100
Class Retreat	Each grade level	\$100
Career Fair	Sophomore	\$50
ACT Prep Class	Junior	\$25 per Class (Including Pre & Post Tests)
College Boot Camp	Senior	\$100 per day
One-on -One College Counseling Session (Pre-App + App)	Rising Senior Summer and Senior (Fall)	\$50 (Summer Session) \$100 (Fall Session)
College Fair	Sophomore, Junior, Senior	\$75
Parent Financial Aid Night (Parts I & II)	Senior Part I (Parents only) Part II (Parents and Scholar)	\$50 (Each occurrence)

Maintaining the Mentor/Scholar relationship, (i.e., regular or at least twice monthly communication, writing notes of appreciation at least twice/year)	Each grade level	Conference/Probation/ Expulsion
Attendance at additional LINK events where required (i.e. LINK social events, Schmitt Scholar Reception, Service Days, Brown Bags, etc.	As appropriate	\$50
Code of Conduct	Every Year	Conference/Probation/ Expulsion
Dress Code	Every Year	Dismissal from event and incurred absence penalty

\*LINK Unlimited Scholars will not discriminate on the basis of religion or creed. If a scholar and his/her family find particular programming to be contrary to their beliefs and/or religious affiliation, the scholar will be relieved of responsibility for said programming and excused from the event. Written communication prior to the event must come from the parent to explain your position.

Give me a fish  
And I eat for a day.  
Teach me to fish  
And I eat for a lifetime.

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