

SMART, A SCHOOL BASED MENTORING PROGRAM



BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

ADHD, ODD, depression, mood disorder, behavior issues, and trouble expressing feelings were words used to describe Christy, kindergartner, in her first referral to the Big Brothers Big Sisters SMART Program. Her teacher and mother also commented that Christy needed a positive role model, a chance to interact positively with others, and help learning to compromise. Christy worked in her classroom each day with a Therapeutic Support Staff (TSS) and was felt to be very intelligent and strong willed, but was stymied by her behaviors and labeled by her diagnosis.

The first day I meet Christy she was in a “no” mood. She sat in the interview room with her long dark hair covering her face unresponsive until I asked if she had any pets. She quickly swiped the hair from her face and asked if I had pets as she had always wanted at kitty.

Katie, a local college student was Christy’s first big sister. Christy made the first month of the match very challenging for Katie. She often growled at her Big Sister, took off her shoes, crawled under the table and refused to do her work. During this period her TSS would intervene and try to discipline Christy. After discussing the match with Katie and the TSS it was decided to pull the TSS from the program to allow Christy and Katie’s relationship to develop. We quickly saw great improvement in Christy’s attitude and demeanor. She allowed Katie to braid her hair so that she could see, looked forward to doing her homework, and showed off her artistic abilities. The match between Christy and Katie was closed after one year as Katie’s college schedule changed.

Christy has since been referred to the program by her first, second and third grade teachers. For the past three years Christy has been matched with another college student, Jill. Christy was reserved when she first met Jill. She growled at her a few times the first day they meet, but loved stroking Jill’s long hair. Jill was calm during the first sessions and was able to demonstrate boundaries and appropriate behaviors to Christy. Jill quickly learned just how intelligent Christy was and she would often have a special topic to discuss or an art project for Christy to do once homework was completed. Jill and Christy have developed a very meaningful relationship and Christy has blossomed. She no longer needs a TSS in class with her. She rarely acts out in class, she keeps her hair cut short so that she can see to read with Jill (Christy’s response when asked why her hair was cut), and her interaction with peers is appropriate. Christy’s third grade teacher noted in her year-end evaluation that Christy has done so much better in class this year and that she has seen improvement in Christy’s confidence, competence, caring and an improvement in her academics.

At the end of this year’s SMART Program Christy came to me and asked if she could participate in the program next school term and if Jill could be her Big Sister. Jill has agreed and will be Christy’s big sister for their fourth year of participation in the program.

Thank you for your support!

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