



Quick Words

MME - The Mentor Matching Engine

ISTC - The Illinois Science and Technology Coalition

Post - Students' MME communication through the discussion tab

1. How do I invite students onto the platform?

For a video demonstration, please click [here](#).

1. Log on to MME with your username and password and click on the "Invitations" tab in the blue bar at the top of the screen.
2. On the following page, click on the red "Create" button in the top right corner.
3. From there, enter the email address or email addresses, separated by a space or a comma, of each student you would like to invite.
4. Then, select their role as "Student."
5. Once you click the "Invite" button, an email will be sent to each student containing a link to create their brief profile. Please have them check their spam folder if they are not seeing the invitation in their general inbox.

*Please note, these links are unique to each email address and should not be shared between multiple students. Students who have not yet accepted the invitation will appear under your "Invitations" tab. You can resend each invitation by clicking the cycle arrows next to the student email. Additionally, you can send a direct link by right clicking the paperclip icon next to the student email, copying the url, and forwarding that information to the student.

Once students have accepted the invitation and created their profile, their names will appear under the "People" tab. Please note: the students you invite are tied to you on the platform. Please do not invite students at your school who will be using MME with another teacher.

2. Students in my class have used MME in the past with a different teacher. Do I still need to send them an invitation to join the platform?

Students with previous accounts on the Mentor Matching Engine can use their previous login information to access the platform, however, their accounts will still be tied to the teacher who invited them the previous year. In order to tie the students to your teacher account, we ask that you still go to the "Invitations" tab

and invite the returning students from your own account. Please contact ISTC Education staff members to have them unlink the student account from the other teacher.

1. **How do I create group projects on the Mentor Matching Engine?**

- a. Group projects on the Mentor Matching Engine are initiated by an individual student. Student 1 must login and begin to create the project as if they were opting to pursue a project by themselves, by clicking the red “Create” button and beginning to fill out the Research Description and the Letter of Introduction. Please note, this student does not have to complete the project details at this time. Student 1 then submits the project to you by clicking “Create.”
- b. Once the project has been submitted to the teacher role, you can login to your profile and navigate to that student project. Within the project, click on the “Participants” tab, click “Add Participants,” “Student,” and add the additional group members.
- c. Once the other students have been added, all members will have the ability to edit the project details at any point and converse with the mentor once the project has begun.

3. **What do the project details (Research Description and Letter of Introduction) need to include in order for me to approve the project?**

Student Research Descriptions should accomplish the following three things:

1. Introduce the subject matter the student is interested in exploring. This can be either a specific question or a general interest that the mentor can help to flesh out and refine into a testable question.
2. Give a concrete timeline - both outlining the duration of the project and stating how often the student is looking to communicate, especially if this differs from ISTC Education’s once a week expectation
3. Clearly explains what the student is looking for help from their mentor regarding (This also helps the student jump right in when they’re matched with a mentor!)

In the Letters of Introduction, have each student in the group briefly introduce themselves. This should include the school, grade level, and course they are conducting the project in. It can also include their interests outside of school, the reason they’re interested in the topic, etc. *Keep in mind, the Research*

Description and Letter of Introduction are the only things the mentor sees when they are deciding whether or not to take on a potential mentee. They cannot view the discussion thread until they accept the project.

4. What if my students don't have a fully formulated research question?

That is perfectly alright! Students on MME start from many different places. We have heard from our volunteers that they often really enjoy helping students narrow down their thoughts to a testable question. If your students haven't yet reached a focused point, have them use the Research Description to detail the subject matter that interests them and why. Students can then use the first post to ask the mentor for guidance in narrowing down their thoughts.

5. Can students have more than one mentor at a time?

In most cases, the answer is no. ISTC Education works to recruit mentors based on the project count provided by teachers over the summer and does not have the volunteer capacity to supply any one student with multiple mentors. However, if a student project pivots and the original mentor is no longer appropriate, please see question 6.

6. My student's project has shifted to a different topic that their current mentor isn't suited for. How should they proceed?

Before taking action to request a new mentor, the student should communicate with their original mentor about the topic shift and ask if they are comfortable continuing, given the change of focus. If the volunteer feels they are not the right fit for the new direction, reach out to ISTC Education to alert the team. Then, your student can request a secondary mentor in the new subject matter. ISTC Education can help with this process as well. Have the student write a post in the discussion thread, explaining the change in direction and need for a new mentor.

7. When are students ready to select a mentor?

Students should only select a mentor when they are ready to begin communication. That does not mean that the student needs to have their project entirely figured out - mentors like to help narrow down topics, give input on research questions, and otherwise shape the beginnings of the project. However, a long gap between a mentor accepting a project and a student posting can send a project off the rails in the early stages. Having the first post mostly drafted

before the mentor accepts can help to ease the transition and build momentum from the very beginning of the project.

8. My student has an external contact they'd like to work with for this project. Should they still use MME?

Yes! We recommend using MME even if the student and mentor have a previous connection. MME has a number of security precautions in place, including background checks for all mentors and allowing you as the teacher to be privy to all discussions between the mentor and the mentee. It also allows you a greater degree of tracking and project management than external communication like email or live documents. Contact an ISTC Education team member to assist in onboarding the external mentor.

9. My students have requested multiple mentors but still haven't gotten a match. What are the next steps?

There are a few things that could help the student find the right match. The first step is to widen the search by expanding or changing the Research Categories of the project. Have the student think through what they will most need assistance with over the course of the project. Selecting a mentor based on their skills (designing a research project, conducting a study, creating methodology, writing research papers, etc) allows students to open their mentor selection to a wider pool and can facilitate a very successful project.

The next step is to reach out to ISTC Education staff. We have a good knowledge of the mentor base and can help the student to make a more informed decision. Additionally, we can reach out to mentors directly on the students' behalf or recruit specifically for that student project.

10. My student is having trouble logging on. How can I troubleshoot this?

On the Mentor Matching Engine homepage, there is a link labeled "Forgot Password?" - this is the best first step. As long as your student entered the correct email when creating their profile, resetting their password should do the trick. If the problem continues to persist, please contact ISTC Education staff and we will work to gain access for your student.

11. My student wants to share a Google doc with their mentor. Can they ask for the mentor's email?

Students should **not** ask for their mentor's email, phone number, or other contact information for safety and security reasons. To share a google doc with their mentor, the student should open sharing permissions by clicking on the blue "Share" button in the top right corner of the google doc, clicking "Get Link" and changing access from "Restricted" to "Anyone with the Link." Students can also then choose if they want the mentor to have direct editing powers, only be able to comment on the document, or restrict their access to view only.

12. Is there a way to communicate with the mentors separately from the Discussion board?

Yes! As a teacher, you can send the mentor a direct email by selecting the Participants tab, and clicking on the envelope next to the name of the mentor. Students should not and cannot communicate with mentors outside MME, but are welcome to use the video conferencing feature in addition to the Discussion board.

13. How do the students close out their project?

Students closing out their projects should accomplish the following two things:

- 1) Share their findings! By the end of the project, mentors are very invested in the students and their projects. Have the student share their final presentation, paper, or design.
- 2) Thank their mentor!
- 3) (Optional) Students can ask for ways to connect in the future, letters of recommendation, etc.

14. What are the long term goals of an MME project?

Projects on the Mentor Matching Engine are about the process over the product. That means, above all, the ISTC Education staff wants your students to gain the skills that will help them to succeed beyond high school. Communication, project management, collaboration, and relationship building are at the forefront of all MME projects. To this end, we encourage you to foster the mentor-mentee relationship. Encourage students to talk about opportunities beyond the project, invite mentors to final presentations, and have the students step outside of their comfort zone. In the past, students have received letters of recommendation, line of sight to potential universities or careers, and gained invaluable skills.