SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

Somerville Family Learning Collaborative

SPS Volunteers
167 Holland St., 3rd floor Somerville, MA 02144
https://somerville.k12.ma.us/district-departments/volunteering
jcapuano@k12.somerville.ma.us

Somerville Public Schools

Somerville Public Schools is a vibrant, diverse learning community serving nearly 5,000 students in ten schools. Through interactive core curricula, including arts, music, health and physical education curriculum, and a variety of enrichment and extracurricular programs and activities, SPS aims to actively engage each student.

The SFLC/SPS Volunteer Program is a program of the Somerville Public Schools aimed at enhancing, enriching and supporting instruction and learning through volunteer intervention. We strive to fulfill this mission by actively recruiting, screening, referring and supporting volunteers to learn, serve and inspire alongside students and educators.

Somerville Public Schools remain steadfast in their commitment to serving all students and families, regardless of citizenship. Somerville Public Schools has a moral and legal obligation to enroll and serve every child living in our district without regard to immigration status and without fear of discrimination. As a volunteer serving in our schools, thank you for helping to provide a welcoming, safe, inclusive and nurturing educational experience for all students.

This guide outlines Somerville Public Schools' policies and practices for all Somerville Public School volunteers and the expectations we have of you as you serve in a school.

On behalf of our students, families, educators and SPS staff, thank you for your commitment to and care of Somerville's students. We look forward to learning, serving and inspiring with you!

School Standards and Procedures

1. For the safety and security of all students, every volunteer must complete a **CORI** (Criminal Offender Record Information) or background check through Somerville Public Schools every school year. Regardless of duration of commitment or level of interaction with students, the CORI **must be approved** before volunteering.

2. **Volunteers Matter!** Your times is valued. We want to know your interests, preferences, skills, experience and availability in order to identify a good match. All regular or weekly volunteers are asked to self-register here. Your account can be updated or deactivated at any time.

3. Volunteers must follow policies and practices of the Somerville Public Schools. For information about school practices such as fire drills, dress code and further resources please refer to the *SPS Parent/Guardian Guide.*

4. Volunteers should always use the school's main entrance. Volunteers must sign in and out at the school's main office for each session and wear a Volunteer or Visitor tag. You may be asked to show your photographic ID.

5. Most Somerville streets are Somerville resident permit parking only and school lots are reserved for school staff. **Temporary passes** are provided for non-Somerville resident volunteers. One-time volunteers may obtain a temporary parking pass from their assigned school's main office. Parking passes should be displayed on your vehicle's front dashboard.

6. Volunteers working with students may become aware of confidential information about students or families. This information may include students' academic performance or records, behavior, disabilities, medical issues, immigration status or other personal or family matters. Volunteers will not disclose such confidential information except to school employees who have a need to know.

7. Volunteers who work directly with school children are considered mandated reporters in Massachusetts. If you have reasonable cause to believe a child is suffering abuse or neglect (including physical or emotional injury, including sexual abuse, neglect, malnutrition or human trafficking) **report immediately** to your supervisor or school administration.

8. Develop, learn and practice cultural competency. Become aware of your own biases and cultural perspectives; actively seek knowledge about other cultures: https://www.edtechreview.in/trends-insights/insights/top-resources-to-teach-about-cultural-diversity-in-the-classroom/.

9. Volunteers should not photograph students unless authorized by the building principal or designated staff. Volunteers should not share photographs of students. Volunteers should not use social media, 'friend' or text with students. Texting is permitted for scheduling purposes only and with SPS authorization.

10. Volunteers should not provide food or medicine to students.

11. Volunteers should not bring tobacco products, illicit drugs, alcohol or weapons onto school premises.

12. Volunteers should never assume responsibility for the supervision of a class in the absence of a certified teacher.

13. Volunteers should never assume responsibility for the discipline of a student.

14. Volunteers are not authorized to transport students.

15. Adult volunteers should use adult restrooms only.

16. Volunteers wishing to serve with your dog or therapy animal must be certified and insured to serve in a school environment. Please review **Therapy Dog Team Guidelines** for next steps. For more information about how to gain certification contact SPS/SFLC Volunteer Coordinator JCapuano@k12.somerville.ma.us.

17. Somerville Public Schools welcome youth ages 15 and older to serve as homework helpers, peer mentors, assist with school events, serve with after school programs and more. Volunteers under the age of 18 years wishing to serve regularly (at least once weekly) with Somerville Public Schools may reach out to SPS/SFLC Volunteer Coordinator JCapuano@k12.somerville.ma.us for an application and to schedule an interview.

18. **Conflict of Interest Law.** Anyone performing services for a city or town or holding a municipal position, whether paid or unpaid, including full- and part-time municipal employees, elected officials, volunteers, and consultants, is a considered a municipal employee under the Conflict of Interest Law. For a summary of the Conflict of Interest Law, MA General Laws, Chapter 268A:

http://www.mass.gov/ethics/education-and-training-resources/required-education-and-training/municipal-employee-summary.html.

19. **Liability.** The City of Somerville and Somerville Public Schools requires volunteers to accept terms and conditions which release the City and Somerville Public Schools from liability in the event of volunteer injury, illness or property loss, and damages or costs associated with such.

20. **Photo Release.** Somerville Public Schools requests that volunteers complete an opt out form if they do not wish Somerville Public Schools to publish, print or post to its website your photograph as part of your volunteer activities. Please see the SPS Volunteer Coordinator if you wish to complete this form.

21. SMILE and have FUN!

Best Practices

Volunteers are most effective when they can serve consistently and with the same classroom, educator, counselor, staff or student(s) for consecutive weeks, ideally for at least three consecutive months. If you are matched with a classroom, program or for individual tutoring, mentoring or other regular support, we ask that you:

1. Make a Firm Commitment. Volunteer tutors, academic support volunteers and mentors should commit to **a consistent schedule, serving at least one hour a week for a minimum of three months**. Except in an emergency, last minute absences are disruptive. If you are casual about your absences, students will receive the wrong message, and it may cause teachers to be hesitant to work with volunteers in the future. Please contact your direct supervisor at least 24 hours prior to an absence. Understanding that schedules, work and life changes arise, if you are unable to complete your service, please notify your supervisor and the district Volunteer Coordinator immediately.

2. Define Your Role. The educator or lead staff you are connected with is your supervisor. Work with them to clearly define your role. Your volunteer work will vary depending on the subject and program, but communicate with your supervisor your expectations. Always ask the educator or your direct supervisor if you have questions about materials, school protocols or expectations.

3. Understand Learning Goals. If working one-on-one or with a consistent small group of students, work with your supervisor to understand the learning goals for the student(s). Request progress information from your supervisor if you feel it will help inform your tutoring or mentoring.

4. Get Feedback. Through your supervisor, you may ask for feedback about your volunteering. Educators and staff may or may not provide information about student performance or progress. You may, however, inquire how performance will be measured, such as level of student engagement, behaviors, assessments if relevant, or other areas of student assessment.

5. Be on Time. Teachers and students have tight timelines. Please be on time so that teachers can adhere to their and students' schedules. If you must miss a session, please let your supervisor know well ahead of time. If you cannot reach the supervisor, leave a message at the school's main office.

6. Reassignment or Dismissal from Service. Somerville Public Schools strives to match volunteers with placements that best serve students and staff. SPS understands that not every match is ideal and that there may be times when the educator-staff-volunteer relationship is not productive or beneficial to student learning. In these circumstances, the volunteer will need to be reassigned or in some cases, dismissed from service.

7. College or Community Service Credit; Letters of Recommendation Let your supervisor know ahead of time if you will need a letter of recommendation or other information from them, or from the SPS Volunteer Coordinator. Keep a log of dates and hours worked, activities, and any skills, cultural lessons or other knowledge or understanding you gained through tutoring or serving in a classroom.

8. Exit Survey In order to support volunteers and ensure that their time and service are most effective, we need to hear about your experience. Volunteers are asked to complete a Volunteer Survey upon completion of the school year or at the end their service.

9. VolunteersMatter! Help demonstrate that volunteer serve matters and that volunteer interventions can boost student confidence, engagement, interest in subject and performance. In order to evaluate impact for one-to-one or small group interventions, the following information is required for weekly academic volunteers:

Volunteer Name	Start/End Date	Schedule (Day/Time)	Subject (Literacy/Math/MLL…)	General role (1:1 tutoring; languages support, etc.)	School / Program	Teacher or Staff Name/Grade

Resources

Somerville Public Schools remain steadfast in their commitment to serving all students and families, regardless of citizenship. Somerville Public Schools has a moral and legal obligation to enroll and serve every child living in our district without regard to immigration status and without fear of discrimination. As a volunteer serving in our schools, thank you for helping to provide a welcoming, safe, inclusive and nurturing educational experience for all students.
These resources may be helpful in your volunteering journey:

Teaching Tolerance - Diversity, Equity and Justice

https://www.edtechreview.in/trends-insights/insights/top-resources-to-teach-about-cultural-diversity-in-the-classroom/

Immigrant and Refugee Children: A Guide for Educators and School Support Staff
http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/TT55_Teaching_Tolerance_Magazine.pdf pg 24.

Growth Mindset

https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/tag/growth-mindset/
Free growth mindset resources: online practices, lessons for mentors, parents, educators.

Literacy

www.readingrockets.org resources on how young children learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help.

PBS and WGBH: Interactive reading games and activities: https://pbskids.org/games/reading-games
25 Books that diversify students' reading lists
https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2014/06/07/25-ideas-to-diversify-reading-lists-this-summer/

Multilingual Learners

https://www.colorincolorado.org/ bilingual site for educators and families
Multilingual Learning Toolkit https://www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/starter-guide/

Mentoring Resources
https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/resources-for-mentoring-programs/
https://www.evidencebasedmentoring.org/

Somerville Public Schools
Volunteer Acknowledgement and Agreement

Acknowledgement of Volunteer Guidelines
I acknowledge that I have read and understand the Volunteer Guidelines of the Somerville Public Schools.

Voluntary Participation
I acknowledge that my participation with Somerville Public Schools is voluntary.

Privacy and Confidentiality
During my participation as a volunteer, I may become aware of confidential information regarding students or families. This information may include information such as students' academic performance, student records, behavior, disabilities, medical issues, immigration status or other personal or family matters.
I agree that I will not disclose such information to any person or entity other than to authorized school employees who have a need to know.

Release and Waiver of Liability
I will indemnify and not hold the City of Somerville and the Somerville Public Schools responsible for damages and costs, including attorney's fees, arising out of or in connection with my volunteer service to the Somerville Public Schools.

The City of Somerville and the Somerville Public Schools will not be held liable for any personal injury, illness or property loss that I may sustain in connection with my volunteer service. I waive any claim, and promise not to sue, for compensation from the City of Somerville or the Somerville Public Schools in the event of such personal injury, illness or property loss.

First and Last Name: _____ (please print)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please sign and date above and return form to:

Somerville Public Schools Volunteer Program
167 Holland St, Suite 308
Somerville, MA 02144
jcapuano@k12.somerville.ma.us

SPS Somerville Family Learning Collaborative