

Meeting Street Academy

Where hearts, minds, and futures come together



Volunteer Program



Meeting Street Academy Volunteers

*"Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer."
~Author Unknown*

Dear Volunteers,

Thank you for donating your time to Meeting Street Academy and its students. We recognize the academic and social impact that volunteers can have on our students, and we are thrilled to have you join our team. Your goal as a volunteer is to be a reliable, patient and kind friend to the student. Often times, the most important activity you can do with a student is simply have a discussion. Having an open dialogue is meaningful to the children, and it is more helpful than you might imagine. It is important for the students to learn how to communicate clearly and effectively, and open discussions help students connect with volunteers.

If you are a mentor, teachers will provide weekly updates to you about your mentee and his/her class. The reports include information on their behavior and academics. These are often helpful when deciding what to talk about or work on with your mentee. For example, if your mentee has had trouble focusing in class, you could think of a story about when you had trouble focusing – what the consequences were, how you solved the problem. Or if your mentee is struggling with math facts, the two of you could practice math facts during your time together.

The following pages include information about Meeting Street Academy, our volunteers, our mentors, and our students. We want your experience to be as enjoyable for you as it is for the students. In an effort to enhance your experience, we put together this manual to help you familiarize yourself with life at MSA. We hope it will be helpful to you. If at any time you have questions or concerns regarding your experience at Meeting Street Academy, please feel free to contact the volunteer coordinator at your local MSA.

MSA-Charleston
642 Meeting Street
Charleston, SC 29403
Telephone: (843) 735-7102

MSA-Spartanburg
200 Broad Street, Suite 110
Spartanburg, SC 29306
Telephone: (864) 253-1800



Meeting Street Academy

Volunteer Program

Philosophy, Responsibilities & Qualifications

Volunteer Program Philosophy

- To create a partnership among educators, parents, students, and community members through an organized volunteer program
- To promote the involvement of volunteers in school-related activities
- To complement the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational program at Meeting Street Academy

Meeting Street Academy strives for excellence in all areas of our students' lives, and volunteers play an important role in this process. In order to best serve our students, as well as our volunteers, we ask volunteers to adhere to the following guidelines.

Volunteer Responsibilities

To be professional

- Realize that the relationship with staff members requires mutual respect and confidence.
- Respect the confidentiality of school records, relationship of staff members with each other, students, and parents.
- Be cooperative, flexible, willing to learn, and willing to share ideas. Be a good adult model for students in behavior, attitude, speech, and dress.
- Use proper grammar at all times.
- Conform to school regulations.
- Try to understand students as individuals, to help them feel successful, and to give them your full attention.

To be supportive

- Discuss with staff member(s) any concerns or problems that arise.
- Understand and appreciate the work of the school staff.
- Be supportive of the school and the community.

To be dependable

- Communicate with the volunteer coordinator before beginning volunteer work by sharing any personal interests and abilities, reviewing and adapting to the job description, discussing mutual expectations, and maintaining communication throughout the school year.
- Be as regular as possible in attendance.
- Be on time.
- Notify the school as early as possible if absence is necessary.

Volunteer Qualifications

- Positive attitude about, interest in, and enthusiasm for working for the benefit of MSA students.
- Ability to work cooperatively with school personnel.
- Commitment to fulfilling the obligations of the MSA Volunteer Program.

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Volunteer Program

General Information

Injury/Accidents

In the event of a minor accident at school, please notify the nurse so that first aid measures can be taken. The nurse or responsible adult is required to complete an accident report form, and parents are to be notified.

Volunteer Dress Code

You will be on the floor and bending over to work with children, so please dress comfortably. There is no specific dress code for volunteers. However, we do ask that you dress modestly at all times. No undergarments should be visible, and we ask you to use your best judgment about the length of shorts and skirts. Remember that you are serving as an adult model for the students.

Absences

If you are unable to attend your scheduled volunteer time, please call and notify the school.

Nuts

Meeting Street Academy is a nut-free school! Please do not bring in treats that contain any types of nuts.

Confidentiality

All children and families have the right to expect that any information about their family will be kept confidential. A child's behavior and development should be discussed only with his/her teachers and parents. We ask all volunteers to maintain the confidentiality of our students.

Emergency Closings

Meeting Street Academy follows Charleston County School District policy regarding emergency dismissals due to any weather-related issues. If you have questions, please email or call the school.

Suspicious of Abuse

Any volunteer who has reasonable concern that a child is being abused must notify the Meeting Street Academy Director immediately. South Carolina law requires that any reasonable suspicions of child abuse be reported to the Department of Social Services.

Meeting Street Academy has partnered with Darkness to Light to help prevent child sexual abuse. We do not require it, but we do recommend you attend their Stewards of Children workshop, or a similar training program that will help you prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.

Discipline

If a student is disruptive or harmful to others, please notify his/her teacher immediately. Discipline should be handled by the teacher, not the volunteer.



Meeting Street Academy

Volunteer Program

FAQ's

What is a volunteer?

A friend
Someone who listens
Someone who does not judge
Someone who cares

A volunteer IS NOT:

A parent
A teacher
A disciplinarian
An ATM machine

What do I do if a student confides at-risk information to me?

All information a student tells you is confidential. However, if a student tells you or leads you to believe that (s)he or someone (s)he knows is being physically abused, neglected and/or involved in a life-threatening activity, PLEASE report the information to the Director of School.

May I bring a treat/gift for a student?

We ask that volunteers do not bring anything for students – your time is more than enough. However, if you would like to bring something that can be shared with an entire class that is perfectly acceptable. If you are unsure, ask a teacher or the volunteer coordinator.

May I see students outside of MSA?

The MSA Volunteer Program is strictly at MSA during school hours or a sponsored MSA event. If you choose to build a relationship with a student's family outside of MSA, that is your decision and is outside of the MSA Volunteer Program. If you choose to see a student outside of MSA, please set firm boundaries and expectations with the student and his/her family.

Do parents/guardians know that I am their child's mentor?

Yes, parents/guardians have given approval for their child to have a mentor. Parental involvement is important to MSA, and it is important within the context of the Mentor Program as well.

What if I have questions?

See the volunteer coordinator or any other faculty/staff member at the school.



Meeting Street Academy

Mentor Program

Mentor/MSA Commitment

The Mentor Commitment

- Mentors eat lunch with their mentees, visit with them, play games or read a book.
- Lunch meetings last between 30 and 45 minutes.
- Ideally, mentors will meet with their mentees every week on the same day. This helps build consistency for the mentees. The **minimum** commitment is 2 lunch meetings per month.
- The most important component of scheduling lunch meetings is communication. If a mentor is unable to attend, he/she should let the volunteer coordinator know as soon as possible.
- MSA asks for at least a one year commitment to the mentee. Hopefully, mentors will watch their mentees graduate from MSA and from college!
- After each session, mentors are welcome to check out with the volunteer coordinator to discuss any questions or concerns.

Meeting Street Academy's Commitment

- MSA's volunteer coordinator will match each mentor with a student who needs time, attention and love.
- MSA's volunteer coordinator will be a facilitator between mentors, teachers, parents, and mentees.
- MSA will provide a private table for the mentor and mentee to enjoy lunch. Mentors are welcome to eat from the salad bar provided by MSA, or you may bring in your own lunch if you prefer (NO NUTS!!!). However, please do not bring in "outside" food for the student.
- MSA will organize and host 1-2 events per year to celebrate our mentors, mentees and families.
- MSA faculty and staff will be available to help with any concerns or questions.



Meeting Street Academy

Mentor Program

Activity Ideas

Open Dialogue

- The most important activity a mentor can do with his/her mentee is have a discussion. Our students crave that one-on-one attention from adults, especially adults other than their parents and teachers. Some discussion topic ideas are:
 - What do you like most about yourself? Is there anything you would like to change about yourself?
 - What has been the best part of your day? What about the worst part of your day?
 - Who are your friends? Encourage the student to tell you about their friends, not just list their names.
 - What is your favorite subject in school? Why? What do you like about it?
 - What do you like to do for fun?
 - What do you do on the weekends?
 - What do you want to be when you grow up? Why? What do you do in that profession?
 - What are you passionate about? Snakes? Basketball? Hair? Learn a little bit about the topic and discuss it with your mentee. Often, the mentees can be great teachers on the subject.
 - Tell the mentee about where you grew up, what you did for fun as a child, what you do for fun now.
 - Ask your mentee to tell you about MSA's REAL values (Relationships, Excellence, Accountability, and Leadership). Ask your mentee how (s)he has showed one or two of the values that day or week.
 - Explain to your mentee what you do for a living.
 - Tell the mentee about where you went to college and why you chose that college.

Games

- There are plenty of games and puzzles designated for the Mentor Program. They are located in Room 203.
- There are academic activity boxes that you can use as a game with your mentee. They are located in Room 203.
 - On the Teacher Communication Log, teachers might suggest a specific skill the student needs extra help with. The activity boxes are labeled by what skills they target.

Reading

- MSA students love to read, and we encourage them to read whenever they can. Our library has many books that you can read with your mentee. One-on-one reading is especially helpful because students get undivided attention and help with reading skills.
- Depending on the age of your mentee, you can read to him/her, or the mentee can read to you. Ask your mentee questions about the book. Encourage them to think about what they heard and ask them to recall facts. Maybe even have them make up a different ending to the story.

Miscellaneous

- Have your mentee give you a tour of Meeting Street Academy. They are passionate about their school and love to show friends where they learn.
- Play on the playground with your mentee. We have a basketball hoop, a jungle gym, jump ropes, a track to run around, balls, etc.
- Arts and Crafts – We have plenty of arts and crafts materials. Draw a picture with your mentee.
- Is there something that you are particularly good at? Teach your mentee how to do it.
 - Drawing, photography, knitting, moon-walking, ANYTHING!
- Manners – Focus on table manners at lunch. (Napkin in your lap, don't wipe your mouth on your sleeve, please and thank you, etc.)



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Contact Information

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Meeting Street Academy Volunteer Service Agreement

I have carefully read through the following parts of the Volunteer Program Manual:

- Program Philosophy, Responsibilities, and Requirements of MSA Volunteers
- Mentor Commitment and MSA Commitment
- General Information for Meeting Street Academy Volunteers
- Frequently Asked Questions of Meeting Street Academy Volunteers

Having read and understood them, I agree to volunteer according to the provisions therein. If at any time I feel I need to violate these provisions, I realize I should voluntarily step aside from my volunteer opportunities.

Signature

Date

Print Name

Please sign and return this page to Meeting Street Academy. Thank you!