

Washtenaw Promise

Belief in the future. For every child.

Summary of Washtenaw Promise Current Volunteer Options for Project Outreach Students

Winter Term, January, 2022

Washtenaw Promise is a non-profit organization with a mission to improve educational opportunity and to increase connections to human resources for young children who live in Ypsilanti, Michigan with the challenges of poverty. We have several opportunities for student volunteers to engage with children in meaningful ways and are always eager to design more. We guide every University student volunteer through their experience, maintaining frequent contact throughout the term, helping to make their time rewarding for them and impactful for kids and teachers. We look forward to working with you!

Current volunteer options

1) Be a “Big Friend” for a child in need

Over a third of all children ages five or under in the Ypsilanti community are living in poverty. Many simply don't have enough connection to caring adults outside the family. When a supportive adult makes a consistent connection and offers friendship, it can make an incredible difference. Our volunteers become a “Big Friend” as they show up each week (up to 4 hours) in a public or private preschool with an encouraging and re-affirming presence. We provide our volunteers with training before beginning their assignment, and support on a weekly basis throughout the term. We can also provide transportation when needed.

During blocks of time from 8:30 - 10:30 am and 12:30 - 2:30 pm, our volunteers can be onsite at Beatty Early Learning Center, a public preschool, or Ford Early Learning Center, a public preschool-1st grade, both in Ypsilanti, Michigan, to work directly with kids and teachers. This requires covid vaccination and masking. All “Big Friend” volunteers also need to complete two forms— background check document and volunteer form required by Ypsilanti Schools— and view four training videos in week 1. We hope that you can then obtain transportation to your assigned school each week, weather permitting. Inclement weather may result in a cancellation of your session for a given day.

2) Be a “Penpal” in a rapidly growing program

You may also want to consider a “penpal” relationship with a preschooler, to provide your volunteer hours if you choose not to be a “Big Friend”, or when/if outdoor sessions are cancelled due to weather. Details of the penpal option will be available on our website and we will guide you through the procedures should you choose this. This option is designed to be an opportunity to connect with one child through an exchange of brief letters, drawings and other artifacts. Teachers at Beatty and Ford are eager to welcome your participation in this program!

3) Creating videos for kids, parents and teachers

Many students choose this option to support young kids in school by creating short videos. Using only a phone, some creativity and enthusiasm (and support from us), students have already created over 90 videos. They are available here: <https://washtenawpromise.org/videos/> You'll see volunteers reading childrens' books (we supply), presenting mini science, math or reading lessons, simple musical perfor-

mances, craft-making, exercise or art activities, and more. We coach volunteers and will supply you with any necessary materials. New videos are welcomed and anticipated by over 50 teachers in the Ypsilanti District. Many use them in their classrooms, and are eager to connect with volunteers who would like to add to the video library. Several teachers have also invited our volunteers into the classroom (virtually for now) to meet kids.

4) Helping to run a great program with one of our partners

We have several placements available for volunteers who would like to help run a program called “Bob-a-loo”, which is one of the rare programs being allowed in-person into a preschool starting in early February, 2022. Bob-a-loo is a unique and highly accredited “learning-through-movement” exercise program in which kids mimic animal movements while learning about the animals. It requires volunteers to be willing to be quite active with two classrooms, for 30 minutes each. Sessions needing volunteers will likely run on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week (you may choose just one day, or both), with time details to come. This is great fun for anyone who loves to be active with the small kids!

5) Other administrative tasks

We would also like to extend an invitation to students to help with administrative tasks, and/or our social media presence. These could be designed with the interests of the students in mind.

Finally, let me say that we expect this to be the last term in which volunteer options at Washtenaw Promise may be compromised by the covid pandemic. That being said, it’s just not possible at this moment to know how things will change in the next few weeks. We will try very hard to provide four hours/week of volunteer opportunity to students this term, and are always available for discussion if these options change for reasons beyond our control.