

Washtenaw Promise

Belief in the future. For every child.

Role of the mentor/volunteer

The fundamental role of a Washtenaw Promise early education volunteer is to connect with children in preschool, kindergarten or first grade, to offer support for emotional, behavioral and/or learning challenges, while helping to build more opportunity for the child to gain a sense of control and empowerment. We ask mentors to learn as they go, with this challenging task, while coordinating with Washtenaw Promise, teachers and sometimes parents as well. This role requires some training, a love of children, patience, and a dedication to the idea that every child, regardless of the conditions of their life, must be given the best possible foundation for educational success.

It's all about relationships

With the students...

We ask you to focus on students each time you visit the school and to do your best to get to know them and their challenges. Take cues from the teacher but don't hesitate to engage the children, letting them know who you are, that you care about them, that you'll be back regularly to see them. You are a "Big Friend" and as such, please consider sharing yourself with the students in whatever ways feel comfortable. You'll find that they will love to get to know you as much as you want to know them. Teachers can often help by providing you information on the students.

With the teachers, social workers, administrators...

Our hope is that mentors will find opportunities to build relationships with the classroom teacher, a social worker or family support specialist when available, and perhaps even the school administrator(s). Team building among the adults in a child's life ultimately empowers the child. It can also help to reduce stress in adults. When we know we're working together, challenges are more manageable and progress is more visible. Try to find time each week to have conversation with the teacher(s) in your classroom, perhaps stop by to greet the building administrator and the social worker(s) who may also be working with the students. We will support you in this effort.

With the parent(s)...

An important goal of our program is to also build relationships of trust with the parent(s) of students we work with, in order to offer needed support to the family. Please don't hesitate to share with us any perspective you gain on how we might support families. We'll keep you in touch with some of our other offerings to moms and dads, including events that you may wish to attend or promote at school.

When you can't make it in on your day

Please let us know in advance when you are unable to make your weekly visit to your school and we will inform the teacher. If advance notice is not possible, email or text Katie Watson, Tim Wilson or Amanda James-Bennett (emails and cellphone numbers below) as early as possible on the day you'll miss.

Snow days/bad road conditions

If you suspect Beatty or Ford may be closing for a snow day, closing information from YCS can be found online and on social media, often the night before or very early in the morning. If you cannot locate the information, let Katie, Amanda or Tim know of your uncertainty (text or email us) and we'll help you with the determination. If on a given day your school is not closing, and yet you feel that conditions may worsen or that the drive to Ypsilanti would be unsafe or unduly stressful for you, please know that we support you in making your own judgment call. Just let us know that you'll not be coming that day.

Reporting to Child Protective Services

In your role as a volunteer with Washtenaw Promise, you are not required to report suspected child abuse to Child Protective Services. The legal requirements may be confusing, as many others who work in early childhood education in Michigan are mandated to do so. If you observe, or hear a child report to you or others, suspected abuse—physical or emotional—we ask that you immediately share your concern with Washtenaw Promise—Tim, Amanda and/or Katie Watson, and also inform the lead teacher in your classroom. We will immediately give you our judgment as to the next steps, based on State law and an immediate consult with the teacher and Principal. A written report would be filed by WP as necessary and would be shared with you. We all care deeply about any and every form of child abuse. We also recognize that trust, safety and well being of children and adults who work in communities of stress are critically important.

Contact Information for Washtenaw Promise, Ford Early Learning Center and Beatty Early Learning Center

Washtenaw Promise

Tim Wilson (734)476-9749
twilson@washtenawpromise.org

Amanda James-Bennett (313)815-6306
amandajames@washtenawpromise.org

Ford Early learning Center

2440 E Clark Rd,
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
Phone: (734) 221-1801

Beatty Early Learning Center

1661 LeForge Rd.
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
Phone: 734-994-8178

Katie Watson (734)516-4487
kwatson3@ycschools.us