Literacy Mentor for Inner-City Kids

Writers’ Exchange Literacy Mentors help inner-city kids boost their literacy skills and self-esteem during super wacky writing projects. If you are excited to learn how zombie scavenger hunts, sweet summer treats and explosive science experiments can get kids excited about reading and writing, then this is the perfect role for you!

Mentors help kids (ages 6 to 13) read picture books and graphic novels and encourage creativity during crafts and writing. Activities may challenge the kids (and you!) to create a jar of lava monsters and then write about the monsters’ powers and how to defeat them; or imagine, draw and write enticing descriptions of new ice cream flavours. You don’t need to plan the activities or worry about managing behaviour—a staff programmer will be there to support you 100% of the time—just show up ready to have fun and support the kids.

Many of the kids we work with have low self-confidence when it comes to reading and writing, but when Mentors like you make the kids feel safe and supported, the kids get excited about reading and writing and build the self-confidence and life skills to set them up for long-term success!

In operation since 2011, every year the Writers’ Exchange serves 700 kids with the help of 250 Literacy Mentors. Our programs operate in the highest-needs neighbourhoods in East and South Vancouver.

In-School Projects
- Working in Vancouver School Board inner-city schools, mentors work with small groups of students to help an entire class of inner-city kids create a publication. Previous books include “Deez Dough Nuts”—filled with reviews from Vancouver’s favourite doughnut shops
- Hours: 1.5 hours/week, programs usually start between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m.
- Commitment: 5-6 weeks, on the same day/time each week
- Mentors MUST attend all sessions of an in-school project
- We run 3-6 In-School Projects each term

After-School Programs
- Mentors work one-on-one or with small groups of kids to help them complete fun writing projects, homework, awesome crafts, and a published book, like "Wiggle Wiggle Wiggle"! Programs often include wacky themes, like Magical Mondays, or FOMO Fridays.
- Hours: 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- Commitment: 1 full school term (10 – 15 weeks) with the same program, 2 hours/week on the same day each week. Mentors are allowed to miss no more than 2 weeks of an after-school program per term to ensure that we provide the consistency the kids crave.
THE IMPACT OF YOUR TIME AND ENTHUSIASM:

KIDS BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS!
97% of kids in our programs say there's an adult at the Writers' Exchange who cares about them

KIDS HAVE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE!
96% of kids in our programs love coming to the Writers' Exchange

KIDS ARE MOTIVATED TO READ AND WRITE!
98% of kids in our programs are excited to do the activities

KIDS SUCCEED LONG-TERM BECAUSE OF A HUGE SELF-ESTEEM BOOST!

WHAT YOU’LL DO TO CHANGE LIVES:
• Be a consistent positive role model for the kids
• Bring your creativity, enthusiasm, kindness, and willingness to be wacky to all shifts
• Model an infectious love for reading and writing
• Demonstrate compassion for the communities in which the Writers’ Exchange is situated
• Become familiar with the Writers’ Exchange and our mission and culture
• Commit to constantly learning how you can best support the kids

WHAT MAKES A GREAT MENTOR:
• Possess most or all 15 of the following qualities: adaptable, committed, compassionate, consistent, flexible, friendly, fun, genuine, kind, love to learn, open-minded, relaxed, team player, trustworthy, and understanding
• Thrives in a space that is loud, fun, energetic, and constantly changing
• Previous experience working with children is great but is not required – a genuine enthusiasm to connect with awesome kids over glue and glitter is more important
• Eager to participate in ongoing training activities

HOW TO JOIN THE TEAM:
• Pinky swear to attend at least one in-school project per term (1.5 hours / week for 4 - 5 weeks) and/or the same weekly two-hour shift in an after-school program for at least one full term (10 - 15 weeks). Mentors MUST attend all sessions of an in-school project. Mentors are allowed to miss no more than 2 weeks of an after-school program per term to ensure that we provide the consistency the kids crave. Our terms run from September - December, January - March, April - June, and July - August. We encourage Literacy Mentors to make an even longer-term commitment to cultivate close, supportive relationships with kids as they grow up.
• Be at least 16 years old
• Provide two references
• Complete a BC Criminal Records Check (please note it can take up to 4 weeks to process a criminal record check, so please apply ASAP for the upcoming term)

We encourage applications from people from diverse backgrounds, including LGBTTIQ2SA folks, Indigenous peoples, people of all colours, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities or another equity-seeking group with which you identify.

WHY PEOPLE LOVE BEING A LITERACY MENTOR:

This is an especially great volunteering opportunity if you’re thinking about becoming a teacher, social worker, child psychologist or working with children or youth in any capacity and want to gain concrete skills, experience and hours working with kids.

It’s also an energizing break from your daily routine, a great way to make connections, cultivate a sense of belonging, and build community, and a fun, meaningful opportunity to work with kids who need your support.

“Writers' Exchange creates community through literacy, intergenerational interactions, and creative fun!” — Tara, Literacy Mentor

HOW TO APPLY:
Please visit vancouverwe.com/vancouver-volunteer-opportunities for all the details and to fill out an application form by March 8th, 2019.

“At Writers’ Exchange we can do anything our mind wants to imagine!” — Erin, age 11