



Springfield
School
Volunteers 

1550 MAIN STREET, 3RD FLOOR
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01103
(413) 787-7100 EXT. 55697
SPRINGFIELDSCHOOLVOLUNTEERS.ORG

ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

WELCOME

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for committing to share your time and talents with our students. Volunteers have been a part of the success story of the Springfield Public Schools for many years. Regardless of your specific volunteer role, you will contribute greatly to the future success of Springfield's students.

As you take on this important challenge, this handbook will provide you with helpful information to support and guide you along the way. If you have questions or concerns that are not covered in this handbook, please feel free to reach out to us. A staff directory is on page 12.

We look forward to partnering with you to make a difference in the lives of students – one student at a time!

With gratitude,

Denise N. Cogman

ABOUT SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS(SSV)

SSV is a non-profit organization that has been matching the resources of the community with the needs of the Springfield Public Schools (SPS) since 1969. In 1979, First Lady Rosalynn Carter selected SSV as a model of the spirit of volunteerism. We have been proudly carrying that torch ever since.

SSV is governed by a board of directors, managed by a small staff, and supported by many caring and committed volunteers. We are funded by the City of Springfield through a contract with the Springfield Public Schools, as well as by grants and individual gifts. SSV's primary focus is to support positive youth-adult relationships with the goal of helping students reach their highest potential.

THE SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ABOUT SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

With approximately 24,000 students, more than 4,000 employees, and nearly 70 schools, Springfield Public Schools (SPS) is the third largest district in MA. Led by its superintendent Dr. Sonia Dinnall, and the School Committee chaired by Mayor Domenic Sarno, the district's mission, called the Springfield Promise, is reimagining schools to:

- Partner with families and the community as essential to student success;
- Attract, develop, support, retain, and promote exceptional and diverse educators and staff;
- Prioritize purposeful teaching, empowered learners, culturally responsive instruction, collaborative learning environments, and joyful and meaningful learning;
- Empower students to grow as whole people; and
- Graduate students ready for success in college, career, and life.

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

During a period of more than two years, SPS engaged students, parents, school staff, business and faith leaders, and other community members in a series of conversations that led to a community-created vision of what every SPS student should know and be able to do by the time they graduate high school.

The Portrait of a Graduate is built on six pillars or key themes. Outlined in the diagram below, these pillars are the elements of specific knowledge, skills, or mindsets every student should master.



Springfield Public Schools Portrait of a Graduate

LEARN



"I have the academic knowledge and skills to critically understand the world, form opinions, and solve problems."

COMMUNICATE



"I listen to others and convey ideas with respect, openness and clarity."

PERSIST



"I practice resilience, self-awareness, and advocacy to navigate challenges and new situations"

THRIVE



"I can independently navigate the world as an empathetic and respectful adult."

LEAD



"I will lead with confidence, empathy and kindness in my family, my community, in Springfield, and beyond."

WORK



"I can identify and pursue career pathways that empower and sustain me."

THE SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are embedded in the SPS strategic plan, which has core values that include: a commitment to advancing educational equity through ensuring just outcomes for each student; raising historically marginalized voices and challenging imbalances of power and privilege; and valuing students' diverse experiences by practicing culturally responsive practices.

As a volunteer, you will support students who represent a wide range of races, ethnicities, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. The chart below represents SPS's 2023 - 2024 demographic profile compared to the state:

Race	% of District	% of State
African American	17.6	9.6
Asian	1.7	7.4
Hispanic	69.3	25.1
Native American	0.1	0.2
White	7.9	53
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	0.1
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	3.4	4.5
Other Selected Populations		
First Language not English	28.6	26
English Language Learner	17.1	13.1
Low-income	85	42.2
Students With Disabilities	26.8	20.2
High Needs	89.3	55.8

UNDERSTANDING AND EMBRACING CULTURE

Culture encompasses more than race or ethnicity. It includes values, social norms, communication styles, lifestyle choices, and family structures. Each student's culture shapes their worldview and approach to learning.

Here are a few helpful tips for working with students from diverse cultures:

- Show curiosity and try to understand students' culture from their perspective.
- Don't assign values to differences such as better or worse, right or wrong.
- Ask questions (respectfully) instead of making assumptions.
- Be mindful of differing communication styles.
- Don't try to over-identify with your student - be yourself.

VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME?

Attendance

It is important for volunteers to arrive at their assignment when expected and to notify the school, student, or SSV as far in advance as possible if they will be late or unable to make it to an assignment for any reason.

Appearance

Volunteers are expected to dress appropriately for their assigned duties and should present a positive, professional demeanor.

Conduct

Volunteers are expected to follow rules of conduct that protect the safety and privacy of all staff, students, families, and other volunteers. Inappropriate conduct may lead to termination of the volunteer assignment and if necessary, further legal measures may be taken. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to:

- Physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse of a child, volunteer, or school staff.
- Volunteering under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs and/or possession, distribution, transfer, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs on school grounds.
- Creating a disturbance on school grounds or at SSV-sponsored events that jeopardizes the safety of others.
- Threatening, intimidating, or harassing behavior of any kind.
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information.

Exchanging of Information

In an effort to maintain appropriate boundaries, volunteers are discouraged from exchanging personal contact information and communicating with students, unless pre-approved by SSV or the program/assignment contact. This information includes but is not limited to cellphone number, email address, home address, or social media connections.

VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

Use of Cell Phones and other Portable Communication Devices (PCDs)

To reduce interruption or distraction while you are volunteering in a school, please keep PCDs off or on silent mode. If you must take a call, please excuse yourself and go to an appropriate location. Cell phones should not be used to capture unauthorized images or videos.

Weather

Volunteers are encouraged to be safe. If school is delayed due to inclement weather but you are scheduled to volunteer after the delayed opening, use your best judgment and notify the school if you decide not to volunteer.

Testing

Please follow the school's guidelines for visitors during standardized testing.

Breaks

If you need to take a break during your scheduled volunteer time, ask a school staff member where you may go. Please note that all school grounds are smoke-free environments.

Emergency Procedures

If there is an emergency while you are volunteering, the school's emergency plan and procedures should be followed. As a volunteer, you have the right to ask school personnel for their school's emergency policies and procedures.

Face Masks

When face mask requirements are in place in the district, a face mask that covers a person's nose and mouth must be worn by all individuals in school buildings when school is in session, even when social distancing is observed. Individuals are prohibited from wearing face masks containing language or symbols that cause disruption or disorder within the school.

SSV/SPS POLICIES

CORI POLICY

Anyone who wishes to volunteer in a Springfield public school must agree to a CORI/SORI check by submitting a CORI/SORI Acknowledgment form along with proof of identity (copy of a valid, government-issued photo ID) to SSV. Applicants and schools indicated on the CORI form will be notified when the background check is complete.

Please note that SSV does not receive information from the background check, and a past criminal offense does not automatically disqualify an individual from volunteering. SPS's Office of Safety & Security determines volunteer eligibility and will contact an applicant directly if more information is needed.

SPS obtains all available criminal offender record information (CORI) from the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) and sex offender registry information (SORI) from the Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB) for the purpose of determining the suitability of individuals, including volunteers, who may have direct, unmonitored contact with children.

A background check is valid for three years, as long as an individual is actively volunteering for each of those school years. Applicants will be contacted when their background check needs to be renewed.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

It is the policy of SSV not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, marital status, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, covered veteran status, physical or mental disability, or other categories as defined by state and federal law. To the extent possible, SSV will work with schools to ensure that reasonable accommodations are made for qualified volunteers with known disabilities or circumstances that might require an accommodation.

SSV/SPS POLICIES

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

In connection with your activities as a volunteer, SSV or SPS employees may disclose information (confidential information) to you regarding certain students or their parents/guardians. Except as may be permitted in writing by the Superintendent of the Springfield Public Schools (Superintendent), you shall use any such confidential information only in connection with your volunteer commitment and should never, directly or indirectly, use, publish, disseminate or otherwise disclose any confidential information unless compelled to do so by a court, oral questions at a deposition, subpoena, interrogatories, civil investigative demand or similar process, in which event you will reasonably attempt to notify the Superintendent of any attempt by a third party to legally compel such disclosure.

ILLNESS/INJURY POLICY

SPS and SSV are committed to providing a safe environment for volunteers. We acknowledge that illness or injury may occur as a result of participation in volunteer activities or attendance at SSV or SPS-sponsored events. Volunteers should follow the policies put in place by the Springfield Public Schools in accordance with guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the MA Department of Public Health (DPH) regarding the use of face masks.

Please note that except as otherwise agreed to by SSV or SPS in writing, SSV or SPS do not carry or maintain health, medical, or disability insurance coverage for any volunteer. Each volunteer is expected to obtain his or her own medical or health insurance coverage.

VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

DIRECTIONS & PARKING

The addresses of all schools can be found on the SPS website. If you need specific directions, feel free to contact SSV and we can help you navigate!

Parking availability varies per school. If there is a parking lot, you are free to park there as long as there is not a sign indicating otherwise and as long as the spot is not reserved. In the event there is no lot, you may have to find on-street parking. If you need information about handicap parking, please call the school. Remember to not leave any valuables unattended in your vehicle. SSV and SPS are not liable for damage or theft.

ARRIVING AT THE SCHOOL

All schools are locked for the safety of our students so you will have to be buzzed in to enter. There will be a call box near the door. Press the button and let them know why you are there. Once you are inside, report to the front office and someone will direct you to where you need to go. As you enter some schools, you may be required to check in with a security guard and pass through metal detectors.

SUPERVISION

Massachusetts law prohibits volunteers from being left in charge of the class or a group of children alone. Volunteers must be within sight or sound of an employee of the school at all times. Please do not hesitate to contact SSV with any questions or concerns you may have about your assignment.

THE VOLUNTEER IMPACT

BE A MODEL

Remember, your impact can go far beyond test scores! By sharing your time and talents, you can help broaden students' horizons and expose them to different perspectives. Students who have interactions with volunteers often show improvements in attitude, attendance, motivation and self-esteem. You might even help a student develop an appreciation for the value of community service.

Not only will your volunteerism have an impact on students and community as a whole, but it also has many personal benefits. Research has shown that those who volunteer experience:

- Increased socialization
- Improved self-esteem and self-confidence
- An expanded network
- A decrease in stress, anger, anxiety, and depression



WAIVER OF LIABILITY

WAIVER

I hereby release, waive and forever discharge any and all liability, claims, and demands of any kind against SPS or SSV and its directors, officers, employees, and agents (the “Released Parties”), to the fullest extent permissible by law, including but not limited to damages or losses caused by the negligence, fault or conduct of any kind on the part of the released parties, including but not limited to death, bodily injury, illness, economic loss or out of pocket expenses, or loss or damage to property, which I, my heirs, assignees, next of kin and/or legally appointed or designated representatives, may have or which may hereinafter accrue on my behalf, which arise or may hereafter arise from my volunteer participation. I understand that SPS and SSV do not assume any responsibility for or obligation to provide financial or other assistance, including but not limited to medical, health, or disability insurance in the event of injury or illness.

I hereby release and forever discharge SPS and SSV from any claim whatsoever which arises or may hereafter arise on account of any first aid, treatment, or service rendered in connection with my volunteer activities with SSV or in any Springfield public school. I expressly agree that this Release and Waiver is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the State of Massachusetts, and that this Release and Waiver shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Massachusetts. In the event that any clause or provision of this Waiver of Liability shall be held to be invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity of such clause or provision shall not otherwise affect the remaining provisions of this Waiver of Liability, which shall continue to be enforceable.

VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Please note that once you have reviewed this Volunteer Orientation Handbook and completed the certification on the SSV website, you are acknowledging that you:

- Have reviewed and will abide by SSV and SPS policies and expectations.
- Understand that as a volunteer you are not to be left in charge of a class or group of students alone.
- Understand that you are not cleared through SSV to exchange contact information with, accept social media requests from or otherwise communicate with students outside of SSV-sanctioned activities.
- Understand that as a volunteer you are not cleared through SSV to transport students.
- Understand that SSV reserves the right to terminate any volunteer assignment at any time.
- Have reviewed and agree to all language in the Waiver of Liability

SSV STAFF DIRECTORY

Denise N. Cogman

President and CEO

cogmand@springfieldpublicschools.com

Katherine Gasque

Accounting Specialist

gasquek@springfieldpublicschools.com

Patricia Hanson-Staples

Director of Program Operations

hanson-staplesp@springfieldpublicschools.com

Elyssa Parrish

Read Aloud Program Coordinator

parrishe@springfieldpublicschools.com

Alexa Spath

Community Engagement Coordinator

smithal@springfieldpublicschools.com

Vanessa Stefanelli

Program Support Coordinator

stefanelliv@springfieldpublicschools.com

Lina Villalongo

Data Entry Specialist, Office Administrator

villalongol@springfieldpublicschools.com

JOIN THE SSV COMMUNITY

CONTACT US:

1550 MAIN STREET, 3RD FLOOR
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01103
413.787.7100 Ext. 55697
volunteer@springfieldpublicschools.com

SOCIAL MEDIA:

