

Community Connections - Learning Together

Frequently Asked Questions for Student Volunteers

What is Community Connections - Learning Together?

We are Columbia health professional students (medicine, dental, public health, etc.) who want to provide mentoring and additional academic support for children and teens to ensure their success during this time of uncertainty and change. We are working with various community organizations, including School in the Square, Nido de Esperanza, Coalición Mexicana and NYP Center for Community Health Navigation (CCHN).

Will I be monetarily compensated for my time?

No, this program is voluntary, and compensation is not to be expected from parents/guardians/teachers or our community partners. However, this opportunity is sponsored by the COVID-19 Student Service Corps and can be applied toward service-learning hours, following the procedures for credit per your school.

What if I get paired with a family and their requests are outside of my comfort zone or the hours are too much for me to handle at this moment?

We will match tutoring and volunteer requests based on subject matter as well as time commitment, among other factors. However, requests and commitments can evolve, and if they do, please reach out to the student coordinators at flc2112@cumc.columbia.edu, sa3667@cumc.columbia.edu, iag2114@cumc.columbia.edu, and pak2137@cumc.columbia.edu. We will work with you and the family to come up with a plan that works for everyone, or we will assign the child a different volunteer and change your assignment to a commitment that works better for you.

What will the pairings look like?

After volunteers and families fill out our intake form, we will work to match you as best we can based on the subjects you prefer to teach and your time commitment. Non-English language fluency will also be taken into consideration if the child's family is bilingual. Contact information for the child/family will be shared with volunteers. Volunteers are expected to then follow-up and work with either the partnering organization or family directly to begin the tutoring/mentoring relationship. It will be the responsibility of the family to let the volunteers know their time requirements. Volunteers are also expected to coordinate with families to find a tutoring/mentoring schedule that works well for both parties.

What is the time commitment?

Any time you are able to contribute is incredibly appreciated. There are no minimum or maximum time limits for volunteering, but please let us know a realistic time commitment that you are willing to make so we can best match you to a student. Our priority is creating a consistent volunteering/mentoring relationship to best meet our volunteers' and childrens' needs.

What should I do if I can no longer make a tutoring/mentoring session?

While you are expected to be available for all predetermined tutoring/mentoring sessions, we understand that emergencies may happen. Please let the child and family know as soon as you find out you will not be able to make the session, and try to reschedule to make up that session if possible. Please also fill out the [volunteer log form](#) to record the session as “missed and rescheduled.”. We expect volunteers to be reliable and responsible with this commitment by staying consistent with their tutoring sessions. If you are unable to contact your mentee/tutee, please notify the Learning Together student coordinators (flc2112@cumc.columbia.edu, sa3667@cumc.columbia.edu, iag2114@cumc.columbia.edu, and pak2137@cumc.columbia.edu) ASAP.

What should I do if I witness a situation that makes me uncomfortable (such as possible neglect, abuse, etc)?

Tutoring a child entails “entering” their home, albeit in a virtual format. If you witness any situation or incident that makes you uncomfortable for any reason, please promptly end the tutoring/mentoring session and contact the Learning Together student coordinators at flc2112@cumc.columbia.edu, sa3667@cumc.columbia.edu, iag2114@cumc.columbia.edu, and pak2137@cumc.columbia.edu. **We are working on establishing a process for how to report any witnessed neglect, abuse, or violence.**

What should I prepare for each tutoring/mentoring session?

We expect our volunteers to have a certain degree of autonomy in regard to individual sessions. Individual sessions will vary according to each child’s needs. We expect volunteers to communicate with their mentees/tutees before tutoring/mentoring sessions to clarify the topic/subject matter for the upcoming session. This way, volunteers have time to prepare and are able to meet the individual needs of their tutee/mentee.

What will I be using to keep track of the number of hours I tutor?

All volunteers will be added to CSSC Community Connections in microsoft teams. At the start of each tutoring/mentoring session, volunteers will log in to microsoft teams and “clock in” within the “shifts” tab. Volunteers will then clock out at the end of the tutoring/mentoring session. Hours will be stored this way and can be referenced by both CSSC leadership and volunteers.