



MIGHTY WRITERS

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



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FOREWORD

Mighty Writers (**MW**) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Our mission is to teach Philadelphia kids, ages seven to 17, to think and write with clarity so they can achieve success at school, at work and in life.

At MW, we see our mission as an urgent one. Our staff is comprised of passionate, entrepreneurial and self-motivated leaders who rise to the challenge of creating and implementing big programs, projects and initiatives. MW is far from a 9-to-5, clock-in/clock-out work environment. We see good writing and clear communication as a gateway to success, and we share a commitment to doing whatever is needed to build a community of confident and capable kids and teens.

MW is committed to providing a dynamic and rewarding environment in which to volunteer, and we look forward to a productive and successful association. We consider the volunteers of MW to be one of its most valuable resources. This handbook has been written to serve as the guide for volunteer engagement.

The handbook contains only general information and guidelines. It is not intended to be comprehensive or to address all the possible applications of, or exceptions to, the general policies and procedures described. For that reason, if you have any questions concerning the applicability of a policy or practice to you, you should address your specific questions to **Education Director Rachel Loeper** (rloeper@mightywriters.org).

The procedures, practices and policies described here may be modified or discontinued from time to time. We will communicate changes as they occur.

This handbook and the information in it should be treated as confidential. No portion of this handbook should be disclosed to others, except MW's employees and others affiliated with MW whose knowledge of the information is required in the normal course of business.

CORE VALUES

All of our core values are developed and interpreted in support of the Mighty Writers mission **to teach kids and teens to think and write with clarity.**

Action: *“Action is the foundational key to all success.” – Pablo Picasso*

Empowerment: *“If you want to lift someone else up, lift yourself up.” – Booker T. Washington*

Humility: *“When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new.” – Dalai Lama*

Integrity: *“The truth matters...You don't take shortcuts or play by your own set of rules...Success doesn't count unless you earn it fair and square.” – Michelle Obama*

Tenacity: *“The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity. The fears are paper tigers. You can do anything you decide to do.” - Amelia Earh*

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Drug-Free Workplace

MW provides a safe and productive work environment. When working on site or conducting related work off site, employees are prohibited from being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Smoke-Free Workplace

It is the policy of MW to prohibit smoking on all organization premises in order to provide and maintain a safe and healthy work environment for all employees. The smoke-free workplace policy applies to:

- All areas of organization's facilities
- All work-sponsored, off-site conferences and meeting
- All employees, temporary employees and student interns

Violence in the Workplace

All employees, customers, vendors and business associates must be treated with courtesy and respect at all times. Employees are expected to refrain from conduct that may be dangerous to others.

Conduct that threatens intimidates or coerces an employee, customer, vendor or business associate will not be tolerated. MW's resources may not be used to threaten, stalk or harass anyone at the workplace or outside the workplace. MW treats threats coming from an abusive personal relationship as it does other forms of violence.

Anyone found to be responsible for threats of or actual violence or other conduct that is in violation of these guidelines will be subject to prompt disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF CHILDREN

Volunteer Clearance Process

Volunteer Clearance Requirements

To work with youth in Pennsylvania, state law requires that all employees and volunteers must complete the following standard clearances:

- **Child Abuse Clearance**
- **Criminal Record Check**
- **FBI Background Check** (involves fingerprinting; required for all employees; required for volunteers who have not lived in Pennsylvania continuously for the past 10 years)

Complete a Hard Copy

Complete the attached documents and return to Mighty Writers via mail or email.

- Mail materials to:
Rachel Loeper, Education Director
Mighty Writers South
1501 Christian St.
Philadelphia, PA 19146
- Scan and email documents to rloeper@mightywriters.org.
- Mighty Writers provides the forms, submits the materials and covers all costs associated with the clearances.
- Once we have all of your necessary clearances, a staff member will be in touch with further information about the volunteer opportunities available at your site of choice.

Already Have Clearances?

If you already have clearances from a previous job or volunteer opportunity, you may submit your Child Abuse Clearance, Criminal Record Check and your FBI Background Check directly via mail or email to Rachel Loeper.

If you are a volunteer who has lived in PA continuously for the past 10 years and do not require a FBI Background Check, please complete the FBI Disclosure Statement for our files.

Required Documents¹

Child Abuse Clearance Application
Child Abuse Clearance Consent Form
Criminal Record Check Application
FBI Background Check Application
FBI Background Disclosure

¹ All of these requirements and accompanying documents can be found online at <https://mightywriters.org/volunteer-clearance-requirements/>

Health and Safety Policies

Arrange for proper group supervision. With the exception of one-on-one mentorships, your group must have at least two approved, unrelated adult volunteers or staff members present at all times. One of these can be a program director or program manager who is present but not actively participating in the group.

Get parent/guardian permission for every activity that takes place outside of the normal time, place or circumstances. Advise the parent/guardian about all details of the activity and obtain written permission for each participant. A permission slip template can be provided for your use.

Do not discipline participants by use of physical punishment, by verbal shaming or threats or by failing to provide the necessities of care, such as food and shelter. Food should not be used as an incentive to participation.

Be prepared for emergencies. Work with participants, volunteers and staff to establish and practice procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost participants/adults and site security.

Travel safely. When transporting participants to planned MW field trips and other activities, every driver must be an approved adult volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license and a registered and insured vehicle. Every participant must be in a legal seat, wear his/her seatbelt at all times and adhere to PA laws regarding booster seats and front seat travel. All children 12 and under should sit in the back seat only.

Be a strong role model. Never use illegal drugs. Drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, weapons, and foul language are not permitted at Mighty Writers.

Promote online safety. Ensure all sites visited are educational, age appropriate and productive. Be present in all rooms where participants are working on computers and monitor screens and activities. Participants in our programs should never supply their full names or contact information to an unknown source, engage in virtual conversations with strangers or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. When publishing participant work online, publish first names only and do not provide other identifying information, including email addresses or school. There is a shared, monitored Gmail address that Mighty Writers are welcome to use: username is students@mightywriters.org and the password (subject to change) is available from the program director. For our complete internet safety policy, see page 14.

Emotionally Safe Environments

Adult volunteers and staff members are responsible for creating a space where all participants feel safe emotionally as well as physically.

An emotionally safe space is one in which all participants can express themselves without explanation, judgment or ridicule. All participants will seek out emotionally safe environments, so the environment you create is as important – maybe more – than the lessons and activities you plan. Here are a few tips for creating an emotionally safe environment at Mighty Writers:

- **Inclusivity:** Mighty Writers welcomes staff, volunteers and participants, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, background, ability, family structure, religious beliefs or socioeconomic status. When planning lessons and activities, carefully consider the needs of all of our community members. If you are unsure how an activity might affect our participants or community members, consult the program director at your site before moving forward. Please consult the “Cultural Competency and Responsiveness” section for more guidance.
- **Community Agreement:** Create a community agreement with your group and coach all participants to honor it. For a good example of a community agreement, please refer to the ADDENDUM: Mighty Respect Manifesto and the ADDENDUM: Looks Like / Sounds Like / Feels Like chart.
- **Activities:** Carefully plan movement and informal discussion activities that allow participants to interact with one another, volunteers and staff in natural and productive ways. For examples, please see the program director at your site.
- **Mentor Texts:** Before asking participants to write, show them examples of similar kinds of writing by adults, peers or published authors. Use mentor texts to highlight and practice specific elements of writing before attempting a longer piece.
- **Collaborative Writing:** Collaborate with participants throughout the writing process. You’re not a lecturer or teacher, but a partner similarly engaged in the demanding but dynamic task of writing.
- **Praise and Feedback:** Allow multiple opportunities for participants to share and receive praise and feedback from volunteers and one another, at every stage of the writing process. In order to uplift all participants, volunteers must find something positive in everything they write, point it out in specific terms and encourage them to try it again and again.
- **High Expectations:** Encourage participant autonomy and responsibility by having clear, high expectations for behavior and writing.
- **Positive Classroom Management:** Use positive guidance including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement to encourage positive behavior. If you struggle with behavior or classroom management, consult the program director at your site for positive classroom management resources.

Cultural Competency and Responsiveness

Culture is defined as the intersection of one’s national origin, religion, language, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, age, gender identity, race, ethnicity, and physical and developmental ability. Cultural competency actively promotes respect for cultural diversity and creates an inclusive, welcoming and respectful environment that embraces diversity.

Staff and volunteers can become culturally competent by first developing a self-awareness of their own cultural identities, beliefs and practices. They also should seek to understand and address their own implicit biases. Project Implicit of Harvard University has developed useful implicit bias tests for that purpose. Additionally, Teaching Tolerance and the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity have developed practical standards, articles, guides, and lesson plans for educators who wish to address biases.

Staff and volunteers should also invest time in learning the cultural beliefs and practices of their students. They actively value cultural differences in children, youth and families by having high expectations for their students, teaching from and designing curriculum from within the cultural contexts and performance styles of their students, and facilitating storytelling and other student-centered practices that value student perspectives².

Working with Parents

Parents are welcome and encouraged to visit program sites at any time. They are required to comply with check-in and security procedures. If a parent will be staying on-site for more than 15 minutes to drop off or pick up a child, s/he is asked to sign in.

Parents will receive regular, timely communication of accidents, injuries or contagious diseases occurring on-site. Parental complaints regarding child safety will be investigated immediately. All parental complaints will be acknowledged within 24 hours.

Volunteers will only contact your child via phone or email in the case of mentorships. In these cases, parental permission is received and parents are asked to review our “Best Practices for Internet Use.”

Children will be released only to previously authorized persons. Identification may be required prior to the release of the child.

Reporting Child Abuse

What is a mandated reporter? Who is mandated to report abuse in PA?

Anyone may report suspected abuse; mandated reporters are those people who are required by law to report suspected child abuse. Mandated reporters are held to a higher standard of responsibility and may receive serious consequences for not reporting suspected abuse.

² Adapted from “Diversity Toolkit: Cultural Competence for Educators” *National Education Association*.2017. <http://www.nea.org/tools/30402.htm>

Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) was amended in 2014, including substantial changes to the list of people who are mandated reporters.

Effective December 31, 2014, people in these positions are mandated to report child abuse:

- A person licensed or certified to practice in any health-related field under the jurisdiction of the Department of State;
- A medical examiner, coroner or funeral director;
- An employee of a health care facility or provider licensed by the Department of Health, who is engaged in the admission, examination, care or treatment of individuals;
- A school employee;
- An employee of a child care service, who has direct contact with children in the course of employment;
- Clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization;
- An individual paid or unpaid; who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child;
- An employee of a social services agency, who has direct contact with children in the course of employment;
- A peace officer or law enforcement official defined as Attorney General, District Attorney, PA State Police and municipal police officer.
- An emergency medical services provider certified by the Department of Health;
- An employee of a public library, who has direct contact with children in the course of employment;
- An individual supervised or managed by a person listed above who has direct contact with children in the course of their employment; and
- An independent contractor who has direct contact with children.
- An attorney affiliated with an agency, institution, organization or other entity that is responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or control of children.
- A foster parent.

How do I make a report of suspected abuse?

When you suspect child abuse, the law requires you to immediately make an oral report of suspected child abuse via the Statewide toll-free telephone number ChildLine at [1-800-932-0313](tel:1-800-932-0313). The recent amendments to CPSL allows mandated reporters to make a written report online.

If you make an oral report to ChildLine you must follow-up with a written report, which may be submitted electronically, within 48 hours.

Can't I just tell my boss or supervisor about the abuse and s/he can take it from there?

No, changes to CPSL now require that a mandated reporter must personally make the report. Your supervisor may assist you in making the report (for example, sit with you for support if you are uncomfortable in the process) as long as they do not interfere in any way with the making of the report. Afterward, you should inform your supervisor (or whoever is designated at your place of employment) about the report.

Where can I find more information?

<http://www.pa-fsa.org/Mandated-Reporters/Understanding-Mandated-Reporting/Frequently-Asked-Questions>

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

Autism and Sensory Processing

- Students with ASD often experience sensory challenges
- Occurs when the brain has difficulty processing or receiving sensory information
- Can be hyposensitive (under stimulated) or hypersensitive (overstimulated)
- May “act out” in class even though they are not trying to be disruptive

Sensory Challenges

	Hyposensitive	Hypersensitive
Vision	- focuses on moving objects - delayed reaction to visual stimuli	- oversensitive to light - easily distracted by environment - difficulty with eye contact - detail oriented
Smell	- difficulty noticing unpleasant odors - may smell objects	- strong reactions/aversions to smells - aversions to using scented-objects - gags in response to certain smells
Touch	- difficulty feeling pain or temperature	- doesn't like being touched or standing next to peers in line

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unaware of being touched or being injured - doesn't notice food on face - seeks out touch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may feel touch as pain - picky eater - refuses to wear certain clothing - avoids getting hands messy
Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - drooling, licking - chews or mouths objects - prefers strong taste (sweet, sour, spicy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - picky eater - sensitive to food temperature - prefers bland foods - gags
Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - difficulty responding to name or oral directions - prefers to work with background music - delayed reaction to auditory stimuli - enjoys making noise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fears certain sounds - covers ears - withdraws from noisy environments - difficulty focusing with background noise or in noisy environments - tells other to be quiet - hears auditory stimuli that others may not
Proprioception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extremely high arousal level - may run, climb or toe walk - craves deep pressure - poor postural control - frequently bumps into things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - avoids sports and physical activity - prefers to sit with support
Vestibular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fearful of having head moved in certain ways - fearful of certain movements - dislikes riding elevators or escalators - frequently falls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seeks intense sensory experiences like running, spinning or jumping - sways or rocks while standing

Sensory Overload

Sensory overload occurs when the brain fails to process sensory information, leading to overstimulation. It can happen to anyone, including non-ASD students.

Signs:

- Irritability
- Tantrums
- Difficulty focusing
- Over-excitement
- Covers ears/eyes
- "Shutting down" or refusing to participate in activities
- Unusually high or low energy levels

Sensory Tools

Students with ASD should be *offered* the opportunity but never forced to use a sensory tool or take a sensory break.

Earplugs - reduces distractions; helps those with auditory sensitivities

Beanbags/Pillows - provides calming sensory input to help students stay calm and focus; use during break or homework; allow students to bury under pillows or beanbag

Sensory Sack - provides proprioceptive input to joints and muscles for increased attention by regulating sensory system

Discovery Putty/Scented Putty - provides proprioceptive input; pull, stretch, pinch, squeeze, find hidden items

Fidgets/Gel Pads/Hair Tangles/Squish Balls - increases attention and focus; reduces anxiety; use during homework or break

Sit Disc - allows movement to increase attention/focus; use while working

Resistance Band - provides proprioceptive input to calm and organize body; pull and stretch with slow controlled movements; wrap around leg chair and allow students to bounce or kick their feet on them

Movement Breaks - a 5 to 10 minute break can provide hours of increased attention and focus; jumping jacks, wall pushups, chair pushups, yoga, animal walk

Communication

Students with ASD are never trying to be disruptive or difficult. Instead of punishing students for “acting out” or getting frustrated, recognize their sensory challenges and work with the students to find the environments, activities, and interactions that work best for them.

Instead of...	Try...
“It’s not that hard.”	“Would you like to go to a quiet space to work?”
“Calm down. Just sit down.”	“Would you like to take a break?”
“It’s not that big of a deal.”	“I’m trying to understand what you are frustrated about. Can you tell me?”
Giving directions from across the room	Gain their attention and speak slowly

TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET USE

The following guidelines have been established for using MW computers, phones and email in an appropriate, ethical and professional manner:

Do NOT:

- use disparaging, abusive, profane or offensive language
- create, view or display materials that might adversely or negatively reflect upon MW
- engage in any illegal activities, including piracy, cracking, extortion, blackmail, copyright infringement, and unauthorized access of MW equipment
- download or install software that you find through social networks
- copy, retrieve, modify or forward copyrighted materials, except with permission or as a single copy to reference only

Please Note: Internal and external emails are considered business records and may be subject to discovery in the event of litigation.

MW Social Media Accounts

Communication on behalf of the organization is the primary responsibility of **Executive Director Tim Whitaker**, (twhitaker@mightywriters.org). Unless authorized by Tim Whitaker, volunteers are NOT permitted to post material, updates or opinions, under the MW online accounts.

Regulations for Personal Social Media Accounts

Be a good ambassador

Do NOT swear, use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language in your messages. Transmissions or importing of any material or data in violation of any federal or state law or regulation is prohibited, including, but not limited to, copyrighted material, threatening, pornographic, or obscene material, or information constituting trade secrets.

Get permission

MW requires that you obtain permission before publishing anything related to your function or assignment. This also applies to blogs and similar online publications. To avoid problems, discuss your work-related social media activities with Tim Whitaker.

Respect privacy

Respect people's right to privacy and, unless given permission by them, do NOT:

- take/post photos or videos of MW participants and their families
- identify or discuss MW participants and their families on social media

- mention classified/confidential goals, test results, grades, income or other information about MW participants and their families

Connecting with students

It is only acceptable for staff members to “friend” participants online using professional accounts and with parental permission. With both of these items in place, consider following your participants on Twitter and YouTube.

Be a good digital role model

Resist the temptation to pull out your phone to check your email during workshop or send a quick text while talking to a participant. Your participants will pay far more attention to what you do, than to what you say – both online and offline.

Use a disclaimer

If you have a blog and talk about work-related issues, add a disclaimer to each page making clear that the views you express are yours alone.

If you have an “about me” page, you are prohibited from using photos where you stand in front of official MW signage, since this might give the website or blog an official appearance.

Be the first to admit a mistake

If you have made a mistake, be upfront about it and correct it.

Protect your own privacy

Many websites allow you some form of control over who can see your material.

Spread the word and connect with your colleagues

Connect with colleagues through social networks and spread their success stories. Re-post what others have to say. However, be sensitive about linking to content. Redirecting to another site may imply an endorsement of its content.

Right to Monitor

All organization-supplied technology and organization-related work records belong to the organization and not to volunteers. MW reserves the right to periodically review volunteers' social media accounts, to ensure adherence to the regulations set out in this handbook. Policy violations may result in discipline up to and including termination of the volunteer relationship.

EXPECTATIONS FOR TUTORS AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Requirements

- Provide two writing samples to the program director of the site at which you are interested in volunteering
- Attend volunteer orientation and show up when you are scheduled
- Maintain open communication with the program director, program manager and lead instructor share concerns and successes often

Role

- Support lead instructor or program director in youth activities including but not limited to a workshop program, Academy program, Teen Scholars program, homework help tutoring and/or essay tutoring.
- Commit to a schedule. Show up on time and ready to actively engage with youth.
- Participate in workshop on days scheduled, exhibiting punctuality and consistency
- Communicate with the lead instructor before, during and after the workshop
- Gain a clear understanding from the lead instructor about the objectives of the workshop and how he/she plans to meet those objectives
- Be prepared to step in and substitute teach in the case of an instructor absence

Skills

- Offer students encouragement and assistance
- Sincere desire to participate
- Ability to communicate with youth openly and nonjudgmentally
- Strong listening skills
- Ability to establish relationships based on mutual responsibility and respect
- Interest in needs and concerns of young people
- Practical problem-solving skills and ability to suggest options and alternatives
- Ability to maintain clear boundaries while supporting a participant academically, socially and emotionally

VOLUNTEER POSITION: WORKSHOP LEADER

Summary

Workshop leaders write, develop and implement one complete workshop at one of our MW sites. Workshops run one to ten sessions each. Workshop sessions are 90 minutes to two hours each, and are held weekday evenings 3:00-8:00pm or weekend afternoons. Each group enrolls 16 participants with an average of 10-12 participants attending each session.

Qualifications

- Previous experience working with youth of the proposed age group
- Desire to plan and implement a dynamic and engaging writing workshop for youth
- Ability to communicate with youth and teenagers openly and nonjudgmentally
- Interest in needs and concerns of young people
- Strong listening skills
- Preferred: Experience teaching or training others

Roles and Responsibilities

- Prepare a workshop proposal and complete lesson plan for all workshop sessions and provide to the program director of the site where you are interested in volunteering
- Attend at least one lesson planning meeting with the program director
- Establish classroom relationships based on mutual responsibility and respect
- Exhibit punctuality and consistency throughout all sessions of the workshop, arriving at least 15 minutes before the beginning of each session
- Use mentor texts to highlight examples of quality writing. Model good writing in full group with your participants before asking them to write on their own
- Scaffold discussions about writing process throughout your workshop
- Guide participants toward one culminating writing project, publication, or presentation appropriate for age group
- Maintain open communication with the program director and program manager, and sharing struggles and successes often.

How to Submit a Workshop Proposal

1. In a short paragraph, please explain your previous teaching (or other applicable) experience, and what led you to become interested in conducting a workshop at Mighty Writers.
2. Write a general explanation of your course (one paragraph).
 - a. What activities will your course include?
 - b. What are the learning goals?
 - c. What is the final product for your workshop? All workshops at MW must have an end product that includes an age-appropriate writing assignment. An essay, short story, your own chapbook, a letter to the President, a play, a reading or a podcast are just some ideas.

- d. Suggest a catchy title or two. Some past workshop titles include “Summer Skywatch,” “Impossible Worlds: Science Fiction,” and “Comic Book Club.”
3. In another paragraph, provide logistical information:
 - a. What participant age range would be appropriate for this course? How many sessions of what length will work best for the class? (For example, one two-hour session or eight 90-minute sessions.)
 - b. What materials will you need? There is a small budget for specialized materials for each workshop, which should be requested at least three weeks in advance. Assume that your workshop will have 16 participants.
 - c. Will there be any field trips built in? Trips are a great way to build community within your class or provide a culminating event. There are many great partner organizations within walking distance of either site. We do occasionally ask workshop leaders, teaching assistants, and parents to help us transport the participants and we have appropriate insurance for this purpose. It is possible for us to also rent a Enterprise CarShare van for your use.
 - d. Finally, what days and times are you available to teach?
4. Submit your proposal to the program director of your local site. At that time, you’ll be invited to MW for an interview and asked to begin the clearance process if you have not already. Some new workshop leaders are asked to conduct a single-session sample class before scheduling a longer-term workshop.
5. After your initial meeting at Mighty Writers, it is strongly recommended that you arrange a time to observe an existing MW workshop.

How to Plan & Conduct a Mighty Writers Lesson

1. **Decide upon clear objectives.** What skills do you want participants to gain or develop? What product(s) will they produce at the end? State these objectives clearly at the beginning of your lesson plan.
2. **Know your audience.** Develop activities and expectations are appropriate for each age level. *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14* by Chip Wood, is a great guide to child development.
3. **Use mentor texts.** Mentor texts are works of literature that we can use to learn about writing. Incorporate at least one mentor text into your workshop and have participants return to the same text multiple times throughout the workshop.
4. **Model good writing.** Children should see you write, write in groups, and talk about their own ideas for writing *a lot* before we ever ask them to write individually.
5. **Give clear directions.** Make your directions as clear and explicit as possible. Many instructors write out exactly what they are going to say in their lesson plan. In addition to hearing the directions, seeing them visually is helpful to participants.
6. **Switch it up.** Incorporate art, games, conversation, role playing and full group activities to get participants excited about writing. Create opportunities for participants to work individually, in pairs, in groups, and as a full class. Pay attention to what works best for your group.
7. **Plan down to the minute.** Think about the length of each activity, and imagine how you will transition between them. Then, put it in writing! One benefit of a thorough plan is that you can diverge from it and adjust to meet participants’ needs.

8. **Use specific praise.** “Good job,” is too vague . Praise specific behaviors and accomplishments to encourage those behaviors. A few examples follow.
 - ✓ “I like your starting point - CAT, COW, KUMQUAT - because of the alliteration and also because in yoga, CAT/COW is a balanced combination of poses and fruit contributes to a balanced diet.” [from Summer Yoga for Kids]
 - ✓ “That’s great! We don’t think of worms being tall, but you paint a clear picture of the earthworm extending vertically straight down. Then, it is kind of tall!” [from Garden Writing Club]
 - ✓ “Andrew is doing something I forgot to mention. He must have taken comic book classes before. (Have you?) He drew a blue feather on his hero’s chest in every panel, so there’s no question about who that figure is.” [from Comic Book Club]
9. **Stay positive!** You are responsible for setting the tone and the mood of your workshop. Keep it upbeat, and remember to smile. It’s amazing how far this goes toward improving a group’s sense of community and safety.
10. **Ask questions.** We’re here to help you troubleshoot and ensure that your Mighty Writers workshop is a positive and educational experience for all. That’s right, we’re learning, too! Never hesitate to reach out, ask questions and offer solutions.

Developing an “On the Road” Workshop

“On the Road” workshops are programs we provide off site at schools, religious organizations, and other nonprofits around the city. A select group of workshop leaders teach these “On the Road” workshops as independent contractors.

If you are interested in developing an “On the Road” workshop for Mighty Writers, you’ll need time to get to know our culture and we’ll need time to make sure you are the right fit to represent our organization throughout the city. A little more teaching experience is also helpful. To this end, we ask workshop leaders to follow this procedure to take a workshop “On the Road”:

1. Submit a proposal.
2. Meet with one of our program directors to discuss initial proposal, scheduling, and teaching strategies for Philadelphia children and youth.
3. Provide a 4-5 sentence marketing description for your workshop, which will be conducted on a voluntary basis at one of our neighborhood centers. Via email, confirm descriptions, dates and workshop times.
4. Conduct one complete workshop (one to 10 sessions) on a volunteer basis at one of our neighborhood centers.
5. Meet with MW Education Director (in-person or over the phone) to discuss what worked and what didn't. Revise your lesson plans and submit for approval.
6. Conduct the same workshop again, on a volunteer basis, at a neighborhood writing center.
7. During your workshop, request a formal observation from the MW Education Director. S/he will observe at least one hour of your workshop and provide feedback based on: goal setting & directions, praise & communication with students, class participation, teaching strategies, visual aids, and overall effectiveness.
8. Confirm marketing description and sign a one-year “On the Road” contract.
9. If approved, we can begin advertising your workshop as an "On the Road" workshop. You are also welcome to market it on your own, too. All workshop requests come through the MW Education Director.

10. To renew your contract, we ask that all workshop leaders return to a neighborhood center on a voluntary basis for at least one 2-hour workshop. This keeps our neighborhood centers vibrant and allows us an opportunity to check in with contracted instructors. This is stated in the contract.

Whether you are conducting a workshop at a MW neighborhood writing center, at a school, or in a shelter, the expectations for what make a MW workshop unique and of the highest quality remain the same. These expectations form the basis of all evaluation, including the evaluation that will determine a workshop's eligibility to go "On the Road." They include:

- ✓ The instructor displays a knowledge of child developmental levels, and provides activities and writing supports that are appropriate to the level being taught.
- ✓ The instructor provides clear written and spoken directions for all activities as well as clear overall goals for each class and the workshop as a whole.
- ✓ The instructor praises students often and in very specific ways, using the opportunity of praise to create a teachable moment for other students.
- ✓ The instructor communicates openly and honestly with other volunteers, staff and the children in the workshop, putting professionalism first and addressing concerns and challenges directly.
- ✓ The instructor creates a variety of activities that engage students, including students with diverse learning styles. All students participate in every activity, even if their role is created just for them.
- ✓ The instructor uses a "gradual release of responsibility" model of instruction in which they show examples of high quality writing, write in front of students so students can see their process, and write with students as a group before asking students to write on their own.
- ✓ Visual aids are clear and displayed for all to see.
- ✓ The instructor creates an environment that is warm, welcoming and productive.
- ✓ A final product or performance reflects the overall commitment of the students and success of the workshop.

We understand teaching is a practice. We are looking for team members who are capable of thoughtful evaluation, self-critique and flexibility who wish to develop their teaching practice alongside other teachers and writers.

EXPECTATIONS FOR MENTORS

Requirements

- High school diploma, minimum two years of college/ four-year college degree highly preferred
- Attend mentor orientation
- Maintain open communication with the program director and program manager and share mentee concerns and successes often

Role

- Commit to a meeting with your mentee four hours per month for 9-12 months
- Establish a working relationship and with your mentee to support his/her writing and broader goals
- Praise your mentee's personal progress at every meeting
- Offer constructive criticism when appropriate and beneficial to his/her goals
- Assist mentee in solving problems that interfere with his/her success at MW, work or school
- Work with mentee toward the completion of one writing project per month
- Submit a Monthly Mentor Report and other documentation as requested by the mentorship coordinator.

Skills

- Basic editorial skills and general understanding of the writing process
- Sincere desire to create a relationship with a young person to help him or her set and accomplish personal, creative and academic goals
- Ability to communicate with youth openly and non-judgmentally
- Ability to establish a relationship based on mutual responsibility and respect
- Practical problem-solving skills and the ability to suggest options and alternatives
- Ability to maintain clear boundaries while supporting a participant academically, socially and emotionally

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RECEIPT

The volunteer handbook describes important information about MW, and I understand that I should consult the program director of my site regarding any questions not answered in the handbook.

I understand that any and all policies and practices may be changed at any time by MW. All such changes will be communicated, and I understand that revised information may supersede, modify or eliminate existing policies. Only the Executive Director has the ability to adopt any revisions to the policies in this handbook.

I understand and agree that nothing in the Volunteer Handbook creates, or is intended to create, a promise or representation of a continued relationship, and that volunteering at MW is at-will, which may be terminated at the will of either MW or me. Furthermore, I acknowledge that this handbook is neither a contract nor a legal document.

I have received the handbook, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it.

Signature

Print Name

Email

Phone Number

Date

TO BE PLACED IN VOLUNTEER'S FILE

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY AND PLEDGE

Any information that a volunteer learns about MW, its participants or families, or its members or donors, as a result of volunteering for MW, which is not otherwise publicly available, constitutes confidential information. Volunteers may not disclose confidential information to anyone who is not employed by Mighty Writers or to other persons employed by MW who do not need to know such information to assist in rendering services.

The disclosure, distribution, electronic transmission or copying of MW's, its participants' or families', or its members' or donors' confidential information is prohibited. Any volunteer who discloses confidential information will be subject to disciplinary action (including possible separation), even if he or she does not actually benefit from the disclosure of such information. I understand the above policy and pledge not to disclose confidential information.

Signature

Print Name

Email

Phone Number

Date

Please sign and return to Education Director Rachel Loeper

TO BE PLACED IN VOLUNTEER'S FILE