



# Volunteerism: A Strategy for Student Success

## Why Volunteer In Schools?

Improving educational outcomes for students is critical to strengthening Michigan's communities and reviving our state. We all win when young people succeed in school, but with budget constraints and other limiting factors, schools can't do it alone. They need your support. Each of us has the ability to contribute to the health of our communities, by investing in its' students.

Ready to help? Here are a few thoughts to keep in mind as you look for volunteer opportunities:

- Determine the time you have available to volunteer. Are you available to mentor one hour a week? Can you help on the playground one lunch period a month? Maybe you have afternoons free and can offer homework help in an afterschool program. Can you be a guest reader in an elementary classroom? Whatever your schedule allows, there is a student who needs your time.
- Tap into your own unique skills. A little time and caring is all you need to make a difference to a child – you don't need a degree in childhood education or a work history with youth. But we all have unique skills and talents we use every day that schools and afterschool programs can benefit from. Math, technology, and career skills, just to name a few, provide students with connections to the real world and are greatly valued in volunteers.

## Opportunities in Your Community

Several organizations are in place to mobilize volunteers for schools. To explore what volunteer position fits your skills, visit one of the these great resources:

- **The Center for Michigan** is connecting people to local opportunities through an online portal. Visit [www.thecenterformichigan.net](http://www.thecenterformichigan.net) and click on the "Sign up to volunteer here!" button at the bottom of the page. This will redirect you to the Michigan Community Service Commission's online volunteer opportunity portal, located on the right side of the page. Inside the "**Find Volunteer Opportunities**" widget, you can enter your zip code and keywords such as "education," "youth," and "mentor" to find education-focused volunteer opportunities.
- **Communities in Schools (CIS)** is a nationwide network of individuals working in public schools to provide students with a community of support to help them stay in school and achieve. CIS has six sites in Michigan that mobilize volunteers to meet the needs of schools and students. To see if you have a CIS site in your community, visit [www.communitiesinschools.org](http://www.communitiesinschools.org).
- **Mentor Michigan** connects volunteers with mentoring programs throughout the state. Many local mentoring programs offer school-based opportunities such as the Lunch Buddies program. These programs connect you to a child who could benefit from additional support during the school day. To find one in your area, visit the Mentor Michigan website at [www.mentormichigan.org](http://www.mentormichigan.org).
- **Volunteer Centers of Michigan** mobilize people to deliver solutions to community problems. Michigan has 31 Volunteer Centers serving 59 counties. Most of these centers provide a searchable database that will allow you to find a volunteer role that fits your skills and schedule. You can find your local Volunteer Center by visiting [www.mivolunteers.org](http://www.mivolunteers.org).



## Interested in making a longer term commitment?

Consider national service opportunities in your community. These programs offer individuals the opportunity to give make a longer-term impact in a variety of settings, some of which are education-related.

- **AmeriCorps** is an opportunity to make a big difference in your life and in the lives of those around you. It's a chance to apply your skills and ideals toward helping others and meeting critical needs in the community by providing a year of service.
- Individuals in the **Foster Grandparents Program** devote their volunteer service entirely to disadvantaged or disabled youth. Across the country, foster grandparents offer emotional support to child victims of abuse and neglect; tutor children with low literacy skills; mentor troubled teenagers and young mothers; and care for premature infants and children with physical disabilities and severe illnesses.
- **Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)** matches the personal interests and skills of older Americans with opportunities to serve their communities. RSVP volunteers choose how and where they want to serve—from just a few hours each month to more than 40 per week. RSVP volunteers tutor children in reading and math; help get children immunized; model parenting skills to teen parents; as well as a number of other programs not specifically targeted at youth.

**The Corporation for National and Community Service** hosts an Interactive Program Selector that can help you determine if a year of service is a good fit. Visit: [www.nationalservice.gov/forindividuals/ready/selecter.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/forindividuals/ready/selecter.asp).

## Didn't find what you're looking for?

If school-based volunteering isn't your interest or you couldn't find an opportunity that fits your needs through the options listed here, there are plenty of other ways to serve!

Visit the **Center for Michigan's** site at [www.thecenterformichigan.net](http://www.thecenterformichigan.net) and click on "Sign up to volunteer here!" This will redirect you to the Michigan Community Service Commission's website where they have compiled many state and national volunteer databases into one easy-to-use portal. The **"Find Volunteer Opportunities"** portal is located on the right-hand navigation menu and can be searched by using your zip code and key interests.

