



# EDUC111 - EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY

## VEXPO Submission



*Students in the Spring 2024 EDUC111 crafted reflective messages to future participants. These legacy letters encapsulate their personal insights and experiences from the service-learning component of the course, offering practical advice and encouragement to upcoming classes.*

### **Official Partner Sites:**

**826 Boston - SquashBusters (Boston) - Yawkey Club of Roxbury, Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston - Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester**





**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF BOSTON  
YAWKEY CLUB OF ROXBURY

**Written by:**

**4 S24 Yawkey Club Volunteers**

## Dear Yawkey Volunteers,

Congratulations you have been assigned to work with the Yawkey Boys and Girls Club. We volunteered at the same location Spring 2024 and are excited to share some insights and tips for your upcoming service learning.

### Expectations

- Going in, try your best to keep an open mind and don't have any expectations or assumptions. Go into the service learning site and be willing to learn/adapt. Most students may seem like they don't need help with their homework, but in reality, they may be too scared to ask a new face for help. Try to keep open body language and a friendly/welcoming demeanor.
- Remember that you are an asset to their team. You are adding value to what the Boys and Girls Club has created. You are not there to be a savior to them but to further bring out their strengths and support them.

### Lightbulb moments

- As I was leaving a session later in the term, I got into a "bit" with the kids where I claimed to be planning world domination and that they were CIA agents trying to get my plan out of me. It was the first time I had really made a connection with the kids and it made me remember that teaching isn't all about multiplication.
- The first time I really made a connection with a student was when I pretended to be her cheerleader (this helped a lot with motivating her to complete her homework!). At the end of the session, she wanted to make a handshake and call each other best friends - it really goes to show that your connections go past being an educational volunteer. You are a role model for these students.

### Recommendations

- To really get the most out of working with the students, we recommend volunteering between 3-5 to optimize your one-on-one time.
- Recommend finding creative ways to get students interested in learning the topics; a lot of the time the students could easily understand the concepts, but you need to focus on getting them to be willing to put in the effort. For example, creating number lines and using legos to help them skip count or drawing and highlighting words on the page for them can stimulate their learning.
- Be willing to step out of your comfort zone and interact with students of all ages and backgrounds. It may seem intimidating at first, but you can do it. Find ways to connect with the students by sharing similar interests (Lots of them are very artistic, like reading, and enjoy sports!).

### Advice/Insight

Prepare yourself to be patient. First, it takes a couple attendances to begin to bond with students. Second, most of the students who will actually be utilizing your help are performing below their grade level. They lack the resources and motivation to apply themselves to their work. The pandemic and other factors play a role into their academic performance so be aware of this and utilize creative ways to engage students in their homework.

Good luck and you will do great! 😊



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF BOSTON  
YAWKEY CLUB OF ROXBURY

**Written by:**

**2 S24 Yawkey Club Volunteers**

## **Dear Yawkey Volunteers,**

I am very happy to have experienced a month-long teaching journey in Yawkey Club. I am also very honored to work with Kiara to help children who need help in learning.

We have tutored many children in math, reading, writing, etc. during this month. In our experience, I found that the most important secret to tutoring children is to be patient. When they don't understand what we say, maybe it would be better to express it in another way, and not to rush for success. Try to get as close to them as possible, rather than being aloof, and give them the feeling of being friends. It is important to encourage them positively and give them positive encouragement every time they complete a task.

Punctuality is important, we should attend on time, try to play with mobile phones as little as possible during the process, and focus on the children. Finally, I am very lucky to have this experience. We have learned a lot. Setting a good example for children is not about what you can teach them, but about what you do and how it affects them.

All the best

**Dear SquashBusters Volunteers,**

As you are about to begin your journey with SquashBusters, we, the outgoing group of volunteers, would like to share our experiences and advice with you. We've enjoyed the positive moments and challenges that come with making a difference in the lives of young students through both academic enrichment and squash activities. A few tips we have for you before starting would be as follows:

In every interaction, remember to treat each student and fellow volunteer with the utmost respect. The diversity of backgrounds is what makes SquashBusters a vibrant community. Embrace it, celebrate it, and let it teach you.

Based on our experiences, we noticed that it is very important to be patient with the students as they navigate their paths. Engage with them, not just in academics but in understanding their personal interests and stories.

Come to your site motivated and ready to make a difference. Take the initiative to approach students. They may be hesitant to voice their needs, but offering your help can make a big difference.

Show up on time every day. Being consistent and reliable shows your commitment to the students.

Be present. Keep your attention on the students, not your phone or schoolwork. It's important you're setting a good example for the students, and the instructors really appreciate it when you are fully engaging with the kids.

Bring your enthusiasm and energy to each session. Your passion encourages students to take an interest in their learning.

During our time here, we've learned the importance of understanding, patience, and creativity in engaging with students from diverse backgrounds. Being a good role model isn't just about teaching - it's about inspiring, encouraging, and believing in each student's potential. Use the time you have at SquashBusters to make a difference, and hopefully, you will also be transformed.

Warm regards,  
The Outgoing SquashBusters Volunteers

**Dear future 826 Boston volunteers,**

You have been partnered with an incredible organization, and as an outgoing volunteer who was lucky enough to share in the work that 826 Boston does, I would love to offer some words of advice and encouragement! The staff at 826 is overwhelmingly warm and welcoming; don't worry whatsoever about getting started because they lead each tutoring session with an orientation for the volunteers. My biggest tip is to engage with the students you tutor (you will most likely have one to two students per week) on an individual level! Talk to these kids about their interests, their hobbies, etc. They are such friendly faces and will always say hello to the volunteers they know!

One tenant of 826 is a commitment to creativity through writing. Each two-hour after school session is divided by a fifteen minute creative writing break, in which the kids will explore different writing prompts. I encourage you to do these prompts with them -- it's always more fun to work on something if you know you'll have someone to share it with (and vice versa) afterwards!

Be engaged and respectful, and obviously, stay off your phone during tutoring. Also, 826 is consistently hosting different workshops and community programs to work towards publishing their students' work, so that's definitely something to look for as well! The mural on the wall is another beautiful touch. You're so lucky to be working in such a lively, colorful space!

I hope you enjoy your time there!

**Dear future 826 Boston volunteers,**

As someone who has had the immense privilege of volunteering with this incredible organization, I want to share some thoughts and wisdom that I hope will enrich your experience and impact the students you'll have the honor of working with.

First, approach every interaction at 826 Boston with an open heart and mind. The students who come through these doors have stories, backgrounds, and perspectives that will expand your understanding of the world if you fully embrace listening to them. Shed any preconceived notions you may have and be ready to learn as much from the students as they learn from you.

Creativity is the currency here at 826 Boston. Foster an environment of boundless imagination and self-expression with the students. Encourage them to think boldly, color outside the lines, and not be constrained by traditional formulas. The writing, storytelling, and projects they produce here should be an outpouring of their authentic voices.

At the same time, balance that creativity with patience, structure, and high expectations. Provide the scaffolding the students need to turn their ideas into fully realized works. Guide them through the process of drafting, editing, and refining their writing. Uphold standards of excellence so they build vital skills in communication and critical thinking.

Most importantly, let the students lead and follow their curiosity. Don't come in with rigid lesson plans. Listen to their interests and newfound passions, then become a facilitator helping them explore those avenues through writing and projects. You are here to empower them to steer their own learning journeys.

Lastly, please remember to be there on time for each volunteer session. If you have any questions or feel confused, feel free to ask your supervisor or other 826 Boston staff - they are all super nice and happy to help.

All the best



**Written by:**  
**1 S24 BGCD Volunteer**

**Dear future BGCD volunteers,**

Hello, before you start this volunteering, I have something to say to you as a former volunteer. This organization may be a little different from others that you will be meeting some very young children and there are a few things to keep in mind when dealing with these children.

First, children are very cute and friendly, but as adults, we need to keep our distance from them. Some children may want to hug you when you say hello, but all you need to do is let them give you a high five. Secondly, you need to be more patient with children, they may ask you to play some very simple games with them such as puzzles and Barbie dolls. But don't worry, these kids will tell you the rules of the game. Thirdly, when playing in the sports ground, please pay attention to their shoelaces while playing games with them, so they won't fall on the way running.

My experience at BGCD was memorable, I met exceptionally lovely children who were polite and exceptionally friendly. I remember one little boy told me that there are not many Asians in the Dorchester neighborhood, but it's okay and he will be my friend if I feel lonely. I always thought it would be weird to be around kids because we didn't have much in common. But after I went there, I realized that they were really like little suns that warmed me up. So don't worry about going, the staff at BGCD is also very patient and you can ask them anything you don't understand.

I hope your experience at BGCD is just as enjoyable!



**LEARN**  
TO BE

Unofficial  
Service Site

**Written by:**

**1 S24 Learn to Be Volunteer**

**Dear future Learn To Be volunteers,**

I had the opportunity to explore a difference service learning than most of you. Learn To Be is great platform where you get to pick a student to work one on one with. It's a free site where kids get to work with volunteers on whatever subject they struggle with.

One thing I learnt early was trying to make the kid feel comfortable. I wanted the sessions to be something he felt excited about and not just extra homework. A good way to do this was to ask personal questions about their life outside of school and actively listening to be able to bring it up in a later session. This helped me gain his trust and made the session way more fun.

A big don't is to not get frustrated with all of the service issues that come with being online. In many instances the sound would completely cut out so I wouldn't be able to hear him. We had to resort to using the chat box for certain time periods. We worked both on simple math problem during the technical difficulty and was able to work on read and word pronunciations at other times.

Learn to Be is a great opportunity for someone who wants to give back but has a tight schedule because you can pick when the tutoring sessions are.

Best of luck!





**Unofficial  
Service Site**

**Written by:**

**1 S24 New Mission Athletics Volunteer**

**Dear Future Interns and/or Managers of New Mission Athletics,**

Right off the bat I encourage you to be mindful of your power and influence on the young black and brown student athletes you'll come in contact with. So many of them carry so much weight on their shoulders, and lots of stories/backgrounds you wouldn't even imagine they would have. So watch the way you talk to them and look at them, be patient and mindful that these kids don't have a lot of people in their corner. You're going to have to work hard to gain their trust, but trust me when I say it'll be worth it in the long-run. The best ways to their hearts is with questions, transparency, and humor. Questions, don't be afraid to ask them questions, personalize this experience and build some relationships with these kids. Trust me when I say they'll deeply appreciate and feel the love when you show genuine interest in who they are. Transparency, lay your intentions with helping them all out, the more honest and open you are about yourself and what you're doing, the more they will be as well. Humor, they love laughing and making jokes, so let loose and bring out that inner kid in you, they want to see that more than the strict or timid volunteer. Be yourself, be open, and show them that you're there for them, it'll create a sense of love and security for them, something that a lot of kids never get, or have seen before.