

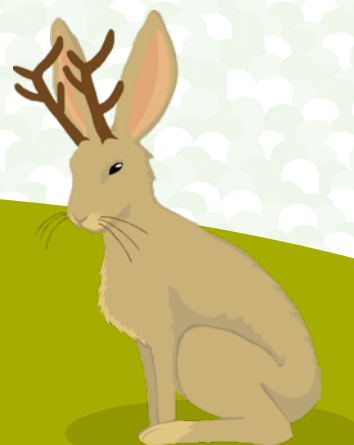
826 Boston Volunteer Handbook



ON CREATIVE WRITING

& INDIVIDUALIZED

STUDENT INTERACTION



THE BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Dear 826 Boston volunteer,

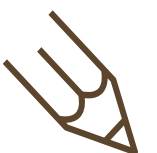
If you're reading this, you've found your way to the writing and tutoring center located behind the Greater Boston Bigfoot Research Institute. We call it **826 Boston**.

Our biggest discovery at the Institute is that creative writing and individualized student interaction dramatically increase students' social-emotional skills, writing skills, and their likelihood of finding bigfoot. You probably always had a hunch that reading and writing would unlock the secrets of the unknown. That hunch was correct.

826 Boston volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization. You make this work possible. Every year, more than 600 volunteers like you contribute thousands of hours to providing underserved students in Boston with free, high-quality, creative, and fun programming. **We could not do this without you.** Please take the time to read through this information, as well as the trail guide on the back, to get oriented with the adventure ahead. Our team will always be happy to answer any questions that aren't covered here.

Welcome aboard, and thank you for all that you do for 826 Boston.

Sincerely,
The 826 Boston Volunteer Team



THE BASICS

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

1. ATTEND A TUTOR TRAINING

Tutor Trainings are mandatory in order to volunteer at one of our tutoring programs. Register online to attend one at your earliest convenience.

2. COMPLETE BACKGROUND CHECKS

All volunteers must go through a CORI and SORI check as part of a general background check. During an expedition, safety always comes first, and our students are our number one priority.

3. SIGN UP FOR SHIFTS

Whether you want to volunteer once a week or once a semester, we'll find a schedule that works for you. Volunteers can confirm weekly shifts directly with our team or sign up for individual tutoring shifts on the website and in volunteer newsletters.



RESOURCES

DRESS CODE

One of the main tenets of cryptozoological fieldwork is, "Be aware of your surroundings." At 826 Boston, you'll be working closely with students, parents, and teachers. Tutors often go into schools and other environments with pre-established dress codes, but during 826 Boston hours we expect everyone to dress in a professional manner consistent with their responsibilities.

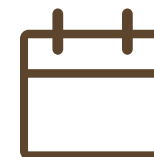
POINT PERSON

(Out-of-School-Time Programs only)

The Point Person will be at the front desk by the entrance to our writing center. Do not be scared of their welcoming demeanor and positive attitude. Their primary tasks are to assign tutors to specific tables and students to specific tutors. They'll also ask you to sign in/out to track your hours, and give you a feedback sheet to fill out after your shifts. They're highly trusted members of the Institute, so feel free to ask them for tutoring tips and expedition advice.

PRE-BRIEFS & DEBRIEFS

Searching for and studying cryptids is a team effort. At every writing center you visit, please report to an 826 Boston staff or service member so they can prep you on any lesson plans. It is also important that you attend debriefs at the end of a session to discuss best practices and learn new ways to become an even more effective tutor.



EXPEDITION TIPS

VOLUNTEER CALENDARS

Our Volunteer Calendars are located on our website. Once you've completed THE BASICS, you'll be able to sign up for shifts on our calendars. Use your mouse to hover over a shift and see how many volunteers are still needed, then click and follow the instructions.

W.A.T.E.R.I.N.G. H.O.L.E.

www.826boston.org/wateringhole

Where **A** (lot of) **T**utoring (and) **E**ducational **R**esources, **I**nformation, **N**ews, **G**uidance, **H**elp, (and) **O**ther **L**essons **E**xist. This website comes pre-loaded with all the tools and resources you'll need to be an experienced tutor, volunteer, and trailblazer.

IN TANDEM

Our volunteer newsletter, "In Tandem," is emailed out on a monthly basis. In it we'll discuss the most pertinent cryptid identification strategies, highlight our Top Researcher of the Month, share student work, and communicate with our ever-growing web of volunteers. Ensuring that our volunteers have all of the tools they need to do a great job is a commitment we do not take lightly. And we would not want you to miss out on any of the volunteer appreciation events we hold throughout the year.



POTENTIAL SCENARIOS

TUTOR CONDUCT

When interacting with students, there should be no cursing, and no talking about sex, drugs, or violence, unless the conversation relates directly to the work you are doing. Also, you should avoid talking about students in front of other students.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

If a student asks to set up an appointment with you outside of the center or requests to share email, phone, or other social media contact, kindly say no.

SAFETY DRILLS

From time to time, our sites will practice what to do in the event of an emergency so that everyone is prepared. Look for 826 Boston staff to lead you through these procedures, which vary site to site. Please let our staff know if you cannot participate in these exercises.

TECHNOLOGY

During tutoring sessions, keep cell phones stowed away. If you need to use your phone, please step away from the tutoring space first.

POTENTIAL SCENARIOS

STUDENT DISCLOSURES

The act of writing and individualized interactions may present situations in which students disclose sensitive information to you. If you read or hear anything that may put the student in any kind of unsafe situation, please report it to a staff member immediately. Even if you feel that you can handle it yourself, we kindly ask that you allow us to deal with the situation. 826 Boston staff are mandated reporters and are trained to handle sensitive situations.

Two things about the roles of volunteers in situations like these:

Volunteers are NOT mandated reporters.

Please report sensitive information you may hear to 826 Boston staff. This is for the students' safety.

No volunteer should feel expected to handle these situations by themselves. We are here as a resource and as support.

TROUBLES WITH PEERS, ADULTS, SUPERVISORS, AND THE OCCASIONAL POACHER

If at any point during your volunteer experience you're having trouble working with a fellow volunteer/tutor, teacher, adult, or student's family member, report your experience to your immediate supervisor and the Volunteer Manager.

If you're having an issue with your direct supervisor, feel free to contact the Volunteer Team so we're able to address the issue.



THE MISSION

826 Boston is a nonprofit youth writing and publishing organization that empowers underserved students ages 6-18 to find their voices, tell their stories, and gain communication skills to succeed in school and life.

THE WATERING HOLE

826boston.org/wateringhole

DIRECT ANY VOLUNTEER QUESTIONS TO

617.442.5400

volunteer@826boston.org

PLEASE DON'T FEED CRYPTIDS

826
BOSTON

Ideas

What's this all about?

Do:
Identify/define the focus.
Highlight big ideas that develop the focus.
Highlight details that support the central focus.
Circle ideas that don't support the focus.

Ask:
What are you writing about? What's the main idea?
How does this idea/sentence connect to the topic?
What does this mean? Why does this matter?

Organization

What's the overall structure of the piece?

Do:
Identify the organizational pattern.
Highlight any transitional words or sentences.
Provide options for organizing if there isn't any organization.

Ask:
Talk to me about what is happening in each paragraph.
How do you want to start/end this piece of writing?
How are these paragraphs related? How can we connect them?

Voice

Is there a distinct tone or flavor?

Do:
Transcribe.
Identify the perspective, point-of-view, or style.
Affirm the perspective, point-of-view, or style and reflect back.

Ask:
How do you feel about the topic? How do you let the reader know what you feel?
Who is your audience? How can you make this interesting for them?

I'm bored.

Tip: Build rapport. Ask them about how they're doing and get to know their interests.

Writing Trail Guide

I don't need help!

Tip: Be curious about their assignment and ask specific questions about what they're doing.

Conventions

Make time for grammar and mechanics!

Do:
Read out loud and see what the student automatically self-corrects and picks up.
Look for one or two patterns or constellations of errors and show the student how to correct those patterns of errors.

Ask:
Do you see anything that is missing? What do we need to change?
Does that sound right? Which one sounds better?

Say:
Let me show you how to... now let's try one together... and then you can try one on your own.

Word Choice

How do specific vocabulary or details convey meaning?

Do:
Identify specific nouns and active verbs.
Identify overused words and linking verbs (is/am/are/was/were).
Highlight moments when more detail or imagery would help.
Take me there: What am I hearing? Seeing? Smelling? Feeling?

Ask:
What's another/more specific word you can use?
Take me there: what am I hearing? seeing? smelling? feeling?
Would you be able to draw this scene?

Sentence Fluency

What's the rhythm and flow to the language?

Do:
Read out loud.
Pause and mark down areas where a transition seems absent.
Mark where sentences seem repetitive.

Ask:
Are there any words missing? The sentences all sound the same. How can you add some variety? How does that sound?
How are these sentences related? How can we connect them?

Say:
I got a little lost when...

What are merfolk? There are only mermen and mermaids.

Tip: Listen actively and ask them where they're coming from before judging or correcting.

I don't know. It doesn't matter.

Tip: Ask about what matters to them and help them find other ways to engage, e.g., drawing, talking it out, etc.