

Volunteer **in Falmouth Public Schools!**

Opportunities Await You



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Thank you for your interest in volunteering in Falmouth Public Schools! Falmouth's Volunteers In Public Schools (VIPS)—with over 1,100 active volunteers—is one of the largest public school volunteering programs in the region. Each year, VIPS volunteers log over 40,000 hours and, in doing so, have enhanced the educational experience of Falmouth's 4,000+ pre-Kindergarten to high school students. Those hours represent one-time contributions to weekly or even daily contributions by volunteers. *If you have one hour a year or one hour a day, you will be making a huge difference.*

How can you contribute?

The needs are great and the possibilities are almost endless... For most positions, no experience is necessary; no special skills are required. Simply a willingness to help will qualify you for many jobs, ranging from a one-time to a weekly commitment. However, opportunities do exist for volunteers with special skills, interests, and backgrounds, and some programs require training *which VIPS will provide.*

What is VIPS?

VIPS—short for Volunteers In Public Schools—is *you!* VIPS was initiated in 1982 as a way to get interested community members, parents, and organizations more involved with Falmouth public schools. What started out as eight individuals volunteering in one school has grown to include 1,100 active volunteers in all seven schools! VIPS is a volunteer corps, coordinated by a paid director and administrative assistant, and a board of advisors. VIPS is a unique partnership designed to link the schools with the community. VIPS is a nonprofit organization whose paid staff members are employees of the Falmouth Public Schools. The VIPS Board of Advisors represent local organizations, businesses, and community members who have an interest in Falmouth public schools. These individuals help promote the need for and benefits of volunteering and work to raise funds that support school-based programming.

Volunteer Opportunities

A list of general needs—some available at all schools; others geared for elementary-age students—is followed by a brief description of some of our core volunteer programs:

Classroom or Student-based Opportunities

Art Appreciation/Arts Alive	Language Arts	Physical Education/Sports
Books and Beyond	Library	Science
Computers	Math	Social Studies
Foreign Languages	Music	Tutoring
Resource speaker for various subjects		

Behind-the-Scenes Opportunities

Assembling/Collating Papers	Phone calls, Mailings
Baking	Photocopying
Correcting student work	

Opportunities based on Skills, Interests

Cooking	Gardening
Career development, guidance	Photography (digital or film)
Audio-visual (animations, podcasting, presentations)	Translation services

Programs in Need of Volunteers

Project Inquire—this is a 6-week mentor program that matches volunteers with motivated students. This is an enrichment study program for students who welcome the challenge of going beyond the classroom curriculum to explore a topic or subject area that interests them. Mentors and mentees meet once, or even twice a week, for approximately one hour. *Training is provided.*

Project RISE (Raising Interest and Self-Esteem)—this year-long mentoring program matches adult volunteer mentors with a student who may not be reaching his/her full potential, either socially, emotionally, or academically. Mentors and mentees meet weekly, for approximately one hour. *Initial and ongoing training is provided;* special skills for mentors include a sense of humor, a compassionate, non-judgmental attitude, and good listening skills.

Falmouth High School Mentoring Program—similar to Project RISE, but working with high school age students, this program pairs adult mentors with teens with the goal of creating a positive role model for the student. *Initial and ongoing training is provided*; special skills for mentors include a sense of humor, a compassionate, non-judgmental attitude, and good listening skills.

Literacy—volunteers tutor English as a Second Language (ESL) students or those who may be functionally illiterate. This program also matches students in need of translation assistance, often younger students whose families have relocated from a non-English speaking country. Volunteers and students meet at a mutually convenient time and the frequency varies depending on the situation. Most often, volunteers meet with a student at the student's school.

Read Naturally—this fluency-building, instructional reading program is now in place at each of Falmouth's four elementary schools and the grades 5-6 school. Developed by a reading teacher, the program helps students improve fluency, an important component of good reading and reading comprehension. *Training is provided.*

CAST (Cross Age Science Teaching)—Junior high school students at Lawrence School are trained to teach hands-on, inquiry-based science lessons to elementary school students. Volunteers are currently needed to coordinate this program (training provided).

School to Business Partnerships—individual schools or school-based programs work with a business or organization to develop a mutually beneficial program that enhances the educational experience of the students. Together, the business/organization and the school, classroom, or program establish a structure for the sharing of resources, which may include (but is not limited to) knowledge, skills, time, space, or materials. Examples include: local bank branches partnering with students to learn applied math; local scientific institutions partnering with the schools to provide career and topic-specific speakers; local elder care facilities partnering with neighborhood school to foster inter-generational relationships.

Have an idea? VIPS will assist with training and/or the facilitation of School to Business partnerships.

Other Volunteer Needs

VIPS Building Coordinators—critical to the smooth operation of volunteers in each school, the VIPS building coordinators help oversee and manage volunteers in each school. Usually working in teams, these individuals coordinate, schedule, and log volunteer hours. They act as the “eyes and ears” in the schools, helping to identify staff needs for volunteers and assisting the VIPS staff in the placement of volunteers. Building coordinators are provided with initial training and ongoing support in the form of regular meetings and communications.

VIPS Project Leaders—As key members of the VIPS team, program leaders manage and provide support for existing VIPS programs or work with VIPS staff to design and set up new programs to fill school/faculty/student needs. *Have an idea for a program? VIPS would love to hear from you!*

VIPS Board of Advisors—In addition to the generous support VIPS receives from the school budget, the VIPS board of advisors is responsible for raising a substantial share of the VIPS operating budget. Major fundraisers include the annual golf tournament and the Feasts of Falmouth and Beyond, along with smaller events. VIPS is always in need of event and program sponsors, as well as donations of raffle items and prizes, and ideas for fundraisers.

Getting Ready to Volunteer

Interested, but uncertain of the program that best fits your skills or interests? Arrange a time to meet with—or speak to—a building coordinator or the VIPS director. During this informal conversation, we can learn more about your background, interests, experiences, and skills.

If you have an interest in a certain school (perhaps it is closest to your home or place of employment), or a certain age group, this should be shared, as well as your availability (weekly? monthly? do you travel in the winter?) Based on this conversation, the building coordinator or VIPS director will match your preferences, skills, and schedule with a request or need expressed by a teacher or school staff member.

Once a mutually agreeable referral/match has been made—and required paperwork is submitted (see back cover)—the volunteer can get to work! Tours of the school and introductions to the staff can also be arranged by the building coordinators.

Why is it so important to Log Hours?

VIPS volunteers are very familiar with the Volunteer Sign-in Sheet/Log Book at each school. The VIPS staff and the VIPS building coordinators are constantly sending reminders and leaving notes to remind volunteers to log their hours! Why do we care so much about counting hours? The log book and sign-in sheet are important for a variety of reasons; here are the big ones:

1. VIPS keeps records about its volunteers and the hours they log at each school, each year to track changes in the program over time.
2. VIPS volunteer hours play an important role in grant applications for VIPS, individual schools, PTOs, and the district when outside funding is sought for existing and new programs, training opportunities, and recognition events.
3. Volunteer work is important for students and adults when applying for colleges, jobs, other volunteer positions, and community service work
4. The school in which you are volunteering needs to know when you are in the building for safety reasons
5. If you are ever injured while volunteering, the sign-in sheet would serve as a record that you were in the school at the time of an incident

Volunteer Responsibilities/Dos and Don'ts

1. complete the necessary paperwork
2. attend information session, orientation or training session (if applicable), or meet with school or program contact person to understand your role and what is expected of you
3. use discretion and treat all information as confidential; make no statements regarding students, personnel, or student materials outside the school.
4. be dependable and punctual, sign in upon entering the school, and wear a volunteer badge (available at the sign-in desk) when volunteering at the school. Make arrangements ahead of time with the teacher if unable to attend when expected. If there is a last minute emergency, notify school office to relay the information to the teacher or staff member. In case of inclement weather, check for school cancellations, delays, or early dismissal notices on local radio stations, or call the school and listen to the automated phone prompts for school cancellations.
5. work under the direction and supervision of teacher or school staff member with whom he/she volunteers. The relationship is at all times professional.
6. support the teacher or school staff member and recognize that content, technique, and discipline is the staff member's responsibility.
7. avoid expressing differences of opinion or dissatisfaction in the presence of students.
8. take matters of concern to the school building coordinator and/or the VIPS director.
9. observe the rules of the school, including but not limited to parking, sign-in, fire alarm procedures, etc.
10. log hours each school visit, including hours spent off-site preparing for a project or volunteer session, and training sessions (see the "Log Hours" section of this booklet)

Feedback

With 25 years of overseeing an ever-increasing number of volunteers in Falmouth's public schools, the VIPS program can attribute much of its success to good advice, feedback, and a willingness to make changes when necessary. No program is perfect; change is healthy—it can represent both a recognition of, and response to, changing needs. As such, VIPS welcomes, *depends on*, feedback from our volunteers, building coordinators, program leaders, board members, and school staff. We want to hear from you!

If, for any reason, your volunteer experience is unsatisfactory, please let us know. (The same goes for satisfactory experiences!) The following list of self-evaluation questions are well-worth reviewing before you begin your volunteer experience and at any time you feel there is a "disconnect" between you and your assigned staff member:

1. have I shared with the staff member my skills and interests that are relevant to my volunteer service?
2. am I discreet and tactful in working with students, teachers, and staff members? Am I careful to observe the confidentiality rules?
3. when I am unable to make a pre-arranged volunteer time, do I contact the school promptly?
4. am I reliable and prompt?
5. do I make suggestions as to how I can be of further help?
6. am I effective in helping children who have questions?
7. do I make an effort to learn by observing the staff person and the students?
8. am I able to accept criticism or suggestions?
9. do I take advantage of training opportunities to enhance my skills as a volunteer?
10. do I share my enthusiasm for my work at school with friends and community members?

In some cases, volunteers find that they would like to try something new. We have many unmet needs, so get in touch with us and we *will work with you* to find another position or program that can utilize your energy, enthusiasm, and interests!

CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) Form—a one-page form that must be filled out and signed by an authorized representative of Falmouth Public Schools, this form requires presentation of a government issued photo identification (such as driver's license or passport). These forms—and staff authorized to witness and sign the CORI forms—are available at all Falmouth schools, the Falmouth Public Schools administration building (340 Teaticket Highway, E. Falmouth), and at the VIPS office. For more information about the CORI form or process, visit www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/advisory/CORI.html.

I'd love to volunteer! What do I do next?

Have we piqued your interest? Stimulated your thinking? Motivated you to join an outstanding and dedicated group of volunteers? Great!

Make your interest known to someone in the VIPS network:

- At a **school**, the office staff can put you in touch with the VIPS building coordinators OR you can leave your contact information and they will get in touch with you.
- If you are interested in volunteering but do not have an affiliation with, or preference for, a particular school, contact the **VIPS office** at (508) 548-1621 or by e-mail at vips@falmouth.k12.ma.us
- If you have a particular program that has captured your interest and would like to learn more or sign up for training, call the VIPS office and we will put you in touch with the appropriate Program Leader.

Paperwork!

In order to volunteer in any capacity, there are some forms to fill out:

VIPS Volunteer Registration Form—a one-page form that requests contact information, volunteer preferences if known, emergency contact information, and a reference

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