



## **FAQ for Potential Volunteer Mentors**

### *What is the story of the College Essay Mentoring Project?*

The College Essay Mentoring Project began in 2010 through a partnership with Susan Bartley, a teacher at Franklin High School who co-founded the Advanced Scholar Program. (She also received the Councill Trenholm Memorial Award by the NEA, an award for teachers who work to reduce inequities within education.) The first year we trained 34 volunteers to work with 34 mentors at an after-school session at Franklin. The session was a powerful, positive experience for everyone involved. We've expanded the project every year since, and currently partner with teachers at Benson, Franklin, Madison, and Roosevelt High Schools.

### *How much time is required?*

Volunteer mentors can expect to spend about 4 to 12 hours total, depending on how many sessions they participate in. New mentors are required to attend a training, which is usually about 2 hours, and each mentoring session is about 90 minutes to 2 hours. Since these sessions are held at the high schools, we also ask that mentors take travel time into account.

### *How do I become a mentor?*

When school begins each fall, we coordinate with teachers. Once we have firm dates, we reach out to potential and returning volunteers, usually in late September. New volunteers are required to fill out an application and undergo a volunteer background check with Portland Public Schools. This background check is good for 3 years and then must be renewed.

We are actively seeking mentors from a wide range of cultural and professional backgrounds. About half the students we work with are first-generation applicants to college.

### *What will I be doing as a mentor?*

While some students will come with completed essays that need polishing, it's much more common to have a student who is brainstorming and/or working on first drafts. We ask that in addition to correcting grammar and punctuation, our mentors must be thoughtful, active listeners and encourage each student to present their best selves on the page. Of course, we'll go over all of this and much more at the trainings.

If you have any other questions, please contact Program Coordinator Mel Wells at [mel@literary-arts.org](mailto:mel@literary-arts.org) or 503-227-2583 ext. 105.