Purpose of the FISH Program

FISH (Friends in Schools Helping) is a JABA (Jefferson Area Board for Aging) Program that provides free, screened and trained adult mentors to work with students in our local public schools. FISH mentors commit at least one hour per week for the length of the academic year to support students who could benefit from extra one-to-one attention. Teachers are JABA’s key partners in facilitating intergenerational relationships that benefit mentors and students alike. Adults find purpose and connection while kids receive the extra attention they need to grow socially and academically.

Please read on for more information on who FISH mentors are and tips for facilitating volunteer support for your students. Thank you for your role in carrying out JABA’s mission to promote healthy aging for all in the community!

About FISH Mentors
FISH mentors range in age from young professional to retired adult. Many are retired educators and other professionals. All have a desire to help students succeed. They have been screened and trained by JABA. They are patient, supportive and treat students and staff with dignity and respect. They are encouraged to participate in FISH workshops. FISH mentors are dedicated, reliable and love what they do!

The Role of a FISH Mentor
Work under the direction and supervision of the teacher. Help students with motivation and self-confidence while providing academic or social support. Provide teacher with feedback on student progress. Maintain supportive relationships with staff and students.

About FISH Students
There is no typical student.

The Role of the Teacher—Tips for Success
Identify students who could benefit from ongoing one-to-one or small group support. Meet with FISH mentor beforehand to set expectations. Establish an effective communication system with the mentor. Guide the activities of the mentor and prepare for the FISH mentor each week. Maintain an open dialogue with the FISH mentor about any changes, issues or praise. If possible, share materials or books that the mentor can use to prepare for their visits. Contact your in-school volunteer coordinator or the FISH Team at JABA with any questions or concerns. Complete survey at the end of each school year to evaluate impact and share feedback. Invite your FISH mentor back to serve with you the following year, if appropriate.
Outcomes

In 2021-22 Participating School Staff, Referring Agencies, or Parents Said:

- Their volunteer mentor made a positive impact on their or their students' lives—100%
- Their mentor has kept the student engaged in school—85%
- They are satisfied with their volunteer(s) — 100%

“Every year my students are able to make greater gains academically and socially because of the additional time and attention they receive from FISH volunteers. Often I match particular students with particular volunteers as I like to match teaching styles and personalities of the volunteers with the varied needs of the students they work with. I can’t thank you enough for sending your volunteers my way.” – Teacher

“My volunteer situation in an elementary school is the only opportunity that I have to interact with people that are more than fifty years my junior. It is enlightening, enriching, and energetic. I gain something from the students each time I am there as I assist them in learning and understanding the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics. This interaction has greatly expanded my perceptions of human behavior and is a refreshing change from interfacing with the "adult" world the rest of the week!” – FISH Volunteer

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