



SEATTLE  
MUSIC  
PARTNERS



# SMP TUTOR HANDBOOK



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2019-2020

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## The SMP Mission

*SMP cultivates a diverse and vibrant music-making community by providing youth with free music instruction and one-on-one mentoring to eliminate racial and economic barriers to quality music instruction.*

To do this, we recruit, train and support accomplished high school, college, and community musicians as volunteer music tutors and mentors. That's you!

Our free after-school program is an innovative combination of weekly music instruction and mentoring. For 19 years, SMP has worked with underserved elementary school students in Seattle's Central District. Through our weekly program at our 4 partner elementary schools, tutors lead individual music lessons with their students.

In addition to weekly individual lessons with the students, the SMP staff meets with students for a 2<sup>nd</sup> session each week to engage in group music lessons during which our staff and Teaching Artists (TAs) receive classroom support from our volunteer Student Assistants (SAs). Thank you for believing in our mission and for committing to help bring it to life!

## Expectations and Guidelines for Tutors

SMP depends on you. Without volunteer support, we just couldn't do what we do. And for our program to run at its smoothest and highest quality possible, we have some non-negotiables. Please familiarize yourself with and abide by the following rules and expectations:

### ATTENDANCE:

The students depend on seeing you, even if sometimes it doesn't appear so. It is imperative that you make the commitment to be there for them each week. Attend all music lessons at the assigned school. Be on time. Schedule appointments (dentist, projects, etc.) on days other than your assigned afternoon. **Three unexcused absences will be grounds for dismissal from the program.** Communicate well in advance with SMP staff regarding any upcoming absence, or potential lateness. In the event of anticipated prolonged absence (as in the case of participation in school sports or school musical productions) you will need to arrange for a long-term substitute, acceptable to SMP, to work for your student. Assume that you and your substitute will need to work together for a couple of sessions to assure a smooth transition.

### SUPERVISION:

You are the adult responsible for your student during your lessons. Supervise your student at all times, ensuring their safety and proper conduct in the classrooms, hallways and restrooms. Tutors must have a staff member or adult volunteer supervise students in the event a tutor needs to leave a student for any reason. Please don't leave your student unattended. At the end of each session, you must accompany your student to the SMP Check-Out area. Once there, remind them to check-out before leaving for the day. If your student must a lesson leave early or they tell you their normal transportation home is different that day, make sure to communicate immediately with a staff member. Any family picking up their student early must sign out with a staff member before leaving.

### CLASSROOM SET-UP AND USE:

*Generally, you will work with a student in an empty classroom that is available after normal school hours.* You and your student are expected to use your assigned classrooms each week. If there is a problem or the need to make a change, please work with SMP's Program Coordinator to find a different available classroom. Choose a position in the room that creates minimal distraction for the student (example: position the student so that his/her back is to the door or other students). To assure security, **classroom doors are to remain propped open** at all times. Tutors and students may not use any classroom equipment or supplies. After your lesson is done, restore the classroom to the state it was in at the start of the session (lights, windows, door, chairs, etc.)

## **BEHAVIOR:**

*Each tutor is expected to behave in a way that is appropriate for an instructor in an elementary school setting. That behavior includes using respectful language that excludes profanity of any kind, and maintaining a professional, on-the-job manner with other tutors, students, instructors, parents, adult volunteers, SMP staff, school staff, etc.*

- Please silence cell phones and other communications devices.
- Please keep your focus on your student.
- Please refrain from personal contact that is inappropriate to the lesson setting
- Please refrain from smoking and/or using any illegal substances before and/or during any activities at the host school.
- Please do not give food or drinks to your student without permission by SMP staff.
- In order to minimize noise and confusion when using the hallways, please always accompany your student and encourage them to walk quietly.
- Never go off site with students or meet them off site, and never give them a ride in your car. Your volunteer experience is limited to the public school setting.
- Please do not contact your student at home without permission by SMP staff.
- Please do not discuss confidential information about a student with your peers. Any concerns should be brought to the attention of SMP staff.
- All tutors must abide by the attached District Code of Prohibited Behavior regarding zero tolerance for alcohol, drugs, tobacco and firearms. Do not initiate or participate in conversations with students regarding any of these prohibited behaviors.

## **MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES WITH STUDENTS**

*For an effective teaching relationship, it is important that you establish and maintain your role as the teacher – You are the adult. Establish healthy boundaries early in your work with a student.*

- Be alert to your own behavior and how personal stresses (for example, health, family, school or social) may affect your interactions with students.
- Personal information about yourself should be shared only as it is relevant to the work you are doing with the student. Avoid giving personal contact information such as your address, phone or email. Please do not accept invitations to connect with your student on social media platforms.
- If a student reveals information relating to a possible abusive situation, let the student know that you care and are there to listen but that you are required to pass this information on to SMP staff and the school immediately following your tutoring session (see “Concerns” section).

Examples of other actions that cross the normal teacher-student boundaries and that you therefore **must not do**:

- Use of profanity or insensitive, disparaging or sarcastic comments.
- Any sexual remarks of any sort, even those that are jokes.
- Remarks about body parts; e.g., "you have a beautiful face."
- Remarks about appearance or dress; e.g., "you look good in those jeans."
- Any request for affection; e.g., "give me a hug."
- Any form of physical punishment of pupils is unlawful as is any form of physical response to misbehavior.
- Requests for social interaction outside the classroom.
- Sexual contact with any student or former student.
- Unnecessary or inappropriate touching of the student (see below).
- Do not give gifts to students or write them cards or notes without first speaking to SMP staff about the purpose and scope of the communication.

If a student acts inappropriately or acts in a way that makes you uncomfortable, please clarify the tutor/student boundaries and inform an SMP staff member as soon as possible so that we may deal appropriately with the situation. Following any incident in which you feel that your actions have been, or may have been misconstrued, you should immediately discuss the matter with SMP staff.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH STUDENTS**

In the process of teaching a student a musical instrument, it may be necessary to have physical contact between the teacher and the student—whether for helping the student to hold the instrument correctly or to use the correct touch, hand position, fingering or bowing. The extent to which volunteers can touch students and, if so, where on the student's body such contact can occur is an extraordinarily sensitive subject that has generated much discussion and guidance.

When contact with a student is necessary, always ask for your student's consent before touching him/her (e.g. "Is it okay if I touch your hand to show you how to hold your bow?"). Areas that are most appropriate to touch when instructing your student are (with their consent): shoulders, arms, upper back, hands.

Keep in mind cultural perspectives and the personal context of touch from the student's perspective. Cultural influences, beliefs and personal history affect a student's comfort level regarding personal boundaries. **Some children do not invite touching and may want more personal space**; respect their wishes. If a student indicates by word or action that he/she is not comfortable with touching, you should avoid physical contact with that student.

A front hug is unacceptable, so carefully put your arm around a child's shoulder and turn it into a side hug. Use other signs of affection, such as high fives, and remember the appropriate places to touch students. In addition, regardless of age, students should never sit on your lap.

## **STUDENT DISCIPLINE**

We are not asking you to be solely responsible for the discipline of your student. If your student has trouble settling into the relationship or a particular lesson, or appears to have ongoing behavioral issues, please confer with SMP staff. We are here to help and may have insights about your student's home or classroom life or other contextual information and ideas to help you and your student succeed.

SMP staff do their best to be accessible to you during lessons, whether observing your lesson in the classroom or by being nearby in the hallway. However, we also do our best to spend time in all of the lesson classrooms. If you do not find us readily accessible by calling our name in the hallway, please do call an SMP staff person's cell phone if you need support and we will make sure to come straight to your classroom. We ask that you save our phone numbers in your cell phone for emergencies.

Please familiarize yourself with the SMP Participation Agreement. Because an SMP staff person will not be in the lesson room with you at all times, you should feel welcome to remind your student to be safe, respectful and focused by giving them a verbal warning when appropriate. With ongoing disruptions of the learning environment, students will be expected to stop the lesson and have a discussion with a SMP staff member.

## **RESTROOM USE:**

Please accompany your student to the restroom and wait outside in the hallway.

## **CONCERNS:**

If your student shares any information with you regarding any potential physical or emotional harm or abuse in their home you must (i) share the information that afternoon with SMP staff and (ii) send an email that evening to our executive director, Marlette Buchanan ([marlette@seattlemusicpartners.org](mailto:marlette@seattlemusicpartners.org)), which sets forth the facts (who/what/when/where) of the potential abuse. Please refrain from any editorial content. Our executive director will pass along the information, verbatim, to the school principal who will, in turn, report to Child Protective Services.

**If any other situation arises in which you are in any way uncomfortable, or if at any time you need assistance, please seek out a SMP staff member.**

## STUDENT INSTRUMENTS AND SUPPLIES

In order to keep the program running smoothly, please help us this year by observing the following reminders or changes:

Please ensure that your student has everything they need for their lesson before heading to your classroom. An SMP staff member will be available to provide forgotten supplies, books, or instruments to students for the first 10 minutes of lesson time. Students and tutors must retrieve the needed supplies for the SMP staff member within that 10 minutes, or go without for the lesson.

## QUALITIES OF AN EXCELLENT SMP TUTOR

All SMP Students are expected to participate in our program in a way that is **Safe, Respectful, Responsible, Persistent, Focused, and Creative** and we hold our tutors to the same standard. An excellent SMP Tutor...

Creates a **Safe** Space:

- Uses student's name often.
- Smiles, leaves their personal baggage at the door and focuses on their student's needs.
- Is curious about their student's interests. Asks their student questions (about his/her day or in general).
- Shares appropriate personal stories about him/herself.
- Creates opportunities to laugh together.
- Remembers/refers to discussions from previous sessions.
- Exercises patience with student.
- Keeps an open mind and asks questions rather than making assumptions about the student.

Serves as a supportive and **Respectful** role model:

- Respects student's efforts and meets them where they are each week.
- Sets the standard of good behavior and positive social interaction.
- Offers emotional support, and knows when to ask for help when necessary.
- Creates a relaxed, respectful, supportive environment.
- Provides opportunities to play their instrument with student.
- Maintains a positive attitude in the face of adversity or challenge.

Is **Responsible** for the delivery and management of well-planned lessons:

- Shows up for lesson on time each week and communicates about any known upcoming absences with both the student and SMP staff at least a week in advance.
- Is prepared for lesson (does not spend session time reviewing it and getting ready).
- Provides clear directions, explanations and guidelines to student.
- Addresses student misbehavior appropriately and promptly asks for help when necessary.
- Uses positive reinforcement and compliments student's efforts.
- Demonstrates proper technique on instrument.
- Asks for support from SMP staff when challenges and questions arise.

Has high expectations for the student and is **Persistent** in reaching those goals:

- Encourages student to try out new skills and attempt higher level of performance.
- Provides feedback on performance, positive and critical.
- Recognizes student's frustrations and challenges and then helps student work through them, rather than allowing them to focus on what comes easily.
- Provides student with examples of excellence on their instrument and helps him to find inspiration.
- Leads by example through positive, persistent attitude.
- Reviews important concepts regarding theory and technique in each lesson.

Remains **Focused** and helps their student focus during instruction time:

- Spends the large part of their tutoring time working towards their lesson goals.
- Follows curriculum guidelines given by SMP staff.
- Praises student for working on music during lesson.
- Encourages student to practice outside of lessons (praises if they report doing so).
- Creates a realistic practice plan with student each week including clear and outcome-based directions and goals for practicing.
- Reads the energy of their student and determines when “brain breaks” are necessary, and how to manage this time.

Is a fun and **Creative** instructor who adapts to the learning needs and styles of student:

- Spends extra time on aspects of the curriculum where the student is struggling, and finds new ways to approach that material. Presents challenging teaching points in two or more ways.
- Spends extra time on aspects of curriculum that the student enjoys.
- Varies instructional strategies to best meet learning style of student.
- Finds creative ways to make practicing at home fun and accessible according to student’s needs.
- Isn’t afraid to be a little silly, and move outside of their comfort zone.

## BUILDING MUSIC MENTORSHIP

We understand that committing to mentor a youth comes with a lot of responsibility and may feel like brand new territory. You may worry that you won’t know how to do this. Try thinking about your background; you may have already been a mentor in informal situations. Maybe you helped a niece or nephew with schoolwork or listened to a youth who thought nobody cared. In each instance, you were acting as a mentor. By joining SMP, you are simply formalizing your commitment to help guide a young person. At the same time, you get the benefit of comprehensive training and ongoing support. **Here are a few tips we’ve gathered over the years to get you started:**

**Be a friend.** Invest the time to establish a bond with your student. Take a personal interest in their lives by asking questions about their family, interests, etc. Share something from your own day or week to help foster a connection.

**Have fun together.** Structure your lessons so that there is time for fun while learning continues. If you are willing to show your student that it is important to you to have fun in a learning environment, it is much more likely that they will become more committed to the relationship and to the goal of learning how to play music.

**Give voice to your student.** If you ask your student what they want to work on in a lesson, it will help build a sense of trust and equality. Give choices that fit within the structure of your lesson plan (and make sure you’re OK with whichever choice your student makes).

**Be positive in the face of challenges.** Encourage your student, even with small accomplishments. Offer concrete assistance where you can – when you need to point out a mistake, provide guidance about how to correct it (e.g. “slow down the tempo, sing the phrase before you play it, clap out the rhythm, etc.”).

**Be yourself.** Relax. Don’t adopt a new persona in your relationship. Be genuine.

**Build on the trust that your student places in you.** Once you have established a connection with your student, the responsibility rests with you to uphold that trust. Your role as a mentor includes maintaining an appropriate level of decorum for a lesson, making it a priority to be at lessons on time, taking a consistent interest in their lives – in short, being there for them.

**Share a sense of possibility and confidence** with your student. To them, you are an expert – someone who has mastered both an instrument and a new language. What you do when you play a scale or a melody is natural to you at this stage – but to them, it is new and may seem even impossible. Help your student see that there are always ways to break down a task and to succeed.

## SMP's STAFF IS HERE FOR YOU!

**SMP staff members are present at each after-school session** to observe, support, and guide each tutor and student through any challenges and to share in each pair's successes in musical learning and the mentoring relationship.

**Each tutor and student pair has a Lesson Supervisor assigned to them.** The Lesson Supervisor is a staff member who is responsible for observing the pair's lesson each week, providing feedback and support to the tutor and student, suggesting additional teaching materials and strategies, and providing disciplinary support as needed.

**SMP staff ensure that each after-school session runs smoothly**, by communicating directly with all elementary school staff, student families, classroom teachers, in-school music teachers, and tutors.

**SMP staff organize and facilitate briefings and debriefings with tutors each week before and after the lesson time.**

The *briefing* time is an opportunity for all tutors to regroup around the teaching points for the day, lesson plan and hear any announcements about upcoming recitals or events. The *debriefing* time is a time to reflect on the lesson time, share best practices and challenges in teaching, discuss important issues and concepts in music tutoring and mentoring, plan for the next lesson, and give and receive feedback.

### **You may also count on SMP staff to:**

- Provide advice about using and adapting the Tutor Lesson Guide for you and your student.
- Help brainstorm new ways to teach a concept or motivate your student.
- Stay in touch with your student's in-school music teacher about their progress, needs, etc.
- Communicate with your student's family or classroom teacher in order to get advice about working with your student, if the need arises.
- Work with you on any conflicts, miscommunications or challenges that might arise.
- Lead group music lessons and ensemble playing once a week with the students during their 2<sup>nd</sup> afternoon with SMP (and to keep you informed about their learning during those group lessons).
- Organize recitals and other performance opportunities for your student.