



Program Assistant Job Description

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Organization Profile

Spark is an award-winning, rapidly growing youth empowerment organization. Spark creates real-world opportunities for middle-school youth to build motivation, self-confidence and school engagement through hands-on apprenticeships. Our mission is to inspire middle-school students to pursue their interests, create bonds with their communities, and develop a lifelong passion for learning. As students explore the opportunities and challenges of a work environment, guided by a trained volunteer, they discover the relevance of school, build motivation, and set positive goals for academic and personal success.

Spark's innovative model piloted in 2005 and has more than doubled in size each year since, reaching students across the San Francisco Bay Area. With demonstrated effectiveness, the model has attracted interest from communities and educators around the United States. Spark was recently awarded the prestigious Draper Richards Fellowship in 2008, an award granted to four early-stage non-profits from around the world with the highest potential for "broad social impact." Spark is now preparing to launch national-scale programs and help thousands of youth around the United States, showing that middle-school can be a time when students become motivated lifelong learners.

Since its founding in 2004, Spark has grown rapidly in response to need and demand from the Bay Area community, serving 132 youth in 2008 and an estimated 280 youth in 2009. Spark's programs operate at four locations in Redwood City and two in San Francisco. For more details, please visit www.sparkprogram.org.

Position Overview:

Spark seeks an enthusiastic Program Assistant to assist with multiple facets of Spark's Redwood City and San Francisco after-school and summer programs. The position is an opportunity to learn about all aspects of a youth empowerment program, from administrative assistance in the office to recruitment of students and Apprentice Teachers, as well as program delivery. Spark's Program Assistant will be responsible for supporting all the "behind-the-scenes" systems that increase the program's efficient functioning, in addition to helping work with the students. The ideal candidate is a self-starter who is a creative problem-solver and enjoys connecting with middle-school youth, as well as someone who can work alone and complete delegated tasks well. The Program Assistant will join a supportive, dedicated team of educators working to empower Bay Area middle-school students. The ideal candidate wants to grow significantly, is an excellent communicator, and deeply motivated to help students become self-actualized learners. This role is based in San Francisco, and begins as a half-time role with full benefits. Opportunities to increase to 75%, and eventually 100%, time will become available.

Spark's Core Values:

- **Self-Actualization:** Empowering people to confidently pursue their interests and live their values, driven by intrinsic motivation.
- **Community:** Fostering connections among people and organizations to meet individual and shared goals.
- **Democracy:** Collaboratively involving all stakeholders in decision-making.



- **Transparency:** Encouraging honest communication and actively seeking feedback for understanding and growth.
- **Positivity:** Planning for and expecting the best from every situation and person, and finding the opportunities in each challenge.

Job Description:

The Program Assistant's role is focused on assisting with all aspects of Spark's after-school and summer youth programs. The position offers an intensive learning experience, with potential for growth. The ideal candidate wants to learn about all aspects of running a youth empowerment program, including working with the students, is an excellent communicator, and is deeply motivated to help students become self-actualized learners.

Specific Responsibilities:

Direct Youth Program Management (40%)

- Assist with leading summer youth programs, creating an environment of encouragement, motivation and support for students as they develop their leadership potential.
- Act as personal role model for students as they progress through their apprenticeship and Spark's curriculum.
- Assist Spark staff member in leading one group of 12 students for each of two four-week intensive summer sessions.
- Coordinate volunteer-led workshops.

Outreach & Recruitment (25%)

- Assist in recruiting volunteers for Spark's apprenticeships, workshops and field trips.
- Maintain relationships with Spark alumni when possible, assisting in developing an alumni relations process.

Program Coordination (35%)

- Document Spark's ongoing processes, helping to create more detailed training guides for staff and other organizations interested in customizing the Spark model to their areas.
- Ensure a smoothly-run program by managing all logistics related to volunteers, transportation and other critical Program areas.
- Implement Spark's evaluation methods: pre- and post-program surveys, long-term follow-up surveys, focus groups, and school district data.
- Help schedule parent carpools and arrange transportation related to the program.
- Compile and send program packets to students, parents and Apprentice Teachers.
- Ensure all Program materials are properly prepared for each session.
- Support Community Outreach Manager in devising and implementing systems to recruit, retain and accommodate Apprentice Teachers.
- Manage the logistics of "Discovery Night," the graduation and learning presentation event at the conclusion of each Spark session.
- Assist in developing and implementing processes around Alumni Leadership Coaching.



Qualifications:

- **Spanish or Cantonese fluency required.**
- Demonstrated passion for and commitment to helping students become self-actualized, empowered learners.
- Outstanding organizational skills and ability to think logically and devise creative solutions.
- Strong interpersonal skills in working with diverse groups of adults and youth, including leadership experience.
- Outstanding written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to both communicate clearly with both adults and youth, and follow up on these communications.
- Demonstrated ability to exercise good judgment and manage her/his time.
- Ability to coordinate with multiple people, both within and outside the organization.
- Comfortable managing complex programs and keeping track of many details.
- Comfortable giving and receiving honest, constructive feedback.
- Must have a driver's license, an excellent driving record, and access to a car.
- Comfortable with Microsoft Word and general internet and computer usage.

Personal Qualities

- High-energy, creative, and has a sense of humor even under stress.
- Extremely organized and detail-oriented.
- Loves being part of an active team, while also able to self-direct and take initiative.
- Love of, and ease in, forming relationships with students, parents, and teachers.
- Energized by working with youth, especially in a leadership-development context.

The Program Assistant's time will be divided between Redwood City (for Program delivery) and San Francisco. Spark's office is located in San Francisco.

Compensation & Benefits:

- **Salary: Position is half-time and based on a \$32,000 annual equivalent salary. Half-time salary is thus \$16,000 annually, with full benefits (see below). Opportunities for increasing to 75% and/or 100% time, with equivalent increases in salary, will most likely be presented in 2009.**
- **Learning Benefits:** Spark staff and students are fellow learners, and the organization highly values the staff's personal learning pursuits. To that end, there are several opportunities for staff to "walk the talk" and experience the excitement of being a Spark student.
 - **Annual Paid Sabbatical:** Seven paid working days off each year, in addition to other paid time off, for the pursuit of a personal learning opportunity. Each day of the sabbatical comes with a \$100 learning expense stipend.
 - **Personal Apprenticeships & Learning Roundtables:** All staff are encouraged to spend time every other week to pursue a personal apprenticeship, with occasional mornings designated for learning roundtables in which staff can collaboratively continue their study of the education field and share new knowledge, stories, and best practices.
 - **Professional Training Account:** A personal account to pursue your choice of professional training opportunities, including workshops, conferences, books, etc.
- **Retirement Benefits:** Spark matches all retirement contributions to the organization's retirement plan dollar-for-dollar, up to 3% of salary.



- **Paid Time Off (PTO):** Spark has a unique flexible time-off policy, which empowers staff to collaboratively determine and schedule time off as needed. Rather than setting and tracking specific numbers of days off, Spark staff may take time off based on the status of their work-related goals and results within the organization. This policy is part of Spark's focus on a balanced and healthy life for staff.
- **Health Benefits:** Full health coverage is provided, including medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and some alternative health coverage (acupuncture, herbal treatments, etc).

Timeline: Start date for the position is January 5, 2009. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled.

Contact:

To apply, please e-mail your resume and cover letter as two separate documents to Gail Fisher, Associate Director, at gfisher@sparkprogram.org. In your cover letter, please describe your personal educational philosophy, and how the Program Coordinator position fits into your vision of creating social impact.

Spark is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage applications from all individuals regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, and evaluate all candidates based on merit.