

Meet Somerset's General School Assistants!

Name: Aviti Mathur
Years of Employment: Since Feb 2018
Languages I Speak: English & Hindi
Highlights from the Field:

A highlight from my time working as a GSA is from last year when a new student started at Somerset halfway through the school year. She was a quiet, shy, and apprehensive as English was not her first language. I was working in her classroom already doing small group reading. I was assigned to work with her one on one. We worked very hard all year, she was always eager to learn and polite, we would even talk about making new friends and other social-emotional aspects of being at a new school.

At the end of the school year the classroom teacher shared with me how much progress that student had made. Her scores in reading were amazing. She was starting to come out of shell, started to make new friends, and was enjoying school. I was so pleased in being a small part of that journey. It's these little victories that make it all worthwhile. In my opinion, being able to support the classroom teachers and help the kids that benefit from one on one or small group instruction is one of the most fulfilling tasks of a GSA.



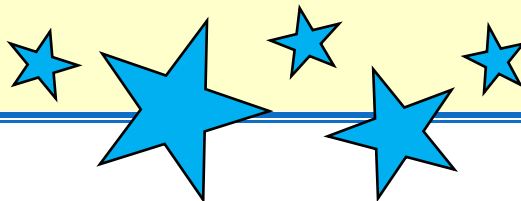
Name: Elsa Fong
Years of Employment: 2 years
Languages I Speak: Cantonese, Mandarin, English
Highlights from the Field:

A highlight, both at school and during remote learning, is to understand another's condition from their perspective, staff or students, and learning how to put myself in their shoes. Especially during this Pandemic, even though we are not at school, I feel closer to students when I exchange our feelings over a Teams meeting or over the phone. Being open to new learning styles makes all of us stronger. I feel rewarded when I see students giggling on the screen.



Name: Zhiqi Chen, Kiki is my nickname.
Years of Employment: since November 2019
Languages I Speak: Mandarin and English.
Highlights from the Field:

I enjoy teaching and helping students. After I explain something to students, their eyes light up as they understood the concept. That's the most joyful moment in my life. I have substituted in many BSD elementary schools. Somerset is the best. Students here are very smart, fast learners, disciplined, and have integrity. I look forward to working with them in the future!





Name: Debbie Chiu
Years of Employment: 2 years
Languages I Speak: English and Cantonese (Chinese)
Highlights from the Field:

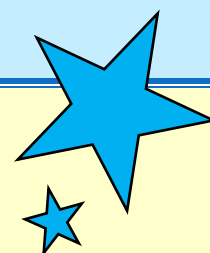
I helped students at school in small groups with reading, math, or writing. One of my favorite parts of working at the school was listening to what the students did on the weekend and helping them write their ideas into their journals. This involved helping them spell out words on their own by sounding it out. One of my favorite activities with Kindergarten classes was working with them to code the beebot. Helping them code the beebot to move to the correct spot and seeing their excitement when it got to correct spot on the grid was very rewarding.

During remote learning, I have been working one on one with multiple students. I help them with reading, math, writing and ensuring they turn in their homework assignments to their teacher. My favorite part is that although we are not physically at school, I am able to connect with some of the students via Teams meeting to help support them through this time.

Name: Candy O'Dore
Years of Employment: 7 years
Languages I Speak: English, Cantonese (Chinese) and Mandarin (Chinese)
Highlights from the Field:

I love to help all students in the area of their social and emotional development, particularly students that are new to Somerset, some of which are living in the United States for the very first time. Many students need extra time, support, communication, and care to make them feel like they are part of the Somerset family.

During this COVID19 remote learning period, many students are struggling at home in many ways, from lack of access to a computer to non-English speaking parents or grandparents at home that are unable to help with homework, to parents that are struggling to juggle multiple kids at home together with working full-time. I enjoy building a relationship with students and parents and helping them to have a sense of belonging at Somerset. Myself and the other GSA's provide additional support to students which allow the teachers to develop curriculum, lesson planning, and focus on other students with specific academic needs.



Name: Vicki Premo
Years of Employment: 2
Languages I Speak: English
Highlights from the Field:

This is my second year supporting Somerset as a GSA. I enjoy spending time in the classrooms with the kids the most. I love the one on one support I'm able to provide with Math, Reading and Writing. Seeing the students improve during the school year from the help I'm providing is the best feeling! Also gaining the students trust is a good feeling. When the students are in a Social Emotional situation and they feel comfortable coming to me to talk it truly makes me feel like I'm making a difference.

Name: Fabian J. Rios

Years of Employment: The 2019-20 school year is my first at Somerset

Languages I Speak: English & Spanish

Highlights from the Field:

In general, I love helping people and promoting education. Being at Somerset, I get to help students reach educational and school milestones, like their first time working on new curriculum or introducing them to new friends. I especially enjoy helping students overcome daunting activities – solving story problems, looking for text evidence, or brainstorming for a “huge” project – they now find easy to do on their own. I enjoy getting to meet and work with new students almost every week. I was especially excited to meet a couple students, who at first avoided me.

I was pleasantly surprised when those students started talking to me and sharing all the fun activities going on in their classroom. I was also thrilled to be the person many students turned to for last minute cramming/clarifications/polishing for assignments. I find it hilarious when suggestions I make often get rejected and 30 minutes later, we end up keeping everything from original work. I guess all it needed was a quick review and a stamp of approval. I also love pretending to “race” to finish an assignment or activity only to get beat every time.

After we switched to remote learning, I’ve enjoyed sending individual chats to students through Teams, receiving students’ messages about schoolwork, and helping them step-by-step. The best part of my days are the conversations we have using no words, just an endless thread of emojis, stickers, memes, and gifs.

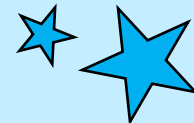


Name: Jennifer Lawrence

Years of Employment: 7 years

Languages I Speak: English

Highlights from the Field:



I have been a GSA at Somerset for 7 years. This year, I took a Paraprofessional job that started in February, but prior that I served as a GSA and loved it and found it to be a very valuable position that the school couldn't live without. We get to know so many kids and get to know them WELL! We know how they learn, how they play, how they interact with their peers and adults, and what their strengths and weaknesses are. Also, because we work in the school for multiple years, we get to see them grow and change each year and are aware of their needs as they get older. Other than working with the kids, this is my favorite part of my job. I love watching them grow and learn each year!

As a GSA, we are a big part of each classroom, we are on the playground, in the office, in the clinic, in the lunchroom, and everywhere else your kids are in the school. We are there to help them with anything and everything. We check in with students in the mornings and check out in the afternoons with individual students who need that extra attention. We run small groups in reading or math for the teachers so they can also have their small groups or are able to work one on one with students that might need extra support. We also work one on one with students who might not get the extra help if we weren't there. With the larger class sizes, we are even MORE important so there are more opportunities for the students to get the help they need. We go from the classroom where we help them academically, to the lunchroom where they can get help from us with social skills and nonacademic issues, to the playground where they can count on us to help them find friends to play with or even join in on a game of four square with them. We do it ALL!



Name: Keiko Mohr

Years of Employment: 2 years, but almost 5 as a Somerset mom

Languages I speak: Japanese and English.

Highlights from the Field:

My highlight is helping students have a fun and safe time in our school and to grow together. Working in the cafeteria, I made a system to encourage students to take responsibility, keep the cafeteria clean, quiet, and safe. This system worked very well this year as the second year, and hopefully we can keep it going. I love to have a movie lunch and birthday lunch. I made several certificates to celebrate student's good behavior and display them in the hallway. I enjoy working in kindergarden, 3rd, and 4th grade classrooms. My dream is to see my kindergarteners graduate as 5th graders. They all grow fast!



Name: Connie Rigor

Years of Employment: This is my second year working at Somerset; however, I have been a part of the Somerset community since 2005-2006. I have four children who have all attended Somerset: from my daughter who is currently in 5th grade to my oldest son who is now 20 years old.

Languages I Speak: English & Cantonese (Chinese)

Highlights from the Field:



A highlight of my job at Somerset is that I work with an exceptional community of students, teachers, and staff. At Somerset, all the GSAs and staff members genuinely care about the students. As a part-time General School Assistant, my role is to help students when they come into the health room. I help treat students who are not feeling well or hurt. I not only treat physical needs but sometimes, emotional needs as well. Along with Nurse Ruby, we are responsible for caring for all students at Somerset. I have been trained to administer medication, document student visits, assist with hearing and vision screenings, and update teachers and parents on their students' condition. I also communicate with parents by phone as needed about their student's health and well-being.

I consider my role to be unique in that, not only do I work in the health room to treat students, but I also have the privilege to help within the classroom. I help the students in two classrooms for about 45 minutes each per day. I feel that I have built a trust and a good relationship with the students because I am able to be in the classroom four days a week. I give support to teachers by helping the students who may be struggling academically as well as those who need additional assistance. I may be asked to work one-on-one with students, answer many questions, or give directions to a small group of students. I check-in with students and give them that extra needed support.

As we switched to remote learning, I have been assisting a grade-level team with their students. I participate in their daily meetings and receive updates on the students who may need addition support. I then make daily phone calls and remote calls via Microsoft Teams to parents and students. I check-in with students about their daily needs, whether it is a computer/technology need or an academic need. I work one-on-one with students to give them extra support as well as try to answer concerns the students or parents may have on behalf of the teachers. Lastly, it brings joy to my heart when I can support a student in this difficult time, where in some cases, working independently for a student is very difficult but, by spending an hour helping the student feel successful!



We love our GSAs!

