COLLEGE GUILD

Reader Guidelines

Welcome, and thank you for your interest in College Guild and your willingness to donate your time. These guidelines are designed to help our volunteers fulfill the mission of College Guild in an effective, professional, and safe manner.

Purpose: Rather than academic credit, our goal is to encourage thought, creativity, self-esteem, objectivity, and even a sense of humor. The courses are designed to be engaging, challenging, and interactive. Research has shown that when prisoners are given educational opportunities, they are less likely to return to prison – the College Guild motto reflects both this fact and our belief that *Respect Reduces Recidivism.*

Professionalism: Although College Guild is a volunteer organization, we strive to be professional in terms of the quality of courses, timely response to students, and the boundaries we set on relationships with students. It can be an important part of the learning process to have College Guild volunteers demonstrate appropriate interpersonal boundaries. We want our students to learn how to engage in mutually respectful relationships.

In your work with College Guild, you are supporting and encouraging our students in their quest for knowledge. You can be friendly, but not a friend or pen pal. The only mail between College Guild volunteers and students is that directly related to the course work. All mail goes through the College Guild office and only first names are used. (You may use a false first name if you wish.)

Do not give out any personal information about yourself or any other person involved with College Guild. Student responses are confidential. Do not copy or share their answers to course assignments which may contain personal history or feelings which are directed solely to the reader. We seek to create for students a safe place for free expression.

Guidelines: Before you begin your work with College Guild, you will be required to participate in a brief orientation – in a group, individually, or by phone.

1. Readers will receive a copy of a student's completed unit by email and will go to College Guild's website to locate the appropriate unit material. Readers will then write comments for the student, elaborate on certain answers, summarize strengths and weaknesses, and offer encouragement. Some readers prefer to put all their comments in a letter. You are not teaching a subject as much as responding to the student's answers. Instead of "correcting" answers, you can explain why they are good, original, or appeal to you. Include rhetorical questions, constructive criticism, or suggestions for different ways to approach a question, but with at least an equal amount of positive feedback. The student's original work and your feedback are returned to the student along with the next unit in the course. We will do our best to give you successive units from the same student.

2. Do not promote or discuss your own political or religious beliefs, or share your personal history, (e.g. "*When I was a teacher / lived in Hawaii / took piano lessons...*"). You are responding to students' thoughts, stories, and efforts rather than having a dialog.

3. Assume that every student has access to only paper and pencil. Assume that they do not have books available, or the ability to research certain topics.

4. Avoid comments about their release, as many of our students are "lifers."

5. Prejudicial statements against any group (race, religion, sexual orientation) are unacceptable. However, they are a good chance for a lesson on stereotyping, such as how inaccurate it is to say, "All prisoners are bad." Excessively graphic sex or violence is not appropriate. Simply write, "Not appropriate for College Guild" or ignore that particular answer and add a note to alert the office when you return the unit.

6. Read, comment on, and return your unit **WITHIN ONE WEEK**. College Guild may be a volunteer organization, but it is still important to maintain professionalism and return feedback promptly out of respect for our students. Let the office know your own time limits, and please give advanced notice of upcoming vacations, periods when you will be unavailable, or when feedback cannot be returned on time. Please return your work by email as a Word doc, a google doc, or another editable format. We cannot accept pdfs.