



Volunteer Handbook

Volunteer Management Department
IMPROVING SERVICE TO OUR STUDENTS, STAFF AND FAMILIES

Welcome and Thank You!

Thank you for volunteering in Seattle Public Schools. You are making an important contribution to our school district and its students, and we want you to know that we value your time, energy and expertise.

Whether you volunteer in your school's main office, the classroom or at the John Stanford Center for Education Excellence, you are essential to the principals, teachers, schools, families and the larger school community. With budget cuts, we have to do more with less and our volunteers are critical supporting our students.

Everyone volunteers in their own way. Some volunteers enjoy being in the classroom and many others only have time in the evenings after work. That is why your commitment is so important. Schools cannot do this work alone

Our work has been driven by a crystal-clear mission—academic achievement for every student in every school. Our District has rigorous academic standards that clearly set out what students should know and be able to do as they progress through school. We have professional practice standards for teachers that capture the essence of quality instruction, and we have leadership standards for principals that reflect the very best in research-based practice.

We are preparing our students to thrive in a world that will be far different from the one we know today. If they are to reach their full potential, the schools that educate them must transform themselves. The schools must look, feel and operate differently than they ever have.

So please explore the many ways to become involved in educating and supporting Seattle students. Thank you for everything you do.

Handbook originally created by Colin Sexton and Trisha Matthieu Volunteer Services, 2002; second revised 2009 Susan Hall.

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Volunteer

A volunteer is an unsalaried person authorized by the School Board to perform volunteer services for the school district. A volunteer shall serve in such capacity without compensation or employee benefits of any type, except for worker's compensation as provided for in the district's self-insured program. All volunteers serve at the discretion of the Superintendent without any expressed or implied privileges beyond those found in this handbook and may be released from volunteering if so deemed by the Superintendent or designee (refer to appendix for types of volunteer)

Visitor:

A guest or visitor is an unsalaried person who with district approval assists at a school on a non-regular or one-time basis or attends a school sponsored event or activity. A guest or visitor would typically be required to report their presence at the school office or other designated location, except for specific events such as athletics, performing arts, etc. All guest and visitors are subject to the policies and procedures set forth by the District (refer to appendix for explanation).



As a volunteer in Seattle Public Schools, it is important for you to know that we are a large school district with many resources and challenges. The students you work with will look different and have different life experiences than you. Many come from single parent or low-income households, and have special educational needs.

Purpose of School Volunteer Programs

- To support academic achievement and district goals, to assist teachers in providing basic skills instruction, to enrich quality of instruction, to enhance interpersonal experiences for students, and to assist school staff with support services.
- To increase children's motivation for learning.
- To support the dropout prevention program by providing supplementary instruction such as, but not limited to, tutoring/mentoring.
- To build an understanding of school programs among interested citizens and business/community organization partnerships.
- To strengthen school/parent/community relations through positive participation.
- To promote parent involvement by actively supporting and seeking collaboration with PTA, school/community advisory councils, and other parent groups.
- To enhance district educational programs, not to displace district employees.



Being a Volunteer

Volunteering in a school is a unique and exciting experience and a benefit to both the school and the volunteer. It is designed to promote and maintain a supportive relationship between students, their schools and their community.

Volunteers should be:

- Friendly and caring.
- Reliable and flexible.
- Understanding and appreciative of the work of the school staff and the volunteer program.

Volunteers should have:

- A professional attitude and an ability to work cooperatively with school staff.
- Interest in working with young people.
- Good moral character.
- Time and willingness to serve.
- An understanding of the important role that education plays in the lives of children and our communities.

Please keep in mind that volunteering will involve learning new skills and learning about students. The school's role, and therefore the role of the school volunteer, is always to improve the academic achievement of our students. We do this in a variety of ways including academic instruction and individual support.



Becoming a Volunteer

To begin volunteering with the school district, you must:

1. Make sure that you are registered with the school. Applications are available from your school or from the Volunteer Management Department. Make sure and update your contact information as it changes.
2. Complete and sign a Disclosure Form authorizing the school to complete a Washington State Criminal History Background Check. A copy of the findings of this check will be provided for you.
3. Attend the recommended orientation and trainings conducted by the school district and your assigned school (as applicable).
4. ALWAYS sign in and out through the school office whenever you come to the school. (This is an important procedure for the safety of our children and it allows us to track your hours for insurance and district information purposes.)
5. Wear a name badge when volunteering.

Your name here!

Volunteer Badge

Responsibilities of Volunteers

1. Understand and accept the students in terms of their own background and values.
2. Support and supplement the instructional program of the classroom teacher. The volunteer's role is assistance, not replacement.
3. Communicate regularly with the teacher, librarians, or school volunteer coordinator via meetings, notes, logbook, telephone or email.
4. Attend recommended or required orientation and training sessions. Workshops are held to provide growth for the volunteer.
5. Be prompt, dependable, and regular in attendance.
6. Know and observe all regulations and procedures in the assigned school (i.e. fire drills, accident reporting, lunch and coffee privileges, pupil restroom and drink privileges, inclement weather procedures).
7. Discuss problems that arise with the teacher, librarian, or school volunteer coordinator.
8. Notify the teacher, librarian or school volunteer coordinator if a student confides in them about an abusive situation. Staff will do reporting and follow-up.
9. Leave personal concerns and pressures at home. Leave school problems at school.
10. Respect confidentiality with relationship to the school. Ensure that a child's work and behavior in school are held in confidence.
11. Remember that you are acting as a role model for children, not only in how you interact with others at school, but who you are as a person.

Rights of Volunteers

Volunteers have the right to:

1. Know as much about the school as possible, including its policies, its people and its programs.
2. Training for the job and continuing education that is thoughtfully planned and effectively presented. Information about new developments and training for greater responsibility should follow periodically.
3. Sound guidance and direction by someone who is experienced, informed, patient, thoughtful and has the time to invest in giving guidance.
4. A suitable assignment with consideration for personal preference, temperament, life experience, education and employment background.
5. A variety of experiences, through transfer of one activity to another, and through special project assignments.
6. Be heard, have a part in planning, feel free to make suggestions, and have respect shown for an honest opinion or different perspective.
7. The right to recognition through day-by-day expression of appreciation, or some tangible evidence; by being treated as a colleague.



Tips for Volunteers

1. Be patient when working with students. Give yourself time to find your niche.
2. Names are important. Make sure you say the student's name the way the student wants it to be said. Learn to spell it correctly. Make sure the student knows your name and can pronounce it correctly.
3. Treat individuals with respect and courtesy and expect the same in return.
4. Show that you are interested in the student as a person by listening carefully to what they say and showing you care by words and action.
5. Encourage and support student successes. Build self-confidence by praising them honestly and frequently. Remember attentiveness and effort can be as important as performance. Accentuate the positive and minimize the negative.
6. Avoid making comparisons between students, between teachers and between schools.
7. Always remember to be fair and consistent.
8. Students make mistakes. Let them know that making mistakes is part of learning. Don't be afraid of making mistakes yourself.
9. Be trustworthy and honest in your approach and attitude. Students will trust and respect you when you are "real."
10. If you must be absent, call the school and let them know. The students will be disappointed you can't come, but are reassured that you care enough to call.



Academic Standards

In 1999, the Seattle School Board adopted standards, or learning targets, in four core areas—reading, writing, communication and mathematics. (Standards in other subject areas are currently being developed.)

Our commitment to these standards sends a message to our students and their communities that we believe in our children, that we expect the best of them, and that we can observe and measure their successes.

Benefits of Standards Based Learning System

Benefits for Students

- Students have clearly articulated expectations for performance as they progress through school.
- Students understand what they are learning, which standard it relates to and why they are learning it.
- Students recognize how teachers expect them to show what they've learned.
- Students are given increased opportunities to evaluate their own work before the teacher does—using the same criteria as the teacher.
- Student performance is based on individual progress, not as it relates to other students.
- Students are given multiple opportunities to demonstrate achievement standards (using varying learning modalities).
- Students know that their performance is evaluated



Benefits for Teachers

- Teachers understand how each lesson aligns with District and State academic standards.
- Teachers have a clearly articulated framework for their teaching; defined student performance expectations.
- Freedom to use varying teaching modalities to help get kids to standards; allows for greater creativity in curriculum and activities.
- Teachers see greater investment and motivation in their students.
- Increased clarity in the student assessment process.
- Teachers have greater opportunities to partner with other teachers as the framework for their teachings is better aligned.

Benefits for Community Partners

- Partners have a shared language in approaching partnerships with schools.
- Partners have a greater understanding of how and where their services can be aligned with schools; increased effectiveness and impact of program services.
- Partners have expanded freedom in program/project design if clearly linked with student achievement of standards.
- Partners have increased receptivity from schools as schools begin to recognize the need for community support in the standards effort.
- Individual partners (tutors/volunteers) have enhanced clarity as to the framework for their work with students.
- Partners experience increased continuity and consistency between schools

The effects of our academic standards will be felt throughout the district, including in your work with the schools. It will be helpful for you to have a general understanding of the standards and their benefits. For more information about academic standards, please consult your school supervisor or the Seattle Public Schools homepage at: <http://www.seattleschools.org>.

Safety and Liability Issues

Where should I work with a student?

Locations will vary, depending upon availability and the preference of the student's teacher. Many schools are crowded, so you may end up working with the student in the hallway. Try to find a quiet space with as few distractions as possible.

Sometimes a teacher will direct you to an empty classroom. Be sure to leave the door open at all times, and to sit in two desks which are easily seen by those passing by. **Always work in a public area, on site.**

If you are working with a student in an after school program, it may be tempting to offer the student a ride home. **Never go off site with a student, and never give them a ride in your car.** Your volunteer experience is limited to the public school setting.

What are my confidentiality rights?

As the relationship with a student progresses, he/she will begin to trust you and may start to confide in you. You should take time to listen and show them that you care about them. However, do not make a promise you cannot keep. 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 a teacher, counselor, or principal who can offer them help. There is also a chance that someone may already have insight into the situation, which could help you to understand and work better with that student.

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, and email.

Can I hug my student?

Some students, especially at the elementary level, will naturally become very attached and affectionate toward you. Many students are craving affection and attention, so it is important that you handle the situation with sensitivity. **A front hug is inappropriate.** 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 (see next section). In addition, regardless of age, students should never sit on your lap.



What are some safer touch areas?*

Areas that are safest to touch are:

- Shoulders
- Upper Back
- Arms
- Hands



Remember to keep in mind the cultural perspective and personal context of touch from the student's perspective. Cultural influences, beliefs and personal history affects a student's comfort level regarding personal boundaries. **Some children are not inviting of touch and may want more personal space;** respect their wishes. In general, touch all students in a consistent manner.

** Special circumstances will arise where touch that exceeds these guidelines will be necessary. Special education, nursing and coaching may require additional student contact for the health and hygiene needs of the student. Be clear (to yourself and the student) about when, where, why and how you are touching the student.*

What are some signs of possible child abuse?

The following factors may be present when abuse has occurred, but do not guarantee an abusive situation. If any of the following signs are present in your child, **you are required to alert the teacher, principal, or counselor so that they can further investigate the situation:**

- Signs of injury, such as welts, bruising, cuts, burns, fractures, or swellings.
- A history of repeated, untreated, or unexplained physical injury.
- A contradiction between the story, "I fell off my bed", and the physical evidence, such as repeated bruising.
- The child appears to be uncomfortable or fearful when talking about the injury.
- Child alludes to or seems preoccupied with sexual matters.

What is the purpose of these rules?

The Seattle School District wants you, as volunteers, to carry out your responsibilities in a caring and appropriate manner. We want you to feel comfortable about hugging and touching kids and we want you to feel safe and to have guidelines that will assist you in creating and maintaining a safer environment for you and the students you work with.

Working with Students Of Different Cultures



Students in Seattle Public Schools come from many different families, cultures, and communities—each with its own set of values and beliefs. Our own culture, beliefs, values and behaviors seem so naturally a part of which we are that it is often difficult to understand others with different traditions.

Because of the many different ethnic groups represented in Seattle Schools, children speak many different languages and have many different beliefs and customs. Children from those cultures must learn to acculturate—that is, live in both cultures. Each individual must honor the beliefs and habits of their own culture, while learning to respond to the beliefs and habits of the school culture.

Cultural differences may affect a student's background knowledge, learning style, behavior, and social skills. Specifically, you may experience cultural differences with regards to:

- Varying learning styles
- Eye contact
- Sense of time
- Effective discipline
- Student motivation
- Personal space and appropriate touch
-

Understanding the students' cultures and helping them to understand the school culture will increase your ability to help them learn.

Volunteer Information/Procedure Checklist

When you first meet with your teacher/supervisor, plan to discuss the following:

- Days and times to work in classroom/school
- Procedures for volunteer and teacher/supervisor to keep in touch (regular conferences, telephone conversations, notes, informal meetings).
- Alternate plans for days when the teacher/supervisor is absent.
- How the teacher/supervisor will tell volunteer of day's assignment (folder, note or other means).
- How the students will address the volunteer (school or volunteer's preference of having students use first name or Mr. /Ms. /Mrs.) Materials, strategies or games to be used
- Teacher/supervisor's classroom/school policies, procedures and rules (such as management system, reinforcement techniques, organizational plans, emergency procedures, where volunteer leaves personal belongings, and whether volunteer is welcome in teachers' lounge and lunchroom).
- Dates of required and suggested trainings.
- Protocol for informing school/teacher/student about volunteer absence.

If you work on academic areas with students, you should also discuss:

- Pertinent background information about the student(s) the volunteer will work with (within the appropriate standards of student information confidentiality).
- Special strengths of the student(s).
- Special needs of the student(s).
- Tips for working with specific students (learning style and reinforcement techniques).
- Procedures for taking student(s) out of classroom for individual work.
- Designation of work area location.
- Alternate plan if student is absent.



VOLUNTEER STAFF DIRECTORY

Assigned School _____

School Telephone _____

School Address _____

Principal _____

School Secretary _____

Volunteer Coordinator/Contact _____

Teacher (s) _____

Other Contacts (s) _____

NOTES: _____

The volunteer coordinator, teacher or supervisor at the school can assist you with any questions, concerns, problems, etc. that you might have with your placement.

In the event you are unable to find resolution for an issue involving a student you may contact the school principal or the Office of Volunteer Management:

Volunteer Management Department
The Stanford Center
Mail stop: 32-150
PO Box 34165
Seattle, WA 98124-1165
206.252.0529
rmcglone@seattleschools.org

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Seattle Public Schools
Volunteer Handbook

Volunteer Agreement

Safety and Liability Issues

_____ As the relationship with a student progresses, he/she will begin to trust you and may start to confide in you. You should take time to listen and show them that you care about them. However, do not make a promise you cannot keep. If a student reveals information relating to a possible abuse or neglect situation, let the student know that you care and are there to listen but that you are required to pass this information on to a teacher, counselor, or principal who can offer them help

_____ Personal information about yourself should be shared only as it is relevant to the work you are doing with the student. Do not give personal contact information such as your address, phone, personal website, and email.

_____ Some students, especially at the elementary level, will naturally become very attached and affectionate toward you. Many students are craving affection and attention, so it is important that you handle the situation with sensitivity. Unfortunately, front hugs should be avoided. Instead, 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." In addition, regardless of age, students should never sit on your lap.

Working with Children from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds

_____ Students in Seattle Public Schools come from many different families, cultures, and communities--each with its own set of values and beliefs. Our individual culture, beliefs, values and behaviors seem so naturally a part of which we are that it is often challenging to understand others with unique traditions. Understanding the students' cultures and helping them to understand the school culture will increase your ability to help them learn.

Confidentiality

_____ Students in Seattle Public Schools have the right to expect that information about them will be kept confidential by all volunteers. Additionally, the U.S. congress has addressed the privacy-related concerns of educators, parents, and students by enacting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (known more commonly as "FERPA" or the "Buckley Amendment").

Each student with whom you work has the right to expect that nothing that happens to or about him or her will be repeated to anyone other than authorized school department employees, as designated by the administrators at your school.

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You may not share information about a student even with others who are genuinely interested in the student's welfare, such as social workers, scout leaders, clergy, grandparents, or nurses/physicians. A grave medical emergency, in which confidential information may be necessary for a student's care, is an exception. Thus, you must refer all such questions to the school employees so authorized and indicated to you, typically the student's teacher or principal.

Parents, friends, or community members may in good faith ask you questions about a student's problems or progress. Again, you must refer all such questions to the authorized school employees. You may not share information about a student even with members of your own family.

Before you speak, always remember that violating a student's confidentiality isn't just impolite, it's against the law.

Agreement

I, (print name) _____, as a volunteer have read and agree to the above terms. In addition to the remaining guidelines in the Volunteer Handbook, I have been made aware of where to find the Volunteer Handbook and to whom I can speak to regarding any questions or concerns I may have.

Please print full name

Volunteer site

Please sign full name

Date

Volunteer Coordinators signature

Date

Appendix

CATEGORY “A” VOLUNTEER:

Volunteers with classroom exposure, who work directly with students, and may have unsupervised time with students, but only while on district property with district personnel on site. Conditions typically are areas outside of the classroom where staff or other adults can observe at most times, but may occasionally include short solitary time with children and short duration of obstructed view, such as on-site tutoring outside of the classroom, school patrol parent volunteers, field trip chaperones (chaperones who drive for field trips must also follow the requirements set forth in the Volunteer Driver procedures, including documentation of current driver’s license and automobile insurance coverage).

Screening requirements:

- Be sponsored or approved by a school site or district employee
- Complete and submit for approval the district School Volunteer Application
- Be able to present a form of current government-issued photo identification (driver’s license, passport, military ID, US or other government identification), sufficient to allow completion of a WATCH (Washington Access to Criminal History) background check through the Washington State Patrol.
- Submit to a WATCH background check **conducted by the site volunteer coordinator** to determine whether the applicant is precluded from volunteering. In rare cases, depending upon information returned, volunteer applicants may require fingerprinting
- Sign in on the district approved “Volunteer Sign-in Sheet” in the main office
- Upon approval, be required to display a **volunteer identification badge** to be surrendered at the conclusion of the day’s volunteer activity.

CATEGORY “B” VOLUNTEER:

Volunteers with unrestricted exposure, who work with children and may be unsupervised by district staff. This volunteer likely will have direct and unsupervised interaction with children. Typical examples include volunteer walk-on coaches, senior high support personnel for athletics, off-site tutoring, mentoring, and overnight chaperones. Conditions typically include an off-campus setting and unsupervised solitary time. Returning Category B volunteers who have a current fingerprint clearance on file with Safety & Security do NOT need to be fingerprinted annually. A Request for Criminal Background Check (Category B process) must be submitted each year to keep the clearance current.

Screening requirements:

- Be sponsored or approved by a school site or district employee
- Complete and submit for approval the district School Volunteer Application
- New volunteers fingerprints are provided by first contacting our HR department. Volunteer makes an appointment with HR by calling 206.252.0215 (Front Desk). HR will refer volunteer to Safety & Security to submit fingerprints to both State and National databases. Volunteer calls HR Department for more information on hours and appointment scheduling. Volunteer will bring current government-issued picture ID (driver's license, passport, military ID).
- Returning Category B volunteers who have a current fingerprint clearance on file with Safety & Security do NOT need to be fingerprinted annually. However, a WATCH Check must be submitted to the site volunteer coordinator each year to keep their volunteer status current. (A request for Criminal Background Check requiring fingerprinting (Category B process) must be performed every two years to keep their clearance current). All volunteers (Category A/B must submit to an annual WATCH Check.
- Sign in on the district approved "Volunteer Sign-in Sheet" in the main office
- Complies with sign-in procedures at school site and wears name badge while on campus. Surrendered name badge at the conclusion of the day's volunteer activity and/or at the end of volunteer service to the school

STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

District K-12 students who volunteer at schools other than their assigned school is only required to complete and submit the district School Volunteer Application.

VISITORS OR GUESTS:

Visitors or guests who enter a school for a one-time event. This person has no unsupervised exposure or contact with children. Typical examples include Read Across America guest reader, Principal for a Day participant, guest/resource speaker, senior exhibition panel member, one-time volunteer for school or classroom event, or other day or guest-type activity. Parents who attend school to eat lunch or to participate in a parent involvement activity such as "Family Night" with their child (ren) are also considered visitors or guests.

Requirements:

- Sign in on the district approved "Visitor Sign-in Sheet" in the main office.
- Display a **visitor identification badge** which they will surrender following the event or activity.

Visitors with group exposure who have little or no direct unsupervised exposure or contact with children, visitors participating in school activities in open and public settings, and visitors with classroom exposure who work with children and are directly supervised by district staff. Visitor

conditions are typically public settings and classrooms where staff or other adults can observe at all times, no solitary time with children, and always within unobstructed view. Typical examples include classroom tutoring, classroom reading, classroom assistance and after-school programs where supervised by district personnel, as well as non-classroom visitors such as office helpers, non-classroom assistance, organized functions associated with school organizations such as PTA, school foundation, Site council.

Requirements:

- Be sponsored or approved by a school site or district employee
- Sign in on the district approved “Visitor Sign-in Sheet” in the main office
- Display a **visitor identification badge** to be surrendered at the conclusion of the event or activity

