

# 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 personal support.

# Becoming a Volunteer

**To begin volunteering with the school district, you must:**

- ❖ Make sure that you are registered with the school. Applications are available from your school or from the Volunteer Services Department. Make sure and update your contact information as it changes.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Attend the recommended orientation and trainings conducted by the school district and your assigned school (as applicable).
- ❖ 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.)
- ❖ Wear a name badge when volunteering.



# Responsibilities of Volunteers

- ❖ Understand and accept the students in terms of their own background and values.
- ❖ Support and supplement the instructional program of the classroom teacher. *The volunteer's role is assistance, not replacement.*
- ❖ Communicate regularly with the teacher, librarians, or school volunteer coordinator via meetings, notes, logbook, telephone or email.
- ❖ Attend recommended or required orientation and training sessions. Workshops are held to provide growth for the volunteer.
- ❖ Be prompt, dependable, and regular in attendance.
- ❖ 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).
- ❖ Discuss problems that arise with the teacher, librarian, or school volunteer coordinator.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Leave personal concerns and pressures at home. Leave school problems at school.
- ❖ Respect confidentiality with relationship to the school. Ensure that a child's work and behavior in school are held in confidence.
- ❖ 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:**

- ❖ Know as much about the school as possible, including its policies, its people, and its programs.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Sound guidance and direction by someone who is experienced, informed, patient, thoughtful and has the time to invest in giving guidance.
- ❖ A suitable assignment with consideration for personal preference, temperament, life experience, education and employment background.
- ❖ A variety of experiences, through transfer of one activity to another, and through special project assignments.
- ❖ Be heard, have a part in planning, feel free to make suggestions, and have respect shown for an honest opinion or different perspective.
- ❖ The right to recognition through day-by-day expression of appreciation, or some tangible evidence; by being treated as a co-worker.

# Tips for Volunteers

- ❖ Be patient when working with students. Give yourself time to find your niche.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Treat individuals with respect and courtesy and expect the same in return.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Avoid making comparisons between students, between teachers and between schools.
- ❖ Always remember to be fair and consistent.
- ❖ Students make mistakes. Let them know that making mistakes is part of learning. Don't be afraid of making mistakes yourself.
- ❖ Be trustworthy and honest in your approach and attitude. Students will trust and respect you when you are "real."
- ❖ 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 cared enough to call.