



# Volunteer Handbook

## Volunteer Program

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.

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.

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## **Seattle Public Schools Volunteer Program**

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206-252-0631

Handbook originally created by Colin Sexton and Trisha Matthieu Volunteer Services, 2002; second revision, 2009, Susan Hall; third revision, 2013, Ronald McGlone; last revised January 2018. Suggestions or questions concerning this Handbook should be directed to [volunteer@seattleschools.org](mailto:volunteer@seattleschools.org)

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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.

# 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 personal support.



# **Becoming a Volunteer**

To begin volunteering with the school district, you must:

1. Complete the SPS Volunteer Packet and submit it to the school's Volunteer Liaison. Applications are available at [seattleschools.org/volunteer](http://seattleschools.org/volunteer) or your school. Update your contact information as it changes.
2. Complete Adult Sexual Misconduct Prevention course available at [www.seattleschools.org/misconductvideo](http://www.seattleschools.org/misconductvideo)
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. Recognition through day-by-day expression of appreciation, or some tangible evidence by being treated as a co-worker.



# 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

**Seattle Public Schools is committed to ensuring high expectations and high quality schools for every student.**

As part of a system-wide effort to increase the number of Seattle Public School students who graduate from high school prepared for college and the 21st century workforce, Seattle Public Schools has committed to aligning curriculum in core academic subjects across all high schools.

Educational excellence and equity for every student is goal one of our district's Strategic Plan. Our academic program is grounded in standards-based curriculum, with strong, targeted instruction delivered by highly qualified teachers to ensure that every student graduates ready for college, career and life.

Review current curricula and standards at [https://www.seattleschools.org/academics/curriculum/common\\_core\\_state\\_standards](https://www.seattleschools.org/academics/curriculum/common_core_state_standards)

## 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 website at <http://www.seattleschools.org>**

# Safety and Liability

## **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.

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## **Can I hug my student?**

Some students, especially at the elementary level, will naturally become attached and show affection. Students may crave affection and attention, so it is important that you handle the situation with sensitivity. **A front hug is inappropriate and should be avoided.** 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 naturally a part of who 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 the 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
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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 Volunteer Office at [volunteer@seattleschools.org](mailto:volunteer@seattleschools.org) or 206-252-0631.

## **Volunteer Agreement**

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**This agreement is part of the SPS Volunteer Packet and is signed by applicants before being approved to volunteer.**

### **Safety and Liability**

As the relationship with a student progresses, student will likely begin to trust and confide in you. You should take time to listen and show them that you care. It is best practice to avoid making promises and make sure to report to staff any behaviors or communications that concern you.

Personal information about yourself should be shared only as it is relevant to the work you are doing with the student. Do not give any personal contact information to student, including your social media contact information.

Some students, typically at elementary level, will naturally become attached and show affection. Handle the situation with sensitivity. Front hugs are NOT allowed. Instead, carefully put your arm around a child's shoulder and turn it into a side hug or give "high fives." Students should never sit on your lap regardless of age.

### **Working with Children from Diverse Backgrounds**

Students in Seattle Public Schools come from many different families, cultures, and communities--each with its own set of values and beliefs. Be mindful of different cultural norms that every student has. Understanding the students' cultures and helping students' to understand the school culture will increase their ability to learn. Please do not impose your personal values and belief onto the students.

### **Confidentiality**

Students in Seattle Public Schools have the right to expect that information about them will be kept confidential by all volunteers. Additionally, all information contained within a student's educational record is considered confidential and protected by a federal law, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g. Volunteers are expected to maintain student confidentiality.

Each student you work with 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 volunteer site.

## Seattle Public Schools Volunteer Handbook

### Volunteer Agreement

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#### Confidentiality (continued)

You may NOT share information about a student with anyone, including your best friend, significant other, or individuals who are genuinely interested in the student's welfare, such as social workers, scout leaders, clergy, grandparents, or nurses/physicians. Thus, you must refer all such questions to authorized school employees, typically the student's teacher or principal.

Information about a student may be communicated to school staff and school administration. Information shall be communicated immediately if it is a medical emergency OR if a student shares information that indicates a threat of imminent physical injury to the student or others.

Before you speak about a student to another person, remember that violating a student's confidentiality is not only impolite; it's also against the law.

#### Agreement

Volunteer Agreement: I will take the above statements (and the remaining guidelines in the Volunteer Handbook) into consideration during and after my time as a volunteer for SPS. I acknowledge that I have been made aware of where to find the Volunteer Handbook for future reference and to whom I can speak to regarding any questions or concerns I may have. I also acknowledge that I will need to review the Online Adult Sexual Misconduct Video AND meet criteria for background check clearance prior to volunteering with SPS students. In addition, while volunteering, I understand that my photo could be used in a SPS publication unless I opt out with the site coordinator. I understand that volunteering at a school or in a program with students is a privilege and that the Principal or Program Manager can terminate my eligibility to volunteer.

**This agreement is for your reference only. Approved SPS volunteers sign the agreement before starting their service.**

## **Appendix**

### **STUDENT VOLUNTEERS**

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

### **VISITORS OR GUESTS**

**A visitor/guest 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.** This person has no unsupervised exposure or contact with children. Typical examples include a Read Across America guest reader, Principal-for-a-Day participant, guest/resource speaker, senior exhibition panel member, one-time school or classroom event with no unsupervised activity with student, or other day or guest-type activity. **This category includes visitors participating in school activities in open and public settings** where staff or other adults can observe at all time, no solitary time with children occurs, and always within unobstructed view of staff or adult. 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 the PTA, school foundations and Site Council.

Parents who attend school to eat lunch or to participate in a parent involvement activity such as “Family Friday” with their child (ren) are also considered visitors or guests.

#### **Visitors/Guest Must:**

1. Be sponsored or approved by a school site or district employee;
2. Sign in on the district approved “Visitor Sign-in Sheet” in the main office; and
3. Display a visitor identification badge which they will surrender following the event or activity

## **Discrimination is Against the Law!**

Seattle Public Schools Seattle Public Schools (“SPS”) provides Equal Educational Opportunities and Equal Employment Opportunities and does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex; race; creed; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; age; economic status; sexual orientation, including gender expression or identity; pregnancy; marital status; physical appearance; a disability; veteran or military status; or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal. SPS provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

SPS complies with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to: Title IX, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and RCW 49.60 (“The Washington Law Against Discrimination”). SPS’s compliance includes, but is not limited to all District programs, courses, activities, including extra-curricular activities, services, and access to facilities.

**The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination:**

### **Requests for Accommodation**

- Student 504: 206-252-0842 or [504coordinator@seattleschools.org](mailto:504coordinator@seattleschools.org)
- Adult 504: 206-252-0024 or [504ADA@seattleschools.org](mailto:504ADA@seattleschools.org)

### **Sexual Harassment**

- Title IX Coordinator 206-252-0367, [Title.IX@seattleschools.org](mailto:Title.IX@seattleschools.org)

### **All Other Forms of Discrimination**

- Student Matters: 206-252-0707 or [securityoff@seattleschools.org](mailto:securityoff@seattleschools.org)
- Adult Matters: 206-252-0367 or [Title.IX@seattleschools.org](mailto:Title.IX@seattleschools.org)
- Mail: Seattle Public Schools, P.O. Box 34165, Mail Stop 33-157  
Seattle, WA 98124-1165