

Thompson Falls Public Schools



Volunteer Handbook

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Volunteer Orientation

A handbook like this is useful in covering information in a general manner. Volunteers, whether in specific programs such as the “Foster Grandparent Program” or as a volunteer in a certain classroom, need specific information about their volunteer duties. This can be accomplished by attending an orientation/training with other potential volunteers or by meeting individually with the member of the school staff who will be supervising you. For example, volunteers need to know where supplies are located, how to use certain office equipment, as well as specific school practices. Once you've become an experienced volunteer, you may be asked to help with the orientation of new volunteers.

Teachers, Parents, and Volunteers - Partners in Learning

Volunteers have played, and will continue to play an important and valuable role in the Thompson Falls Public School. Students, teachers, staff, parents, and the community benefit from the work of individuals like you who freely share their talents and resources. We also know that as a volunteer, you, too, will be rewarded.

This handbook is directed to volunteers who are parents, older brothers and sisters, grandparents, college, high, or middle school students, retired persons, former teachers and administrators, persons from the business and community leaders, persons of every educational level - in short, to anyone wishing to devote a portion of her or his time to one of the most important systems in any community - public schools. Because we want you to get the most out of your volunteer experience, we want to make sure you are an informed volunteer. Volunteers are a valuable addition to the education team and make a considerable contribution to a school's ability to meet its goals for student achievement. School volunteers assist in school activities under the supervision and direction of school. Screening of volunteers will be made as required by district procedures and are required to complete a fingerprint and background check. Volunteers are directed to sign in at the school office each and every time they arrive to volunteer. One hour a week, one day a week, one day on a special project - your efforts make a difference for students.

You don't need to be an expert in an academic subject to be an effective volunteer in a school. Far more important is a genuine interest in the well-being and education of children. Successful school volunteers possess the following qualities:

- Cooperation and dependability
- Compatibility with children
- A respect for and understanding of confidentiality
- A positive attitude
- Flexibility, friendliness and patience
- A sense of humor
- Responsible citizenship qualities

Teachers and staff know they are fortunate to work with so many committed volunteers. Volunteers in schools help in many different ways: classrooms, playgrounds, libraries, offices, field trips, team sports, and special projects.

Commitment

Whether you are volunteering on a regular basis or for a one-time project or event, arrive a little early so there is time for communication and direction. Also, be sure to let the teacher, librarian, or whoever is supervising your work as a volunteer know when your schedule changes or if you can't make it when you are expected. While there are certain expectations from volunteers to help things run smoothly, we realize you also have expectations from school staff. We are committed to working with you to make sure volunteering is rewarding for everyone.

You're Part of a Team

Be a professional. As a school volunteer, you are a role model for students. Behave toward students and school staff in a respectful manner that sets an example of professionalism and good citizenship.

Communicate

As a school volunteer, it is crucial that the lines of communication stay open and clear. Remember the saying "no question is a dumb question?" Believe it! If you are unsure about what's expected of you, or how to use certain office equipment, please ask someone for direction.

What to Wear

Wearing appropriate, practical, and comfortable clothing when you volunteer is one more way you can be a role model. If you have a question, feel free to ask for a copy of the school's dress code or to talk with the administrator, a teacher, or another school volunteer.

Who is Doing the Teaching?

If you are volunteering in a classroom, make sure you and the teacher are clear on your responsibilities and that you are both comfortable with your duties. The real value for a teacher in having a volunteer is that it frees the teacher to teach.

Interests and Talents

We want to make the best match we can between volunteer opportunities and your interests and talents. Let school personnel or the volunteer coordinator know how you can best contribute. Your input may lead to the development of additional volunteer opportunities.

Discipline or Behavior Problems

As a school volunteer you may notice students disobeying school or classroom rules. Your responsibility is to call such matters to the attention of the teacher or other supervising school personnel. Never take corrective measures into your own hands. There are many ways in which schools are alike; but because schools must fulfill educational needs of students from many diverse backgrounds, each school has a personality or culture of its own. Volunteers should be informed about the school's general disciplinary procedures to avoid any misunderstanding.

Volunteers in the K-8 and 9-12 Grades

Volunteers are strongly encouraged to participate in school-wide training/workshops and activities for volunteers. Volunteering with older students is just as important as in the early grades; it simply has to be adapted to the developmental and educational needs of the students. If you would like to volunteer with older students and are unsure how, feel free to speak to the administrator or a teacher.

Legal Issues – Sign in Procedure and Security

Volunteers are required to sign in at the office. Signing in each time you volunteer also allows school personnel to locate you immediately in case of an emergency. Each school has name badge or sticker for volunteers to wear while at school. For everyone's safety, it's important to know who you are and why you are at school.

Supervision

Volunteers perform under the direction/supervision of school personnel. If a volunteer assists a student or students outside the classroom, they should not be taken to any area except that specified by the teacher or administrator.

Confidentiality

What you hear or observe about students or staff while volunteering in a school is confidential. Even a seemingly harmless comment repeated to another can be misunderstood and cause harm to the school team. If confidentiality is violated, volunteering may be suspended.

Child Care

Parents/guardians are discouraged from bringing children with them to school while they volunteer. Everyone's focus needs to be on the students who are enrolled in the school and involved in learning activities.

Child Neglect and Abuse Reporting

School volunteers are considered mandatory reporters of suspected child neglect and abuse. If a student discloses that they are in a dangerous situation or if you have reason to suspect neglect/abuse, report this immediately and privately to the administrator.

Screening

All prospective volunteers who will be volunteering on a regular basis or has unsupervised contact with students need to complete a Volunteer Registration Form. All prospective volunteers will need to be fingerprinted and have a background check. All necessary paperwork can be picked up from and returned to the District Office. We do not have a school resource officer, so you'll need to contact the Sanders Country Sheriff Dept.

Volunteer Hours

School volunteers help in schools during regular school hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Volunteers are also needed for afterschool programs such as athletics, music, and homework help. Hours and days can be tailored to fit your schedule. If you would like to volunteer in a district school please contact the school office.

One hour a week, one day a week, one day on a special project - your efforts make a positive difference for students.

Volunteers Procedures

Duties for Supervisors and Volunteers

Teacher will:

- Recruit volunteers
- Assign specific days and times are needed for volunteers in the classroom
- Assign specific duties or tasks as needed in the classroom

Administrator will:

- Go through an orientation of the volunteer handbook with the volunteer(s)
- Orientation will cover such things as: dress, school hours, various procedures, programs and services provided by the district, familiarization with staff and school, etc.
- Review the handbook on an annual basis.
- Have primary responsibility of all volunteers

- Assign or re-assign volunteers where they will most benefit the students.

Volunteer will:

- Lend support and supplement regular district staff.
- Help improve level and quality of service to students.
- Help broaden students' experiences through interaction
- Help strengthen school-community relations
- Help parents and community members learn more about school objectives and programs.
- Ensure confidentiality in the workplace.

Notes: _____

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Volunteers

The District recognizes the valuable contributions made to the total school program by members of the community who act as volunteers. By law, a volunteer is an individual who:

1. Has not entered into an express or implied compensation agreement with the District;
2. Is excluded from the definition of “employee” under appropriate state and federal statutes;
3. May be paid expenses, reasonable benefits, and/or nominal fees in some situations; and
4. Is not employed by the District in the same or similar capacity for which he/she is volunteering.

District employees who work with volunteers shall clearly explain duties for supervising children in school, on the playground, and on field trips. An appropriate degree of training and/or supervision of each volunteer shall be administered commensurate with the responsibility undertaken.

Volunteers who have unsupervised access to children are subject to the District’s policy mandating background checks.

Chaperones

The Superintendent may direct that appropriate screening processes be implemented to assure that adult chaperones are suitable and acceptable for accompanying students on field trips or excursions.

When serving as a chaperone for the District, the parent(s)/guardian(s) or other adult volunteers, including employees of the District, assigned to chaperone, shall not use tobacco products in the presence of students, nor shall they consume any alcoholic beverages or use any illicit drug during the duration of their assignment as a chaperone, including during the hours following the end of the day’s activities for students. The chaperone shall not encourage or allow students to participate in any activity that is in violation of District policy during the field trip or excursion, including during the hours following the end of the day’s activities. Chaperones shall be given a copy of these rules and sign a letter of understanding verifying they are aware of and agree to these District rules before being allowed to accompany students on any field trip or excursion.

Any chaperone found to have violated these rules shall not be used again as a chaperone for any District-sponsored field trips or excursions and may be excluded from using District-sponsored transportation for the remainder of the field trip or excursion and be responsible for their own

transportation back home. Employees found to have violated these rules may be subject to disciplinary action.

Cross Reference: 5122 Fingerprints and Criminal Background Investigations

Policy History:

Adopted on: 1/10/2022

Reviewed on:

Revised on:

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Criminal Background Investigations

Board policy requires that any finalist recommended to be employed in a paid or volunteer position with the District, involving regular unsupervised access to students in schools, as determined by the Superintendent, shall submit to a criminal background investigation conducted by the appropriate law enforcement agency or other approved entity. Any offer of employment or appointment will be contingent on results of the criminal background check. In the event that the background check cannot be obtained in a timely fashion, an individual may be recommended for hire or appointment contingent upon positive results of a background check and allowed to work with students through an arrangement which provides for temporary supervision of the employee or volunteer on an as-needed basis.

The following applicants, as a condition for any offer of employment, will be required to authorize, in writing, a name-based and fingerprint criminal background investigation:

- A certified teacher seeking full- or part-time employment with the District;
- An educational support personnel employee seeking full- or part-time employment with the District;
- An employee of a person or firm holding a contract with the District, if the employee is assigned to the District;
- A volunteer assigned to work in the District, who has regular unsupervised access to students; and
- Non-licensed substitute teachers.

Any requirement of an applicant to submit to a fingerprint background check will be in compliance with the Volunteers for Children Act of 1998 and applicable federal regulations. If an applicant has any prior record of arrest or conviction by any local, state, or federal law enforcement agency for an offense other than a minor traffic violation, the facts must be reviewed by the Superintendent, who will decide whether the applicant will be declared eligible for appointment or employment. Arrests resolved without conviction will not be considered in the hiring process, unless the charges are pending.

Legal Reference: § 44-5-301, MCA Dissemination of public criminal justice information
§ 44-5-302, MCA Dissemination of criminal history record information that is not public criminal justice information
§ 44-5-303, MCA Dissemination of confidential criminal justice information
ARM 10.57.113 Substitute Teachers
Public Law 105-251 Volunteers for Children Act

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Policy History
Adopted on: 2-1-2021
Revised on

Thompson Falls Public Schools Volunteer Application

Please PRINT or TYPE the following information and return it to:

**Thompson Falls Public Schools
School Volunteer Program**

Fingerprint and Background
check mailed on: _____
completed on: _____

Circle one: Mr. Mrs. Ms.

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

In case of emergency, call: _____

Phone: _____

I would prefer to work with (circle one or any): K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9-12

My special talents/interests are:

References: List two persons not related to you who have definite knowledge of your skills and character.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Please answer the following questions:

1. Do you have the legal right to work in the United States?

_____ Yes _____ No

2. Are you able with or without reasonable accommodation to perform the functions of the job for which you are applying?

_____ Yes _____ No

3. Have you ever been released or discharged from employment or resigned to avoid such release or discharge?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please explain. Include the date of discharge or resignation and the reason for discharge or resignation.

4. Have you ever been subject to an investigation by the Department of Public Health and Human Services or any other state agency that resulted in a substantiated finding of child abuse or neglect?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please explain the circumstances, including the dates and relevant facts.

5. Have you ever been convicted of, been adjudicated or plead guilty to any violation of criminal law, including criminal convictions resulting from a deferred imposition of sentence or a plea of nolo contendere/no contest, except minor traffic offenses. Please include all convictions that are subject to expungement pursuant to plea agreements.

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please attach and sign a complete description of the circumstances surrounding such conviction. (This may not disqualify a person from consideration from volunteering.)

I agree to become familiar with and follow all Thompson Falls Public Schools policies and procedures.

Signature

Date

