School Volunteer Handbook

Guidelines, Resources, &
Important Information for Volunteers

Partners In Education & Volunteers in Public School
Volusia County Schools

Revised July 2024

Welcome VIPS Volunteer!

Volusia County Schools is very fortunate to have thousands of volunteers like you who are dedicated to supporting our students, staff and schools. Each day our school volunteers display selfless acts of service to assure that all Volusia County public school students receive a quality education in a safe and secure learning environment.

Volunteers work in every aspect of school operation, from classroom and health clinic helpers, one-on-one tutors and mentors, to organizing and staffing special events and extracurricular activities. Volusia Partners become volunteers when they assist with job/career shadowing, career mentoring, youth motivating, resource speaking and other school-to-work programs.

This handbook outlines what is required of you as a Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) volunteer and will give you an overview of the program policies, procedures and guidelines that you should be aware of prior to volunteering. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your school's volunteer coordinator or the Community Information Services at (386) 734-7190, extension 20221.

Thank you for providing your precious time, individual gifts and talents as a VIPS volunteer.

Sincerely,

Denise Ribeiro

Denise Ribeiro, Specialist
Partnerships, Mentors, and Volunteers
Office of Community Information
Volusia County School District

We ♥ volunteers!

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School Volunteer Program

Who is a School Volunteer?

A school volunteer is a person willing to take time to share their wisdom and experience. A school volunteer helps to expand and enrich the students' learning experiences by working under the direction of teachers and school staff.

Occasionally it can be difficult to decide if an individual falls into the classification of a school volunteer. A school volunteer usually meets all of the following criteria:

1. The individual will provide a service to the school.
2. The individual will NOT be compensated monetarily by the school district.
3. The individual will be providing volunteer service for more than one day at any one site (except for chaperones).
4. The individual may have access to students while performing the service.

Qualifications - A genuine interest in students, a professional commitment to your volunteer activity, regular attendance, a cooperative attitude, flexibility, good health, and a willingness to attend training sessions, as needed.

School Volunteer Coordinator

Each school's volunteer program is individualized to meet the needs of the students and teachers at the school. In cooperation with the principal, the school's Volunteer Coordinator directs their volunteer program.

Responsibilities of the school Volunteer Coordinator are:

- Surveying needs of teachers.
- Recruiting and registering volunteers - especially parents.
- Arranging for orientation and training.
- Placing volunteers by matching their skills/interests to job assignments.
- Serving as a resource for volunteers.
- Coordinating school recognition events for volunteers.

Volunteers in Schools: Benefits for Everyone!

The student gains:

- Additional individual attention
- Enriched learning experiences
- An accepting atmosphere for reinforced learning
- A chance to succeed, thus building better self-esteem
- A warm and caring adult who is a friend(ly) and role model

The volunteer gains:

- Assisting students to high achievement
- Personal satisfaction from helping children learn
- Opportunities to learn new skills, polish old ones
- Knowledge and understanding of Volusia County Schools
- Work experience that may lead to a future career

The school gains:

- Positive interaction with the community
- Extra teacher time to provide supplemental instruction
- Improved student achievement and behavior
- Additional services without extra costs
- Increased community understanding and support

The Volusia County community gains:

- Higher quality education
- A more responsive school system
- Better-educated students
- Greater pride and confidence in the educational system

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

—Dr. Seuss

GETTING STARTED

If you are not yet a volunteer in our schools, contact the Volunteer/Partnership Programs Department for assistance. You may also contact a school directly and ask to speak with the school's Volunteer Coordinator. You will be invited to visit the school and asked to complete the online *Application to Volunteer*. Your government-issued photo ID must be scanned prior to volunteering. After you have been cleared to volunteer, the school volunteer coordinator will provide an orientation on school policies and volunteer procedures. A meeting will be scheduled between you and the individual you will be assisting.

Volunteer Registration

Volunteer Application

To become a VIPS school volunteer, interested individuals must complete an online application annually at tinyurl.com/VCSVolunteerApp. Prior to any volunteer work, the online application must be approved and a government issued photo ID must be scanned at the school site or district office. This application process includes field trip chaperones, mentors, business partners who assist students, Volusia County Schools' Speakers Bureau, and employees.

Clearance

In compliance with state law, all volunteers' legal names and birth dates are checked against the sexual predator and sexual offenders database that is maintained by the Department of Law Enforcement.

Fingerprinting for Overnight Chaperones and Band Adjuncts

All overnight field trip chaperones and band adjuncts (working one-on-one with band students) must be fingerprinted and pass a level II background check through the FDLE and FBI. Screening should be complete at least one month prior providing service. Overnight chaperones and band adjuncts are responsible for the payment of fingerprinting. Contact your school volunteer coordinator or the VIPS office for details. Fingerprinting is renewed on a yearly basis.

Renewal

All volunteer approvals expire at the end of each school year. Returning volunteers need to renew and update their application each year after July 1.

Volunteer Guidelines

School Procedures

Each school has specific information for the volunteer to learn. Volunteers need to know fire drill procedures, adult-use restroom locations, school dress code, rules about smoking, parking areas, absence procedures, the location to sign-in and out, wearing an ID badge, opening and closing times of the school, use of the teacher's lounge, use of cell phones, and general regulations in the school.

Classroom Responsibility

As a volunteer, you are never to be left alone with a student or a group of students. These are the teachers' responsibilities. You should always be in the line of sight of a VCS employee.

Volunteers' Children

Volunteers are asked not to bring younger children with them to any volunteer assignments. This presents a liability issue and prevents the volunteer from giving undivided attention to the task at hand and the students. Arrangements could be made to do work at home or, if childcare is arranged and it is given voluntarily, the baby-sitter's hours may count as out-of-school volunteer hours.

If You Must Cancel

Because students and teachers depend on volunteers, please do your best to be prompt and dependable. If an illness or an emergency arises, call the school and ask that the teacher be notified that you are unable to volunteer on that day. For the health and safety of our students and staff, please do not come to school if you are not feeling well.

Appearance and Manner

Volunteers are considered non-paid employees and should be well-groomed and dress professionally. If you are not sure how you should dress, please ask the teacher, your supervisor or your volunteer coordinator. Volunteers should also set a good example to students by maintaining professional conduct and language.

Confidentiality

Respect the confidential nature of anything that you see or hear at the school. Any information about a student's academic progress, behavior or a school-related incident is strictly confidential. Please share any concerns you have with school administration.

Discipline

Discipline of students is the responsibility of the school staff. Any problems should be reported to the teacher or an administrator.

Identification

When volunteering always: 1) report to the school office; 2) sign in at the kiosk; and 3) wear your ID badge. This will identify you as someone who belongs on campus.

Importance of Signing In and Signing Out

Each time you go to a school to volunteer, you must sign in and wear your ID badge, and sign out when your day's service is complete. These requirements are necessary for the following reasons:

- Our students' safety and maintaining campus security is of the utmost importance.
- In case you need to be reached in an emergency, you can be found.
- Verified volunteer service can be used as work experience for future employment.
- Individual volunteers will be recognized for their dedication and service to our schools.
- Schools are eligible for annual state awards are based on their volunteer hours.

Your Volunteer Hours

Please be sure to sign-in at the kiosk to keep track of your volunteer hours. <u>All</u> hours that you provide as a service to the school, including work done at home for the school, should be recorded. These include not only hours in the classroom, but also service hours provided to school's PTA/PTSA, School Advisory Council or special clubs/organizations.

When making a decision as to what constitutes volunteer service, the hours must be completed while providing <u>nonpaid service to the school</u>, not while attending school event (ex: Open House, school play, athletic event, etc.) or eating lunch with your child.

Reporting Child Abuse

If you suspect a student is a victim of child abuse, immediately notify a teacher or school administrator.

Volunteer Status

Volunteers in a school or a program serve at the sole discretion of the building principal, program manager or teacher. Permission to volunteer in a school may be revoked at any time by the building principal or program manager.

Making the Right Match

From preparing materials for a lab experiment, to cleaning lunch tables, or mentoring/tutoring a student one-on-one, there is a volunteer job to suit every person's background and interest. Following is an overview of possible volunteer opportunities available within Volusia County Schools. All of these positions are not available on every school campus. Schools reserve the right to recruit volunteers only for job positions in need at their school. To help with the placement process, please consider the following:

- Would you like to work directly with students?
- Would you like to be a tutor or a classroom assistant, an office worker, motivator/mentor, or to work with exceptional students?
- Do you have special talents and/or skills that would benefit music, art, drama, physical education, or an extra curricular program?
- Would you prefer elementary, middle, or high school?
- How much time can you commit to volunteering?
- What days or hours do you prefer?
- Can you make a weekly commitment or are you only available occasionally?
- What experience do you have that would prepare you for your volunteer job?
- What is your motivation for volunteering?

Volunteer Job Descriptions

Art Volunteer

- Works with small groups on special projects
- Helps teacher with preparations and clean-up
- Assists in designing and building stage sets for school performances
- Creates and/or makes costumes

Classroom Volunteer

(Reading, Basic Math, English, Science, Social Studies)

- Reads to children or listens to them read
- Uses flash cards to help students learn words, multiplication tables, and word sounds
- Assists younger children with learning the alphabet, colors, numbers and in identifying letters, shapes, rhyming words, etc.
- Supervises learning centers, games, and other areas where an extra pair of hands are needed
- Assists students with special projects
- Assists students in academic work without evaluating
- Chaperones on field trips
- Prepares bulletin boards or hands-on teaching materials

Clerical Volunteer

- Assists the support staff in the operation of our schools

Family Center Volunteer

- Assists staff in daily operations of the Family Center
- Responsibilities might include tutoring, reading, telephoning, baby-sitting, assisting with check-out of materials, making games, repairing/cleaning equipment and organizing materials

Field Study Chaperone

- Assists teachers during field trips
- Takes responsibility of a group of students assigned by the teacher
- Specific chaperone guidelines are provided by the school

Guidance Volunteer

- Works with small groups on special projects
- Files and organizes paperwork, assists with bulletin boards and special project decorations, generates certificates
- Tutors or mentors students
- Might become a career or special topic classroom presenter

Health Clinic Volunteer

- Provides tender loving care (the best medicine)
- Helps conduct health screenings
- Maintains health room logs and supplies
- Takes care of minor injuries

Horticultural/Agricultural Volunteer

- Assists agricultural or horticultural teachers
- Helps special interest clubs with beautification projects
- Works with FFA or gardening clubs
- Helps with school exhibits at the County Fair.

Media Center Volunteer

- Responds to teachers' and students' requests for services
- Works at the circulation desk; shelves books
- Operates audio/visual equipment
- Assists with book fairs

Music/Band Volunteer

- Accompanies choral groups as a pianist
- Works with small groups on special projects
- Files and organizes music and uniforms
- Travels with students to performances
- Organizes fundraisers

Physical Education Volunteer

- Helps the PE teacher with team games
- Helps with field day events

School Advisory Council Volunteer

- Serves on the school's advisory council through an election process
- Develops strategies for improving areas of need
- Participates in the development of the School Improvement Plan

Speakers Bureau Volunteer

- Provides students with the opportunity to learn about careers, hobbies, talents, travel experiences, and skills
- Presents slides or videotapes
- Discusses training or qualifications needed for a profession/career.
- Extends the students' learning environment beyond the school's walls
- Discusses training or qualifications needed for a profession or career field

Tutor Volunteer

- Works with small groups to reinforce basic skills
- Works at any grade level and in any subject area
- Offers remedial help or reinforcement activities
- May provide additional challenges to gifted students

Youth Motivator/Mentor Volunteer

- Works with an at-risk student needing extra support
- Serves as a role model and advisor, helping the student understand how education will help him or her reach personal goals
- Encourages school attendance; discourages tardiness
- Attends a mentor training which provides an overview of the program and mentoring responsibilities/conduct
- Minimum commitment is approximately 30 minutes per week for a minimum of 12 consecutive weeks, but preferable for one year

Opportunities Based on Availability

Even if you are not sure what you might like to do as a school volunteer, you probably know when you are and are not available. Is your schedule flexible and time is not an issue? Or do you work and would only be available occasionally at night or on the weekends? Maybe you work full-time, but at night, so you still could volunteer during the school day. Some professionals are able to fit an hour of mentoring or tutoring into their schedule, once a week, during their lunch time. Some employers allow flex hours or employee release time to volunteer one hour each week.

Your availability, whether it is during the day, night or weekend is an important consideration. Also, whether you can commit to a weekly schedule or only sporadically will effect the volunteer opportunities offered to you by schools.

Important Things to Remember

When Working with Students

- Follow school confidentiality policy in regard to students and staff
- Volunteers do not diagnose student weaknesses and strengths, prescribe activities for students, or evaluate student progress.
- Never be alone with students—a school employee should always be present
- Volunteers' discussions with teachers should not disrupt class time
- Limit the use of personal cell phones to emergencies only
- Volunteers should be in good physical and mental health
- Always dress appropriately
- Do not use any form of tobacco or alcohol on school grounds

- Do not share religious or political views
- Volunteers may not give any medication to students
- Volunteers' comments should not be written on student papers.
- Volunteers should not laugh at or belittle student answers or efforts
- Volunteers are assigned only to staff members who request their services
- Comparing and criticizing teachers and students is not acceptable volunteer behavior
- Volunteers may not hold informal parent/teacher conferences or leisure conversations with staff members or other volunteers during volunteer time
- Volunteers may not conduct personal business at school
- Volunteer may not take photographs of students, unless permitted by a school administrator. Never post any student photographs or student information on social networks
- Volunteers should never touch students in any way that is aggressive, disciplinary or sexual in nature
- Volunteers should not use profane or inappropriate language
- Volunteers should contact ONLY school staff members with any concerns regarding students

Safety Guidelines

- Be aware of school playground regulations
- Supervise climbing activities carefully
- Certain materials need to be watched closely: scissors, saws and woodworking tools, sand (it can damage eyes), glass items, pointed objects (such as a math compass or knife), cooking utensils and pans
- Do not allow a child to use a paper cutter or adult scissors; handle hot dishes, pans, or ovens; move a pan containing hot grease or boiling water; remove pans from a stove

Remember:

- Know and follow all of the school's safety rules
- If an accident occurs, immediately notify a staff member
- Never move a child involved in an accident; a member of the school staff will initiate proper procedures
- If you are hurt or involved in an accident while serving in your volunteer capacity, you should immediately report the incident to the school office and complete an accident report

CHAPERONE GUIDELINES

(from the Field Trip Procedures Manual)

- An approved and cleared Volusia County Schools Volunteer (VIPS) Application must be verified by the school volunteer contact before a chaperone attends a field trip.
- There will be a minimum of one (1) chaperone to ten (10) students.
- Chaperones will be designated by the teacher and should be 18 or over and no longer a K-12 student.
- Chaperones will always be responsible for a group of students assigned by the teacher.
- Chaperones, always, will supervise their group, keep assigned group together and keep the safety of the students in mind.
- All chaperones must dress appropriately.
- Do not use profane or inappropriate language.
- Do not buy drinks, snacks or souvenirs for the group unless it has been planned as part of the trip.
- Chaperones are encouraged to get to know the students in their group in order to make the field trip a great experience for everyone.
- Follow the planned timeline and itinerary. Be sure the group is in the right place at the right time.
- Chaperones will be responsible for contacting the teacher twice during a full day field trip or once during a half-day field trip.
- Do not use cell phones except for communication with the school field trip contact and for emergency use.
- Chaperones will be responsible for following the field trip procedures as outlined by the teacher.
- Chaperones will refrain from using any tobacco or tobacco-like (e-cigs, etc.) in the presence of students.
- Chaperones are not permitted to consume alcoholic beverages while participating in a school board activity.
- Family members not designated as chaperones by the teacher may not participate in the field trip.
- Parents, siblings (including infants), other family members, and students who are not student participants in a field trip will not be permitted to join a field trip at its destination.
- Chaperones will ride the school bus or the transportation provided by the school (any exceptions must be approved by the principal well in advance of the field trip). Family members not designated as chaperones by the teacher are not allowed on school provided transportation.

Helping Students Learn

- A student's name is very important. Make sure you say and spell it correctly.
- Make sure your student knows and can pronounce your name. You might give the student a card with your name written on it.
- LISTEN! Show that you are interested in each student as a person. Listen carefully to what the student has to say.

- Students make mistakes. Assure them that this is part of learning.
- Build the student's self-confidence. Praise your student honestly and frequently.
- Encourage students to feel, smell, taste, and listen as well as look at objects. Let students discover.
- Ask questions that may lead students to the answer instead of telling them the answer.
- Let students try new methods, even if you know an easier way.
- Give the students as much time as they need to understand new ideas. Be patient!
- Be reliable. Students will be disappointed when you are absent. Show you care by calling when you can't go to school when expected.
- Allow your own child room to grow. Volunteer in a location other than your child's classroom.

Students Learn By:

- Doing - not by passive observing
- Asking questions and searching for answers to their questions
- Discovering - using all their senses, whenever possible
- Experimenting - sorting and combining objects
- Repeating experiences
- Building confidence in themselves

Communicating with Students:

The following suggestions are provided to help you communicate with students to get positive results.

- Be sure the students understand what you're saying. We sometimes use words they do not comprehend.
- Keep your voice as low as possible. The students will get louder as your voice increases in volume.
- Instruct students as though you expect them to comply. Give sufficient warnings and time. Example: *"Jason, in five minutes you'll need to stop painting and put your apron away."*
- If students gain your attention and praise only when they behave, they will soon learn that you expect proper conduct.
- Positive statements greatly influence students' attitudes about themselves and contribute to their success-building experiences.

Some expressions to boost a student's self-image:

"I like the way you're working."
"That's right! Good for you."
"That's quite an improvement."
"Good thinking."
"I'm very proud of the way you worked today."
"It looks like you put a lot of thinking into this."
"That's respectful behavior. Thank you!"

PRIDE - Goals for a School Volunteer

***P**rovide* individual educational assistance to students.

***R**elieve* the teacher of some non-instructional tasks and duties.

***I**mprove* students' self-worth by increasing the opportunity for educational achievement.

***D**emonstrate* community interest, concern, and support for the educational system.

***E**nhance* all aspects of the educational process and enrich the curriculum.

Q & A

How do I become a volunteer?

Contact the Volunteer Coordinator at the desired school or call PIE and VIPS. You will be asked to complete the *online Application to Volunteer*. To complete the process, your government issued ID must be scanned. Applicants may not be placed in a volunteer position prior to clearance. You can contact the VIPS office to check on the status of your clearance.

I do not have teaching experience. Can I still volunteer?

Yes! A teaching background is not required since volunteers work under the direction of the professional staff. ***Qualifications for a school volunteer are****:* a personal desire to help, sincere interest in students, ability to follow school procedures and policies, and a willingness to make a definite time commitment. Any necessary training will be provided by the teacher or at a special workshop.

How do I find out which volunteer services are needed?

Each school has a volunteer coordinator who will assist you in your placement. Some schools hold informative orientations which explain the volunteer program and opportunities available. Your volunteer assignment is determined by your skills, interests and preferences, as well as by the needs of individual schools and teachers.

I'd like to volunteer, but I can't offer my services on a regular basis. Can I still volunteer?

Yes! You may volunteer on special school projects or with PTA/ PTSA. The time commitment will depend on the specific project. Another possibility is to arrange to take volunteer work home to execute at your convenience.

Suppose I don't feel qualified to perform the assignment I have agreed to undertake?

Feel free to say so. Remember, there are many different jobs. Talk to your teacher/supervisor or volunteer coordinator for possible reassignment. You may also call the district office for placement at a different school.

May I choose the teacher with whom I want to work?

Volunteers are placed only in classrooms where teachers have specifically requested assistance. Permission to volunteer in school may be revoked at any time by the building principal or program manager.

I would like to volunteer, but I have a younger child. Can I bring my child with me?

No. Taking younger children with you to school presents a liability problem for the school. In addition, having a very young child in a classroom interrupts class procedures, disrupts the students, and prevents the volunteer from giving full attention to the work the teacher has prepared. However, you can still help the school by making arrangements to do work at home.

What do I do about discipline?

Disciplinary action is the responsibility of the teachers and school staff. ***Volunteers do not enforce discipline.*** Think instruction instead of discipline. Request students to work according to the rules in the classroom. Immediately notify the teacher if there is a discipline problem.

My friends and neighbors will ask me about school. What may I say?

We want you to talk about your school and your involvement. But you may have access to "privileged" information, which must be treated as confidential. This includes information about a student's academic progress, behavior or a school -elated incident. Privileged information is important school business and must never be discussed outside of the school. Also, remember that criticizing school personnel and school practices are not acceptable. In school, you are a professional working with other professionals.

Volunteer Checklist

I have:

- ❑ talked with the school's volunteer coordinator
- ❑ completed an *online Application to Volunteer*
- ❑ waited for my application to be processed and cleared prior to volunteering
- ❑ participated in an orientation/training session
- ❑ been assigned to a teacher or a supervisor of a project/activity
- ❑ a specific place and time to work

I know:

- ❑ the school layout, parking, and facilities available
- ❑ the school/classroom discipline policy
- ❑ classroom policies, procedures, and rules
- ❑ fire drill procedures and safety rules
- ❑ where and when to report to work
- ❑ where the sign-in book/computer and namebadges are located
- ❑ what to do if I must be absent
- ❑ what to do if I am working with a substitute teacher
- ❑ where instructional materials/tools are kept
- ❑ what is expected of me

Notes

School Board Members
Ms. Jamie M. Haynes, District 1
Mrs. Anita Burnette, District 2
Mrs. Jessie Thompson, District 3
Mr. Carl G. Persis, District 4
Mr. Ruben Colòn, District 5

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