VALDEZ CITY SCHOOLS

Volunteer Handbook



Guidelines and Expectations for Volunteers in Valdez City Schools

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering in Valdez City Schools. Our schools depend on volunteers and value your contributions. Your willingness to serve the students and staff of the district is greatly appreciated. This handbook outlines the guidelines and expectations that volunteers must follow to create safe and successful experiences for students, staff and volunteers. All volunteering relationships established through Valdez City Schools must take place with students on the school campus during school hours or at other authorized school activities only.

You Are Part of an Education Team

Volunteers who are committed to helping students be successful are important members of the school team. These individuals are essential to bringing the outside world to the school. Students need contact with individuals who can share experiences and bring other perspectives into the classroom. They need adults who can guide them through the learning process.

Goals

- Enrich the curriculum
- Enrich students' learning opportunities
- Provide help for individual students
- Provide opportunities for meaningful service
- Support staff with non-instructional tasks
- Establish a school and community partnership for quality education
- Enhance all aspects of the educational process

Work closely with the school staff

- Follow the direction of a school staff member
- Accept direction and suggestions from staff
- Respect the privacy of staff and students by not discussing school matters away from the classroom
- Understand that evaluation of a students' learning can only be done by the staff
- Commit to supporting and improving education for all students
- Seek help from school staff when you need additional information or instruction
- Share ideas and constructive comments with the staff
- Acknowledge that staff are responsible for discipline

Enjoy working with students

- Establish a good rapport with students
- Provide assistance without doing the students' work
- Show a genuine interest in each student
- Accept each student and encourage the best from him or her
- Use patience and kindness

Sometimes a volunteer placement may not be a fit for the volunteer, the staff or the school. If your volunteer placement does not work for you, the staff or the school for whatever reason, your volunteer assignment may be ended, modified or changed to a new assignment. You may request a different placement if you wish to continue volunteering.

Volunteer Expectations

Volunteers are expected to

- Sign in and wear an ID badge on school grounds at all times
- Wear appropriate attire
- Show respect for all staff and students
- Share concerns regarding students with the appropriate school staff only
- Help focus their attention on their volunteer services, by leaving their other children in the safe care of someone else

Volunteers are encouraged to

- Contact the school if unable to make scheduled volunteer time
- Turn cell phones off (or silence them) while volunteering
- Refrain from making personal calls while on the school campus

Ground Rules for School District Facilities

- No smoking, vaping, or tobacco products allowed, including on athletic fields and in district vehicles
- No weapons allowed
- No drugs or alcohol allowed
- Do not use school equipment for personal purposes

Maintain Student Confidentiality

Volunteers are expected and required to keep all 'student information' that they obtain while working as a volunteer for the district confidential. In fact, Federal Law strictly prohibits school districts and district volunteers from releasing any student information without parent/guardian permission. Student information includes all academic, medical and personal information. Disclosure of student information by a volunteer is a violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and may subject the volunteer and the district to civil liability. It is very important that you keep information about students confidential. It is important that you do not discuss students or their progress with others –even their parents. Do not make references to a student's abilities in front of other students. The only person who should be told about a student's work is school staff. If parents ask about their student's progress, suggest in a friendly way that they contact the staff.

Harassment at School

The Valdez City Schools Harassment Policy calls for a commitment to an educational environment that is free from all types of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation. Volunteers are expected and required to respect and uphold both the Valdez City Schools Board of Education Policy 4119.12/4219.12/4319.12 *Harassment* and Board Policy 5141.42 *Professional Boundaries of Staff with Students*. The district asks each volunteer to read over these policies and become familiar with it prior to volunteering in any of the schools (policy attached).

Civility Policy Highlights

- Promote a positive environment in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect
- Empower all people to reach their full potential
- Remove barriers of bigotry and prejudice that infringe upon individual freedom, respect and progress
- Eliminate discrimination and bullying in our schools and departments
- Recognize the strength of diversity
- Recruit, support, and retain a culturally diverse workforce

Important Guidelines

Safe Interaction with Students

The school board expects that the entire staff and volunteers shall strive to set the kind of example for students that will serve them well in their own conduct and behavior and contribute toward a school atmosphere that is friendly but has a degree of formality.

General Guidelines for Safe Interaction with Students:

All interactions with students should be professional and focused on teaching and learning.

Do not

- Take a student or students on private outings
- Initiate social activities with students
- Have a prolonged verbal exchange with students if you have an impromptu encounter at a public place
- Provide childcare for students
- Ask a student to baby-sit for your family
- Engage in Social Networking with students via Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter or any other social networking service to initiate or maintain relationship(s) with any student that is not consistent with appropriate professional behavior and/or boundaries

Communication

Do not say or write things to a student that you would be uncomfortable sharing with the student's parents, the school administrator or staff.

Do not

- Make any comments that are based on gender or could be construed as sexist
- Make any comments and/or innuendos that are sexual in nature or could be construed as sexual
- Make jokes that belittle or diminish another person
- Give students compliments that focus on physical attributes
- Initiate conversations or correspondence of a private and/or personal nature with students

Working Alone with Students at School

- Always keep the door open and lights on
- Do not post anything on class windows that would obstruct a clear view into the room

Gifts
In general, we discourage giving gifts to students. If gifts are provided, they should be:

- Of nominal value
- Identical for all students in the class

Physical Contact with Students
It is the District's expectation that all physical contact between volunteers and students must be professional and appropriate.

Field Trips and Off-Campus Activities
It is the general policy of Valdez City Schools that all off-campus field trip and activity chaperones must be at least 21 years of age. Volunteers who wish to drive students must have at least five years driving experience and must have a valid Alaska State, or state of residence, driver's license. Volunteer drivers must also complete the required driving forms and permission slips and file them with the school.

Extracurricular and Enrichment Activities
Schools often provide before and after-school programs. All extracurricular and enrichment activities must be organized under the authority of Valdez City Schools or comply with all applicable rules and regulations.

Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect
As a volunteer, you are in a unique position to observe students. If you suspect that a student may be the victim of abuse or neglect, report it immediately to the principal, learning specialist, school counselor or other school district employee.