

JARRELL ISD

Mentor Guidelines





On behalf of the Jarrell Independent School District, thank you for mentoring your time and talents to help students and schools improve and succeed.

Your role as a mentor is essential. Whether you assist in a classroom, work with individual students, chaperone special events, set up book fairs, fundraise, or volunteer for PTO, your willingness to help inspires all of us—students, parents, teachers, principals, and administrators alike. It truly does take a village, and we can't do it without you.

As a volunteer parent or community member, you have special responsibilities. These include being knowledgeable about student safety, mentor accountability, and confidentiality. This handbook will help guide you toward a successful experience as a school mentor.

Again, thank you for your commitment to students and schools. Your participation could not be more appreciated, as you make a difference daily!

Sincerely yours,
JISD STAFF

WHAT IS A SCHOOL MENTOR?

A school mentor is a parent, family member, or community member who willingly contributes time or talent to Jarrell Independent School District students. Mentors serve without compensation or employee benefits and without expressed or implied privileges beyond those found in this handbook. Mentoring for the school district is a privilege and may be revoked by the building principal or the community engagement coordinator.

WHY VOLUNTEER?

School mentors are such an important part of our student's education team, helping each child succeed in academic and life goals. Mentors enhance interpersonal experiences for students, provide guidance and support as adult mentors, increase academic success through tutoring, and create a foundation of community support for teachers and education.

When parents, family members, and community members mentor, children prosper. Research shows that student outcomes are strengthened when adults show genuine interest by participating in the school experience through mentoring. As a mentor, you model the rewards of personal goal setting, academic achievement, civic involvement and citizenship, compassionate service, and a lifelong love of learning.

BECOMING A VOLUNTEER...

1. VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Before mentoring for the school district, you must submit a mentor application each year and pass a successful background check. Applications are available on the JISD website. Please submit your application at least ten days before your intended start date. This is especially important for individuals who wish to chaperone events or field trips. All individuals **MUST** have a completed application on file before serving as a mentor.

2. GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION

The mentor application includes confirmation that you have read and agree to abide by important district policies regarding student safety, personal behavior, communication, and confidentiality. All mentors are expected to follow school rules and set a positive and professional example for students.

3. RAPTOR/LOBBY GUARD REGISTRATION

For security reasons, the Jarrell Independent School District utilizes Raptor, an electronic sign-in system that checks all visitors and mentors (including parents) against a national registered sex offender database. It also creates daily visitor and mentor name badges, tallies mentor hours, and enables staff to know who is in the building at all times.

Once you have been approved and placed as a school mentor, you will register with each school by providing your state or federal photo ID (driver's license, military ID, etc.) to be scanned into the Raptor system. Once you are cleared through Raptor, a name badge will be printed for you to wear during that day's visit. Before leaving the building, you will sign out at the office. Future visits are simplified through the use of a self-serve kiosk located in each front office. You'll be able to check in and out by yourself, and print out your name badge without assistance. By signing in and out, we are able to document the high level of mentor participation at each school. Tracking this information is also helpful for recognition and funding purposes.

VOLUNTEER POLICIES...

Student and mentor safety is of primary importance. To help ensure our student's safety and your protection as a mentor, please observe the following policies:

1. CONFIDENTIALITY

All mentors must keep private ANY information regarding student academic, emotional, social, medical, or family information. Disclosure of student information by a mentor violates the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and may subject the mentor or the district to civil liability. Even without mentioning a student's name, details can be used to identify a student or family, thus violating that student or family's right to privacy.

2. CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS

If you hear or are witness to something that causes you concern for a child's safety, or if a student confides in you about an abusive situation, you are required to alert the principal, teacher, school counselor, or community engagement coordinator so that they can further investigate the problem. District staff are required by law to share this information with the proper authorities.

What are some signs of possible abuse?

- Signs of injury, such as welts, bruising, cuts, burns, fractures or swelling
- A history of repeated, untreated, or unexplained physical injury
- A contradiction between the "story" of injury and the physical evidence
- The child appears uncomfortable or afraid when discussing the injury

3. SAFE LOCATION

A. Always work in an open, visible public area. You should never be alone with a student or group of students without a staff member, mentor, or parent nearby. If you are working in a room, leave the door open or stay in a common area where you are in plain sight. All mentors must be in a supervised setting at all times.

B. Please use staff restrooms only. Student restrooms are only for children and teens. Ask at the front office of each school for the location of staff restrooms.

4. SAFE TOUCH

You must maintain adequate physical boundaries between yourself and the student and give each student his or her own safe, personal space. Touching children carries risks, as the mentor can be accused of impropriety, unnecessary physical contact, or sexual harassment. Being alone with a student can prompt an allegation of intimacy. A finding of sexual harassment is just cause for disciplinary action and loss of mentor privileges, and other consequences may include legal action. The best rule of thumb is to avoid all touching. Some forms of touch MAY be acceptable, including handshakes, "high fives," or "fist bumps." However, cultural perspectives, beliefs, and personal history may affect students' boundaries. If a student indicates by word, action, or demeanor that he or she is uncomfortable with touch, the mentor should avoid physical contact except for safety reasons. Students should never sit on your lap or be subject to a hug. No mentor should ever touch a student in anger.

5. SAFE COMMUNICATION

A. No personal correspondence or contact is allowed outside of the school setting. Do not ask for a student's address, phone number, or email address to protect the student's privacy and your own. Likewise, do not share your address, phone number, or email address with a student. You must contact the teacher or community engagement coordinator if you need to get a message to a student.

B. Your conversation should demonstrate respect for others, using language that is not perceived as discriminatory, racist, sexist, or offensive. It is not appropriate to discuss your religious beliefs or to engage a student in a conversation about his or her religious beliefs.

C. Do not ask a student to arrive early or stay late. All schedule changes affecting individual students must be pre-arranged with the district's community engagement coordinator.

D. Do not single out a student for special privileges or spend time only with one student or group. Gifts are not encouraged, but if given, they must be of nominal value and identical for all students with whom you work. Examples of inexpensive gifts are stickers or colorful pencils.

6. GENERAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

- A. Always wear your name badge (printed from Raptor) while on school premises. The badge serves as your building pass and helps identify you to the staff. Sign out from Raptor and leave the building promptly after your mentor assignment for the day is completed.
- B. Dress comfortably yet mindful of your position as a role model for children. Follow the lead of the staff you are assisting.
- C. Do not smoke, drink, or use drugs on school grounds.
- D. If you must cancel due to illness or emergency, please contact the district community engagement coordinator or the school secretary as soon as possible so your message can be relayed to the children or staff affected by your absence. Pre-arranged absences may be worked out directly with the staff who supervise your service or, if you are a tutor, with the community engagement coordinator.
- E. Know that we are here to help! Your happiness is essential to us, and we work hard to place each mentor in just the right spot. If problems arise—with an individual or a group of students, using or understanding instructional material, or even personality conflicts with other adults—we are here to help guide you toward success! You may feel you need more training or wish for a change of classroom, subject area, or grade level. Speaking directly to the teacher or staff member who supervises your work will often resolve misunderstandings or give you important tips for working with the material or students. You are also welcome to contact the community engagement coordinator anytime for help navigating any aspect of your mentor service.

IS THERE ANYTHING VOLUNTEERS SHOULDN'T DO?

Yes! The professional staff at your school is responsible for everything that goes on in your building, including student instruction, safety, and discipline. Mentors supplement and support the program but may not:

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| *Discipline students | *Diagnose student needs |
| *Evaluate achievements | *Counsel students |
| *Discuss student progress with parents | *Access student records |
| *Meet with students outside of the normal school day | |