



BOULDER VALLEY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Volunteer Guidance for BVSD Special Educators

Introduction

Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) recognizes the valuable contribution volunteers can make in supporting our special education programs. This guidance document aims to clarify the role of volunteers in special education settings, dispel common myths, and provide clear guidelines for schools, principals, and special educators.

Can Schools Have Volunteers that Support Special Education Staff?

Yes, absolutely! The special education department in BVSD not only allows but encourages volunteers to support special education staff in our schools. This includes:

- Resource teachers
- Intensive Learning Center (ILC) teachers
- Occupational Therapists (OTs)
- Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs)
- Other special educators in the building

It's a common misconception that volunteers cannot assist in special education settings. In reality, these hard-to-fill positions can greatly benefit from volunteer support, helping to reduce burnout and provide much-needed relief for our dedicated special educators.

Benefits of Volunteers Supporting Special Educators

1. **Reduced Workload:** Volunteers can help with non-instructional tasks, allowing special educators to focus more on direct student support.
2. **Increased Individual Attention:** With volunteer assistance, students may receive more one-on-one or small group attention from teachers and paraeducators.
3. **Material Preparation:** Volunteers can help create and organize educational materials, saving valuable time for teachers and paraeducators.
4. **Community Engagement:** Involving volunteers strengthens the connection between schools and the community.
5. **Enhanced Learning Environment:** Extra hands in the classroom can lead to a more dynamic and supportive learning atmosphere.
6. **Professional Development:** Volunteers may bring unique skills or perspectives that enrich the educational experience.
7. **Stress Reduction:** Having additional support can help alleviate stress for special educators, potentially reducing burnout.

Volunteer Requirements and Process

All volunteers need to be cleared through BVSD's volunteer process. Please visit: [BVSD Volunteer Page](#)

Dos and Don'ts for Volunteers in Special Education Settings

Dos:

1. **DO** maintain strict confidentiality about students' information, including disability labels or IEP goals.
2. **DO** create volunteer folders for material preparation (e.g., books for ILC classrooms).
3. **DO** consider how volunteers can support in general education classrooms or on playgrounds.

4. **DO** consult with OTs and SLPs about potential volunteer tasks that could provide relief.
5. **DO** assign volunteers to assist with organizational tasks, such as organizing materials or setting up learning stations.
6. **DO** allow volunteers to assist in preparing visual aids or adaptive materials.
7. **DO** encourage volunteers to support school-wide inclusion initiatives.

Don'ts:

1. **DON'T** share any confidential information about students including disability labels and IEP goals.
2. **DON'T** have volunteers work with students who are most vulnerable or struggle with changes.
3. **DON'T** place volunteers in ILC classrooms where many students may struggle with changes.
4. **DON'T** have volunteers substitute for classrooms to provide teachers breaks.
5. **DON'T** allow volunteers to be alone with students or make educational decisions.
6. **DON'T** have volunteers administer assessments or tests.
7. **DON'T** expect volunteers to manage challenging behaviors or crisis situations.
8. **DON'T** allow volunteers to access confidential student records or IEPs.

Additional Recommendations

1. **Training:** Provide specific training for volunteers working in special education settings, covering topics such as disability awareness and appropriate interaction techniques.
2. **Regular Check-ins:** Establish a system for regular check-ins between volunteers and special educators to ensure smooth collaboration and address any concerns.
3. **Feedback System:** Create a feedback mechanism for both volunteers and special educators to continuously improve the volunteer program.

4. **Recognition:** Implement a volunteer recognition program to show appreciation for their valuable contributions.
5. **Clear Role Definition:** Clearly define the role and responsibilities of volunteers to avoid any misunderstandings or overstepping of boundaries.
6. **Emergency Procedures:** Ensure volunteers are familiar with emergency procedures and know their role in various scenarios.
7. **Inclusive Practices:** Encourage volunteers to promote inclusive practices and positive attitudes towards students with disabilities.

Conclusion

Volunteers can play a crucial role in supporting our special education programs in BVSD. By following these guidelines and recommendations, we can ensure that volunteer involvement enhances the educational experience for our students with special needs while providing valuable support to our dedicated special educators.

For any questions or further guidance, **please contact the Special Education Department.**