Wrangell Public Schools

Volunteer Guidelines

2026-2027



"Educate and Inspire Every Student"



WELCOME AND THANK YOU!

On behalf of Wrangell Public Schools, thank you for giving your time and talents to help our students and schools succeed.

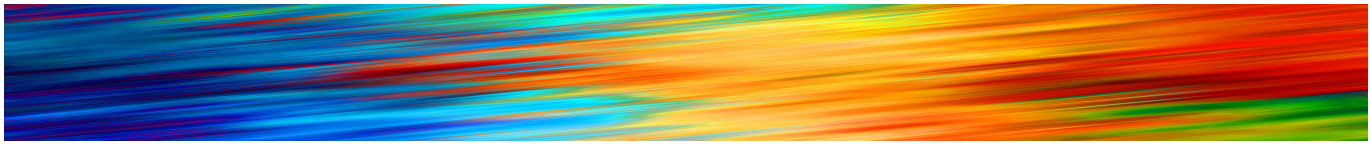
Volunteers matter here. Whether you're reading with a student, chaperoning a field trip, running a book fair table, helping with a fundraiser, serving on a committee, or pitching in on a special project, your willingness to show up makes a real difference. Students notice. Teachers notice. So do we. It takes a village to raise and educate a child, and in Wrangell, you are part of that village.

With this role comes some responsibility. As a volunteer, you'll want to be familiar with our expectations around student safety, accountability, and confidentiality. This handbook walks you through what you need to know to have a smooth and successful experience.

Thank you again for showing up for our students and schools. What you give of your time does not go unnoticed, and it does not go unappreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Garrett, Ed.D.
Superintendent



Becoming a Volunteer

1. **VOLUNTEER APPLICATION**
   Prior to volunteering for the school district, you must submit a volunteer application each year. Applications are available online at www.wpsd.us. Please submit your application at least 10 days prior to your intended start date. This is especially important for individuals who wish to chaperone events or field trips. **All individuals MUST complete an application and receive approval prior to serving as a volunteer.**

2. **BACKGROUND CHECK**
   You will NOT be eligible to volunteer or chaperone until the District can review the online criminal history background check report. The turnaround time for results could take five or more business days. Once your background check has been approved, you will be notified by a district representative. If you are approved as a volunteer/chaperone, that approval is valid for two years from the date of approval. Volunteer/chaperones are required to self-report any convictions that occur in the intervening time between background checks. If you have questions regarding the volunteer/chaperone application, please contact the Human Resources Director.

3. **GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION**
   The volunteer application includes confirmation from you that you have read, and agree to abide by, important district policies regarding student safety, personal behavior, communication, and confidentiality. All volunteers are expected to follow school rules and to set a positive and professional example for students at all times.

4. **VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION**
   Volunteer orientations may be held throughout the school year. This informal session provides information about volunteer policies and opportunities and is also a chance to meet fellow school volunteers. Orientations are not mandatory but are highly recommended.

5. **VOLUNTEER LOG**
   Please sign in and out when volunteering so that we can track volunteer hours for the Report Card to the Public. This also tells us who is in the building in case of an emergency. By signing in and out, we can document the high level of volunteer participation at each school. Tracking this information is also helpful for recognition and funding purposes.

Volunteer Policies

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

1. **CONFIDENTIALITY**
   All volunteers must keep private ANY information regarding student academic, emotional, social, medical, attendance, discipline, or family information. Disclosure of student information by a volunteer is a violation of the **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)** and may subject the volunteer 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.

   Each student with whom you work has a right to expect that nothing that happens to or with them will be repeated to anyone other than authorized school employees, as designated by the administrators of each school. Even when discussing a student with those who are directly involved in a student's education, such as a teacher, principal, or counselor, you may not share otherwise confidential information with them unless it is relevant to the student's educational growth, safety, or well-being. This obligation extends to written or verbal information.

   Parent, friends, or community members may, in good faith, ask you questions about a student's problems or progress. Again, you must refer all such questions to the authorized school employees. You may not share information about a student, even with members of your own family or their family.

   Employees have a right to expect their personal information also be kept confidential. Volunteers may become aware of employee personal information through the course of their activities. You are asked to respect the privacy of the individuals by not sharing this information with others. If you have a concern about this private information, you may discuss your concerns with the associated school principal or program supervisor.

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 or school counselor so that they can further investigate the situation. District staff members 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
   - The child alludes to, or seems preoccupied with, sexual matters

3. PHOTOS AND STUDENT PRIVACY

Volunteers to our schools and at school-related events (including class parties and field trips) are welcome to take photos of their own child(ren) for their personal use. However, volunteers and visitors are asked to respect the privacy and confidentiality of other families. At school and school events (including field trips) students have an expectation of privacy. This is governed by the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Volunteers should not take photographs or videos which clearly identify someone else's child or their work and share them on social media websites.

4. SAFE LOCATION

A. **Always work in an open, visible public area**. You should not ever be alone with a student or group of students without a staff member, volunteer, 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 volunteers must be in a supervised setting at all times.

B. **Do not meet with students outside of school. Never go offsite with a student, and never give them a ride in your car.** Once you become a district volunteer, your volunteer experience is limited to the public-school setting. Meetings with students in their homes or at any other public or private location will result in dismissal from the school volunteer program.

C. **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.

5. SAFE TOUCH

It is very important that you maintain adequate physical boundaries between yourself and the student, and that you give each student his or her own safe, personal space. Touching children carries risks, as the volunteer 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 volunteer 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 perspective, beliefs, and personal history may affect a student's personal boundaries. If a student indicates by word, action, or demeanor that he or she is not comfortable with touch, the volunteer should avoid physical contact except for safety reasons. In general, treat the child as you would an adult. If you would not pat an adult on the head or put your arm around an adult's chair, then you should not do so with a student. Students should never sit on your lap or be subject to a hug. **No volunteer should ever touch a student in anger.**

6. SAFE COMMUNICATION

A. **No personal correspondence or contact is allowed outside of the school setting (including contact via social media).** To protect the student's privacy and your own, do not ask for a student's address, phone number or email address. Likewise, do not share your address, phone number, or email address with a student. **If you need to get a message to a student, you must contact the teacher or school principal**.

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 school principal.

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

6. GENERAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

A. Wear your name badge at all times while on school premises. The badge serves as your building pass and helps identify you to staff. Sign the volunteer log and leave the building promptly after your volunteer 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. Do not bring other children when volunteering. We love children and encourage you to bring younger siblings to family events. When scheduled to volunteer, we ask that small children and babies do not accompany our volunteers. We desire a positive and professional environment where our volunteers and staff can entirely focus on student safety and educational needs, as well as effectively supervise activities and tasks at hand. Thank you for your help and understanding.

E. If you must cancel due to illness or emergency, please contact the school secretary as soon as possible so that your message can be relayed to the children or staff who may be affected by your absence. Pre-arranged absences may be worked out directly with the staff who supervise your service.

F. **Know that we are here to help!** Your happiness is very important to us, and we work hard to place each volunteer in just the right spot. If problems arise—with individual students or a group of students, with 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 you may wish a change of classroom, subject area, or grade level. Often, speaking directly to the teacher or staff member who supervises your work will resolve misunderstandings or give you important tips for working with the material or students. You are also welcome to contact the school principal at any time for help in navigating any aspect of your volunteer service.

Building Positive Relationships

Getting to know your student is essential to the success of your volunteer experience. Your initial contact affords an important opportunity to get off to a good start. Be sure to tell your student something about yourself and your family. Also, make sure to ask the correct pronunciation and spelling of your student's name. This is a sign of respect and very important to children.

Your student may:

- Need to know why learning to read, write, or do math is worth the time and effort
- Not know many adults and may seldom be alone with an adult
- Not know a happy adult or one who trusts them, or whom they can trust
- Have learned many defenses against failure
- Be frightened, antagonistic, or challenging at first
- Test your patience for weeks and then come to admire you
- Need to know that it takes effort to learn

- You want to ensure that each tutoring session is a pleasant encounter. Affirm your student in genuine ways. Praise effort above all. (Nice job, Good work effort, Way to go!, etc.)
- Take a student-centered approach to learning. Let his or her interests lead you, and learn about your student's perspective on life. You want the student to feel at ease and enjoy being with you and learning from you.
- Let your student know that it is all right to make mistakes or to say, "I don't know." Be honest, without being negative, when you are stumped for an answer. Let your student see that grappling with difficult problems is a natural part of learning.
- In many ways, a successful volunteer is a role model for life. Letting your student see you working hard (without "doing" the work for the student), keeping focused on the task at hand, and cooperating with as well as listening to others, can make an impact on your student over time.
- The greatest gift you can give a student is yourself. Who you are as a person is the most important thing to share. Relax and be yourself but know that you are being watched closely by your student.
- No matter what the conditions, always show respect for your student's family members. Our parents really love their children, but some may be unable to provide them with the necessary tools to live successfully in society. If you feel that there are signs of abuse or any cause for concern regarding a student's wellbeing, you must immediately share your concern with the teacher and/or building principal.

Effective Ways to Work with Children

- Be warm and friendly – learn the children's names and show interest in what they are doing and saying – you are very important as a listener.
- When working with children, encourage them to do their own thinking – give them plenty of time to answer; silence often means they are thinking and organizing what they want to say or write.
- Keep your commitment; the children will expect you and look forward to you coming. If you know you will be gone, tell them in advance. Keep all promises and make none that you cannot keep – children will not forget.
- If you don't know an answer or are unsure of what to do, admit it to the children and try to work it out together – always feel free to ask the teacher of the children for help when you need it.
- Use tact and positive comments – encourage children – look for something worthy of a compliment, especially when children are having difficulties. Acknowledge effort and participation, even if the desired result is not yet achieved.
- Accept each child as she or he is – you do not need to feel responsible for judging a child's abilities, progress or behavior.
- Respect a child's privacy – confidentiality is essential to our school. Information gathered or impressions made about a child must remain confidential.
- Maintain a sense of humor and be flexible. No two days or children are alike.
- Be consistent with the teacher's rules for classroom behavior, schedule and atmosphere.

Characteristics of an Effective Volunteer

- Positivity: The belief that outcomes can be changed through action
- Empathy: The ability to feel what another person is feeling
- Evenness: Patience, gentleness, understanding and fairness
- Open Mind: A willingness to accept others and their point of view
- Initiative: The ability to see what needs to be done and follow through
- Enthusiasm: A liking for your subject and a wish to share it with others
- Reliability: Punctuality, dependability, accountability

For more information about volunteering in the Wrangell Public Schools, please contact the school principal.

Wrangell Public Schools
Volunteer/Chaperone Code of Conduct

The Volunteer/Chaperone Code of Conduct outlines expectations for all WPS volunteers and chaperones.

Volunteers' role and responsibilities in schools and programs:

- Understand that your role is a supportive one. The teacher and principal are completely in charge. If the teacher leaves the room, the teacher in the next room assumes responsibility. You must not be left in charge of a classroom.
- Volunteers are only permitted to work with students on school ground or under the supervision of district staff.
- Always maintain student confidentiality. Do not discuss any student with anyone except teachers, counselors, and principals.
- Use good judgement and avoid any compromising situations. Work in a room with other people at all times. Never be left a lone with one student out of view of other people. Always keep the door open. Always use adult bathrooms.
- Discipline is absolutely prohibited. Ask the teacher or district staff for assistance with problematic student behavior.
- If you become aware of suspected child abuse through your volunteer activities with the district, immediately report your concerns to an administrator.
- Maintain a constructive attitude. Don't make negative comments about the school, its personnel or the students to other volunteers or individuals outside the school.
- Be prompt and consistent in your attendance. Staff depend on volunteers and plan their work accordingly. Students depend on volunteers even more.
- Notify the school or department as soon as possible if you will be late or absent.
- Keep an accurate record of your attendance by signing in each day you volunteer.
- Dress and act professionally.
- Never be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when with students.
- Do not smoke on school grounds or at any time around students.
- Adhere to district, school, and classroom policies, rules, and regulations.
- Refer any student in need of first aid or any type of medication to the teacher or school office staff.
- Learn and follow fire drill and other emergency procedures and school rules.
- Notify the principal of any accident you had on school grounds or while on a school-sponsored field trip.

Chaperone's role and responsibilities

- Set an example for proper behavior and take reasonable measures to protect the health and safety of the students in their charge. In addition, chaperones must be supervising students at all times.
- Enforce all WPS Activity Travel Procedures and report all violations of the rules to the appropriate building principal.
- Are responsible for students during all free time activities (such as movies, dances, and contact with individuals not associated with the District).
- Adhere to curfew laws and are expected to remain within the lodging room for the duration of the night without exception.
- Abide by Alaska State Law.
- While traveling with students, the use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited.
- Always carry a copy of the students' participation agreement and medical release forms.
- Funding for lodging, transportation, activities within the agenda and per diem for meals will be provided by the school. Chaperones will be expected to provide personal funding for all other expenses.
- Immediately notify the building principal if the student is having medical problems, is being returned to the district, is being held by the police or is involved in an accident. It is the responsibility of the building principal to immediately notify the parent/guardian.
- Determine if a student is using or is under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs and immediately notify the building principal if use is suspected.
- If a student leaves the group without authorization and cannot be located immediately or will not return to the group, the chaperone shall immediately contact the building principal and if the situation warrants, contact the police.
- Only movies rated "G" and "PG-13" shall be permitted for student viewing.
- Time shall be designated each day of travel for students to complete homework assignments.

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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. Volunteers supplement and support the program, but may not:

- Discipline students
- Have access to materials in students' permanent record files
- Diagnose student needs
- Evaluate achievements
- Counsel students
- Discuss student progress with parents
- A volunteer is never considered a substitute for a member of the school staff

School & Staff Information

WRANGELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS 350 Bennett Street Wrangell, AK 99929 (907) 874-2347	Joshua Garrett, Ed.d., Superintendent jgarrett@wpsd.us Kimberly Powell, Administrative Assistant kpowell@wpsd.us
EVERGREEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 350 Bennett Street Wrangell, AK 99929 (907) 874-2321	Cathy Winn, Principal cwinn@wpsd.us Kendra McDougall, School Secretary kmcdougall@wpsd.us
STIKINE MIDDLE SCHOOL 312 Church Street Wrangell, AK 99929 (907) 874-3393	G**reg Clark**, Principal gclark@wpsd.us Brook McHolland, School Secretary bmcholland@wpsd.us
WRANGELL HIGH SCHOOL 312 Reid Street Wrangell, AK 99929 (907) 874-3395	G**reg Clark**, Principal gclark@wpsd.us K**athleen Easterly**, School Secretary keasterly@wpsd.us
HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT 350 Bennett Street Wrangell, AK 99929 (907) 874-2347	Kimberly Powell, Human Resources Director kpowell@wpsd.us

SCHOOL VOLUNTEER APPLICATION & AGREEMENT

(Confidential-Please Print)

Welcome and **thank you** for your interest in volunteering with Wrangell Public Schools. In an effort to keep our schools safe, we ask that you take a few moments to complete this volunteer application form.

Name (Last, First, MI):		**Date:**
Phone:	**Email:**	
Mailing Address (PO Box, City, State, Zip):		

In Case of Emergency contact:_____

(Name) (Relationship to you) (Phone)

Reminder, you must always disclose criminal information. Have you ever:

1. Been convicted, pled guilty, pled nolo contendere or arrested for a criminal offense, other than a minor traffic violation? **YES**_____ **NO**_____
2. Arrested for a drug or sexual related offense or act of violence? **YES**_____ **NO**_____
3. Reported for child abuse/sexual activities involving a student or minor or had charges filed against you by a school district, state/county agency, police, or court? **YES**_____ **NO**_____

If **YES**, please explain the type(s) of offense(s), location(s), and date(s) in the space below. Attach a sheet if necessary.

As a volunteer for the Wrangell Public School District, I acknowledge that I am a role model for students and my actions need to reflect the professional conduct of an adult working with children. I further understand that:

- My time and service in this volunteer capacity are given without promise, expectation or receipt of any compensation, benefits, or other remuneration.
- The Superintendent or designee will create appropriate procedures for attracting, screening, and training community and parent volunteers.
- Volunteering in the District is a privilege, not a right.
- The District will conduct screening and criminal background checks before any volunteer is placed in a position where he or she will be left alone with a student.
- The District may decline the services of any volunteer at any time, with or without cause, and that I may withdraw from participation at any time for any reason**.**
- The District may terminate any volunteer arrangement at any time for any reason.
- All information collected on volunteers will be considered confidential to the extent allowed by law and will only be used to protect the students or minimize disruption to the educational environment.

Further, I understand that I must:

- Comply with all district policies, state, and federal law, including, but not limited, to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99).
- Adhere to the District's policies regarding the confidentiality nature of student records and information.
- Respect the confidential nature regarding students, families, and staff of the school building/district. I will keep confidential information private after I leave school and after I cease serving as a volunteer.
- Immediately report to the principal or administrator with any issues/concerns.
- Make reasonable efforts to ensure that each student is safe, protected from harassment, and/or discrimination.

I certify that I have read the Wrangell Public School District's Volunteer Agreement and agree to abide by these guidelines.

_____ _____

Signature of Volunteer Date

_____ _____

Superintendent Signature Date