VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

St. Helens School District



St. Helens School District

Volunteer Guidelines

Welcome!

This handbook is designed to help volunteers understand the important role they play in supporting students and staff. It includes information on volunteer activities, expectations, policies, practices, and procedures that volunteers must follow. It also details the requirement for all volunteers to undergo background checks to ensure the utmost safety of students and staff.

Volunteering in the St. Helens School District

The research is clear about the role of family and community involvement - it makes a significant difference in student achievement. SHSD is very fortunate to have a supportive and engaged community who understands and appreciates the importance of education.

We are all Part of a Team

Volunteers work under the direction of school principals, teachers, and other staff members.

Volunteers can:

- Relieve teachers of many non-teaching duties and tasks.
- Assist teachers in providing more individual help and instruction to students.
- Strengthen relationships and understanding between schools and families.

School-Based Staff work with principals, teachers, other staff members to support school and student needs with volunteer help. They recruit and place volunteers, as well as offer or arrange for training, as needed.

The **District Director of Communications** is the point person for the volunteer application and background check process and can answer questions about eligibility and expectations.

Parent Groups operate independently from schools but within the parameters of school and district policy. Parent Groups work with principals, teachers, other staff members, to organize, support, and fundraise for extracurricular and enrichment activities for students and families.

School Principals have the final authority over what happens in their schools, including the volunteer program and Parent Group activities. Principals are responsible for setting guidelines and developing a positive working relationship with volunteers.

Volunteer Program Policies

Volunteers - Board Policy IICC

Volunteers are an important part of ensuring student success in SHSD. Volunteering in SHSD is a privilege, not a right. Volunteers are there to complete a specific task or SHSD assignment. Volunteers are expected to adhere to the rules and guidelines set forth by the District. The District reserves the right to place and remove volunteers from service.

Background checks - ***Board Policy: GCDA/GDDA // GCDA/GDDA***

In a continuing effort to ensure the safety and welfare of students and staff, the District requires a criminal records check of all volunteers. Information needed for the check is part of the online volunteer application.

Read the Handbook

Please read through the Volunteer Handbook completely so you understand what is expected of you as a volunteer.

Volunteer Expectations and Responsibilities

Wear identification

In an effort to increase safety and security, all volunteers must wear a school-approved nametag at all times when in the building. Those without proper identification will be directed to the main office.

Sign in and out

Volunteers are expected to sign in and out of the building.

Follow Sight or sound

Volunteers shall operate under the direction of a staff member and shall be within sight or sound of a staff member while working with students. This applies to parents as well as non-parent volunteers and is for the safety of students, staff and volunteers.

Exercise confidentiality

Volunteers must protect the right to privacy for all staff and students. You may not disclose sensitive school or personal matters that have come to your attention while volunteering. Discuss student concerns only with the teacher or staff member with whom you are working; discuss other concerns with the principal. **Do not take any photos or videos of students for personal use.**

Exercise professionalism
Although the job is voluntary, the commitment is professional. Besides being responsible for maintaining an attitude of mutual respect, you also should become familiar with school and classroom policies and practices. Working with the teaching staff requires flexibility and a willingness to follow directions.

Don't bring siblings
Volunteers aren't allowed to bring younger siblings and babies to school when they're scheduled to volunteer. It's a safety issue. The situation also can be potentially distracting in the classroom and other areas.

School Climate and Equity
SHSD is committed to equity by recognizing and eliminating institutional barriers and creating access and opportunities that benefit each student. All students, employees, volunteers, and visitors are entitled to a school environment free from discrimination or harassment, expressed by "Bias Incidents" or "Symbols of Hate" as described in ***Board Policy ACB: Every Student Belongs.***

Be dependable and punctual
Students, teachers, and staff members rely on the services performed by volunteers. We ask that you contact the school or teacher if you are unable to volunteer on your scheduled day. Please arrive ahead of time for your volunteer shift.

Follow emergency drills
Volunteers must follow the same emergency procedures as students and staff. Please be aware of and follow posted procedures for Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter drills.

No alcohol/drugs/tobacco/weapons
Board Policy KGB defines the parameters for public conduct on district property and prohibits alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and weapons, and any other items prohibited by policy.

Student Medication
Only trained school personnel will administer medications to students. This includes over-the-counter medication like cough drops and pain relievers.

Student Volunteers
Student volunteers under the age of 18 who wish to volunteer at a location other than their own school must complete the district's online volunteer application and select 'Yes' when asked if they are a SHSD student.

Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries

It is important that EVERYONE take an active role in helping to ensure a SAFE and HEALTHY environment for students.

Appropriate interactions with adults create a safe environment for students to learn, grow, and seek help in problem-solving and developing social skills. Volunteers play a key role in creating and maintaining this environment.

- Focus conversations on academics, school events, and school activities. Refer personal issues to the classroom teacher, school counselor, or school administrator. Refrain from making comments that could have sexual overtones.
- Stay in a group or public part of the school. Do not be alone with a student.
- Treat all students fairly and equally. Avoid favoritism such as special privileges or gifts.
- Limit interactions to the school environment. Do not meet with students outside of school or communicate with students electronically (text messaging, social networks, email,etc.).
- Maintain personal space and be aware of perceived inappropriate physical contact with students.

Working With Students

As you observe and work in the classroom, you'll notice that instruction is delivered in many ways. Changes in technology, new focus areas, and career requirements have changed the way teachers teach and students learn.

Students learn by:

- Doing, not by observing.
- Asking questions, searching for answers, and collaborating in teams.
- Discovering, experimenting, and repeating experiences that build confidence.
- Using all senses whenever possible.

Volunteers can help students and staff by:

- Creating a relaxed, friendly atmosphere for learning.
- Learning student names and using them often.
- Listening carefully to students.
- Accepting students as individuals.
- Being patient; refer disciplinary problems to the teacher or an administrator (volunteers will never discipline a student).
- Silencing cell phones while in the school.
- Being aware of limitations on staff time and tight classroom schedules.
- Dressing appropriately for the specific volunteer task.
- Asking students to call you "Mr." or "Mrs./Ms." rather than by your first name.
- Following all school/district policies and procedures.

Benefits for Volunteers

Transferable work skills

Keep an accurate and updated record of the skills and experiences you develop while volunteering. Many corporations accept volunteer work as work experience.

Choose the Way you Want to Volunteer Based on What's Right for You!

- Volunteering can be flexible - choose days and times that work for your schedule.
- Volunteering could be a one-time commitment.
- Volunteering involves you in your child's school experience.
- Volunteering makes your school and community a better place to live and grow.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The St. Helens School District recognizes the diversity and worth of all individuals and groups. It is the policy of the St. Helens School District that there will be no discrimination or harassment of individuals or groups based on their actual or perceived race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, marital status, age, veteran status, genetic information, or disability in any educational programs, activities, or employment.

Getting Started

Visit our website to complete the SHSD Volunteer Application HERE.

Once your application has been approved, contact the school or your student's teacher directly, either by email or phone, to see what opportunities they have available.

Your volunteer application must be fully approved in order to begin volunteering.

If you have questions about the process, please contact the District's Director of Communications at either staceym@sthelens.k12.or.us or by calling 503-366-7240.