Red Oak ISD Volunteer Handbook

Volunteers work in every aspect of school operations from the classroom and office helpers, tutoring and mentoring, organizing and manning special events and extracurricular activities, and preparing teacher/student materials. The Red Oak Independent School District (ROISD) Volunteer Program is the organization of individuals that contribute service to Red Oak ISD Schools to strengthen and/or enrich the educational experience offered to our students. A District Volunteer is a person who, working under district staff supervision, contributes service without financial remuneration from Red Oak ISD. Volunteers can work at the campus or outside the school site to support educational activities. As with all other school personnel, volunteers must meet certain qualifications and accept certain responsibilities.

About this Handbook

Red Oak ISD is grateful for community partners who join us in our mission. We strive to ensure your experience volunteering with ROISD is a positive one and that it enhances your relationship with our schools and community. We appreciate the time and effort all of our volunteers give to make our district a great place to live, learn, and work.

This handbook is designed to help volunteers understand the important role they play in helping learners achieve success. It includes information on volunteer dos and don'ts, as well as important policies, practices, and procedures that volunteers must follow to ensure learners and adults in our schools are safe. This handbook also answers common questions that are often asked during volunteer service.

Benefits of Volunteering in Red Oak ISD Schools

Being a school volunteer benefits, learners, staff, and volunteers'. Each person who helps a child learn makes a difference in that child's life. The work of our volunteers make the learning environment even more rich and meaningful.

Benefits for the LEARNER:

- Increases student learning & success
- Exposes learners to authentic and engaging projects
- Helps learners discover their passions and builds confidence
- Makes connections between skills learned in school and skills needed in the workforce
- Enhances positive relationships with our community

Benefits for the SCHOOL & STAFF:

- Expands services schools can offer
- Builds outside support for schools & education
- Increases communication and trust with the community
- Allows educators additional time to work with students

Benefits for the VOLUNTEER:

- Builds community
- Gains an understanding of school operations
- Provides a sense of fulfillment
- Helps support our future workforce
- Fulfills corporate responsibility goals and increases employee moral

Red Oak ISD uses Raptor Volunteer, a volunteer management system, to register volunteers, perform background checks, post volunteer opportunities and find volunteers. To volunteer on one of our campuses, you will need to create a Raptor Volunteer account by visiting: ROISD VOLUNTEER PROGRAM INFO or visit the district website and search "Volunteer Program". Raptor will send you customized emails with details about your registration and volunteer opportunities. ROISD Board Policy requires that each volunteer and/or mentor undergo a background check before working with students. You will be prompted to complete the background check during your Raptor Volunteer account creation process. Keep an eye on your inbox for your background check approval (the process can take up to 3-5 business days). Once approved, you will be able to sign up for volunteer opportunities when needed. These volunteer requests will be communicated through Parent Square. Volunteers who serve after hours or in areas where no Raptor kiosk is available, can update their volunteer hours through the Raptor Volunteer Portal also on the Volunteer page on the district website.

Volunteers must renew their registration annually which will also include an annual background check. Volunteers will receive an automated email notifying them of their account expiration details and steps to renew.

Approval of Volunteers
All volunteers for ROISD must complete a background check annually through the online Raptor Volunteer portal. Once a volunteer registers and is approved, the sysem will automatically notify volunteer when time to renew their registration and will automatically perform background check once renewal is confirmed.

Supervision of Volunteers
Volunteers are an integral part of the educational team. The suggestions and opinions of volunteers are always welcome. However, it is the employees, who are held responsible by law for decisions that are made regarding the learning and management of learners. For this reason, volunteers always work under the direct supervision of educators, administrators, and educational support staff.

Maintaining Appropriate Adult-Student Boundaries
The purpose of volunteering is to support academic and/or school activities. Volunteers must maintain appropriate boundaries with learners at all times. Each situation and each child is unique so please contact the school administrator, school counselor, or classroom educator if you have any questions or concerns. It is important that everyone take an active role in helping ensure a safe and healthy environment for students.

General Guidelines for Safe Interaction with Learners:
Do not:
- Take a learner or learners on private outings
- Initiate social activities with learners
- Say or write things to a leaner that you would be uncomfortable sharing with the learner's parents, district/school administrators or the educator you are working with
- 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 are inappropriate

- Initiate conversations or correspondence of private and/or personal nature with learners. This includes digital correspondence.
- Social Media with students

Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drugs
The use of tobacco, tobacco products, alcohol and other drugs (exclusive of those prescribed by a medical provider and over the counter medication) by staff, volunteers and the public at school events, on district property (including district vehicles), while volunteering at an off campus event, is prohibited by law.

Discipline
Learners rarely have discipline issues while working with volunteers. However, the district has a discipline plan in place should a situation arise. The responsibility of discipline rests with the staff; volunteers may not discipline learners. Please make the educator or a staff member aware of any discipline concerns that might arise while you are working with a learner.

Protecting Student Privacy
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects student privacy. School staff and volunteers must abide by the FERPA regulations. Some examples of information protected by FERPA include details about a student's:

- Health
- Behavior
- Academic performance
- Family or living situation
- Other

It is appropriate and expected that volunteers will share private information gained about learners with the appropriate school staff. However, such information must not be shared with anyone outside the school unless the principal has authorized you to do so. A good way to ensure you are staying within the legal requirements is to remember, "What happens at school stays at school." Personal information about learners that you gain while volunteering should not be shared with anyone but school staff. There is one important exception to this rule: illegal activity, such as suspected child abuse, must be reported to the principal and law enforcement, even if it means sharing information that would normally be protected.

Taking photos of students
FERPA also protects parents' and guardians' rights to prevent photographs of their learners from being taken while at school or while involved in school related activities. Here are the steps to follow before taking pictures of learners:

1. Get the principal's permission prior to taking photographs of students.
2. Check with the school office to see if a parent has denied permission to photograph their child.
3. Even if permission is granted, never identify students in photos by full name.

Volunteer Safety
The district recognizes that the work and physical surroundings for volunteers may be unfamiliar. The district will provide training and proper tools when necessary. However, we ask all volunteers

to take safety precautions. Injures or incidents involving visitors and students (non-work related) who suffer an injury or illness are not eligible for workers' compensation benefits; however, injures, illnesses, or incidents that are observed by Red Oak ISD faculty/staff should be documented and reported to a campus administrator and/or campus nurse.

Emergency Procedures
The district has emergency procedures in place for each campus. Be sure to review the procedures with a staff member prior to volunteering on campus.

Dress Code
Appropriate school attire at school is an important way to help establish a productive learning environment. Learners, staff and volunteers alike are expected to follow the school's dress code. A volunteer's attire should be modest, professional and not a distraction from learning. It is important that volunteers set an example for students by modeling appropriate dress while volunteering. The dress code may vary slightly depending on the task or program in which a volunteer is working. Please check with the school administration for details.

School Policies and Guidelines
Become familiar with the rules, policies, and guidelines of the school where you volunteer. It is a good idea to read the school's staff handbook. Ask your supervising educator to explain the school's policy for use of cell phones, eating facilities, emergency drills and emergency procedures. Use reasonable judgement in making decisions when there appears to be no policy or when the policy is not communicated.

Volunteers can help maintain an atmosphere of learning by:
- Silencing cell phones while in the school
- Giving full attention to your tasks
- Using good judgement and being a positive role model
- Expecting students to treat you with respect, just as you treat them with respect
- Following all policies and procedures; if you aren't sure about something, ask a staff member

Lastly, suggestions when working with students
- Learn the names of students you will be working with and call them by their name.
- Make sure the students know your name.
- Accept all children as they are- with all their differences, idiosyncrasies, backgrounds, values, and behavior.
- Observe all techniques used by the teachers and try to mimic them when working with students.
- Give positive feedback and encourage often.
- Use comments that allow children to feel good about their efforts.
- Let students know that it is OK to make mistakes and that this is part of learning.
- Help to keep students focused and on task, but give them time to understand new concepts.
- Do NOT give students food or treats of any kind unless approved by the teachers.
- Don't be afraid to say you do not know an answer to a question – and do not be afraid to ask for help.
- Keep your sense of humor and smile – do not take things personally.

- Maintain strict confidentiality concerning grades, records, abilities, peer interactions, and family situations.
- If a discipline problem arises that you cannot redirect, notify the teachers.
- If a student begins to share personal information with you, tell them that you will let the teacher and/or counselor know and do not try to advise or help in these types of situations.
- Do not write comments on students' work – give a note to the teacher about any observations or concerns.
- Remember what is a small thing in our eyes, may be everything to a student. It is important to not make light of their concerns, questions, or incorrect/inappropriate responses.
- Many students do not feel comfortable and/or may have experienced inappropriate or aggressive touching. Never touch a student in any way.
- If an accident occurs, notify the teacher in charge, as there are specific school guidelines that must be followed.
- Use age-appropriate vocabulary to ensure students understand what you are saying/teaching

Closing

As a volunteer, you not only serve the needs of the learners, you also provide a vital link between the school and community. Learners, parents, and community members will view you as a representative of the school. You will have an opportunity to share the many positive things that learners and educators are doing and what makes Red Oak ISD such a great place to live, learn, and work. On behalf of all, district staff and learners, thank you for being part of the greatest school district in Texas. We appreciate your service and your commitment to Red Oak ISD.

If you have questions regarding the volunteer program, registration, background check process, or volunteer opportunities, please email **karen.anderson@redoakisd.org** or call 972-617-4320.

