

# USD #261 Volunteer Handbook

## Teachers, Parents/Families, and Volunteers

### Striving for a Professional Learning Community

Welcome!

As part of a Professional Learning Community, volunteers have played, and will continue to play an important and valuable role in the Haysville Public School system. Students, teachers, staff, parents, and the community benefit from the work of individuals like you who freely share their talents and resources. We also know that as a volunteer, you, too, will be rewarded.

This handbook is directed to volunteers who are parents, family members, grandparents, college, high school, or middle school students, retired persons, former teachers and administrators, persons from the business and faith communities, persons of every educational level - in short, to anyone wishing to devote a portion of their time to one of the most important systems in any community - public schools. Because we want you to get the most out of your volunteer experience, we want to make sure you are an informed volunteer.

One hour a week, one day a week, one day on a special project - your efforts make a difference for students.

#### **Application**

All prospective volunteers who will be volunteering on a regular basis need to complete a School Volunteer Application. Applications are available in the school's main office.

#### **Screening**

All prospective volunteers will be subject to a background check and may be interviewed by the building principal.

#### **Commitment**

Whether you are volunteering on a regular basis or for a one-time project or event, arrive a little early so there is time for communication and direction. Also, be sure to let the teacher, librarian, or whoever is supervising your work as a volunteer know when your schedule changes or if you can't make it when you are expected.

#### **You're part of a team**

Be a professional. As a school volunteer, you are a role model for students. Behave toward students and school staff in a respectful manner that sets an example of professionalism and good citizenship.

## **Communicate**

As a school volunteer, it is crucial that the lines of communication stay open and clear. If you are unsure about what's expected of you, or how to use certain office equipment, please ask someone for direction.

## **What to wear**

Wearing appropriate, practical, and comfortable clothing when you volunteer is one more way you can be a role model. If you have a question, feel free to ask for a copy of the school's dress code or to talk with the principal, a teacher, or another school volunteer.

## **Who is doing the teaching?**

If you are volunteering in a classroom, make sure you and the teacher are clear on your responsibilities and that you are both comfortable with your duties. The real value for a teacher in having a volunteer is that it allows the teacher time to teach.

## **Language, Tobacco products and Alcohol**

Just as we expect students to refrain from using inappropriate language, tobacco products, and alcohol, we also expect the same from teachers, staff and volunteers. Most adults realize how easily children pick up on what we say, what we do, or what we drink. Please keep in mind that what may be intended as harmless slang, or having one harmless cigarette, or having alcohol on one's breath is not acceptable in the school environment.

## **Our commitment to you**

While there are certain expectations from volunteers to help things run smoothly, we realize you also have expectations from school staff. We are committed to working with you to make sure volunteering is rewarding for everyone. The following are some of the commitments we make to our volunteers:

### **Volunteer orientation**

A handbook like this is useful in covering information in a general manner. Volunteers need specific information about their volunteer duties. This can be accomplished by meeting individually with the member of the school staff who will be supervising you. For example, volunteers need to know the facility's layout, where the buses are loaded, and how to use certain office equipment, as well as specific school practices. Once you've become an experienced volunteer, you may be asked to help with the orientation of new volunteers.

### **Efficiency**

We respect your time commitment and will make every effort to utilize your time efficiently. If you have any questions or suggestions to help us, please share them.

### **Interests and talents**

We want to make the best match we can between volunteer opportunities and your interests and talents. Please let the administration know how you can best contribute. Your input may lead to the development of additional volunteer opportunities.

## **Discipline or behavior problems**

As a school volunteer, you may notice students disobeying school or classroom rules. Your responsibility is to call such matters to the attention of the teacher or other supervising school personnel. Please do not take corrective measures into your own hands.

There are many ways in which schools are alike, but because schools must fulfill educational needs of students from many diverse backgrounds, each school has a personality or culture of its own. Volunteers should be informed about the school's general disciplinary procedures to avoid any misunderstanding.

## **Volunteers in kindergarten classes**

Although kindergarten classes operate on schedules that are different from other grade levels, they often viewed as "autonomous" entities within a school. Classroom volunteers are strongly encouraged to participate in school-wide training/workshops and activities for volunteers. All volunteers must sign-in at the school office.

## **Volunteers in the upper grades**

Sometimes volunteers do not feel as needed or welcome by students or teachers in upper grade levels. Be assured, however, that your presence and assistance is still welcome and needed. Volunteering with older students is just as important as in the early grades; it simply has to be adapted to the developmental and educational needs of the students. If you would like to volunteer with older students and are unsure how, please feel free to speak to the principal.

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## **Legal issues**

### **Sign in procedure and security**

Volunteers are required to sign in at the office. Signing in each time you volunteer also allows school personnel to locate you immediately in case of an emergency. Each school has a badge or button for volunteers to wear while at school. For everyone's safety, it's important to know who you are and why you are at school.

### **Supervision**

Volunteers perform under the direction/supervision of school personnel. If a volunteer assists a student or students outside the classroom, they should not be taken to any area except that specified by the teacher or principal.

Volunteers attending field trips should never leave students unattended. In an emergency, if it is necessary for the volunteer to leave the students assigned, or the field trip location, the teacher or principal should be notified immediately.

### **Confidentiality**

What you hear or observe about students or staff while volunteering in a school is confidential. Even a seemingly harmless comment repeated to another can be misunderstood and cause harm to the school team.

## **Child Care**

Parents/guardians are discouraged from bringing children or other friends with them to school while they volunteer. Everyone's focus needs to be on the students who are enrolled in the school and involved in learning activities. There are ways to volunteer at home if childcare is unavailable. If you have specific concerns regarding this practice, consult with the school principal.

## **Child neglect and abuse reporting**

School volunteers are considered mandatory reporters of suspected child neglect and abuse. If a student discloses that they are in a dangerous situation or if you have reason to suspect neglect/abuse, please report this immediately and privately to your principal or a school counselor.

## **Volunteer hours**

School volunteers help in schools during regular school hours, namely the same hours that the school office is open. If volunteering after school, the school office must be accessible or school personnel must be present who have access to it. It is essential that there is access to the first aid kit, a phone, and emergency contact information.

## **Transportation of students**

Volunteers are not allowed to provide transportation for students unless they have prior approval and have completed the required forms. Volunteers often assist as chaperones on school buses.

## **Communications**

If you are unable to make it to school when you are expected, please call the school and leave a message. Similarly, school staff will contact you if your time is cancelled or changed for any reason.

## **Student/Volunteer Relationships**

Volunteers function in a position of trust and USD #261 does not extend that volunteer/student trust relationship outside of the supervised school environment. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to notify the principal immediately if he/she becomes involved with a student's family outside of the school environment.