

# **Volunteer Handbook**

## **Okaloosa County School District**



**Superintendent of Schools**  
**Marcus Chambers**

**School Board Members**

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**OKALOOSA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

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**VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

- **Please check in and out at the RAPTOR station.**
- **Wear your name tag for identification purposes.**
- **Please call the school if you are unable to work at your specified time.**

Based on state legislation (Section 228.041 (24), Florida Statutes, school volunteers will:

- **Be in good physical and mental health.**
- **Be of any age.**
- **Complete a volunteer application.** @ <https://www.okaloosaschools.com>
- **Appeal Process**

If you are not eligible to be cleared for service as a Volunteer/Mentor and should you wish to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in the FBI and/or FDLE report or file an appeal of this decision, you should contact this office at (850-833-5856) for information regarding that process.

Your appeal will be reviewed by a Review Team consisting of two District Administrators and one School Administrator.

The Review Team will notified you in writing with their decision regarding your appeal.

**Be under the supervision of a staff member.** As stated in the Florida Statutes, the supervising staff member is responsible for assisting the volunteer. The staff member should be familiar with state and district policies. When a volunteer is assigned to work directly with students, it is the responsibility of the supervising staff member to ascertain that the volunteer has a clear understanding of the type of performance or behavior the students are expected to demonstrate.

**Receive orientation to the school and/or assigned duties.** Volunteers should possess a clear understanding of all state and district practices and policies relevant to their responsibilities.

**Policies state, a volunteer will not:**

- **Establish instructional objectives.**
- **Administer corporal punishment or determine punishment.**
- **Assume responsibility for an entire class.**
- **Contact parents regarding performance or behavior of students.**



*Everyday,*

*an old man walked the beach with a pail,  
picking up starfish that had been washed in by the tide,  
and throwing them back into the sea.  
One day a young boy stopped the old man and asked,  
“Why do you throw the starfish back? It doesn’t matter.  
They will only wash upon the shore again tomorrow.  
The old man picked a starfish out of his pail,  
threw it as far as he could into the sea,  
and replied.....It mattered to this one.*

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VOLUNTEER**

The volunteer expresses concern for, interest in and acceptance of those with whom he or she works. He or she will be responsible for maintaining a professional attitude of mutual respect and confidence. He or she should:

- Be willing to offer supportive and supplemental service under Professional supervision and direction.
- Be punctual and reliable and notify the school in cases of absence.
- Become familiar with school and classroom policies and practices. Refrain from criticizing school procedures.
- Be capable of adjusting to the teacher’s way of doing things and follow his/her directions.
- Be willing to have short conferences, periodically, with the coordinator and/or teacher.

### **WHAT TO DO IF ...**

#### **A Student is Injured:**

No matter how minor the injury is, you should immediately notify the teacher or a staff member. Do not attempt to administer any type of aid.

#### **A Student Becomes Ill:**

If a student complains of not feeling well, you should notify the teacher or a staff member immediately. You should never administer any form of medicine to the student.

#### **You are Asked to Take the Class Alone:**

Because you are not a paid School Board employee, you are not legally permitted to supervise a class alone. Consequently, if the teacher must leave the room, arrangements should be made to have a paid staff member present.

#### **Someone Asks to See a Student:**

If any person asks to speak to or take a student, you must direct that individual to the

teacher. Under no circumstances should you grant such a request.

**A Problem Arises With Your Supervisor:**

If you should encounter any type of problem with your role, please discuss it with your volunteer coordinator.

**Someone Asks You How a Student Is Doing:**

As it becomes known that you are working in the school, you may be asked questions concerning specific students. If a parent or friend inquires as to the student's progress, you should say, "I enjoy working with that student and I am sure if you schedule an appointment, the teacher would be happy to talk with you."

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS**

### **Drug-Free Workplace**

The Okaloosa School District is a Drug-Free Workplace. Volunteers shall not have consumed alcoholic beverages or taken illegal drugs when working at a school or school-related function.

### **Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited on all school property. Therefore, volunteers are not allowed to smoke during their time of service.

### **Health**

- Please do not come to school if you are ill. This includes a cold, sore throat or cough.
- Students learn by example, and we ask that you act as a model by using good health habits when you are at school.

### **Safety**

- Be aware of the school playground regulations.
- Supervise climbing activities carefully.
- Certain materials need to be watched closely: scissors, saws, woodworking tools, sand (it can damage eyes), glass items, pointed objects (such as a math compass), cooking utensils and pans.
- Do not allow a student to use a paper cutter or handle hot appliances, utensils or equipment.

### **Blood**

The general public has been made aware of blood-transmitted diseases. If there is blood on a student, immediately secure a staff member.

**REMEMBER: Follow all safety rules of the school in which you are working.**

- **If an accident occurs, immediately secure a staff member.**
- **Never move a child involved in an accident. A member of the school staff will initiate proper procedures for accidents.**

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTEER**

#### **Be Well Groomed:**

You, as a volunteer, will set an example for the students with whom you work. It is, therefore, important that you dress appropriately. The volunteer should also dress according to the duties of his/her job.

#### **Sign In and Out:**

Each time you arrive at the school, you must check in at the office and take your volunteer nametag. Before you leave the school, you must check out.

#### **Take Directions From the Teacher:**

The volunteer is a very important part of the educational staff who works under the direction of a teacher or other staff member. The volunteer supplies support to the teacher but is not a substitute for the teacher. It is the teacher who must decide the educational plan and design the activities for the students.

#### **Be Adaptable:**

Working with students, teachers, and in schools requires adaptability. You must be willing to adjust to varying facilities, resources and students. For instance, if the school does not have a room in which to work, or if the material is not what you are accustomed to using, then make do with what is available.

#### **Be Dependable:**

You are a vital part of the education of students, and you are depended upon. It is very important that you be dependable in every aspect of your work with the school, teacher and especially, the students.

#### **Be On Time:**

The teacher has planned activities for you to do which must begin at a specific time. Therefore, it is very important that you be at your job at the agreed upon time.

#### **Notify the School if You will be Absent:**

If you have to miss your scheduled time, notify the school as far in advance as possible. Remember, the teacher has planned for you to be there and if you will not be able to come, adjustments will have to be made.

**Keep Information Confidential:**

Confidentiality is absolutely essential! Please be aware that information which you may hear, see, or otherwise acquire while at the school is to be considered privileged information and is to be kept private. Volunteers must respect the confidential nature of school records, as well as relationships between staff members and students.

**SITUATIONS FOR YOUR AWARENESS**

- Visiting with other volunteers. This is very distracting in a classroom situation.
- Laughing at the effort a student is making to complete a task. It makes him reluctant to try again and gives him a feeling of failure.
- Talking about a student within his hearing distance. If you are being critical, his self-image can be damaged.
- Talking to the teacher during class time unless absolutely necessary. Try to save your questions, comments or suggestions to a specified time.
- Damaging a student's self-esteem by criticizing him, using harsh words or labeling him with negative remarks such as, "You cheated" or "You lied."
- Judging a student. Each one is different and needs every chance to be successful.
- Scolding a student for an incorrect answer. Instead, reply to the response with a statement such as, "Let us think about this." You can then review a few facts and help him/her discover the correct conclusion.
- Passing on confidential information. When you are participating in the school, you may hear or come across personal facts about a particular student or family. Please be aware that this information is considered "privileged" and should be kept private.
- If you would like to learn more about student guidance and adult/student communication, we recommend: Between Parent and Student by Dr. Haim Ginott or P.E.T. by Dr. Thomas Gordon.



*“If all children had a safe Harbor - None would be at Risk!”*

## **VOLUNTEERS ASSISTING STUDENTS**

Listening to a student is one of the most important things you can do for him/her. It helps to teach most of the basic skills students need. Remember to be on the same level as the student so that you can look directly into his/her eyes. This way the student knows you are giving your undivided attention.

### **When Speaking to Students:**

- use a tone of voice which will encourage and make them feel confident,
- show an interest in what each student says,
- avoid comparing students and their work,
- give students a choice only when you intend to abide by the choice,
- state directions in a positive form, e.g., “Use the blocks for building” rather than “Don’t throw the blocks.”
- your goal should be the success of the students.

### **Basic Skills Students Need Which Volunteers Can Help Them Develop**

- How to pay attention.
- The desire to listen.
- Body awareness: How it works and where it is in relation to the environment.
- Language skills: Be able to ask questions when they do not understand.
- The ability to verbally express themselves.
- The ability to carry on a conversation with other students and adults.
- The ability to understand different sounds.
- Knowledge of time and space.
- Understanding and use of numbers.
- Planning a task and following it through.
- Problem solving at their own level.
- A good self-image.
- Getting along well with students of their own age.
- Waiting for something they want.

### **Assisting Students Learning**

- Students learn by doing, not passive observation. Avoid making models for students when they use any art media.
- Students learn by asking questions and by searching for answers to their



questions. Ask students questions that may lead to the correct answer instead of telling them the answer directly.

- They learn by discovery. Let students discover properties of materials by themselves, e.g., let them discover which materials are attracted by a magnet.
- They learn by using all their senses when possible. Encourage students to feel, smell, taste and listen, as well as look at objects.
- They learn by experimenting. Let students try new methods of doing things even though you already know an easier way.
- They learn by sorting and combining objects. Let students sort and combine according to their own ideas, e.g., shapes or sizes rather than colors.
- They learn by repeating experience. Give the students as much time as they need (often weeks or months) to understand a new idea.
- They learn by building confidence in themselves.

## TUTORING STUDENTS

You may be asked to help a student who needs some individual attention. A student who has been absent or who is having difficulty with a particular problem will benefit greatly from your special help. The following guidelines may help you in your first tutoring situation.

- First, do not be hesitant about refusing the assignment if you feel you do not understand the material well enough to help the student. The teacher will understand and will find another area in which you can help.
- Get specific directions about the assignment from the teacher.
- Find a quiet place in the room where the two of you can talk quietly without disturbing the rest of the class.
- Establish a one-to-one relationship with the student by talking first for a minute about the student.
- Find out exactly where the student is in his work by asking him/her to explain to you some of the work which has preceded this assignment.
- Let the student work out as much as he/she can do on his own. Provide encouragement, but do not step in too soon.
- Rather than giving a student the answer when he asks, direct his/her thinking so he/she can discover the answer him/herself. Example: "How can I subtract \$.63 from just \$1.00?" Volunteer replies, "Well, how many cents are in one dollar?" In another assignment the student might ask, "When did Columbus discover America?" Volunteer replies, "Does your social studies book have an index? Perhaps you could find the information if you look under *Columbus*."

Using these methods takes more time than giving the student the answer, but do not feel you need to hurry. It is essential that the student understand what he/she is doing before going further.

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