

404 Volunteers in Schools

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Policy

The Board believes that the education of students is an undertaking that should be shared among its employees, parents and members of the community. The active involvement of parents in a volunteer role has the potential to provide considerable benefit to the intellectual and social development of students. In addition, the participation of volunteers increases communication and positive relationships between the school, parents and the community. Consequently, the Board supports and encourages the use of volunteers to support the work of employees.

The Board believes that the use of volunteers supports parental involvement, complements the skill and expertise of employees, assists schools in providing enriching additional learning experiences and extracurricular programs, and strengthens lines of communication among the school, home and community.

Involvement of volunteers is encouraged in activities for which the volunteer is qualified, which benefit the school, and which do not interfere with employees performing their regular duties or result in the displacement of an employee. The delivery of an effective volunteer program requires a harmonious relationship between school staff and volunteers.

While encouraging the community context of schooling, the Board expects its schools to be safe, secure, and caring environments for students. Therefore, appropriate safeguards respecting the selection, role, and supervision of volunteers must support the use of volunteers. The School Board, through its employees, must maintain control of school programs and school-sponsored activities.

Administrative Procedures

Definition

- A volunteer is a parent or other person who has made an accepted commitment to assist the school without expectation of compensation. This policy does not apply to students and to school staff who volunteer.

The Role of Volunteers

- Volunteers should function in a supportive role which is compatible with the philosophy of the school and should not undertake tasks that require making programmatic or educational decisions.
- Volunteers must not be used to provide services that would result in the displacement of any employee.
- Volunteers must not be assigned tasks, which would violate the privacy of students and their families, or be permitted access to student records, with the exception of a student's medical information which may only be shared with a volunteer if it is required to ensure student safety and physical well-being. Volunteers are required to keep this information strictly confidential.

Screening, Selection, and Management of Volunteers

- Volunteers are selected on the basis of an ability to deal with students, skill in performing needed services, previous related experience, interest in the work, and personal character. In order to reinforce a sense of community, volunteers are encouraged from within the community at large, and efforts should be made to involve a wide representation of the community.
- The principal or designate must ensure that the screening of potential volunteers includes following the *District's Volunteer Screening Process*, and depending on the nature of the activity and the extent of supervision undertaken by the potential volunteer, the need for an interview to determine the appropriateness of the volunteer candidate.
- When a volunteer will **not** be under the direct supervision of a teacher or administrator and will have regular and ongoing involvement with students, a criminal record check, interview and reference checks are required. The principal has the discretion to waive one or more of these processes if there is assurance the volunteer has previously undertaken a similar screening process with another organization or program within the past six months.
- It must be recognized some applicants will not be suitable for volunteer work in a school setting. All information collected in the screening process should be officially documented and treated as confidential, excepting the disclosure of information when necessary to determine suitability.
- A volunteer's services may be terminated at the discretion of the principal.

Orientation of Volunteers

- An orientation for volunteers conducted by the principal or designate should include a review of relevant and applicable policies and procedures.
- The supervising staff member shall provide any necessary direction or specific instruction related to the volunteer's assignment, with particular attention to procedures related to student safety.

Supervision and Monitoring of Volunteers

Volunteers are visitors and must report to the office on arrival unless other arrangements have been approved by the principal or designate.

- Schools are required to maintain a list of volunteers and the specifics of their tasks.
- Parents should be informed if their child is working exclusively with a volunteer on a regular basis.

Conduct of Volunteers

- Volunteers shall meet all the criteria of conduct and deportment required of School District staff, shall not be under the influence of or in possession of illicit drugs or alcohol, shall maintain confidentiality of students and of school matters, and shall comply with all relevant and applicable legislation and school district policies.
- Complaints about volunteers should be handled by the supervising teacher or the school principal or designate responsible for volunteers.

Special Provisions Governing Community Coaches

A community coach is a coach of a school team who is not an employee of the school district.

- A community coach must have a staff sponsor who may be a principal, vice-principal, teacher, or school district employee, unless exempted by the principal or vice-principal, based on the assurance the volunteer has completed the appropriate screening and has recognized involvement in the school's athletic program.
- Staff sponsors are expected to be in the building during practices; if unavailable, they must arrange for a designated staff contact to be on site. Staff sponsors must be present at all games, tournaments, and travel events. The principal or vice-principal may waive this requirement, except for events involving overnight travel. Parents are to be advised of all travel

and supervision arrangements.

- Community coaches are selected by the school administration in collaboration with staff members and/or the secondary athletic directors. Community coaches will be considered, providing they have the necessary ability and appropriate level of training required for the sport and age level in question, especially in high risk sports. In addition, community coaches would be subject to the same screening process as other volunteer applicants, including a criminal record check.
- Student coaches and coaches under nineteen years of age must be under the direct supervision of an employee sponsor at all times.
- Student teachers operate, as in all other aspects of their placement, under the supervision of their sponsor teacher.

Liability, Insurance and Expenses

- Claims, other than for libel or slander, against volunteers for damages for acts or omissions in the provision of volunteers services for the Board are disallowed under Section 94(1.1) of the *School Act*, except where the volunteer has been guilty of dishonesty, gross negligence, malicious or willful misconduct. The Board's liability insurance coverage applies to volunteers who are engaged in activities authorized by the School District or school.
- Where any incident or accident occurs that may conceivably give rise to a claim against a volunteer or the school board, the volunteer must promptly provide all information to the school to further its insurance claim.
- Volunteers are responsible for their own injury coverage.
- No honorarium or fee for services may be paid to volunteers.
- Volunteers may be reimbursed for out-of pocket expenses if previously approved.
- Volunteers who use a private vehicle in the transportation of students shall be covered by a Special Excess Third Party Legal Liability Insurance policy as provided in *Policy 607: Transportation of Students*.

Annual Review

- The principal or designate should review the school's volunteer program annually with the Parents' Advisory Council.