



WELCOME AND THANK YOU!

On behalf of the Anacortes School District, thank you for volunteering your time and talents to help students and schools improve and succeed.

Your role as a volunteer is so important. Whether you assist in a classroom, work with individual students, chaperone special events, set up book fairs, fundraise or volunteer for PTA or PTSA, serve on school committees or support special school projects, your willingness to help inspires all of us—students, parents, teachers, principals, and administrators alike. It truly does take a village, and we can't do it without you.

As a volunteer parent or community member, you have special responsibilities. Your role includes being knowledgeable about student safety, volunteer accountability, and confidentiality. This handbook will help guide you toward a successful experience as a school volunteer.

Again, thank you for your commitment to students and schools. Your participation could not be more appreciated, and you make a difference every day!

Sincerely yours,

Keiko McCracken
ASD Volunteer Coordinator

WHAT IS A SCHOOL VOLUNTEER?

A school volunteer is a parent, family member, or community member who willingly contributes time or talent to Anacortes School District students, classrooms, or programs. Volunteers serve without compensation or employee benefits of any kind, and without expressed or implied privileges beyond those found in this handbook. Volunteering for the school district is a privilege and may be revoked at any time by the superintendent, building principal, or district volunteer coordinator.

WHY VOLUNTEER?

School volunteers are such an important part of our students' education team, helping each child succeed in academic and life goals. Volunteers enhance interpersonal experiences for students, provide guidance and support as adult mentors, increase academic success through tutoring, and create a foundation of community support for teachers and education.

When parents, family members, and community members volunteer, children prosper. Research shows that outcomes for students are strengthened when adults show real interest by participating in the school experience through volunteerism. As a volunteer, you model the rewards of personal goal setting, academic achievement, civic involvement and citizenship, compassionate service, and a lifelong love of learning.

As Nelson Mandela once wrote, *"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."*

IS THERE ANYTHING VOLUNTEERS SHOULDN'T DO?

Yes! The professional staff at your school is responsible for everything that goes on in your building including student instruction, safety and discipline. Volunteers supplement and support the program, but may not:

- Discipline students
- Have access to materials in students' permanent record files
- Diagnose student needs
- Evaluate achievements
- Counsel students
- Discuss student progress with parents
- A volunteer is never considered a substitute for a member of the school staff

School & Staff Information

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ASD VOLUNTEER SERVICES

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Becoming a Volunteer

1. VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Prior to volunteering for the school district, you must submit a volunteer application each year and pass a successful background check. Applications are available online (www.asd103.org; click on *For Community*, then *Volunteer Services*). As of Fall 2017, paper applications are no longer accepted. Please submit your application at least three days prior to your intended start date. This is especially important for individuals who wish to chaperone events or field trips. **All individuals MUST have a completed application on file prior to serving as a volunteer.**

2. BACKGROUND CHECK

As part of the volunteer application, you will fill out and sign a disclosure form authorizing a **National Criminal History Background Check**. The report serves as a safety precaution to identify individuals who have been convicted of crimes that may preclude volunteer service. Notification of your volunteer status will be emailed to you, and a copy of the findings made available upon request.

3. GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION

The volunteer application includes confirmation from you that you have read, and agree to abide by, important district policies regarding student safety, personal behavior, communication, and confidentiality. All volunteers are expected to follow school rules and to set a positive and professional example for students at all times.

4. VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

Volunteer orientations are held throughout the school year for all new and returning volunteers. This informal session provides information about volunteer policies and opportunities and is also a chance to meet fellow school volunteers. Orientations are not mandatory but are highly recommended for all current or potential volunteers.

5. RAPTOR REGISTRATION

For security reasons, the Anacortes School District utilizes *Raptor*, an electronic sign-in system that checks all visitors and volunteers (including parents) against a national registered sex offender database. It also creates daily visitor and volunteer name badges, tallies volunteer hours, and enables staff to know who is in the building at all times.

Once you have been approved and placed as a school volunteer, you will register with each school by providing your state or federal photo ID (driver's license, military ID, etc.) to be scanned into the *Raptor* system. Once you are cleared through *Raptor*, a name badge will be printed for you to wear during that day's visit. Before leaving the building, you will sign out at the office. Future visits are simplified through the use of a self-serve kiosk located in each front office. You'll be able to check in and out by yourself, and print out your name badge without assistance.

By signing in and out, we are able to document the high level of volunteer participation at each school. Tracking this information is also helpful for recognition and funding purposes.

Volunteer Policies

Student and volunteer safety is of primary importance. To help ensure our students' safety and your protection as a volunteer, please observe the following policies:

1. CONFIDENTIALITY

All volunteers are expected to keep private ANY information regarding student academic, emotional, social, medical, or family information. Disclosure of student information by a volunteer is a violation of the **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)** and may subject the volunteer or the district to civil liability. Even without mentioning a student's name, details can be used to identify a student or family, thus violating that student or family's right to privacy.

2. CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS

If you hear or are witness to something that causes you concern for a child's safety, or if a student confides in you about an abusive situation, you are required to alert the principal, teacher, school counselor, or volunteer coordinator so that they can further investigate the situation. District staff is required by law to share this information with the proper authorities.

What are some signs of possible abuse?

- Signs of injury, such as welts, bruising, cuts, burns, fractures or swelling
- A history of repeated, untreated, or unexplained physical injury
- A contradiction between the "story" of injury and the physical evidence
- The child appears uncomfortable or afraid when discussing the injury
- The child alludes to, or seems preoccupied with, sexual matters

3. SAFE LOCATION

- Always work in an open, visible public area.** You should not ever be alone with a student or group of students without a staff member, volunteer, or parent nearby. If you are working in a room, leave the door open, or stay in a common area where you are in plain sight. All volunteers must be in a supervised setting at all times.
- Do not meet with students outside of school. Never go offsite with a student, and never give them a ride in your car.** Once you become a district volunteer, your volunteer experience is limited to the public school setting. Meetings with students in their homes or at any other public or private location may result in dismissal from the school volunteer program.
- Please use staff restrooms only.** Student restrooms are only for children and teens. Ask at the front office of each school for the location of staff restrooms.

4. SAFE TOUCH – *Varies with age, cultural and personal factors*

It is very important that you maintain adequate physical boundaries between yourself and the student, and that you give each student his or her own safe, personal space. Touching children carries risks, as the volunteer can be accused of impropriety, unnecessary physical contact or sexual harassment. Being alone with a student can prompt an allegation of intimacy. A finding of sexual harassment is just cause for disciplinary action and loss of volunteer privileges, and other consequences may include legal action.

The most acceptable form of touch includes handshakes, “high fives,” or “fist bumps.” When appropriate, some forms of touch on the shoulders, back, arms or hands may be acceptable. However, even these areas of contact may be unwelcome. Cultural perspective, beliefs, and personal history affect a student’s personal boundaries. If a student indicates by word or action that he or she is not comfortable with touch, the volunteer should avoid physical contact except for safety reasons. In general, treat the child as you would an adult. If you would not pat an adult on the head or put your arm around an adult’s chair, then you should not do so with a student.

No volunteer should ever touch a student in anger.

The best rule of thumb is to avoid all touching, though some factors, listed below, may influence your response.

A. AGE OF STUDENT

Grade Pre-K – 3rd: It is almost impossible to avoid physical contact with students of this age in a classroom or learning setting. This is because some children may approach you for contact. It is important to handle each situation with sensitivity. Students should never sit on your lap. You should always avoid front hugs and, instead, carefully put your arm around the child’s shoulder and turn it into a side hug.

5. SAFE COMMUNICATION

- A. To protect your privacy and that of the student, do not ask for a student’s address, phone number or email address.** Likewise, do not share your address, phone number, or email address with a student. Direct communication outside of the regularly scheduled tutor session is not allowed. **If you need to get a message to a student, you must contact the volunteer coordinator.**
- B. Your conversation should demonstrate respect for others, using language that is not perceived as discriminatory, racist, sexist or offensive. It is not appropriate to discuss your religious beliefs or to engage a student in a conversation about his or her religious beliefs.
- C. Do not ask a student to arrive early or stay late. All schedule changes affecting individual students must be pre-arranged with the district’s volunteer coordinator.
- D. Do not single out a student for special privileges or spend time only with one student or group of students. Gifts are not encouraged, but, if they are given, must be of nominal value and identical for all students with which you work. Examples of inexpensive gifts are stickers or colorful pencils.

6. GENERAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

- A. Wear your name badge (printed from *Raptor*) at all times while on school premises.** The badge serves as your building pass and helps identify you to staff. Sign out from *Raptor* and leave the building promptly after your volunteer assignment for the day is completed.
- B. Dress comfortably, yet mindful of your position as a role model for children.** Follow the lead of the staff you are assisting.
- C. Do not smoke, drink, or use drugs on school grounds.**
- D. If you must cancel due to illness or emergency**, please contact the district volunteer

coordinator or the school secretary as soon as possible so that your message can be relayed to the children or staff who may be affected by your absence. Pre-arranged absences may be worked out directly with the staff who supervise your service or, if you are a tutor, with the district volunteer coordinator.

- E. **Know that we are here to help!** Your happiness is very important to us, and we work hard to place each volunteer in just the right spot. If problems arise—with individual students or a group of students, with using or understanding instructional material, or even personality conflicts with other adults—we are here to help guide you toward success! You may feel you need more training, or you may wish a change of classroom, subject area, or grade level. Often, speaking directly to the teacher or staff member who supervises your work will resolve misunderstandings or give you important tips for working with the material or students. You are also welcome to contact the volunteer coordinator at any time for help in navigating any aspect of your volunteer service.

Building Positive Relationships

Getting to know your student is essential to the success of your tutoring experience. Your initial contact affords an important opportunity to get off to a good start. Be sure to tell your student something about yourself and your family. Also, make sure to ask the correct pronunciation and spelling of your student's name. This is a sign of respect and very important to children.

Your student may:

- Need to know why learning to read, write, or do math is worth the time and effort
- Not know many adults and may seldom be alone with an adult
- Not know a happy adult or one who trusts them, or whom they can trust
- Have learned many defenses against failure
- Be frightened, antagonistic, or obnoxious at first
- Test your patience for weeks and then come to admire you
- Speak, read, or write English poorly, even as a native speaker
- Need to know that it takes effort to learn

- ✚ You want to ensure that each tutoring session is a pleasant encounter. Affirm your student in genuine ways. Praise effort above all.
- ✚ Take a student-centered approach to learning. Let his or her interests lead you, and learn about your student's perspective on life. You want the student to feel at ease and enjoy being with you and learning from you.
- ✚ Let your student know that it is all right to make mistakes or to say, "I don't know." Be honest, without being negative, when you are stumped for an answer. Let your student see that grappling with difficult problems is a natural part of learning.
- ✚ In many ways, a successful tutor is a role model for life. Letting your student see you working hard (without "doing" the work for the student), keeping focused on the task at hand, and cooperating with as well as listening to others, can make an impact on your student over time.
- ✚ The greatest gift you can give a student is yourself. Who you are as a person is the most important thing to share. Relax and be yourself, but know that you are being watched closely by your student.
- ✚ No matter what the conditions, always show respect for your student's family members. Most parents really love their children but some may be unable to provide them with the necessary tools to live successfully in society. If you feel that there are signs of abuse or any cause for concern regarding a student's wellbeing, you must immediately share your concern with the teacher, building principal, or the district volunteer coordinator.

Effective Ways to Work with Children

- ✚ Be warm and friendly – learn the children’s names and show interest in what they are doing and saying – you are very important as a listener.
- ✚ When working with children, encourage them to do their own thinking – give them plenty of time to answer; silence often means they are thinking and organizing what they want to say or write.
- ✚ If you don’t know an answer or are unsure of what to do, admit it to the children and try to work it out together – always feel free to ask the teacher of the children for help when you need it.
- ✚ Use tact and positive comments – encourage children – look for something worthy of a compliment, especially when children are having difficulties. Acknowledge effort and participation, even if the desired result is not yet achieved.
- ✚ Accept each child as she or he is – you do not need to feel responsible for judging a child’s abilities, progress or behavior.
- ✚ Respect a child’s privacy – confidentiality is essential to our school. Information gathered or impressions made about a child must remain confidential.
- ✚ Maintain a sense of humor and be flexible. No two days or children are alike.
- ✚ Be consistent with the teacher’s rules for classroom behavior, schedule and atmosphere.
- ✚ Wear comfortable clothes and don’t hesitate to get down to a child’s level.
- ✚ Keep your commitment; the children will expect you and look forward to you coming. If you know you will be gone, tell them in advance. Keep all promises and make none that you cannot keep – children will not forget.

Characteristics of an Effective Volunteer

- ✚ Positivity: The belief that outcomes can be changed through action
- ✚ Empathy: The ability to feel what another person is feeling
- ✚ Evenness: Patience, gentleness, understanding and fairness
- ✚ Open Mind: A willingness to accept others and their point of view
- ✚ Initiative: The ability to see what needs to be done and follow through
- ✚ Enthusiasm: A liking for your subject and a wish to share it with others
- ✚ Reliability: Punctuality, dependability, accountability

For more information about volunteering in the Anacortes schools, please contact Keiko McCracken, ASD Volunteer Coordinator, at (360) 293-1234, or kmccracken@asd103.org.