



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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# **Welcome and Thank You!**

On behalf of the Teaneck Public Schools' community, thank you for volunteering in our schools. Your willingness to serve the students and staff of the district is greatly appreciated.

Volunteers work in every aspect of school operations. Whether you volunteer in your school's main office, the classroom or in the library, you are essential to the principals, teachers, schools, families and the larger school community.

We hope that through volunteering in the district, you will experience the same rewarding satisfaction that we do on a daily basis.

This handbook outlines the guidelines and expectations that volunteers must follow in order to create safe and successful experiences for staff, students and volunteers.

Thank you for giving your time and talents, and we look forward to working with you!

# **Being a Volunteer**

Volunteers who are committed to helping students be successful are important members of the school team and benefit everyone.

## **The volunteer achieves:**

- Personal satisfaction from helping children learn.
- Opportunities to learn new skills and enhance old ones.
- Knowledge and understanding of the Teaneck Public Schools.

## **The student receives:**

- Additional individual attention.
- An accepting atmosphere for reinforced learning.
- An opportunity to further enhance self-esteem by achieving success.
- Additional caring adults who are role models.

## **The school gains:**

- Positive interactions with the community.
- Increased community understanding and support.
- Additional services without extra costs.

## **The Teaneck Public Schools' community benefits from:**

- Better-educated students.
- Greater confidence in the Teaneck Public Schools.

# Volunteer Application Process

- Contact the Supervisor of Community Relations & Volunteer Services (201-833-5498) to make an appointment to apply and to schedule a criminal background check. (The district will reimburse the \$31.00 fee.)
- Complete the Volunteer application and schedule fingerprinting appointment. NOTE: If you have had fingerprinting done in last 10 years (in NJ), you will be eligible for the “Archived” process. The fee for this process will also be reimbursed to you.
- Return the criminal background check or “Archived” approval form – along with your receipts (for reimbursement) – to the Supervisor of Community Relations.
- The Teaneck Board of Education must also approve applicants who pass the criminal background check.
- Upon Board approval, applicants will be contacted by their requested school/s for a volunteer assignment based on their interests as noted on the application.
- The principal of the assigned school will schedule an appointment with the volunteer for a brief training and orientation session.
- Receive and read the Volunteer Handbook; sign Acknowledgement and Receipt form (on last page of handbook). Return the signed form to the school principal.

# **Expectations for Volunteers**

*Volunteers are expected to:*

- Demonstrate a professional attitude and an ability to work cooperatively with school staff.
- Possess an interest in working with young people.
- Show respect for all staff and students.
- Share concerns regarding students with only the school staff.
- Defer to the classroom teacher or school staff member for final solution of any student problem that arises, whether of an instructional or medical nature.
- Work collaboratively with the teacher to enrich the curriculum by augmenting students' learning opportunities.
- Provide help for individual students.
- Acknowledge that teachers are responsible for discipline in the classroom.
- Understand that evaluation of a student's learning can only be done by a teacher.
- Share ideas and constructive comments with the teacher.
- Seek help from the teacher when you need additional information or instruction.
- Foster a school and community partnership for quality education in the Teaneck Public Schools.

## **Guidelines for Volunteers**

- The volunteer assignments are to be arranged between the school principal and the individual volunteer. The volunteer work schedules will be arranged with the school staff contact with whom he/she will be working. The work scheduled will be communicated to the building principal or assistant principal.
- Volunteers who are unable to make a scheduled commitment should contact the building secretary at least a half-hour before your scheduled volunteer time if you are unable to make it. Emergencies should be directed to the building secretary who will inform the teacher and principal.
- Volunteers must sign in and out at the school office for each visit.
- Volunteers must wear a “Visitor” badge at all times.
- Volunteers must follow all school district policies, procedures, rules, and dress code.
- Volunteers must follow cell phone use policies and should refrain from using cell phones or electronic devices while volunteering.
- When volunteering in a school, you will be in a position to learn about and observe students as well as other adults. Please refrain from allowing confidential information about students to become conversation topics outside the school. All adults working with children have ethical and moral obligations to them.

- Volunteers provide valuable support and supplement the instructional program of the classroom teacher.  
*The volunteer's role is to assist the teacher, not replace the teacher.*
  
- Volunteers must maintain student **confidentiality**. The U.S. Congress has addressed the privacy-related concerns of educators, parents, and students by enacting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (known more commonly as “FERPA” or the “Buckley Amendment”). Each student has the right to expect that nothing that happens to or about him/her will be repeated to anyone other than authorized school department employees, as designated by the administrators at your school.

Parents, friends, or community members may in good faith ask you questions about a student's problems or progress. Again, you must refer all such questions to the authorized school employees. You may not share information about a student even with members of your own family.

Student information includes all academic, medical and personal information. Volunteers cannot take photographs of students during their volunteer activities nor post them publicly or online without authorization from the school.

- Volunteers must report any suspected act of **harassment, intimidation or bullying (HIB)** to the teacher, staff member or principal *on the same day the incident is observed.*

HIB means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that:

- Is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by an actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic;
- Takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus; or off school grounds;
- Substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students;
- Causes substantial disruption or interference; and that:
  - a) A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property; or
  - b) Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; or
  - c) Creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

There are generally four types of bullying behaviors. These behaviors and some examples are identified below:

- Verbal—including taunting, name calling, malicious teasing or making threats;
- Psychological—including spreading rumors, purposefully excluding people from activities, breaking up friendships;

- Physical—includes hitting, punching, shoving, spitting or taking personal belongings;
- Cyberbullying—includes using the Internet, mobile phone or other digital technologies to harm others.

***\*Note—It is not the responsibility of the volunteer to determine the validity of the shared or witnessed incident. The volunteer must report to a teacher or principal any conversation, accusation or action witnessed that could potentially fall under the HIB definition.***

➤ Volunteers must report any suspected child abuse to the teacher or principal immediately. The following factors may be present when abuse has occurred, but do not guarantee an abusive situation. **If any of the following signs are present in a student, the volunteer is required to alert the teacher and principal immediately so that they can contact the Department of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) to further investigate the situation:**

- Signs of injury, such as welts, bruising, cuts, burns, fractures, or swellings.
- A history of repeated, untreated, or unexplained physical injury.
- A contradiction between the story, “I fell off my bed”, and the physical evidence, such as repeated bruising.
- The child appears to be uncomfortable or fearful when talking about the injury.
- Child alludes to or seems preoccupied with sexual matters.

# **Guidelines for Working with Students**

- Call the students by name at each opportunity.
- Accept the children as they are. Be ready to accept their differences in background, values, vocabulary and goals.
- Closely observe the techniques used by the teacher and try to model those methods.
- Encourage and support the students.
- Use positive comments that will foster the students' self-esteem.
- Be caring, but firm.
- Be a good listener, but be careful not to give advice or to make promises that you may not be able to keep.
- Do not give students any materials, including foods, without first discussing it with the teacher.
- Be friendly and enthusiastic.

# **Working with Students of Different Cultures**

Diversity is all around us. It includes all of us since we all have different beliefs, styles, and abilities. An awareness and understanding of the diverse cultural backgrounds, learning approaches, and preferences of the students you will be working with will help you provide an enriching educational experience.

Students in Teaneck Public Schools come from many different families, cultures and communities. Cultural differences may affect a student's background knowledge, learning style, behavior and social skills. Specifically, you may experience cultural differences regarding:

- Eye contact and gaze
- Personal space
- Gestures
- Appropriate touching
- Vocal qualifiers such as: volume, pitch, rhythm, tempo, and tone

Respecting the students' cultures and helping them understand the school culture will increase your ability to help them learn.

# **Safety and Liability Issues**

Teaneck Public Schools wants you, as volunteers, to carry out your responsibilities in a caring and appropriate manner and to have guidelines that will assist you in creating and maintaining a safe environment for you and the students with whom you volunteer. All interactions with students should be professional and focused on teaching and learning. These guidelines protect both the student and the volunteer.

## **Do Not:**

- Take a student or students on private outings;
- Initiate social activities with students;
- Have a prolonged verbal exchange with students if you have an impromptu encounter at a public place;
- Provide childcare for students;
- Ask a student to baby-sit for your family;
- Engage in social networking with students via Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter or any other social networking site.

## **Communication**

Do not say or write things to a student that you would be uncomfortable sharing with the students' parents, district/school administrators or the teacher with whom you are working.

## **Do Not:**

- 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 belittle or diminish another person;
- Give students compliments that focus on physical attributes;
- Initiate conversations or correspondence of a private and/or personal nature with students.

### **Working Alone with Students at School**

- Always keep the door open and lights on.
- Do not post anything on class windows that would obstruct a clear view into the room.

### **Gifts**

In general, giving gifts to students is not encouraged. If gifts are provided, they should be:

- Of nominal value
- Identical for all students in the class
- Approved by the teacher or administrator in charge of the program

### **Physical Contact with Students**

It is the District's expectation that all physical contact between volunteers and students must be professional and appropriate. Some students, especially at the elementary level, will naturally become attached and show affection. Students may crave affection and attention, so it is important that you handle the situation with sensitivity. A front hug is inappropriate and should be avoided. Use other signs of affection, such as "high fives". In addition, regardless of age, students should never sit on your lap.

The Safety and Liability Issues section was referenced from:

Lake Washington School District Volunteer Handbook. (n.d.). Retrieved April 21, 2017, from <https://www.lwsd.org/school/ss/SiteCollectionDocuments/Volunteer-Handbook.pdf>.

# Acknowledgement and Receipt

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Teaneck Public Schools' *Volunteer Handbook*.

I further understand that, by signing this statement, I am indicating that I have read the *Volunteer Handbook* and understand its contents, and have had an opportunity to discuss my questions with the principal or teacher.

In addition, I understand that I serve as a volunteer at the discretion of the Teaneck Public Schools.

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Volunteer full name - **Please print**

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Volunteer signature

Date

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Principal's signature

Date

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher name – **Please print**