Volunteers

in

Simcoe County

Schools

Tips for Volunteers

Volunteering in a school is a unique and exciting experience and is also a privilege for both the school and the volunteer. It is designed to promote and maintain a supportive relationship for students and school staff.

REMEMBER TO BE

Positive … in your approach and attitude.

Patient … when working with students. Give the program time to get established and for you to find your niche or area of expertise.

Fair … avoid comparisons between students, between staff or between facilities. Students will trust and respect you when you are fair.

Flexible … adapt to special situations.

Friendly … with a smile and a thank you, you can accomplish miracles and the desired tasks.

Confidential … ensure that you do not disclose any information about students or staff that you may receive or come in contact with as a result of your volunteer work.

Consistent … apply the same rules every day to every student.

Considerate … treat individuals with respect and courtesy and expect the same in return.

Reliable … attempt to meet your commitments on a regular basis. Students and staff come to depend on your help.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Evaluation: A Natural Component of Program Planning

Evaluation allows an objective review of the progress being made within the school setting. This evaluation will take place on two different levels.

Self-Evaluation…
At the end of each session a checklist may be reviewed at a meeting between the volunteer, staff and/or coordinator of the volunteer program. This will help to determine specific needs of the volunteer and also help school staff to know where further general training is required.

Program Review…
The volunteer program will periodically be reviewed and modified to maximize the partnership between the school and the community. Areas of consideration will include:
☺ enhancement by volunteer participation;
☺ areas of strength/needs for improvement;
☺ the timelines of the volunteer sessions;
☺ effectiveness of communication.

Rationale

The Simcoe County District School Board encourages participation of volunteer helpers in schools and recognizes the educational advantages to all concerned. The Board further believes that through volunteering, individuals can model caring and cooperative relationships and promote the value of being responsible citizens.

When does a volunteer work?

It is up to you – a few hours a month or each day.

The hours are flexible. You can arrange mutually convenient times with your team members, when you can give your full attention to your position. Please arrange daycare for others in your charge.

What if I'm absent

We know that things come up and sometimes you can't get to school on your volunteer day. Let us know when you can't come, it helps us plan our day without you.
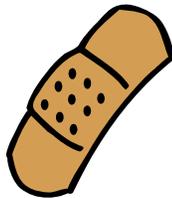
What are the Goals of the Volunteer Program?

1.   Establish a school and community **partnership** for quality education, enabling members of the community to appreciate and contribute to the educational philosophy, the instructional procedures and the resources of our school.

2.   Make each shared learning opportunity the best one possible for the students, staff and the volunteer.

3.   Provide opportunities for meaningful and reliable service in areas of interest and expertise.

4.   Enrich students' learning opportunities by assisting teachers and support staff in instructional and non-instructional tasks.

5.   Provide individualized opportunities for students, assisting each student to reach his or her fullest potential.

6.   Enrich the curriculum by enhancing students' knowledge of the community at large.

What Can Volunteers Expect?

Volunteers can expect:

- to participate in a screening process;

- to submit an original copy of a Criminal Records Check which includes a Vulnerable Sector Screening executed within the last six months prior to beginning to volunteer

- be responsible for the cost of the Criminal Records Check which may be reimbursed if requested by the volunteer

- complete an Offence Declaration annually after providing the original Criminal Records Check

- to know as much about the school as possible…its policies…its people…and its programs;

- to receive thoughtfully planned and effectively presented training for the job;

- to receive support and direction from staff who are experienced, well informed, patient and thoughtful;

- to receive a suitable assignment with consideration for personal preference, temperament, life experience;

- to experience a variety of activities and opportunities;

- to be heard and valued by the educational team who will be planning for the individual learners;

- to receive ongoing feedback regarding personal performance in the volunteer role;

- to receive recognition for contributing time and talents.

4

Hints For Working With Students

1. A student's name is very important. Make sure you learn to say and spell the name correctly.

2. Make sure students know what to call you and can pronounce your name.

3. Show that you are interested in the student as a person. Be calm and avoid being judgmental.

4. Listen carefully to what students have to say. Listen for ideas and not just facts. By your words and actions, you let the students know that you care.

5. Tune into feelings and reflect these back to the learners for clarification and understanding.

6. Let learners know that making mistakes is a part of learning. Do not be afraid of making mistakes yourself.

7. Each learner is an individual. Encourage the learner to work to his/her potential.

8. Build the learner's self-confidence. Praise your learner honestly and frequently. Remember, attentiveness and effort can be as important as performance. Accentuate the positive and minimize the negative.

9. Both teacher and volunteer are responsible for open communication. Make time to discuss or question.

9

A Code of Ethics For Volunteers

Once volunteers begin to work in a school setting, they become privy to knowledge about students' behavior patterns, academic ability, emotional maturity, relationships with others, etc. In some cases information of this nature is imparted in order that the volunteer might work more effectively with an individual student. In other cases, it is simply acquired in the course of frequent contact in the school.

Volunteers must respect the confidentiality of the relationship to the school, being careful to ensure that any student's work and behaviour in school or personal information about students or staff that they come in contact with be held in confidence.

Sometimes students will share very sensitive, personal information about home or out of school events (e.g. physical, sexual abuse). Such information should be reported to the teacher who will then take the appropriate action.

All such information is **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**.

Sometimes volunteers have questions or queries regarding program, teaching strategies or routines. If problems develop, the line of communication in the school is always first with the staff member concerned and then, if necessary, with the principal.

A volunteer has every right to expect that his or her participation will be treated with the same confidentiality and respect.

What are the Responsibilities of Volunteers?

Volunteers:

… are responsible to the principal but work directly with the professional teaching staff;

… are prompt, dependable and regular in attendance;

… work cooperatively as part of the team to support and supplement the program;

… understand and accept the student in terms of their own background and values;

… maintain confidentiality about the student, teacher and staff;

… communicate regularly with the staff;

… are asked to notify the teacher about abusive or harassing situations. Staff will follow up;

… know and observe all pertinent regulations in the Board and at the school. Be clear about procedures related to fire drills, accident reporting, lunch and coffee, use of the halls, etc.

What is a Volunteer?

A school volunteer is a responsible individual who is willing to give **TIME** and **TALENT** to assist as a valuable member of a school team.

Volunteering is Learning

- … new skills
- … about students
- … about your community
- … to enrich the curriculum
- … to reinforce skills taught in school
- … to improve basic academic achievement
- … to increase a student's motivation to learn

Remember that learning is a lifelong endeavour. Making mistakes is an important part of learning. Do not be afraid of making mistakes or asking for staff assistance when you need it. Learning together can be fun!

Who Can Volunteer?

Volunteering in a school is a unique, exciting experience and a privilege for the school, its staff, students and the volunteer. It is designed to promote and maintain a supportive relationship for students and school staff. Parents, business and professional people, retirees, college students, high school students – all have talent to share. Your work or hobby can add an exciting learning experience for some student.

Volunteers will participate in a process which has been adopted by the Simcoe County District School Board. This routine procedure is in place for all individuals who wish to work on a regular basis within our school settings.

If a description of the ideal volunteer were to be drawn, he or she would:

- … be friendly, dependable, reliable and flexible;
- … show concern for students;
- … want to help and would like working co-operatively with school staff;
- … have a good professional attitude, interest and enthusiasm for working with young people;
- … provide a positive role model for young learners;
- … recognize that students are our greatest resource;
- … be willing to share skills and knowledge;
- … maintain confidentiality at all times