

Volunteer Handbook



South Washington County Schools School, Family & Community Involvement Program

South Washington County Schools offer a wide variety of volunteer opportunities for parents, grandparents and members of our community. Volunteers are an important asset in our school district.

April 2016

Purpose of Volunteer Program

- Enrich and enhance student learning.
- Enable teachers to offer more individual attention to their students.
- Provide individuals an opportunity to participate in a variety of activities within the school.
- Promote and strengthen the partnership between families, community and the school.

Why Volunteer?

Volunteering is an opportunity for you to show your children ...

- Your interest in their school life.
- Your commitment to the community.
- Your belief that education is a partnership between family and school.
- Your belief that learning is a lifelong process.

Personal Benefits of Volunteering

- Experience the satisfaction of helping people.
- Develop new skills.
- Meet new and interesting people; develop new friendships.
- Share your time and talent.

Student Benefits

- Students will see a clear relationship between families, community and school.
- Students will develop a feeling that school is important because they see their parents and community showing an interest and becoming involved.
- Student's self-confidence improves when they notice the interest and involvement their families and community have in their school activities.
- Students are able to demonstrate first hand their activities to their families and community.
- Statistics prove that student achievements are higher when their families are involved in their school activities.

Procedures when Volunteering

Volunteer Application Form

Complete and return your Volunteer Application Form to your school's main office before starting your volunteer assignment. Forms are available in your school office or online at www.sowashco.org then to Community-Volunteers.

Sign-in

Stop in the office immediately upon entering school. Volunteers are asked to sign in each time they work at the school. The School Check-In System computer is located in or right outside the office. For security reasons, and in case of an emergency, it is important for the principal to know who is in the building and why.

Please be sure to record the time you volunteered before you leave. The hours you volunteer are calculated and sent to the district office, so it's important that we have all your time recorded. In addition, a record of our volunteer hours enables the school to evaluate its volunteer program and recognize volunteers for their contribution of time. The hours spent volunteering are an example of the commitment to quality education at our school.

Name Badge

Print a name badge when you sign in into the School Check-In computer. By wearing a name badge designated for volunteers, you will immediately be recognized as a person whose specific purpose is to help students and staff.

Background Checks

As per School Board policy, criminal background checks will be required of volunteers in specified assignments such as field trips, athletic or academic coaching and any non-staff supervised activity. Our School District respectfully asks the volunteer to pay the cost (\$10.25) for the background check. We will cover the cost of the background check if it is a hardship to you. Please inform your school if payment is a hardship. A link to the online background check process will be emailed to you once you have completed the volunteer application form and indicated you will be needing a background check.

Accept Direction

Accept direction and supervision. While recognizing that you are an important leader, you do not take the place of a staff member, but are a supplementary person who offers assistance and enrichment with your personal skill and competence.

Guidelines for Volunteering

Appearance

As representatives of South Washington County Schools, volunteers, like staff, are responsible for presenting a good image to students and to the community. Volunteers should dress appropriately for the condition and performance of their duties.

Assignment

If the assignment does not prove to be what you expected, please notify the supervising staff person. If you feel hesitant to discuss it with the staff person, please contact the volunteer services coordinator or school principal.

Be Dependable

Come when promised and on time. Students, staff and other volunteers count on you. If you are unable to keep a commitment, call the office and leave a message for the appropriate teacher, chairperson or volunteer services coordinator as far in advance as possible.

Communications

Maintain good communication with staff, building volunteer services coordinator and other volunteers. Any question is a good question - be sure to ask! Make every effort to arrange a time to talk with the teacher when there are problems or questions.

Confidentiality

Information regarding our students is confidential. South Washington County Schools is regulated by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. This law states:

1. No information can be shared regarding a student without the written and witnessed signed consent of the adult student or underage student's parent or guardian.
2. Discussing personal information regarding an adult student or underage student will be cause for disciplinary action and/or lead to termination of the volunteer.

Confidentiality is important to the integrity of our program. It is important to respect the privacy of all students, staff and other volunteers. Never repeat anything you have heard or seen about individuals while volunteering.

Cultural Differences

Our community is diverse. It is important that we work with one another positively and consider cultural, moral and value differences.

Guidelines, continued

Discipline

Volunteers may not discipline students beyond maintaining order in their group or activity. Please report any problems with students' behavior to the supervising staff person. The professional staff of the school is always responsible for discipline.

Mandatory Reporting

Volunteers are considered "mandated reporters." That means, you must report when you have knowledge or reason to believe that a child is being or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused. Report any incident or suspicion immediately to a staff person.

Record Keeping

Keeping accurate records is an important part of the volunteer program. Accurate records allow us to assist volunteers who might request records for use on job applications, they allow us to track how, when and where volunteers are utilized in the district and they serve in future program planning. Accurate records enable us to recognize the contributions of all volunteers.

Religious, Racial or Sexual Harassment

Religious, racial or sexual harassment is a violation of Federal and State law and of South Washington County School District Policy. Copies of Personnel Policy, Policy Against Sexual Harassment and other School District Policies may be obtained at the District Service Center, 7362 E. Point Douglas Roads S., Cottage Grove, MN 55016 or viewed on the district web site: www.sowashco.org
Volunteers are required to observe all School District Policies.

Staff Responsibilities

Volunteers are an important part of the educational team. The suggestions and opinions of volunteers are always welcome. It is the professional staff, however, that is held responsible by law for the decisions that are made regarding the instruction of students and school management. For this reason, volunteers always work under the direct supervision of the professional staff. The professional staff is responsible for everything that goes on in the building, including student instruction, safety and discipline.

Guidelines, continued

Student contact

As a volunteer you will meet many students and will enjoy working with them.

However, volunteers should not telephone students, visit them at their homes or meet students off school grounds without permission from the parents and/or school principal. In addition, when working with students, whether individually or in small groups, we recommend you work in a highly visible area. This is not only for the protection of the students but volunteers as well.

Tax deductions

Some of your out-of-pocket expenses connected with volunteering may be deductible when you file your income tax. Consult with your tax advisor concerning your personal tax situation.

Use of controlled substances

It is important that we are in compliance with the Regulations of the South Washington County School District and the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988 prohibiting the manufacture, distribution, possession or use of controlled substances in the workplace. This policy applies to paid staff, volunteers and students.

You may review a copy of the Drug Free Workplace Certification Policy on file at the District Service Center, 7362 E. Point Douglas Road S., Cottage Grove, MN 55016.

Value in dollars and sense

Volunteers are a valuable asset to our school. They dedicate many hours of their time to give teachers more time to teach and to provide opportunities for students to learn and enjoy school. Volunteers represent a great gift to the district and to the children who attend its schools.

What I shouldn't do as a volunteer

Volunteers supplement and support the program, but may not

- Have access to student permanent record files
- Diagnose student needs
- Make final evaluation on student achievement
- Counsel students
- Discuss student progress with parents

Tips for Working with Students

- Call students by name; be friendly and caring.
- Be enthusiastic, patient and kind.
- Praise success.
- Be honest with students. It's okay to say, "I don't know."
- Be comfortable with silence. Allow student time to think and form answers.
- Do not give any student materials on your own without first discussing it with the teacher.
- Accept students as they are. Be sensitive to differences in background, culture, religion, values, vocabulary and aspirations.
- Never make a promise you can't fulfill.
- Do not eat candy, snacks or gum when working with students unless it is part of programming.
- Be dependable and prompt.
- Keep calm in an emergency.
- Maintain your sense of humor!
- And by all means, enjoy yourself! You have the opportunity to make a positive difference in someone's life! How wonderful is that?!

And most importantly . . .

Parents are their children's most important educators throughout their learning years!

That's what the Parent Involvement Program of South Washington County Schools is all about - supporting parents and other family members as involved educators of their children and supporting school staff in working with parents as partners.

Thank you!



Community Education
South Washington County Schools



South Washington County Schools

District Service Center

7362 E. Point Douglas Road S.

Cottage Grove, MN 55016

Phone: 651-425-6300

This handbook has been prepared to guide and support the volunteer efforts that provide lasting impact on our school community. Processes have been developed through the guidance of Series 900 School District/Community Relations Policies.