Riverview School District Volunteer Handbook

RIVERVIEW
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dear Volunteers,

You have taken a step towards making a significant impact on the excellent educational programs offered in the Riverview School District. Volunteers enrich the educational experience for students while supporting our teachers and staff. Volunteers also help us build a strong foundation and a community connection for students as they continue to learn and develop.

As you enhance and support the volunteer program, it is important to also help students be excited about life and to promote a positive attitude that will help prepare them as they grow and learn. By modeling for students, the qualities and characteristics they need to succeed, you will help them develop into productive citizens in our community. As you continue to volunteer, we ask that you share your positive experiences with others in our school community and encourage them to become involved as well.

This handbook is designed to help make a smooth transition into your volunteer experience and provide an overview of our school volunteer program. Our hope is that you will find personal satisfaction in this experience. Thank you for your support of the students and staff in the Riverview School District. We look forward to working with you!

Volunteer Categories

*** The Riverview School District encourages all volunteers to get clearances, regardless of type, for the safety and protection of all students and volunteers.**

1. Assistive Volunteer

An assistive volunteer works directly under the supervision of a teacher or administrator. The volunteer does not provide direct services to students and does not have unsupervised contact with students, and therefore, clearances are not required.

Examples of Assistive Volunteers include homeroom parents, parents who attend or conduct classroom celebrations, parents who are guest readers, talent show volunteers, day-time field trip chaperones (who must stay within sight of teacher), etc.

2. Independent Volunteer

An independent volunteer works under the general direction and supervision of a teacher or administrator and provides direct services to students on behalf of the school. Independent Volunteers may have unsupervised contact with students, and as such, clearances are required.

Examples of Independent Volunteers include volunteer tutors (before or after the regular school day), daytime field trip chaperones (who may be out of sight of teacher), overnight field trip chaperones, PTO dance chaperones, musical chaperones & costumes, book fair chairs, activity advisor or booster officer, recess or library aides, and after-school program volunteers, etc.

3. Volunteer Coaches/Sponsors

A volunteer coach or sponsor works under the general direction and supervision of a coach or student activity sponsor. The volunteer directly supervises or instructs students and may have unsupervised contact with the students. Volunteer Coaches and Sponsors must be up to date clearances.

Examples of Volunteer Coaches/Sponsors include volunteers on a coaching staff of an athletic team, athletic trainers or equipment managers, choreographers, musicians, or other individuals who provide instruction to students in the marching band or the school musical, amongst others.

Independent Volunteer, Coach, or Sponsor Application Process

*Volunteer process can be found on the Riverview School District website: www.rsd.k12.pa.us under the Volunteer Tab. All items will be completed using the COMPLY system.

Riverview School District Volunteer Program Policies

Volunteer Assignment

You will be assigned to a job according to the needs of a staff member as well as the skills you have to offer. IF you feel you will not be able to fulfill the tasks of that assignment, please contact the teacher or staff person who you are working with.

Absence

Your willingness to donate time to our school is greatly appreciated. Because teachers plan with the expectation that you will be there, absences can cause real problems. If an emergency arises and you will not be able to keep your commitment, please contact the teacher or staff person with whom you will be working by phone or email.

Younger Children

Because it is essential that you give your full attention to your assignment, we ask that younger children not accompany volunteers during your assignment.

Cell Phones

As a courtesy to the staff and students, please turn off your cell phone before entering the classroom.

Procedures

Upon arrival at the school building, all visitors must register in the building office before proceeding to any other part of the building.

As part of the registration process in the front office, all visitors will be asked to sign in and provide their driver's license or other state-issued photo-identification, for processing in our visitor badge system.

Once registered, the visitor will be issued a Visitor Identification Badge, which must be always displayed while the visitor remains in the school building or on school premises.

Visitors must always remain in approved areas only and act in a manner appropriate to the safe functioning of the school environment. Any individual who engages in uncooperative or disruptive behavior will be required to leave the premises.

Upon conclusion of the visit, the visitor must return to the building office, sign out on the Visitor Register and return the visitor badge.

Personal Boundaries

Before you start your volunteer experience, we ask that you have a clear idea of your personal boundaries. Are you comfortable having the students refer to you by your first name, or would you prefer to be called Mr. or Mrs.? Are you willing to discuss aspects of your personal life such as your spouse and children? Children ask adults many personal questions in an attempt to bond. Because children are developing social skills, they are still learning the difference between appropriate and inappropriate questions. Answer personal questions that are within your own comfort level if they are asked during appropriate times. If a child asks a question that you do not want to answer, let the student(s) know in a polite way.

Confidentiality and the School Volunteer

Confidentiality is an essential expectation for anyone serving as a school volunteer. You can strengthen the bond between yourself and the school by being certain to do the following:

1. Treat all students' personal information as confidential. This includes *observed* behavior along with academic, personal, and social information.

2. Please only share relevant information about a student with the classroom teacher, counselor, or building principal.

3. Information regarding a student should NEVER be discussed outside of the school setting.

4. If you are concerned or need a better understanding of a situation, please speak with the school personnel involved. Please avoid discussion about these concerns with non-school personnel. *Never* leave the building with a serious concern— please take the time to talk to the secretaries, the counselor or principal.

5. Channel friends' or neighbors' questions about confidential issues that are directed to you to the school principal, teacher, or counselor.

6. Recognize that you see only a small part of the big picture and try to avoid generalizations.

7. Respect ALL students' right to privacy.

The confidentiality regarding students' social behavior, academic achievement, health information, student records, and other legal documents is a serious matter. PA law prohibits volunteers from recording grades in teacher's permanent record books and taking and/or recording attendance records. In addition, the school volunteer must have no contact with the home regarding the child's progress or behavior. You may discuss any ideas you have with the teacher, but the teacher must be the one to formally communicate with home. You, the volunteer, may not actually assign class work or homework for the child. Your job is to implement work and follow directions prescribed by the teacher.

Tips for Volunteers

- Use eye contact, it's powerful.
- Use a seating chart to refer to children by name.
- Tell students that you are glad to be there!
- Treat students and yourself with dignity.
- Always speak to students as if another person was standing right beside them.
- Don't take misbehavior personally; students can be duty-bound to challenge authority, no matter who it is.
- Make one of your first tasks to clearly state your expectations to students.
- Use humor, never sarcasm.
- Don't make a mountain out of a molehill, yet don't wait until you have a major out-of-control meltdown before seeking help.
- Provide as much positive feedback to students as possible. Use praise and encouragement--it goes a long way.

DO'S and DON'TS When Using Reinforcements

Do let a child know, when he/she is really trying, that what he/she is doing is acknowledged and appreciated.

Don't be insincere or praise a child for things that are easy for him/her and take little or no effort on his/her part.

Do let a child know he/she is making progress even though the work is not perfect.

Do reinforce a child for the part she/he does, when a child is learning something new or something that is hard for her/him.

Don't wait until she/he is completely finished with a difficult task before you give her/him encouragement.

Do vary the words you use.

Don't use the same word for everything.

Do be specific about behavior when reinforcing a child.
"Good job, you finished on time!" or "I liked the way you…"

Don't be so general that the reinforcement is ineffective or ignored. "Good"
"Great"

Source: **Reinforcement Theory** by Madeline Hunter

How to Encourage Students

Use Phrases to Demonstrate ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: Help students learn to evaluate their own progress and make their own decisions. Do not focus on having students please you. Be specific in your comments.

Examples of *encouraging* statements:

- **"Way to go!" or "Thumbs up!"**
- **"It looks like you enjoyed that."**
- **"Those are neat colors that you chose for your picture."**
- **"Your whole team seemed to have a blast at that game."**

Common times to use these phrases: *almost anytime, in response to artwork, athletics, homework, school projects, or any time you used to say "good job".*

Use Phrases that Show CONFIDENCE: Help students develop a willingness to try things and be responsible for their own behavior. Teach them to have the courage to be imperfect.

- **"You can do it!" or "You'll make it!"**
- **"You can do hard things."**
- **"Knowing you, I'm sure you'll do fine."**
- **"I trust your judgment."**

Common times used: *joining new activity or group, facing peer conflicts, when going off and trying a new job responsibility.*

Use Phrases of APPRECIATION: Help students feel that their contributions count, and that their talents and efforts can be used for the good of all, not just personal gain. Help the children learn to feel glad for successes of others as well as for their own personal success.

- **"Thanks, you helped a lot."**
- **"I really appreciated your cooperation."**
- **"I really enjoyed today. Thanks."**
- **"I could really use your help on _____."**

Common times used: *After completing a difficult task, after seeing positive interaction with other students, during field trips, during a time when cooperation is needed.*

Use Phrases that Recognize EFFORT: Help students focus on what they can do. Help them recognize improvements in their work and develop persistence on difficult tasks.

- **"Look at the progress you've made."**
- **"You spent a lot of time thinking that through."**
- **"You're really improving in these ways: _____."**

Common times used: *in response to homework, report card.*

Valuable is the work you do

Outstanding is how you always come through

Loyal, sincere, and full of good cheer

Untiring in your efforts throughout the year

Notable are the contributions you make

Trustworthy in every project you take

Eager to reach every goal

Effective in the way you fill your role

Ready with a smile like a shining star

Special and wonderful that's what you are

Thank you for volunteering with the Riverview School District!

RIVERVIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT