

# Sharon Elementary Volunteer Handbook

This handbook is designed to provide you with practical information that will assist you in your volunteer placement. It is our goal that the time you spend with students is worthwhile for you as well as the students.

Thank you for helping to make a difference in the lives of students at Sharon Elementary!



Welcome!

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## Why Volunteer?

Sharon Elementary encourages parents/guardians and other members of our community to share their time, knowledge, and abilities with our student body. Volunteers enrich our school's educational programs, strengthen our home/school connection, and help us to build relationships with outside businesses and public agencies. The presence of volunteers in the classroom and school also enhances supervision of students and contributes to overall school safety. Teachers, staff, students, and families all benefit from volunteers being present in the school. Thank you for your time!

## Sign-In & Sign-Out

When you come to the school to volunteer, **you must sign in at the Front Desk**. In order to enter the building, you **must present your valid I.D.** to the secretary to scan into our Raptor Security System. The secretary will then give you a Visitors Pass that **must be worn at all times** so the staff knows why you are in the building. When you leave, be sure to sign out and return the Visitors Pass. Sharon Elementary enforces this procedure for the protection of our children, for security reasons, and for keeping track of your volunteer hours.

## Cell Phones & Making Phone Calls

All teachers and staff must turn their personal cell phones off (or to silent mode) while in the school so as to not distract the students. We ask that our volunteers also turn their phones to silent mode to help us preserve a focused environment.

## Restrooms

Volunteers are asked to use the adult restrooms located throughout the school. Please do not use the student restrooms.

## Confidentiality

**Students and their parents have a right to confidentiality which covers such things but is not limited to attendance, behavioral reports, family background, grades, health data, standardized tests scores, etc. All volunteers are expected to respect our students and their parents by keeping such information confidential. The school will immediately revoke volunteer privileges if there is a breach of confidentiality.** If another parent asks you questions that would put you in the position of breaching confidentiality, ask them to take their questions to the teacher or principal, and explain that you are not authorized to talk about other children or adults outside the school. (See Confidentiality Agreement)

## Discipline of Students

If you are working with a student(s) and a behavior problem arises, please report the issue to the classroom teacher as soon as possible. You may remind the student(s) of the classroom rules but volunteers are not to reprimand or give out punishments to a student under any conditions. Please be consistent and calm with working with students, restate the rules and expectations, and offer reasonable choices. We expect our students to be respectful with everyone. **The teacher will handle all issues with behavior by following the procedures that are in place.**

## Working in Your Child's Classroom

As a parent you know that your child may behave differently when you are present than when you are away. Please explain to your child that they need to continue using the same work ethic they would use if you were not in the room. If your presence in the classroom is a distraction to your child or the other children in the classroom, another volunteer assignment can be arranged for you. Remember that even if you are in a completely different area from your child, your child still knows you are involved in his/her school.

## Appropriate Student Interactions

Listed below are some helpful tips on how to positively interact and build connections with the students. Keep in mind that you are in a position to set an example for students. Your speech and behavior should serve as good models for them to follow.

- **Be courteous and show respect to other people and school property.**
- **Accept children as they are.** Each child is unique. Be ready to accept differences in background, values, and vocabulary.
- **Allow children to do things by themselves. Please do not step in too quickly to help.**
- **Reinforce success and good behavior.** When children are behaving well, always let them know how proud you are of them. **If possible, try to ignore minor misbehaviors and find something the child is doing well instead.**
- **Use positive comments whenever possible** (see page for a list of suggestions).
- **Be patient, fair, and firm. Let children know you care about them.**
- **Under no circumstances should you leave a student or small group of students without supervision.**
- **Model use of PLEASE, THANK YOU, and EXCUSE ME.**
- **If you make a mistake, admit it to the child and say, "I'm sorry."**
- **Model the best English possible. Avoid slang and never use vulgarity and profanity when working with children. Do not use "put down" phrases.**
- **Call students by name at each opportunity.** A child's name is very important to him/her.
- **Always be consistent with the teacher's rules for classroom behavior.** Don't allow children to do things that their teacher doesn't allow.

## Child Development

It is important to consider child developmental stages when working in the classroom. **Our students range in age and may all be at different stages in their development.**

## Dependability

**Although the job is voluntary, the commitment is professional.** Besides maintaining an attitude of mutual respect and confidence, you should become familiar with school and classroom policies and practices. Working with the teaching staff requires flexibility and a willingness to follow directions.

**Please be on time!** Volunteers' timeliness affects a teacher's ability to execute their daily plan.

The teacher's desk is private! Please do not go through any papers or files without permission.

If you are unable to volunteer on your scheduled day, please notify the teacher or front office as soon as possible.

## “Dressing for the Job”

The following are some common sense, general rules Sharon Elementary has in place in order to contribute to the overall safe and positive learning environment we want to create for all staff, students and volunteers.

- **Wear clothing that is comfortable, but appropriate.** You may be sitting on the floor working with groups. Shirts must be worn with no midriff exposure. **Please no spaghetti straps or see through fabrics.**
- **Wear appropriate footwear for working with children.**

## Younger Siblings

Volunteers may not bring younger siblings to the school while volunteering in the classroom. The distraction will disrupt the flow of learning for our students. Younger siblings are not allowed on field trips.

## Student Injuries and Dealing with Body Fluids

THE BODY FLUIDS OF ALL PERSONS SHOULD BE REGARDED AS POTENTIALLY INFECTIOUS. The “body fluids” we come into contact with the most when working with small children are: blood, urine, feces, vomit, saliva, and runny noses. In the school setting universal precautions such as good hand washing, wearing of protective gloves, and careful trash disposal should be used if there is contact with another person's bodily fluids. Remember, thorough hand washing is the single most important factor in preventing the spread of infectious diseases. All staff and volunteers must wash their hands before handling food, drinking and eating, after using the restroom, and after contact with bodily fluids.

If a student injures himself/herself while under your supervision, first tell the classroom teacher immediately. Depending on the situation, the student may need to be escorted to the nurse's office for further assistance.

- ⦿ Avoid direct skin contact with body fluids. If it occurs, wash your hands and other affected areas immediately with soap and water.
- ⦿ Disposable gloves should be used when contact with body fluids is anticipated (such as bloody nose, vomit, or wet pants).

## Reporting Problems, Concerns, Suggestions

If you have a problem, concern or a suggestion, we urge you to report it so that it can be addressed and resolved. Depending on the situation, it may be best for you to report it first to the classroom teacher and then, if needed, to the principal.

## Volunteer Opportunities

There are many ways to become involved in our classroom and at Sharon Elementary. Below you will find examples that may interest you. Some options are working directly with students while other options are for those of you who may prefer not to work directly with students.

### **Working Directly with Students: Teachers will schedule on an as needed basis**

- Listen to students read
- Mentor students
- Read to students
- Play games to reinforce basic skills
- Help with phonics skills
- Assist at center time
- Help with math skills
- Help out at class parties
- Assist with writing skills
- Be a chaperone on field trips

### **Classroom Jobs without Student Interaction: The office will schedule on an as needed basis**

- Putting up/taking down displays
- Cutting out shapes
- Organizing & Filing Papers
- Stapling student books together
- Preparing other materials for the classroom (copying will require copy machine training)

### **Three points to keep in mind:**

- 1) Whether you work with students or not, your time is valuable to us. Students will thrive from the one-on-one attention that volunteers can provide and teachers will have more free time to plan quality instruction when volunteers take care of the routine jobs such as organizing papers and preparing learning materials. We appreciate YOU!
- 2) We all have different ways of doing things. When you have been assigned a task, make certain you know exactly how the teacher wants the job done. Ask for clear directions and, if necessary, ask that the teacher give you samples or demonstrate how tasks are to be completed.
- 3) The opportunity to learn new skills is one of the benefits of being a school volunteer. However, feel free to decline tasks that make you feel uncomfortable.

# Confidentiality Agreement

There are federal and state laws that protect the privacy rights of students and families. In a school situation, there are many instances in which confidential information is discussed in order to better understand students and how we can help them. When working in the schools as a volunteer, there may be times when this information is overheard. Our staff will make every effort to prevent this from happening; however, as a volunteer you must agree that if you do hear information about a student or family, you will not repeat this outside of the school. This will ensure the protection of our students' interest and their families, thus creating a better environment for all.

Additionally, two laws govern special education confidentiality. FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act). Both of these regulations indicate that confidentiality must be maintained relative to special education students.

**Therefore, any written or verbal communication with anyone who does not have a right to know is in violation of these laws. A volunteer should not discuss a child's disability, needs, or personal information with any individual outside of the classroom instructor or building principal. The volunteer should not carry any written or verbal statements outside of the school that would divulge the child's disability. In essence, only those who work directly with the student are considered as those with a "need to know". If at any time these terms of confidentiality are violated by a volunteer, termination of volunteer services may occur.**

## As a volunteer:

I realize that I am subject to a code of ethics similar to that which binds educational professionals.

I will keep confidential matters private.

I also understand that volunteering in the Sharon Elementary Volunteer Program is a privilege and not a right. The school's principal reserves the right to deny or remove any volunteer violating confidentiality or any district policy.

**I will not divulge information about any student or family to any person outside the school setting.**