

Volunteers In the Classroom

A Teacher's Guide



**Volunteers in Public Schools
School District of Palm Beach County**

Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) Program

Did you know...

- ✍ February is Florida School Volunteer Appreciation Month.
- ✍ Each school has a school -based volunteer coordinator to assist and support faculty and staff with community involvement.
- ✍ To support school community involvement, each area has a volunteer/business partnership coordinator housed at each area office.
- ✍ Each volunteer (including parents) are required to complete application and background check procedure, even for chaperoning field trips.
- ✍ All volunteers must sign in the front office each time they enter the school campus and must wear identification badge.
- ✍ You should communicate with your school coordinator to learn more about the Outstanding Volunteer Awards, Five Star Awards, Business Partnerships, Mentoring, Tutoring, and Parent Involvement opportunities.
- ✍ Volunteers are busy people. Use them well, find out their expertise and match their skills with your needs.
- ✍ For additional information please contact:

The Office of Community Involvement at 434-8789 or PX 48789



Staff and Faculty Information

Objectives of the Volunteers in Public Schools Program

1. To help provide the best education for students
2. To assist teachers
3. To increase student motivation
4. To enrich and augment the school program
5. To strengthen school-community relations

Volunteer Recruitment

A school volunteer can be from various walks of life. They may be a parent, a retired person, a senior citizen, a business person, a college student, or a student in the school.

School volunteers come from many sources including:

Parents	Newspapers
PTA/PTO meetings	Faith groups
Open House	Social groups
School newsletters	College campuses
Retirees	Personal contacts
Condominiums	“Satisfied Customers”
Businesses	(Veteran volunteers)

Teachers can play a big part in recruiting because of their direct involvement with parents, children, and the community.

The Volunteers in Public Schools district office also recruits school volunteers through media releases, distributions of fliers, speeches, and presentations to community organizations, etc.

School Volunteer Qualifications

1. Desire to be involved with schools
2. Reliability
3. Willingness to be trained
4. Respect for confidentiality
5. Completed background check

Policy and Procedures for School Volunteers

1. School Volunteers work only with teachers that request assistance.
2. School Volunteers DO NOT:
 - a. Diagnose student weaknesses and strengths
 - b. Prescribe activities for students
 - c. Evaluate student progress
 - d. Discipline students
3. It is recommended that school volunteers do not assist in their own child's classroom unless requested by that teacher.
4. All volunteers must attend an orientation session provided by the School Volunteer Coordinator.
5. All volunteers must complete an application form including background and emergency information.
6. Volunteers must be approved through the VIPS COUNT Tracking system prior to going on a field trip.
7. All volunteers must log in and out to record their hours of volunteer service, using electronic volunteer tracking system.
8. Volunteers may want to observe the first time.

Volunteer Orientation and Training

1. Pre-Service Orientation:
 - a. Role of the volunteer
 - b. School Board policy and procedures
 - c. Confidentiality
 - d. Reliability
 - e. Discipline
2. In-Service Training:
 - a. Reading skills reinforcement
 - b. Mathematics skills reinforcement
 - c. Media Center training
 - d. Clinic/Health training
 - e. Office training
 - f. Other topics as requested

Planning for your volunteer

- ✓ Maximize the volunteer's time. Volunteers should be able to start work without waiting for verbal instruction or direction from teacher.
- ✓ Provide alternative service opportunities when teacher and/or student(s) are absent.
- ✓ By planning for the volunteer, you will increase their commitment and self-esteem by being a part of the school support team.
- ✓ Plan for volunteer should include:
 - φ task to be performed (vary the tasks)
 - φ location of materials
 - φ place to work

Understand your volunteer's background

- ✓ Learn about each volunteer's education background.
- ✓ Become familiar with the extent of the volunteer's knowledge of the community.
- ✓ Realize that the school may be a new environment in the volunteer's current experiences.
- ✓ Be aware of the volunteer's desire to work with children.
- ✓ Accept the volunteer's non-judgmental attitude and lack of hidden agenda.
- ✓ Become familiar with the volunteer's previous experiences with children.

Getting to know your volunteer will:

- ✓ Increase likelihood that volunteer's special skills and talents will be utilized to best advantage, and that responsibility given is appropriate.
- ✓ Establish rapport necessary when teacher or volunteer need to discuss the assignment or classroom policies.
- ✓ Create an atmosphere in which the volunteer is comfortable about asking questions or discussing the student's progress.

Involving the volunteer in the classroom

- ✓ Plan for an appropriate introduction of the volunteer to the students.
- ✓ Inform the volunteer of the classroom curriculum.
- ✓ Arrange a consistent time to plan and prepare activities for the volunteer.
- ✓ Clearly define and demonstrate the volunteer's tasks, and provide a variety of activities.
- ✓ Plan times to discuss the volunteer's involvement, share experiences, respond to concerns, and give feedback.
- ✓ Be supportive of the volunteer directly and in front of the student, staff, etc.
- ✓ Let the volunteer know that you recognize his/her contributions.
- ✓ Note areas in which the volunteer needs to develop in order to be more effective in the classroom and correlate this input with workshops.
- ✓ Decide whether the volunteer is to come when there is a substitute, and inform the volunteer of this decision.

Importance of dependability

- ✓ The volunteer's loyalty and dependability are determined mainly by the degree of satisfaction felt on the job – tasks assigned should be perceived as meaningful and varied with the responsibility increasing with the volunteer skills.
- ✓ Volunteers enter the program with enthusiasm and high hopes for a meaningful experience. If a volunteer is not dependable, try to determine the reason. Stress the importance of letting you know when he or she cannot come on an assigned day.
- ✓ The teacher should make certain the volunteer understands the value of his or her contribution and how it relates to the total effect.

Importance of professionalism

- ✓ The teacher sets the example – the volunteer will model the professional attitude demonstrated by the teacher in dress, manner, behavior, etc.
- ✓ The volunteer orientation should include a section on professionalism that reminds volunteers that although their job is that of a volunteer, the commitment is professional. They should be considered non-paid staff.

Importance of confidentiality

- ✓ The teacher needs to stress the importance of confidentiality to the volunteer.
- ✓ Instruct the volunteer not to comment on individual students, faculty members, or the school in an inappropriate manner. Volunteers should not have access to student files. If a volunteer has a concern or problem, ask them to discuss it with the appropriate staff member.

Importance of following directions and asking questions

- ✓ Volunteers need clear, concise directions from the teacher.
- ✓ Teachers need to be sure the volunteer understands the assigned tasks.
- ✓ Teachers should provide samples or demonstrate briefly how tasks are to be performed.
- ✓ Volunteers need to feel comfortable about asking the teacher for clarification when necessary. Good communication is the key to a successful working relationship.
- ✓ Volunteers need clearly defined job descriptions and a thorough orientation of duties.

If a volunteer is working in academic areas with a student or students, discuss:

- ✓ Pertinent background information about the students.
- ✓ Special strengths of the students.
- ✓ Special needs of the students and skills to be developed.
- ✓ Tips for working with specific students (learning styles and reinforcement techniques).
- ✓ Designation of work area location.
- ✓ Alternative plans if students are absent.

Preparing the students

Let the students know that volunteers are coming into the classroom to help. Explain what the volunteers will be doing, and the importance of these tasks. Point out the generosity of the volunteers and encourage students to make the volunteers feel that they are valued members of the class.

Supervising volunteers

As with any staff member performing an important function in the school program, volunteers need support and supervision. They should be held accountable for performing assigned tasks appropriately. Frequent feedback will enable volunteers to improve job performance. Good communication is crucial. Always plan ahead for your volunteers. If, for any reason, the placement is not working out, talk to the volunteer coordinator at your school.

Showing your appreciation

- ✓ Personally thank the volunteers each day, note special contributions.
- ✓ Allow the volunteers to grow by increasing job responsibilities.
- ✓ Let the volunteers know how their efforts are helping you or the students.
- ✓ Write an article on your volunteers' contributions for the school newsletter.
- ✓ Have the students write thank-you notes to the volunteer.
- ✓ Call when the volunteer is absent.
- ✓ Send the volunteer a card for special occasions.

Guidelines for Teachers

Requesting a Volunteer

As you develop goals and objectives for the year, identify what your volunteer needs are and the days and times you need volunteer serves. Share this information with the volunteer coordinator at your school. Make your request using the form provided.

Managing School Volunteers

All volunteers must complete an online volunteer application form using the VIPS Count! Electronic Volunteer Tracking System. This system is available at all Palm Beach County Public Schools. Upon submission of the application form, a criminal background check will be completed by the School District Police Department. Teachers should check that the volunteers have logged in each time they are on campus. Teachers are the key to guiding the practical learning experiences of volunteers. The following are suggestions to assist you in making the best of your volunteers' talents.

Meeting with your Volunteers

Meet with your volunteers before their first day of service to discuss:

- ✓ Days and times to work
- ✓ Tasks to be accomplished
- ✓ What to expect of the students
- ✓ Materials and strategies to be used
- ✓ Classroom discipline policy
- ✓ Location of daily assignments for the volunteer
- ✓ Procedures to keep in touch (regular conferences, telephone conversations, notes, informal meetings, etc.)
- ✓ How the volunteer should inform you if they will be absent
- ✓ The importance of confidentiality
- ✓ Acceptance of assigned tasks and agreed upon procedures and practices

VIPS Count! Volunteer Tracking System

VIPS Count! Is a web-based application that allows volunteers to enroll and submit their hours for volunteering in any Palm Beach County Public School. With this system, volunteers are screened with a background check performed by the School District Police Department. All approved volunteers are then allowed to log hours volunteering at their favorite school. These include activities such as PTA/PTO, SAC, chaperoning, mentoring, tutoring, office or classroom assistance, and more.

Volunteer coordinators can produce several reports that can pinpoint the areas in which volunteers are serving as well as areas in which they are most needed. The ability to create reports on demand allows the volunteer coordinators to spend less time accounting the volunteer hours performed and more time helping students.

Features

- **User friendly format**
- **Volunteers apply electronically**
- **Quicker processing of background checks**
- **Secures sensitive data**
- **Sign in & out electronically**
- **Compiles volunteer hours**
- **Automates record keeping tasks**



VIPS COUNT

VOLUNTEER COMPUTER TRACKING SYSTEM

Condensed Instructions for Volunteers

Application: to complete a new application

- Enter your user ID (social security number) with no dashes using only the number keys at the top of the keyboard.
- Move the mouse pointer and select the “Click to Continue” button (*please be sure to read all messages that appear on screen for you*)
- *When you are a new volunteer a message will appear on screen that says, “This USER ID XXX-XX-XXX is not on file. If you would like to sign up to register as a volunteer please press the “Click to Continue” button.* After you click to continue
- Complete application and be sure to complete all sections.
- Once you have completed your application it is electronically transmitted to School Police for review.
- You can now follow the Sign In procedures.

Sign In:

- Enter your user ID (social security number)
- Select the “Sign In/Sign Out” button.
- Fill in your primary volunteering location box giving your physical volunteer location today e.g. media center, office, classroom # or teacher’s name (*it is very important that you complete this accurately for your own safety and security*)
- Select the “Submit” button.
- On this screen you will see 4 buttons and several messages: a “Print Name Tag”; “Click to Finish”; “Update Personal Info”; and a “Cancel” button as well as a Sign-Out reminder message and a welcome message from the school and volunteer coordinator. Please take a few moments to read the message regularly because this will be another form of communication used by the coordinator to keep you in the loop with current events at your school.
- Select the “Print Name Tag” button (only do this if your school has a label printer)
- Select the “Click to Finish” button.

Sign Out:

- Enter your user ID (social security number)
- Select “Sign In/Sign Out” button.
- If you are working in Instructional (e.g. Reading/Language Arts, as a Big Brother/Sister, ESOL), select the down arrow in the instructional column and then choose from the list provided, then using the down arrow under hours select your hours.
- If you were working in support services (e.g. as a classroom assistant) select the down arrow, choose from the list provided, then using the down arrow under hours and enter your volunteer hours.
- Select the “Click to Continue” button.
- Periodically be sure to read this screen because it gives you a summary of hours. This will help you keep track on your time.
- Select the “Click to Finish” button to complete your signed out.

What School Volunteers Do

School Volunteers work with teachers who request them to:

EXTEND the teacher's teaching time-

- Read stories
- Assist in labs
- Answer questions
- Check student work
- Create learning centers
- Tutor in math and reading
- Operate audio-visual equipment
- Find materials for classroom use
- Help older students with research
- Work with non-English speaking students
- Reinforce skills by providing extra drills
- Play spelling, phonics, language, and math games
- Assist child with make-up work and missed tests

ENRICH the learning environment-

- Dramatize stories
- Make educational games
- Assist with art projects
- Help children choose books
- Assist with creative writing
- Help children use computers
- Tape record children's stories
- Type and reproduce class newspapers
- Record textbooks for students with reading difficulties

EXPAND the resources of the school-

- Display special collections
- Explore career opportunities
- Add expert resources in special classes
- Give performances or demonstrations in the arts
- Show slides and comment on experiences in other cultures

ENLIST the community as partners with the school

- Provide a two-way bridge between school and community
- Stimulate greater citizen understanding and support of school programs
- Enable citizens and taxpayers to know school's challenges and successes

TEACHER REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Do you want school volunteer services? _____yes _____no

In what areas are you interested in utilizing volunteers?

_____Tutoring in specific areas:

Reading English Science Social Studies
 Spelling Math Other

_____General assistance in classroom

_____Make bulletin boards, posters, displays

_____Help set up or assist in learning centers

_____Work with individual students

_____Assist with Art Music Physical Education

_____Chaperone on field trips

_____Media Center assistant

_____Clerical typing filing mailing duplicating

_____Speakers on travel careers hobbies other

_____Other_____

Day(s) and Time(s) you would want volunteers to work:

DAY(S)	TIME(S)
Monday _____	_____ to _____
Tuesday _____	_____ to _____
Wednesday _____	_____ to _____
Thursday _____	_____ to _____
Friday _____	_____ to _____

Name_____ Grade_____

Room Number_____ Team (if applicable)_____

The First Meeting Teacher – Volunteer Initial Conference Checklist

The first session with your volunteer is very important. At this time you will set the tone for your working relationship. You must remain the leader, but still make your volunteer feel confident, useful, and an invaluable part of your classroom.

Have you:

- _____ 1. Explained the emergency drill procedures?
- _____ 2. Discussed your methods of discipline and classroom rules?
- _____ 3. Introduced your volunteer to your colleagues and other staff members?
- _____ 4. Shown your volunteer the cafeteria, teacher's lounge, adult restrooms, parking and sign-in location?
- _____ 5. Clearly established and explained the schedule the volunteer will follow?
- _____ 6. Toured your classroom observing centers, materials, equipment, etc.?
- _____ 7. Determined if the volunteer will be eating lunch at the school and made arrangements as necessary?
- _____ 8. Explained your communication procedure for daily volunteer assignments (folder, notes, or other means)?
- _____ 9. Made your volunteer feel a comfortable part of your working situation?
- _____ 10. Allowed the volunteer to ask questions freely?
- _____ 11. Decided what procedure you will follow if either of you must be absent?
- _____ 12. Discussed the school dress code, if applicable?
- _____ 13. Explained school policies and rules?
- _____ 14. Discussed the name students will use for the volunteer?
Recommendations: Mr. Brown or Ms. Smith (not Jane or John).
- _____ 15. Provided a place for your volunteer to put personal items, such as a coat or purse?
- _____ 16. Smiled and expressed your appreciation?

IF YOU HAVE, YOU'RE READY!



Volunteer's Assignment Sheet
Non-tutoring Form

Date: _____

Volunteer: _____

Teacher: _____

It would be helpful if you could work on the following tasks. Please check if you finish. Indicate where you are with a task if you do not finish.

1. _____ **Comment** _____

2. _____ **Comment** _____

3. _____ **Comment** _____

If time permits, you may wish to assist me with:

1. _____ **Comment** _____

2. _____ **Comment** _____

3. _____ **Comment** _____

Location of task assignments: File Back Table Art Room

Other: _____

Location of necessary materials: Closet: _____ **Drawer:** _____

Cabinet: _____ **Other:** _____

Comments: _____

Teacher-Volunteer Assignment Worksheet

Tutoring or Instructionally Related

Teacher _____

Volunteer _____

Date	Student	Activity	How much of activity accomplished?	Comments

Teacher Concerns and Possible Solutions

1. Volunteers are not dependable.
 - a. Have realistic expectations of their time.
 - b. Their commitment is stressed at orientation.
 - c. Volunteers must continue to feel needed and have accomplishments recognized.
2. Volunteers cannot maintain confidentiality.
 - a. Stress confidentiality at orientation.
 - b. Teachers can exercise control over sensitive materials.
 - c. Provide outlets for observations and grievances.
3. Volunteers become disillusioned.
 - a. Commitment is based on satisfaction, acceptance, and recognition.
 - b. Match volunteers to tasks that they can do effectively.
 - c. Short-term commitments, assignments, and an observation period.
4. How do you fire a volunteer?
 - a. Avoid it by clearly presenting roles and expectations initially.
 - b. Place volunteer in another job category.
 - c. Provide continuous evaluation.
 - d. Talk to volunteer coordinator.
5. Volunteers are a threat to teachers.
 - a. Volunteers are assigned only to requesting teachers.
 - b. Teachers need to understand specified goals of volunteer program.
 - c. Volunteers do not replace paid staff.
6. Volunteers sometimes want special treatment for themselves and/or children.
 - a. Strongly recommend parents not volunteer in classroom with their own child.
 - b. Candid discussions about the rewards of volunteering for the entire school, as well as their own children.

Dos & Don'ts of School Volunteers

DO

Make volunteers feel welcome.

Confer often with volunteer.

Plan the work volunteers are to do before they arrive.

Be generous in offering praise, encouragement, and support; judicious in offering constructive criticism.

Start simply; then give additional activities as you feel the volunteer is ready for them.

Plan enjoyable experiences through which volunteers can establish good relationships with children.

Make sure instructions are clear with adequate time allotted for preparation.

Supply materials appropriate for lessons.

Provide guides, keys, or corrected papers for explanation. Be honest and open in talking over small problems.

Treat volunteers as educational team members.

Give volunteers proper notice of schedule changes.

DON'T

Leave volunteers in charge of the class.

Give volunteers more than they can handle in the allotted time.

Expect volunteers to do things for which they are not trained nor prepared to do.

Assign duties that belong to the teacher.

Expect volunteers to be housekeepers.

Criticize volunteers in front of children

Expect volunteers to change their schedules without proper notice.

Speak to volunteers in acronyms (ESOL, SLD, EMR) without explaining the terminology. It is a foreign language to outsiders.

Please remember...

- ✓ Keep your volunteer busy!
- ✓ Busy volunteers are usually happy ones. Volunteers are a dedicated group and expect to work...They genuinely want to help the teacher and children by doing something meaningful.
- ✓ Volunteers are not expected to discipline a child. If a volunteer cannot handle a situation, he/she is instructed to return the child or children to the teacher.
- ✓ Have short conferences periodically in person or on the phone with your volunteer.
- ✓ As time goes by, discover and use your volunteer's special talents.
- ✓ Plan in advance for your volunteer.
- ✓ Inform your volunteer if you or your class will be absent on his/her regular day.
- ✓ We welcome recruiting help from teachers. Teachers may give names of prospects to coordinators.
- ✓ Volunteers are not professionals, but, hopefully, have professional attitudes toward their assignments. We feel teachers' experiences with volunteers will be rich, rewarding and helpful. Let your volunteer coordinator know how they might assist you.



