

# VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Handbook

*SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PALM BEACH COUNTY*

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# MISSION

The School Board of Palm Beach County is committed to excellence in education and preparation of all our students with the knowledge, skills and ethics required for responsible citizenship and productive employment.

The School District of Palm Beach county has eight goals that are intended to establish the school system's educational priorities. They provide a direction or focus for achievement in our schools. The community involvement goal is key to the link between the Volunteers in Public Schools program and the District's focus on achievement.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT GOAL

Increase involvement by parents, business and other community interests through partnerships designed to achieve both management and academic improvement and accountability.

# INTRODUCTION

The Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) Program began in Palm Beach County in 1972. Last year approximately 30,000 volunteers donated over 1 million hours to our schools. This represents over \$22 million worth of services that were donated to our schools by the community. And, our numbers continue to grow! This means that thousands of students have received the individual attention so vitally needed to help them find success, and hundreds of teachers have been offered that “extra pair of hands” that is so gratefully appreciated.

The volunteers in our schools are well trained, dependable community people who, in addition to providing a service to our teachers and students, are learning about our educational program. They are realizing the importance of early education, the emphasis on individualized programs, and how time-consuming teaching can be!

We welcome each and every person into our schools and heartily endorse your participation in our VIPS program.



# PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD POLICY

## 2.53 Volunteers in Public Schools:

- (1) The name of the Palm Beach County School Volunteer program shall be *VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS*, hereafter referred to as *VIPS*.
- (2) The School Board of Palm Beach County encourages volunteer participation by individuals and groups in School Board sponsored programs in local schools, in central and area offices, and for School Board sponsored and supervised off-school campus activities before, during and after regular school hours.
- (3) A volunteer is a non-paid person functioning under the sponsorship of the Palm Beach County School District.
- (4) The School Board of Palm Beach County authorizes the Superintendent or his/her designee to approve volunteers to assist in organized school programs following the submission of an application and upon successful completion of a volunteer training program as outlined in Florida State School Board Rule 6A-1.70.

Authority: 228.041 (24), FS (REVISED: 1001.41(2), FS &1001.43(6) (11) FS)  
230.2311-2312, FS  
236.0873, FS (REPEALED)

Rule Supplemented 6A-170 FAC (REVISED: 6A-1.070 FAC)

Implemented: 1012.01 (5), FS

History: New: 4/23/86

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This handbook contains information that will help you in performing the service at your school that may be required of you. We hope you will find it helpful.

You are required to attend orientation and training sessions offered by the school volunteer program. The sessions are designed to help you feel more comfortable in your volunteer setting and provide you with additional information which will enhance the success of your volunteer work. These training sessions will provide you with the "tools of the trade".

We wish for each of you a successful, rewarding, and satisfying experience. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to call your volunteer coordinator, consult with the teacher to whom you are assigned, or contact the district school volunteer coordinator.

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal \_\_\_\_\_  
School Volunteer Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_ Room Number \_\_\_\_\_  
School Hours \_\_\_\_\_  
Day(s) and Hour(s) to work \_\_\_\_\_

**ALWAYS REMEMBER TO SIGN IN AT THE OFFICE WHEN YOU  
ARRIVE AND SIGN OUT WHEN YOU LEAVE. REMEMBER TO  
WEAR YOUR VIPS ID WHILE ON SCHOOL GROUNDS.**

## **VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**3300 Forest Hill Blvd. Suite B-257  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406  
Phone: 561-434-8789  
Fax: 561-434-8814**

# GENERAL INFORMATION

**PARKING:** Each school has a different method for handling parking. Some schools have parking permits; others have parking restrictions on where you park. Please ask your coordinator to explain your school's rules and regulations for parking.

**REGISTRATION:** All volunteers must complete an application form online prior to helping in a school. The school will assist you in completing this form on the computer.

**ATTENDANCE:** All we ask is dependability! Because each job is important and has to be done, please notify the person for whom you are working or the VIPS coordinator when you are unable to be there at the assigned time.

**IDENTIFICATION:** While you are on school grounds, please wear your VIPS identification tag or button.

**RECORDS:** The District requires that a record be kept of all volunteer hours. Sign in and out each time you volunteer using the VIPS Count! electronic tracking system.

**CONDUCT:** Your conduct should provide for and reinforce the safety and well being of the students. You are a role model for the students and should dress and act appropriately.

**MEDICATION:** Volunteers are not permitted to give medication to the students.

**RELEASING STUDENTS:** Students are to be released to no one except your supervising teacher.

**DISCIPLINE:** It is the teacher's responsibility to discipline the students.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Classroom work with students is always confidential. Keep your observations on a professional level. A volunteer must not divulge information to which he or she may have access.

**ACCIDENTS:** All accidents that occur when a student is under your supervision should be reported to the supervising teacher immediately. If you are involved in an accident, please report to office in order to fill out the necessary report form.

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## **1. How do I become a volunteer?**

*Any person interested in volunteering may do so by contacting the volunteer coordinator at the desired school or by calling the School Volunteer Program Office at 434-8789 or 434-8771. You will be asked to complete a volunteer application listing your skills, interests, preferred location, grade level and type of volunteer service desired. The application includes a background check.*

## **2. What are the qualifications to become a school volunteer?**

*The qualifications needed to be a school volunteer are a personal desire to help, a sincere interest in students, an ability to follow school procedures and policies, and a willingness to make a definite time commitment. Any training that is needed will be provided by the teacher or the School Volunteer Coordinator. A teaching background is not required as volunteers work under the direction of a school's professional staff.*

## **3. May I bring my pre-school child with me?**

*No, bringing pre-school children with you to school presents a liability problem for the school. In addition, having a very young child in a classroom interrupts class procedures, disrupts the students and prevents the volunteer from giving full attention to the work the teacher has prepared. Many school volunteers with pre-school children have formed a cooperative babysitting service among themselves and take turns with babysitting. This can be worked out among volunteers at individual schools. You can, however, still help the school by making arrangements to do work at home.*

## **4. When friends and neighbors ask me about school, what may I tell them?**

*Volunteers can be a big help in representing the school to the community. We want you to talk about your school and your involvement. You may have access to "privileged information" which, naturally, should be treated as such. "Privileged information" is defined as personal records, grades, test scores, behavior and attitude of students. This is important school business and should never be discussed outside of the school.*

*Criticizing school personnel and practices is not acceptable. Your job in school is as a professional working with other professionals.*

**5. May I choose the teacher with whom I wish to work?**

*Volunteers are only placed in classrooms where teachers have specifically requested their assistance. The School Volunteer Coordinator and the Principal at the individual school make the decisions about placement of volunteers.*

**6. What if I am not happy with the job assigned to me?**

*Feel free to say so. Communicate with the School Volunteer Coordinator. Every effort is made to place volunteers in a situation which matches the needs of both the volunteer and the job. There are a variety of jobs for everyone to feel comfortable. Teachers also have the opportunity to ask for a different assignment for a volunteer.*

**7. What do I do about discipline?**

*Disciplinary action is the legal responsibility of teachers. Volunteers should never be put in a position of having to enforce discipline. If you are having a problem with a student, immediately inform the teacher.*

**8. What should I do if I am unable to be at the school at my assigned time?**

*As soon as you are aware that you will be unable to be at the school at your assigned time, call school personnel to let them know. The teacher has planned his/her schedule according to the time that you have agreed upon to help. If possible, please keep your assigned schedule.*

**9. Why is it important for me to sign-in and out each time I volunteer at a school?**

*There are many reasons this requirement is necessary, such as maintaining school security; verification of volunteer service, which can be used as work experience for future employment; liability purposes; in the event you receive an emergency telephone call, you can be found; and so individuals can be recognized for their dedication and service. The school may also be eligible for the Golden School Award presented each year by the Florida Department of Education for outstanding volunteer programs.*

# VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS

**CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS** perform clerical, tutorial, and teacher reinforcement tasks under the direction of the classroom teacher. This allows teachers more professional time to spend with their classes and individual students.

**ARTS AND CRAFTS ASSISTANTS** work with art and classroom teachers to help students develop their creativity by providing them with opportunities to discover and develop their abilities. Volunteers may assist teachers with presentation of materials for art instruction or assist students with art projects.

**MEDIA CENTER AIDES** shelve books, catalog materials, check out books when needed, take inventory, perform simple maintenance tasks, operate equipment, and work with the media specialist on other tasks as needed.

**CLINIC ASSISTANTS** work under the direction of the school nurse to meet the health needs of the students. Volunteers may assist in routine vision and hearing screening, weighing and measuring, and the fluoride (SWISH) program. They will assist students and assist in the recordation of services rendered to students sent to the clinic.

**TUTORS** work one-on-one with a student or with small groups of students who need remedial help in academic subjects to reinforce basic skills. Placements are made with students from kindergarten to high school and with students in adult and community schools.

**MATH TUTORS** work with the classroom or math teacher to provide individual help.

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION ASSISTANTS** assist the classroom or physical education teacher in providing a wider variety of experiences for students through physical education. Volunteers serve as educational materials assistants who prepare materials for instruction, assist in demonstrating skills, or help individual students.

**ROCKIN' READERS** read stories to primary grade students (kindergarten-2nd grade) to help them learn the value of reading at an early age.

**SPECIAL ACTIVITIES VOLUNTEERS** give important support as needed for a special project. This may include serving on Ad Hoc committees, PTA/PTO or Advisory Boards, assisting with fine arts, career fairs, field trips, and/or school-sponsored activities.

**EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION ASSISTANTS** work with the teacher to assist in meeting the individual needs of exceptional education students.

**SPECIAL ENRICHMENT VOLUNTEERS** speak to classes or groups on topics related to occupations or community interests. These volunteers may be professional business people or retirees who, based on their careers, hobbies or interests, may provide enriching experiences for students.

**LISTENERS** are volunteers who communicate with children in ways that are not academic. They may talk with students, read stories to them or listen to them. The Listen to Children program requires special training through the Mental Health Association.

**GENERAL SCHOOL-AIDES** perform a variety of school duties assigned by staff members such as monitoring of hallways, working in the office or bookstore, assisting in the media center, clinic or classroom. General school-aides are not assigned to a single station.

**SCHOOL LUNCHROOM AIDES** supervise lunchroom based on rules established at the school center. During lunch periods, volunteers help maintain order, assist children as needed and work with the school staff to improve procedures.

**MENTORS** are recruited to work with discouraged students. The major task is to motivate the student to stay in school. Through tutoring, setting short-term goals and serving as a role model, volunteers can provide encouragement and friendship to a student who needs to build self-esteem. New mentors must attend a mentor workshop.

**BUSINESS PARTNERS** is a broad-based program which promotes business involvement in our schools. It is an exchange of human resources between a business and a school: one-to one tutoring, classroom presentations, student and/or teacher recognition, field trips, displaying student work, judging student competition, or implementing a unique program designed by a company and the partner school.

**SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS (SAC)** elect members to represent a broad cross section of the school's student population and the area in which the school is located. Volunteers from the community can express an interest in becoming a member of a council. The SAC functions as a resource to the principal. Members work as a team to develop the school improvement plan.

# TUTORING TIPS

*Set a positive, warm learning environment when working with students. It takes time and patience for you and the student to feel comfortable and friendly. Take the first step toward building the desired relationship by simply being yourself. The following points may also help as you begin working with students.*

**A student's name is very important.** Make sure you say the student's name the way the student wants it said. Learn to spell the name correctly.

**Make sure the student knows and can pronounce your name.** Writing it down on a card for him/her may be helpful.

**Be a careful listener.** Show that you are interested in the student as a person. Listen carefully to what the student has to say. Ask questions about favorite activities, family members, good friends, and personal hopes and dreams. By your words and actions, let the student know that you care. Don't talk about his/her home life, unless he/she brings it up. It may be embarrassing to them.

**Make it your first goal to become friends with the student.** The student will benefit from this personal relationship. The student will be more willing to learn from someone he/she likes.

**Relax and be yourself.** Maintain a sense of humor.

**Build your relationship slowly** and it will continue to grow by your acceptance of the student, your faith in his/her ability, your honesty, your sensitivity, and your trustworthiness. Never promise something with which you cannot follow through or produce.

**Meet the unexpected needs of your student by using your creativity.**

**Students make mistakes. Let them know that making mistakes is a part of learning.** Do not be afraid of making mistakes yourself.

**Build the student's self-confidence.** Praise your student honestly and frequently. Attentiveness and effort can be as important as performance. Accentuate the positive; minimize the negative.

**Be patient.** Students learn at different rates and in different ways. Any sign of progress, as little as it might be, will be your greatest reward. Many underachievers work more slowly on academic problems because they are less secure.

**Repetition is important.** Devise different ways of doing things so the student can repeat what is being learned.

**Be sincere and praise any honest effort on his/her part.** Look at failures as an opportunity for another try at the same task. He/she should never see failures as negative. A student quickly loses respect for the giver of undeserved praise.

**If the student starts to digress from the work assignment, help him/her refocus on the subject by saying,** "How does this apply to what we started talking about?"

**You might find out from the teacher a future assignment that will require a lot of reading.** By reading the assignment with him/her and seeing that he/she understands it well, you could give him/her success for that day in class. This should also give him/her help with his/her self concept which is one of your major goals.

**Be reliable.** If you must be absent, call the school and ask that the student be told you cannot come that day. The student will be disappointed that you cannot come, but will be reassured that you care enough to call.

**When speaking to students;**

Avoid comparing students and their work.

Give students a choice only when you intend to abide by that choice.

State directions in a positive form. Example: "Use the blocks for building, " rather than, "Don't throw the blocks."

Your goal should be success.

## GIVING INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION

You may be asked to help a student who needs some individual attention. A student who has been absent or who is having difficulty with a particular problem will benefit greatly from your special help. Students need this kind of help most often in reading and math, but it could be in any subject. The following guidelines may help you in your first tutoring situation:

- Don't be hesitant about refusing the assignment if you feel you don't understand the materials well enough to help the student. The teacher will understand and will find another area in which you can help.
- Get specific directions from the teacher about the assignment.
- Find a quiet place in or out of the room where the student and you can talk quietly without disturbing the rest of the class.
- Establish a one-to-one relationship with the student by talking first for a minute about the student himself/herself.
- Find out exactly where the student is in his/her work by asking him/her to explain to you some of the work which has preceded this assignment.
- Let the student work out as much as they can on their own. Provide encouragement, but don't step in too soon.
- 
- Rather than giving them the answer when they asks, direct his/her thinking so they can discover the answer their self

*(“How can I subtract 82 cents from just \$1.00” Volunteer replies, “Well, how many cents are in one dollar?” In another assignment, the student might ask, “Who made the first American flag?” Volunteer replies, “Does your social studies book have an index? Perhaps you could find the information if you look under flags.”)*

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN KINDERGARTEN THROUGH ADOLESCENCE**

### ***A five-year-old...***

- is helpful around the house
- prefers mother as parent
- needs some assistance with coats, etc.
- is close-mouthed at home about school activities
- has short bursts of energy
- changes from one activity to another with relative ease
- has vague concepts of time
- is not fearful
- asks many questions about how things work
- enjoys cutting, pasting
- loves to play dress-up

### ***A six-year-old...***

- handles and attempts to use tools and materials
- is self-centered, domineering, stubborn, and aggressive
- wants and needs to be first, to be loved best, to be praised
- most, and to win
- is usually better-behaved away from home
- is very domineering and bossy
- is interested in simple games
- carries on long conversations
- enjoys father
- is restless, overactive, exuberant
- usually likes his teacher

### ***A seven-year-old...***

- does not respond promptly
- may forget easily
- fights with playmates
- plays in pairs or in groups
- is interested in magic, puzzles, collecting and exchanging baseball cards, etc.
- girl likes dress-up, paper dolls, jump rope
- is concerned about being good
- is easier to discipline, sensitive to praise
- complains and sulks
- thinks teacher is really paramount in school

### ***An eight-year-old...***

- is money-mad
- makes fewer complaints about teacher
- is expansive and speedy
- has a longer attention span
- is alert, friendly, and interested in people--but sometimes careless, noisy, and argumentative
- has feelings easily hurt by careless remarks
- understands time and money concepts
- likes team games
- is critical of brothers and sisters
- needs frequent reminders about responsibilities
- is demanding of mother
- is sensitive to criticism
- needs adult praise and encouragement

### ***A nine-year-old...***

- has new forms of self-independence
- has increasing self-motivation
- resents interruptions
- likes secret codes and languages
- has a strong sense of right and wrong
- is easily discouraged
- is competitive in work and in play and is afraid of failure
- cries only when emotions are overtaxed
- is a great worrier
- is anxious to please
- makes fewer demands on parents
- is a loyal and devoted friend
- is more interested in talking and listening than in working

### ***A ten-year-old...***

- is relaxed, casual, and alert
- is in one of the happiest ages
- has a strong sense of justice
- truly enjoys friends
- needs schedules
- loves the outdoors
- is a hero worshipper
- is critical of teacher beings
- wants teacher to be fair

## **PRE-ADOLESCENTS ARE (*ELEVEN AND TWELVE YEARS OLD*)**

- in need of a feeling of belonging and acceptance
- in need of increasing opportunities for independence
- in need of warm affection and a sense of humor from adults
- turned off by nagging, condemnation, and being talked down to or disrespected
- antagonistic and teasing toward the opposite sex
- over-critical, rebellious, and uncooperative
- awkward, lazy and restless because of rapid and uneven growth

## **ADOLESCENTS ARE (*THIRTEEN AND OVER*)**

- having tremendous variations in attainment of physical maturity
- acquiring adult capacity for abstract thinking
- using aggressiveness in seeking independence
- resenting conditions that make him dependent on adults
- has difficulty adjusting to the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of adult society
- oversensitive; indulging in self-pity and having intense fear of ridicule
- concerned about popularity
- going to extremes in activities, thinking and emotional reactions
- becoming attached to worthy causes, and are idealistic in value judgements
- showing an acute sense of injustice
- tending to oversimplify
- very interested in philosophical, ethical, and religious problems
- a step toward adulthood by asserting independence
- in need of acceptance by peer group
- in need of adult guidance that is kindly, and does not threaten freedom
- seeking both dependence and independence
- in need of provision of constructive recreation, possible a “worthy cause”

**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

# NOTES



I have received the Volunteers in Public School orientation and read the VIPS Handbook

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and return to the volunteer coordinator at your school center.



For More Information  
Call 434-8789

## School District of Palm Beach County

*The School District of Palm Beach County, Florida is dedicated to the concept of equal access. The Board will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, nor handicaps in the admission and treatment of students in any activity or program.*