



PORT TOWNSEND
School District
LEARNING THROUGH A SENSE OF PLACE

Volunteer
Handbook

Port Townsend School District Volunteer Handbook

Thank You for Being a Volunteer!

Volunteering is the giving of time, energy, and knowledge. We thank all volunteers for their participation and dedication to the students in the Port Townsend School District. Together we can make each child's years in the Port Townsend School District a solid foundation upon which to build a lifetime filled with meaning.

Volunteer Opportunities

There are many ways adults are invited to volunteer, some of which include:

- ◆ PTA Events/Activities and Volunteer positions
- ◆ Helping children in the classroom (e.g. reading, math, art, science, computer lab)
- ◆ Garden care and assistance
- ◆ Field Trip Chaperones
- ◆ Parent Editors
- ◆ Correcting papers
- ◆ Tutoring
- ◆ Copy and preparing materials
- ◆ Computer tasks/web sites
- ◆ Providing place-based instruction resources

Please contact individual school offices for specific volunteer opportunities.

Expectations for School Volunteers

All Volunteers must:

- ◆ Sign in and out at the main office and wear volunteer badge;
- ◆ Follow Port Townsend School District Policies and Procedures and always follow instructions of the supervising teacher;
- ◆ Wear appropriate attire for the activity;
- ◆ Be sensitive to staff's needs;
- ◆ Communicate promptly concerning schedule changes;
- ◆ Refer to a staff member for solutions of any student problems, including behavior;
- ◆ Renew your Volunteer Background Application every two (2) years;
- ◆ Maintain confidentiality at all times

Volunteers are Not Allowed To:

- ◆ Handle behavioral issues; any such issues are to be directed to staff;
- ◆ Perform supervisory tasks nor tasks requiring certified or licensed personnel;
- ◆ Perform first aid tasks or administer student medications; or
- ◆ Take photos of children other than their own, for personal use or for use on social media. Any such violation may lead to revocation of volunteer status.

A volunteer provides support not only to the students, but also to the teacher, the nature of which is based on the discretion of the teacher for whom you are volunteering. As a parent, you have a unique perspective and ability to understand students. However, as a volunteer, you must act in that capacity first and foremost.

Volunteer Responsibilities

Sign In & Sign Out

All volunteers must sign in and out at the school building main office. As a safety measure, it allows the school to know who is or who has been in the building. Our insurance requires the school to know who is in the building at all times. Signing in also helps the school to find you if there is an emergency. Lastly, signing in and out enables us to collect information regarding volunteer hours, which is necessary for many grant applications.

Also, when signing in, please wear your volunteer badge each and every time you visit. This will help everyone, including students, to get to know you more quickly and allows the school staff to know that you have a reason to be there.

Facilitating Classroom Learning

To facilitate classroom learning, teachers have a set of volunteer guidelines for working with students. These guidelines may involve specific questions or procedures to ensure students are provided the appropriate challenge and support for their learning.

Professionalism

Although the job is voluntary, the commitment is professional. Volunteers should set a good example for students by their manner, appearance, and behavior. They should be well-groomed, appropriately dressed, and maintain professional conduct and language. Besides maintaining an attitude of mutual respect and confidence, volunteers 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. Please do not come to school if you are ill. This includes a cold, sore throat, or cough. Please inform teachers in advance of planned absences and call the school for unforeseen absences. (Please note: Arrive early for field trips. Siblings are not allowed on field trips).

Dependability

Students, teachers, and staff members rely on the services performed by volunteers. If you are unable to volunteer on your scheduled day, please make every effort to find a substitute. If you cannot find a substitute, notify the teacher, or staff member, within 24 hours of your scheduled shift. Room parents may be helpful in identifying substitutes.

Respectful Behavior

Volunteers are expected to exhibit behavior that is respectful and assumes equality toward members of the same and opposite sex, and all ethnic/racial and religious groups. Volunteers shall not make any comments that can be construed as racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory.

Volunteers shall avoid promoting any commercial products, religious doctrines or beliefs, as well as any political candidates (this includes political buttons) or parties.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is extremely important for everyone who works or volunteers in a school. Volunteers must protect staff and students' right to privacy.

Once a volunteer begins to work in a school setting, they become privy to knowledge about children's behavior patterns, academic ability, emotional maturity, relationships with others, etc. In some cases, information of this nature is imparted so that the volunteer can work more effectively with the child. In other cases, it is simply acquired in the course of frequent contact in the school.

In addition, volunteers are in a position to learn more about staff members than would normally be learned from their public image. One also forms personal opinions about the professional competency of individual teachers and staff.

Remember, too, that teacher's desks may contain confidential files and information that should remain private.

Regardless of how a volunteer comes by this type of information and/or develops personal opinions, it is considered privileged and, must be kept personal and private.

A Volunteer is expected to:

- ◆ Never share opinions about behavior and/or academic program of students.
- ◆ Never share personal information about the student or student's family with other people.
- ◆ Never contact students' families regarding classroom or playground issues.
- ◆ Never share specific information with a parent about their child or other children based on your classroom experience, whether positive or negative.
- ◆ Never share knowledge and/or opinions about the professional competency of individual teachers and staff in the community.
- ◆ Never make comments harmful to the reputation of any student, professional or other volunteer.
- ◆ Never take photographs of students, unless permitted by a school administrator for a school project. Never post any student photographs or student information on social networks.

If parents and friends ask about your work, tell them you enjoy working with the children and discuss the activities you do rather than specific information about the child, the teacher, or the school.

If problems develop, the line of communication regarding a situation in the school is always first with the staff member concerned and then, if necessary, with the principal.

Discipline and Classroom Management

Allow the teachers to discipline children. If there are incidents of misbehavior, it is the teacher's job to deal with them. As a volunteer, it is helpful to be specific about rules and expectations with students. Keep limits and boundaries in place. Consistently and calmly work with students by taking a neutral stance, restating rules and expectations, and offering reasonable choices.

Helping Students Learn

- ◆ A student's name is very important, make sure you say and spell it correctly.
- ◆ Make sure your student knows and can pronounce your name. You might give the student a card with your name written on it.
- ◆ Listen. Show that you are interested in each student as a person. Listen carefully to what the student has to say.
- ◆ Students make mistakes. Assure them that this is part of learning.
- ◆ Build the student's self-confidence. Praise your student honestly and frequently.
- ◆ Encourage students to feel, smell, taste, and listen as well as look at objects. Let students discover.
- ◆ Ask questions that may lead students to the answer instead of telling them the answer.
- ◆ Let students try new methods, even if you know an easier way.
- ◆ Give the students as much time as they need to understand new ideas. Be patient!
- ◆ Be reliable. Students will be disappointed when you are absent. Show you care by calling when you can't go to school when expected.
- ◆ Allow your own child to room to grow. Volunteer in a location other than your child's classroom.

Students Learn by:

- ◆ Doing – not by passive observing.
- ◆ Asking questions and searching for answers to their questions.
- ◆ Discovering – using all their senses, whenever possible.
- ◆ Experimenting and combining objects.
- ◆ Repeating experiences.
- ◆ Building confidence in themselves.

Communicating with Students:

The following suggestions are provided to help you communicate with students to get positive results.

- ◆ Be sure the students understand what you're saying. We sometimes use words they do not comprehend.
- ◆ Keep your voice as low as possible. The students will get louder as your voice increases in volume.
- ◆ Instruct students as though you expect them to comply. Give sufficient warnings and time. Example: "Jason, in five minutes you'll need to stop painting and put your apron away."
- ◆ If students gain your attention and praise only when they behave, they will soon learn that you expect proper conduct.
- ◆ Positive statements greatly influence students' attitudes about themselves and contribute to their success-building experiences.

Some expressions to boost a student's self-image:

- "I like the way you're working"
- "That's right! Good for you."
- "Good thinking"
- "I'm very proud of the way you worked today."
- That's respectful behavior. Thank you!"
- "It looks like you put a lot of thinking into this."

School Procedures

Schedule Teacher Conference Time

Important conversations deserve preparation and dedicated time. If you need to speak with a teacher about your child, schedule a mutually agreeable time outside of class time.

Parking

Be sure to park in the designated parking spaces. Never leave your car, even for a minute, in the loading zone, fire lane, or bus area.

Hallways

Please keep in mind that hallway conversations can carry into classrooms and may disrupt instruction. Please keep conversations quiet or pick a location in the building for longer conversations that will not disrupt classroom learning.

Preschoolers/Siblings

Please do not bring preschoolers or siblings when you volunteer. Exceptions may be made for classroom parties. Check with your teacher.

Personal Belongings

Please do not bring anything of value to school. Coats, purses, umbrellas, etc. may be kept in the classroom where you are working.

School Lunches

School lunches are available for purchase. To buy a school lunch, you will need to have a food service account set up in the office and pay money to this account in the morning.

Smoking/Tobacco Use/Vaping

There is no smoking, tobacco use, or vaping on school property.

Dogs

No dogs allowed on campus. Thank you for being respectful of those with allergies, and for helping to keep our play areas clean.

Telephone/Cellular Phones

School phones are available for your use if needed. Please turn off cell phones or set on silent mode. You may leave the school office number in case of emergencies.

Workroom

The workroom contains the copy machine, die cutter, laminator, and paper supplies. Training will be offered in the use of this equipment. If you need help finding something, please ask someone in the front office.

Sometimes there can be a lot of demand for the copy machine. Priority is given first to teachers, then to paraprofessionals, and finally to volunteers. If you are using the machine and a teacher needs it, please make it available to her/him. If you are copying for a teacher please let others in the workroom know.

Be sure to clean up the workroom after you use it.

Restrooms

Please use the adult restrooms in the school building.

Emergency Procedures

If there is a fire, earthquake, lockdown drill or emergency exercise of any kind, please follow your class and do as the teacher instructs the students.

Field Trips Specifics

Field trips can be especially challenging. Teachers recommend that volunteers:

- ◆ Realize your first responsibility is to help and keep all children safe.
- ◆ Follow all teacher guidelines and directions.
- ◆ Never leave any student alone for any reason.

Volunteers are the best!

We are all here to help you with your volunteer experience. Any time you need help, please just ask. We are so grateful and thankful that you are willing to help us enhance the lives and spirits of children at Port Townsend School District.

Volunteer Program Benefits

Volunteers have always been an important resource in our school district. A strong volunteer program benefits teachers, students, parents and the community at large. Some of the positive effects of a strong volunteer program include:

Teachers

- ◆ Increased time to teach and plan
- ◆ Increased opportunity to enrich the curriculum
- ◆ Reduction in discipline problems

Community

- ◆ Increased knowledge and appreciation of the education process

Students

- ◆ Increased individual attention
- ◆ Increased motivation
- ◆ Increased ability to relate to adults
- ◆ Increased respect for adults

Parents

- ◆ Increased understanding of the education process
- ◆ Increased understanding of your child's learning process
- ◆ Increased familiarity with the staff and community
- ◆ Opportunity to practice and build skills
- ◆ Opportunity to share expertise and talents

Becoming a Volunteer

All volunteers are required to review the Volunteer Staff Protocol & Policies and complete the online Secure Volunteer Application, which includes a background check to ensure student safety as per RCW 28A.400.303.

The volunteer staff protocol & policies and the link to the online secure volunteer background application can be found at: www.ptschools.org / For Families / Applications and Forms

Under the **Volunteer** section (lower right side of page)

- ◆ Read the Volunteer Staff Protocol & Policies
 - ◆ Complete the Secured Volunteer Application
 - This is a 3rd party website that is contracted to run your background check
 - A small fee applies to process your application
 - Allow at least one (1) full week for processing your application, longer if you have lived in other states.
- You will receive volunteer card in the mail and is good for two (2) years. You will receive a notice from Secured Volunteer when your (2) year renewal is required.