



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

2016-2017 School Year

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY SCHOOLS
Okeechobee, Florida



August 10, 2016

Dear Volunteer,

Please allow me to express to you that the students, employees, parents, members of the Okeechobee County School Board and the community as a whole appreciate all you do. The countless hours spent by our school volunteers could not possibly be repaid in monetary awards because your contribution to the well-being and growth of our young people is priceless.

As you know, the range of services provided by all of our volunteers is beyond measure. From one-on-one tutoring and mentoring of a child to assisting in the media center, computer lab or offices, your talents aid in the smooth operation of our schools.

In addition to your benefiting our schools, each of you will reap untold rewards as you see that light in a child's eyes or the smile on a little face when a student knows that you care enough to be there. The community at large also receives from you each time you give to a child; the long-term effect of a volunteer's time results in positive public relations for our school system and our students.

We trust that your experiences as a volunteer in our school system will be positive and rewarding. Our staffs stand ready to assist you at any time. We thank you for all you do and extend to you a warm welcome.

Sincerely,

Ken Kenworthy
Superintendent of Schools

Thank you for all you do for Okeechobee County Schools: Achieving Excellence!

What Can I Give As a Volunteer

You can....

- ♥ give a child precious time
- ♥ take a child away from a judgmental or evaluative atmosphere
- ♥ give a child a chance to compete only with himself or herself
- ♥ help a child feel accepted
- ♥ bring a child new experiences and “know-how”
- ♥ expand a child’s world of adult friendships
- ♥ bring a child warmth and understanding
- ♥ offer a child a non-judgmental listening ear
- ♥ be a good friend

What Will Be Expected From Me?

All volunteers are required to complete an application form, which includes references and preferences as to areas in which they wish to volunteer. Volunteers will be asked to complete on-line modules related to ethics, reporting child abuse, and other required training prior to volunteering at a school site.

There are no educational requirements for school volunteers; however, there are certain human qualities that enhance a volunteer’s efforts. Those include:

- ♥ respect for the dignity and uniqueness of all people
- ♥ ability to be flexible
- ♥ sincerity
- ♥ ability to maintain confidentiality
- ♥ desire to conform to school policies
- ♥ know the importance of a volunteer’s role as a good example of behavior, speech and dress
- ♥ supporting the teacher in all situations
- ♥ following the teacher’s directions completely
- ♥ asking if they do not understand the assignment

The following are expected from good volunteers:

- ♥ belief in the importance of education
- ♥ dependability and punctuality
- ♥ a warm and understanding personality
- ♥ ability to get along with others
- ♥ patience
- ♥ sense of humor
- ♥ acceptance that the teacher is in charge of the classroom
- ♥ a willingness to give advance notice of an absence
- ♥ a neat appearance
- ♥ a desire to motivate children and help them succeed
- ♥ a positive attitude
- ♥ attend volunteer training opportunities whenever possible

What Do Volunteers Do in the Schools?

Classroom Volunteers come on a regular basis to the same school and help individual or small groups of students. All classroom volunteers work directly under the supervision of a staff person. Volunteers can help children in areas of the curriculum including reading, math, English, science, social studies, art, physical education and music. Volunteers can also serve as resources in exceptional child education classrooms, the media center and other areas of the school.

Clerical Volunteers help with the filing, typing and other duties that are necessary in the media center, school office, guidance office or classroom.

Community Resource Volunteers come into the classroom at the request of the teacher to share their backgrounds, travel, hobbies, experiences, careers, and talents with students in order to enrich the curriculum.

Computer Assistants have computer skills and knowledge of various types of software and computers. There are also opportunities for individuals with limited computer backgrounds to assist small groups of children learn the basics of computer use. Individuals with computer skills are a valuable asset in many schools or offices throughout the school system.

Media Center Assistants fill teachers’ and students’ requests for services. Other tasks may include working at the circulation desk, cataloging and shelving books, mending books and operating audiovisual equipment.

Partners in Excellence 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. It includes individual tutoring, classroom

presentations, student and/or teacher recognition, field trips, displaying student work, judging student competition or a unique program designed by a business and the partner school.

Routine Procedures to Follow

- ♥ Always remember to sign-in at the office when you arrive, wear your name tag and sign-out when you leave.
- ♥ Please notify the school ahead of time if you are not able to volunteer at a scheduled time.
- ♥ Please be prompt.
- ♥ Please remember that you are acting as a role model for your students and therefore dress and act appropriately.
- ♥ Please share problems that you encounter with the school volunteer coordinator or the teacher.

Volunteers are covered by Worker's Compensation benefits under provisions of Florida Statute 440.26. This coverage provides for medical expenses incurred while performing direct volunteer service for the school district at a school location or on a school-sponsored field trip. If you are injured in any way while participating as a volunteer, it is important that you notify the school office immediately and fill out the appropriate accident forms. This is required even if the accident is minor and does not require medical treatment.

Tutoring Tips

You will want to set a warm, positive learning environment when working with students. It will take time and patience for you and the student to feel comfortable and friendly. You will be taking the first step toward building the desired relationship by simply being yourself. Remembering some of the following points may also help as you begin working with students.

- ♥ A student's name is very important. Make sure you pronounce and spell the student's name correctly.
- ♥ Make sure the student knows and can pronounce your name. Your name tag will help the students remember.
- ♥ Be a careful listener and show that you are interested in the student as a person. Ask questions about the student's favorite activities, family members, good friends and personal hopes and dreams. By your words and actions, let the student know that you care.
- ♥ Make it your first priority to become friends with the student. If nothing else is gained in the tutorial sessions, the student will benefit from this personal relationship. The student will be more willing to learn from someone whom they like.
- ♥ Relax and be yourself; keep a sense of humor.
- ♥ Build your relationship slowly and keep it growing by your acceptance of the students, your faith in their ability, your honesty, your sensitivity and your trustworthiness. Never promise something that you cannot follow through with or produce.
- ♥ Meet the unexpected needs of your students by using your creativity.
- ♥ Students make mistakes. Let them know that making mistakes is a part of learning. Do not be afraid of admitting mistakes yourself.
- ♥ Build the student's self-confidence. Praise your students honestly and frequently.
- ♥ Remember 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, no matter how small, will be your greatest reward. Often underachievers will work more slowly on academic problems because they are less secure.
- ♥ Repetition is important. Find many different ways to get the student to repeat what is being learned.
- ♥ Give sincere praise for any honest effort on the student's part. Look at failure as opportunity for another try at the same task. Remember, a student quickly loses respect for the giver of undeserved praise.
- ♥ If the student starts to digress from the work assigned, focus back 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 helping the student understand the assignment, you can help ensure success and promote a positive self concept.

What are some of the Benefits and Rewards to Volunteers?

The benefits of the school volunteer program are more obvious to the student, the teacher and the school than they are to the volunteer. To the volunteer, the rewards are deeply personal and virtually impossible to measure:

- ♥ There is the satisfaction of seeing a student achieve at or above grade level.
- ♥ A former teacher may want to "keep in practice."

- ♥ A volunteer may have a special talent or resource and derive satisfaction in sharing it with students.
- ♥ The volunteer may want to feel needed and useful.
- ♥ Volunteer experience can be used on job applications.
- ♥ Some volunteers may want to use the experience to help get ready to move back into the workforce.
- ♥ The most common satisfaction comes from filling an explicit need in the school.

Dress Code

The Okeechobee County Schools does not have a district wide dress code. Individual schools, however, do have their own dress codes. Volunteers will be informed as to the dress code in effect in any school in which they volunteer. They are requested to follow the dress code for any school in which they volunteer.

School Board Policy 3.60: School Volunteers

For the purposes of this section a school volunteer is defined as an individual who provides scheduled services to students. This would exclude individuals such as field trip chaperones, guest speakers and those individuals who are likely to perform a one-time service to students. Classroom volunteers must work under the supervision of a teacher. Volunteers within other areas of the school must work under the supervision of the school principal (or designee).

Persons interested in being school volunteers must apply at a school site and complete an application form. The volunteer coordinator at each school has the responsibility for approving volunteers for that school. All volunteers, including those already volunteering in the schools, must undergo a security check. Social Security numbers will be submitted for this background check as specified for the performance of duties and responsibilities prescribed by law in Florida Statute 119.071(5).

All Volunteers will be fingerprinted and checked through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

All costs in connection with the security checks will be borne by the Okeechobee County Schools.

Volunteers who are determined to have criminal records may be, depending on the nature of the offense, asked not to volunteer in a school setting.

In carrying out their duties, volunteers are restricted from the following:

They should not be left alone with students unless specifically approved by the principal (or designee).

They should not assume responsibility for the discipline of students.

They should not provide the initial instruction for accomplishing instructional objectives.

They should not contact parents regarding the performance of students or write comments on papers that go to the students' homes.

They should not have access to confidential files and records.

Training will be provided for all volunteers. Such training will normally be held prior to the start of a school year, though other training opportunities may be afforded during the school year. New volunteers will be required to view a video regarding the Okeechobee County Schools' volunteer program. These videos will be available at each school site.

Volunteers are covered under the school district's worker's compensation program and the errors and omissions insurance during such times that they are performing volunteer duties.

School Board Policy 5.321: Bullying and Harassment

It is the policy of the Okeechobee County School Board that all of its students and employees experience an educational setting that is safe, secure and free from harassment of any kind. That being said, as a volunteer in our schools, it is incumbent upon us to share what the definitions of bullying and harassment are and the actions you must take if you witness bullying on a school campus.

Bullying means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees. It may involve teasing, social exclusion, threat, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual, religious, disability or racial/ethnic harassment, public humiliation or destruction of property.

Harassment means any threatening, insulting or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that places a person in fear of harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property, substantially interferes with a student's educational performance and or disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

If you witness bullying or harassment or someone reports alleged bullying and harassment to you as a volunteer for the school district, you must immediately report the incident to the teacher in charge, the school dean, guidance counselors, or school administration.

School Board Policy 6.58: Reporting Educator Misconduct

As a volunteer, you are responsible for reporting any activity by a school employee, contractor, or volunteer that affects the health, safety or welfare of a student. Please be sure to report all instances of obscene language, drug and alcohol abuse, disparaging remarks, prejudice or bigotry, cheating, testing violations, and physical aggression to school administration. If the incident involves possible institutional child abuse, you must call the Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.

Volunteer Coordinators

Okeechobee County School Board

700 SW 2nd Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974
462-5000, ext. 261
Chris Lawrence

Okeechobee High School

2800 Highway 441 North
Okeechobee, FL 34972
462-5025
Lauren Myers, Assistant Principal

Central Elementary

610 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974
462-5077
Christina Norman, Assistant Principal

Okeechobee Achievement Academy

1000 NW 34th Street
Okeechobee, FL 34972
462-5125
Randy Weigum, Principal

Everglades Elementary

3725 SE 8th Street
Okeechobee, FL 34974
462-5108
Billy Ball, Assistant Principal

Okeechobee Freshman Campus

610 SW 2nd Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974
462-5288
Carol Revels, Principal

North Elementary

3000 NW 10th Terrace
Okeechobee, FL 34972
462-5100
Shundra Dowers, Assistant Principal

Osceola Middle School

825 SW 28th Street
Okeechobee, FL 34974
462-5070
Erin Willis, Assistant Principal

Seminole Elementary

2690 NW 42nd Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34972
462-5116
Erin Ellinger, Assistant Principal

Yearling Middle School

925 NW 23rd Lane
Okeechobee, FL 34972
462-5056
Emily Strelman, Assistant Principal

South Elementary

2468 SW 7th Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974
462-5087
Bryan Van Camp, Assistant Principal