



**Jacksonville School District 117**

Preparing Today's Minds For Tomorrow's Challenges

# **Volunteer Handbook**

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# Introduction

Volunteers are important. They are a valuable part of the educational team in Jacksonville School District 117. Volunteers make priceless contributions to educational programs and staff support. The support of volunteers can truly improve the learning environment. Research indicates that increased community involvement in school has a positive impact on student achievement.

The goal of Jacksonville School District 117 volunteer program is to assist schools in providing the best possible education for each student.

## Who Can Volunteer?

Volunteers are people who donate time for the benefit of schools or students. Who is able to volunteer?

- ▶ Parents and guardians
- ▶ Grandparents
- ▶ Extended family members
- ▶ Students
- ▶ Senior Citizens
- ▶ Community members
- ▶ Business partners and employees
- ▶ Retired school employees

## Qualities of a Great Volunteer

- ▶ Reliable and Dependable.
- ▶ Support the school with positive actions and words.
- ▶ Maintains good health and moral character.
- ▶ Willing to accept supervision and responsibility.
- ▶ Have compassion for children.
- ▶ Have talents that enhance the school program.
- ▶ Understand and appreciate the work of the school staff.
- ▶ Recognize that well educated children are our future.

## Volunteer Opportunities

### *Things Volunteers Can Do*

#### ▶ **Classroom Volunteers**

- Work with individual students and small groups of students to reinforce or practice skills.
- Help students with assignments.
- Read with students.
- Help students who have been absent catch up and complete missing assignments.
- Volunteers are needed in all grade levels. Activities can be adapted to the developmental and educational needs of all students.

#### ▶ **Clerical and Office Volunteers**

- Set up bulletin boards and displays.
- File.
- Make copies.
- Prepare instructional items for teachers.
- Sort mail.
- Distribute supplies and messages.
- Answer telephone. – Training available within the district.

## ▶ **Special Projects Volunteers**

- Coordinate the volunteer program for your school!
- Help students with research and preparation for science, history, or other projects.
- Assist students with special productions such as plays, musicals, art fairs, etc.
- Serve as guest speakers for special events.
- Update school marquee.
- Edit newsletters and flyers.
- Participates with PTA/PAC/PTO and booster events and fundraisers.

## ▶ **Media Center Volunteers**

- Assisting with media center tasks such as shelving books, preparing new books for circulation, creating bulletin boards, prepare computers for use, stock printer trays with paper, sharpen pencils, helping students select books and do research, etc.

## ▶ **Fundraising Volunteers**

- Coordinate Box Tops for Education, Campbell's Soup Labels, Capri Sun Juice Pouches, and other corporate rewards programs and awards.

## ▶ **Special Duty Volunteers**

- Supervise lunch, recess, crosswalks, parking lots, picture day, Jump Rope for Heart, etc.

### ***Volunteers help by:***

- ▶ Aiding Teachers and other Staff with Non-Instructional Tasks
- ▶ Chaperoning Field Trips or Extra Curricular Activities (i.e. dances, book fairs, concession stands, etc.)
- ▶ Providing teachers more time to work with students
- ▶ Enriching the curriculum and learning opportunities
- ▶ Providing individual attention to students needing additional support
- ▶ Providing a school-home partnership

## **District Policy and Procedures**

The school district recognizes the importance of volunteers and wants the experience to be successful for both the school and the volunteer. In order to ensure the safety of our students and to enhance the volunteer experience the following steps are encouraged:

- ▶ Attend Volunteer Orientation.
- ▶ Complete and update Volunteer Service Agreement and Registration Card annually.
- ▶ Sign in when arriving and out when leaving the school grounds.
- ▶ Wear an identification badge that is provided by the school district or approved organization.
- ▶ Follow all school rules.

## **Orientation**

Orientation will be offered every fall by District 117 staff. Orientation will cover the following topics:

- ▶ Program Purpose
- ▶ Volunteer Responsibility and Requirements
- ▶ Critical Practices and Procedures
- ▶ Volunteer Paperwork
- ▶ Answering Questions and Providing Feedback

The purpose of the orientation is to familiarize the volunteers with district and school procedures and to help those who are interested become comfortable with volunteering. Follow-up training may be offered by individual schools based on need and interest.

## Documentation of Time and Events

Volunteers must be registered as a volunteer at their school and a record of dates and hours must be maintained. Any injuries incurred while volunteering must be reported immediately to the school nurse or administrator. The district has a nurse on call program.

## Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours normally happen during the school day. If you volunteer after school hours at a school sponsored event and are working with students a school staff member must be present. Please know where the first aid kit, AED, telephone, and emergency contact information are kept.

## Working Effectively With the Staff

Teachers and support staff appreciate all the volunteer time you spend in the school. Don't be surprised when they come to depend upon your assistance. Here are some tips for working with the staff:

- ▶ **Getting acquainted:** Let the staff know your interests and talents so you can work most effectively.
- ▶ **Enjoying your experience:** Being a school volunteer can be both exciting and challenging. As with most experiences, it is a learning opportunity. Some staff members may never have had an opportunity to work with volunteers before. Please understand that this may be a new experience for them and they are learning right along with you.
- ▶ **Communicating:** The staff will welcome your questions and comments. Make sure you always ask if you do not understand something. Communication is a key to effective use of time. Timely discussion of issues will provide results that are effective and productive.
- ▶ **Performing routine tasks:** To allow teachers more time with students and planning quality lessons. The staff may rely upon you to perform routine tasks such as preparing learning aids and organizing materials for lessons.
- ▶ **Doing things differently:** Ask for specific directions, examples, or a demonstration of how to complete tasks to ensure it is completed exactly how the teacher needs it to be done.
- ▶ **Be prompt and 100% dependable:** Honor your commitments. Please be on time and show up when you are scheduled unless you have an emergency. Please contact the school when you will not be there.
- ▶ **Trying something new:** Accept only as much responsibility as you feel comfortable with. Volunteering in a school will give you the opportunity to learn new skills so please be open to trying new things.

## Confidentiality

Because you are working closely with JSD #117 staff, confidential information may be shared. Domestic events, abilities, relationships, information, and confidences of students, their parents, and the staff **MUST NEVER** be discussed with anyone (inside or outside the school) who does not have the professional right or the need to know.

Students and staff need to know they can trust the volunteers. Therefore, volunteers are bound by the guidelines of confidentiality written in the Volunteer Service Agreement.

It is the teacher's responsibility to discuss each student's progress or concerns with their parents. Volunteers will not have the role of addressing parental concerns.

If you have concerns about an issue that a student has shared with you, immediately talk to the teacher or administrator regarding the appropriate chain of command.

As defined by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), you cannot have access to certain types of information like student permanent records, medical files, teacher grade books. This includes not being able to grade student work.

Talk to the teacher or administrator privately if you have concerns about a child's safety. If the school volunteer experiences information regard the abuse or neglect of a child, they should immediately talk to the building administrator or the teacher privately.

## **Cell Phones**

Please turn your cell phone to silent while volunteering. Ring tones can be very amusing and distracting to the students.

## **Discipline/School Rules/ Classroom Rules**

Jacksonville School District 117 has adopted the District-wide Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) which emphasizes teaching students how to behave in specific settings and situations. Rather than telling students what not to do, the school will focus on the preferred behaviors. For example, instead of saying, "Don't run." Say instead, "Walk." Areas of focus are Respect, Responsibility, and Safety. Ask the classroom teacher for a copy of the specific PBIS model for your school.

Students usually behave appropriately with volunteers. However, in those circumstances when a behavior challenge arises, the school has a detailed discipline plan. The responsibility of discipline lies with the professional staff. Volunteers are not to discipline the students. Instead, inform the classroom teacher of any issues that come up while working with students.

Each school has a handbook that outlines the school rules. Please refer to it as questions arise. Ask the staff member you work with to explain the policy for use of school telephones, break areas, emergency drills and procedures. Remember, volunteers are to use the adult restrooms.

Talk to your supervisor if specific situations are not stated in the handbook or classroom expectations.

Possession and/or use of tobacco products are not allowed on school grounds.

## **Release of Students**

When a student must leave school early they need to go to the school office to receive permission and sign out. In order to ensure the safety of all involved, volunteers may not release a student from school, take a student off campus, walk or drive them to their home. Schools have emergency procedures they follow to ensure that students arrive home safely.

## **Code of Conduct**

Volunteers, like all adults, are role models for the children around them. Make sure you are demonstrating good character, decision making, and ethical behavior. Adult initiated physical contact is discouraged. Physical contact that is encouraged includes high-fives, hand shakes, fist bumps, etc.

Dress appropriately for the tasks assigned. If you will be sitting on the floor with students, pants would be more comfortable than a skirt. Casual clothing is acceptable as long as it is neat and professional. District Dress Code guidelines prohibit staff and students from wearing spaghetti straps, wearing t-shirts with profanity, alcohol or drugs, and wearing short-shorts, baggy pants and cut off shirts or midriffs shirts of any kind. The school handbook provides for additional guidelines and rules.

## **Commitment and Dependability**

Volunteers are very important to the operation of the school, as well as to the children they work with. Because of this, please carefully consider the commitment as you sign up. It is better to start out with a few hours a week and work your way up to additional time, if you desire and are able to.

Please be prompt and consistent. If you are sick, on vacation, or unable to volunteer, please let the staff know as far in advance as possible. Contact the school office and leave a message for the staff member you work with. Remember the teacher will be expecting you on the days you are scheduled and so will the children!

## **Field Trips**

Some field trips will require extra training/explanation before the field trip. An individual from the school will contact you about any necessary pre-trip training.

## **School Volunteers and Extended Family**

Involvement is desired and encouraged by Jacksonville School District 117. Research indicates that a child's success in school is directly related to their parent's interest and involvement, regardless of the parent's educational level. However, younger children in the classroom can be disruptive. Do not bring pre-school-aged children while volunteering. Volunteers should discuss with the building administrator the need to bring extended family while volunteering.

## **Problem Solving**

Communication is the key to a positive volunteer experience. At the first sign of a problem, discuss the situation with your supervisor privately. If this does not work, ask the administrator to assist you. Be specific! Be kind! Be positive! Be ready to hear something about yourself or your child!

## **You Can Make a Difference**

Sometimes students struggle with feeling good about themselves or with the work they are doing. It is important to be positive, supportive, and encouraging. Here is some advice in helping students do their best.

### ***When Working With Students***

- ▶ Call them by their name.
- ▶ Accept them as they are.
- ▶ Encourage them and be positive. Praise even the smallest successes.
- ▶ Admit when you don't know the answer.
- ▶ Be patient as you wait for students to come up with answers but keep them on task.
- ▶ Be a good listener.
- ▶ Don't give advice or make promises you cannot keep.
- ▶ Ask the teacher before giving students supplies, food, etc.
- ▶ Make eye contact when talking with students. Get down on their level.
- ▶ Let students come up with their own answers. Help them learn where to find the answers.
- ▶ Be friendly and enthusiastic, it is contagious!
- ▶ Keep your sense of humor!
- ▶ Expect the unexpected!

## ***Things to Say to Students***

- ▶ Good job!
- ▶ Way to go!
- ▶ You're on the right track!
- ▶ Much better!
- ▶ I knew you could do it!
- ▶ Now you have it!
- ▶ Keep working, you're getting better!
- ▶ Perfect!
- ▶ You make it look easy!
- ▶ You're really improving!
- ▶ You've got that down!
- ▶ You're really thinking!
- ▶ I like that!
- ▶ You figured that out fast!
- ▶ You're right!
- ▶ I am proud of the way you worked today!
- ▶ You're almost there!
- ▶ You should be proud of yourself!

## ***Things to Do***

- ▶ Be available.
- ▶ Be willing to follow the example of the classroom teacher.
- ▶ Be prompt.
- ▶ Be dependable.
- ▶ Sign in and out at the front office.
- ▶ Wear your name badge.
- ▶ Make a commitment to the school, teacher, or student.
- ▶ Respect students, staff, and confidentiality.
- ▶ Enjoy the experience.
- ▶ Contact the teacher or administrator if you experience difficulties. You are a valuable member of our team. Your suggestions, concerns, and questions are important to us.

## **Ways to Ensure Success**

Understand that a new volunteer experience is a venture into the unknown. Before you begin volunteering, it is very helpful to have a meeting with the teacher or staff you will be working with. The following are some tips to help make the meeting successful.

- ▶ Days and times you are available.
- ▶ Discuss alternate plans for days when there is a substitute teacher or if the student is absent.
- ▶ How the teacher will tell you of your days' assignments (book, folder, note, etc.).
- ▶ How you will let the teacher know what you have accomplished during the day, performance of students with whom you have worked, need for materials, etc.
- ▶ A place to leave your personal belongings.
- ▶ Location and procedures of using materials and workspace.
- ▶ Classroom rules, teacher's discipline policy, and emergency procedures.
- ▶ Procedure for letting the teacher know when a child is experiencing difficulty.
- ▶ Daily class schedule.
- ▶ Student roll and/or seating chart.
- ▶ Other questions or concerns.

Take time to observe. If you will be working with students, the first day or two in the classroom will probably be spent in observing the teacher and students.

- ▶ Familiarize yourself with the teaching style.
- ▶ Observe acceptable and unacceptable student behavior.
- ▶ Pay attention to how much freedom of movement is allowed.
- ▶ Become familiar with the daily routine.
- ▶ Move among the students as they are working, if applicable.
- ▶ Ask individual children what they are doing. Students love to have the opportunity to explain their assignments.

Take a tour of the building, become familiar with where the nurse’s office is, as well as the media center, adult restrooms, emergency procedures, and emergency exits.

## Own Child’s Classroom

- ▶ All kids make mistakes
- ▶ Public education is a journey – all students develop skills at a different rate.
- ▶ Public education supports the group!
- ▶ Model compliance with the school expectations. They will support future work habits

### Bill of Rights for Volunteers\*

- I. The right to be treated as a respected service ... not free help.
- II. The right to an appropriate assignment ... with consideration for personal preferences, life experiences, education, and employment background.
- III. The right to know as much about the school as possible ... its policies, its people, its programs.
- IV. The right to training for the job ... thoughtfully planned and effectively presented.
- V. The right to continuing education ... as a follow-up to the initial training, information about new developments.
- VI. The right to guidance and direction ... by someone who is experienced, well-informed, patient and thoughtful.
- VII. The right to be heard ..... to feel free to make suggestions, to have respect shown for an honest opinion.
- VIII. The right to recognition ... through day by day expression of appreciation and awards.

*\* Adapted from Mrs. Richard L. Sloss, Director, Office Volunteers  
American Red Cross*

## Volunteers are Ambassadors

As a Jacksonville School District 117 volunteer, you not only serve the students; you also provide a very important link between the school and the community. As a volunteer you are a representative of the school. Students, parents, and community members will put value on what you say about the staff and the school programs. Because of your volunteer experience, you will be able to share the many positive things that students and staff are doing. You will have an opportunity to let the community know what is good about their schools. **Remember you are a key part of the educational team!**

