Office of Community Partnerships

Volunteer Handbook

Created and Effective July 1, 2016

Office of Community Partnerships

301 North Ninth Street, 13th Floor | Richmond, Virginia 23219 | 804.819.4382
www.richmond.k12.va.us
# Table of Contents

Welcome 3  
Purpose and mission 4  
Definition of RPS volunteer 4  
Volunteer-focused personnel within RPS 4  
General volunteer engagement program responsibilities 5  
Volunteer enrollment 7  

For Volunteers 8  
- Communication 8  
- Classroom tips for volunteers 8  
- School rules 9  
- Volunteer attendance and tardiness 9  
- Confidentiality, reporting, and boundaries 9  
- District rules 10  

For Staff 11  
- Tips for teachers working with volunteers 11  
- Release of volunteer 11  

Important information for volunteers 13  

Volunteer Agreement 14
Dear Valued Richmond Public Schools Volunteers:

Thank you for deciding to be a volunteer in Richmond Public Schools. We know that everyone has busy lives, and we truly appreciate that you chose to set aside time to help our students succeed in school.

Your commitment will help in our efforts to create positive outcomes for all RPS students. This goal can only be achieved through collaboration with parents, teachers, community partners, and stakeholders. Our volunteers engage in a variety of ways from reading books with our children to lunch buddies to providing administrative support. Your contributions play an important role in creating an engaging educational environment where students are eager to learn every day!

It takes a community to provide our children with high-quality educational opportunities that foster life-long learning. With your help, we can provide that extra support to our educators, so our students can reach their educational goals.

If you know someone who would be a great RPS volunteer or would like more information about volunteering opportunities that are available, please visit www.handsonrva.org or contact the district’s Office of Community Partnerships at 804-819-4382.

You will find your volunteer experience fulfilling and rewarding, knowing the time you provide is making a difference in students’ lives. Thank you for your support and investment in our students and schools.

Sincerely,

Dana T. Bedden, Ed.D
Superintendent
Purpose and mission

This volunteer handbook has been prepared to provide overall guidance and direction to volunteers and the staff overseeing them. Additional resources can be found on the Office of Community Partnerships website, www.richmond.12.va.us/Departments/CommunityPartnerships.aspx.

The mission of utilizing volunteers in RPS is to maximize the academic learning and personal growth for all students by having volunteers assist teachers, providing enriching experiences, and contributing to creating safe and welcoming learning communities.

Definition of a RPS volunteer

A volunteer is a parent, grandparent, guardian, or community member who “works” in a school in a non-remunerated (i.e., not paid) manner on a regular basis, under the supervision of an RPS staff person. Some examples include:

- Classroom, media center, cafeteria assistant;
- Special project assistant;
- Front office assistant.

Please refer to the School Board policy on volunteers, Policy 4-3.9 School Volunteers, for more details.

Volunteer-focused personnel within RPS

- Each volunteer will be assigned to a supervising staff member. This could be a principal, assistant principal, teacher, or Communities In Schools site coordinator.

- Each school has a designated school volunteer liaison who interviews, places, advocates for, and leads recognition efforts for the school’s volunteers. This is often an RPS employee who could be the school’s principal, assistant principal, or other employee selected by the principal.

- RPS has a district RPS volunteer coordinator who coordinates and manages volunteer services for the entire school district.
General volunteer engagement program responsibilities

**The volunteer is responsible for:**

- Completing a volunteer application, attending a volunteer orientation, and completing an interview.
- Being prompt and dependable.
- Following staff members’ directions.
- Acting responsibly and professionally at all times.
- Modeling good behavior and classroom standards, as children will look up to volunteers and copy behavior.
- Asking questions when needed for clarification.
- Following all school and district rules.
- Complying with the district and school policies and guidelines.
- Reading the Volunteer Handbook and signing the volunteer agreement (or online equivalent) and confidentiality affidavit.
- Reporting any behavior issues or suspected child abuse or neglect to the Designated School Personnel (DSP). The DSP is always an administrator.
- Keeping all student records and personal information confidential.

**The supervising teacher/staff member is responsible for:**

- Getting to know the volunteer(s) assigned.
- Providing meaningful experiences and opportunities for the volunteer.
- Providing training, direction, feedback, and communication with the volunteer.
- Showing appreciation to the volunteer(s) for their efforts.
- Informing the school’s volunteer point person of changing volunteer needs.
- Communicating regularly and honestly with the volunteer.
- Following the proper procedures for discipline and reporting suspected child abuse or neglect.

### The District RPS Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for:

- Assisting volunteers through the enrollment process.
- Providing volunteer engagement training for RPS staff and community partners.
- Maintaining and providing support for posting volunteer opportunities on the HandsOn website, [www.handsonrva.org](http://www.handsonrva.org).
- Planning a district-wide volunteer appreciation celebration.

### During volunteer recruitment and enrollment, the school’s volunteer point person is responsible for:

- Answering calls and in-person inquiries for individuals interested in becoming a RPS volunteer.
- Arranging a volunteer interview with each requesting applicant.*

*Interviews shall be conducted in a quiet setting. Schools are responsible for vetting volunteers based upon the needs of the school and best interests of the students. RPS reserves the right to decline a volunteer application if the school’s volunteer liaison or the RPS Volunteer Coordinator determines that the volunteer cannot serve the needs of the school and/or the district.

### Once a volunteer is accepted for service, the school’s volunteer point person is responsible for:

- Providing volunteers with a copy of school rules.
- Overseeing the structure of the school’s volunteer engagement program.
- Submitting the accepted volunteer roster to the Office of Community Partnerships.
- Leading efforts to create conditions for effective community involvement in the school.
Leading efforts to show support and appreciation for volunteers.

Monitoring the volunteer engagement program for child safety.

Giving prompt feedback to the volunteers.

Evaluating the program and reporting the results to the RPS Office of Community Engagement annually.

Working with the RPS Office of Community Partnerships to update information concerning volunteer needs and challenges.

VOLUNTEER ENROLLMENT

RPS application process for individuals

Before being able to volunteer with RPS, applicants must do the following:

1. Review the volunteer orientation powerpoint to learn more about volunteering with RPS. This slideshow can be located on the RPS Office of Community Partnership’s website.
2. Complete the volunteer application, located on the Office of Community Partnerships website or at your local school’s main office.
3. Once the application is received and processed, the volunteer will receive a link from Verified Volunteers to undergo a criminal background check. Applicants who pass the criminal background check will be contacted to continue in the volunteer application process. Applicants who do not pass the criminal background check will be notified directly by the RPS Office of Community Partnerships.
4. If under the age of 18, submit an application signed by a parent or guardian to the volunteer coordinator and obtain a letter from your school principal stating you are in good standing. Applications are available at schools or on the RPS Office of Community Partnerships website.
5. Schedule an interview with their school of choice, as prompted by the school’s volunteer liaison.
6. Attend a scheduled orientation session, if the school offers it for the volunteer opportunity for which you signed up. Please direct questions to the school’s volunteer liaison.
7. Work with school’s volunteer liaison and assigned RPS staff member to determine next steps.
RPS application process for groups

Before being able to volunteer with RPS, groups must do the following:

1. Log on to www.handsonrva.org and search for RPS volunteer opportunities or contact the Office of Community Partnerships at 819.4382.
2. Sign up for the project listed on the HandsOn website.
3. Sign into Raptor, if applicable*, the day of the event.

*Sign in to Raptor required if project is during regular school hours and school age children are present.

Clearance or approval of volunteers

RPS encourages anyone interested in volunteering with RPS to apply. RPS reserves the right to determine whether a volunteer applicant is a good fit and possesses suitable skills for district, school, or department. RPS also reserves the right to end the volunteer relationship for any reason at anytime or to not accept a volunteer applicant for any reason at any time. At no time are volunteers considered employed by the School Board of the City of Richmond and/or Richmond Public Schools.

FOR VOLUNTEERS

Communication

- Make your interests, skills, expectations, preferences, and availability clear during your application and interview process.
- Update your contact information when changes occur.
- Notify the District Volunteer Coordinator should you become involved in an incident that has the potential to change your clearance status for a criminal information background check.
- Communicate regularly with your supervising staff member and the school’s volunteer liaison, as appropriate, via communication logs, notes, phone, or email.
Classroom tips for volunteers

❖ Take a personal interest in helping and working with teachers, staff, and students.
❖ Arrive with a cooperative attitude in working with school personnel.
❖ Be adaptable and flexible when working with children.
❖ Teachers are in charge of the instruction and the discipline of each student. Report discipline problems to the teacher.
❖ Because of the many unique ethnic groups represented in our schools, children speak many different languages and have many varied beliefs and customs. Cultural differences may influence a student’s background knowledge, learning style, behavior, and social skills. Specifically, please be aware of cultural differences with regard to:
  - Learning styles
  - Effective discipline
  - Eye contact
  - Student motivation
  - Sense of time
  - Personal space and appropriate touch
❖ Because of the many different developmental stages of children in our schools, you may experience children who are acting out, or are not receiving what you may think are appropriate consequences or suitable attention. Keep in mind that these students may have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) where the rules and guidelines are shifted to manage their learning styles or behavior. Please talk to a teacher or principal if you have concerns.
❖ Follow the district policies and procedures for field trips and never transport student(s) in your vehicle.
❖ RPS shall not be responsible for any and all personal injury and/or property damage that occurs to volunteers while on and/or traveling to and/or from RPS property.
❖ Volunteers are encouraged to leave personal items at home and store items in a secure location when at the school.

School rules

❖ Volunteers must sign in and out at the school office for each visit.
❖ Volunteers must wear a “Visitor” badge at all times.
❖ Volunteers must follow dress codes. Individual principals may require additional dress codes for students. If you have questions, please ask. Failure to follow dress codes will result in immediate dismissal as a volunteer.
❖ Volunteers must follow cell phone use policies and refrain from using cell phones or electronic devices while serving as a volunteer.
❖ Smoking and the use of tobacco products, including vapors and/or electronic cigarettes is prohibited on all school property.
❖ Volunteers must not bring guests or other visitors when on a volunteer assignment.
• Volunteers must follow all school district policies, procedures, and rules. Ignorance of policies, procedures and rules is not a reason not to follow the policies, procedures and rules. If you have questions, please ask your school volunteer liaison.

Volunteer attendance and tardiness

• If you know in advance that you will miss a scheduled volunteering session (vacation, travel, work, etc.), please contact the school’s volunteer liaison or your volunteer supervisor to share this information as quickly as possible.
• **If you are ill or feeling, please do not volunteer.** Germs spread easily in a classroom. Please contact your school’s volunteer liaison or your volunteer supervisor to share this information as quickly as possible.
• If you become ill while volunteering or must leave in the middle of a volunteering session for any reason, please notify your volunteer supervisor and sign out in the main office.
• Please be on time. Punctuality is important so that the classroom is not disrupted by tardiness.

Confidentiality, reporting, and boundaries

• Volunteers should not be left to supervise students without a RPS staff member present. If you are left alone, report it immediately to the volunteer liaison.
• Do not be alone with a student behind closed doors.
• Alert the Designated School Personnel (DSP) promptly if you suspect child abuse or neglect. Do not talk to the child directly about these issues.
• Do not give out personal contact information such as your address, phone, email, or personal website address to students. Contact outside of your volunteer service at the school is not permitted.
• Do not engage students on any social media site, email, texts, and/or take or show pictures/videos of students on your phone or other media devices.
• Never go off-site with a student unless you are on a school authorized and sponsored field trip accompanied by an RPS employee (teacher, administrator, etc.).
• It is the teacher or principal’s responsibility to discipline students. Discuss any discipline problems with the supervising teacher before they escalate.
• It is the teacher’s responsibility to record grades in the applicable student records. Volunteers are not permitted to enter grades in schools records.
• All student records and personal information must remain confidential.
District policies

❖ **Harassment**
The district does not tolerate harassment of any kind. Please contact a RPS staff member if you have a concern regarding sexual harassment. Reference Policy 7-1.2 Harassment- School Personnel.

❖ **Child Abuse or Neglect Reporting**
Suspected child abuse or neglect should be reported by an RPS employee as outlined in the RPS policies and procedures. Reference Policy 7-3.17

❖ **Tobacco Free and Drug Free Workplace**
Smoking and the use of tobacco is prohibited at all times and under all circumstances in all Richmond Public School buildings as provided in federal, state and local law. Each principal shall post signs stating "No Smoking" as applicable within each school building. Reference Policy 7-3.18

Volunteers are not to be under the influence of alcohol, controlled substances, or illegal drugs while on RPS premises. Reference Policy 7.31

❖ **Dress Code 7-3.4**
Volunteers are considered professionals in the building and should always dress as such. Reference Policy 7-3.4

❖ **Workplace Bullying 7-3.20 Student Bullying 8-3.3**
Bullying of students or RPS employees, by students or adults, is prohibited on RPS premises. This also includes bullying through electronic means of communication. Reference Policy 7-3.20 and Policy 8-3.3

❖ **Weapons in School 7-3.2**
The School Board of the City of Richmond is committed to maintaining a safe and secure working and learning environment. Staff members are prohibited from carrying, bringing, using or possessing any weapon in any school building, on school grounds, in any school vehicle or at any school-sponsored activity without the authorization of the school or the school division. Reference Policy 7-3.2
FOR STAFF

Tips for teachers working with volunteers

❖ Get to know your volunteer(s). Find out why they decided to volunteer and what they are hoping to gain from this experience. Your attitude toward your volunteer will have a direct effect on how long they will volunteer and how much your students will benefit from their service.
❖ Share classroom rules and procedures—volunteer may not have been in a classroom in 20 years.
❖ Thank your volunteer directly. Try to do this when they arrive or leave, or by email or a phone call.
❖ Let your volunteers know their contribution is important.
❖ Provide direction and support to a volunteer.
❖ Volunteers should not be left alone in a classroom without a RPS staff member. If a volunteer is leading a class presentation, this is not an acceptable time for a teacher to leave the room. Volunteers are not to be behind closed doors with a student or left alone with any students.
❖ All school division employees are mandated reporters. Should a volunteer be observed in any questionable behavior or a student reports being uncomfortable around a volunteer, details should be immediately reported to the principal or volunteer liaison.

Release of a volunteer

❖ Volunteers who do not abide by district policies and/or school procedures and rules, state or federal laws and this volunteer handbook are subject to release from being a RPS volunteer. Depending on the situation, volunteers may have an opportunity to discuss the offending behavior with appropriate staff members.
❖ Possible grounds for release may include, but are not limited to: gross misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, theft or property or misuse of district equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of students or staff, failure to meet physical or mental standards of performance, breach of confidentiality, and/or failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties. Refer to district policies on page 10.
## Important Information for Volunteers

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Phone Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteer liaison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteer liaison Phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Staff Supervisor / Teacher Information

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell (optional)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email (optional)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best way to contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer shift (date, time, room, etc., if regularly scheduled)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other notes:
VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

I, (print name)___________________________________________________,

❖ I have received a copy of, or access to the RPS Volunteer Handbook

❖ I am aware that even though I am not a district employee, the following Administrative Policies apply to me as a volunteer and that complete policies are available online:
  - Harassment Policy 7-1.2
  - Child Abuse or Neglect Reporting 7-3.17
  - Tobacco Free and Drug Free Workplace Policy 7-3.18 and 7.31
  - Dress Code: Policy 7-3.4
  - Workplace Bullying & Student Bullying Policy 7-3.20 & Policy 8-3.3
  - Weapons in School Policy 7-3.2

❖ I am aware that I must follow FERPA regulations and any and all other federal and state laws regarding maintaining the confidentiality of student records and information.

❖ I have read, understand, and agree to the terms outlined in the Volunteer Handbook.

❖ I give permission for Richmond Public Schools to take and publish pictures of me while volunteering.

❖ I have been provided with contact information for an individual who can help with any questions or concerns I may have.

Please print full name:
________________________________________________________

Please sign full name:
________________________________________________________

Date:
________________________________________________________