

# Spring Valley Elementary



## Volunteer Program Handbook

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## **Thank you for volunteering!**

We are proud that you are a partner with us in the most wonderful and important job in the world: educating today's youth and tomorrow's citizens! We know that children's families are their first and best teachers and celebrate all that our families do to help their youngsters be successful. The formal education of our children, however, is primarily the responsibility of the Board of Education, teachers, staff and administrators of the Spring Valley School District – and we need you, as a caring parent and/or community member, to share this responsibility and privilege with us. As a volunteer, you will work with the direction of the faculty to support their ultimate goal of meeting the educational needs of the children. Who better to support our youth and enhance our thriving school-community connection than yourself!

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

Spring Valley School District understands that everyone has different skill sets as well as different preferences when it comes to volunteering. We know that some people would feel most comfortable in a classroom helping students to learn to read, while other volunteers would feel more at home in the workroom preparing materials for the teachers. That is why our district offers a variety of positions to those who would like to volunteer. Some of these positions include:

- Working in a classroom, tutoring students in a variety of subjects
- Working in the copier room
- Laminating
- Helping with picture day
- Helping out with our annual wellness day activities

- Assisting with the Footie Fun Run
- Counting milk jug tops
- Cutting box tops and soup labels
- Shelving books in the library
- Updating the reader board in front of the school
- Helping with vision and hearing screening
- Restocking the copier room with paper and supplies

## **Our commitment to you**

We believe that our schools are responsible for creating and maintaining a student centered learning environment that fosters respect for everyone in the schools: young people, staff, parents and volunteers. Especially since our schools have such a need for and commitment to our volunteers, we promise to:

- treat our volunteers with care and respect.
- make every effort to assign volunteers to positions that match what they like to do and know how to do best.
- provide volunteers with the information they need about our schools, policies, people and programs.
- offer support throughout the volunteer experience.
- make sure volunteers understand how and to whom to talk with about any concerns.
- give volunteers the opportunity to share comments and suggestions about their volunteer experience.

## **Your commitment to us**

The mission of the Spring Valley School Volunteer Program is to increase student achievement and satisfaction with their school experiences through meaningful parent and community involvement. As a school volunteer, you make a world of difference to our staff and students. You will:

- Enrich the school program by sharing your experiences and talents with students and staff.
- Stimulate community interest, concern and support for education through sharing your experiences with our children in the schools.
- Enhance student learning through reinforcing specific skills, providing enrichment experiences, and expanding the walls of the school to include the community.
- Strengthen the district's school-community partnerships through your positive and constructive participation as a member of our school community.
- Make a difference in the quality of the school experience for our students through your honest feedback about our strengths and challenges.
- Support strong student self-concepts by showing them that they are important to you, by taking the time to listen to them and by helping them have an even more joyous learning experience.
- Become a better community member as you learn about the many skills, talents and contributions of the faculty, staff and other volunteers who contribute to the schools.
- Increase your own sensitivity to the challenges of today's young people and strengthen your resolve to help them.
- Model the importance of giving back to the community so that our children will do the same in their generation.

## Volunteer Responsibilities and Expectations

- **Maintain Confidentiality.** In your work as a volunteer, you may read and hear information about students that is confidential. It may be the result of classroom or achievement based tests, awards or honors, attendance data, financial, health or personal family information, social or behavioral actions, program enrollment, or reports of parent/teacher or parent/counselor conferences. There may be times that another staff person may need to share confidential information with you, or a student may tell you something in confidence. You may hear conversations between students and teachers, students and students, or between district personnel. All these things are confidential and should never be discussed with others who do not have a legitimate need to know. Both students and staff have the right to expect that nothing that happens to or about them will be repeated outside the school to anyone, including the students' parents. Only staff responsible for the design, preparation and delivery of education and related services may have access to written or oral information about students and their families.
- **It is our expectation, and a program requirement, that volunteers will never share confidential information about a student or staff member with others, including the volunteer's, student's or staff member's family.** Parents, friends or community members may, in good faith, ask you questions about the progress or problems of a student knowing that you are a volunteer. Discussion of individual students, teachers, or staff, their actions and/or their abilities is considered a breach of professional conduct and may be grounds for your dismissal from the volunteer program. The students' teacher is the most appropriate person with whom to discuss a child's progress and problems. You should direct any questions about a child to the child's teacher.  
A child's work and behavior is confidential. Discuss any problems with staff or the Volunteer Coordinator, not with other volunteers, parents or others in the community. If someone asks you about a particular student,

respond, "That information is confidential. Sorry I can't discuss it with you," or "Please check with the child's teacher."

- **Protect Privacy.** Do not ask for a child's address or phone number. Do not share your address or phone number with children.
- **Always think "safety first".** Always keep children in your line of vision. It's important to continually scan all children for safety when in a large group. When in a small group, it's best to keep doors open and have another adult present.
- **Follow "safe touch" suggestions.** Volunteers may respond to a child's initiation of an appropriate touch and should respect a child's right to say "no". Volunteers may ask a child if they would like a handshake or a high-five.
- **If you have questions about the instructional, curricular or behavior concerns of a student you are asked to work with, talk to the teacher.**
- **If you have questions about school climate issues, harassment or discrimination concerns or conduct of students or staff that upsets you, talk to the principal.**
- **Be reliable.** Remember that students and staff depend on your presence.
- **Be a role model.** Remember that you are acting as a role model for the students. Conduct yourself with dignity, courtesy, and consideration at all times.
- **Use formal names for adults.** Students will refer to you with a Mr., Ms., Mrs. or Miss in front of your last name. When around students, staff will refer to you in this way. Please refer to all adults this way, as well, in order to be consistent for the children.

- **Be flexible.** Remember that you are at a school to help all students. You will be making a contribution whether you are working with a class or in another setting. Determination of the need for and role(s) of classroom volunteers rests with the teacher.
- **Be a positive, public representative of the school.** Address any concerns or issues promptly and productively. If you have an issue with a staff member, please talk to that person, face to face, as soon as possible. If you need time to think about the situation, please do so, but do not let the concern intensify. If you feel uncomfortable, talking with the staff member, please speak to the building principal. Please respect the persons involved by avoiding discussion with other school or community members. Communication is the key to establishing good relationships that benefit everyone.
- **Dress appropriately.** Volunteers should dress comfortably but remember you are a role model. Clothing should not disrupt the learning process. Please do not wear hats, caps, hoods, bandanas or sunglasses into school. Clothing that displays suggestive, offensive, obscene, sexually degrading or racially motivated graphics or statements is not allowed. Backless shirts, strapless or spaghetti strapped tops should not be worn and clothing should completely cover your torso.
- **Become familiar with and abide by district and school handbooks, policies and procedures.** If you don't know, please ask. Staff can also explain the reasons why a procedure or policy is in place. Often there are multiple issues that need to be considered that all may affect a single organizational decision.



## **Daily Procedure Information**

- **Sign in at the office at your arrival and departure.**
- **Please be prompt!** We plan our days with your help in mind. If you must be absent, call the school and ask that the staff member with whom you work be informed so that the student(s) will not be disappointed.
- **If school is cancelled or students are released early because of snow or other unanticipated situation, announcements will be aired on local news stations.**
- **Don't hesitate to ask questions or to set up a meeting to get further instruction.**
  - If you have questions about your volunteer assignment in general, talk to the volunteer coordinator.
  - If you have questions about student instructional, curricular or behavior concerns, talk to the teacher.
  - If you have questions about school climate issues, harassment or discrimination concerns or conduct of students or staff that upsets you, talk to the principal.

## **Additional Helpful Information**

### **Accidents involving students**

Please report all accidents and apparent illnesses to the classroom teacher or to the school office immediately. The school nurse will immediately be notified of all student accidents.

### **Accidents involving volunteers**

Please report any accident or injury you might sustain while volunteering to the building secretary or school principal as soon as possible. We all appreciate your staying home and taking care of yourself if you are not feeling well.

**Emergency drills**

Volunteers are required to participate in emergency drills. If you are unsure of your role or have other questions, please see your principal for information.

**Harassment / discrimination**

Spring Valley Schools are committed to providing a safe, harassment and discrimination-free environment for its students, employees and volunteers. Any volunteer who feels that he/she has been a witness to or the subject of discrimination and/or harassment should report the incident to the building principal immediately and without fear of reprisal.

**Student release / discipline**

Please remember that you do not have the authority to release a student from school; this must be done through the office, with the permission of the principal. Volunteers who work with students are expected to maintain firm but kind control of the young people and to refer any serious problems or concerns to a staff person. Volunteers may not provide transportation in their personal vehicles for any school-sponsored activities.

**Substance use / abuse**

By law, school grounds are "tobacco free". Volunteers are prohibited from consuming, possessing, furnishing, selling or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs in school or at any school-sponsored, organized or associated function or on/in any property, facility or vehicle owned or operated by or for the school.

**Volunteer Appreciation Dinner**

At the end of each school year Spring Valley School District organizes an appreciation dinner. In order to give thanks to all those who gave their time to the school over the course of the year the school pays for a catered dinner for all those who wish to attend. This is our way of giving back to those who give us so much.

## **Tips for working with children**

- Enjoy yourself and they will too!
- Be warm and friendly.
- Learn the child's name and be sure the child knows your name.
- Be a good listener and show that you are paying attention to the child by talking about things in which s/he is interested.
- Use positive comments to encourage the child.
- Let the children know that making a mistake is part of learning.
- If you don't know an answer, admit it, and work the problem out together or ask the teacher.
- Build the children's confidence by praising their attention, achievement and effort. Be as specific as possible in your praise.
- Be reliable so the child will not be disappointed.
- Don't make promises that you cannot keep.
- Maintain a sense of humor.
- Encourage the children to do their own thinking and give them time to respond.
- Communicate often with the teacher.

**And don't forget... Bring a smile...**

**Be patient...**

**Be flexible...**

**Be a positive role model...**

**HAVE FUN...and continue to learn!**