

MERIDIAN PARK ELEMENTARY
VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

WELCOME NEW MERIDIAN PARK VOLUNTEER!

Our school is so happy to have you on board as a tutor, mentor, classroom helper or other role you have elected to take in our learning community. We hope that you will have a great time here and will feel appreciated because you most certainly are! We know that you have valuable gifts to give our children. Your time, your patience, and your enthusiasm are so important. You are now a part of our staff team dedicated to the success of all students.

Please enjoy your time at our school and thank you for volunteering.

Sincerely,
Amy Jessee, Principal

REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Sign-In / Sign-Out

- When you arrive at your school, go to the office or other designated location to sign in. When you leave school, you need to sign out.
- School office staff needs to know when you are in the building and where you will be.
- School office staff needs to be able to locate you in case of emergencies.

Identification

- For student safety, school staff needs to be able to identify all people in the building. You are asked to wear a visitor badge when you are at school (or your Power of One photo ID badge if applicable).
- Students will feel more secure when they see your badge.

Background Checks

- All volunteers in the Shoreline School District are required to undergo a Washington State Patrol Background check before they are allowed to be with students.
- If you drive students on school field trips, you must give information on your vehicle and insurance on the form provided at your school.
- You will also be asked to register your phone and address so that school office staff may contact you with important information and/or schedule changes.

TO BE A SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTEER

Be Reliable

- Be on time.
- Notify the school in case of absences.
- Secure a replacement, if possible.
- Come prepared to work.
- Do not bring other people with you when you volunteer.

Understand the Importance of Confidentiality

- Refuse to discuss teachers, students, or school affairs with anyone except the appropriate staff member in a professional, problem-solving atmosphere.

Accept The School's Organizational Structure

- Be willing to work with the direction from staff and supervision by staff members.
- Respect the teacher's decisions regarding priority of work to be done.
- Adjust to the staff member's individual style.

Be a Positive Role Model for Students

- Set a good example with regard to appearance and behavior.
- Respect all students and their parents regardless of socio-economic status, race, cultural background, religion, etc.
- Follow school policies and practices.

HOW CHILDREN LEARN

1. Children learn by doing.
2. Children learn by asking questions and by searching for answers to their questions.
3. They learn by discovery.
4. They learn by using their senses when possible.
5. They learn by experimenting.
6. They learn by sorting and combining objects and ideas.
7. They learn by repeating experiences.
8. They learn by building confidence in themselves.
9. Children learn behavior by observing people they respect.

HELPING CHILDREN LEARN

1. Let children participate in activities as frequently as possible.
2. Ask children questions that may lead them to the correct answer instead of telling them directly.
3. Let children discover by themselves (of course only when it is safe and prudent to do so).
4. Encourage children to feel, smell, taste and listen, as well as having them look at objects.
5. Let children try new methods of doing things even though you already know an easier way. Avoid making models for children when they use art media.
6. Let children sort and combine according to their own ideas.
7. Give the children as much time as they need (often weeks, months) to understand a new idea.
8. When speaking to children:
 - a. Praise their good efforts;
 - b. Use a tone of voice that will encourage them and make them feel confident.
 - c. Avoid comparing children and their work.
 - d. Give children a choice only when you intend to abide by the choice.
 - e. State directions in a positive form ("We use blocks for building," rather than "Don't throw blocks.").
9. Let children observe you as a model for appropriate behavior (sharing, showing, respect, talking quietly, taking turns, etc.).

PROCEDURES

Sign-In/ Sign-Out

For the safety of our students and in the interest of our instructional programs, all visitors—whether regular volunteers or on-time guests—are required to register with the office whenever they visit our school.

- Check into the office.
- Sign-in on school visitor/volunteer log sheet.
- If you forgot your picture ID, wear the school's visitor identification badge.
- Wear your ID at all times when you are in the building.
- Return the school's ID badges to the office when you leave the building. Keep your photo ID with you.
- Sign-out on the visitor/volunteer log sheet.
- Power of One Volunteers: Record your hours on your RSVP time sheet in the back of the white volunteer sign-in/out notebook.

Work Location

Most of the time you will be working in a classroom under the direct supervision of school staff. Occasionally, a teacher may ask that you work just outside the classroom door, in the library, or in another room. At this school there are many options for workspaces. It is important that you *always work in an area where you are easily seen and accessible* to school staff.

Working With School Staff

Meeting with the teacher or staff member prior to beginning your volunteer work can make your experience more rewarding. Use this time to ask questions about what you will do and how the teacher or staff member wants the work done. Establish how the teacher wants you to handle any student misbehaviors you may observe. Talk about a system for regular communication. This is a wonderful opportunity to get to know the teacher and to learn about any students with whom you may be working.

Communication

It is important that you and the teacher or staff member with whom you work have a regular and reliable means of communicating with one another. Some teachers may use a notebook; others may prefer short notes; still others may want to speak with you after each session. Some may even ask to call you at home. Discuss communication at your first meeting with him or her. You will feel more confident and comfortable.

Commitment

The time you give to our schools is deeply appreciated. We know that teachers and students come to depend on this assistance and expect the volunteer to be at the school at an agreed upon time. However, there may be times when you are unable to keep your commitment. When that happens, we ask that you notify the teacher or leave a message with the office so that everyone with whom you work can be informed that you are unable to be there.

Discipline

As a volunteer you are asked to support the schools discipline policies, but you will not be directly responsible for handling discipline issues. Please let the teacher or other staff person know if an issue arises that needs attention. The school's policies are listed in the back of the handbook. When in doubt, always ask your teacher or another staff person what to do.

Problem-Solving

We want your volunteer experience to be satisfying. Sometimes, despite our mutual best efforts, things do not work out as planned. Working in a situation where you are unhappy is not beneficial to you or the students. If there are problems that arise during your volunteer experience at your school, please bring them to the staff member's attention as soon as possible. We will handle those issues promptly and courteously, with respect for the dignity of all.

Use of Telephones

Please turn off all cell phones during your volunteer time. If you need to make or receive a call while you are at school, you may ask to use the phone in the school office or in the classroom if it is not disrupting to the class. All classrooms have a phone. Should you receive an emergency phone call while you are with us, we will contact you according to the information given in the volunteer/visitor log book. Our telephone lines are limited and we ask that you make personal phone calls prior to arriving or after leaving school.

Use of School Equipment, Including Copy Machines and Computers

There may be times when a teacher will ask you to do work that requires you to use school equipment. If you have any questions about how to operate the equipment, please ask the teacher or another designated staff member to demonstrate. Knowing how to use the equipment will save you much frustration and time.

You may also be asked to help students with their work on computers. You can usually rely on the children to know the programs they are using and the rules for safe use of computers. Periodically, the Power of One program offers free computer classes to help volunteers become familiar with these important tools in the classroom. Volunteers should seek permission before using school computers for personal use.

Restrooms

All volunteers must use the adult bathrooms, not the student bathrooms.

GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION

In the Shoreline School District our students' safety, and yours, are paramount. We strive to provide a safe, healthy, supportive environment for students, staff and volunteers. To help create this, we ask that you follow these guidelines.

Safe Interaction with Students

All volunteers should work under supervised conditions. This means:

- There should be another volunteer, district employee, or parent in the area where you are working with student(s).
- If you are going to work one-on-one or in small groups away from the classroom, leave the door to the room open or stay in an open area.
- Make sure you are in plain sight.
- To protect your privacy, and that of students, do not ask for a student's address, phone number or to take their picture. Also, do not share your address or phone number with a student without discussing it with your classroom teacher or the principal.
- Use adult/staff restrooms only.
- Do not accompany a student into the restroom.
- All that you learn from staff about your student or from interacting with your student is confidential. Please remember this when discussing your volunteer work outside of the school.

Safe Verbal Communication

Let your conversation demonstrate respect for others and yourself.

- Avoid language that may be perceived as discriminatory, sexist or offensive.
- Remember that you are a role model for the students. Treat all students in the same manner.
- If a student shares any information with you that causes you concern for their safety or health, *tell the teacher or principal.* They will follow up on the information appropriately. Please keep the content of the information and action you took strictly confidential.

Safe Touch Areas

Handshakes and high fives are considered appropriate friendly touches.

- If a student wants to hug you, show them how to "hug from the side" – bending down so that your shoulders are level with the student's. Let the student initiate this kind of behavior.
- Never touch a child in anger.
- If a student is unruly or disrespectful, return them to the classroom and let the teacher take over from there.
- The bottom line is to use your best judgment at all times. Treat the students as you wish to be treated: with dignity, care and respect.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

Schools regularly conduct drills so they can be prepared for emergencies. If you are in the building at a time when drills are conducted, you are expected to participate in the exercises. Follow the lead of the staff member as to what to do. Your student may also be helpful, as they have practiced more times than you have. Refer to the building map in this handbook for exit routes and assembly locations.

Fire

Evacuate the building according to designated routes that are posted in each classroom. Assemble at the predetermined location. Maintain quiet so that necessary instructions can be heard.

Earthquake

Drop, Cover, and Hold until an “all clear” is sounded. If it is necessary to evacuate the building, leave by the designated routes and assemble at the pre-determined location.

Lockdown

Remain inside the classroom with blinds drawn and doors locked until “all clear” is sounded. If you are outside a classroom, stay away from open, easily seen areas and move into the nearest classroom if possible.

For More Information About Volunteering Contact:

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or leave a message at: 206-361-4128