



# **Volunteer Handbook 2015-2016**

**Dysart Unified School District**  
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## **Volunteer Program**

The purpose of the Dysart Unified School District Volunteer Program is to assist schools in providing the highest quality education to each and every student. The services of volunteers are utilized in schools and district offices to:

- Enrich children's learning opportunities
- Provide individual attention to those children who need more one-on-one assistance
- Promote a school-home-community partnership for quality education
- Provide teachers with more time to work with students
- Relieve teachers and support personnel of non-instructional tasks

Every person who cares about children and education is a potential volunteer. Prior teaching experience is not necessary. Volunteers can be parents, grandparents, college students who are 18 years of age or older and community members.

Members of the community who are 18 years of age or older, and who want to make a difference in the lives of children and support educators, are encouraged to apply to become a volunteer with the Dysart Unified School District. Volunteers are welcome in all of our schools.

## **Volunteers**

A Dysart volunteer is an individual who has been given a scheduled, pre-arranged activity by a district staff member to assist in one of the district schools. Any person who volunteers more than five (5) hours per year must be fingerprinted. The fingerprint fee will be paid by the district. All potential volunteers, including parents of students attending schools within Dysart Unified School District, must complete the following forms and be cleared before they can begin volunteering:

- Volunteer Application
- Volunteer Video Orientation and Handbook
- Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement
- Volunteer Fingerprint Requirements (will be notarized)
- Volunteer Clearance Application
- Emergency Contact Information
- Volunteer Handbook and Orientation Requirement Form
- Volunteer Statement of Understanding

## **Visitors**

Individuals who are visiting a school do not need to be a registered volunteer. This would include parents who are visiting the school, but not volunteering. However the person(s) must follow the district office and school sign-in procedures.

## **Fingerprinting Process**

All volunteers must be fingerprinted. The Volunteer and Compliance Specialist will take your fingerprints. A photo ID will be required for proof of identity. Badges reflect the approval and expiration date of the application.

## Volunteer Chaperones and Volunteer Athletic Coaches

Volunteer chaperones on overnight field trips or who serve as volunteer athletic coaches must be fingerprinted, regardless of the number of total hours volunteered. If an individual will attend one field trip per year, they do not have to complete the volunteer process unless they will not be directly supervised by a school staff member. If more than one field trip will be attended per year, individuals must become volunteers.

## Parent Support Organization

All Booster/PTO/PTA officers or members appointed to a role with financial responsibilities must be approved volunteers in the district. Officers of Parent Organizations should refer to the Parent Support Organization page for additional information located on our website at [Dysart.org/Parents/Parent Support Groups](http://Dysart.org/Parents/Parent%20Support%20Groups). Please complete the appropriate application and associated documents if you are interested in volunteering. For more information, contact the Volunteer and Compliance Specialist at 623.876.7875.

## Volunteer Approval

After a volunteer is approved, the Volunteer & Compliance Specialist will schedule a meeting for volunteers to meet the teacher and students with whom they will be working. A school delegate will meet you at the school where you will be volunteering, give you a brief tour, and introduce you to the teacher who will help you set up your volunteer schedule in the classroom and discuss your volunteer duties.

## Photo ID Badge

Dysart works diligently to maintain safe schools. Wearing your photo ID badge is very important to school safety and must be worn at all times. This will enable the staff to recognize you as a registered volunteer and also identify you as an important member of the school's educational team. Please make sure your ID badge is visible at all times when volunteering. When a volunteer discontinues participation in the Dysart Volunteer Program, the ID badge must be returned to the Volunteer Coordinator or the school secretary.

## Volunteer Attendance Program

Volunteers are covered by the district's liability insurance policy while they are on campus and working under the direct supervision of the school staff. Volunteers must be registered at their school site. For security and liability insurance coverage reasons, the district must have a record showing the days and hours each volunteer works on campus. For this reason, it is very important that all volunteers log in and out of the attendance computer program each time they volunteer. A special volunteer attendance computer program has been set up for volunteers to log their attendance. Volunteers are not covered under the district's health and medical benefits or workers' compensation insurance.

A record of each volunteer's hours enables the school to evaluate its volunteer program and recognize volunteers for their valuable contribution to the district. In order to remain an active volunteer each year, you will need to log your hours through the volunteer attendance page. ***Please remember to log in and out of the volunteer attendance program each time you volunteer.***

## Volunteer Responsibilities

Volunteers are an important part of the educational team. The suggestions and opinions of volunteers are always welcome. It is the professional staff, however, that is held responsible by law for the decisions that are made regarding the instruction of students and the management of the school. For this reason, volunteers always work under the direct supervision of teachers and administrators. The final decision rests with the school administration and staff.

***Is there anything volunteers shouldn't do?*** The school staff where you volunteer is responsible for everything that goes on in your building, including student instruction, safety and discipline. Volunteers supplement and support the program, but may not:

- Provide the curriculum or teaching plan
- Discipline students
- Take charge of the classroom for any length of time
- Have access to students' permanent record files (psychological records, grades, health histories, etc.)
- Diagnose student needs
- Evaluate achievement
- Counsel students
- Discuss student progress with parents

**A volunteer is *never* considered a substitute for a member of the professional school staff.**

### **Guidelines:**

- **Supervision of Volunteers:** School volunteers work under the direct supervision of the professional staff at each school and only with those teachers who have requested the services of the volunteer. The district is responsible for the education, safety and well-being of each student. Any volunteer whose actions are not in the best interests of the school or students will be dismissed.
- **Discipline:** Students rarely exhibit behavior problems while working with volunteers. Our schools have a detailed discipline plan included in the Student and Parent Handbook. The responsibility for discipline rests with the school staff. Volunteers may not discipline students. Please make the teacher aware of any discipline problems that may occur while you are working with a student.
- **Restrooms:** Staff restrooms are located in the school offices and are available to volunteers. We ask that you do not use student restrooms.
- **Confidentiality:** As you work with the school staff and students, information of a confidential nature may be shared with you. Issues, challenges, behaviors, problems, and confidential information of students, their parents, and the staff should never be disclosed to anyone who does not have a professional right or need to know. Like teachers, volunteers are bound by a code of ethics to keep confidential matters within the school. The staff and students need to know they can trust you. Please do not discuss a child's school progress or difficulties with his/her parents. This is the teacher's responsibility. Occasionally, a child might confide in you about family matters or personal problems. Please keep this information confidential. If you feel it is vital for the school to have this information in order to help the student, discuss the child's conversation with the teacher or principal in private. If you suspect child abuse, you have a responsibility to report it to the principal and Child Protective Services.
- **Dismissal of Students:** Volunteers may never dismiss a student from school. Children who must leave school early must receive permission from the school office. A parent or guardian must sign the student out before leaving. Under no circumstances may a volunteer take a student off campus.

- **Dress:** Casual clothing is fine, but we ask that your attire be neat and conservative. Please keep in mind that you are in a position to set an example for students. Revealing clothing, tube tops, tank tops, and short-shorts are not acceptable. You are required to follow the district dress code.
- **Health:** If you are not feeling well, please don't try to keep up with your volunteer duties. You'll accomplish more in the long run if you allow yourself time to recuperate. Please call in advance to let the teacher know you won't be coming in at your scheduled time. Schools are particularly concerned about keeping students and staff healthy. This is another reason for staying away from school if you have a contagious illness.
- **Your Commitment:** Before you agree to volunteer, carefully consider the commitment you are making. The work of volunteers is important work. Whether in the classroom, main office, media center or health office, the staff and students quickly become dependent upon volunteer assistance. Don't promise to volunteer more time than you will be able to provide. It's better to start out with a few hours per week and gradually build up to more hours or days if you find you have the additional time.
- **Dependability:** Please be prompt and consistent. We know there will be times when you will be ill, on vacation, or unable to volunteer. Remember that the teacher will be expecting you on the days you are scheduled to volunteer – and so will the children. Please call the school office and leave a message for the teacher or staff member with whom you work. Let them know in advance if you will be unable to volunteer on that day.
- **School Rules:** Become familiar with the rules and policies of the school where you will be volunteering. It is a good idea to read through the school's handbook. Ask your supervising teacher to explain the school's policy for use of telephones, eating facilities, fire drills and emergency procedures. Use reasonable judgment in making decisions when there appears to be no policy or when the policy is not communicated.
- **Younger Children of Volunteers:** Volunteers may not bring non-enrolled children with them to school when volunteering.

### Effective Volunteering

The staff will appreciate your willingness to be a part of the educational team. Teachers and support personnel will come to depend upon your assistance. Here are some tips for working effectively with the staff.

- **Getting to Know You** – Let the staff know what type of jobs you are interested in doing and what your special skills are so they can fully utilize your talents.
- **A New Experience for You and the Teacher** – If you've never been a school volunteer, you'll find that there are many new and exciting things to learn about volunteering. Please be aware that some staff members have never had an opportunity to work with volunteers before. This may be a new experience for them, too, as they learn how to utilize the services of a volunteer.
- **Be a Good Communicator** – The staff will welcome your questions and comments. If you don't understand something, please ask. Volunteering should be an enjoyable and rewarding job. If you are unhappy or concerned about an issue, discuss the situation with the school staff. If you have concerns about your placement and/or the job you are doing, feel free to call the Volunteer Compliance Specialist at **623.876.7875**.

- **We All Have Different Ways of Doing Things** – When you have been assigned a task, make certain you know exactly how the teacher expects the job to be done. Ask for clear directions and, if necessary, ask that the teacher give you samples or demonstrate how tasks are to be performed.
- **Try Something New** – The opportunity to learn new skills is one of the benefits of being a school volunteer. Be willing to try new tasks assigned by the staff, but accept only as much responsibility as you are comfortable with.
- **Be Prompt and Dependable** – Please arrive for your scheduled time promptly and give the staff plenty of notice when you won't be available at your scheduled time.
- **Routine Tasks are Important** – The staff often relies upon volunteers to do routine jobs such as preparing learning aids and organizing materials. Since volunteers are able to assist with these important tasks, teachers are free to spend more time working with students or planning for quality instruction.

### Working With Students

Here are a few guidelines you can follow as you work with students as a volunteer:

- **Call students by name at each opportunity.** A child's name is very important. Please make every effort to pronounce and spell each child's name correctly.
- **Closely observe the techniques used by the teacher.** Try to model the teacher's instructional methods when working with students.
- **Accept children as they are.** Each child is unique. Some children may be very different from your own children. Be ready to accept these differences in background, values, skills, and aspirations.
- **Encourage and praise students.** Use positive comments that will encourage children to feel good about themselves even when they are having difficulty. Avoid saying anything that will make students feel negatively about themselves or affect their ability to learn. Be ready to praise children for every success.
- **Encourage students to do their own thinking.** Try not to give students the answers before they have had an opportunity to solve questions on their own. Give children plenty of time to answer your questions. Silence often means that a child is thinking. Be aware of students who may try to get you to do their work for them.
- **Follow the teacher's lead.** Always be consistent with the teacher's rules for classroom behavior. Don't allow children to do things that their teacher doesn't allow. Remember, the teacher is always available and ready to handle discipline problems. Make sure the children with whom you are working do not disturb the rest of the class.
- **Reinforce good behavior.** When children (especially younger students) are behaving well, always let them know how proud you are of them and how much you appreciate their effort. This will encourage them to try even harder. If possible, do not pay attention to a child who shows minor misbehavior problems, but do note things the child is doing well and praise him/her for it.
- **Remember: It's okay if you don't know all the answers.** Admit to the children that you don't know the answer or aren't sure what to do. Work the answers out together with students or feel free to ask the teacher for assistance.

- **Keep students on task.** You'll want the children to learn as much as possible during the short time they spend with you. Try and keep the lesson or activity moving. Try to avoid letting one or more students get you or the group off track for long periods of time by discussing topics that have nothing to do with the lesson.
- **Supervise students carefully.** Under no circumstances should you leave a student or small group of students without supervision. Always be fully aware of what students are doing at all times.
- **Know when to give or not to give.** Your positive words of encouragement will go a long way in helping students become excited about learning. Younger children may also enjoy stars, stickers, stamps and special little notes of praise from the volunteer. You and the teacher can discuss the use of these motivational materials. Please do not give students food without first checking with the teacher. Volunteers may not give students advertisements or fund solicitations.

### Your First Few Days

Starting a new job is always exciting and can even be a bit frightening. The first days are usually the busiest because there are so many new people to meet and things to learn. As you become more familiar with the school and your assignment, you will feel more at home. Here are some suggestions to make the experience more fruitful:

- **Initial Visit** – At your initial visit to the school, the school volunteer delegate will give you a tour of the school. This will provide you with an opportunity to learn your way around the school and be introduced to key people. When you meet with your supervising teacher, plan to discuss the Teacher/Volunteer Conference Checklist in this booklet. If you have any other questions or concerns, add them to the list now so you won't forget to bring them up at the conference.
- **Take Time to Observe** – If you'll be working with students, the first day or two in the classroom will probably be spent observing the teacher and children. You'll become familiar with the teaching style your supervising teacher uses. You'll also observe acceptable behavior for students and what is not, how much freedom is allowed, and what the daily routine is like. While you are observing, you can also work on various tasks the teacher will assign such as correcting papers, filing and preparing learning materials. You'll want to get up from time to time and move among the students as they are working. During appropriate times, don't hesitate to ask individual children what they are doing. Students love to have the opportunity to explain their assignments.

### You Represent The School

As a volunteer, you not only serve the needs of the children, you also provide a vital link between the school and the community. Students, their parents, and the community will view you as a representative of the school. They will pay close attention to what you say about the staff and the educational programs. Sometimes the community hears about the negative aspects of education or stories about the few students who misbehave. Because of your volunteer experience, you'll be able to share the many positive things that students and staff are doing. You'll have an opportunity to let the community know what's going right in our schools.



## Teacher Conference Checklist

Plan to discuss these topics when you meet with the teacher:

- Days and times you will work
- How you will let the teacher know if you are unable to work at your assigned time
- Alternate plans for days when the teacher is absent and a substitute is in charge of the class
- How the teacher will tell you of your day's assignments
- How you will tell the teacher what you have accomplished during the day, performance of students with whom you have worked, need for materials, etc.
- Where to leave your personal belongings
- Location of materials and workspace for your use
- Classroom rules and teacher's discipline policy
- Procedure for letting the teacher know when a child is having a discipline problem that requires his/her attention
- Daily class schedule
- Alternate plans if a student with whom you work is absent
- Student roll and/or seating chart
- Other concerns or questions

## Rewards of Volunteering

We know you'll enjoy your volunteer experience. Each year, many volunteers tell us they receive so much more in return for what they contribute to the program. By sharing your time with our students and staff you will:

- Be given the opportunity to use your skills and talents
- Gain a better understanding of how children learn
- Have a chance to meet and work with teachers and other volunteers
- Know the work you are doing directly affects the quality of education for the children of our community
- Have a great chance to learn valuable new skills that you might use in future endeavors

## Share Your Experience

If you have friends or relatives who might be interested in volunteering in our schools or in one of our school district offices, please ask them to call the Volunteer & Compliance Specialist at **623.876.7875**.



## Contact Information

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