EVERETT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Volunteer handbook

Thank you for volunteering!

Each person who helps a child learn is someone who makes a difference in that child's life. Schools are safe, nurturing places for students to grow and learn, and the work you do makes that environment even more rich and meaningful.

This handbook is designed as a partnership tool. It includes basic information and tips for working with students. It also includes some very important legal information that all school staff and volunteers must understand and abide by to ensure that students and adults in our schools are safe.

Be sure to say "hi" and introduce yourself when we meet in a school or office; I'd like to thank you personally for your gift of time. You are modeling generosity and involved citizenship for our students – qualities we know are important for their futures as they become citizen leaders in their communities.

Sincerely,

Gary Cohn, Superintendent

Our students will lead and shape the future.

Getting to know your team and work area
Gathering important information for your VOLUNTEER CHECKLIST

Someone where you are volunteering will help you gather the following information or review it with you so you are quickly comfortable and successful as a volunteer. Use this checklist to keep track of information.

My volunteer checklist

- Staff contacts for this assignment, phone numbers & emails (who can answer questions; who to contact if you will be absent or late)

  _____
  _____

  _____
  _____
- School or office hours (you might also find it helpful to have a map or school calendar)

  _____

☐ The school or office has my contact information.
☐ I understand the school's rules for adults and students.
☐ I understand the school's fire drill and safety procedures.
☐ I understand where and how to sign in and out and about "volunteer" name tags or badges.

Questions to ask:

- Are there special needs or circumstances I should know about with the students or people I am working with?
- When is it okay to interrupt a teacher giving a lesson or someone in an office meeting?
- What supplies are okay for me to use, and where will I be working on projects?
- Is it okay for me to use equipment or to be in the staff lunchroom? (Sometimes this is the only location for staff to go when discussing confidential issues.)
- What are the school or office expectations for how I should dress?
- Who should I contact if there is a discipline issue? (Volunteers are not responsible for discipline.)
- Can I bring my young child with me to volunteer?
- Can I take photos of students? (Always ask this question before taking photos.)
- What do I do if I am injured while volunteering? (Full details about this are in the section entitled *Your safety – Two things to do if you are injured*.)
- Are there specific laws I must follow when volunteering? (See the specifics about state and federal laws volunteers and staff are obligated to follow in the sections entitled *Legal requirements for volunteers and staff.)*

Volunteer opportunities – so many ways you can make a difference

The possibilities for volunteering are practically limitless. Students learn from adults who are good role models and who bring different perspectives and experiences into their lives. Use the list below to spark a volunteer idea that matches your interests – or share it with someone you know whose talents and enthusiasm would be great assets in a school.

- Help in classrooms, library, office, food service, nurse's office or on the playground
- Work with small groups – for example, in reading, writing, math or spelling
- Set up or take down projects for science, history, art or writing displays
- Help with field trips, parties or special events
- Chaperone school dances
- Sit on a panel to listen to eighth-grade and high school senior project presentations (panelists in August each year are especially hard to find).
- Share your talents and experiences, interests or career in a classroom presentation or career fair
- Help with all-school events (vision screening, science fair, art display, track meets, field days)
- Join a school clean up crew to help with yard work and weed maintenance
- Help the Science Resource Center compile science kits for classrooms in the district's 26 schools
- Help elementary staff welcome new parents each March when kindergarten parents register their students
- Join the school PTA, booster club or special committees
- Become an art docent or science docent
- Become a Big Brother or Big Sister for an Everett Public Schools student
- Join a United Way Day of Caring group to volunteer in a school each September
- Help with the Everett Public Schools Foundation

The benefits of volunteering – everyone gains from your giving

Who knows the difference we can make by giving some time and talent to help others? The act of volunteering in schools helps students, schools and the community.

Benefits to students

- Increases learning and academic success
- Shows and tells students that adults consider them important
- Sets a good example for students about volunteering

- Adds more eyes and ears to focus on students
- Generates more advocates for students, schools and education

"The future our schools provide is, in large measure, dependent upon our involvement."
President Gerald Ford

Bene

- Promotes positive partnerships
- Expands understanding of instruction and learning

- Builds outside support for schools and education
- Increases communication and trust with school and families
- Frees up teacher time for working with students
- Decreases discipline

Benefits to the community and businesses

- Increases positive community visibility
- Generates wider understanding of schools and education
- Fosters understanding of the accomplishments and challenges in schools
- Inspires support and resource possibilities for schools
- Helps strengthen the community by nurturing future citizen leaders

Benefits to those who volunteer

- Sparks insights into how schools work
- Engenders understanding of students
- Builds trust with school staff
- Lessens communications barriers between home and school
- Creates sense of making a difference
- Increases self-confidence and builds job skills

Tips for sparking curiosity and learning; forging partnerships

Encouraging students with words and gestures can help them explore and understand. Let them know you hear, accept and respect what they have to say. Encourage them to say more.

Samples of words of encouragement

- *I can tell you worked really hard on that!*
- *You are getting so much better each time!*
- *I appreciate what you did*
- *You did a great job of handling that situation*
- *I see*
- *Tell me more*
- *How about that?*
- *I like the way you are working*
- *Good thinking. Very creative. How impressive!*
- *Now you've got the hang of it!*
- *That's a great observation*

> *"Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us, hovering, averting our eyes, and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted."*
> Garrison Keillor

Characteristics of successful volunteers

- Enjoy students and have patience with young people and adults
- Take pride in volunteering
- Exhibit great sense of humor – at appropriate level for students and appropriate times
- Show enthusiasm and optimism
- Follow through and show initiative
- Respect others and the wide array of school roles and responsibilities others have
- Learn from others and open to new ideas and suggestions
- Understand the importance of being a part of a team

Guidelines for safe interactions with students

Working with students is rewarding. Society's expectations have changed over the years; professional/personal relationships have been redefined. The protection of persons under 18 years old from abuse and sexual harassment is a critical aspect of court action and case law today.

Specific language that will protect individuals is difficult to convey because the subject matter has many gray areas. For that reason, these guidelines for Everett Public Schools volunteers may err on the side of caution. We believe you should do the same and be sure to ask questions of a school principal or office manager whenever you need more information or have a concern.

Playing it safe
Touching children carries a risk. A volunteer can be accused of impropriety, unnecessary physical contact, or sexual harassment. Being alone with a student can prompt an allegation of intimacy if care is not taken. A finding of sexual harassment is just cause for disciplinary action. Other consequences may include legal action and loss of volunteer privileges.

Exercising good judgment
School volunteers and staff must use good judgment to determine whether or not to touch students and under what conditions. It is important to consider several factors.

Consider a student's age

- Grades K-3 It is virtually impossible to avoid all contact with students of this age. However, it is important to use caution and attempt to keep touches to arms, back and shoulders only.
- Grades 4-9 Female students this age are very conscious of their sexuality. The most numerous accusations of improper touching occur with students of this age. Female students may view a touch on the shoulder or back as sexual in nature. They are extremely sensitive regarding remarks about clothing and physical appearance. Safeguard students'

Guidelines for safe interactions with students, continued

personal boundaries by not patting knees, putting arms around shoulders, hands or waist. Girls this age may be very sensitive about being touched on the back over their bras.

- Grades 10-12 Very little touching is acceptable with this group. Also avoid trying to counsel students of this age, especially about sexual, personal or romantic matters.

Before touching, consider these things

- Males should consider and monitor their behavior very carefully, as the majority of accusations are leveled against men.
- Some individuals and people from some cultures are uncomfortable with touch of any kind. If a student indicates discomfort by word or action, you should avoid physical contact, except in cases where touching is necessary for the student's safety.

Some areas of caution

Some actions, even without improper motive, are common trouble areas. Do not:

- Ask a single student to come early to set up for a class or activity.
- Give a gift at school to a student.
- Sign a yearbook with too-personal inscriptions or nickname.
- Make a request such as, "Give me a hug," or "Come sit on my lap."
- Touch in a lingering way, such as shoulder or neck massages.
- Touch girls differently than boys.
- Comment on dress or appearance.
- Be alone with a student behind closed doors or other area that is not visible to passersby.
- Spend an overly long time with individual students or groups of students.
- Allow a student to develop a personal interest in you.
- Invite students for social activities outside of school.
- Make sexist or sexual comments or innuendos or jokes with double meaning.

Confidentiality is a legal requirement

Any information you learn at school about students or adults is confidential.
A good rule of thumb is to treat information about others at school in the same way you would want them to handle that information if it was about you or your family and report to an adult if you see or hear actions that concern you.

Student photos – check before shooting

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows every public school parent the right to prevent photographs at school being taken of students in that family. School staff and volunteers are obligated to abide by the federal law. Please get permission before taking any student photos.

Your safety – Two things to do if you are injured while volunteering

The district's safety program helps ensure that students, staff, visitors and volunteers are as safe as possible when in schools or in school-related activities off-campus.

1. Seek immediate first aid help and/or call 911. This might be your own action or the response of other adults or students with you.
2. Report the incident to a staff member as soon as possible. Your report should go either to the staff supervising your volunteer time or to a staff in charge of the school or program where you are volunteering.

If you are injured while volunteering, district staff will:

- Give you immediate assistance, and call 911 as a precaution.
- Fill out a district injury report form. Staff will get your signature and forward it to the district risk management staff.

You should know:

- We value your volunteer time and experience and the difference you make for students.
- The district does not have specific insurance coverage for volunteers should you be injured while supporting student activities or programs.
- Therefore, before you volunteer, please review your health care policy and/or homeowner's policy to determine what coverage is available if you are injured while volunteering.

Legal requirements for volunteers and staff

School employees and volunteers help ensure student safety. When everyone is familiar with and abiding by the following legal requirements, the student safety net is stronger. District policies and procedures are in line with state and federal laws that protect students and adults.

Child abuse and neglect (Procedure 3421)

- If you are concerned that a student may be the victim of physical or sexual abuse, share your concerns with a school or district administrator.
- If you become aware of possible adult-student, student-adult or student-student misconduct, it is mandatory to report this information.
- These are situations are known as ones with mandatory reporting requirements.

Preventing harassment, intimidation and bullying (Procedure 3204)

Harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) means any intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act including but not limited to one shown to be motivated by race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, including gender expression or identity, mental, sensory, or physical disability or other distinguishing characteristics, when the intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act:

- physically harms a student or damages the student's property; or
- has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
- is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, embarrassing or threatening educational environment; or
- has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

This can take many forms including but not limited to, slurs, rumors, name-calling, jokes, innuendoes, demeaning comments, drawings, cartoons, pranks, gestures and hazing.

Preventing sexual harassment (Procedures 3204 and 3205)

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is either an explicit or implicit term of:

- an individual's employment or volunteer service;
- as a basis for decisions affecting a person; or
- has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Preventing all types of harassment

Schools are to be safe, nurturing places for adults and students to learn and to grow. To safeguard that environment, school staff and volunteers are asked to be aware of and to report any activities that threaten the safety or well-being of others.

Examples of other types of prohibited harassment include written or verbal abuse, slurs, jokes, threats, pranks or comments that stereotype individuals because of their race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or other legally protected status.

Reporting

If you believe you or a student have experienced harassment of any kind, immediately contact a school or district administrator and complete an HIB Incident Reporting Form located at *http://www.everett.k12.wa.us/Health-Fitness/Harassment%20Reporting*

Everett Public Schools shall provide equal educational opportunity and treatment for all students in all aspects of the academic and activities program without regard to race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, veteran or military status, the presence of any physical, sensory or mental disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a student with a disability.

Designated to handle inquiries about nondiscrimination policies are: **Affirmative Action Office** – Carol Stolz, *cstolz@everettsd.org*, 425-385-4106; **Title IX Officer** – Randi Seaberg, *rseaberg@everettsd.org*, 425-385-4104; **504 Coordinator** – Becky Ballbach, *rballbach@everettsd.org*, 425-385-4063
ADA Coordinator – Dr. Tony Byrd, *tbyrd@everettsd.org*, 425-385-4050
Address: 3900 Broadway, Everett, WA 98201