

Volunteer Handbook



PINELLAS COUNTY
SCHOOLS

Be Part of It

Office of Community Involvement

Contents

Welcome Volunteers.....	i
Table of Contents.....	1
Becoming a School Volunteer.....	2
Volunteer Job Descriptions.....	3 - 6
Orientation / Training.....	7 - 8
Registration Process.....	9
Guidelines.....	10 - 11
State Law / County Policy.....	12
Tips for Volunteers.....	13
Benefits.....	14

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Welcome Volunteers

You have taken a step towards making a significant impact on the excellent education programs offered in Pinellas County Schools. Volunteers provide enrichment opportunities that enhance the educational experience for students while supporting our teachers and staff. Volunteers also help us build a strong foundation for students as they select a career path or post-secondary education.

As you enhance and support the academic programs, it is important to also help students be excited about life - to have a positive attitude that will get them through challenging times as they grow and learn. By modeling for students the kinds of expectations they need to succeed, you help them develop into productive citizens of the community. We urge you to become a strong advocate by sharing your positive experiences with others and encouraging them to become involved.

This handbook will help you make a smooth transition into your volunteer job, giving you an overview of the school volunteer program and the variety of opportunities that you may choose to pursue. My hope is that you will find personal satisfaction in what you do.

There has never been a more exciting time to be part of the education experience in Pinellas County Schools. Thank you for joining us.

Sincerely,

J. Howard Hinesley, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Becoming a School Volunteer

Contact the Community Involvement Office at (727) 588-6405, if you are not yet a Pinellas County Schools volunteer. After a short telephone interview, you will be referred to a school. The interview will help us match your talents and interests to a volunteer job that you will enjoy and to a school that can use your services. If you already know in which school you would like to be placed, you may contact the volunteer program liaison at the school.

To help with your placement, consider these questions:

- *Would you like to work directly with students?*
- *What kind of volunteer job would you like to do?*
(See pages 3 - 6 for a description of volunteer jobs)
- *Where would you prefer to work -- elementary, middle or high school or vocational/career/technical school?*
- *What days or hours do you prefer?*
- *How much time do you want to commit to a volunteer job?*
- *What experience do you have that would prepare you for your volunteer job?*
- *What are you looking for in your volunteer experience?*

You do not need a teaching certificate.

You should have:

- A genuine interest in helping students
- A commitment to your volunteer activity
- A cooperative attitude with faculty and staff
- Training as recommended for your volunteer placement
- Training as required for mentors
- Flexibility
- Regular attendance
- Good health

Volunteer Job Descriptions

Volunteers have specific duties assigned to them and work under the supervision of school staff. Below is a listing of available volunteer opportunities at most schools and administrative centers in Pinellas County Schools. Customized school volunteer placements that best utilize your skills can be discussed with the person responsible for the volunteer program at the school. All volunteers must complete a registration form before volunteering.

Instructional Volunteers

Instructional volunteers provide direct services to five or fewer students on a regular basis. Typically, tutors and mentors are in this category.

Tutor

A tutor may work one-on-one with a student, or with small groups of students, who need to reinforce basic skills in an academic subject. Placements are made with students from prekindergarten through high school and with students in vocational/career/technical schools.

Mentor

Mentors typically work one-on-one with a Doorways student or a struggling student. Their major task is to motivate the student to stay focused on school. Through tutoring, setting short-term goals and serving as a role model, volunteers can provide encouragement and friendship to a student needing to build self-esteem. **New mentors are required to attend a free Pinellas County Schools mentor workshop.**

Adult Literacy Tutor

Adult literacy tutors work with adults who are learning basic skills. The one-on-one tutoring program is designed to accommodate the adult learner. Volunteers are assigned to adult centers where students are preparing for their General Education Diploma (GED) exams or learning basic skills.

ESOL - Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages

ESOL- tutors help non-English-speaking students increase their skills in understanding, speaking, reading and writing English. Volunteers do not need to speak the students' native languages.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

(cont.)

Support Service Volunteers

Support Service volunteers provide assistance to school personnel frequently or on a regular basis. Classroom and office/clerical helpers and field trip drivers are in this category. All volunteers attending meetings held at the school such as PTA/PTSA, boosters and SAC are also in this category.

Classroom Assistant

Volunteers work closely with classroom teachers and staff, assisting in various projects, keeping records, preparing instructional materials and interacting with students. Duties in elementary schools may include telling stories, reading with children and preparing bulletin boards. Duties in middle and high schools, and adult education centers, may include working on special projects, operating audiovisual equipment, performing clerical duties, making instructional materials, reviewing homework and assisting with testing.

Office/Clerical Assistant

Clerical assistants help staff members at a school, administrative center or adult/community education center. Duties may include typing, computer entry, copying, bookkeeping, record keeping, telephone and switchboard operator, as well as other office work.

Media Center/Library Assistant

Volunteers in the school library/media center help fill teacher and student requests for services. They may also work at the circulation desk, catalogue and shelve books, use a computer, mend books and operate audiovisual equipment.

Chaperone

Volunteer chaperones have the opportunity to enjoy museums, exhibits, musicals and plays as they accompany students and teachers on field trips. Trips may involve free transportation on a bus and occasionally free admission tickets. Like all other volunteers, field trip drivers and chaperones must be **registered** volunteers.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

(cont.)

Clinic Assistant

Clinic assistants work in the clinic during school hours to assist with basic first aid.

Computer Helpers

Computer helpers share their computer skills and knowledge of various models of computers and software. Volunteers assist students and/or school staff in classrooms or administrative offices.

Activities Volunteers

Activities volunteers lend a hand to support school extracurricular clubs, groups and events. Areas of involvement for activities volunteers include participating in organizations such as PTA/PTSA and booster clubs; serving as volunteer coaches; and assisting with sports, music or drama programs.

Gus A. Stavros Institute - *home to Enterprise Village and Finance Park*

- **Enterprise Village** is the school system's "mini-mall" -- an economic education project for fifth-grade students. Volunteers help students, as they learn about the free enterprise system, through hands-on experiences in one of the mall businesses. Volunteers serve as shop supervisors, owners or consumers, as well as doing tasks such as pricing merchandise, advertising products, serving customers and managing a small business. **Training is required.**

- **Finance Park** is the new hands-on simulation for eighth-grade students which enables them to build foundations for making intelligent, lifelong, personal and financial decisions. Volunteers assist students in developing their budgets and managing their finances, as well as answering questions and assisting in the distribution of materials.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

(cont.)

School Advisory Council Member (SAC)

Schools elect members of the SAC to represent a broad cross section of the school's student population and the area in which the school is located. Volunteers from the community can express an interest in becoming a member of a council. The SAC functions as a resource to the principal, as members work as a team, to accomplish school improvement goals.

Off-Site Volunteering

All volunteer activities take place on the school grounds, during school hours, under general supervision of school personnel. Exceptions can include chaperoned field trips, school sponsored athletic activities, extra-curricular events, and "at-home" volunteer projects such as creating newsletters, phone recruiting of other volunteers or helping classroom teachers. Those who do clerical volunteer work at home, or work out of the school with a club activity, should be registered and keep a written record of their hours of service.

Partnership Programs

Partnerships match community resources to identified needs of the school district or individual schools. Schools, in turn, provide resources to meet identified needs of a particular partner such as a business or community group. Partners often contribute more than money to the program -- they donate time and expertise, send tutors and mentors to volunteer in the classroom, speak to classes about their business or organization and invite students on field trips.

Orientation/Training

Orientation

In the schools: Orientation sessions for new and returning volunteers will be scheduled at individual schools. If you are unable to attend this meeting, a personal orientation may be scheduled at another time. You will receive on-the-job training from your supervisor. In addition, some schools offer training in specific curriculum areas for their volunteers.

In the county: Program-related workshops are scheduled throughout the school year at locations across the county. For more details, ask the volunteer program liaison at your school for a copy of the current workshop schedule.

Training

Effective Mentoring Strategies

The primary task of the volunteer who works one-on-one as a mentor, with a struggling student, is to motivate the student to stay in school. This workshop provides useful information about being a mentor so they are able to better understand the nature of their task. Participants will learn how to be good listeners, help students establish short-term goals, practice communication skills, serve as role models and offer encouragement. **Attendance at this workshop is required for all new mentors.**

Introduction to Elementary Tutor Training

Introduction to Secondary Tutor Training

These workshops prepare parents and volunteers to assist elementary school and secondary school students who need special attention with academic subjects. Participants will be given tips on reinforcing classroom instruction and suggestions on how to help students enjoy learning. The information provided in each workshop has been specifically designed to meet the needs of each age group. This session is worthwhile for anyone who wants to help students do their best in school.

Orientation/Training

(cont.)

Discussion Group Session

Custom designed for experienced tutors and/or mentors.

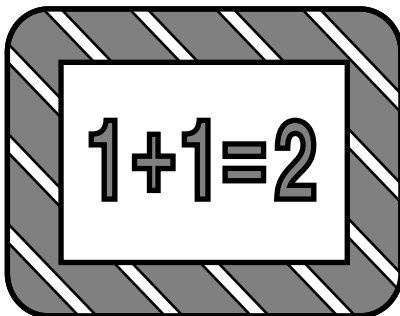
These sessions can be custom designed for schools and their volunteers. Although these sessions are not necessarily structured with handbooks, the discussion group facilitator will provide guided sharing of skill-building opportunities for tutors and mentors.

Elementary Reading Tutor Training

This workshop is for tutors and parents working with students in prekindergarten through fifth grade who need specific work in reading comprehension. This training provides a specific routine including strategies to help students experience reading and understand stories, magazines, newspapers and textbooks. Sometimes students can read words but have difficulty remembering and understanding what they read. Strategies for helping students in this situation are shared.

Secondary Math Awareness

This workshop focuses on strategies that parents and tutors can use to help students succeed in mathematics. Topics to be covered include math content and examples for middle and high school math, the new Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and high school readiness tips. Participants will receive a copy of the *Tutoring in Math Handbook*.



Registration Process

All volunteers are required to officially register as a volunteer and to show an official photo I.D. Completing the registration form, or re-activating a previous registration with the “Volunteers Count!” computerized volunteer registration program, does not guarantee placement; volunteers are placed by administrative approval. Information on the registration form is used to conduct a background check by Campus Police. All information is for program use only and will not be given to any other organization, group or person. Guidelines for confidentiality and volunteer activities are listed throughout this handbook. The Community Involvement Office is responsible for the direction of the volunteer program and its compliance with all laws and policies pertaining to school volunteers.

Social Security Number/Date of Birth/Photo I.D.

Pinellas County Schools has a responsibility to its students, staff and visitors. In this regard, all individuals desiring volunteer assignments in our facilities are asked to provide their social security number and date of birth. An official photo I.D. will be required to verify name and date of birth. Pinellas County Schools reserves the right to refuse volunteer assignments to individuals convicted of offenses pursuant to 112.011, Florida Statutes (1997). The social security number may be used to verify the information provided in the Criminal Arrest section of the Volunteer Registration Form and the Criminal Offense Review form.

On-Campus Identification/Sign-In

Because the students’ safety is the responsibility of the school, always report to the school office before you begin your volunteer activity. Sign-in on the computer and obtain your name badge. Wearing your name badge while in the building and during your volunteer activity will ensure that school staff and students can easily identify you. Signing -in on the computer is very important so school staff can locate you in case of an emergency. In addition, the signing-in and signing-out process verifies your hours of service for which the school receives recognition for the number of volunteer hours accumulated. **Don’t forget to sign out.**

Guidelines for Volunteers

All volunteer activities take place on the school grounds during school hours under general supervision of school personnel. Exceptions can include chaperoned field trips, school sponsored athletic activities, extra curricular events and “at-home” volunteer projects such as creating newsletters or helping classroom teachers.

Nonregistration and Dismissal

Individuals who do not meet appropriate requirements for volunteers working with children, as established by state law and Pinellas County Schools, will not be accepted into the program. If a volunteer does not conform to the guidelines outlined in this handbook, the administrator may suggest alternative actions or assignments. If this option does not meet with success, the administrator has the option to terminate the volunteer’s placement. **Falsification or Omission on the registration form, which is a public document, is a criminal offense that can be prosecuted and may constitute grounds for dismissal.**

Confidentiality

By School Board Policy, you must keep information you learn about students between yourself and your assigned supervisor. A misplaced comment can be devastating to a student, a family and the school volunteer program. If you do have questions or concerns, talk with the person responsible for the volunteer program at the school, or call the supervisor of the Community Involvement Office. Volunteers who consistently breach confidentiality will be dismissed.

Attendance/Punctuality

Reliability is expected because teachers and the school staff plan for volunteer assistance. If you need to be absent, call the school as soon as possible and ask that the teacher, or your supervisor, be told of your impending absence.

Guidelines for Volunteers

(cont.)

Dress Code

Follow school guidelines for student dress code. Dress comfortably, but remember that you are a role model for our students.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Any volunteer who has reason to believe that a child has been subject to abuse or maltreatment must report it. It is recommended that the volunteer report their suspicion to the principal or other school official. The school official will call the Department of Children and Families in the volunteer's presence. Volunteers may call the Children and Families hot line directly; however, the school administration must be informed. The following circumstances should be reported: neglect; malnutrition; sexual abuse; physical injury; mental injury and /or failure to provide sustenance, clothing, shelter or medical attention. Failure to report is a misdemeanor of the second degree and is punishable by law. Persons reporting are guaranteed immunity from any civil or criminal liability.

In cases of suspected institutional abuse (abuse by a Pinellas County School Board employee) the school administration or the Office of Professional Standards (727)588-6472 must be notified. The Department of Children and Families no longer handles institutional abuse complaints.

Student Discipline

As with employees, volunteers should not touch students in an aggressive, disciplinary or sexual nature. It is the teacher's responsibility to discipline the students.

Remember...

It is necessary to approach volunteer work with a sense of commitment, open-mindedness, flexibility, resourcefulness and initiative. By doing so, volunteering will be a rewarding experience.

State Law/County Policy

Volunteers are an integral member of our education team. State law and county policy provide specific restrictions on what volunteers may or may not do and on benefits volunteers may expect from the school system.

Florida Law

6A - 1.70 Teacher aides and volunteers

Standards and procedures shall apply to teacher aides and volunteers as defined in Section 228.041(23), (24), Florida Statutes.

Pinellas County School Board Policy

6.14 School Volunteer Program has a complete legal description of school board policy.

Below are a few details from school board policy:

- Volunteers will work within guidelines established by the school administration and will work under the direction and supervision of teachers and school staff members.
- Volunteers may perform those assignments as directed by the volunteer program liaison and approved by an administrator.
- Volunteers will not have access to student records and grades unless appointed by the principal and after attending a required training.
- Volunteers may not supervise a class during a teacher's absence.
- Volunteers may ride regularly scheduled school buses to reach their assigned school under certain circumstances. The principal must give final approval. Check with the volunteer program liaison at the school for details.
- Volunteers **may not** bring children who are not registered in the school when they tutor, mentor, assist in the classroom, media center, office, cafeteria, clinic or health screenings or when chaperoning field trips.
- Volunteers **may** bring younger children if they are driving on a field trip (but not chaperoning) or attending SAC, PTA and Booster Club meetings **when there is appropriate insurance coverage**.

Tips for Volunteers

Emergencies

In case of emergency, or when you have concerns for student safety, please report immediately to a school official.

If you need help

If you need more instructions in order to perform a task, just ask. Establish a method of communication with the teacher, either written or verbal. If you want to change your assignment, tell the teacher or the volunteer program liaison.

Checklist

Find out about:

- the building layout and parking facilities
- discipline and classroom policies
- what is expected of you as a volunteer
- what to do if you are absent
- how to work with a substitute teacher
- fire drills and safety rules

Enjoy the students

Be yourself! Accept students in terms of their background, values, manners and vocabulary as theirs may be different from yours. By giving of yourself, by sharing time, by caring ... you are making a difference!

Thanks!

Always remember that you are appreciated! Sometimes the staff members get caught up in the tasks of the day and may forget to say "Thanks!" We value the time you give to schools.

Benefits for Registered Volunteers

Insurance

Volunteers registered with the Community Involvement Office are covered by Pinellas County Schools' general liability insurance program. In case of an accident that occurs during your volunteer hours; please notify the person responsible for the volunteer program at the school, the school secretary or the principal immediately. Verification of your participation is another reason that signing-in and signing-out, as requested, is important.

Credit Union

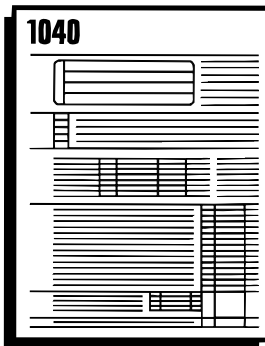
Volunteers are eligible for membership at Pinellas County Teachers Credit Union. As a community credit union, membership is open to anyone who lives or works in Pinellas County. No matter what your age or financial service needs, the credit union has a lot to offer you. You'll find they provide all of the services you're looking for, with great rates and low fees. For more information about membership and services, please call (727) 585-8775 or visit their website at www.pctcu.com.

Tax Deductions

For information about tax deductions, see IRS booklet #526, Charitable Deductions, or call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040.

Barnes & Noble

Tutor/Mentor training cards = a discount on purchases at the bookstore locations in Pinellas County.





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