Volunteers
The HEART Of The COMMUNITY

Volunteer Handbook
“Bridging the Gap between our Community and School”
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Dear Community Volunteer:

On behalf of the staff of Val Verde Unified School District, I would like to express our innermost gratitude to our volunteers who have devoted hours of work and support to the staff and students of VVUSD. Our school sites would not be able to do all that they do without your helping hands and dedication. Volunteers play an essential and valuable role in our district. We take pride to know that staff, parents, students and the community work together to meet the needs of our children and ensure their highest achievement. We also know that as a volunteer, you, too, will be rewarded.

This handbook is intended as a resource to volunteers because we want you to get the most out of your volunteer experience; we want to make sure you are an informed volunteer.

One hour a week, one day a week, one day on a special project – your efforts make a difference for our students. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Christi Barrett

Christi Barrett
Assistant Superintendent
Human Resources
Val Verde Unified School District

- Val Verde unified in 1991
- Total District Employees: 1,730
- Serving Perris and Moreno Valley communities
- Number of Students Served: 18,922
- Consists of 21 School Sites
  - 1 Preschool
  - 12 Elementary Schools
  - 4 Middle Schools
  - 2 High Schools
  - 1 Continuation High School
  - 1 Alternative School/Virtual Academy
- 9% of our student population is enrolled in Special Education programs.
- 6.8% of our student population is identified for GATE program (Gifted and Talented Education)
- National Association of Music Merchants (NAM)
- District API: 806; Riverside County: 781
- Schools over 800 API: 13
- Title 1 Achieving Schools: 12
- CA Distinguish Schools: 5
- Similar Schools Rank: 8, 9, 10
- Graduation Rate: 91.2%
- AP Honor Roll: Advanced Placement District of the Year!
WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS DO?

Volunteers play a very important role in the Val Verde School District. The following is a list of some of the many different tasks performed:

- Bulletin boards and other classroom displays
- Chaperones
- Classroom parents
- Classroom support
- Field trips
- Fundraising
- Library support
- Office support
- Organizing teaching materials; photocopying and stapling
- PTA/PTO events
- School beautification
- Special events

WHAT SHOULD A SCHOOL VOLUNTEER EXPECT?

A school volunteer should expect:

- to feel that the assistance given is worthwhile and contributes to the overall value of the education program;
- to be treated with respect and consideration by all students and staff;
- to be given clear instruction and any training necessary for particular volunteer assignments;
- to be given proper orientation to the school with introductions to key personnel and information provided as to parking, storage or personal items, washroom and coffee/lunch facilities;
- to have an effective mechanism for two-way communication with staff (i.e. discussion time or regular memo exchange for ongoing direction and feedback);
- to be provided with direct support from staff if difficulties arise.
WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A SCHOOL VOLUNTEER?

A school volunteer has the following responsibilities:

1. Remember that the principal has ultimate responsibility for all personnel, policy and programs in his/her school, including volunteers;

2. Follow the policies and procedures of your school (i.e. sign-in procedures, wear appropriate identification badge, local school behavior codes, etc.);

3. Be reliable. Accepting a school volunteer assignment means a regular commitment to be there – promptly and on schedule. Also, notifying the school in advance if you have to be absent; or wish to discontinue your volunteer service.

4. To assist, under the direction of qualified staff, following their instructions closely. Please remember that volunteers are in the school to assist and supplement – not replace the role of paid staff;

5. Volunteers will not have access to student educational records. (All information, including but not limited to, student grades and academic progress in the school is confidential.)

6. Being under the influence of and/or having in possession illegal substances, alcohol or firearms are grounds for immediate dismissal and notification to Police Department will be issued.

7. Volunteers may not administer medication or give medical treatment to students. In case of medical emergency, volunteer is to notify school personnel immediately.

8. Please use only adult designated restrooms; volunteers are expected to clean up after themselves while helping at school sites.

9. Be receptive to, and participate in, orientation, training and meetings, as offered or required.

10. Will not transport students. Please do not put yourself in the position of being alone with any student in any vehicle; volunteers are not allowed to have unsupervised contact with students under any circumstance.

11. Responsible for the safety of their own personal property. We recommend that all valuables be left at home.

12. Volunteers must sustain a clear criminal background. Subsequent Arrest Notification (SAN) will be reviewed by Personnel Administration and may result in denial of application of immediate revocation of volunteer rights for approved volunteers.
GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS

• A school volunteer is there to enrich the educational program and student supervision. A school volunteer is not a teacher or an educational assistant, nor a therapist of a counselor. A school volunteer is not on campus to develop friendships with students.

• Ask questions freely about programs, policies and equipment at a time appropriate for both the staff member and for yourself. Follow the staff person’s established procedures. Talk to the teacher about any difficulties at appropriate times, not in front of students or parents.

• Do not interrupt the teacher during a lesson. Have a prior agreement with the teacher about how you will signal him or her for help.

• Help students to tackle their work but do not do their work for them. If they get off-track, help them get back on track in a tactful manner.

• Speak in a positive way to students – point out the things they have done right, the things they do well. Belittling a person or making comparisons is harmful.

• Remind students of appropriate behavior if they are disruptive or break rules. Show by example a calm, responsible attitude for dealing with problems. Remember though, that corrective discipline is the responsibility of the principal and the teaching staff.

• Show respect for our students who come from many diverse families, cultures and communities; each with its own set of values and beliefs.
CAUTIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS

The District considers its primary responsibility to be the safety and development of children. For this reason, we must do everything possible to prevent people who would prey on children from having access to our schools. Any suspicion of improper or illegal dealing with children will be handled quickly and seriously, with the involvement of law enforcement as required and necessary:

- Do not use your position to promote your own religious, political, economic or social bias.
- Do not use student restrooms.
- Do not drive alone with a child in your vehicle.
- Do not take a child alone to the restroom, an office, a classroom or any other private place on campus.
- If you are directed to work with a student in an empty room, be sure to leave the door open at all times, and to sit at two desks which are easily seen by those passing by. Always work in a public area, on site.
- Do not arrange your area so that certain areas are hidden from view or so that places exist in your classroom in which one person could have unseen access to another.
- Do no socialize with students outside regular school hours and school activities. This includes phone calls, visits, regular mail, or email, or transporting students in personal vehicles without express permission from the school district.
- Some students, especially at the elementary level, will naturally become very attached and affectionate toward you. Many students are craving affection and attention, so it is important that you handle the situation with sensitivity. Unfortunately, a front hug is unacceptable, so carefully put your arm around a child’s shoulder and turn it into a side hug. Use other signs of affection, such as “high fives” and handshakes.
- No volunteer may hold a student in his or her lap. All school personnel must be extremely careful not to touch a child in any way that could be interpreted as inappropriate.
DISCLOSURE OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

In California, it is the legal obligation of all school personnel to report any suspected case of child abuse. If a child indicates to a volunteer that he or she has been, or is, the victim of abuse, or if a volunteer has strong suspicions that a student may be an abuse victim, the volunteer must inform either the supervising teacher or the principal. People in these positions are mandated reporters.

One of the most difficult things to handle may be when the student who asks the person in whom they have confided to “promise not to tell.” A volunteer cannot make such a promise and should be clear about that to the child. Don’t try to “counsel” the child.

Remain merely a sympathetic “listening ear” without being judgmental or trying to offer solutions. Assistance and counseling should come from those professionals with the responsibility and experience to provide it.
HEALTH & SAFETY REGULATIONS

Drug-Free Workplace
The Val Verde Unified School District is a Drug-Free Workplace. Volunteers shall not have consumed alcoholic beverages or taken illegal drugs when working at a school.

Smoking
Smoking is prohibited on all school property. Therefore, volunteers are not allowed to smoke during their time of service.

Health
- Please do not come to school if you are ill. This includes a cold, sore throat or cough.
- Students learn by example, and we ask that you act as a model by using good health habits when you are at school.
- All school staff members are expected to maintain good personal hygiene. Be certain that you are keeping yourself well-groomed and physically approachable by children. They are especially sensitive to and outspoken about bad breath and body odor.

Safety
- Be aware of the school playground regulations.
- Supervise climbing, running and contact activities carefully.
- Certain materials need to be watched closely: scissors, saws, woodworking tools, sand (it can damage eyes), glass items, pointed objects (such as a math compass), cooking utensils and pans.
- Do not allow a student to use a paper cutter or handle hot appliances, utensils or equipment.

Blood
The general public has been made aware of blood-transmitted diseases. If there is blood on a student, immediately inform a staff member.

*Remember to follow all the safety rules of the school in which you are working.*

- If an accident occurs, immediately inform a staff member.
- Never move a child involved in an accident. A member of the school staff will initiate proper procedures for accidents.
TIPS FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS

These tips from successful instructional volunteers will help you become skilled:

- Begin by telling the child something about yourself and your family. Share experiences and ask questions about favorite activities, interests and friends with the exception of those related to your own religious, political, economic or social bias.

- Try to learn the names of students as quickly as possible, including the correct pronunciation, and be sure the student knows your name. Use the child’s name frequently in your conversations.

- Work at the student’s level; sit or stand with him/her. Show your interest and involvement.

- Be clear about what you’ll be doing at each session, whether it’s working on a specific academic skill, learning to play a new game or telling them a story.

- Try not to be late or absent for your sessions, as a child will quickly learn to count on your time together. If you must be absent, let him or her know ahead of time, if possible.

- Listen attentively, be aware of the child’s feelings, provide encouragement and praise frequently.

- If a child makes a mistake, let them know that making mistakes is part of learning. If a child cannot master the skill you are working on, consult the teacher for suggestions on different approaches and materials.

- Finish each session on a positive note. Take a few minutes to tell the child how much you enjoy working with him or her. Point out their accomplishments and let them know you appreciate how hard they are working.
STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

The Val Verde Unified School District has well-defined policies on student behavior and discipline. The Board of Education strives to provide a supportive, caring and orderly school environment that will empower students to develop skills that they will benefit from and assist them achieve their full potential academically, physically and socially.

Good school discipline displays a sense of order prevailing in the classrooms and throughout each campus. The sense of order offers security and comfort for teaching and learning. Discipline should encourage and acknowledge good behavior and model activities which endorse the quest for the best possible learning environment. As a result, school and classroom principles will incorporate policies for cultivating, recognizing and rewarding positive behavior, in addition to outlining the potential consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Conclusively, school discipline is a process that involves several allies in education: namely, the Board of Education, the educators, the parents and guardians, the students and the community. By working together, these partners can create a teaching and learning environment that allows every student to reach his or her potential.
CONFIDENTIALITY

Perhaps one of the utmost challenges in the path of effective use of volunteers is the concern regarding the possible misuse of privileged information. Once anyone begins to work in a school setting, he/she becomes aware to knowledge about children’s behavior patterns, academic ability, emotional maturity, relationships with others, etc. In some cases, information of this nature is conveyed in order for the volunteer to work more effectively with the child. In other cases, it is simply acquired in the course of frequent contact in the school.

Additionally, volunteers are in a position to learn more about school staff first hand as opposed to normally learning from their “public image.” One also develops personal opinions about the professional ability of the individual teachers and principals.

There is nothing wrong with the volunteer having such knowledge and reaching personal conclusions. This knowledge or these opinions, however, should never be shared in the community or with anyone who has no legitimate need to know. Likewise, caution should be used when making comments concerning a volunteer that can be harmful to their character.

If problem develops, the line of communication concerning a situation in the school is always first with the staff member involved and then, if necessary, with the principal.

A volunteer has every right to expect that his or her contribution will be handled with the same confidentiality and respect.
VOLUNTEER INFORMATION/PROCEDURE CHECKLIST

When you first meet with your teacher/supervisor, plan to discuss the following:

- Days and times to work in the classroom/school
- Procedures for volunteer and teacher/supervisor to keep in touch (regular conferences, telephone conversations, notes, informal meetings)
- Alternate plans for days when the teacher/supervisor is absent
- How the teacher/supervisor will tell volunteer of the day’s assignment (folder, note etc.)
- How the students will address the volunteer (school or volunteer’s preference of having students use first name or Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms.)
- Materials, strategies or games to be used
- Classroom/School policies, procedures and rules
- Dates of required and suggested trainings
- Protocol for informing school/teacher/student about volunteer’s absence

And don’t forget the “housekeeping” questions:

- Location of volunteer parking
- Which restrooms to use
- Where to leave personal belongings
- Whether volunteers are invited to use the staff lunchroom and lounge
- Telephone usage rules
The school is available to assist you with any questions, concerns, problems, etc. that you may have; as well as the Human Resources Department.

Thank you for volunteering in the Val Verde Unified School District!