



Volunteer Handbook

Introduction

The School District of Palm Beach County is proud of the level of volunteer involvement in schools throughout the District. The active participation of parents and community members in the classroom enhances the effectiveness of teachers and staff. Volunteers also help the District deliver valuable services to students and schools, thanks to the support of the community.

The Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) program provides an avenue for individuals and organizations to become involved with education in the Palm Beach County School District. The Office of Communications & Engagement organizes volunteer efforts district-wide and serves all schools in the areas of recruitment, program development, training, recognition, and more. What cannot be measured is the intrinsic value of the services volunteers bring to the students. The encouragement, patience, and boost in self-esteem are immeasurable and critically important to students.

Each school's volunteer program reflects individual school needs and strengths. The key to the success of the school-based volunteer program is the leadership of the volunteer coordinator and staff liaison for volunteers. These leaders manage their school's many outstanding volunteer activities and programs.

This Handbook Provides You With:

- District standards and procedures regarding volunteers.
- Strategies for recruiting, training, recognizing, and retaining volunteers.
- Guidelines for individual, school, district, and state awards.
- Suggested orientation outlines for teachers/staff and volunteer trainings.

Program Goals

The Office of Communications & Engagement facilitates community involvement with individuals, businesses, and organizations to provide ongoing support for the mission, goals, and services unique to volunteerism, which are designed to:

- Orient school administrators and coordinators.
- Provide guidance in matters of volunteer program policies.
- Supply schools with items needed to implement and maintain their volunteer program.
- Help ensure a safe school zone for students by providing District policies and procedures for screening volunteers.
- Offer opportunities for interested community members to become directly involved with the educational system and process of the Palm Beach County School District.
- Enrich students' curriculum, broadening their awareness and experiences.
- Reinforce lessons taught in schools.
- Assist school personnel with instructional tasks and duties.
- Enhance all aspects of the educational process.
- Provide individualized educational assistance to students.
- Assist in solving problems that cannot be resolved at the school level.
- Strengthen school/community relations through direct volunteer and business partner participation.

Framework of the Volunteer Program

At the District

Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) provide District-wide support and coordination to the school-based volunteer programs in the Palm Beach County School District. VIPS is responsible for:

- Providing initial orientation and training to school volunteer coordinators at the beginning of the school year and providing assistance and training throughout the year.
- Developing and disseminating volunteer materials.
- Recruiting volunteers from the community.
- Working with school-based coordinators to develop and maintain programs.
- Networking with community involvement programs.
- Sponsoring District-wide recognition events.
- Reinforcing District volunteer policies and guidelines.

At the School

School-based staff liaisons for volunteers and volunteer coordinators are a vital link to successful volunteer programs. In cooperation with the principal, they jointly coordinate and direct their school's program and the many outstanding volunteer activities. Each school structures its volunteer program to meet the needs of the students and teachers at the school.

The Responsibilities of the School Volunteer Program Include:

- Ensuring school volunteer coordinator attends District training and orientation.
- Assessing needs of teachers to determine level of volunteer assistance.
- Recruiting, registering, and coordinating volunteers.
- Arranging for orientation and training of volunteers, front office staff, teachers, and staff.
- Assigning volunteers to specific teachers when requested.
- Providing a resource person for volunteers.
- Monitoring accurate records of volunteer services and hours.
- Coordinating school recognition events for volunteers.
- Making sure front office is a family-friendly environment.

Role of a School Volunteer Coordinator

As a volunteer coordinator, you have one of the key positions in the school volunteer program. The success or failure of the program in your school depends on your skill in helping coordinate the many factors involved in the program.

The duties of the volunteer coordinator will vary greatly from one school to another depending upon the desires and needs of the principals and teachers. Therefore, this handbook is not designed to establish rules and regulations, but rather to offer guidelines and ideas to help you, the volunteer coordinator, organize your own program.

The school volunteer coordinator works under the direction of and in cooperation with the principal, his/her designee, and the assistance of staff and other volunteers. The school coordinator may perform some or all of the following tasks:

- Participate in establishing goals for the volunteer program.
- Recruit volunteers within the community.
- Interview and provide training orientation for volunteers.
- Ensure that all volunteers have been screened through Raptor
- Ensure that all volunteers have completed a volunteer application on the volunteer tracking system.
- Assign volunteers in coordination with principal and designated staff member or community representative.
- Inform volunteers of training opportunities.
- Support and assist in organizational and administrative tasks.
- Arrange reassignment of volunteers to provide compatible work situations or growth opportunity as necessary.
- Work with staff to provide ongoing and formal recognition.

Role of a Principal

Select an Effective Coordinator

A principal who is strongly committed, enthusiastic, and understands the program, is the key to its success. Leadership from the principal gives the program increased credibility and impact with the teachers, students, parents, and the partner. The Volunteer Coordinator, whether a volunteer or an appointed staff member, is an agent who will be acting on your behalf. As principal, you will be held accountable for his or her actions, as well as the actions of any school volunteer on your campus. Therefore, you should be the person to make the selection. Some characteristics to look for in a coordinator are:

- Good public relations skills, since the coordinator will be interacting frequently with your school's community.
- Strong organizational skills to help you assess your school's volunteer needs and to recruit, place, and recognize your volunteers.
- Time commitment - a volunteer coordinator, especially during the first few months, may need at least 10 hours per week to structure your school's program for that school year.

A Coordinator Relies on a Principal to:

- Communicate school needs and goals to the coordinator.
- Provide administrative support for volunteer activities.
- Encourage teachers and staff to support and participate in volunteer programs e.g., faculty orientation scheduled by coordinator.
- Provide guidance in matters of PBCSD policies and procedures.
- Provide space and resources to meet volunteer program objectives (e.g., a voicemail station, a mailbox, District email account, access to VIPS COUNT).
- Communicate with volunteers.

Faculty Responsibility

Unfortunately, the size of a campus may prevent a VIPS Coordinator from conducting individual interviews with everyone who wants to volunteer. Subsequently, the PBCSD staff person who works directly with a volunteer is responsible for overseeing the actions of that person and making sure they complete the registration application. If a faculty member is concerned by a volunteer's actions, the faculty member should immediately report those concerns to the school's principal and/or the VIPS Coordinator.

Setting the Tone

As principal, you will set the tone for your school's volunteer program. Please meet with your VIPS Coordinator to discuss your policies on the following questions:

- Can volunteers bring their toddlers to school when they work?
- Can volunteers work in their own child's classroom?
- Can volunteers use the teachers' lounge? The copier? The lunchroom?
- What are your school's safety procedures for volunteers?
- What is the appropriate attire for a volunteer?

School Needs

What volunteer help does your school need? Please help your VIPS Coordinator assess your school's volunteer needs. This can be accomplished by distributing a survey to your faculty at the very beginning of the school year. VIPS Coordinators are encouraged to recruit volunteers first for classroom assistance.

Sign-in Procedures

All volunteers are required to scan their ID through Raptor in the front office. Please provide a designated computer for volunteers to sign-in to record their hours on the VIPS COUNT Tracking System. This computer can also be used to post any notices for volunteers and visitors.

Faculty Orientation

The VIPS Coordinator is required to conduct a faculty orientation at the beginning of the school year. This orientation session must be completed by October 31 to meet the Golden School Award criteria. The purpose of this meeting is to reacquaint your faculty with the school's policies regarding appropriate use of volunteers, sign-in procedures, identification of a volunteer, and other liability issues.

Dismissal of a Volunteer

If the VIPS Coordinator has a concern about a volunteer, or if a volunteer acts inappropriately and disrupts the academic environment of the school, then the coordinator should inform the principal about the concern. Once the facts about the volunteer's conduct are reviewed, a decision should be made about whether to keep or dismiss the volunteer. Dismissal should be done by the principal or a designated administrator, not the coordinator. Refer to Policy 2.53 for guidance. The Office of Communications & Engagement will be glad to assist you with this process. For security purposes and to help the District maintain its records, please inform the Office of Communications & Engagement of any dismissals, as this will impact the volunteer's application status.

Recruitment of Volunteers

Volunteer recruitment is an ongoing year-round activity. It is a vital process that requires careful planning. A recruitment program can be formulated to meet the total volunteer needs of a school. It can also be designed for special projects occurring at certain times of the year.

Parents are a school's most accessible source of volunteers. Try to reach them through flyers sent home with the students, PTA/PTO, advisory committee meetings, signs posted in the office and around the school, and by having recruitment speeches at back-to-school nights and special school events. Remember that parents who work can also help in some way, such as making or collecting materials for learning centers. Reach the community by speaking at civic, religious, or social organizations in your area, publicizing recruitment or special interest articles in community newspapers, or preparing handouts for libraries, stores, restaurants, or senior citizen centers in the area. Effective recruitment is also done by teachers who have used volunteers and by dedicated volunteers themselves.

Recruitment Methods

Individual Recruiting:

- Peer recruitment: parents recruit parents, teachers recruit teachers, students recruit students, and senior citizens recruit senior citizens.
- Contact with key community leaders and business partners.
- Face-to-face approach at PTA/PTO meetings, school fairs, student councils, school assemblies, service clubs, and religious groups.
- Contact volunteers from last year.

Mass or Public Recruiting:

- Letters to homes, organizations, and civic groups.
- Selected mailing lists, including email lists.

Delegated Recruiting:

- Contact local chapters of civic, religious, and social organizations. Ask them to announce the need for volunteers, distribute information, and possibly appoint a recruitment chairperson.
- Form a recruitment committee in your school to develop resources and techniques.
- Use the faculty and administration of your school. Explore their social and civic contacts.

Where and how to get volunteers:

- Contact volunteers from the previous year, get them recommitted, and have them help secure more volunteers.
- Principal should make an appeal in his/her letter to parents.
- Include a volunteer request form with school packets or give them out at room parent's meetings, at kindergarten round-up, fall open house, preschool, PTA/PTO meetings, etc. This form, stating specific needs at your school for volunteer services and days and times desired, should have a checklist with "boxes," so parents can check capacities in which s/he wishes to serve and can designate days and times available to serve.
- Advertise in your school newsletter and PTA/PTO newsletter.
- Remember that in your community outside of your school, there is great volunteer potential. Contact people in your area – senior citizens, religious groups, service groups, civic organizations, and businesses.
- Place a message on the VIPS COUNT Tracking System to communicate with and recruit volunteers for specific events at your school.
- Recruit at each PTA/PTO meeting.
- If you still need help in recruiting for special events, call the District Volunteer Program Coordinator at 561-738-2780.

Volunteer Orientation

All volunteers are expected to assume responsibility for the health, safety, and welfare of students or to assist a teacher in promoting students' achievement learning. Therefore, volunteers must possess a clear understanding of state and District rules, regulations, and policies relevant to their responsibilities. As such, a volunteer orientation is imperative to your program. At this event(s) your school will give volunteers:

- An overview of the program.
- The guidelines established by the School District of Palm Beach County.
- The procedures for your school.
- A summary of volunteer needs.
- An opportunity to scan their ID through Raptor and to register as a volunteer on the VIPS COUNT Tracking System.

Registration and Refreshments:

Light refreshments are suggested.

Workshop Sign-In – Include the following:

- Name and phone number.
- Email, if available.
- Specify whether they are a parent of a child in the school.
- Provide the name of their child's teacher.
- Veteran volunteer or new volunteer?

Welcome and Introductions:

- Volunteer Coordinator and Staff Liaison.
- Principal.
- Staff.

Role of Volunteers:

- Complete an application on the VIPS COUNT Tracking System.
- Work under direction and supervision of teacher or staff member to whom they are assigned.
- Notify teacher or school if they must be absent.
- Have their government issued ID scanned through the Raptor system every time they volunteer.
- Log in and out of the VIPS COUNT Tracking System when volunteering.

Volunteer Guidelines – In the Classroom:

- Volunteers are only assigned to teachers that have requested assistance.
- Volunteers should not disagree with teachers in front of students.
- Teachers supervise all volunteer activities.
- Volunteers never replace teachers or take responsibility for the class. Students must not be left unattended.
- Volunteers should not be left alone or be unsupervised with students at any time.
- Volunteers should not diagnose a student's strengths or weaknesses, prescribe learning activities, evaluate student progress, discipline students, or issue grades.
- Perform tasks as assigned by teacher or staff member.

Volunteer Guidelines – Working With Students:

- Call each student by his or her name.
- Ask leading questions rather than giving answers to students.
- Realize that a student must feel that it is acceptable to make mistakes.
- Do more listening than talking.
- Be reliable. Your consistent attendance shows students that you are committed to helping them.
- Look for and praise each small success. Don't expect huge leaps in achievement.
- Self-esteem and self-control are basic to learning.
- Information about students is confidential. Information from students that may affect their health and safety must be reported to the teacher or other staff member.

General Volunteer Guidelines:

- Maintain consistent and regular attendance.
- Record attendance for each visit.
- Follow regulations and procedures of school.
- Wear school ID, such as a name tag or VIPS Count printed name tag.
- Discuss school problems with staff members, at appropriate times.
- Call your school if you cannot be present on your regular volunteer day.
- Maintain discretion in commenting on school matters.
- School attire should be neat, clean, and appropriate for school.

A volunteer is a goodwill ambassador for the School District of Palm Beach County.

Registering Volunteers:

- Instruct volunteers to have their government issued ID scanned through the Raptor system and to fill out their application form online using the VIPS Count! Volunteer Tracking System and to sign in and out each time they come to volunteer.
- Talk about volunteer requests made by teachers and ask if anyone is interested in specific jobs.
- Tell all volunteers that they will be called with their volunteer assignments within a specified amount of time.
- Offer a school tour to all new volunteers.

Additional Points For Discussion at the Orientation:

- Location and explanation of fire drill routes.
- School traffic patterns.
- Parking situation and restrictions.
- Absentee procedures for volunteers.
- School calendar.

School Tour:

The school community is especially important if you have volunteers who are new parents to your school, community volunteers, and senior citizen volunteers.

On the School Tour, Point Out the Location of:

- Sign-In procedures.
- Telephones that volunteers can use.
- Media center.
- School clinic or health room.
- Restroom facilities (adult).
- Lounge (if volunteers are permitted to utilize).
- Cafeteria (What is the price of lunch? How do volunteers get lunch if they desire?)

A Special Reminder to Parents:

Parents who volunteer in a school that their children attend are in a special situation. It is at the Principal's discretion to allow parents to assist in their child's classroom. If allowed, it is essential that they hold in confidence any information learned about or from the students in the school. These volunteers must refrain from discussing the capabilities, behavior, attitudes, etc. of students with anyone besides school personnel. They must also be cautious about any remarks they make that their own child may hear.

Parent volunteers should not work directly with their own child or students who are playmates of their child. It is strongly recommended that parents do not work with students who are in the same room as their own children.

Volunteers who work in their children's school must show discretion and tact in conversations about the school and teachers. Volunteers who are in such circumstances may wish to rely heavily on the volunteer office to act as liaison between themselves and school personnel.

Volunteer Training

Training differs from orientation in that it is the process of providing the volunteer with opportunities to acquire specific skills and techniques. The goal of the training program should be the continual development of the volunteer's confidence, skills, knowledge, and motivation to perform the tasks involved in the job.

Training Can Be Divided Into Three Basic Categories:

- Initial orientation – School volunteer coordinator provides training at initial orientation.
- In-service or on-the-job training – Volunteer will be trained by the teacher or staff member to whom the volunteer is assigned.
- On-going training.

Training programs should consider all those involved; volunteers, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel.

Interviewing & Placing Volunteers

Once a volunteer has been recruited, the interviewing process is used to ensure appropriate placement of a volunteer. The volunteer coordinator usually interviews, coordinates, and places the volunteer. The specific tasks which volunteers are needed to do should be outlined before interviewing and placement begins. The coordinator should confer with the school's administrators and teachers in defining the needs for volunteer jobs.

The interviewer collects data on the skills, abilities, talents, interests, and personality of the volunteer. The volunteer finds out about the purposes of the program, the need for his/her help, and the responsibility involved in various jobs within the program. Each volunteer should be selected according to the job to be done and the qualifications required for effective job performance. Place volunteers as quickly as possible and offer choices when available.

Methods For Interviewing and Placing Volunteers:

- By volunteer coordinator – Review applications on VIPS COUNT Tracking System according to job desired (math tutors, etc.)
- By teacher's requests – Information can be gathered from teachers at faculty orientation.
- By volunteers – Allow individuals to request their own assignment.

Placement might be done at an orientation meeting, but is usually done afterwards. The volunteer and teacher then need to be notified of the assignment and starting date.

Guidelines for Volunteers

Your interest and concern for students has motivated you to volunteer in the School District of Palm Beach County. This is a challenging and rewarding role. To make your experience as a school volunteer a beneficial one for both you and the students, please follow these guidelines as you assist in the schools:

- The safety and education of students must be the main concern of volunteers while engaged in school activities.
- Volunteers may not give students medication, food, candy, or any type of snacks unless approved and overseen by the classroom teacher.
- Individual student's grades, records and abilities are personal and confidential information. Students have a right to confidentiality under Florida Statute that covers:
 - Academic work completed.
 - Family background information.
 - Standardized test scores.
 - Attendance records.
 - Health data.
 - Grades.
 - Interest inventory reports.
 - Teacher or counselor rating.
 - Behavior patterns and observations.
- Classroom supervision and student discipline are the responsibilities of the teacher and school. If you see a student misbehaving, notify the teacher in charge.
- Volunteers will be assigned only to staff members that have requested assistance.
- Volunteers should set a good example for students by their manner, appearance, and behavior. Volunteers must adhere to a standard dress code while volunteering during any school sponsored activity.
- Volunteers are required to complete an online application form before volunteering in the school.
- Volunteers are required to scan their government issued ID through the Raptor system and to log in and out on the VIPS COUNT Tracking System every time they are working on a school campus.
- For identification, volunteers are required to wear a volunteer name tag or VIPS COUNT printed name tag when volunteering.

General Tips for the School Volunteer

Volunteering in a school is an experience and a privilege for both the school and the volunteer. It is designed to promote and maintain a supportive relationship for students, teachers, and school staff.

Remember:

- Be honest in your approach and attitude – it will aid in developing trust.
- Be patient when working with students – they are having difficulty with a subject and do not need additional pressure.
- Be flexible in responding to the needs of students.
- Be friendly – with a smile and a thank you, you can accomplish miracles.
- Be respectful – treat individuals in the same manner you wish to be treated.

Suggestions for Developing Volunteer/Teacher Relationships

- Establish a good, solid working relationship with the teacher.
- Discuss the level of the class, if special help is needed for students, times that the teacher needs assistance the most, and areas and goals that the teacher is pursuing. Notify the teacher if you have received any special training.
- Exchange phone numbers and/or email so that contact may be established and used when necessary.
- Come to the class at the time and day prearranged with the teacher. He/she will have changed their work schedule to include you. Also, the student(s) will be relying on your arrival.
- Be warm, friendly, and courteous at all times.
- Never disagree with the teacher in front of the students or let the students play you against each other.
- Keep channels of communication honest and open. If there is a problem, speak about it to the teacher or volunteer coordinator.
- Notify the teacher if you have discovered a serious problem or handicap that may affect the student's work.
- Be willing to receive direction and supervision from the teacher or other members of the school staff.
- Clearly understand the task that has been assigned and work toward a specific goal.
- Complete the assignment as quickly and thoroughly as possible in order to work independently without having every activity assigned.

Teacher Expectations

A good volunteer will display:

- Promptness
- Love of children
- Enthusiasm
- Flexibility
- Dependability
- Patience
- Loyalty
- Businesslike attitude
- Imagination and creativity
- Non-disruptive influence
- Tact
- Sense of humor
- Initiative
- Interest in helping for the benefit of the community

Volunteers Must:

- Be willing to help, ask for directions, follow instructions, take training, try a variety of approaches and techniques with students.
- Be pleasant, friendly, have a warm, positive attitude.
- Dress appropriately for any activity; adhere to school dress code.
- Be sensitive to children's needs.
- Know that the teacher is the authority.
- Be sensitive to teacher's time needs.
- Be trustworthy with confidential matters relating to students.

Hints for Working with Students

- Our names are very important to us because they give us a special identity. Make sure you learn your student's name and pronounce it the way the student wants it pronounced. Learn to spell the name correctly. Make sure your student knows and can pronounce your name.

- Understand your student in terms of his/her own background and values. These may be different from yours.
- Show that you are interested in your student as a person. Listen carefully to what they say. Ask questions about favorite activities, family members, friends, hopes and dreams. By your words and actions, let your student know that you care.
- Be reliable. If you must be absent, call and ask that your student be told that you cannot come that day. Your student may be disappointed, but they will be reassured by the fact that you cared enough to call.
- Build self-confidence. Praise your student honestly and frequently.
- Know and observe school regulations (i.e. fire drills, walking in the right direction, using phones, vending machines).
- Act as a role model for all students through your dress and behavior.
- Communicate regularly with the teacher or staff member you are assisting, either in person or by phone.

What To Do If ...

A Child is Injured:

If a child should receive an injury while under your care, no matter how minor the injury, you should notify the teacher or a staff member immediately.

A Child Becomes Ill:

If a child complains of not feeling well, you should notify the teacher immediately. You should never administer any form of medication to the child.

You Are Injured:

Should you become injured while performing the duties of your job, notify the school office immediately. The office staff will assist you and ask you to fill out the proper accident forms.

You Are Asked to Supervise the Class Alone:

Because you are not a paid School District employee, you are not legally permitted to supervise a class alone. Consequently, if the teacher must leave the room, arrangements should be made to have a paid staff member present.

Someone Asks to See a Child:

If a person who is not a member of the school staff should ask to speak to or take a child, you must direct that individual to the teacher. Under no circumstances should you grant such a request.

Someone Asks You How a Child is Doing:

You must not discuss a student's behavior or academics with others. All information regarding a student is confidential.

Staff and Faculty Orientation

Faculty Orientation

Each year the faculty of your school must participate in an orientation concerning the use of school volunteers. This is a requirement of the Gold and Silver School Awards and the Five Star School Award. The orientation session also provides an opportunity for the staff to become aware of the VIPS coordinator and Office of Community & Engagement's role. Staff training usually occurs during a school faculty meeting. The length of time for this orientation should be determined by you and your principal.

Prior to conducting the faculty orientation, you will want to meet with your school's principal and/or designated assistant administrator to clarify the principal's priorities for the current year's volunteer program. These priorities should work hand-in-hand with the current goals set by the school's administration and School Advisory Committee.

Conducting the Faculty Orientation

The Faculty Orientation session is your chance to create interest and support for your school's volunteer program. This is your opportunity to initiate the momentum that will last throughout the school year. As the Volunteer Coordinator, you are the catalyst for successful school involvement. Schools are encouraged to customize this training component to meet the specific needs of the school's program.

For example, some schools may need to reinforce and remind staff members about policies and procedures (volunteer registration and logging hours, communicating with volunteers, advanced planning for field trips, etc.).

Since a faculty orientation regarding volunteers has different objectives from the school's regular faculty meetings, you will want to select the most important points to include in your orientation. Among topics which have proven to be useful are these:

Policies and Procedures For Volunteers:

- All volunteers must be screened through Raptor and must complete an application in the VIPS COUNT Tracking System.
- Volunteers must be approved prior to going on a field trip.
- School volunteers work only with teachers that have requested their assistance.
- School volunteers DO NOT:
 - a. Diagnose students' weaknesses and strengths.
 - b. Prescribe activities for students.
 - c. Evaluate student progress.
 - d. Discipline students.
- It is recommended that school volunteers do not assist in their own child's classroom unless requested by that teacher, and with the principal's approval.
- All volunteers must attend an orientation session, either school-based or sponsored by Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS)
- Volunteers must not be left alone with children, and always be within view of a teacher or staff member at all times
- All volunteers must log in and out while volunteering to record their hours of volunteer service.

Recruitment:

Solicit the faculty's help with recruitment of volunteers since they are directly involved with parents, students, and the community.

Teacher Responsibilities:

Teachers should have clear descriptions of tasks for volunteers to complete, share mutual expectations with volunteers, and devise a planning folder with instructions for volunteers which will be available each time a volunteer serves. Explain procedures for absences and changes in class schedule, classroom policies and procedures, location of the planning folder, and information needed to work with special students.

Getting to Know the Volunteer:

After establishing the necessary rapport with a volunteer, provide comfortable ways for the volunteer to fit into the classroom family, as well as ways to best utilize the volunteer's special skills and talents.

Recognizing Volunteers:

Since volunteers are a dedicated group and expect to work, school staff members need to respect the time and effort of these individuals. Volunteers genuinely want to help the teacher and students by doing something meaningful.

Student Achievement:

- Review and clarify volunteer job descriptions.
- Discuss the critical importance of teacher communication for effective volunteer placements.
- Highlight teacher/volunteer teams that have seen improvement in student academic performance.
- Ask staff members to share success stories about volunteers.

Safe School Practices:

- Remind teachers about the requirements regarding volunteer registration, logging hours and wearing ID badges while on campus.
- Discuss advance planning and registration requirements for field trip chaperones, drivers, and extracurricular activities volunteers.

Program Management:

- Encourage teachers to request help if they have a concern about a volunteer situation.
- Encourage teachers to recruit volunteers.
- Teach them how to recognize and reward good volunteers.

- Request participation in nominating Outstanding School Volunteers.

Retention of Volunteers

Retention begins very early in the relationship with volunteers. From the first contact to the registration and final placement of the volunteer, follow-up is extremely important. The volunteer will develop an impression of your school based on the follow-up, and that will determine if they will become dedicated to your school and continue service.

What Are the Keys to Retaining Volunteers?

- Provide benefits, incentives, perks, rewards and recognition e.g. letters from students, teachers, and/or principal, certificates, bulletin boards, and sweet treats. Let them know how valued they are.
- Don't overload them with multiple jobs.
- Offer ongoing training.
- Promote deserving volunteers to roles of greater responsibility.
- Provide volunteers with personal workspace.
- Provide volunteers with ongoing supervision.
- Have clear job descriptions.
- Get a volunteer's commitment.
- Offer meaningful work. If a task seems pointless, explain why it's necessary.
- Say "thank you" often.
- Do frequent evaluations.
- Let volunteers know the impact of what they are doing.
- Provide start and end times for jobs.
- Provide an "open door" for discussion of any problems that may arise.
- Train your staff how to work with and support volunteers.
- Plan and prepare for the volunteer's visit.
- Some volunteers are motivated by new challenges, others by relationships. Find out what motivates each volunteer, and provide it as appropriate.
- Place your volunteer in the most suitable role.
- At the end of the school year, conduct exit interviews or evaluations to determine what can be changed to make the next year better.

Volunteers Work With Teachers Who Request Them to:

EXTEND the teacher's teaching time –

- Read stories.
- Assist in labs.
- Answer questions.
- Check student work.
- Create learning centers.
- Tutor in math and reading
- Operate audio-visual equipment.
- Find materials for classroom use.
- Help older students with research.
- Work with non-English speaking students.
- Reinforce skills by providing extra drills.
- Play spelling, phonics, language, and math games.
- Assist child with make-up work and missed tests.

ENRICH the learning environment –

- Dramatize stories.
- Make educational games.
- Assist with art projects.
- Help children choose books.
- Assist with creative writing.
- Record children's stories.
- Type and reproduce class newspapers.

- Record textbooks for students with reading difficulties.

EXPAND the resources of the school –

- Display special collections.
- Explore career opportunities.
- Add expert resources in special classes.
- Give performances or demonstrations in the arts.
- Show pictures and comment on experiences in other cultures.

ENLIST the community as partners with the school –

- Provide a bridge between the school and the community.
- Stimulate greater citizen understanding and support of school programs.
- Create awareness among citizens and taxpayers so that they know about a school's challenges and successes.

Do's & Don'ts of School Volunteers

DO:

- Make volunteers feel welcome.
- Confer often with volunteers.
- Plan the work volunteers are to do before they arrive.
- Be generous in offering praise, encouragement and support, judicious in offering constructive criticism.
- Start simply, then give additional activities as you feel the volunteer is ready for them.
- Plan enjoyable experiences through which volunteers can establish good relationships with children.
- Make sure instructions are clear with adequate time allotted for preparation.
- Supply materials appropriate for lessons.
- Provide guides, keys, or corrected papers for explanation. Be honest and open when discussing problems.
- Treat volunteers as educational team members.
- Give volunteers proper notice of schedule changes.

DON'T:

- Leave volunteers in charge of the class.
- Give volunteers more than they can handle in the allotted time.
- Expect volunteers to do things for which they are not trained or prepared to do.
- Assign duties that belong to the teacher.
- Expect volunteers to be housekeepers.
- Criticize volunteers in front of children
- Expect volunteers to change their schedules without proper notice.
- Speak to volunteers in acronyms (ESOL, SLD, ADHD) without explaining the terminology.

Teachers Need Many Hands

There are many non-teaching jobs in the classroom which can be done effectively by someone other than the teacher. Teachers need many hands and some of these belong to volunteers. Volunteers allow you the time to do the specialized job for which you were trained.

The additional help and encouragement that volunteers offer students can sometimes be the difference between a school's success and failure. Their gift of time and talent supplements, but does not replace, the effectiveness of the professional staff. The willingness of volunteers to help is concrete evidence of the community's encouragement and support of the teacher. It is a demonstration that the community shares the teacher's interest and concern for the education of our children.

Appreciation

Recognition should be an ongoing process; a smile or a word of thanks from you, the teacher, students, etc. Official recognition should take place during April, which is Florida School Volunteer Appreciation Month, or at the end of the academic year. Appreciation functions should be financed by the school, not the coordinator.

Volunteer appreciation:

- Certificates of appreciation are available from the District Volunteer Coordinator, in the Communications & Engagement office, to be filled in at the local school and awarded to each volunteer.
- Each local school volunteer program will want to recognize their own volunteers in some way. You might have a breakfast or luncheon for them at the end of the year, thank them in the school newsletter, or write a personal thank you, as well as giving each of them a Certificate of Appreciation which is available from the Office of Communications & Engagement by request. Certificates will be sent by PONY mail.
- Use every opportunity available to stress the importance of volunteer contributions.

Awards

Golden and Silver School Awards

Each year the Florida Department of Education presents the Golden and Silver School Awards to schools with exemplary school volunteer programs. The Golden School Award is offered to all schools that meet the required criteria. The Silver School Award is only offered to secondary (middle and high) schools.

The Golden and Silver School Awards application forms must be submitted to the Communications & Engagement office by the designated date.

Outstanding Volunteer Award

The Outstanding School Volunteer Award is presented annually to those student, adult, and senior school volunteers who have shown outstanding dedication and commitment to quality education in Florida.

The application form for the Outstanding School Volunteer Award is on our website. The same form is used for nominations in each category: Youth (20 years and under), Adult (21 to 61 years), and Senior (62 years and over).

Outstanding volunteers are selected based on the following criteria:

- Hours of service.
- Years of service.
- Unique type of contribution.
- Commitment to improving student learning.
- Commitment to personal growth and knowledge, including training sessions.
- Dedication to serving as a school volunteer – dependable, confidential, considerate, cooperative.
- Appointed by the School Board or its designee.
- Served within the structure of an organized school volunteer program.

To nominate a candidate:

- Submit nominee applications to the District Volunteer Program Coordinator for Palm Beach County.
- Submit no more than one nomination in each category – youth, adult, and senior.
- Submit an application form for each nominee.
- You may submit additional pages, pictures, news clippings, etc.
- Return completed application form by the designated deadline date.

Golden School Award Criteria

The Florida Department of Education presents the Golden and Silver School Award in an effort to recognize exemplary programs to increase student learning through promoting parent and community involvement. The Golden School Award is presented to those elementary and secondary schools having exemplary volunteer programs that meet the following criteria:

1. A staff training program in which a minimum of 80% of the school staff have participated in training related to school volunteerism during the school year.
2. A school volunteer coordinator is designated to provide leadership for the school volunteer program through recruitment, placement, training, and supervision of all participants.
3. A total number of hours in volunteer service that equals the number of students enrolled in the school. Any volunteer activity that contributes to student improvement may be counted. This can include fundraising.

NOTE: Effective in 2012, there is no longer a limit of eight (8) hours per day for volunteer chaperones of academically related field trips (i.e., bands, plays, museums, Washington, D.C., etc.)

Silver School Award Criteria

The Silver School Award is presented annually to recognize secondary schools with exemplary peer volunteer/tutor programs that meet the following criteria:

1. The sending school must have a school volunteer coordinator who provides coordination of the program, placement of students, orientation/training for the students, evaluation of student/program, and supervision of student volunteers.
2. The receiving school must have a volunteer coordinator who provides coordination of the program, placement of secondary students, orientation/training for the receiving staff, evaluation of student/program, and supervision of student volunteers.
3. Student volunteers and the receiving faculty must both receive orientation and training. Student volunteers must receive continuous supervision.
4. The composite student volunteer hours must equal at least one half the total number of students (FTE count) in the sending school (e.g., 2,000 students = 1,000 volunteer hours.)

Tips for Writing the Outstanding School Volunteer Award Nominations

Writing a good, concise award nomination can be a challenge. Here are some guidelines to help in the development of clear and explicit nominations.

Because of the large number of nominations received for many awards, readers are asked to evaluate the forms. Points are usually assigned to each category on the form. Points are often deducted if the person filling out the form does not follow directions. It is important to give only the information requested and to use the exact space allocated. Do not attach additional pages or information, unless noted on the form. All extra materials will be discarded.

All forms should be easy to read and appear well organized. Always type, rather than print the information requested on the nomination form. Leave clear margins, and never cover every blank space with words. State your thoughts in paragraphs. Never write one giant paragraph if several ideas are expressed. Use the same font type throughout.

Check the eligibility requirements before you prepare the nomination. Most forms will be disqualified immediately if the volunteer being nominated does not meet the requirements. For example, one requirement is that the individual has been volunteering for at least one year. Don't nominate a person who has been volunteering for less than one year. This award is for an individual volunteer. Do not nominate a husband and wife, team, group of volunteers, or a program, institute, or agency.

Provide a clear picture of the volunteer's skills and activities. Be sure to emphasize any unique contribution the volunteer has made. Show relevance by stating how the volunteer's work fits into the "big picture." Explain how the volunteer's work helps accomplish the School District's goals or goals that have been set for the students being assisted.

The nominator must demonstrate the positive outcomes from the volunteer's service. This is your chance to talk about the impact of the volunteer's work with students and teachers, and changes in the attitudes of students or staff. Be sure to include quantitative information; list things such as pre-test versus post-test data, or how a student's attendance rate has improved.

If endorsements are required, give what is requested. Be sure to label each quote so the reader will clearly understand who wrote it. Be sure to have all required signatures on the nomination form. Nominating individual volunteers for awards is an effective way to provide positive feedback for people who share their time and talents with students and teachers. Take the time to do a good job in preparing the form, and you will increase your chances of submitting a winning nomination.

Family & Community Involvement Award

Annually, schools are invited to nominate an outstanding program for family involvement in one of these categories: Elementary (preschool - 5th grade) or Middle/High (6th grade -12th grade). There are many successful programs that involve parents in our District. The Florida Department of Education wants to recognize them and share the information with all Florida school districts. As a result, best practices for family involvement will be able to be duplicated throughout

the state.

This is an opportunity for schools in Palm Beach County to share their successes with others around the state. To be selected, family involvement programs must be innovative, increase parent involvement, and be easily replicated. The nomination should be generated after input from the school's PTA/PTO or parent organization. Entries must reflect a school project that focuses on a specific school-initiated parent/family involvement program or strategy.

Five Star School Award

What is the Purpose of the Five Star School Award?

The Five Star School Award designates and recognizes schools that have total community involvement. The purpose of this award program is to provide schools with an annual self-analysis of their level of community involvement. The requirements are reasonable. Some are tougher than others, but they set high expectations for top achievement.

What is the Incentive for the Five Star School Award?

Schools that receive the Five Star School Award will be designated annually in the fall, reflecting the achievement of the preceding year. It is intended that the celebration of this achievement at the beginning of the traditional school year be a positive way to start the year. It spotlights the commitment and value the school places on community involvement.

The question of incentives is on the mind of many in the state. Recipients of the Five Star School Award will always receive a certificate of designation from the state. Palm Beach County holds the Five Star Reception to honor the school recipients where they are presented with a certificate and a Five Star Flag to display proudly at their school.

VIPS COUNT Volunteer Tracking System

VIPS COUNT is a web-based application that allows volunteers to enroll and submit their hours for volunteering in any Palm Beach County School. All approved volunteers are then allowed to log hours volunteering at their favorite school. These include activities such as PTA/PTO, SAC, chaperoning, mentoring, tutoring, office or classroom assistance and more.

Volunteer coordinators can produce several reports that can pinpoint the areas in which volunteers are serving as well as areas in which they are most needed. The ability to create reports on demand allows the volunteer coordinators to spend less time tracking the volunteer hours performed and more time helping students.

When a volunteer would like to volunteer at more than one school, the volunteer will need to tell their school volunteer coordinator. The school coordinator will then contact the VIPS office in order to link the volunteer to the other school(s). A volunteer can only be registered at a total of six (6) schools. Should the volunteer need to be registered at more than six schools, please contact Stacey Oak, the District Volunteer Program Coordinator at 561-738-2780.

Features:

- User-friendly format.
- Volunteers apply electronically.
- Secures sensitive data.
- Sign in and out electronically.
- Compiles volunteer hours.
- Automates record-keeping tasks.

Fingerprinting and Background Check

On September 1, 2005 the Jessica Lunsford Act (HB1877) went into effect. This law requires all contracted individuals who are permitted access on school grounds when students are present, who will have direct contact with the children or any other students of the school district, or will have access to or control of school funds, to be fingerprinted and undergo a background check.

All volunteers will be required to complete an application online at a school site and will be screened through Raptor by having his/her name searched against the sexual offender/predator database. There is no cost to the volunteer or school to perform this screening.

Generally, volunteers are not fingerprinted. However, if a volunteer had contracted with the District for some other reason unrelated to their duties as a volunteer, they must be fingerprinted to come on campus or have direct contract with students for purposes related to the contract. It is important to note that some contracted volunteers may also be required to be fingerprinted if there is a contractual obligation or stipulation requiring that they be fingerprinted due to the nature of their specific service.

For further information, if needed, please contact the Communications & Engagement office at 561-738-2780.