

Volunteer Handbook

Welcome to the Peoria Unified School District!

Your willingness to share your skills and time is greatly appreciated by teachers and administrative staff within the entire district.

We sincerely believe the involvement of volunteers is a major factor in the success of our students. We need and value talented volunteers who are genuinely concerned with the quality of education of our young people.

Thank you for your interest in being a part of our educational family and sharing our mission and vision with us.

Our Mission:

Empower students to fulfill their potential.

Our Vision:

Every Student, every day, prepared to shape tomorrow.

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Volunteer materials, including Orientation videos, can be found at www.peoriaunified.org in the section called ***I Would Like To...***

All volunteers must provide a Volunteer Application, fill out & sign the Emergency Information / Liability Insurance statement each school year.

When signing a Volunteer Application, a volunteer acknowledges with their signature that they have read the Volunteer Handbook and viewed the Volunteer Orientation video.

Volunteers who are not a parent or legal guardian of a student at the school where they will be volunteering are required to provide 3 personal references on the Volunteer Reference Form.

What Are the Goals of the District's Volunteer Program?

The major goal of the district's volunteer program is to assist schools in providing the best possible education for each student. The services of volunteers are utilized in schools and district offices to accomplish the following objectives:

- to relieve teachers and support personnel of some non-instructional tasks;
- to provide teachers with more time to work with students;
- to enrich the curriculum and children's learning opportunities;
- to provide individual attention to those children who need more one-on-one assistance than the classroom teacher is able to provide;
- to promote a school-home-community partnership for quality education.



Seniors



Community Members



College Students



Parents



Grandparents

Who Can Volunteer?

Everyone who cares about children and education is a potential volunteer. Prior teaching experience is not necessary. Volunteers include seniors, community members, college students, parents and grandparents.

Peoria Unified School Volunteers:

- recognize that well-educated children are our greatest natural resource;
- are dependable;
- have good health and moral character;
- are willing to accept supervision and responsibility;
- understand and appreciate the work of the school staff.

What Kinds of Jobs Do Volunteers Do?



The Peoria Unified School District offers a wide variety of volunteer opportunities. Some jobs provide the volunteer with a chance to work with children while many other jobs are available to those who prefer not to work directly with students.



Classroom Instructional Volunteer. For those who enjoy working directly with individual or small groups of students, volunteers are needed to listen to students read, reinforce basic math, or assist students with written assignments.



Classroom Assistance Volunteer. Classroom volunteers perform tasks such as putting up bulletin boards, correcting papers, preparing materials, photocopying, and other jobs to provide the teacher with more time for planning and teaching students.



Office Clerical Assistant. Clerical assistants work with the school secretary and office staff to provide support and assistance with duties such as sorting mail, photocopying school newsletters and flyers, preparing and distributing classroom supply orders, typing, answering phones, and preparing bulletin boards for the office area.



Special Education Volunteer. Our school system serves many children with special needs. Children with physical, mental or emotional handicaps benefit greatly from the assistance of an extra caring adult. Volunteers are needed to assist students who attend special education classes in neighborhood schools throughout the district. For example, physically handicapped students who are unable to write need volunteers to write for them.



Health Office Assistant. Health office volunteers are not permitted access to student health records. The 1996 HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) requires privacy of student records.

Library or Media Center Volunteer. Assistance to the librarian or media center specialist can be provided by repairing and shelving books, completing clerical tasks or preparing bulletin boards and displays. Volunteers may also choose to work directly with students helping them to locate and use library materials.

Other Assignments. Volunteers also assist with the visual and performing arts programs or technology labs. They serve as art masterpiece docents and program assistants.

How to Get Started

1. Complete a Volunteer Packet

Both parent and non-parent volunteers must complete an Application and Emergency Information and sign the Liability Insurance statement before beginning service. The information provided is especially important in the event of illness or an accident while on campus.

2. Review the Volunteer Handbook

We also want to make certain that you are aware of our volunteer policies and other information included in the handbook.

3. Volunteer References (for non-parents/legal guardians)

Volunteers who are not the parent or legal guardian of a student at the school where they will volunteer must provide 3 personal references, in accordance with our district policy.

4. Volunteer Training

All new volunteers must have a Volunteer Orientation. Many schools provide a training at the beginning of the school year or provide one-on-one training sessions. Schools may schedule periodic updates or additional training as needed to cover site-specific information regarding procedures, copy room guidelines, introductions to key staff, etc. New volunteers, at their convenience, can also view the Orientation video or read the handouts in the 'Join Our Team' Volunteer Information folder on our website, www.peoriaud.k12.az.us.

Volunteer Guidelines

- 1. Your Commitment.** Before you agree to volunteer, carefully consider the commitment you are making. The work volunteers do is important, and the staff and students quickly become dependent upon volunteer assistance. Avoid committing more volunteer time than you are able to fulfill. It is better to start out with a few hours a week and gradually build up to additional hours or days as your schedule allows.
- 2. Dependability.** Please be prompt and consistent! We know there will be times when you will be ill, on vacation, or unable to volunteer for one reason or another. Remember, the teacher and children will be expecting you. So if you fail to show up at your appointed day and time, they are disappointed. Please telephone the school office to let the staff member know in advance if you will be unable to volunteer.

3. **Health.** If you are not feeling well, don't try to keep up your volunteer duties. You'll accomplish more in the long run if you allow yourself time to recuperate.
4. **School rules.** Become familiar with the rules and policies of the school where you will work. It is a good idea to read through the school's handbook. Ask your supervising teacher to explain the use of telephones, eating facilities, fire drills, and emergency procedures. Use reasonable judgment in making decisions when it appears a policy is unclear or lacking. As soon as possible, consult with the supervising teacher for guidance.
5. **Confidentiality.** As you work with the staff and students, confidential information may be shared with you. The problems, abilities, or relationships of students, their parents and the staff should never be discussed with anyone but the classroom teacher. Like teachers, volunteers are bound by a code of ethics to keep confidential matters within the school. The staff and students need to know they can trust you. It is the teacher's responsibility to discuss a child's progress with parents or administrators. Occasionally, a child might confide in you about family matters or personal problems. Keep this confidential, too. If you feel that it is vital for the school to have this information in order to help the student, discuss the child's conversation (in private) with the teacher.
6. **Dress and Behavior.** Take your lead from the professional staff and dress appropriately for the job you are doing. A dress code is outlined for students in the Elementary Student Handbook and we ask you to follow those standards. Be sure your attire is not obscene, vulgar or suggestive and does not promote tobacco, alcohol, drugs, violence, gangs, sex or sexual innuendos. Denims or pants, sleeved tops and closed-toed shoes are acceptable; Short shorts, halters or tank tops, and flip flops sandals are not appropriate. Keep in mind that you are in a position to set an example for students. Your speech and behavior should serve as good models for them to follow.
7. **Parent Volunteers and Preschoolers.** Parent involvement is the reason Peoria Unified School District ranks among the best districts in Arizona. Peoria Unified School District has nearly as many volunteers as the district's 3,700 employees. Parent involvement is encouraged and solicited. Research shows that children's success in school is directly related to their parents' interest and involvement.



However, the district's mandate is to educate children. On occasion, parent volunteers have brought preschoolers to school with them who unintentionally have distracted students from learning and teachers from teaching. If you are a parent volunteer, please arrange with a neighbor or other volunteer to baby-sit. Your services are greatly needed...and very much appreciated.

Is There Anything Volunteers Shouldn't Do?

YES! The professional staff at your school is responsible for everything that goes on in your building including student instruction, safety, and discipline. Volunteers supplement and support the program, but may not participate in the following:

- provide the curriculum or teaching plan;
- discipline students;
- take charge of the classroom for any length of time;
- have access to a student's permanent record including psychological records, grade cards, health histories, etc.
- diagnose student needs or evaluate achievement

Working Effectively with the Staff

Supervision of Volunteers. School volunteers always work under the direct supervision of the professional staff at each school and only with those teachers who have requested the services of the volunteer.

Volunteers are an important part of the educational team and their suggestions and opinions are always welcome. It is the professional staff, however, that is held responsible by law for the decisions that are made regarding the education, safety, and well-being of each student. For this reason, you can understand why the teacher, principal or district volunteer coordinator must dismiss any volunteer whose actions are not in the best interest of the students or school.

Be a good communicator. The staff will welcome your questions and comments. If you do not understand something, always ask. Volunteering should be an enjoyable and rewarding job. If you are unhappy or concerned about something, discuss the situation with the staff.

Routine tasks are important. The staff often relies upon volunteers to do the routine jobs such as copying, preparing learning aids, and organizing materials. Because volunteers are able to assist with these jobs, teachers are free to spend more time working with students or planning for quality instruction.

We all have different ways of doing things. When you have been assigned a task, make certain you know exactly how the teacher wants the job done. Ask for clear directions and, if necessary, ask that the teacher give you samples or demonstrate how tasks are to be completed.

Try something new. The opportunity to learn new skills is one of the benefits of being a school volunteer. However, feel free to decline tasks that make you feel uncomfortable.

When Working with Students

Call students by name at each opportunity. A child's name is very important. Make every effort to pronounce and spell each child's name correctly.



Closely observe the techniques used by the teacher. Try to model the teacher's instructional methods when working with students.

Follow the teacher's lead. Always be consistent with the teacher's rules for classroom behavior. Don't allow children to do things that their teacher doesn't allow. Remember, the teacher is always available and ready to handle discipline problems. Make sure the children with whom you are working do not disturb the rest of the class.



Discipline. Students rarely have behavior problems while working with volunteers. Our schools have detailed discipline plans, and the responsibility for discipline rests with the professional staff. Volunteers may not discipline students. Please make the teacher aware of any discipline problem that arises while you are working with a student.

Reinforce success and good behavior. When children (especially younger students) are behaving well, always let them know how proud you are of them and how much you appreciate their effort. This will encourage them to try even harder. If possible, do not pay attention to a child who shows minor misbehavior problems, but do note things the child is doing well and praise him/her for it. Be ready to praise children for even the smallest successes. You and the teacher can discuss use of rewards.

Accept children as they are. Each child is unique. Some children may be very different from your own children. Be ready to accept these differences in background, values, vocabulary and aspirations.

Be firm with students, but also be warm and friendly. Let each child know that you care about him/her.

Remember, it is okay if you don't know all the answers. You're not expected to. Admit to the children that you do not know the answer or aren't sure what to do. Work the answers out together with students or feel free to ask the teacher for assistance.

Keep students on task. You'll want the children to learn as much as possible during the short time they spend with you. Keep the lesson or activity moving. Try to avoid letting one or more students get you or the group off track for long periods of time by discussing topics that have nothing to do with the lesson.

Supervise students carefully. Under no circumstances should you leave a student or small group of students without supervision. Always be fully aware of what students are doing at all times.

Dismissal of Students. Volunteers may never dismiss a student from school. Children who must leave school early for any reason must receive permission from the school office and sign out before leaving. Volunteers may not walk or drive students to their homes unless the child's parent has notified the school office in advance and given permission for the volunteer to do so.

Your First Few Days



Starting a new job is always exciting and can even be a bit overwhelming. The first days are usually the busiest because there are so many new people to meet and things to learn. As you become familiar with the school and your assignment, you will feel more at ease.

Here are some suggestions:



Set up a time to meet with your supervising teacher. When you meet with your supervising teacher, plan to discuss the topics on the Teacher/Volunteer Conference Checklist in this booklet. If you have any other questions or concerns, add them to the list now so you will not forget to bring them up at the conference.



You may want to take a tour of the building with your supervising teacher so you'll learn your way around and have an opportunity to be introduced to key staff members.



Take time to observe. If you will be working with students, the first day or two in the classroom will probably be spent in observing the teacher and children. You'll become familiar with the teaching style your supervising teacher uses. You will also see what is acceptable behavior for students and what is not, how much freedom is allowed, and what the daily routine is like.

While you are observing, you can also work on various tasks such as correcting papers, filing and preparing learning materials. Feel free to get up from time to time and move among the students as they are working. Do not hesitate to ask individual children what they are doing. Students love to have the opportunity to explain their assignments.

Wear Your Name Badge

By wearing a volunteer name badge, you will be immediately recognized as a person whose specific purpose is helping students and teachers. Without name badges, volunteers are sometimes mistaken for visitors or strangers as they move about campus. Your name badge will enable the staff to recognize you as a registered volunteer and an important part of the school's educational team.

You Represent the School

As a volunteer, you not only serve the needs of the children, you also provide a vital link between the school and the community. Students, their parents and the community will view you as a representative of the school. They will pay close attention to what you say about the staff and the educational programs.

Sometimes the community hears about the negative aspects of education or stories about the few students who misbehave. Because of your volunteer experience, you'll be able to share the many positive things that students and staff are doing. You'll have an opportunity to let the community know what's going on right in their schools! (Remember not to share confidential information.)

Insurance Coverage

Volunteers are covered by the Peoria Unified School District's liability insurance policy while they are on campus working under the direction supervision of the professional staff as long as they are registered at their school and a record of volunteer hours is maintained. For this reason, it's important for you to sign-in and out each time you volunteer. If you have questions about this liability coverage, feel free to call the district volunteer coordinator at (623) 486-6042.

The district does not carry health and accident insurance or Workers' Compensation for volunteers.

Sign-In Procedure

Each volunteer must sign-in and out in the school office or an alternate area designated by the school for this purpose.

For security reasons, and in case of an emergency, it is important for administrators to know who is on campus and why. In addition, the district must have a record showing the days and hours each volunteer works on campus for the purpose of liability insurance coverage. Lastly, a record of each volunteer's hours enables the school to evaluate its volunteer program and recognize volunteers for their contribution of time.

Teacher/Volunteer Conference Checklist

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

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

School Orientation Checklist

- Complete Volunteer Application packet
- Review Volunteer Guidelines
- Attend copy machine training
- Meet office staff and administration
- Learn sign-in procedures
- Coordinate a schedule with school volunteer coordinator



Rewards of Volunteering

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

- be given the opportunity to use your skills and talents;
- gain a better understanding of how children learn;
- have a chance to meet and work with teachers and other volunteers;
- know that the work you are doing directly affects the quality of education for the children of our community;
- have a great chance to learn valuable new skills that maybe useful in future endeavors.



Thank you!

Quick Reference Directory

For quick reference, fill out the following information and keep this handbook in a convenient location. If you will be unable to volunteer at your scheduled time, please call the school secretary and ask her to notify the staff member with whom you work.

School _____

Principal _____

School Secretary _____

School Telephone _____

School Address _____

School Volunteer Coordinator _____

Teacher/Staff _____ Room Number _____