



Suffolk Public Schools

2019-2020

Volunteer Handbook

Suffolk Public Schools
100 N. Main Street
Suffolk, Virginia
(757) 925-6750
www.spsk12.net

Thank you for your interest in volunteering in Suffolk Public Schools! Every day, students and teachers across our school division benefit from the generosity of volunteers who take the time to share their talents with our children. The countless tasks performed by volunteers are vital to the continued operation and success of our schools. Sharing your life experiences, technical know-how, and friendship with a young person can make a huge impact on a student's life and achievement.

Please review this handbook. It will give you an understanding of the volunteer program and procedures you should know prior to volunteering in our schools. On the following pages, you will learn how to sign up to volunteer in Suffolk Public Schools, how to track your volunteer hours, what kinds of volunteer opportunities are available, guidelines and responsibilities, safety procedures, and helpful resources for volunteers.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact your school's volunteer coordinator.

Policies & Procedures

SPS Volunteers are expected to:

- Complete a new Volunteer Application each school year
- Adhere to the Volunteer Confidentiality Policy as discussed in the Volunteer Handbook
- Adhere to the District's sign-in/sign-out procedures
- Wear appropriate attire for service and working with students
- Wear a visible nametag at all times during service
- Maintain communication with their volunteer supervisor
- Adhere to all District policies

Absence and Punctuality

Volunteers are asked to commit to specific times and days, as teachers need to know they can count on you. If you are unable to volunteer on a given day, or if you will arrive late, please contact your site immediately to ensure that student needs are met.

Background Check

All Suffolk Public Schools (SPS) volunteer applicants are required to be screened on the National Sex Offenders and Crimes Against Minors Registry. Once your Volunteer Connect application has been submitted, SPS will perform the needed background checks. Any person who has been convicted and placed on the registry will not be allowed to volunteer in the schools.

Volunteer applicants will receive notice of the final status of the application. No volunteering assignments will be permitted until completion of the background check.

Suffolk Public Schools reserves the right to deny volunteer privileges to individuals and to run updated background checks as necessary.

Cell Phones

Volunteers will follow school policy on personal communication devices. For more information, contact the Principal at the school where you are volunteering.

Children Not Registered at the School

Volunteers may not bring non-registered or non-school-aged children with them on volunteer assignments. The school cannot assure their safety while the volunteer is giving undivided attention to their assigned tasks.

Confidentiality

You are responsible for respecting the confidentiality of all students, staff, and privileged information which you may be exposed to as a volunteer. Our students and their families entrust SPS with important information relating to their personal lives. The nature of this relationship requires maintenance of confidentiality. Your volunteering with SPS assumes an obligation to maintain this confidentiality. It is essential that you not share any information about students, even with your own family, friends, or acquaintances. Because of its seriousness, disclosure of confidential information could lead to dismissal.

What Is Confidentiality?

- ✓ Protection of ALL personally identifiable data, information, and records collected, used or maintained by an agency
- ✓ Confidentiality requirements also apply to discussions about a student and the student's records

What is Personally Identifiable Data?

- ✓ Name of child, parent, or other family member
- ✓ Address of child
- ✓ A personal identification number (student lunch number, student ID number)
- ✓ Personal characteristics or other information to identify child (bus number, hair color, etc.)

Students and Student Records

Teachers and volunteers are bound by a code of ethics to keep confidential matters within the school. Please do not discuss information about a student with anyone other than his/her teacher, principal, or school staff that has a vested interest with the student. No information should be discussed by any volunteer with parents of children in the school.

Students in Suffolk Public Schools have the right to expect that information about them will be kept confidential by all volunteers, student interns, practicum students and student job shadow observers. Additionally, the U.S. Congress has addressed the privacy-related concerns of educators, parents, and students by enacting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (known more commonly as "FERPA" or the "Buckley Amendment"). Among other provisions, FERPA allows the government to withdraw federal funds from any educational institution,

including Suffolk Public Schools, which disseminates a student's education records without his or her parent's consent.

Every student with whom you work has the right to expect that no information about him or her will be repeated to anyone other than authorized school department employees, as designated by the administrators at your school. Even when discussing a student with those who are directly involved in a student's education, such as a teacher, principal, or guidance counselor, you may not share otherwise confidential information with them unless it is relevant to the student's educational growth, safety, or well being.

You may not share information about a student even with others who are genuinely interested in the student's welfare, such as social workers, scout leaders, clergy, or nurses/physicians (a medical emergency, in which confidential information may be necessary for a student's care, is the only exception). Thus, you must refer all such questions to the school employees so authorized and indicated to you, typically the student's teacher or principal.

Parents, friends, or community members may in good faith ask you questions about a student's problems or progress. Again, you must refer all such questions to the authorized school employees. You may not share information about a student even with members of your own family or the student's family.

Before you speak, always remember that violating a student's confidentiality isn't just impolite, it's against the law!

Discipline

Any discipline of students is the responsibility of school staff. Any problems you have with a child's behavior should be reported to those in authority at the school site.

Dress Code

Volunteers are expected to dress in accordance with accepted school/business standards. If you are unsure as to the appropriateness of particular attire, please consult with the site administrator. Dress should be professional or business casual. An administrator has the right to request that a volunteer wear appropriate attire as it relates to school dress.

Liability & Disclosures

By signing your volunteer application (electronically or otherwise) you are acknowledging and agreeing to the following statements.

I affirm that I have not been convicted of any felony, and that there is no pending charge against me for any felony or misdemeanor offense with the exception of traffic offenses.

I hereby give my voluntary consent to a criminal history check. By selecting "I Authorize" in the box below, I empower Suffolk Public Schools to be my designated representative for the purpose of obtaining my criminal history record information maintained by law enforcement agencies.

I understand that certain information obtained as a result of the criminal history check may preclude my participation as a volunteer for Suffolk Public Schools. I also waive any claim for damages or injury against Suffolk Public Schools, the Suffolk City School Board, its officers, employees, assigns and/or representatives or the provider of the report, except as mandated by the Fair Credit Reporting Act. I further understand that Suffolk Public Schools and/or the Suffolk City School Board does not provide liability insurance, personal injury insurance, and/or workers' compensation insurance of any kind whatsoever for persons serving as a School Volunteer, but I do understand that I have the right to obtain any such insurance coverage on my own at my own expense while serving as a volunteer for Suffolk Public Schools. I further agree to hold Suffolk Public Schools and/or the Suffolk City School Board, its officers, employees, assigns and/or representatives harmless for any and all claims, liabilities, damages, lawsuits, and/or causes of action, of any kind, nature and/or description, including attorney fees, for any personal injury, violation of rights, violation of any law, bylaw, ordinance, regulation or decree, and for any damage to property, either real or personal, sustained by me or committed by me against a third party, whether intentional or unintentional, in tort or contract, law or equity, directly or indirectly resulting from my serving as a volunteer for Suffolk Public Schools.

Protecting Our Students

If child abuse and/or neglect is suspected, report your concerns to school staff. If a student talks about harming themselves or others, report the conversation **immediately** to school staff. School staff will help you follow proper procedures established by state law and School Board policies.

School volunteers who witness bullying (teasing, social exclusion, threats, stalking, physical violence, theft, sexual, religious, or racial harassment, public humiliation, destruction of property) must report the incident to a staff member **immediately**.

Volunteers may not have individual contact with students outside of school hours.

Volunteers do not take pictures or videos of students without the appropriate staff permission.

Protecting Our Volunteers

Please stay in sight of school staff when working with students. Make sure you are working in an open, visible area and do not allow yourself to be in a situation where your actions might be misconstrued. Avoid physical contact beyond handshakes and hands on shoulders.

Resignation/Dismissal

If for any reason you decide not to continue volunteering with SPS, please inform your site administrator and those you work with directly. SPS reserves the right to discontinue the volunteer relationship with any individual at any time.

Sign-In / Sign-Out Procedures

All volunteers must sign in at the school office each day that they are volunteering. Once signed in, volunteers will receive a volunteer badge. Volunteers must wear their badge at all times when acting as a volunteer with SPS. Volunteers will also need to sign-out in the school office when they have completed their volunteer time for the day.

Standards of Conduct

You are a role model for students. By volunteering with SPS, you have a responsibility to SPS and to your fellow volunteers to adhere to certain rules of behavior and conduct. The purpose of these rules is not to restrict your rights, but rather to be certain that the learning environment is not compromised. When a person is aware that he or she can fully depend upon others to follow the rules of conduct, then our organization is a better place for everyone. Volunteers should become familiar with the specific rules at the site(s) at which they volunteer.

Generally speaking, we expect each person to act in a mature and responsible manner at all times. Suffolk Public Schools standards of conduct and personnel policies include, but are not limited to:

- Observing safety rules at all times and using common sense in operating any type of equipment
- Treating fellow volunteers, teachers, students, parents, and administrators with respect and kindness
- The maintenance of a drug-free workplace. Employees and volunteers are prohibited from being intoxicated or under the influence of controlled substances while volunteering. Use, possession, or sale of a controlled substance in any quantity while on SPS property (except medications prescribed by a physician which do not impair volunteer performance) will result in immediate dismissal.

- All buildings owned by the Suffolk School Board are designated smoke-free facilities. Smoking in buildings and on grounds of Suffolk Public Schools is prohibited.
- No soliciting or selling of products, services, etc. on SPS property without the prior written approval of the Superintendent or his designee.

Tracking Your Hours

Volunteer hours will be automatically logged in the Raptor Volunteer System when you sign in and out at the front kiosk at the school.

Updating Your Information

When your name, address, phone number or schools change, be sure to log in to Volunteer Connect and update your information.

Volunteer Orientation

Volunteers are required to attend a school volunteer orientation before their first volunteer assignment. If you have not received orientation, notify your site's volunteer coordinator.

Opportunities for Volunteering

There are many ways to volunteer in our schools!

Here are some ways you can help:

- Tutor an individual or a small group of students in an academic subject.
- Mentor a student and motivate him/her to excel.
- Share your special skill, hobby, collection or story to enrich the curriculum.
- Translate and interpret for our families who are non-native English speakers.
- Assist a teacher in the classroom.
- Help with clerical tasks so the teacher can focus on instruction.
- Catalog, shelve, mend or recommend books in a school's library media center.
- Chaperone a class or club field trip.
- Devote your computer or communications skills to school newsletters, web sites, or other publicity.
- Lead the PTA or a Booster Club.
- Sponsor or assist with an extracurricular club.
- Mulch, rake, weed, paint or otherwise beautify a school campus.
- Prepare food for hungry and appreciative students and faculty/staff.
- Ask if there is anything else you can do!

Ways Volunteers Can Help at the Elementary School Level

- Tell stories to children.
- Listen to children read.
- Conduct flash card drills.
- Assist in learning center.
- Provide individual help.
- Set up learning center.
- Help contact parents.
- Reproduce materials.
- Work in clinic or library.
- Check out audio-visual equipment.
- Practice vocabulary with non-English speaking students.
- Make instructional games.
- Play instructional games.
- Play games at recess.
- Assist with visual tests.
- Prepare visual materials.
- Help with book fairs.
- Work with underachievers.
- Help select library books.
- Assist with field trips.
- Make props for plays.
- Set up or run bookstore or book exchange.
- Gather resource materials.
- Help children learn to type.
- Help children with arts and crafts.
- Help with cooking projects.
- Set up experiments.
- Take attendance.
- Escort children to various locations throughout the building.
- Work on perceptual activities.
- Make a list of library resources.
- Prepare teaching materials.
- Discuss careers or hobbies.
- Help young children with walking on a balance beam, jumping rope or skipping.
- Reinforce learning of alphabet.
- Reinforce recognition of numerals.
- Drill recognition of color words.
- Talk to children – be a friend.
- Help children with motor skill problems.
- Play a musical instrument.
- Help students who play instruments.
- Make puppets.
- Dramatize a story.
- Help with handwriting practice.
- Set up grocery store to practice math skills.
- Drill spelling words.
- Tell stories with puppets with flannel board.
- Assist with sing-along.
- Show slides: life in other countries, parts of the US, crafts, games.
- Discuss care and training of pets.
- Demonstrate different artistic abilities.
- Discuss life from the point of view of a person with a handicap and the importance of understanding others.
- Discuss different handicaps.
- Discuss attitudes, feelings and emotions.
- Share ethnic backgrounds and experiences.
- Discuss farm life and farm animals.
- Demonstrate gardening skills.
- Help prepare assembly programs.
- Discuss holidays and special occasions.

Ways Volunteers Can Help at the Secondary School Level

- Volunteers who are native speakers from other countries and people who speak foreign languages fluently can give language students extra practice in conversation or discuss the literature that advanced language students are reading.
- Volunteers can be available in guidance offices to help students find answers to questions about careers, training opportunities and college selections.
- Volunteers can contribute to social studies units. Resource people from the community can speak or be interviewed on topics in which they have experience and expertise.
- Volunteers can help students use library resources for units of study.
- Volunteers can assist teachers in gathering resources for units of study.
- Volunteer nurses may extend the work of the school nurse – for example, they might help teach CPR to health classes.
- Volunteers can assist in science and math laboratories.
- Volunteers can help in vocational classrooms and laboratories, such as printing, auto mechanics, commercial food and sewing, industrial arts, construction trades.
- Volunteers can accompany the school chorus and help build sets for plays.
- Volunteers who are artists and performers can assist and encourage students who aspire to careers in fine arts.
- Volunteers can arrange meaningful field trips into the community.
- Volunteers can share collections, discuss careers, travels, hobbies and other areas of special knowledge.
- Volunteers can sponsor school clubs.
- Volunteers can assist the staffs of student publications, yearbook, literary magazine, newspaper.
- Volunteers can assist teachers in academic subject matter areas.
- Volunteers can assist English teachers as lay readers of student essays and compositions, enabling teachers to give more writing assignments.
- Volunteers can assist special education teachers giving students extra drill and reinforcement of concepts.
- Volunteers can help students who were absent to make up missed work.
- Volunteers can assist non-English speaking students in expanding their vocabularies and improving conversational skills.
- Volunteers can share slides and artifacts from other cultures and countries as well as from different sections of the US.
- Volunteers share their own experiences, such as what it's like to be a handicapped person and how the handicap impacts on relationships and career choices.
- Volunteers can demonstrate a variety of artistic abilities.
- Volunteers from various ethnic backgrounds might share their individual life experiences.
- Volunteers can assist in organizing a college fair.
- Volunteers can assist in organizing a career exploration day or week.

Safety Procedures

Suffolk Public Schools uses a code system across the district for emergencies. You should familiarize yourself with these codes in the event you are at a school when one happens.

EMERGENCY CODES

When we are under normal operating conditions we are in a **CODE GREEN**

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p style="text-align: center;">CODE GREEN</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(This would also be the signal for an ALL CLEAR)</p> <p>If a situation arises that indicates the need, we will move to a CODE YELLOW.</p> |
|  | <p style="text-align: center;">CODE YELLOW</p> <p>Classrooms are locked, no one leaves the room or area, and only designated persons should be in the hall. Hall duty teachers should move to the nearest room and abide by lockdown procedures (This would include having the drug dogs, a severe injury, etc. in the building). Students who are out of the classroom are to go to and enter the nearest classroom. Should the situation deteriorate or be deemed as more severe, we will move to a CODE RED.</p> |
|  | <p style="text-align: center;">CODE RED</p> <p>Classrooms locked, no one leaves the room or area, and students should be moved away from windows and doorways. (This would include having an intruder or irate individual, weapon, etc. in the building)</p> <p>During a CODE YELLOW or a CODE RED all faculty and staff are to keep all students in the rooms, lock the doors, and wait for further information and instructions from the main office. During a CODE RED, teachers should ensure that doors are kept locked/barricaded and all students remain quiet and clear of windows and doorways.</p> |
|  | <p style="text-align: center;">CODE BLUE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Severe Weather Alert</p> <p>A school administrator, over the intercom system or auxiliary notification system, will notify the faculty and staff any time that the status changes. In the event that the intercom is inoperable, a designated team with walkie-talkies will personally notify staff in their assigned area of the building if possible.</p> |
|  | <p style="text-align: center;">CODE ORANGE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bomb Threat Evacuation</p> <p>An announcement will be made to prepare for an evacuation. A second announcement will be made at the appropriate time to proceed with the CODE ORANGE EVACUATION. While evacuated, all students and personnel shall remain at least 300 feet from the building.</p> |

A school administrator, over the intercom system or auxiliary notification system, will notify the faculty and staff any time that the status changes. In the event that the intercom is inoperable, a designated team with walkie-talkies will personally notify staff in their assigned area of the building if possible.

Resources for Volunteers

Best practices when working with Students

- Relax and be yourself.
- Be friendly toward all students
- Be pleasant and interested in the students' activities
- Encourage the student to try and do the activity to the best of his or her ability
- Praise individual students for a job well done.
- Encourage positive behavior by making note of students who are doing things the right way.
- Remember that a student often responds better to suggestions, rather than commands.
- Proceed at the student's own rate of speed.
- Don't do for a student what he or she can do for him or herself.
- Call the student by name at each opportunity.
- Approach a subject in a very specific way. In planning with the student, keep your expectations few, short, and clear.
- Be flexible! Don't be afraid to admit your mistakes, nobody is perfect. Students are delighted with this honesty. It gives them a chance to "teach you" and an opportunity for the two of you to learn together which is important both academically and personally.
- Be patient – remember teachers and students are human. They will have good days as well as bad days, and will not perform at 100% efficiency at all times.

Words of Encouragement

Try using some of these statements when working with students.

- I knew you could do it.
- Excellent!
- You've just about got it.
- Outstanding!
- You did it that time.
- Good for you.
- You're doing fine.
- That's great!
- I'm very proud of you.
- Much better.
- You're learning fast.
- That's better.
- I knew you could do it.
- That's the way.
- Fine!
- You're working hard today.
- That's it!
- You're doing a good job.
- You figured that out fast.
- You're right.
- It's a pleasure to teach you.
- Keep trying.
- You did a lot of work.

What Does the Teacher Expect of the Volunteer?

- Dependability and promptness
- Love of children
- Enthusiasm
- Flexibility
- Patience and loyalty
- Business-like attitude
- Imagination and creativity
- Tact and a non-disruptive influence
- Sense of Humor
- Initiative
- Interest in helping because it benefits the community as a whole
- Discretion and trustworthiness with confidential matters relating to classroom and students
- Willingness to help, ask for directions, follow instructions, participate in training, try a variety of approaches and techniques with students
- Friendly, warm and positive attitude
- Appropriate dress for the activity
- Sensitivity to children's needs
- Capability to maintain firm, but kind discipline when working with small groups of children

What Should the Volunteer Expect of the Teacher?

- Friendly, welcoming attitude
- Appreciation and consideration of their time; Prompt notification of schedule changes
- Patience
- Respect and courtesy
- Sincerity
- Good directions and preparations of volunteers' activity
- Cooperative attitude
- Control of classroom, and good organization
- Willingness to explain school policies and procedures
- Willingness to tell volunteers specific expectations
- Feedback on students' progress and on volunteers' efforts
- Understanding of volunteers' interests, capabilities, and limitations
- Business-like attitude when dealing with volunteer, treating volunteer as a professional assistant
- Willingness to accept volunteers' creative ideas and suggestions

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I signed up to volunteer last school year. Do I need to sign up again?

A: Yes. This year we are using a new system, Raptor Volunteer Management, so everyone will need to complete a new application. Applications will be valid for the current school year only and will expire on June 30 each year.

Q: I have children at multiple schools. Do I need to fill out multiple registration forms?

A: No. These forms certify you as a volunteer across the district. If you plan to volunteer at multiple schools, select which schools on the Volunteer Application.

Q: Will I be contacted to volunteer by other schools?

A: No. District volunteer records help us track involvement numbers and keep students and staff safe. We understand a volunteer commitment comes from the volunteer. You will only be contacted to volunteer at schools where you have expressed an interest in helping.

Q: My teacher knows when I come and everyone at the school knows me. Do I really have to sign in and out at the front desk every time I volunteer?

A: Yes. The sign-in/sign-out process is mandatory and helps us to track volunteer involvement as well as keep our students safe.

Q: How soon can I start volunteering after turning in my registration materials?

A: You may begin volunteering once you have received notice that you have been approved to volunteer. If you know you will be volunteering at some time during the year, completing your application at the beginning of the year can cut out any lag time between registration and approval.

Q: How do I use Volunteer Connect?

A: It's easy! Go to bit.ly/VolunteerSuffolk and complete the Suffolk Public Schools Volunteer Application. After completing the application, take your state issued identification to the school and have it scanned into the Raptor system. That's it! You are all set to volunteer!

Q: Who can I contact with more questions about these policies and procedures?

A: You can visit the SPS Volunteer Connect webpage at www.spsk12.net/community/volunteer-connect for more information and other resources. For further questions, please contact the district volunteer coordinator at (757) 925-6752.

Questions? Concerns? Let us know!

As we move forward with changes to our volunteer program, please feel free to offer your feedback and experiences so we can better prepare materials and procedures for our volunteers. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, contact the SPS Community Relations Officer, Bethanne Bradshaw at (757) 925-6752 or bethannebradshaw@spsk12.net

VOLUNTEERS WANTED! SIGN UP TODAY!

New & Improved Volunteer Connect



WE NEED YOU TO:

- Complete a new application at the beginning of each school year
- Provide your state-issued identification when you check in at the school
- Make sure to stop by the kiosk to check out when you're finished

[HTTP://BIT.LY/VOLUNTEERSUFFOLK](http://bit.ly/volunteersuffolk)