



Mullica Township School District

Volunteer Handbook

Guidelines and expectations for
serving as a volunteer in our district

Andrew Weber, Superintendent



Mullica Township School District

Volunteer Handbook

Thank you for volunteering!

Each person who helps a child learn is someone who makes a difference in that child's life. Schools are safe, nurturing places for students to grow and learn, and the work you do makes that environment even more rich and meaningful.

This handbook is designed as a partnership tool. It includes basic information and tips for working with students. It also includes some very important legal information that all school staff and volunteers must understand and abide by to ensure that students and adults in our schools are safe.

Be sure to say "hi" and introduce yourself when we meet in a school or office; I'd like to thank you personally for your gift of time. You are modeling generosity and demonstrating citizenship for our students –qualities we know are important as they become citizen leaders in their communities.

Sincerely,

Andrew Weber

Superintendent of Schools

Mission Statement

In an effort to prepare students to be college and career ready, the mission of the Mullica Township School District is to celebrate diversity by creating an emotionally and behaviorally safe learning environment where academics and the arts are esteemed.

Expectations and Guidelines for Volunteering

Thank you for your interest in volunteering in our schools! Our district schools depend on volunteers and value their contributions. Your willingness to serve the students and staff of the district is greatly appreciated. This handbook outlines the guidelines and expectations that volunteers must follow to create safe and successful experiences for students, staff and volunteers. All volunteering relationships established through Mullica Township School District must take place with students on the school campus during school hours or at other authorized school activities only.

All volunteers must complete the volunteer application form and background check before volunteering. Volunteers will receive an email from <https://www.sterlingvolunteers.com/> to complete the background check.

You're Part of an Education Team

Volunteers who are committed to helping students be successful are important members of the school team.

Volunteers find opportunities to:

- Enrich the curriculum.
- Enrich student's learning opportunities.
- Provide help for individual students.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful service.
- Relieve teachers of some non-instructional tasks.
- Establish a school and community partnership for quality education.
- Enhance all aspects of the educational process.

Volunteers support the school by:

- Following the direction and suggestions of school staff members.
- Respecting the privacy of teachers and students by not discussing school matters away from the classroom.
- Committing to working in a classroom to support and improve education for all students.
- Seeking help from the teacher when you need additional information or instruction.
- Sharing ideas and constructive comments with the teacher.
- Acknowledging that teachers are responsible for discipline in the classroom.
- Referring to the classroom teacher or an appropriate school staff member for final solution of any student problem which arises, whether of an instructional, medical or operational nature.

Enjoy working with students by:

- Finding ways to establish a good rapport with students.
- Providing help and assistance without doing the work for students.

- Showing a genuine interest in each student.
- Accepting each student and encouraging the best from him or her.
- Using patience and kindness.

Sometimes a volunteer placement may not be suitable for the volunteer, the teacher or the school. If your volunteer placement is not a good match, you may request a different placement if you wish to continue volunteering.

Tips for Sparking Curiosity and Learning

Encouraging students with words and gestures can help them explore and understand. Let them know you hear, accept and respect what they have to say. Encourage them to say more.

Examples of words of encouragement:

- *I can tell that you worked really hard on that!*
- *You are getting so much better each time!*
- *I appreciate what you did.*
- *You did a great job of handling that situation.*
- *I see.*
- *Tell me more.*
- *How about that?*
- *I like the way you are working.*
- *Good thinking. Very creative. How impressive!*
- *Now you've got the hang of it!*
- *That's a great observation.*

Learn the names of the students and use them often. Get a child's attention before speaking to him/her. Communicate at eye level. Try not to interrupt children when they are telling you their stories. We communicate with looks, actions, silence, as well as with words. Remember to think before you speak.

Attitudes

- Be enthusiastic. Your enthusiasm can go a long way toward overcoming obstacles and solving problems.
- Take the initiative. This means going the extra distance to finish a job or assist someone who needs your help.
- Have a sense of humor. A good sense of humor can light up a life and make everyone's job seem easier. Smile!
- Be sincere. Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- Take pride in your work. No matter what your job, you should take pride in the fact that you're doing your best to help others.
- Respect others. Recognize and appreciate the skills and qualities of the people around you.
- Respect the teacher's role.
- Learn from others. Be open to new ideas and suggestions. Be flexible enough to respond to changes in systems, policies and programs.
- Cooperate with others. A spirit of teamwork is essential to getting things done.
- Enjoy the students. Have a positive attitude and patience with students.

“Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us, hovering, averting our eyes, and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted.”

Garrison Keillor

Volunteer Expectations

- Sign in and wear your name tag while volunteering.
- Attire should be neat, clean, comfortable and appropriate for the school setting. Be familiar with the school dress code and follow it.
- Show respect for all staff and students.
- Share concerns regarding students with the school staff only.
- Be prompt and reliable. If you are volunteering, call the school if you are coming in late or will be absent.
- No smoking, vaping, or tobacco allowed, including on athletic fields and in district vehicles.
- No weapons allowed.
- No drugs or alcohol allowed.
- Do not use school equipment for personal purposes.
- Turn your cell phone to vibrate while you are volunteering in the classroom and make personal calls or texts while performing your volunteer duties only in emergency situations.

Confidentiality

- Federal law prohibits school districts from releasing non-directory student information without parent/guardian permission. Disclosing this information is a violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).
- All information concerning students and teachers is strictly confidential and should not be shared with others. Keep ALL student information confidential, including scholastic and health records, test scores and grades, discipline and classroom behavior, and children’s character traits.
- Don’t repeat stories and personal information that children share with you.
- Share concerns with school staff only – not with the child’s parents or others. Only staff members are responsible for parent communications.

Exercising Good Judgment and Guidelines

All interactions with students should be professional and focused on teaching and learning. These guidelines protect both the student and the volunteer.

DO NOT:

- Take a student or students on private outings.
- Initiate social activities with students.
- Have a prolonged verbal exchange with students if you have an impromptu encounter at a

public place.

- Provide childcare for students.
- Ask a student to baby-sit for your family.
- Engage in social networking with students via social networking website to initiate or maintain relationship(s) with any student that is not consistent with appropriate professional behavior and/or boundaries.

Some actions, even without improper motive, are common trouble areas. Do not:

- Ask a single student to come early to set up for a class or activity.
- Give a gift at school to a student.
- Sign a yearbook with too-personal inscriptions or nickname.
- Make a request such as, "Give me a hug," or "Come sit on my lap."
- Touch in a lingering way, such as shoulder or neck massages.
- Touch girls differently than boys.
- Comment on dress or appearance.
- Be alone with a student behind closed doors or other area that is not visible to passersby.
- Spend an overly long time with individual students or groups of students.
- Allow a student to develop a personal interest in you.
- Invite students for social activities outside of school.
- Make sexist or sexual comments or innuendos or jokes with double meaning.

School volunteers and staff must avoid touching students whenever possible. It is the District's expectation that all physical contact between volunteers and students must be professional and appropriate. Praise may be given with a fist bump or high five and it is important to consider the following factors.

Age

- **Grades PreK-3:** It is virtually impossible to avoid all contact with students of this age. However, it is important to use caution and attempt to keep touches to arms, back and shoulders only.
- **Grades 4-8:** Students this age are very self-conscious. The most numerous accusations of improper touching occur with students of this age. Students may view a touch on the shoulder or back as sexual in nature. They are extremely sensitive regarding remarks about clothing and physical appearance. Safeguard students' personal boundaries by not patting knees, putting arms around shoulders, hands or waist.

Physical Contact

- Some individuals and people from some cultures are uncomfortable with touch of any kind. If a student indicates discomfort by word or action, you should avoid physical contact, except in cases where touching is necessary for the student's safety.

Gift Giving

In general, giving gifts to students is not encouraged. If gifts are provided they should be:

- Of nominal value
- Identical for all students in the class
- Approved by the teacher or administrator in charge of the program

Student Photos

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows every public school parent the right to prevent photographs at school being taken of students in that family. School staff and volunteers are obligated to abide by the federal law. Please get permission before taking any student photos.

Volunteers are restricted from taking images for personal use of students at school, school-sponsored events or on field trips. Student images may not be posted on social media, sent via email or distributed using other communication channels. If a volunteer is taking images for school-related use, appropriate district and school procedures must be followed.

Discipline

- Our schools have a discipline plan with clear-cut consequences for negative behavior and rewards for positive behavior. Many teachers add to the school-wide guidelines by making a more specific behavior plan for their classroom. Talk with the teacher about his/her discipline plan.
- Be familiar with school and classroom discipline plans and what role you will play in the plan.
- Only school staff may discipline a student.

Working with the Classroom Teacher

Working in the classroom has tremendous rewards. Classroom volunteers should establish a good working relationship with the classroom teacher to maximize the experience. Several topics should be discussed with the teacher prior to beginning a classroom volunteer experience:

- Days and times the volunteer will work.
- Procedures the volunteer will use to keep in touch, such as email or telephone.
- Alternate plans for days when the teacher is absent and a substitute is in the classroom.
- Procedures to follow if the volunteer will be absent.
- How the teacher will communicate assignments or duties to the volunteer, such as a folder, note, email or other means.
- Where materials and supplies are kept and the location of available workplaces.
- Teacher's classroom policies, procedures and rules, such as management style, discipline issues and where the volunteer can leave personal belongings.
- School procedures for volunteers to follow during fire and earthquake drills, as well as lockdown procedures.

- Special needs and strengths of the student(s) and skills that need to be developed.
- Tips for working with the student(s), such as learning styles and reinforcement techniques.
- Alternate plans if student(s) is/are absent.
- What to do if you have questions while the teacher is teaching (it is important not to interrupt instruction).

Legal Rights and Requirements for Volunteers and Staff

School employees and volunteers help ensure student safety. When everyone is familiar with and abiding by the following legal requirements, the student safety net is stronger. District policies and procedures are in line with state and federal laws that protect students and adults. A summary of key policies are provided below. The complete policy manual is available on our district website at www.mullicschools.com

Child abuse and neglect

- If you are concerned that a student may be the victim of physical or sexual abuse, you must share your concerns with the teacher or building principal.
- If you become aware of possible adult-student, student-adult or student-student misconduct, it is mandatory to report this information.
- If you suspect that a student may be the victim of abuse or neglect, report it immediately to the principal, school counselor or another school district employee.

Preventing harassment, intimidation and bullying

The Mullica Township School District Harassment Policy calls for a commitment to an educational environment that is free from all types of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation.

- Harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) means any intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act including but not limited to one shown to be motivated by race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, including gender expression or identity, mental, sensory, or physical disability or other distinguishing characteristics, when the intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act:
 - physically harms a student or damages the student's property; or
 - has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
 - is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, embarrassing or threatening educational environment; or
 - has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

This can take many forms including but not limited to, slurs, rumors, name-calling, jokes, innuendoes, demeaning comments, drawings, cartoons, pranks, gestures and hazing.

Preventing sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is either an explicit or implicit term of:

- an individual's employment or volunteer service;
- as a basis for decisions affecting a person; or
- has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Preventing all types of harassment

Schools are to be safe, nurturing places for adults and students to learn and to grow. To safeguard that environment, school staff and volunteers are asked to be aware of and to report any activities that threaten the safety or well-being of others.

Examples of other types of prohibited harassment include written or verbal abuse, slurs, jokes, threats, pranks or comments that stereotype individuals because of their race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or other legally protected status.

Reporting

Immediately report harassment, intimidation, bullying, weapons, drugs or other concerns to the teacher, staff member, or building principal. You may also use the **online Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (HIB) Incident Reporting Form**. The form is available at [HIB Report Form](#).

Safety

The district's safety program helps ensure that students, staff, visitors and volunteers are as safe as possible when in schools or in school-related activities off-campus. If you are injured while volunteering, please do the following:

1. Seek immediate first aid help and/or call 911. This might be your own action or the response of other adults or students with you.
2. Report the incident to the school nurse or staff member as soon as possible. Your report should go either to the staff supervising your volunteer time or to a staff member in charge of the school or program where you are volunteering.

You should know:

- We value your volunteer time and experience and the difference you make for students.
- The district does not have specific insurance coverage for volunteers should you be injured while supporting student activities or programs.
- Therefore, before you volunteer, please review your health care policy and/or homeowner's policy to determine what coverage is available if you are injured while volunteering.

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Mullica Township School District

I have read and understand the expectations and confidentiality of being a classroom volunteer outlined in this handbook. I understand that if confidentiality or expectations are violated, I may not be able to continue to offer my time as a classroom volunteer.

By signing this agreement, I am stating that I will not divulge information about any student or family to any person outside the school setting.

Name (print): _____

Signature: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

Child Name: _____

Child's Teacher: _____