

# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



Bellingham  
Public Schools

*a collective commitment*



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# Welcome from Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent

Dear Volunteers,

Thank you for your interest in helping our students, staff, families and schools.

Our district's strategic plan The Bellingham Promise guides our work and emphasizes our community's collective commitment to our children. We believe that all children should be loved and that every child can learn at high levels. Our collective commitment is evident in the number of partnerships we sustain, which includes our dedicated volunteers. One of The Promise's key strategies is student, family and community engagement. We believe authentic partnerships are essential in order to deliver upon our promise. We actively seek input from and work together with all stakeholders to cultivate both existing and new partnerships. Thank you for engaging as a valued partner with Bellingham Public Schools.

We hope that your experience with our students, staff and families is a positive one. Please know that we are very appreciative of your time, patience and generosity.

We strive to fulfill our Promise with your collective support, and as The Promise states, "together we achieve more than alone."

Sincerely,

Greg Baker

## The Bellingham Promise

**Vision:** We, as a community, make a collective commitment to Bellingham's children. We will empower every child to discover and develop a passion, contribute to their community, and achieve a fulfilling and productive life.

**Mission:** We collectively commit that our students are cared for and respected, and that they will graduate from our schools prepared for success in the global community. Each will be exceptional in his or her own way, with strong character, a passion for learning and ready for the widest range of educational and vocational options to support a diversity of life choices.

**Volunteer Vision:** A coordinated means of involvement that will help to raise student achievement, enhance the learning experiences of students and create collaborative partnerships between schools and community members.

# INTRODUCTION and ORIENTATION

The administrative office where you are volunteering will help you gather the following logistical information to insure you are comfortable and knowledgeable about your surroundings.

- Teacher/Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_
  - phone number: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Email address: \_\_\_\_\_
- School office hours: \_\_\_\_\_

Please read the information in this handbook and be sure to understand the policies and procedures of working with our students prior to starting your volunteering.

- I understand my roles and responsibilities as a volunteer.
- I understand the schools' rules for students and adults.
- I understand the schools' fire drills and safety procedures.
- I understand district policies regarding harassment, confidentiality, FERPA and affirmative action.

## VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Bellingham Public Schools (BPS). District schools depend on volunteer and value their contributions. Your willingness to support the growth and development of our students is greatly appreciated. This handbook outlines the guidelines and expectations that volunteers must follow to create a safe and learning experience for students, staff and volunteers.

### **Volunteers are expected to:**

- Have completed BPS volunteer application and be WATCH approved
- Sign in and out of the office and always wear an ID badge while on school grounds
- Wear professional attire-no torn clothing
- Show respect for all students and staff
- Share concerns regarding students with school staff only
- Call the school if you are unable to attend a scheduled volunteer shift
- Leave all personal items including cell phones in a locked and covered area

# **VOLUNTEER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

You are part of an education team.

Volunteers who are committed to helping students be successful are important members of the school team. Volunteers are essential to bringing the outside work to the school. Students need contact with individuals who can share experiences and bring other perspectives into the classroom. They need adults who can guide them through the learning process. Here are some suggestions to help maximize your time and benefit to students while volunteering.

## **Characteristics of Successful Volunteers**

- Demonstrate patience, kindness and a genuine interest in each student
- Find ways to establish a good rapport with students and teachers
- Encourage and support student success
- Accept each student and encourage the best for him/her
- Are fair, consistent, trustworthy and honest in their approach, attitude and interactions with students.

## **Ground Rules for Schools District Facilities**

- No smoking tobacco, marijuana or other substances allowed.
- No weapons allowed
- No drugs or alcohol allowed
- Do not use school equipment for personal purposes

# IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

## **Safe interactions with Students**

The school board expects that all staff and volunteers will strive to set the kind of example for students that will serve them well in their own conduct and behavior and contribute toward a supportive learning atmosphere.

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

### **As a volunteer you will:**

- Meet in public spaces with students within the school setting. Do not meet with students behind closed doors or off campus without prior parent/guardian permission.
- Refrain from initiating social activities outside the school setting unless parent/guardian approved.
- Refrain from initiating any conversations or correspondence of a private or personal nature with students.
- Refrain from engaging in social networking with students via Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, Twitter or other social networking websites without parent/guardian approval.
- Refrain from sharing your personal phone or email information without parent/guardian permission.
- Refrain from giving students gifts unless of nominal value or identical for all students in the class.
- Refrain from giving students inappropriate signs of affection such as front hugs, students sitting on lap, touching or patting on areas other than shoulders, upper back, arms or hands or any other contact that causes a student to feel uncomfortable.

## **Maintain Student Confidentiality**

Volunteers are required by federal law to keep all student information that they obtain while working as a volunteer for the district confidential. Student information includes all academic, medical and personal information. In addition volunteers cannot take photos or share student work without parent/guardian written permission. Disclosure of student information by a volunteer is a violation of the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)** and may subject the volunteer and the district to civil liability.

## **Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect**

As a volunteer, if you suspect that a student may be the victim of abuse or neglect, you are required by law to report it immediately to the teachers, school principal or another school district employee.

# WORKING WITH STUDENTS

## Effective Communication with Students

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. Here are some tips to encourage student learning, encourage them to verbalize their learning and persevere through difficult or challenging problems and projects.

- A student's name is very important. Make sure you can say it correctly.
- LISTEN! Show that you're interested in them by listening to what they have to say.
- We all make mistakes. Assure students this is a part of the learning process.
- Build the student's self-confidence. Give them frequent honest feedback and encouragement.
- Be patient. Give students ample time to complete a problem or understand a new concept or idea.
- Be reliable. Students will be disappointed when you are absent.

It is important for students to learn problem solving skills in relation to their studies as well as real world application. Not giving them enough time to complete a problem or rushing to completion diminishes their own confidence as a learner. Here are some tips to support their learning and promote Questions of Inquiry

- Can you tell me more about that \_\_\_\_\_ (picture, project, story, homework assignment etc)?
- I see that \_\_\_\_\_.
- I don't understand. Could you give me an example?
- Is there another way to \_\_\_\_\_ (explain, read, solve)?

Positive statements greatly influence students' attitudes about themselves and their work. However, "nice job" provides limited encouragement and direction to students. Try to keep comments timely, specific, and descriptive, not evaluative. If the assignment requires further work, offer to assist with clear direction. Here are some comments for providing positive feedback and encouragement to students.

- I can tell you worked really hard on that. Have you considered \_\_\_\_\_?
- That's a great observation.
- I like how focused you are on your work. Do you recall the assignment objective?
- You are improving your calculations with each math problem completed.



# Developmental Characteristics of School-Age Children

## PHYSICAL

## SOCIO-EMOTIONAL

## COGNITIVE

Grades K-1 (5-6 years)		
Enjoys long periods of free play	Eager for adult praise	Interested in present
Developing eye-hand coordination	Eager to engage in new activities	Eager to learn
Enjoys small group cooperative play	Eager to identify with older children	Asks many questions
Improved body coordination	Can be easily frightened by stories	Developing sense of humor
Middle Year Grades 2-3 (7-9 years)		
Enthusiastic about games	Strong drive towards independence	Developing sense of time
High activity level	Strong sense of loyalty to friends	Uses language to express feelings
Improved gross and motor skills	Rigid sense of right and wrong	Increased self-direction
Enjoys games for self-improvement	Friends with same-sex peers	Enjoys problem solving games
Pre-Adolescent Grades 4-6 (10-12 years)		
May be careless with clothes, room and body cleanliness	Enjoy small, peer-dominated group discussions	Can often understand other points of view
Girls may have growth spurts	Are anxious to grow up	Strong interests and hobbies
Enjoy competitive games	Are intensely loyal to peer group	Enjoys rule based games
High activity level	Are self-conscious of their abilities	Understands humor and sarcasm
Early Teens Grades 7-8 (13-14 years)		
May appear awkward due to rapid physical growth	Depend on peer group to determine identity	Can plan ahead and organize tasks with little guidance
Puberty typically begins	Critical of their parents and home	Capable of high level abstract thought
Tend to tire easily	Establishing a personal moral code	Need time for self-reflection
Differ greatly in rate of maturation	Strong desire to assert independence	Develop views around social issues
Teenagers Grades 9-12 <sup>th</sup> (15-18 years)		
Needs increased sleep and exercise	More interest in the opposite sex	Learn more defined work habits
Focus on balanced diet	Develop deeper capacity for caring and sharing	Show more concern about future school and work plans
	Less time with parents, more with peers	Clear understanding of right and wrong
	May experience depression	

Chart adapted from Center for Disease Control/child development

## Teaching kids to resolve conflicts builds confident and empowered youth

Conflict is inevitable among communities, including in schools. It's easy enough for adults to solve kids' conflicts. "Lena, I saw you take Josie's ball. Give it back and say you're sorry." This type of adult intervention doesn't empower students to solve their own conflicts. ***Conflict resolution is a learned***

**skill; it takes practice. Adults can help youth develop this skill.** Try these four conflict resolution techniques to build empowered, confident youth:

**1. Rock Paper Scissors.** Did the four square ball bounce in or out? Who was first in line? Who gets to use the red marker first? These types of conflicts occur countless times in elementary schools. Rather than let small conflicts escalate and take valuable time to solve, teach students to play a simple game of Rock Paper Scissors. Here's how to play:

Counting to three (or while saying "rock paper scissors"), two players bounce their fists in the air. On "three" or "scissors", players pick either rock, paper or scissors—as shown in the image. If both players choose the same object, they go again. Rock crushes scissors; scissors cut paper; paper covers rock. (Note: there is no physical contact necessary to play this game.)

**2. I-Messages.** Children are known to blame others when a problem arises, (i.e. "He did it!") Adults know that it often takes more than one person to start a conflict. Teaching children to recognize emotions, both in themselves and others, helps. Using an I-statement, such as "I feel sad when you don't play with me," allows children to identify their emotion instead of blaming others. Guide children through talking out their conflict with I-messages before discussing possible solutions. In time, children will become better at using I-statements without adult guidance.

**3. Peace Path.** Provide guided steps for students to take when resolving conflicts. Teach these to students and post on a wall or paint them on the playground. The path may have statements to finish, such as "I feel... when..." and "I need...", or things for students to answer, such as "what happened?", "how would you feel?", and "brainstorm a solution."

**4. Conflict Managers.** By identifying and training student leaders to become conflict managers, schools empower youth. Student mediators can be available on and off the playground to help other students. When kids lead by example, other students learn conflict resolution techniques from their peers. Peer mediation may also be more available to students who worry about 'tattling' to adults.

List adapted from PlayWorks blog post: *Four Conflict Resolutions for School Children* by Beth Kimberly, October 21, 2011

## **Effective Communication with Teachers**

Please be respectful of teacher's time when working in the classroom. It is best practice to meet the teacher or direct volunteer supervisor prior to starting your volunteer time. This meet and greet should include specific duties while volunteering, preferred communications systems and exchanging contact information. Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you have specific concerns or questions, ask the teacher when would be a good time to discuss. If it concerns the discipline of a student, don't hesitate to immediately ask for assistance. Be sure to contact the teacher if you cannot come at your scheduled time so alternate plans can be made.

# **SAFETY PROCEDURES**

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.

## **Field Trips and Off- Campus Activities**

It is the general policy of Bellingham Public Schools that all off-campus field trips and activity chaperones be at least 21 years of age. Volunteers who wish to drive students should be at least 25 years old and must have a valid WA State driver's license. Volunteer drivers must also complete the required driving forms and file them with the school office. [\(Include driver form link on website\)](#)

## **Your safety**

If you are injured while volunteering:

- Seek immediate first aide
- Report the incident to a staff member as soon as possible

You should know Bellingham Public Schools does not have specific insurance coverage for volunteers should you be injured while supporting student programs or activities. Please review your health care policy and/or homeowner's policy to determine that coverage is available if you are injured while volunteering.

## **Fire/earthquake drill**

During your orientation please familiarize yourself with the emergency exits. If a fire or earthquake drill takes places during your volunteer time, please follow the teacher's directions to students to safely evacuate the building.

# LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

School employees and volunteers help ensure student safety. The safety net is stronger when everyone is familiar with and abiding by the legal requirements. District policies and procedures are aligned with state and federal laws that protect students and adults.

All volunteers are required to read and understand the following policies and procedures as outlined in the online volunteer application prior to their first day of volunteering: **affirmative action, reporting child abuse and neglect, preventing sexual harassment, intimidation and bullying, non-discrimination, tobacco and drug free and network information.**

District policies and procedures are aligned with state and federal laws that protect students and adults.

## **Volunteer Dismissal and Reassignment**

Volunteering is a privilege, not a right. If at any time you do not adhere to our policies, procedures and/or expectations outlined in this handbook, you may be dismissed or reassigned.

# Appendix A

## TYPES OF VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Please note that the opportunities listed here may not be available in each of our schools.

Level	Job	Description	Commitment
<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Classroom Aide</b>	Support a teacher with a variety of tasks and assignments as needed.	2-5 hours per week as needed
	<b>Lunch/Recess Buddy</b>	Engage student(s) in small groups while in cafeteria. Lead organized activities, help students problem solve and maintain a safe environment at recess.	1-5 hours per week
	<b>Enrichment Instructor</b>	Teach or support enrichment class in arts, sports, chess, music etc. Assist with set-up, keep students on task and clean-up.	1.5-3 hours per week
	<b>Food and Garden Educator</b>	Assists in teaching students about healthy eating and growing nutritional food.	2-5 hours per month
<b>Middle and High</b>	<b>Tutor/Mentor</b>	Provide 1:1 or small group academic support in variety of subject areas. Support goal setting and attainment as related to student's education and life goals.	1-3 hours per week
	<b>Student Intern Host</b>	Invite a student to job shadow and learn your business while gaining invaluable experience in the workplace.	5-10 hours per semester
	<b>Athletic Coach</b>	Teach and coach students the elements of your favorite sport. Be a role model of good sportsmanship.	seasonal
<b>After Hours</b>	<b>Materials Aide</b>	Support classroom teachers by cutting and pasting materials, making copies, creating new bulletin boards and sort and file documents for teachers and office staff.	Based on your availability
	<b>Food Bank Assistant</b>	Supports healthy eating with set-up, food distribution and tear down weekly at Alderwood Elementary.	2 hours per weekly shift

