

Volunteer Handbook



Introduction to Being a Volunteer At Challenger Elementary School



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Definitions of the Volunteer/Visitor	Page 2
Being a Volunteer	Page 3-4
Responsibility of a Volunteer	Page 5
Rights of Volunteer	Page 6
Tips for Volunteers	Page 6
Safety and Liability	Page 7-9
Working with Students of Different Cultures	Page 9
Volunteer Information/Procedure Checklist	Page 10-11

Volunteer

A volunteer is a person authorized by Challenger Elementary to perform volunteer services for the building. All volunteers serve at the discretion of the principal and the school staff without any expressed or implied privileges beyond found in this handbook and may be released from volunteering if so deemed by the principal or designee.

As a volunteer in Challenger, it is important for you to know that we are a large school with various resources and challenges. The children you work with will look different and have different life experiences than you. Many come from single parent or low-income households, and have special educational needs. Many students come from different backgrounds and various cultures.

Visitor

A guest or visitor is a person who with the school site approval assists at Challenger on a non-regular or one-time basis or attends a school sponsored event or activity. A guest or visitor will be required to report their presence at the school main office. All guests and visitors are subject to the policies and procedure set for by the school building and District Office.



Being a Volunteer

Volunteering at Challenger is a unique and exciting experience and a benefit to both the school and the volunteer. It is designed to promote and maintain a supportive relationship between students, their school and their community.

Volunteers should be:

- Friendly and caring.
- Reliable and flexible.
- Understanding and appreciative of the work of the school staff and the volunteer program.

Volunteers should have:

- A professional attitude and an ability to work cooperatively with school staff.
- Interest in working with young people.
- Good moral character.
- Time and willingness to serve.
- An understanding of the important role that education plays in the lives of children and our community.

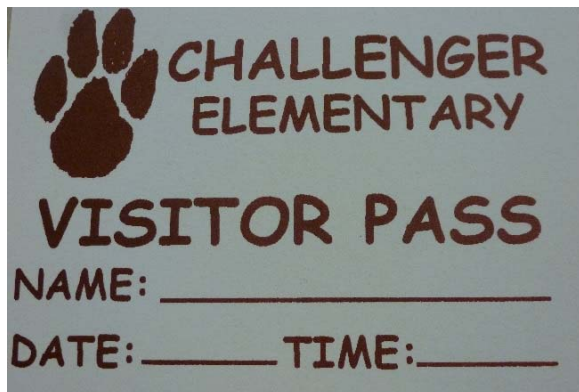
Please keep in mind that volunteering will involve learning new skills and learning about students. The school's role, and therefore the role of the school volunteer, is always to improve academic achievement of our students. We do this in a variety of ways including academic instruction and personal support.



Becoming a Volunteer

To begin volunteering with Challenger Elementary you must:

1. Register with the school. Applications are available from the main office. Update your contact information as it changes.
2. Complete and sign a Disclosure Form authorizing the school to complete a Washington State Criminal History Background Check. A copy of the findings of this check will be provided for you.
3. ALWAYS sign in and out through the school office whenever you come to the school. (This is an important procedure for the safety of our children and it allows us to track your hours for insurance and district information purposes.)
4. Wear a name badge when volunteering.



Responsibilities of Volunteers

1. Understand and accept the students in terms of their own background and values.
2. Support and supplement the instructional program of the classroom teacher. The volunteer's role is assistance, not replacement.
3. Communicate regularly with the teacher, librarian, or school volunteer coordinator via email, telephone or email.
4. Attend recommended or required orientation and training sessions.
5. Be prompt, dependable, and regular in attendance.
6. Know and observe all regulations and procedures in the school (i.e. fire drills, accident reporting, lunch and coffee privileges, pupil restroom and drink privileges, inclement weather procedures)
7. Discuss problems that arise with teacher, librarian, or school volunteer coordinator.
8. Notify the teacher, librarian or school volunteer coordinator if a student confides in them about an abusive situation. Staff will do reporting and follow-up.
9. Leave personal concerns and pressures at home. Leave school problems at school.
10. Respect confidentiality with relationship to the school. Ensure that a child's work and behavior in school are held in confidence.
11. Remember that you are acting as a role model for children, not only in how you interact with others at school, but who you are as a person.



Rights of Volunteers



Volunteers have the right to:

1. Know as much about the school as possible, including its policies, its people and its programs.
2. Sound guidance and direction by someone who is experienced, informed, patient, thoughtful and has the time to invest in giving guidance.
3. A variety of experiences, through transfer of one activity to another, and through special project assignments.
4. Recognition through day-by-day expression of appreciation, or some tangible evidence by being treated as a co-worker.

Tips for Volunteers



1. Be patient when working with students. Give yourself time to find your niche.
2. Names are important. Make sure you say the student's name the way the student wants it to be said. Learn to spell it correctly. Make sure the student knows your name and can pronounce it correctly.
3. Treat individuals with respect and courtesy and expect the same in return.
4. Show that you are interested in the student as a person by listening carefully to what they say and showing you care by words and action.
5. Encourage and support student successes. Build self-confidence by praising them honestly and frequently. Remember attentiveness and effort can be as important as performance. Accentuate the positive and minimize the negative.
6. Avoid making comparisons between students, between teachers and between schools.
7. Always remember to be fair and consistent.
8. Students make mistakes. Let them know that making mistakes is part of learning. Don't be afraid of making mistakes yourself.

9. Be trustworthy and honest in your approach and attitude. Students will trust and respect you when you are “real”.
10. If you cannot make your assigned day, call the school and let them know so we can let the individual who you help know.



Safety and Liability Issues

Where should I work with a student?

Locations will vary, depending upon availability and the preferences of the student's teacher. Challenger is very crowded, so you may end up working with the student in the hallway. Try to find a quiet space with as few distractions as possible.

Sometimes a teacher will direct you to an empty classroom. Be sure to leave the door open at all times, and to sit in two desks which are easily seen by those passing by. Always work in a public area, on site.

What are my confidentiality rights?

As the relationship with a student progresses, he/she will begin to trust you and may start to confide in you. You should take time to listen and show them that you care about them. However, do not make a promise you cannot keep. If a student reveal information relating to a possible abusive situation, let the student know that you care and are there to listen but that you are required to pass this information on to a teacher, counselor, or principal who can offer them help. There is also a chance that someone may already have insight into the situation, which could help you to understand and work better with that student.

Personal information about yourself should be shared only as it is relevant to the work you are doing with the student. Avoid giving personal contact information such as your address, phone, and email.

Can I hug my student?

Some students, especially at the elementary level, will naturally become attached and show affection. Students may crave affection and attention, so it is important that you handle the situation with sensitivity. A front hug is inappropriate and should be avoided. So carefully put your arm around a child's shoulder and turn it into a side hug. Use other signs of affection, such "high fives", and remember the appropriate places to touch students. In addition, regardless of age, students should never sit on your lap.



What are some safer touch areas?

Areas that are safest to touch are:

- Shoulders
- Upper Back
- Arms
- Hands

Remember to keep in mind the cultural perspective and personal context of touch from the student's perspective. Cultural influences, beliefs and personal history affects a student's comfort level regarding personal boundaries. Some children are not inviting of touch and may want more personal space: respect their wishes. In general, touch all students in a consistent manner.

*Special circumstances will arise where touch that exceeds these guidelines will be necessary. Special education may require additional student contact for the health and hygiene needs of the student. Be clear (to yourself and the student) about when, where, and why and how you are touching the student.



What is the purpose of these rules?

The Mukilteo School District and Challenger Elementary wants you, as volunteers, to carry out your responsibilities in a caring and appropriate manner. We want you to feel comfortable about hugging and touching kids and we want you to feel safe and to have guidelines that will assist you in creating and maintaining a safer environment for you and the students you work with.



Working with Students of Different Cultures

Students in Challenger Elementary School come from many different families, cultures, and communities - each with its own set of values and beliefs. Our own culture, beliefs, values and behaviors seem naturally a part of who we are that it is often difficult to understand others with different traditions.

Because of the many different ethnic groups represented in Challenger Elementary, children speak many different languages and have many different beliefs and customs. Children from those cultures must learn to acculturate - that is, live in both cultures. Each individual must honor the beliefs and habits of their own culture, while learning to respond to the beliefs and habits of the school culture.

Cultural differences may affect a student's background knowledge, learning style, behavior, and social skills. Specifically, you may experience cultural differences with regards to:

- varying learning styles
- eye contact
- sense of time
- effective discipline

student motivation

personal space and appropriate touch

Understanding the students' cultures and helping them to understand the school culture will increase your ability to help them learn.

Volunteer Information/Procedure Checklist

When you first meet with your teacher/supervisor, plan to discuss the following:

- Days and times to work in classroom/school.
- Procedures for volunteer and teacher/supervisor to keep in touch (regular conferences, telephone conversations, notes, informal meetings).
- Alternate plans for days when the teacher/supervisor is absent.
- How the teacher/supervisor will tell volunteer of the day's assignment (folder, note or other means).
- How the students will address the volunteer (school or volunteer's preference of having students use first name or Mr. /Ms. /Mrs.).
- Materials, strategies or games to be used.
- Teacher/supervisor's classroom/school policies, procedures and rules (such as management system, reinforcement techniques, organizational plans, emergency procedures, where volunteer leaves personal belongings, and whether volunteer is welcome in teachers' lounge and lunchroom).
- Dates of required and suggested trainings.
- Protocol for informing school/teacher/student about volunteer absence.

If you work on academic areas with students, you should also discuss:

- Pertinent background information about the student(s) the volunteer will work with (within the appropriate standards of student information confidentiality).
- Special strengths of the student(s).
- Special needs of the student(s).

- Tips for working with specific students (learning style and reinforcement techniques).
- Procedures for taking student(s) out of classroom for individual work.
- Designation of work area location.
- Alternate plan if student is absent.