

STAUNTON CITY SCHOOLS



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE:
ONE CHILD AT A TIME**

Volunteers in Staunton City Schools
Adopted 2015

This Volunteer Handbook has been written and reviewed collaboratively by Staunton City Schools' stakeholders. Consultation is appreciated and credit given to Fairfax County Public Schools (Mary Shepherd, Specialist Family and School Partnerships), Albemarle County Public Schools (Gloria Rockhold, Office of Community Engagement), Mountain Home Public Schools, Rolla Public Schools, Oselola County Public Schools, and Orange County Public Schools (Virginia).

Staunton City Schools' Beliefs

Diversity

- We believe that diversity of racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds represents a strength of the community and the school division will be intentional and proactive to take advantage of this strength.
- We believe that vigorous efforts are to be pursued that promotes a workforce within the school division that reflects the diversity of the student population.
- We believe that the school division will be an active participant in community-wide efforts to promote diversity as an asset within the community.

Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum and Instruction

- We believe that all children should be ready to learn upon entry into the school division.
- We believe the school division will commit to both strategic and tactical policies that enhance readiness to learn (birth to age four as resources permit).
- We support on-going commitments that emphasize K-grade 3 core academic skill development, to ensure the best foundation possible for all future learning.

Respect and Discipline

- We believe that respect and discipline are hallmarks of and standards for excellence.
- We believe that interpersonal respect and personal self-discipline are essential elements of an exceptional school division. This school division is committed to creating and maintaining an environment where all employees model respectful and disciplined behavior.
- We believe that expectations exist for all students, faculty and employees to exhibit behavior that demonstrates personal responsibility as well as respect for self, for others and for the community.
- We believe the school division must provide well trained and skilled graduates who are capable of filling high quality jobs within the community.

Family and Community Involvement

- We believe that active community involvement in schools is critical to success of our students.
- We believe that opportunities will be pursued that considers the needs of the larger community in formulating plans, policies, and programs.
- We believe the school division must continue its discussions with the city government to emphasize the importance of excellent schools in any future economic development of the city.

Volunteer Program Goals

Volunteering in any of the Staunton City Schools (SCS) is a unique and exciting experience and a benefit to both the school and the volunteer. Volunteering is designed to promote and maintain a supportive relationship between students, schools and their community. Volunteers who are committed to helping students be successful are important partners in academic achievement.

The goals of the Staunton City Schools' Volunteer Program are to:

- Provide students with individual assistance and attention.
- Support the educational process.
- Enrich student's curriculum and broadening their awareness of and experiences with those who share different backgrounds, resources and talents.
- Help school personnel with instructional tasks and duties.
- Provide opportunities for school employees, parents and community members to share knowledge, talents, and resources with our students.

This handbook outlines what is required of you as a Staunton City School volunteer, and will give you an overview of the various opportunities, policies, and procedures that schools and volunteers must follow in order to maintain a safe and caring learning environment for our students. Your personal interest and desire to help is welcomed and appreciated. Our youth are our most important community resource, and their education will form the foundation of the future.

Should you have any additional questions or need information, please contact the volunteer coordinator at your school or Staunton City Schools' Human Resources Department at 332-2920.

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Serving as a Volunteer

Overview

The Staunton City School Board recognizes that the greatest resources of the school division is to be found in the patrons of the community who have special knowledge and particular talents to contribute to the school programs. The School Board, therefore, encourages the use of community resources and citizens to assist in furthering the educational program. The superintendent or designee will create appropriate procedures for attracting, screening and training community and parent volunteers.

Selection and recruitment of volunteers are completed through the volunteer coordinator at each respective school. Interested individuals should contact their volunteer coordinator. The volunteer's interests and abilities are considered when making assignments. For volunteer athletic coaches, please contact the Activities Director at Robert E. Lee High School. Staunton City Schools will conduct screenings and possibly criminal background checks before any volunteer is placed.

Staunton City Schools may decline the services of any volunteer for any legal reason. All information collected on volunteers will be considered confidential to the extent allowed by law and will only be used to protect the students or minimize disruption to the educational environment.

Once the selection process has been concluded, orientation and training are provided. Orientation and training will include instruction on the confidentiality provisions of the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) and all volunteers who have access to personally identifiable information regarding students will be required to sign a form indicating their willingness to comply with the provisions of that law prior to being permitted to volunteer.

Volunteers are bound by the same code of ethics and all applicable laws as the professional and support staff. Volunteers will not be discriminated against in relation to age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex or marital status. Staunton City Schools is prohibited from discriminatory practices by Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1984, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 and various other state laws and regulations. School liability insurance shall include coverage for authorized volunteers.

Although volunteers will provide support services, they are not substitutes for the professional building staff. Volunteers will work under the direction and supervision of division staff.

General Guidelines

Becoming a volunteer in the schools means you have a special obligation to maintain the confidentiality of all information you see, hear or collect on behalf of Staunton City Schools. This obligation to confidentiality covers all information pertaining to a student or staff member including but not limited to grades, disciplinary/medical issues, and personal demographic information. Here are some guidelines regarding confidentiality:

- Treat all student's information as personal and confidential.
- Share relevant information about students only with the respective volunteer coordinator, classroom teacher or building principal.
- Seek clarification of unusual situations that may occur in the school from the person(s) involved or the building principal and avoid discussing such matters with non-school personnel.
- Respect the customs and courtesies of each school and retain a sense of perspective regarding the comments you hear and the actions you observe.
- Respect the right to privacy of all students, parents, guardians, and school personnel by not releasing or permitting access to any and all personal information.

Volunteer Behavior and Dress

- Please dress appropriately for the school setting and assignment.
- Tobacco products including E-cigarettes are not permitted on school grounds.
- All adults shall use appropriate language with students and other adults.
- Show you are interested in the students by listening carefully to what they have to say.
- If you are working in a classroom setting, try to learn the names of the students.
- While we hope you will establish new friendships from your involvement in the volunteer program, remember that you are here to do specific tasks.
- Please remember that the school office is a place where the business of the school is conducted and it is important not to use it as a place to socialize. Please do not use the school as social time.
- Please avoid stepping outside your role as a volunteer and guessing at causes of behaviors or learning problems that you see in students. Take any of your concerns to the teacher of that student or volunteer coordinator.
- Please do not bring children to school with you while you are volunteering.

- Do not use the student bathrooms. Adult bathrooms are available.
- No volunteer should be left alone with a student or students.
- Volunteers shall NOT dispense medication of any kind to students. All medication needs should be routed through the school nurse.
- Volunteers shall not transport students unless they have written permission.

Definition of a Volunteer

A **Volunteer** is defined as a division/non-division person who provides a service to the school division without financial compensation, has an ongoing relationship with school employees, often participates in activities as supervisors or helpers to students unrelated to them, and may be involved with activities at multiple schools. Volunteers serve under the guidance and direction of school employees. “Volunteer” activities may include a classroom volunteer, volunteer athletic coach, field trip chaperone, or extracurricular club sponsor. “Volunteer” activities do not include individuals serving at one-time, large-scale school events such as dances, proms, graduation parties and science fairs.

(Adapted from Fairfax County Public Schools: Volunteer Program Guide)

Examples of Volunteer Positions

Clerical Volunteers

- Type and duplicate materials for teachers.
- File and conduct inventory of materials.
- Assist in typing and publishing students’ writing.
- Duplicate instructional materials.
- Assist in office.

Instructional Volunteers

- Work with individuals or small groups of students.
- Assist teacher with reinforcement of concepts in all subject areas.
- Assist with preparation and distribution of classroom materials.
- Display students’ work in classroom, mount displays on bulletin boards, help teachers record materials for reading centers, etc.

Library Volunteers

- Shelve, file, and process books.
- Check out materials and books to students and teachers.
- Assist students with book selections.
- Assist students with operating multimedia equipment.
- Read and dramatize stories.

Bus Monitors

- Help kindergarten students board correct buses to go home.
- Help monitor students during band and other events and field trips.

Special Activities Volunteers

- Special Activities volunteers help support school extracurricular clubs, groups, and events. Areas of involvement may include participating in activities such as the parent/teacher organizations and booster clubs, serving as volunteer coaches, and assisting with sports, music, or drama productions.
- Chaperone field trips.
- Monitor playground at recess and/or before or after school.
- Greeters
- Monitor students in cafeteria at lunchtime.
- “WatchDogs” Program

Building and Grounds

- Maintain school grounds and landscaping under the supervision of the principal or volunteer coordinator.
- Participate in building beautification under the supervision of the principal or volunteer coordinator.

Resource Volunteers

- Share experiences and expertise from culture, travel, occupation, career, hobbies, or other interests.

Mentor

- Mentors typically work one-on-one with a student who needs special attention and assistance. Their major task is to motivate the student to stay focused on school. A mentor provides academic reinforcement, sets short-term goals, serves as a role model, and provides encouragement and friendship that helps build the student’s self esteem. One example is a Breakfast or Lunch Buddy.

Becoming a Volunteer

Application and Background Check

All applicants must complete a **Volunteer Agreement Application** and Student **Privacy Statement and Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement** and submit to the school volunteer coordinator at each respective school or Activities Director (Volunteer Athletic Coach). Make sure to note any volunteer assignments you are interested in on your application as well as your general interest areas and experience. This application must be submitted annually for review. The safety and security of the school community is a top priority for Staunton City Schools. Therefore, for your protection and that of students and staff of Staunton City Schools, the volunteer coordinator will check with the National Sex Offender Public Website which includes the Virginia State Police “Registry of Sexual Offenders and Crimes against Minors” on all school volunteers. Furthermore, anyone convicted of a misdemeanor offense, especially an offense against a minor, may be disqualified from volunteering depending upon then nature/time of the offense and/or volunteer activity. **Anyone convicted of a felony offense will not be eligible to volunteer with Staunton City Schools.** **Note:** Certain volunteer positions including Volunteer Athletic Coaches and Volunteer Mentors must undergo fingerprinting/background checks including but not limited to the Virginia State Police/FBI Background Check and the Virginia Department of Social Services/Child Protective Services. Furthermore, all Volunteer Athletic Coaches must be approved by the Staunton City School Board.

After a completed application and background check is reviewed, Staunton City Schools will determine if the individual’s volunteer efforts should be declined, if they may be restricted in any way, or if there should be no restriction. All information obtained in the volunteer application packet and the background check shall be kept confidential. In the event a background check turns up something that may prevent a volunteer from serving or affect the area in which he or she services, the applicant will be notified.

Which Background Check to use

1. Volunteering as an Athletic Coach or 1:1 Mentor

In an effort to ensure the safety and security of our students, any volunteer that regularly interacts, and has the potential to supervise students directly is subject to:

- A national criminal background check, conducted by the Virginia Department of State Police

- Central Registry Release of Information, conducted by the Virginia Department of Social Services
2. Occasional School Participation (ie. Instructional Volunteer, Special Activities Volunteer, etc.)
Parents/relatives are often invited to serve as chaperones at events such as school trips and other school events (such as after school dances). In this situation, full-time employees will be present and provide direct supervision for students. In an effort to ensure the safety and security of our students, any volunteer following under this category will adhere to the following:
- Completion and approval of the Volunteer Agreement Application including a check with the National Sex Offender Public website.

Cost of Background Checks

1. Volunteering on a consistent basis (ie. Coach or 1:1 Mentor)
- In the case of athletic volunteer coach and/or mentor, Staunton City Schools is responsible for all costs associated with the Virginia Department of State Police and the Virginia Department of Social Services.
2. Occasional School Participation (ie. Instructional Volunteer, Special Activities Volunteer, etc.)
- There is no fee associated with the completion of the Staunton City Schools Volunteer Agreement Application

Placement

Once your application has been processed and approved, Staunton City Schools will make every effort to assign you to the role of interest. If you do not know what you want to do, the volunteer coordinator will take into your account your interests, skills and experience in assigning your placement. If you have no preferences, you will be assigned to the school/area that has the greatest need for volunteers taking into account your skills and interest areas. Once you have been assigned a school and placement, the school volunteer will contact you to arrange a time for volunteer training/orientation.

Volunteer Procedures-General

First Day

Upon completion of your volunteer training/orientation, the volunteer coordinator will choose a start date and time. If you have any questions about dress code, your volunteer placement/assignment or any other school expectations, please direct questions to your school volunteer coordinator. On your first day, check into the office and sign in on IdentiKid and secure a volunteer badge. The volunteer coordinator will let you know where you need to go.

Ongoing Visits

On subsequent visits, volunteers must always check into the office, sign in on IdentiKid and receive your volunteer badge. If you are unable to make your scheduled volunteer time, please call the school so the teacher and student(s) know you will not be able to be there.

Expectations

What the Volunteer expects of Staunton City Schools

- All volunteers should be treated as professional assistants, with respect, courtesy, and a friendly and welcoming attitude.
- The volunteer coordinator/staff shall provide materials and necessary instructions/expectations for assigned tasks and have them ready for the volunteer at his/her assigned time.
- The volunteer coordinator/staff should notify the volunteer about any schedule changes which may alter their schedule including a student absence.

- The volunteer coordinator shall explain policies and procedures that the volunteer will need to know to carry out his/her tasks.
- The volunteer coordinator shall assign tasks that volunteers are capable/willing to do and provide assistance as needed.

What Staunton City Schools expects of the Volunteer

- Please be punctual. Arrive by your assigned time, ready to volunteer.
- Please be reliable. If you are unable to make your scheduled time, please notify the school as soon as possible so other arrangements can be made.
- Wear your volunteer badge at all times while in the building.
- Complete your tasks in a timely fashion. If you are unable to finish your assigned task, please leave detailed instructions for the teacher or volunteer coordinator so they can complete the task.
- Please be sensitive/considerate to the teacher's time and needs. Limit classroom disruption as much as possible.
- Please do not use volunteering time as an opportunity for extra parent-teacher conferences. Conferences are separate from the volunteering experience and should be scheduled separately.