



HANDBOOK
for Volunteers and Mentors in
the Greene County
School System



MISSION

To educate, inspire, challenge, and support students to become college and career ready.

VISION

All Greene County schools will ensure effective teaching and learning thus enabling students to become college and career ready citizens able to compete in a global society and elevate student achievement in to the top quartile of state school systems as measured by state standardized performance targets by 2023.

BELIEFS

1. Every child can learn and deserves an advocate.
2. Everyone is worthy of being treated with dignity and respect.
3. In establishing high expectations that are measurable and establish accountability for achieving them.
4. Education is the primary responsibility of all staff and the student, with the family, and the community playing an essential role.
5. Every person is accountable and responsible for reaching his or her highest potential.
6. Hiring, evaluating, developing and retaining highly qualified staff in all positions is essential for student success.
7. Resources applied in an effective manner are essential for successful schools.
8. In effective collaboration to ensure, best practices are identified and adopted throughout the whole school system.
9. A safe and orderly learning environment is essential to teaching and learning.
10. Student and staff achievement should be celebrated while embracing continuous improvement

Greene County School District Policy -- Volunteers in Public Schools

The School Board of Greene County encourages volunteer participation by individuals and groups in School Board sponsored programs in local schools, in central and area offices, and for School Board sponsored and supervised off-school campus activities before, during, and after regular school hours.

A volunteer is a non-paid person functioning under the sponsorship of the Greene County School District.

The School Board of Greene County authorizes the Superintendent or his/her designee to approve volunteers to assist in organized school programs following the submission of these items:

- I. Application
- II. Background Check – consent form, picture ID and \$5.00 money order taken to the 911 Emergency Center in Greensboro. Background results should be returned to GCSS with the Application Packet.
- III. Release Form and Code of Conduct
- IV. Completion of Volunteer Training – may be help individually or with a group

The handbook contains information that will help you in performing the service at your service at your school that may be required of you. We hope you will find it helpful.

You are required to attend orientation and training sessions offered by the school volunteer program. The sessions are designed to help you feel more comfortable in your volunteer setting and provide you with additional information, which will enhance the success of your volunteer work. These training sessions will provide you with the “tools of the trade”.

We thank you for choosing to volunteer in the Greene County School System and wish for each of you a successful, rewarding, and satisfying experience. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to consult with the teacher to whom you are assigned or contact the district school volunteer coordinator – Beth Thomas at (706) 347-0750 / beth.thomas@greene.k12.ga.us.

General Information

Parking: Each school has a different method for handling parking. Please ask your coordinator to explain your school's rules and regulations for parking.

Application: All volunteers must complete an application packet and attend an orientation prior to helping in a school.

Attendance: Please notify the person for whom you are working or the coordinator when you are unable to be there at the mutually agreed upon time.

Identification: While you are on school grounds, please wear your identification tag.

Conduct: Your conduct should provide for and reinforce the safety and well-being of the students. You are a role model for the students.

Medication: Volunteers are not permitted to give medication to the students

Releasing Students: Students are to be released only to your supervising teacher.

Discipline: It's the teacher's responsibility to discipline the students.

Confidentiality: Classroom work with students is always confidential. Keep your observations on a professional level. A volunteer must not divulge information to which he or she may have access.

Accidents: All accidents that occur when a student is under your supervision should be reported to the supervising teacher immediately. If you are involved in an accident, please report to the office in order to fill out the necessary report form.

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

1. How do I become a volunteer?

Any person interested in volunteering may do so by contacting the Volunteer Coordinator Beth Thomas at (706) 347-0750 or by calling the Greene County Board of Education at (706) 453-7688. You will be asked to complete a volunteer application listing your skills, interests, preferred location, grade level and type of volunteer service desired. The application includes a background check.

2. What are the qualifications to become a school volunteer?

The qualifications needed to be a school volunteer are a personal desire to help, a sincere interest in students, and ability to follow school procedures and policies, and a willingness to make a definite time commitment. The Volunteer Coordinator will provide any training that is needed. A teaching background is not required as volunteers work under the direction of the school's professional staff.

3. May I bring my pre-school child with me?

No, bringing pre-school children with you to school presents a liability problem for the school. In addition, having a very young child in a classroom interrupts class procedures, disrupts the students and prevents the volunteer from giving full attention to the work the teacher has prepared. You can, however, still help the school by making arrangements to do work at home.

4. When friends and neighbors ask me about school, what may I tell them?

Volunteers can be a big help in representing the school to the community. We want you to talk about your school and your involvement. You may have access to "privileged information" which may vary from personal records, grades, test scores, behavior, and attitude of students. This is important school business and should never be discussed outside of the school. Criticizing school personnel and practices is not acceptable. Your job in school is as a professional working with other professionals.

5. May I choose the teacher with whom I wish to work?

Volunteers are only placed in classrooms where teachers have specifically requested their assistance. The School Volunteer Coordinator and the Principal at the individual school make the decisions about placement of volunteers but you may certainly make a request.

6. What if I am not happy with the job assigned to me?

Feel free to say so. Communicate with the Volunteer Coordinator. Every effort is made to place volunteers in a situation, which matches the needs of both the volunteer and the needs of the students. There are a variety of jobs for everyone to feel comfortable. Teachers also have the opportunity to ask for a different assigned volunteer.

7. What do I do about discipline?

Disciplinary action is the legal responsibility of teachers. Volunteers should never be put in a position of having to enforce discipline. If you are having a problem with a student, immediately inform the teacher or an administrator.

8. What should I do if I am unable to be at the school at my assigned time?

As soon as you are aware that you will be unable to be able at the school at your assigned time, call or email school personnel to alert them. The teacher has planned his/her schedule according to the time that you have agreed upon to help. If possible, please keep your assigned schedule.

9. Why is it important for me to sign-in and out each time I volunteer at a school?

There are many reasons the requirement is necessary, such as maintaining school security; verification of volunteer service, which can be used as work experience for future employment; liability purposes; in the event you receive an emergency telephone call, you can be found; and so individuals can be recognized for their dedication and service.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

Tutors work one-on-one with a student or with small groups of students who need remedial help in academic subjects to reinforce basic skills. Placements are made with students from kindergarten to high school.

Mentors/Career Coaches can provide encouragement and friendship to a student while helping them focus on goals – both academic and social.

Exceptional Education Assistants work with the teacher to assist in meeting the individuals needs of exceptional education students.

Classroom Assistants perform clerical, tutorial, and teacher reinforcement tasks under the direction of the classroom teacher. This allows teachers more professional time to spend with their classes and individual students.

Special Enrichment Volunteers speak to classes or groups on topics related to occupations or community interests. These volunteers may be professional business people or retirees who, based on their careers, hobbies, or interests, may provide enriching experiences for students.

Arts and Crafts Assistants work with art and classroom teachers to help students develop their creativity by providing them with opportunities to discover and develop their abilities. Volunteers may assist teachers with presentation of materials for art instruction or assist students with art projects.

Media Center Aides shelve books, catalog materials, check out books (when needed), take inventory, perform simple maintenance tasks, operate equipment, and work with the media specialist on other tasks as needed.

Special Activities Volunteers give important support as needed for a special project. This may include serving on PTA/PTO or Advisory Boards, assisting with fine arts, career fairs, and/or school-sponsored activities.

Business Partners is a broad-based program, which promotes business involvement in our schools. It is an exchange of human resources between a business and a school, one-to-one tutoring, classroom presentations, student and/or teacher recognition, displaying student work, judging student competition, or implementing a unique program designed by a company and the partner school.

Tutoring Tips

Set a positive, warm learning environment when working with students. It takes time and patience for you and the student to feel comfortable and friendly. Take the first step toward building the desired relationship by simply being you. The following points may also help as you begin working with students.

A student's name is very important. Make sure you say the student's name the way the student wants it said. Learn to spell the name correctly.

Make sure the student knows and can pronounce your name. Writing it down on a card for him/her may be helpful.

Be a careful listener. Show that you are interested in the student as a person. Listen carefully to what the student has to say. Ask questions about favorite activities, family members, good friends, and personal hopes and dreams. By your words and actions. Let the student know that you care. Don't talk about his/her home life, unless he/she brings it up. It may be embarrassing to them.

Make it your first goal to become friends with the student. The student will benefit from this personal relationship. The student will be more willing to learn from someone he/she likes.

Relax and be yourself. Maintain a sense of humor.

Build your relationship slowly. The relationship will continue to grow by your acceptance of the student, your faith in his/her ability, your honesty, your sensitivity, and your trustworthiness. Never promise something with which you cannot follow through or produce.

Meet the unexpected needs of your student by using your creativity.

Students make mistakes. Let them know that making mistakes is a part of learning.

Do not be afraid of making mistakes yourself.

Build the student's self-confidence. Praise your student honestly and frequently. Attentiveness and effort can be as important as performance. Accentuate the positive; minimize the negative.

Be patient. Students learn at different rates and in different ways. Any sign of progress, as little as it might be, will be your greatest reward. Many underachievers work more slowly on academic problems, because they are less secure.

Repetition is important. Devise different ways of doing things so the student can repeat what is being learned.

Be sincere and praise any honest effort on his/her part. Look at failures as an opportunity for another try at the same task. She/he should never see failures as negative. A student quickly loses respect for the giver of undeserved praise.

If the student starts to digress from the work assignment, help him/her refocus on the subject by saying, "How does this apply to what we started talking about?"

You might find out from the teacher, a future assignment that will require a lot of reading. By reading the assignment with him/her and seeing that he/she understands it well.

Be reliable. If you must be absent, call the school and ask that the student be told you cannot come that day. The student will be disappointed that you cannot come, but will be reassured that you care enough to call.

When speaking to students:

Avoid comparing students and their work.

Give students a choice only when you intend to abide by that choice.

State directions in a positive form. Example: "Use the blocks for building."
rather than, "Don't throw the blocks."

Your goal should be success.

Giving Individual Attention

You may be asked to help a student who needs some individual attention. A student who has been absent or who is having difficulty with a particular problem will benefit greatly from your special help. Students need this kind of help most often in reading and math.

The following guidelines may help you in your first tutoring situation:

- ◇ Don't be hesitant about refusing the assignment if you feel you don't understand the materials well enough to help the student. The teacher will understand and will find another area to which you can help.
- ◇ Get specific directions from the teacher about the assignment.
- ◇ Find a quiet place in or out of the room where the student and you can talk quietly without disturbing the rest of the class.
- ◇ Establish a one-to-one relationship with the student by talking first for a minute about the student himself/herself.
- ◇ Find out exactly where the student is in his/her work by asking him/her to explain to you some of the work, which has preceded this assignment.
- ◇ Let the student work out as much as they can on their own. Provide encouragement, but don't step in too soon.
- ◇ Rather than giving them the answer when they ask direct his/her thinking so they can discover the answer their self.

Characteristics of Children:

Kindergarten Through Adolescence

5-Year Olds...

- Helpful around the house
- Prefers mother as parent
- Needs some assistance with coats, etc.
- Close-mouthed at home about school activities
- Have short bursts of energy
- Changes from one activity to another with relative ease
- Have vague concepts of time
- Fearless
- Asks questions about how things work

6-Year Olds...

- Handles and attempts to use tools and materials
- Is self centered, domineering, stubborn, and aggressive
- Wants and needs to be first, to be loved, to be praised, and to win.
- Is usually better-behaved away from home
- Is very domineering and bossy
- Is interested in simple games
- Carries on long conversations
- Enjoys father
- Is restless, overactive, exuberant usually likes his teacher

9- Year Olds...

- Has new forms of self-independence
- Has increased self-motivation
- Resents interruption
- Likes secret codes and languages
- Has a strong sense of right and wrong
- Is easily discouraged
- Is competitive in work and in play and is afraid of failure
- Cries only when emotions are overtaxed
- Is a great worrier
- Is anxious to please
- Makes fewer demands on parents
- Is a loyal and devoted friend
- Is more interested in talking and listening than in working

10-Year Olds...

- Is relaxed, casual, and alert
- Is in one of the happiest ages
- Has a strong sense of justice
- Truly enjoys friends
- Needs schedules
- Loves the outdoors
- Is a hero worshipper
- Is critical of teacher beings
- Wants teacher to be fair

Pre-Adolescents (11- 12 years old)

- In need of feeling of belonging and acceptance
- In need of increasing opportunities for independence
- In need of warm affection and a sense of humor from adults
- Turned off by nagging, condemnation, and being talked down to or disrespected
- Antagonistic and teasing toward the opposite sex

- Over-critical, rebellious, and uncooperative
- Awkward, lazy, and restless because of rapid and uneven growth.

Adolescents (13 and up)

- Having tremendous variations in attainment of physical maturity
- Acquiring adult capacity for abstract thinking
- Using aggressiveness in seeking independence
- Resenting conditions that make him dependent on adults
- Has difficulty adjusting to the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of adult society
- Oversensitive; indulging in self pity and having intense fear of ridicule
- Concerned about popularity
- Going to extremes in activities, thinking and emotional reactions.
- Becoming attached to worthy causes, and are idealistic in value judgments
- Showing an acute sense of injustice
- In need of acceptance
- Tending to oversimplify
- Interested in philosophical, ethical, and religious problems
- Seeking both dependence and independence

Types of Abuse and Mandated Reporting

Neglect – The failure of a parent, guardian or other caregiver to provide for a child’s basic needs. This can also include failure to protect them from a known risk of harm or danger.

Indicators

- Frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, glasses, etc.
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Abuses alcohol or drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Physical Abuse – The non-accidental physical injury of a child. This is the most visible and widely recognized form of child abuse.

Indicators

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Sexual Abuse – Anything done with a child for the sexual gratification of an adult or older child.

Indicators

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a sexually transmitted disease
- Runs away

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children – When individuals buy, trade or sell sexual acts with a child.

Indicators

- Branding or tattooing
- Older significant other or friends
- Withdrawn and uncommunicative
- Large amounts of money
- Inappropriate dress or poor hygiene
- Runaway or lack of adult supervision / support

Emotional Abuse – A pattern of behavior that impairs a child’s emotional development or sense of self-worth.

Indicators

- Shows extremes in behavior
- Inappropriately adult or infantile
- Is delayed in physical and emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

Mandated Reporters: Section 19-7-5 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to reporting of child abuse, designated several categories of individuals as **mandated reporters**, who “having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused shall report or cause reports of that abuse to be made.” **All child service organization personnel are mandated reporters. Child service organization personnel** means persons **employed by or volunteering** at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit or voluntary, that

provides care, treatment, education, training, supervising, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children.

Disclosures – When a child tells you that he or she has been abused.

- **Indirect Hints** – A child may talk in these terms because he or she hasn't learned more specific vocabulary, feels ashamed or embarrassed, has promised not to tell, or for a combination of those reasons.
- **Disguised Disclosure** – The child may be talking about someone he or she knows, but is just as likely to be talking about himself or herself. Encourage the child to tell you what he or she knows about the “other child”. Then ask whether something like what is being said has ever happened to him or her.
- **Disclosure with Strings Attached** – Many children believe something very negative will happen if they break the secret of abuse. The child may have been threatened by the offender to ensure his or her silence. Let the child know that there are some secrets that you just can't keep. Assure the child that your job is to protect the child and keep him/her safe. Let the child know you will keep it as confidential as possible but that you are required by law to make a report.

What to do When a Child Discloses

1. Find a private place to talk with the child.
2. Reassure the child.
3. Listen attentively, openly and calmly.
4. Write down the facts and words as the child has state them but don't try to investigate and get more details.
5. Report the disclosure to the designated reporter in your school immediately – the classroom teacher or volunteer coordinator.
6. Respect the child's need for confidentiality.

Rights of the Mandated Reporter

Mandated reporters who report in “good faith” are protected by law, even if the report is not substantiated. All reports are confidential and the reporter may remain anonymous. Any person or official required by Georgia law to report suspected cases of child maltreatment and who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

The Role of Child Protective Services

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) provides a number of services to communities in Georgia. Child Protective Services (CPS) is a term for those services related to child abuse and neglect.

- Interview the child and parents/caregivers
- Arrange for child's medical examination if necessary
- Assess parents'/caregivers' abilities to care for/protect the child
- Provide support for services to parents/caregivers
- Request immediate temporary custody of child from judge in juvenile court when abuse/neglect is substantiated
- Petition court for permanent custody when parents/guardians fail to demonstrate ability or willingness to care for the child



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