



# **A Teacher's Guide To Working with Volunteers**



## Why Take Volunteers?

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Volunteers can provide many benefits to a teacher and students. Below are a few examples.

- Volunteers can help ease your workload as a teacher.
- They can work with students one-on-one or in small groups, allowing you to reach more students on a daily basis.
- They can help students who are struggling to catch up, inspire average students to work hard, and push gifted students.
- Volunteers can bring in new skills and expertise into the classroom.
- Volunteers can help you make copies and prepare for a lesson, lab, or art project. Ultimately, volunteers can help ease your workload.

If you're still unsure how to properly use a volunteer, please keep reading! You'll learn information about how to request a volunteer, what is expected of you when working with volunteers, and look through a list of activities for volunteers suggested by veteran MPS teachers.

## Request a Volunteer

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Every school has a designated volunteer liaison. At \_\_\_\_\_ school, \_\_\_\_\_ is your volunteer coordinator. If you are interested in having a volunteer, please contact your school's volunteer coordinator. They may have a potential volunteer lined up for you. You may also request a volunteer from Volunteer MPS. You can do so online, here: [http://volmps.mpls.k12.mn.us/vol\\_request.html](http://volmps.mpls.k12.mn.us/vol_request.html) . You can also contact Janine Freij (elementary and middle school) at 612.668.3990 or [Janine.freij@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:Janine.freij@mpls.k12.mn.us) or Julie McLeod (high school) at 612.290.9301 or [Julie.mcleod@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:Julie.mcleod@mpls.k12.mn.us).

## Volunteer Screening Process

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All volunteers must be screened by your school's volunteer coordinator or Volunteer MPS before they can begin to volunteer. The screening process includes an application, reference check, and orientation at the minimum and a criminal background check when necessary. This process generally takes around one to two weeks. If any individuals contact you directly wanting to volunteer, please have them complete the process before beginning to volunteer in your classroom. This also includes parent volunteers.

## Expectations of Teachers Working with Volunteers

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Teachers who are working with volunteers have the following responsibilities:

- The teacher or a school staff person is responsible for directing the work of the volunteer.
- A teacher or other staff must always be present when volunteers are working with students.
- The teacher or other school staff is responsible for selecting students who can be successful working with a volunteer.
- The teacher or staff person is responsible for establishing a routine and regular method of communicating about the progress of the student or the project to the volunteer.

- The teacher or staff person will ensure all volunteers shall sign a data privacy letter regarding the confidentiality of any student information, academic or non-academic, they may have access to in the course of their volunteer work.
- The teacher or staff person must obtain a student’s guardians/parents’ permission for them to participate in a mentoring or tutoring program.
- Mentor and tutor activities are restricted to a school’s campus. Off-site activities require special planning by school staff and permission for involvement from guardians/parents.
- Teachers will not allow volunteers to have contact with students without insuring the volunteers have been screened and given an orientation by the teacher, the school volunteer coordinator or a staff person in the Volunteer Services Office.
- Access to students via US mail or the internet must be conducted within MPS district policies and procedures.
- The teacher and/or school staff will show appreciation for the time and talents volunteers are sharing by thanking them.

### **The First Meeting with your Volunteer**

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It is extremely important to take the time to sit down with your volunteer when they first start and establish your expectations of the volunteer as well as learn what expectations the volunteer has for their experience. Attached you will find a “First conversation” handout that all volunteers are given, which helps both of you to facilitate a conversation. Please remember to talk to your new volunteer about the following:

- Your expectations of volunteers (timeliness, showing initiative, etc.)
- Activities that you often have your volunteers perform (please check to make sure that the volunteer is comfortable performing all of these activities)
- Fire drill and emergency procedures
- Give your volunteer a copy of your syllabus and explain classroom rules and procedures as necessary
- Decided upon a method of communication (how often and through what means will you communicate?)
- School policies and rules
- Ask the volunteer how they would like students to address them
- Provide the volunteer a safe space to put their coat and/or purse
- Answer any questions the volunteer may have
- **Thank the volunteer and make them feel welcome in your classroom!**

### **Relicensure / Clock Hours Request**

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There is a one-hour long training on how to use volunteers in Moodle. Before you begin working with a volunteer, you should complete the training. Please log into eCompass and search for “Utilizing Volunteers Effectively.” Once you have completed this training, you are eligible to receive relicensure/clock hours for your work with volunteers.

## Thanking your Volunteers

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Everyone appreciates a little praise. The phrase “thank you” is welcomed but is often overlooked. Here are some additional phrases you may try on for size.

1. The students really enjoyed that activity you did with them.
2. Your coming today made a difference to \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I like the way you are working with \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ - has shown remarkable improvement since you starting working with him/her.
5. How did you get such a good response from \_\_\_\_\_?
6. You were really tuned in to \_\_\_\_\_'s needs today
7. It's a pleasure to work in this school when there are volunteers like you.
8. To think you came out on such a snowy day as this!
9. You've shown me a new way to \_\_\_\_\_.
10. It certainly looks like you've put a lot of work into \_\_\_\_\_.
11. You've really become an expert at \_\_\_\_\_.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ always looks forward to 5<sup>th</sup> period on Tuesday because he/she knows you are going to be here.
13. I like the way \_\_\_\_\_ has begun to work since you've been here.
14. I appreciate your help with \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Could you show \_\_\_\_\_ (another volunteer) that good technique that you used with \_\_\_\_\_?

## The First Conversation with a Volunteer

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*In your first conversation with your volunteer, establish the following:*

Dates and times of volunteering:

Duration of volunteerism:

Classroom materials: (e.g. copy syllabus, lend or view texts)

Best way to contact volunteer and teacher:

Plan for routine communication:

What do in case of absence:

Discuss volunteer's role in the classroom:

- **Volunteer skills:** (e.g. volunteer has a strong background in earth sciences and would feel very comfortable helping students learn content material. – or- volunteer used to teach an after-school study skills program at the YWCA. )
- **Needs of the teacher:** What do you need help with? What challenges do your students face? How can you and the volunteer work together? (e.g. I would really like the volunteer to work one-on-one with students, I want the volunteer to take initiative to work with students or to sit near students who are goofing off, I want the volunteer to co-teacher lessons with me).

## Expectations

### TEACHER'S EXPECTATIONS

*What does the teacher expect of the volunteer?*

- ❖ Promptness
- ❖ Love of children/ adolescents
- ❖ Enthusiasm
- ❖ Flexibility
- ❖ Dependability
- ❖ Consistency
- ❖ Patience
- ❖ Loyalty
- ❖ Businesslike attitude
- ❖ Imagination and creativity
- ❖ Non-disruptive influence
- ❖ Tact
- ❖ Sense of humor
- ❖ **Initiative**
- ❖ Interest in helping for the benefit of community
- ❖ Be discreet and trustworthy with confidential matters relating to classroom and students
- ❖ Be willing to help, ask for directions, follow instructions, take training, try a variety of approaches and techniques with students
- ❖ Be pleasant, friendly, have a warm, positive attitude
- ❖ Dress appropriately for the activity
- ❖ Be sensitive to teachers time needs
- ❖ Avoid trying to be an amateur psychologist
- ❖ Be capable of maintaining firm but kind discipline when working with small groups of students

### VOLUNTEER'S EXPECTATIONS

*What does the volunteer expect of the teacher?*

- ❖ Consideration
- ❖ Patience
- ❖ Appreciation
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Courtesy
- ❖ Pleasant voice
- ❖ Sincerity
- ❖ Good directions
- ❖ Loves children
- ❖ Has tasks ready
- ❖ Cooperative attitude
- ❖ Controls class
- ❖ Shows how to use machines, when applicable
- ❖ Organization- gives clear instructions, plans
- ❖ Explains specific expectations for volunteer
- ❖ Explains policies and procedures of school and classroom
- ❖ Gives feedback on students' progress, attitude
- ❖ Is willing to help volunteer as needed
- ❖ Assigns tasks volunteers are capable of doing
- ❖ Treats volunteers as professional assistants
- ❖ Has students prepared to work with volunteer
- ❖ Has friendly and welcoming attitude
- ❖ Remains in charge of classroom
- ❖ Tells volunteer about schedule changes
- ❖ Matches personality of volunteer with students
- ❖ Provides materials needed for assigned tasks
- ❖ Offers constructive criticism or corrections but NOT in front of students
- ❖ Accepts creative ideas and suggestions of volunteer whenever possible
- ❖ Gives volunteer relevant information about student(s) that will help volunteers work with the student(s)

## Teacher Guidelines when Working with Volunteers

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	GOAL
Student selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Select students who can be successful with the volunteer (do not pick students how are at-risk behaviorally or would benefit most from the teacher's expertise)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plan activities and materials where both will feel successful</li> </ul>
Provide assurance and sense of belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maximize volunteer's time. Establish a working area with materials to work with children (i.e. games, writing center)</li> <li>▪ Create atmosphere in which the volunteer feels comfortable and helpful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a comfortable situation for the volunteer to want to come back to serve our students.</li> </ul>
Classroom policies/procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Go over the classroom rules, emergency procedures, equipment, lunchroom, copy machine, nurse's office, adult bathrooms, rewards and consequences. Provide a daily schedule of classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unify efforts to keep a supportive learning environment for children. Be willing to help, give directions to make the volunteer be successful.</li> <li>▪ Post classroom rules and policies</li> </ul>
Create a classroom community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assign same students work with volunteer to create a relationship and consistency,</li> <li>▪ Make children aware of the volunteer's role and create an environment of appreciation for their service.</li> <li>▪ Assign to volunteer a non-threatening activity (story-time, snack, party) where he/she can interact with whole class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make list of positive traits and strengths of the students working with volunteer</li> <li>▪ Always be positive about the students with whom they will work</li> </ul>
Model Kindness and courtesy (non-judgmental attitude)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Model for volunteer: consideration, patience, courtesy, and appreciation regardless of race, religion, color, or diverse family structure for all students</li> <li>▪ Use a calm voice and manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Set the example- professional attitude, model respect for all the children we serve.</li> <li>▪ Advocate for your students.</li> </ul>
Establish open communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish a journal or folder for the volunteer to communicate with you</li> <li>▪ Provide relevant information about students</li> <li>▪ Give feedback on student's progress</li> <li>▪ Give feedback on volunteer's help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This will help avoid interruptions from your volunteer while you are teaching</li> <li>▪ Read and write in the folder regularly</li> <li>▪ It can be a communication or an anecdotal account of students' progress and activities if appropriate</li> </ul>
Be resourceful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Get to know your volunteer</li> <li>▪ Use his/her talents in the classroom</li> <li>▪ Provide meaningful tasks</li> <li>▪ Encourage volunteer to share his/her thoughts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take time to get to know the volunteer</li> <li>▪ Capitalize on the volunteer's knowledge and experience</li> <li>▪ Share the volunteer with other teachers when appropriate</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct formal and informal evaluations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Measure and observe student progress</li> </ul>

## Addressing an Issue Productively

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**When you have a problem with a volunteer, you should follow the following ten-step procedure for arriving at a productive solution.**

1. **Set a time and place to talk** – “ I want to discuss with you an issue that concerns both of us. When and where would be a good place to do this?” (Agree on a time and place. Be sure to provide enough time and insure complete privacy.)
  2. (When you have arrived at the appropriate spot), **State your intentions and expectations for the outcome of this meeting.** “I intend to raise an issue about a certain way we are working together. I hope we can join together to create a solution that will be agreeable to you as well as me.”
  3. **State the event.** “Remember when....” (Wait for acknowledgment).
  4. **State your feelings about the event and end your statement with a question.** “When you..... I felt ..... I felt that way because I wanted ..... . How are you feeling?”
  5. **Explore all relevant information concerning the event.** “I’d like to tell you my view of what happened and I want to hear your side also.” **DO NOT GO FOR SOLUTIONS YET.**
  6. **Repeat the teacher’s view of the event.** “OK, let me see if I understand your statements. What you’re saying is .....
  7. **Explore solutions that would satisfy both of you.** “Maybe now that I understand what you were thinking about and you understand what I was thinking about, we can explore some ways to solve this kind of thing in the future.” What can I do to make you more effective?
- Here’s what you can do to make me more effective.
8. **Offer a fair-exchange.** “OK, I’ll perform this for you in the future, if you perform what I want you to do in exchange.”
  9. **Test for agreement and commitment.** “Do you really think we can carry this bargain out? What will we do if someone breaks their half of the agreement?”
  10. **Sum up.** “I think we have agreed that.....”

From: Managing a Volunteers for Results. C, 1978, Institute for Fund Raising  
Forms/General/Confronting a Volunteer  
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## Red Flags to Look For

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If you see any of the following behaviors, please notify your volunteer coordinator as soon as possible.

- Volunteer anxious to have child spend the night or overnight activities early in the match (*camping seems to be a repeated pattern of risk*)
- Majority of activities take place at volunteer's home
- Majority of activities take place in the evening hours
- Volunteer is very cooperative with his/her supervisor, stops by the office to talk, etc. (*over compliance*)
- Volunteer involves other children other than his/her own on outings with matched child
- Rapid or significant change in matched child's behavior at home, with volunteer, in school performance, etc.
- Volunteer going through stressful period in own life, significant loss, etc.
- Volunteer or child wants to terminate the relationship without specific reasons
- Volunteer asks child to pose for pictures
- Over-investment in child – arguing or threatening mother to take child away
- Volunteer gets into “childish” arguments with child
- Excessive or expensive gift giving, particularly gift giving not associated with birthdays and religious holiday/events
- Child becomes secretive about match activities
- Sudden unexplained changes in relationships between volunteer and child
- Volunteer involves other adults on outing with child
- Volunteer expresses strong need to exercise discipline or authority over child
- Mother of child is uncomfortable about the volunteer
- Volunteer fails to set limits on child's behavior, over-indulges
- Volunteer violates agency rules or mother's wishes
- Volunteer wants to introduce ideas of sex 'education' to child (*oftentimes shows child pornographic magazines under the guise of 'sex education'*)
- Supervisor/Program Director is uncomfortable, uneasy, or has a hunch about the match (go with your gut feelings –usually picking up non-verbal cues)

## Suggested Classroom Activities K-6

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### ACADEMIC

- Tell stories to children
- Conduct flash card drills
- Assist and set up learning centers
- Provide vocabulary with non-English speaking students
- Work with underachievers
- Work on perceptual activities
- Reinforce learning of alphabet
- Listen to children read
- Reinforce recognition of numerals
- Drill recognition of color words
- Help children with motor skills problems
- Help students who play instruments
- Dramatize a story
- Help with handwriting practice
- Set up a “store” to practice math skills
- Drill spelling words

### SOCIAL

- Play games at recess
- Help with book fairs
- Assist with field trips
- Make props for plays
- Talk to children - be a friend
- Make puppets
- Make reading carrels from boxes
- Tell stories
- Assist with sing-a-longs

### ENRICHMENT

- Set up or run bookstore or book exchange
- Help children learn to type
- Help children with arts and crafts
- Help with cooking projects
- Set up experiments
- Discuss careers or hobbies

- Show a video to a group
- Help children learn a foreign language
- Play a musical instrument
- Show slides about life in other countries, parts of the United States, crafts, games
- Discuss care and training of pets
- Assist computer labs
- Facilitate mini-course
- Discuss life from the point view of a person with a disability and the importance of understanding others
- Share ethnic backgrounds and experiences
- Discuss farm life and farm animals
- Demonstrate gardening skills
- Help prepare assembly programs
- Discuss aspects of safety
- Share information about local history
- Demonstrate pioneer crafts: weaving, candle-making, soap-making, musical instruments, toys and dolls
- Assist in preparing courses in: photography, creative dramatics, knitting, square dancing

### HELP TEACHERS

- Reproduce materials
- Work in office or library
- Make instructional games/materials
- Prepare visual materials
- Develop programmed materials
- Grade papers
- Prepare bulletin boards
- Help select library books
- Gather resource materials
- Take attendance
- Escort children to library, cafeteria, etc.
- Record grades
- Supervise groups taking test

## Suggested Classroom Activities, Grades 6-12

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### English/Language Arts

- Assist with writing assignments and review corrected themes with students
- Assist with vocabulary words, grammar skills and library research
- Tutor individual students in reading and communication skills
- Help with daily assignments

### Math

- Help students prepare for math tests
- Assist students in applying computer skills
- Help with daily assignments
- Help students use problem solving techniques and relate math skills to real life experiences

### Social Studies/World Culture

- Share travel experience with students
- Assist with daily assignments
- Participate in discussions about current events
- Foreign language conversation practice
- Talk about local historical events

### Science

- Assist with the use of laboratory equipment
- Help students in the area of horticulture
- Review vocabulary words and scientific facts with students
- Assist with daily assignments

### Special Subjects

- Assist in art, music, gym, library, modern languages or special education classes
- Tutor students whose primary language is not English
- Serve as classroom aide in industrial technology courses/labs
- Help in libraries, counseling offices, college/career centers or with clerical tasks

### Social

- Have conversations with students and LISTEN

- Provide friendship, companionship and encouragement
- Help to create a supportive environment and encourage student participation in activities
- Be a mentor to support a student's special area of interest

### Enrichment

- Help with school clubs or special interest groups
- Share collections, travel pictures and artifacts
- Help with student publications
- Share childhood recollections and stories that illustrate local history and ethnic culture
- Help organize a college fair or career exploration day
- Plan or chaperone field trips to community and business sites
- Share information on job experiences and careers
- Assist with school plays

### Help Teachers

- Gather resources for units of study or special projects
- Audio record textbooks, plays, stories, etc.
- Help students complete daily assignments or material missed because of absences



## Suggested Classroom Activities by Subject

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### Math

- Help students prepare for upcoming tests
- Help with daily assignments
- Assist with MCA preparation
- Go over classroom material
- Correct tests and assignments with students
- Assist students individually or in small groups

### English

- Tutor students in reading and communication skills
- Help with daily assignments
- Help students with comprehension skills
- Help improve writing assignments
- Help with vocabulary words, grammar and library resources

### Social Studies

- Assist with daily assignments
- Prepare for upcoming exams
- Go over classroom material
- Discuss current events or share your own experiences with students
- Assist with research
- Help students with History Day projects

### Science

- Assist with labs
- Assist with daily assignments
- Go over classroom material

### World Language

- Go over classroom material
- Hold conversation groups
- Help with daily assignments
- Help prepare students for upcoming tests
- Help with language and culture activities
- Help test students on language abilities

### ELL (English Language Learner)

- Assist student individually or in small groups
- Help with reading or writing assignments
- Hold conversation groups
- Tutor students one-on-one