



Volunteer Handbook

A Guideline to Volunteering for St. Lucie Public Schools





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Welcome Message



Dr. Jon R. Prince
SUPERINTENDENT

The School Board recognizes that certain programs and activities can be enhanced through the use of volunteers who have particular knowledge or skills that will be helpful to members of the school staff who are responsible for the conduct of those programs and activities. School volunteers may include, but are not limited to, parents, senior citizens, students, and others who assist the teacher or other members of the school staff. School volunteers may be used to aid professional school personnel wherever this use will provide for the improvement of services to students.

Volunteer Program Goals

1. Provide individual educational assistance to students.
2. Improve student's self-worth by increasing opportunities for educational achievement.
3. Relieve teachers of many noninstructional tasks and duties.
4. Stimulate business and community interest, concern, and support for the educational system.
5. Enhance all aspects of the educational process.

Communication

The way we speak to and interact with children plays a powerful role in shaping their self-esteem and overall development. Our tone of voice, body language, and choice of words all matter. Volunteers must always use respectful, encouraging, and supportive language. It is never acceptable to shame, insult, belittle, discourage, or label a child—or their feelings, choices, or actions. As a volunteer, you are a role model. Your behavior sets an example and contributes directly to the success of the Volunteers in Public Schools program. Please act with integrity, kindness, and responsibility at all times.

Volunteer Guidelines

Welcome Volunteers!

The Board encourages individuals and groups to volunteer in local schools, district offices, and supervised school-related activities—before, during, and after school hours. Your time and energy make a meaningful difference in the lives of our students.

Who Is a Volunteer?

A volunteer is someone who offers their time and service without pay, under the sponsorship of the Board and the supervision of a designated administrator.

Program Oversight

The **District Volunteer Coordinator** is responsible for approving volunteers and issuing official volunteer badges and clearance. This role ensures that all volunteers meet district requirements and that the program complies with applicable laws and policies.

At the school level, **School-Based Volunteer Coordinators** manage day-to-day volunteer operations. Their responsibilities include recruiting and onboarding volunteers, assigning roles, and maintaining accurate records of volunteer participation on their campus.

Insurance Coverage

Registered volunteers are covered under the Board's Workers Compensation and General Liability Self-Insurance programs—just like employees.

Guidelines for Volunteers

As a volunteer, you play a vital role in supporting our students and schools. Here are some key principles to guide your work:

Your Role

- Volunteers do not replace teachers. Instead, they provide additional support to enhance student learning and motivation.
- You may work directly or indirectly with students, helping them build confidence and a positive self-image.

Working with School Staff

- Teachers and staff will assign tasks and provide the necessary materials and instructions.
- Volunteers follow the teacher's lead in both instruction and discipline, offering encouragement and guidance along the way.

Respect and Confidentiality

- Treat every student with respect and understanding. Building self-esteem is essential to learning.
- Any information about students is confidential and must be handled with care.

Professional Conduct

Volunteers are expected to:

- Maintain regular and consistent attendance.
- Follow all school and district policies and procedures.
- Discuss any concerns with staff at appropriate times.
- Use discretion when commenting on school matters.

Volunteer Expectations & Conduct

To ensure a safe, respectful, and productive environment for all students, volunteers are expected to follow these guidelines:

Supervision & Safety

- Volunteers must always work under the supervision of a district employee.
- Volunteers may not meet with a student alone under any circumstances.
- Volunteers are expected to maintain professional boundaries at all times. Physical contact with students should be avoided unless necessary for safety or instructional purposes.

Identification & Appearance

- Volunteers must wear their district-issued badge every time they are on campus or supervising an event.
- Volunteers should follow the school's dress code, unless otherwise directed.

Attendance & Scheduling

- Volunteers should be punctual and make the most of their scheduled time.
- If unable to attend a scheduled activity, volunteers must notify the school so the teacher and/or student can be informed.
- Volunteers are asked to commit only to the time they can realistically fulfill.

Classroom Conduct

- The teacher must always be present and responsible for instruction and discipline.
- Volunteers support the teacher's direction and do not administer discipline.
- Volunteers must go directly to their assigned area or classroom and should not wander or disrupt instructional time.

Confidentiality & Communication

- All student information accessed during volunteer duties is strictly confidential.
- Questions about policies or procedures should be directed to the teacher, principal, or school volunteer coordinator.

Placement & Restrictions

- Parent volunteers are not regularly placed in their own child's classroom. Exceptions require a teacher's request and principal's approval.
- Alumni under age 21 are not permitted on campus during regular school hours.
- Volunteers may not bring their own children while volunteering, as this poses a liability and distracts from student supervision.

While volunteering, individuals must:

- Refrain from smoking, profanity, and use of alcohol or controlled substances.
- Limit personal cell phone use.
- Avoid taking photos of students without prior parent/guardian approval.

St. Lucie Public Schools is a drug-free workplace, and all volunteers are expected to uphold this standard.

Procedures

To ensure a safe, organized, and effective volunteer experience, all volunteers must follow these procedures:

Annual Application

- All Volunteers—including general volunteers, student volunteers, and volunteer athletic coaches—must apply each school year via the district’s online system: <https://www.stlucie.k12.fl.us>.
- Applications must be submitted and approved at least 72 hours in advance of volunteering.

Sign-In/Sign-Out Requirements

- Volunteers must sign in and out at the front office with the volunteer coordinator or designated school district employee, see page 7 for more details.

Onboarding & Badge Process

- Volunteers must visit the District Office to complete onboarding, which includes:
 - Fingerprinting (required every 5 years, \$75 fee).
 - Photo for badge (required annually, \$6 fee).
- If a volunteer is already in the Clearinghouse with current fingerprints, they do not need to repeat fingerprinting until the 5-year mark—but must still apply and renew their badge annually.
- Volunteer badges expire on June 30 of each school year.
- Volunteers cannot be on campus until they receive their badge.
- Applicants will be notified when their badge is ready for pickup.
- Fingerprint processing times may vary depending on print quality and FBI turnaround.

Special Volunteer Categories

- **Student Volunteers:** No fingerprinting or badge required, but must apply online and complete a paper application.
- **Substitute Teachers:** Must apply, onboard, complete fingerprinting, and receive a volunteer badge.
- **Contractors:** Must apply and pay for a badge, but fingerprinting is not required if their fingerprints are current.
- **SLPS Retirees:** Fingerprinting costs are covered by the District.
- **Union Officers:** Do not need to apply to be a volunteer.

Volunteer Athletic Coaches

- Must complete the following certifications annually at <https://www.nfhslearn.com>:
 - Concussion in Sports
 - Heat Illness Prevention
 - Sudden Cardiac Arrest
 - Sportsmanship
- Must also complete CPR certification through an approved Florida Department of Health provider (valid for 2 years). Approved providers include:
 - American College of Emergency Physicians
 - AAOS/ACEP Emergency Care & Safety Institute
 - American Health and Safety Institute – 24/7
 - American Heart Association
 - American Red Cross
 - Emergency Medicine Learning and Resource Center
 - EMS Safety Services
 - Pacific Medical Training
 - ProTraining, LLC

Volunteer Sign-In and Badge Policy

To ensure the safety of our students and the integrity of our volunteer program, all volunteers must follow the procedures below each time they are on campus or participating in a school-related activity:

- **Sign In and Out:** Volunteers must sign in and out at the front office with the volunteer coordinator or the designated school district employee.
- **Wear Your Badge:** A valid volunteer badge must be worn at all times while on campus. These badges are orange and display the volunteer's name, expiration date, and the word "Volunteer."
- Schools must maintain a log of volunteer activity, including names, dates, hours served, and tasks completed.
- An online tracking form is provided by the District Volunteer Coordinator for district-wide reporting.

This policy is essential for the following reasons:

- To protect students and maintain a secure campus environment.
- To comply with the School Board policy requiring volunteer sign-in procedures.
- To locate volunteers quickly in case of an emergency.
- To ensure insurance coverage while volunteering. Volunteers are not covered if they have not completed the application process or fail to sign in.
- To verify volunteer hours for work experience documentation.
- To recognize and celebrate volunteer contributions.
- To help the school qualify for the Florida Department of Education's Golden School Award, which requires volunteer hours to double student enrollment.

Volunteers vs. Visitors

Understanding the difference between a volunteer and a visitor is essential for maintaining safety, compliance, and clarity on campus.

Volunteer

A volunteer is someone who provides direct service to students or the school, often on a recurring basis, and always under staff supervision. Volunteers must:

- Apply annually through the district's online system and be approved well in advance of the volunteer activity.
- Complete security screening, including FDLE background checks and registry clearance.
- Visit the district office for fingerprinting (approximately \$75, required every 5 years).
- Purchase and wear a district-issued badge (approximately \$6 annually).
- Sign in and out, wear their badge at all times, and log hours and tasks.
- Work under staff supervision—volunteers may not discipline students or be left unsupervised.

Visitor

A visitor typically comes to campus for a short-term, specific purpose such as a meeting, conference, or event. Visitors must:

- Check in at the front desk, usually via the Raptor system, and present a valid photo ID.
- Do not require background checks, fingerprinting, or a volunteer badge.

Volunteer Activities

The volunteer coordinator at each school site will help match volunteers with activities that align with their skills, interests, availability, and the school's needs.

All volunteer work must:

- Be supervised by a staff member
- Be approved by the school administration
- Follow district clearance procedures (some casual visits—like dropping off treats or having lunch with a child—only require signing in at the front desk via Raptor)

Common Volunteer Roles

- **After-School Support:** Assist with activities under teacher supervision.
- **Arts & Crafts:** Help students explore creativity with guidance from teachers.
- **Business Partner:** Share career expertise, support internships, and participate in advisory events.
- **Chaperone:** Supervise students during field trips and school events.
- **Classroom Assistant:** Support teachers with instruction and classroom tasks.
- **Office Help:** Assist with clerical tasks like filing, data entry, and materials prep.
- **Clinic Support:** Help with health screenings and care for students who are ill.
- **Community Resource:** Present on hobbies, careers, or interests to enrich student learning.
- **Exceptional Student Support:** Assist ESE teachers with instructional activities.
- **Media Center Help:** Support library operations under the media specialist's direction.
- **Mentor/Tutor:** Work one-on-one or in small groups to support academic and personal growth.
- **ESOL Assistance:** Help bridge communication for non-English speaking students and families.
- **Special Projects:** Join committees, assist with fundraisers, or help in the school store.
- **Supervision Support:** Monitor areas like the cafeteria, hallways, or playground.
- **Career/Technical Support:** Help students with hands-on learning in applied tech or career prep.
- **Miscellaneous:** Support programs like Math Superstars, band, PE, gardening, and more.

Field Trip and Event Guidelines

Chaperone Requirements

- Must be 18 or older to chaperone K–8 field trips.
- Must be 21 or older to chaperone high school field trips.
- All field trips must be supervised by a certified faculty member, who serves as the sponsor.
- Additional chaperones (staff or parents) must be approved by the principal and follow School Board Policy 9200.
- The number of chaperones will be based on the number of students and the specific needs of the trip.
- For trips extending beyond school hours, the supervising teacher is responsible for students until they are released to their parents.

Student Participation

- Only students enrolled in the participating classes may attend field trips, athletic events, or field day activities.

Counting Volunteer Hours

Accurate tracking of volunteer hours is essential for recognizing contributions, supporting school improvement efforts, and meeting district and state benchmarks.

Logging Hours

- Each school must maintain a log of volunteer names, dates, hours served, and tasks completed.
- An online form is provided by the District Volunteer Coordinator for district-wide tracking.

Why It Matters

Recording volunteer hours helps:

- Measure recruitment and retention success.
- Support School Improvement Plan benchmarks.
- Strengthen grant applications.
- Recognize volunteer contributions.
- Qualify for awards like the Florida Golden School Award.

Many volunteers give generously without seeking recognition—but logging hours ensures their impact is documented and celebrated. Teachers and staff should remind volunteers to record their time.

What Counts (and What Doesn't)

Counts:

- Time spent before/after school, during lunch or recess (for student/youth volunteers).
- Student safety patrol hours.
- PTO/PTA and SAC meetings (for approved volunteers).
- Off-campus activities (e.g., fundraising, preparing materials, phone calls).
- Field trip chaperoning—including overnight hours.
- Club/organization activities that directly benefit the school.
- Booster club service hours.
- High school/college students volunteering as part of a course (except internships).

Does Not Count:

- Activities during school hours for student/youth volunteers.
- Teacher hours for job-related or paid tasks.
- Administrator hours served at their own school.
- Education majors completing full-time internships.



Retired Volunteer Policies

Pursuant to Florida Statute §121.091(15) retirees from the Florida Retirement System (FRS) who wish to volunteer within the first 12 months after retirement must follow specific guidelines to ensure compliance with district and state regulations:

- **No prior agreement:** There must be no arrangement—formal or informal—between the retiree and the District before the retirement date regarding future volunteer service.
- **No compensation:** Retired volunteers may not receive payment or cash equivalents for their service.
- **No employee benefits:** Retired volunteers are not eligible for employee benefits (e.g., health or life insurance), except for necessary items like uniforms or equipment required to perform volunteer tasks.
- **Limited hours:** Volunteer hours must not exceed 20% of the retiree's previous weekly work schedule, including any training time.
- **Distinct roles:** Volunteer duties must be clearly different from those of paid employees.
- **Flexible scheduling:** Retirees control their own volunteer schedule, including hours and assignments.
- **Recordkeeping:** Both the school based volunteer coordinator and the retiree must maintain documentation to show compliance with these policies and submit them to the District Volunteer Coordinator. Records must be available upon request by the Department of Management Services (DMS) or the State Board of Administration (SBA).