

Mount Pleasant

Volunteer Handbook



Approved by the Governing Board of Mount Pleasant School December 5, 2017

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1. Introduction

The purpose of volunteers is not to replace the work of the employee, but rather to assist the administration and staff in improving the quality of the school environment.

Volunteers do make a difference! Volunteer participation will be an opportunity for you to share with others in the enrichment of education for our students. You will discover the rewards of helping students achieve their personal best and at the same time gain useful experience yourself. We hope as well that the experience of volunteering in our schools will offer you a greater awareness of the variety of challenges and opportunities confronting our education system.

2. What do volunteers do?

Volunteers can help in many different ways:

- Computer lab
- Classroom parents
- Field trips
- Fund raising
- Special events
- Library support
- Pizza, Frozen Yogurt, Sub Day Lunch program
- Reading programs
- Classroom cleanup
- Home & School

3. What Should a School Volunteer Expect?

A school volunteer should:

- Be made to feel that the assistance given is worthwhile and contributes to the overall value of the program in which they are participating.
- Be treated with respect and consideration by all students and staff.

4. What is Expected of a School Volunteer?

A school volunteer has the following responsibilities:

- to remember that the principal has ultimate responsibility for all personnel, policy and programs in his/her school, including volunteers;
- to follow the procedures of the school
- to be reliable
- to devote all of your attention to your role (we ask that you do not bring any additional children or babies while you volunteer)
- to remember that volunteers are in the school to assist and supplement - not replace the role of paid staff
- to remember you are a role model for students and the school community. Please maintain the highest standards of confidentiality and ethics.
- Never to take pictures (nor share those pictures via social media) unless expressly asked to do so by a staff member

5. Guidelines for Volunteers

A school volunteer is not a teacher or an educational program assistant, not a therapist or a counsellor, but first of all an adult/adolescent who accepts the students as they are. The volunteer can convey by his/her interest, attitude and sincerity that the student is a worthwhile person. Only when people feel good about themselves are they able to learn.

- **Ask** questions freely about programs, policies and equipment at a time appropriate both for the staff member and for yourself. Follow staff's established procedures.

Talk to the teacher about any difficulties at appropriate times, not in front of students or parents.

- **Share** your experiences and talents. Let the teacher know in what you excel (telling stories, singing, playing instruments, handcrafts, computer use, photography, etc.)

- Try to **learn** the names of students.

- **Help** students to tackle their work but do not do their work for them. If they get off-track, help them get back on in a tactful manner.

- **Work** at the student's level; sit or stand with him/her. Show your interest and involvement.

- **Speak** in a positive way to students – point out the things they have done right, the things they do well. Making comparisons is harmful.

- **Remind** students of appropriate behaviour if they are disruptive or break rules. Show by example a calm, responsible attitude for dealing with problems. Remember though that corrective discipline is the responsibility of the principal and the teaching staff.

6. Confidentiality

Perhaps one of the greatest obstacles in the path of effective use of volunteers, especially parent volunteers, is the worry on the part of teachers and principals regarding the possible misuse of privileged information. Once anyone begins to work in a school setting, he/she becomes privy to knowledge about children's behaviour patterns, academic ability, emotional maturity, relationships with others, etc. In some cases, information of this nature is imparted in order that the volunteer might work more effectively with the child. In other cases, it is simply acquired in the course of frequent contact in the school.

In addition, volunteers are in a position to learn more about staff members than would normally be learned from their "public image". One also forms personal opinions about the professional competency of the individual teachers and principals.

There is nothing wrong with the volunteer possessing such knowledge and arriving at personal conclusions. This knowledge or these opinions, however, should never be shared in the community, **including via social media**. Similarly, care must be taken not to make comments verbally or **via social media** that may be harmful to the reputation of any student, staff member or other volunteer.

If problems develop, the line of communication regarding a situation in the school is always first discussed with the staff member concerned and then, if necessary, with the principal.

A volunteer has every right to expect that his or her participation will be treated with the same confidentiality and respect.

7. Position of Privilege

As a volunteer you have the privilege of access to the people who work with your children. There is a fine line of discretion that needs to be maintained when interacting with staff. By using your time and access in the school building to speak to the staff members who work with your child, you are taking advantage of the privilege of being in the building. As an example, when you are volunteering in the library, you strike up a discussion with your child's teacher about your child. This would be considered to be an abuse of the privilege.

8. Safety and Security

✓Volunteers must:

- access and leave the building from the front door
- see the school secretary
- sign-in before proceeding into the building
- wear a volunteer sticker while working in the school
- If there is a fire drill or lock-down drill, volunteers must follow the instructions given and follow set procedures
- **complete a confidential judicial records verification**
- Wait for their child at dismissal outside as usual **or** sign them out before dismissal.
- Sign-out when leaving the building

Volunteers are not free to roam the building and visit different areas which are not part of their duties. Including going to your own child's class.

9. Recognition

Volunteering is “the giving of time, energy, and concern”. It is an honourable and cherished responsibility of our society. Mount Pleasant staff wishes to thank each and every volunteer for their participation and dedication to the students.

Together we can make each child's years at Mount Pleasant a solid foundation upon which to build a lifetime of successful achievement.

