

CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Volunteer Handbook



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Mission

The mission of our volunteer program is to inspire and promote volunteerism within the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and to help create student success in a positive learning environment.

Vision statement

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District envisions 21st Century Schools of Choice where students will be challenged with a rigorous curriculum that considers the individual learning styles, program preferences and academic capabilities of each student, while utilizing the highest quality professional educators, administrators and support staff available.

Board of Education volunteer policy

Citizen volunteers may be used to enhance students' educational opportunities by drawing upon the strengths of citizens in the community. School personnel shall actively seek to locate and use the voluntary services of people whose backgrounds will further the school's educational program.

- **Criteria.** The standards of conduct prescribed for employees of the Cleveland Municipal School District shall be applicable to all volunteers. Criteria for the selection of volunteers shall be developed on the basis of school or District need.
- **Training.** Volunteers shall be oriented and trained in their assignments.
- **Activities.** Volunteers shall help school personnel in appropriate education and other school-related activities. Such activities shall include assistance inside or outside the classroom, such as assignment in the lunchroom, the playground, the office, or the library.
- **Limitations.** Volunteers shall function only under the direction and supervision of school personnel and shall respect the confidential nature of relationships with students and school personnel. Volunteers who work directly with students may be required to have a criminal record check.
- **Termination of the voluntary services of any person** shall be based on performance judged to be inconsistent with the policies of the Board of Education or a determination that such services are not needed.

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LEGAL REFERENCES

ORC 2305.23; 2305.231; 2744.01; 3319.311; 3319.39

OAC 3301-9-01; 3301-35-03(J)



What are the goals of the CMSD volunteer program?

The major goal of the district Volunteer Program is to assist schools in providing the best possible education for each student. The services of volunteers are utilized in schools and district offices to accomplish the following objectives:

- To relieve teachers and support personnel of some non-instructional tasks
- To provide teachers with more time to work with students
- To enrich the curriculum and children's learning opportunities
- To provide individual attention to those children who need more one-on-one
- Assistance than the classroom teacher is able to provide
- To promote a school-home-community partnership for quality education

Volunteers have a positive impact on student academic performance, attendance and behavior.

Who can volunteer?

Everyone who cares about children and education is a potential volunteer. Prior teaching experience is not necessary. Volunteers are:

- Parents
- Family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.)
- College students
- Senior citizens
- Community members

What kinds of jobs do volunteers do?

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District offers a wide variety of volunteer opportunities with a chance to work with children while many other service descriptions are available for those who prefer not to work directly with students.

Volunteers can select from a number of service opportunities available at each school that interest them. Here is a sample of the jobs, which you may choose:

Classroom instructional volunteer and tutor: Work directly with individual or small groups of students. Volunteers listen to students read, reinforce basic math skills, or assist students with written assignments. Needed 2-3 days a week. May require a FBI/BCI background check.

Classroom assistance volunteer: Works with a teacher and performs tasks such as putting up bulletin boards, correcting papers, preparing teaching aids and special learning materials, duplicating worksheets, and other jobs which will provide the teacher with more time to plan for and teach students. Needed 2-3 days a week.

Office clerical assistance: Works with the school secretary and office staff to provide support and assistance with duties such as sorting mail, duplicating school newsletters and flyers, getting classroom supply orders ready for distribution to teachers, typing, answering the phone, and preparing bulletin boards for the office area. Needed 2-4 days a week.

Special education volunteer: Our school system serves many children with special needs. Children with physical, mental, or emotional handicaps benefit greatly from the assistance of an extra caring adult. Volunteers are needed to assist students who attend special education classes in neighborhood schools throughout the district. For example, physically handicapped students who are unable to write need volunteers to write for them. Needed 2-4 days a week. May require a FBI/BCI background check.

Health office assistant: Works in the health office with the school nurse providing clerical assistance and helping with health screenings such as vision tests. Needed 1-3 days a week. May require a FBI/BCI background check.

Library or media center volunteer: Works with the librarian or media center specialist by repairing and shelving books, doing clerical work or preparing bulletin boards and displays. Volunteers may choose to work directly with students helping them to locate and use library materials or assisting them with research projects. Needed 2-4 days a week. May require a FBI/BCI background check.

Special event volunteer: Works with school staff and/or Administration staff in the successful implementation of school wide or district wide events. Volunteers may participate in all or in a few aspects of the planning, promoting, and implementation of the Event. The commitment of time may span between 1 to 4 months as participation is required for planning and implementation meetings.

For additional information, know there is a Tutoring Handbook available for volunteers working to reinforce student academic achievement. This handbook is located on the school district's website (ClevelandMetroSchools.org/Page/537) you will find strategies for reading and writing with students as well as tips for positive reinforcement.

Volunteer guidelines

Registration: Every volunteer who serves with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District must complete an Electronic Registration Form before he/she begins. (This includes parent volunteers and community groups.) This form is located on the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's website (ClevelandMetroSchools.org/Page/537).

For community groups wanting to volunteer at a school, a Group Volunteer form must be completed by the group's contact and a Volunteer Release form must be signed by each member of the group. A copy of the form must be shared with the FACE office.

Community groups wanting to volunteer at a school, can select one of two options that best fit the group's needs:

Option #1: Community members can complete the online Volunteer Electronic Registration (see above) at the approval of their group's main contact. This format works well with large groups that are spread out and that security checks are not performed by the organization.

Option #2: The organization assumes responsibility for the liability and security clearance of the group members by downloading the Community & Corporate Partner Volunteer Registration form located on the district's website (ClevelandMetroSchools.org/Page/537.) The main contact for the group must be legally authorized to assume this liability. If volunteers are under 18 years of age, they must fill out the Minor Volunteer Registration packet that will include a parent signature.

Supervision: School volunteers always work under the direct supervision of the designated professional staff at each school and only with those teachers who have requested the services of the volunteer. The district is responsible for the education, safety, and well being of each student. For this reason, you can understand why the teacher, principal, or school coordinator must dismiss any volunteer whose actions are not in the best interest of the school or students.

Background checks: Volunteers of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District will be asked to complete one of two types of checks. The first, is an electronic security check that volunteers are required if they are volunteering under continuous staff supervision. Second type of check is for those who serve or apply to volunteer with children and have limited supervision by school staff, they will have to have a FBI/BCI background check before they can begin their duties, or as a condition of continued service as a volunteer. This also applies to all volunteers that serve in after-school programs.

If a FBI/BCI background check indicates that a volunteer has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to any of the offenses listed below and/or described in OAC 3301-20-03(A)(6), the volunteer will be informed either that the Board is no longer interested in maintaining his/her volunteer service or that the volunteer will be assigned to duties for which s/he will not work with children.

Background checks will be conducted by CMSD Division of Safety and Security after completing their registration. The cost is \$46, payable by money order or cashier's check. For our community partners bringing in a group of volunteers that require background checks, we have extended a courtesy in accepting an organization check.

If you wish to contact CMSD Safety and Security Office for more details, please call 216.838.0467. If you have questions regarding disqualifying offenses please contact the Manager of Volunteers at 216.838.0337.

Volunteer identification badges: All volunteers must be identified with a volunteer ID badge indicating the volunteer's security clearance. Badges with a Yellow band indicate that the volunteer must always be supervised by school staff. Badges with a Green band indicate that the volunteer has a higher level of clearance and can work with students under limited school staff supervision. School staff will assist by taking a badge picture of the volunteer. If you are unsure who at the school is responsible for your badge picture, please contact the Manager of Volunteers at 216.838.0337 for assistance. Badges will be provided to volunteers only after security clearances are complete.



Volunteer protocols and procedures

Confidentiality: As you work with the staff and students, information of a confidential matter may be shared with you. The problems, abilities, relationships, and confidences of students, their parents, and the staff should never be discussed with anyone who does not have a professional right or need to know them. Like teachers, volunteers are bound by a code of ethics to keep confidential matters within the school. The staff and students need to know they can trust you.

Please do not discuss a child's school progress or difficulties with his/her parents. This is the teacher's responsibility.

Occasionally, a child might confide in you about family matters or personal problems. If you feel that it is vital for the school to have this information in order to help the student, discuss the child's conversation (in private) with the teacher or principal.

Discipline: Students rarely have behavior problems while working with volunteers. However, our schools have detailed discipline plans and the responsibility for discipline rests with the professional staff. Volunteers may not discipline students. Please make the teacher aware of any discipline problem that might arise while you are working with a student.

Restrooms: Staff restrooms are available for volunteers. Adults must never use a student restroom or accompany a student into a restroom.

Dismissal of students: Volunteers may never dismiss a student from school. Children who must leave school early for any reason must receive permission from the school office and sign out before leaving. Under no circumstances may a volunteer take a student off campus. Volunteers may not walk or drive students to their homes.

Dress and behavior: Take your lead from the professional staff and dress appropriately for the job you are doing. It is best to neither over dress nor under dress. Casual clothing is fine, but we ask that attire be neat and conservative. Your appearance should attract no undue attention. Keep in mind that you are in a position to set an example for students. Your speech and behavior should serve as good models for them to follow.

Health: If you are not feeling well, don't try to keep up your volunteer duties in spite of an illness. You'll accomplish more in the long run if you allow yourself time to recuperate. (Do call the school office in advance to let them know you won't be coming in at your scheduled time, however.) Schools are particularly concerned about keeping students and staff healthy. This is another reason for staying away from school if you have a contagious illness.

Your commitment: Before you agree to volunteer, carefully consider the commitment you are making. The work volunteer's do is important. Whether they work in the classroom, main office, media center, tutor, etc. the staff and students quickly become dependent upon volunteer assistance.

Don't promise to volunteer more time than you will be able to follow through with. It's better to start out with a few hours a week and gradually build up to more hours or days if you find you have the additional time.

Find out about school rules: Become familiar with the rules and policies of the school where you work. It's a good idea to read through the school's handbook. Ask your supervising teacher to explain the school's policy for smoking, use of telephones, eating facilities, fire drills, and emergency procedures. Use reasonable judgment in making decisions when there appears to be no policy or when the policy is not communicated. As soon as possible, consult with the principal or family liaison for future guidance.

Responsibilities of the staff: Volunteers are an important part of the educational team. The suggestions and opinions of volunteers are always welcome. It is the professional staff, however, that is held responsible by law for decisions that are made regarding the instruction of students and the management of the school. For this reason, volunteers always work under the direct supervision the administrators.

Field Trip Chaperones: If parent is attending a school field trip with their child for a reason such as to look after their child's needs: medical, special needs, etc. They do not have to register as a volunteer. Parent will require the approval of the school Principal. If parent is attending a school field trip with the purpose of assisting the teachers with scholars: They will need to register as volunteers. School administrators will determine the security level clearance needed in accordance to the supervision of the volunteer by school staff while on the field trip. All volunteer field trip chaperones' must be properly identified with their CMSD volunteer badge.

Is there anything volunteers shouldn't do?

YES!! The professional staff at your school is responsible for everything that goes on in your building including student instruction, safety, and discipline. Volunteers supplement and support the program but may not:

- Provide the curriculum or teaching plan
- Discipline students
- Take charge of the classroom for any length of time
- Have access to materials in student's permanent, hard-copy, records file or electronic records file (psychological records, grade cards, health history, etc.)
- Diagnose student needs
- Evaluate achievement
- Counsel students
- Discuss student progress with parents
- Drive district vehicles
- Fulfill duties with young children in tow during school hours.
- A volunteer is never considered a substitute for a member of the school staff.

You are a valued volunteer

Working effectively with the staff: The staff will appreciate your willingness to be a part of the educational team. The staff will come to depend upon your assistance. Here are some tips for working effectively with the staff:

Getting to know you: Let the staff know what types of jobs you are interested in doing and what your special skills are so they can utilize your talents.

A new experience for you and perhaps for the teacher: If you've never been a school volunteer before, you'll find that there are many new and exciting things to learn about the job. Please be aware that some staff members have never had an opportunity to work with volunteers before. This will be a new experience for them, too, as they learn how to utilize the services of a volunteer.

Be a good communicator: The staff will welcome your questions and comments. If you don't understand something, always ask. Volunteering should be an enjoyable and rewarding job. If you are unhappy or concerned about something, discuss the situation with the staff.

Routine tasks are important: The staff often relies upon volunteers to do the “routine” jobs such as preparing learning aids and organizing materials. Because volunteers are able to assist with these jobs, teachers are free to spend more time working with students or planning for quality instruction.

We all have different ways of doing things: When you have been assigned a task, make certain you know exactly how the teacher wants the job done. Ask for clear directions and if necessary, ask that the teacher give you samples or demonstrate how tasks are to be performed.

Try something new: The opportunity to learn new skills is one of the benefits of being a school volunteer. Be willing to try new tasks assigned by the staff, but accept only as much responsibility as you feel comfortable with.

If you work with students ...

Call students by name at each opportunity: A child's name is very important. Make every effort to pronounce and spell each child's name correctly.

Closely observe the techniques used by the teacher: Try to model these instructional methods when working with students.

ACCEPT CHILDREN AS THEY ARE: Each child is unique. Some children may be very different from your own child. Be ready to accept these differences in background, values, vocabulary, and aspirations. ENCOURAGE AND PRAISE STUDENTS.

Use positive comments that will make children feel good about themselves even when they are having difficulty. Avoid saying anything that will make student feel bad about themselves or their ability to learn. Be ready to praise children for even the smallest successes! Let each child know that you care about him/her through the use of verbal affirmation.

Children never forget: If you promise them something, be prepared to keep the promise. Be careful not to make promises that you will be unable to keep.

Encourage students to do their own thinking: Try not to give students the answers before they have had an opportunity to solve problems on their own. Give children plenty of time to answer your questions.

Silence often means that a child is thinking. Beware of occasional students who may try to get you to do their work for them.

- Help students 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.
- If you don't know an answer or are unsure of what to do, admit it to the children and work it out together. Feel free to ask the teacher for help when you need it.
- Use tact and positive comments. Offer choices as a problem-solving technique.

Follow the teacher's lead: Always be consistent with the teacher's rules for classroom behavior. Don't allow children to do things their teacher doesn't allow. Remember, the teacher is always available and ready to handle discipline problems. Make sure the children with whom you are working do not disturb the rest of the class.

Reinforce good behavior: When children (especially younger students) are behaving well, always let them know how proud you are of them and how much you appreciate their effort. This will encourage them to try even harder. If possible, do not pay attention to a child who shows minor misbehavior problems, but do note things the child is doing well and praise him/her for it.

It's okay if you don't know all the answers: Admit to the children that you don't know the answer or aren't sure what to do. Work the answers out together with students or feel free to ask the teacher for assistance.

Keep students on task: You'll want the children to learn as much as possible during the short time they spend with you. Keep the lessons or activity moving. Try to avoid letting one or more students get you or the group off the track for long periods of time by discussing topics that have nothing to do with the lesson.

Supervise students carefully: Under no circumstances should you leave a student or small group of students without supervision. Always be fully aware of what students are doing at all times.

To give or not to give

Your positive words of encouragement will go a long way in helping students to become excited about learning. Younger children may also enjoy stars, stickers, stamps, and especially little notes of praise from the volunteer. You and the teacher can discuss the use of these motivational materials.

Please **do not** give students food without checking with the teacher. Volunteers may not give students advertisements or fund solicitations.

Rewards of volunteering

We know you will enjoy your volunteer experience. Each year, many volunteers tell us they receive so much more than they give to the program. By sharing your time with our students and staff you will:

- Be given the opportunity to use your skills and talents
- Gain a better understanding of how children learn
- Have a chance to meet and work with teachers and other volunteers
- Know that the work you are doing directly affects the quality of education for the children of our community
- Have a great chance to learn valuable new skills that you might use in future endeavors.



Share your experience

If you have friends or relatives who might be interested in volunteering in our schools or in one of our district offices or departments, please ask them to contact the Family and Community Engagement office at 216.838.3223.

Teacher/volunteer conference checklist

Plan to discuss these topics when you meet with the teacher:

- ☐ Days and times you will work
- ☐ How will you let the school know if you are unable to work at your assigned time?
- ☐ Alternate plans for days when the teacher is absent and a substitute teacher is in charge of the class
- ☐ How the teacher will tell you of your days' assignment (plan book, folder, note, etc.)
- ☐ How you will tell the teacher what you have accomplished during the day, performance of students with whom you have worked, need for materials, etc.
- ☐ A safe and secure place to leave your personal belongings
- ☐ Location of materials and workspace for your use
- ☐ Classroom rules and teacher's discipline policy
- ☐ Procedure for letting the teacher know when a child is having a discipline problem that requires his/her attention
- ☐ Daily class schedule
- ☐ Alternate plans if a student with whom you work is absent
- ☐ Student roll and/or seating chart

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