



# Volunteer Handbook

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for E-12 Volunteers  
Bloomington Public Schools



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## Introduction

This handbook contains information that will help you perform the services at your school that may be required of you. We hope you will find it helpful.

You are strongly encouraged to attend Orientation and Training sessions offered by the Volunteer Connection and the school. These sessions are designed to help you feel more comfortable in your volunteer position and provide you with the tools necessary for literacy and math activities.

We appreciate your willingness to share your time and talents to increase educational opportunities for students. Your service will help students achieve academic success, provide an “extra pair of hands” for busy teachers, and will contribute to the general welfare of the schools.

We wish for each of you a successful, rewarding and satisfying experience. Should you have any additional questions or need other information, please feel free to call the teacher to whom you are assigned, or contact the Volunteer Connection, E-12 Programs.

### **Volunteer Connection, E-12**

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*The Bloomington Public Schools is an Equal Opportunity/  
Affirmative Action Educator and Employer.*

## What Can I Give as a Volunteer?

You can...

- Give a child time — precious time
- Give a child a chance to compete only with himself
- Help a child feel accepted
- Bring a child new experiences and “know how”
- Expand a child’s world of adult friendships
- Offer a child a listening ear
- Be a good friend
- Reinforce skills taught in the classroom
- Strengthen school-community relations through direct and positive participation in the school.



## What Will Be Expected From Me?

All volunteers are required to complete an application and background check, which includes past volunteer experience and your preference as to areas in which you are interested in volunteering. This information is used to find a suitable volunteer position for you.

Although there are no education requirements for school volunteers, there are certain human qualities that enhance a volunteer’s efforts, such as:

- desire to motivate children and help them succeed in school
- sincerity
- a warm and understanding personality
- ability to get along with others
- patience
- sense of humor
- positive attitude

## **What Will Be Expected From Me?**

(continued)

### **The following are expected from good volunteers:**

- respect for the dignity and uniqueness of all human beings
- ability to be flexible
- confidentiality
- conform to school policies; know importance of volunteer's role as a good example of behavior, speech, and dress
- support the teacher in all situations
- follow the teacher's plan completely
- ask, if they do not understand the assignment
- dependability and punctuality
- good health
- willingness to accept supervision
- remember the teacher is in charge of the classroom
- acceptance that the teacher is a professional educator and the volunteer is there to supplement
- advance notice of impending absence
- neat appearance

## What Do Volunteers Do in the School?

### **Basic Skills Tutor**

*Basic Skills Tutors* serve as a critical link in the learning process by providing remedial, one-on-one attention to a student outside the classroom. Reading, writing and mathematics are the most frequently requested subject areas. Basic skills tutors reinforce academic learning, review homework assignments, and help develop study and organizational skills.

### **English Language (EL) Volunteers**

*EL Volunteers* work with students who need assistance with verbal and written English. Knowledge of a foreign language is not required. Volunteer activities may include: listening to students read, reviewing grammar and spelling assignments, reinforcing classroom learning, or building the young learner's English language confidence.

### **Classroom Assistant**

*Classroom Assistants* serve as role models to help students increase academic performance, confidence and self-esteem. Classroom assistants work with a small group or an individual student under the direction of a classroom teacher. Volunteers give extra attention and help provide skill reinforcement.

### **Enrichment Tutor**

*Enrichment Tutors* enrich the lives of students who are performing above grade level by introducing activities that stimulate and challenge. Enrichment tutors work in a variety of subject areas including mathematics, science, writing and computers.

### **Homework Connection**

*Homework Connection Volunteers* help E-12 students with basic skills at our homework centers in several Bloomington locations. Great for people who want to volunteer in the late afternoons or evenings. Service groups and family volunteers are also welcome!

## Routine Procedures to Follow

- Always remember to sign in at the office when you arrive, and sign out when you leave.
- Be sure to wear your Bloomington Schools Volunteer name tag for identification.
- Be reliable. If you must be absent, call the school and ask that the teacher 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.
- Once you receive your assignment, meet with the teacher sometime when she does not have students in her classroom. This will give you an opportunity to discuss your volunteer assignment, learn about classroom procedures, etc. Do not hesitate to set up additional meetings, if necessary, to get further instructions, discuss a problem, or learn about materials.
- Do not accept this responsibility lightly. Teachers will have planned on you; your student is dependent upon you. Volunteer for only the time you can realistically expect to give.
- Remember that you are acting as a role model for your student and you should dress and act appropriately.
- Wear clothes that are comfortable for sitting on the floor and small chairs. Hats are not allowed in a classroom.
- Share any problems you encounter with the Coordinator of the Volunteer Connection or teacher with whom you work.
- Never share your telephone number, email address, home address information or accept this information from students. Do not interact with students on social media.



## The Students Need...

- To think you are working with them, rather than talking at them. Patronizing can do more harm than good.
- To know you will handle minor behavior problems fairly, firmly and in a friendly manner. Disruptive behavior must be dealt with by the classroom teacher.

## **The Students Need...** (continued)

- To talk about their problems now and then. When this happens, just listen and refrain from prying. Avoid taking sides; you may not know the “whole story.”
- To be accepted as they are, rather than to have our personal standards imposed upon them.
- To find success in their school work each session. Praise and acceptance will speed their progress. Ridicule and sarcasm do not increase success.
- To succeed in learning by working with others and sharing ideas. “Lecturing” turns most students off.
- To have your complete attention during the tutoring sessions. Interruptions may cause a student to lose his train of thought.

## **A Bill of Rights for Volunteers**

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### **A Volunteer has:**

- The right to be treated as a co-worker, not as free help or a once-in-a-while convenience.
- The right to be treated with respect by students and staff. If students are unmanageable or disrespectful, alert the teacher immediately.
- The right to a suitable assignment, with consideration for personal preference, temperament, life experience, education, and employment background.
- The right to know as much about the organizations policies, its people, and programs.
- The right to training for the job, offered through the Volunteer Connection.
- The right to continued information and new developments affecting your assignment.
- The right to a convenient place to work, conducive to learning, and worthy of the job to be done.
- The right to be heard; have a part in planning, freedom to make suggestions, ask questions and get answers.
- The right to recognition in the form of awards and through day-to-day expressions of appreciation.

## 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. Student's need this kind of help most often in reading and math, but it could be in any subject. The following guidelines may help you in your first tutoring situation.

- First, 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 in which you can help.
- Get specific directions about the assignment from the teacher.
- Find a quiet place in or out of the classroom where the two of 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.
- Find out exactly where the student is in his work by asking the student to explain to you some of the work which has preceded this assignment.
- Let the student work out as much as she can on her own. Provide encouragement, but don't step in too soon.
- Rather than giving the student the answer when he asks, direct the student's thinking so he can discover the answer himself.

### Examples

Student: "How can I subtract \$.82 from a \$1.00?"

Volunteer replies: "Well, how many cents are there in one dollar?"

Student: "Who made the first American flag?"

Volunteer replies: "Does your social studies book have an index? Perhaps you could find the information if you look under 'flag.'"

## Tutoring Tips

Set a positive, warm learning opportunity when working with students. It will take time and patience for you and the student to feel comfortable working together. You will be taking the first step toward building the desired relationship by simply being yourself. Remembering some of the following points may also help in 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. Your volunteer name tag will help the student remember.
- 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 home life, unless the student brings it up. It may be embarrassing to them.
- Make it your first goal to become friends with the student. If nothing else is gained in the tutorial sessions, the student will benefit from this personal relationship. The student will be more willing to learn from someone he likes.
- Relax, be yourself and keep a sense of humor.
- Build your relationship slowly and keep it growing by your acceptance of the student, faith in his ability, honesty, sensitivity and trustworthiness. Never promise something to him that you cannot follow through or produce.
- Students make mistakes. Let them know that making mistakes is part of learning. Do not be afraid of making mistakes yourself.
- Build the student's self-confidence. Praise your student honestly and frequently. Remember attentiveness and effort can be as important as performance. Accentuate the positive, minimize the negative.

## Tutoring Tips (continued)

- 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. Most underachievers work more slowly on academic problems often because they are less secure.
- Repetition is important. As many different ways as you can devise to get the student to repeat what is being learned, the better it will be.
- Be sincere, and praise any honest effort. Look at failures as opportunities for another try at the same task. The student should never see failure as negative. A student quickly loses respect for the giver of undeserved praise.
- If the student starts to digress from the work assignment, focus her back on the subject by saying, "How does this apply to what we started talking about?"
- Make all tasks appear challenging. Do not tell students, "this is easy" or they will feel defeated if they fail in the task.
- Avoid scolding a student for an incorrect answer. Instead, reply to the response with a statement such as: "Let's think about this." You can then review a few facts and help her discover the correct conclusion.
- Avoid "don't" and "no". Try to be positive. If you view the student as capable of listening, he will also perceive himself as capable and worthy.
- Praise the student when they succeed at the activity you have been doing together. Let the student know you expect their success by saying, "I knew you could do it."
- The volunteer's interest and enthusiasm may be the single and most important part of the student's success!!!

## What Can I Expect?

### **A five year old...**

Is helpful around the house.  
Prefers mother.  
Needs some assistance with coats, etc.  
Is close-mouthed at home about school activities.  
Has short bursts of energy.  
Changes from one activity to another with relative ease.  
Has vague concepts of time.  
Is not fearful.  
Asks many questions about how things work.  
Enjoys cutting, and pasting.  
Loves to play dress-up.

### **A six year old...**

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

### **A seven year old...**

Does not respond promptly.  
May forget easily.  
Fights with playmates.  
Plays in pairs or in groups.  
Is interested in magic, puzzles, collecting and exchanging.  
Is concerned about being good.  
Is easier to discipline, sensitive to praise.  
Complains and sulks.  
Looks up to his/her teacher.

### **An eight year old...**

Is often interested in money.  
Makes fewer complaints about teacher.  
Is expansive and speedy.  
Has a longer attention span.  
Is alert, friendly, and interested in people—but sometimes careless, noisy, and argumentative.  
Has feelings easily hurt by careless remarks.  
Understands time and money concepts.  
Likes team games.

## **What Can I Expect?** (continued)

Is critical of brothers and sisters.  
Needs frequent reminders about responsibilities.  
Is demanding of mother.  
Is sensitive to criticism.  
Is in need of adult praise and encouragement.

### **A nine year old...**

Has new forms of self-independence.  
Has increasing self-motivation.  
Resents interruptions.  
Likes secret codes and languages.  
Has a strong sense of right and wrong.  
Is easily discouraged.  
Is competitive in work and 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.

### **A ten year old...**

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

### **Preadolescents are...**

Awkward, lazy, and restless because of rapid and uneven growth.  
Very antagonistic and teasing toward the opposite sex.  
Often over-critical, rebellious and uncooperative.  
In need of warm affection and a sense of humor from adults.  
Turned off by nagging, condemnation, and being talked down to.  
In need of a feeling of belonging and acceptance.  
In need of increasing opportunities for independence.

### **Adolescents are...**

Often going to extremes, emotionally unstable, and know-it-alls.

Having tremendous variations in attainment of physical maturity.

Acquiring adult capacity for abstract thinking.

Using aggressiveness in seeking independence. Resenting conditions that make him/her dependent on adults.

Having difficulty adjusting to the hypocrisies of adult society.

Oversensitive, indulging in self-pity, and having intense fear of ridicule.

Concerned about popularity.

Showing an acute sense of injustice.

Tending to oversimplify.

In need of adult guidance that is kindly and does not threaten freedom.



### **Some of the Benefits and Rewards of Volunteers?**

The benefits of the school volunteer program are more obvious to the student, the teacher, and the school than they are to the volunteer. To the volunteer the rewards are deeply personal and virtually impossible to measure, such as:

- There is the satisfaction of seeing the student come up to grade level.
- A former teacher may want to “keep in practice” so she can return to teaching.
- A volunteer may have a special talent or resource and derive satisfaction from sharing it with students.
- The volunteer may want to feel needed and useful.
- Volunteer experience can be used on job applications.
- Some volunteers have a desire to be recognized.
- Volunteers may want to use the experience to help get ready to move out of the home and back to work, using the program as a stepping stone to accomplish this.
- And perhaps the most common reward is the satisfaction in helping to fill an explicit need in the school.

**Please note —  
We are not  
responsible for:**

A child's hug or kiss

A teacher's comment, "You'll never know how much you  
being here means to me!"

A teenager saying, "Gee, thanks for your time."

A principal giving you a hearty welcome and sincere  
thanks for a job well done.

Anyone saying "Thanks so much for caring!"

**You are responsible for that!**

**Thank you for your willingness to share your time  
with our students. You can help make a difference  
in the lives of Bloomington youth.**



Adapted from the D÷v÷dends  
School Volunteer Program,  
Seminole County Public Schools, Florida.

