Acknowledgement

The Nashua School District gratefully acknowledges the contributions of parents, students, local college students, retirees, business staff, and community members who give of their time and effort to enhance Nashua students’ educational experience.

Explanation

This handbook, prepared by the Office of Grants and Community Development, is intended to serve as a resource to assist you in your role as a Partner in Education participant. The handbook outlines procedures for volunteers, school volunteer coordinators, principals, and teachers.

Partners in Education encourages members of the community to become involved in our schools.
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Dear Partner in Education,

Thank you for participating in Partners in Education.

Your support brings special encouragement. We at the Nashua School District seek the best possible learning opportunities for our students. In doing so, we draw on an unwavering commitment to explore innovative and engaging approaches to teaching and learning. We welcome volunteers playing a role in that commitment to excellence in education.

Again, thank you for your willingness to take part in our award-winning volunteer program. The Nashua School District is truly fortunate to have a volunteer like you who is a dedicated “partner” in education.

Sincerely,

Mark Conrad
Superintendent
Partners in Education
Mission and Purpose

The mission of Partners in Education is to develop links between schools, parents, business leaders, and the community-at-large through a school volunteer program. Partners in Education serves to enrich and support the academic and cultural growth of our students, grades kindergarten through high school; create a spirit of involvement and concern for our students; and build bridges to develop a sense of unity and pride in our community.

The purpose of Partners in Education is:

- To assist teachers in providing more opportunity for students for individual attention and enrichment
- To increase student motivation and appreciation for the value of continual learning through both schooling and experiences beyond the classroom
- To offer the community an opportunity to become involved with the educational system through direct and positive participation in the schools
- To share resources
- To provide role models

History

To encourage parental support in the Nashua public schools, the School Volunteer Program was formally established in 1968. Although volunteerism in the schools was not new, Edmund Keefe, then superintendent of schools, and recognized the need to promote parental involvement, started the program. Superintendent Keefe’s successor, Berard Masse believed that community-orientated schools helped to promote school-orientated communities. Dr. Masse worked to develop the means to
promote relationships between the community at large, businesses, and the schools. Today Superintendent Mark Conrad continues to foster the mission of community involvement in our schools.

School Volunteer Program: Overview

At each school, a parent or team of parents volunteers to manage the school’s volunteer program. Working with the support of the District’s Office of Grants and Community Development, the coordinators meet monthly to share ideas, discuss problems and solutions, and learn about available resources. These monthly forums also provide the necessary information and assistance needed to maintain and strengthen programs already in place, and to develop new school programs. From its earliest beginnings in 1968 to today, the volunteer program’s mission is to support our schools’ staff in their pursuit of excellence in education.

Partners in Education is an award-winning program. Since 1989, each Nashua school has been awarded the Blue Ribbon School Achievement Award for volunteerism each year. The award, sponsored by the Office of the Governor, the NH Department of Education, and New Hampshire Partners in Education, recognizes exceptional collaborative efforts between schools and communities.

Why Volunteer?

Our volunteers are willing to spend time in the schools because they want to contribute to our students’ success and help the school staff. But many veteran volunteers tell us that they end up benefiting much more personally than they ever imagined. We are delighted to hear how rewarding being a member of Partners in Education can be. We are strengthened by their support, and we hope to continue to merit their continuing involvement.

As always, we welcome new members. Let’s Get Started!
Partners in Education Participant: Volunteer

Qualifications

A volunteer needs:

- To be a kind and responsible adult who enjoys working with students
- To be committed to assigned volunteer work
- To be flexible and dedicated in fulfilling all obligations
- To work cooperatively with school personnel

Guidelines

A volunteer is

**Committed**

- To participate in program orientation and training, if needed
- To sign the volunteer book at arrival and at departure, and wear a volunteer badge while in the school
- To maintain a record of all volunteer hours for recordkeeping purposes
- To be dependable and prompt; if a volunteer appointment cannot be kept, the school contact should be notified as far in advance as possible

**Discreet**

- Volunteer work is to remain confidential

In keeping with the Nashua School District’s mission of providing a safe, nurturing, and motivating environment for all our students, the District’s school volunteer program asks all volunteers to respect students’ privacy. While volunteering, please keep observations about student behavior and academic performance confidential. In addition and in keeping with District policy, if a student confides in a volunteer about any harm being done to
themselves or someone else, the threat of harm must be reported immediately to the principal. We appreciate your sensitivity to the importance of confidentiality issues. If you have questions regarding confidentiality, please confer with the principal.

- Discuss with appropriate school personnel issues regarding:
  - School policies or procedures
  - Individual student or classroom issues

**Consistent**

- Follow school regulations, as explained during orientation
- Communicate with the teacher about goals, methods, discipline, and assignments
- Recognize the volunteer’s role as a model in behavior, speech, and dress to children
- Work with students in supervised areas designated by teachers

**Caring**

- Motivate students
- Build self-confidence in students
- Praise their accomplishments
- Communicate to students how much you enjoy being with them
- Convey the positive value of volunteering

**Professional in Dress and Demeanor**

- Check with school about appropriate school attire
- Notify appropriate school personnel of any concerns regarding your volunteer assignment

**Knowledgeable**

- Keep a record of volunteer assignments and training because volunteer work is accepted by business and industry as work experience
What Should A Volunteer Know

The following is a list of general policies and procedures. Specific school policies and procedures may vary from school to school. Volunteers should be made aware of these variations at the time or orientation and placement.

General school policies and procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>place of work</th>
<th>usually assigned by teacher</th>
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<tr>
<td>taking students from classroom</td>
<td>only with the knowledge and approval of classroom teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student discipline</td>
<td>volunteer may not discipline student(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parking</td>
<td>available parking to be designated by school principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers’ lounge/room</td>
<td>use of teachers’ lounge/room is decided by principal on an as needed basis</td>
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<tr>
<td>smoking</td>
<td>all schools are non-smoking facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sign-in procedures</td>
<td>volunteers are asked to sign in at arrival at the school, wear a volunteer/visitor badge while in the school, and sign out when leaving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absence procedures</td>
<td>volunteers are requested to notify teacher of any absence or schedule change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of custodial services</td>
<td>volunteers need to inform teacher of maintenance staff need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cell phone</td>
<td>use according to school policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medicine</td>
<td>all medicine is kept in the nurse’s office and administered by school nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fire drills</td>
<td>for safety, volunteers must follow the rules and examples of the teacher with whom they are volunteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placement of volunteer in child’s classroom</td>
<td>this practice is usually discouraged; each school has developed guidelines</td>
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What School Volunteers Do

The scope of volunteer work is unlimited and is determined by the particular needs of the individual teachers and schools.

A volunteer’s time commitment varies according to the needs of the assignment.

Possible Areas of Volunteer Service

Advisory Committee Members
   After-School Programs
   Athletic Assistant Coaches
   Award Judges
   Bakers
   Booster Club Supporters
   Chaperones
   Classroom Aides
   Classroom Speakers
   Clerical Aides
Computer Supervision/Instruction
   Gifted/Talented Mentors
   Guidance Support
   Fundraising Organizers
   Industry Tours
   Laboratory Aides
Library/Media Center Assistants
   Material Preparation
   Newsletter Editors
   Playground/Lunchroom Buddies
   Room Parent Organizers
   Shadowing/Job Hosts
   Special Needs Assistants
   Tutors

What Volunteers Do Not Do

   Discipline Children
   Release a Child to any person other than the Child’s Teacher
   Diagnose or prescribe instructional programs
   Evaluate Students
   Take over for Teacher
Partners in Education Participant: 
School Volunteer Coordinator

The school volunteer coordinator plays a key role in the success of a school volunteer program. The coordinator, regardless of the scope of the program, works closely with the principal and acts as a liaison between the principal, teachers, and volunteers. The school volunteer coordinator promotes and implements existing and new relationships between the school and the community through the effective use of volunteers and community resources. The school volunteer coordinator’s role is central in building an atmosphere of trust and confidence between school and community.

Partners in Education Participant: 
Principal

The school principal plays a vital role in the overall operations of the school volunteer program and partnership program. The principal determines how Partners in Education programs are utilized and accepted by the school staff, students, and volunteers. Because the principal has the ultimate responsibility for the school, the principal needs to know how the volunteer program or partnership functions. The principal provides leadership, support, and recognition to the program and its participants.

Partners in Education Participant: 
Teacher

Teachers have the opportunity to utilize volunteers during daily lessons. The effective integration of expertise and talent offered by these volunteers gives teachers more time to work directly with students. The ways volunteers can assist are numerous.
As classroom manager, the teacher is responsible for the effective use of his/her volunteer(s) and for planning the duties of the volunteer(s) who work(s) in the class. The relationship between a teacher and his/her volunteers should be professional, based on mutual respect and confidence.

Guidelines

Requesting a Volunteer

- Determine how a volunteer can be of service to you and the class; subject areas where assistance is needed; time of day; day of week, length of volunteer assignment
- Complete a faculty/staff volunteer request form and return to the school volunteer coordinator and/or principal

Preparing for the Volunteer

- Introduce the volunteer and explain his/her role in the classroom
- Discuss expected student behavior

Orientation and Training of the Volunteer

- Volunteers receive general orientation and training from the school volunteer coordinator and principal before they start their duties
- The individual teacher is responsible for giving the volunteer specific orientation and training for assignment
- The volunteer and teacher need to meet prior to the first volunteering session to discuss needs and expectations and to set up a schedule of days and time for the volunteer to report

Day-to-Day Operations

A volunteer should not be left in charge of a student, group of students, or an entire class while the teacher is out of the room, even for a short period of time. A teacher or staff member must be present in class at all times while a volunteer is working.
The volunteer program runs smoothly when teachers:

- Plan the work before the volunteer arrives; creating a teacher/volunteer planning sheet and a file folder specifically for the volunteer is very helpful
- Acquaint the volunteer with classroom procedures, materials, records, and provide working space needed to carry out assignments
- Share with the volunteer any ideas that might work with individual students and listen to the volunteer’s comments, observations, and ideas
- Notify the volunteer in advance if she/he will not be needed at the regularly scheduled time because of field trips, assemblies, early release days, testing, etc.
- Keep open the lines of communication with the volunteer. Be sure to share contact information (phone numbers and email addresses)

If a problem develops in the working relationship between the teacher and the volunteer, please counsel the volunteer and advise the school volunteer coordinator. If the problem remains unresolved, please consult with the principal. The principal and the school volunteer coordinator are responsible, if necessary, with reassigning the volunteer, counseling the volunteer out of the program, or resolving the problem.

Evaluation

- Please periodically check to see whether the volunteer is helping to meet the goals of the volunteer assignment and of the classroom.
- At year-end, please follow up with reporting requested by the school volunteer coordinator. Your input is important to maintaining the viability of the school volunteer program.

Appreciation

Recognizing the efforts of volunteers is the shared responsibility of the principal, teachers, school staff, and the school volunteer coordinator.

- Volunteers have proven to be most dependable and successful when they feel satisfaction and appreciation in their assignment
- “Thank you” can never be said enough
- Arrange for students to express their appreciation
- Arrange for on-the-spot as well as year-end recognition of volunteers
Risk Management

Schools and school volunteer programs, like all youth-serving organizations today, are becoming increasingly concerned about issues related to liability and risk management. Sadly the very organizations developed to work with young people today may serve unknowingly as a catalyst through which pedophiles, non-custodial parents, and others with ulterior motives attempt to gain access to children.

Approved and effective since September 1997, the Nashua School District’s volunteer screening policy requires all school volunteers to read and complete the Volunteer Assurances Form. Because of the heightened concern for the safety of students and changes in state laws, the policy was amended in September 2000. The updated policy now includes additional screening for “designated” volunteers. All designated volunteers are fingerprinted to initiate a FBI criminal history background check.

Designated volunteers are individuals who are volunteering to serve as an athletic or academic coach or as a mentor. Designated volunteers are defined as volunteers who have the potential of being in a long-term, less-supervised setting than other school volunteers. All coaches including academic coaches, like those who volunteer to coach Destination Imagination and Lego Mindstorms teams and FIRST, and mentors have been identified as designated volunteers.

The screening process for volunteer application may vary slightly depending on the volunteer assignment. Below are suggested guidelines for screening before placement.

- Potential volunteers complete an application
- Interview may be required
- Reference may be requested
- Each potential volunteer is required to read and sign the Volunteer Assurances Form stating that they have read and understood RSA 632-A:10
Appreciation

Thank you!

Partners in Education is possible only through the efforts of dedicated volunteers and school personnel. Without all of you, Partners in Education would not happen at the scale and scope that it happens today. Please know that the students and staff who you support very much appreciate your time, effort, patience, cooperation, intellect, compassion, hard work, and goodwill.

Thank you for making a difference in our school community!