



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

2019-2020



Discover U
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Volunteer Handbook

The purpose of volunteers is to provide teachers and staff with the extra time and help they need to make the educational process more effective. The services of volunteers are to:

- Enrich children's learning opportunities
- Provide individual attention to those children who need more one-on-one assistance
- Promote a school-home-community partnership for quality education
- Provide teachers with more time to work with students
- Relieve teachers and support personnel of non-instructional tasks

Prior teaching experience is not necessary. Volunteers can be parents, grandparents, college students who are 18 years of age or older and community members.

Volunteers

Discover U offers a variety of volunteer opportunities. Some jobs provide the volunteer with a chance to work with children while many other jobs are available for those who prefer not to work directly with students. Some examples of volunteer jobs are:

- Reading and Math Volunteer - Listen to students read, reinforce basic math skills or assist students with written assignments.
- Classroom Assistance - Works with a teacher and performs tasks such as putting up bulletins, preparing teaching aids and special learning materials, making copies and other jobs which will provide the teacher more time to plan for and teach students.
- Lunch Time - Assist in lunch room assisting students as needed and cleaning up
- Playground Monitor - Monitoring students outside during lunch recess.
- TPO (Teacher Parent Organization) - Help out our parent group with fundraising throughout the school year and with school sponsored events.

Each person who volunteers at Discover U must complete a Discover U Volunteer Application Packet and have an IVP Fingerprint Clearance card before he/she begins work.

Volunteer Responsibilities

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 the 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 of teachers and administrators. The final decision rests with the school administration and staff.

Discover U staff is responsible for everything that goes on in the 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 student's permanent record files (psychological records, grades, health histories, etc.)
- Diagnose student needs
- Evaluate achievement
- Counsel students
- Discuss student progress with parents

A volunteer is never considered a substitute for a member of the Discover U school staff.

Guidelines:

- **Supervision of Volunteers:** School volunteers work under the direct supervision of Discover U staff and only with those teachers who have requested the services of the volunteer. Discover U is responsible for the education, safety and well-being of each student. Any volunteer whose actions are not in the best interests of Discover U or students will be dismissed.
- **Discipline:** Students rarely exhibit behavior problems while working with volunteers. Discover U has a detailed discipline plan included in the Student and Parent Handbook. The responsibility for discipline rests with the Discover U staff. Volunteers may not discipline students. Please make the teacher aware of any discipline problems that may occur while you are working with a student.
- **Restrooms:** Staff restrooms are located in the school office and are available to volunteers. We ask that you do not use student restrooms.
- **Confidentiality:** As you work with the Discover U staff and students, information of a confidential nature may be shared with you. Issues, challenges, behaviors, problems, and confidential information of students, their parents, and the staff should never be disclosed to anyone who does not have a professional right or need to know. 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. Please keep this information confidential. If you feel it is vital for the school to have this information in order to help the student, discuss the child's conversation with the teacher or principal in private. If you suspect child abuse, you have a responsibility to report it to the principal and Child Protective Services.
- **Dismissal of Students:** Volunteers may never dismiss a student from school. Children who must leave school early must receive permission from the school office. A parent or guardian must sign the student out before leaving. Under no circumstances may a volunteer take a student off campus.
- **Cell Phones:** You are not permitted to have your cell phone out while in the classroom. Cell phones are not to be used while in the classroom. If you need to make or take a call, please step out of the classroom to conduct your business. These instances should be brief and should not happen frequently.
- **Classroom Conduct:** When volunteering in your own child's classroom, please treat your child as any other student. No special treatment. As a volunteer, you should not hold students or have them sit in your lap - this includes your own child.

Dress Code:

Casual clothing is fine, but we ask that your attire be neat and conservative. Please keep in mind that you are in a position to set an example for students. Examples of attire not regarded as appropriate include, but not limited to:

- Tank tops/spaghetti strap shirts
- T-shirts with inappropriate pictures/sayings
- Sweatshirts/sweatpants
- Jogging Suits
- Shorts
- Clothing with frayed areas or holes
- Revealing clothing - no exposed cleavage or midriff, no short skirts/dresses; no skin tight clothing

Health: If you are not feeling well, please don't try to keep up with your volunteer duties. You'll accomplish more in the long run if you allow yourself time to recuperate. Please call in advance to let the teacher know you won't be coming in at your scheduled time. Discover U is 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 of volunteers is important work and staff and students quickly become dependent upon volunteer assistance. Don't promise to volunteer more time than you will be able to provide.

Dependability: Please be prompt and consistent. We know there will be times when you will be ill, on vacation, or unable to volunteer. Remember that the teacher will be expecting you on the days you are scheduled to volunteer – and so will the children. Please call the school office and leave a message for the teacher or staff member with whom you work. Let them know in advance if you will be unable to volunteer on that day.

School Rules:

Become familiar with the rules and policies of Discover U. It is a good idea to read through the school's handbook. Ask your supervising teacher to explain the school's policy for 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.

Younger Children of Volunteers:

Volunteers may not bring non-enrolled children with them to school when volunteering.

Effective Volunteering

The staff will appreciate your willingness to be a part of the educational team. Teachers and support personnel 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 type of jobs you are interested in doing and what your special skills are so they can fully utilize your talents.
- ★ A New Experience for You and the Teacher – If you've never been a school volunteer, you'll find that there are many new and exciting things to learn about volunteering. Please be aware that some staff members have never had an opportunity to work with volunteers before. This may 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, please ask. Volunteering should be an enjoyable and rewarding job. If you are unhappy or concerned about an issue, discuss the situation with the school staff.
- ★ We All Have Different Ways of Doing Things – When you have been assigned a task, make certain you know exactly how the teacher expects the job to be 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 are comfortable with.
- ★ Be Prompt and Dependable – Please arrive for your scheduled time promptly and give the staff plenty of notice when you won't be available at your scheduled time.
- ★ Routine Tasks are Important – The staff often relies upon volunteers to do routine jobs such as preparing learning aids and organizing materials. Since volunteers are able to assist with these important tasks, teachers are free to spend more time working with students or planning for quality instruction.

Working With Students

Here are a few guidelines you can follow as you work with students as a volunteer:

- ★ Call students by name at each opportunity. A child's name is very important. Please make every effort to pronounce and spell each child's name correctly.
- ★ Closely observe the techniques used by the teacher. Try to model the teacher's instructional methods when working with students.
- ★ Accept children as they are. Each child is unique. Some children may be very different from your own children. Be ready to accept these differences in background, values, skills, and aspirations.
- ★ Encourage and praise students. Use positive comments that will encourage children to feel good about themselves even when they are having difficulty. Avoid saying anything that will make students feel negatively about themselves or affect their ability to learn. Be ready to praise children for every success.
- ★ Encourage students to do their own thinking. Try not to give students the answers before they have had an opportunity to solve questions on their own. Give children plenty of time to answer your questions. Silence often means that a child is thinking. Be aware of students who may try to get you to do their work for them.
- ★ Follow the teacher's lead. Always be consistent with the teacher's rules for classroom behavior. Don't allow children to do things that 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.
- ★ Remember: 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. Try and keep the lesson or activity moving. Try to avoid letting one or more students get you or the group off 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.
- ★ Know when to give or not to give. Your positive words of encouragement will go a long way in helping students become excited about learning. Younger children may also enjoy stars, stickers, stamps and special 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 first checking with the teacher. Volunteers may not give students advertisements or fund solicitations.

You represent Discover U as a volunteer, you not only serve the needs of the children, you also provide a vital link between Discover U and the community. Students, their parents, and the community will view you as a representative of the school. They will pay close attention to what you say about the staff and the educational programs. Sometimes the community hears about the negative aspects of education or stories about the few students who misbehave. Because of your volunteer experience, you'll be able to share the many positive things that students and staff are doing. You'll have an opportunity to let the community know what's going right at Discover U.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Nancy Englund, Office Manager, at 623-974-4827.