

BRIDGER CREATIVE SCIENCE SCHOOL

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

2024-2025

Volunteers enrich students' educational
experience through positive participation in our schools. 🧡



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If you have questions about volunteering in our school, contact our Main Office at
503-916-6336



You Make a Difference

The research is clear about the role of parent, family and community involvement — it makes a significant difference in student achievement. PPS is fortunate to have a very supportive and engaged community that understands and appreciates the important role education plays in the overall health of our community.

Each person who helps a child learn is someone who makes a difference in that child's life. Schools are safe, nurturing places for students to grow and learn, and the work you do makes that environment even more rich and meaningful.

This handbook is designed as a partnership tool. It includes basic information and tips for working with students. It also includes some very important legal information that all school staff and volunteers must understand and abide by to ensure that students and adults in our schools are safe.

Helping children is what teaching, parenting and volunteering is all about – a shared venture, a collaborative undertaking, a labor of love.

As a volunteer, you are an important part of our education team.



Our Education Team

Volunteers work under the direction of school principals, teachers and staff members. By agreeing to volunteer, we can:

- Assist teachers in providing more individual help and instruction to students
- Support non-teaching duties and tasks both in- and out of the classroom
- Strengthen relationships and understanding between schools and families

Caregiver Groups like our PTA operate independently from schools but within the parameters of school and district policy. Parent Groups work with principals, teachers and staff members to organize, support and fundraise for extracurricular and enrichment activities for students and families.

Staff Members work in partnership with volunteers to support students in a variety of ways. Educators and staff members develop positive working relationships with volunteers.

School Principals have the final authority over what happens in their schools, including the volunteer program and Parent Group activities. Principals are responsible for setting guidelines for volunteers and developing a positive working relationship with volunteers.

Goals of the Volunteer Program

- To establish a school and community partnership for quality education.
- To strengthen school/community relationships.
- To support teachers.
- To enrich students' learning opportunities.
- To relieve educators of some non-instructional tasks like making photocopies or putting up bulletin boards.
- To provide an opportunity for interested community members to support their community in a meaningful way.
- To build an understanding of schools in the community.

Volunteer Opportunities

Schoolwide

- Office:
 - Collect and return Late Slips from classrooms
 - Assemble and distribute beginning of year packets and other mailers
- Library:
 - Shelve and organize books
- Cafeteria/Playground:
 - Help out with lunch and recess duty
 - Support students in community care by modeling cleaning up after ourselves and one another

Classroom-Specific

- Copies, cutting, laminating, etc
- Other opportunities as determined by classroom teachers

Steps to Becoming a Volunteer

The process of becoming a school volunteer is outlined on the [PPS Volunteer webpage](#). If you are interested in volunteering, connect with the school directly to share that you are beginning the process and to talk about volunteer opportunities, then follow these steps:

1. Read the Volunteer Code of Conduct
2. Review the mandatory volunteer training
3. Submit a volunteer application and volunteer background check
4. Receive approval notification from the District
5. Bring a government-issued photo ID to the school site on the first day of volunteering



Portland Public School District Volunteer Guidelines



Sign in and out

Volunteers are expected to sign in and out of the building when volunteering. There is generally a computer volunteer sign-in area in the school office, but ask the front office staff if you need help.



Wear identification

In an effort to increase safety and security, all volunteers need to wear a school-provided nametag at all times when in the building. Adults not wearing proper identification should be directed to the school office.



Exercise confidentiality

Volunteers must protect a teacher's and student's right to privacy. You may not disclose sensitive school or personal matters which have come to your attention while volunteering. Discuss student concerns only with the teacher or staff member with whom you are working; discuss other concerns with the principal.



Mandatory Reporting of Abuse

District employees are mandatory reporters of all reasonable suspicion that abuse of a child has occurred. Oregon law recognizes these types of abuse: physical, neglect, mental injury, threat of harm, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation. If you become aware of suspected abuse of a child, immediately report your concerns to an administrator, school counselor, or teacher.



Harassment and Bullying

The District is committed to providing a safe, positive, and productive learning environment for all students. Hazing, harassment, intimidation, bullying, menacing, or acts of cyberbullying by students, staff, or third parties toward students is strictly prohibited. Teen dating violence is unacceptable behavior and prohibited. Volunteers play a valuable role in helping to create and maintain this safe school environment. Immediately report all suspected acts of harassment and bullying to a school staff member. All reports will be investigated by the school administrator.



Follow emergency drills

Volunteers must follow the same emergency procedures as students and staff. Please be aware of and follow posted procedures for all safety drills. Guidelines are included on page 8.



No alcohol/drugs/tobacco

PPS has a drug-free workplace policy and prohibits the use of alcohol, drugs, controlled substances and tobacco on district property.



Politics and Religion

Volunteers shall not engage in political or religious activities while on district premises and while performing district duties.



Siblings

Volunteers are asked to arrange childcare for younger siblings when they're scheduled to volunteer. Even a quiet, sleeping baby draws the attention of students away from their schoolwork when in the classroom and other areas.

Behavior Support

At BCSS, we value the positive behavioral choices students make daily and are focused on preventing behavior that negatively impacts student learning through education and preventative school support. Please let students know when you see them following the schoolwide expectations. If issues arise regarding student behavior, let a staff member know so that we can assist you with appropriate responses. **Volunteers are not expected to intervene with unexpected behaviors.** Unless a student is in danger of being harmed, avoid intervening when students are behaving outside of the school's expectations. You can learn more about our schoolwide climate practices in our School Climate Plan.



Our Vision: Bridger Creative Science School is a focus-option K-8 serving the diverse students and families in Portland Public Schools. Our constructivist approach to learning ensures that all of our students become critical, reflective thinkers, courageous problem-solvers, and engaged, compassionate community builders.

Our Mission: Through the deliberate use of relationship-building experiences, exploration of essential questions, and integration of multiple perspectives, we inspire students to actively participate in their education and create tangible evidence of meaningful learning.

Our Schoolwide Expectations: We use the Wayfinder Core Skills of Self-Awareness, Purpose, Agency, Adaptability, Collaboration and Empathy to frame our expectations for our common areas. The acronym SPAACE helps us remember these skills. Please compliment students when you see students demonstrating these skills.

Tips for Working with Students

As you observe and work in the classroom, you'll notice that instruction is delivered in many ways. Changes in technology, new jobs and career requirements have changed the way teachers teach and students learn.

Students learn by:

- Doing, rather than simply observing
- Asking questions and searching for answers
- Discovering, experimenting and repeating experiences which build confidence
- Using all senses whenever possible

Volunteers can help students and staff by:

- Creating a relaxed, friendly atmosphere for learning
- Learning student names and using them often
- Listening carefully to the students
- Accepting students as individuals
- Being patient; refer disciplinary problems to the teacher or an administrator, when necessary
- Silencing cell phones while in the school
- Being aware of limitations on staff time and tight classroom schedules
- Dressing appropriately for the specific volunteer task
- Asking students to call you “Ms,” “Mr” or “Mx” rather than by your first name
- Following all school/district policies and procedures

Maintain Appropriate Boundaries

It’s important that EVERYONE take an active role in helping to ensure a SAFE and HEALTHY environment for students. Appropriate interactions with adults create a safe environment for students to learn, grow and seek help in problem-solving and developing social skills. Volunteers play a key role in creating and maintaining this environment.

- Focus conversations on academics, school events and school activities. Refer personal issues to the school administrator, counselor or classroom teacher. Refrain from making comments that could have sexual overtones.
- Stay in a group or a public part of the school. Do not be alone with a student.
- Treat all students fairly and equally. Avoid favoritism such as special privileges or gifts.
- Limit interactions to the school environment. Don’t meet with students outside of school or communicate with students electronically (text messaging, social networks, email, etc.).
- Maintain personal space and reasonable eye contact.
- Be cautious about physical contact with students. Lap sitting, tickling, frontal hugs and shoulder massages are not appropriate.

Discuss student problems or concerns only with the teacher or staff member with whom you are working. Discuss other concerns with the principal.

**Working with the Classroom Teacher**

Supporting a classroom can be incredibly rewarding. Clear communication between the volunteer and classroom teacher sets both people up for success. Suggested topics to discuss include:

- Days and times the volunteer will work.
- Procedures the volunteer will use to keep in touch, such as email or telephone.
- Alternate plans for days when the teacher is absent and a substitute is in the classroom.
- Procedures to follow if the volunteer will be absent.
- How the teacher will communicate assignments or duties to the volunteer, such as a folder, note, email or other means.
- Where materials and supplies are kept and the location of available workplaces.
- Teacher's classroom policies, procedures and rules, such as management style, discipline issues and where the volunteer can leave personal belongings.
- Special needs and strengths of the student(s) and skills that need to be developed.
- Tips for working with the student(s), such as learning styles and reinforcement techniques.
- Alternate plans if student(s) is/are absent.
- What to do if you have questions while the teacher is teaching (it is important not to interrupt instruction).
- Where to take breaks. At times, staff use the staff room to discuss confidential issues, which may not be discussed with community members unrelated to the student. Because of this, please do not be offended if volunteers are not invited into the staff room. An alternate location will be available to volunteers.

School Logistics

Office

- Remember to sign in and out in the front office using the Raptor machine.
- Teacher Mailboxes - this is a great way to get non-urgent information to staff.

Staff Room

- Copy paper is located near the copiers in the back of the workroom, and the copiers require a school ID badge to operate. The staff member that you are supporting will lend you their badge so that you can access the machine. If there is a jam or you are unsure how to use the machine, check in with the office before proceeding.
- The laminator is located in the staff room. The laminator must be "warmed up" before use; please allow sufficient time for it to heat up. When using the laminator, always do a "test run" to make sure all functions are working. There should be a weight of some sort (large binder clips) holding the plastic behind the machine. Stop using the machine when the laminate roll is low. Discontinue using when you see a red line or sticker indicating "end of roll". If the laminate runs out while you are completing a job, please inform the office staff.
- After using the paper cutter, please ensure that the blade is lowered to avoid accidents.

Volunteer Protection Against Bloodborne Pathogens*

Staff members are trained and have the necessary equipment at their disposal for handling emergency situations. As a volunteer, we ask that you do not assist or provide first aid, or handle any body fluid spills. If you were to be accidentally exposed to another individual's body fluid, wash the affected skin thoroughly with soap and water, or flush mucous membranes with water for 15

minutes. Promptly report the incident to the school nurse. You may want to contact your own physician for further instruction.

* Pathogens are disease-causing microorganisms.

Liability Insurance

Portland Public School District does not carry medical insurance or Workman's Compensation insurance for volunteers. However, volunteers are covered under the district's liability insurance for injuries incurred as a direct result of school or district negligence.



Safety Response

Volunteers must follow school guidelines during safety drills and emergencies. If you are working with a specific class, remain with that class. If you are supporting the school in general, move to the nearest classroom and stay with them. The guidelines are as follows:

IN AN EMERGENCY WHEN YOU HEAR IT, DO IT!

SECURE

Secure the Perimeter

Secure is activated when there is an unsafe situation outside the school building. Designated personnel are assigned to secure the exterior doors to the building.

Students:

Return and remain inside the school building
Business as usual inside the classroom

Teachers:

Bring everyone indoors
Ensure exterior doors are locked
Increase situational awareness
Take attendance
Business as usual inside the classroom



LOCKDOWN

Locks, Lights, Out of Sight

Lockdown is activated when there is a threat inside the school building. Creates a time barrier.

Students:

Immediately move away from the threat
Get to a safe area-classroom or away from the school
Stay out of sight
Maintain silence

Teachers:

Immediately bring students into the classroom or safe location if able.



Lock the classroom door and barricade.

Cover interior windows, lights out

Move away from sight

Maintain silence

Wait for First Responders to open the door

Take attendance, account for students

Think of your options and maintain situational awareness

Team Response

Activate School Emergency

Team(SET)

Team response is activated when there is a medical emergency or some non threatening incident that requires staff to control movement inside the school.

Students:

Immediately return to their classrooms

Teachers:

Return to classrooms
Take attendance, account for students
Increased situational awareness
Business as usual inside classroom



PPS School Emergency Response Plan

PPS has a multi-hazard emergency response plan. The plan is based on six actions. Secure, Lockdown, Team Response, Evacuate, Duck-Cover-Hold On and Shelter-in Place.

Evacuate

Move students and staff from one location to another

Students:

Leave stuff behind
Form a single line
Move quickly and safely to the directed location

Teachers:

Grab roster, emergency forms and emergency supplies
Close classroom door
Lead students to the evacuation location
Take attendance, account for students



Duck, Cover, Hold On Earthquake

Students:

Get under a desk/table/ hard surface
Stay away from windows and other objects that could fall
Wait for evacuation instructions

Teacher:

Get Under a desk, table or hard surface
Stay away from windows and other objects that may fall
Assess the damage, determine if it is safe to evacuate
Grab attendance roster and emergency supplies
Take roll, account for all students



Shelter in Place

Remain indoors: Air contaminate or threat requiring staff and community to remain in doors.

Students:

Follow the instructions of staff
Be ready to move

Teachers:

Cancel outside activities Move students to interior rooms Seal windows doors if necessary
Take attendance, account for students



Communicate

Administrators:

Remain in communication with staff and students during an emergency.
Provide information and updates to parents as soon as its safe to do so

Staff:

Keep students informed and calm
Relay information to first responders if able
Communicate with administrators if possible

Middle School and High School Volunteers

Looking for a way to be involved at the secondary level? Volunteers are just as important here as they are in grade school. No matter what your skills or experiences, a student can learn from you, and a teacher can benefit from your assistance. There are many myths connected with volunteering at the secondary level. Here are a few:



MYTH	REALITY
Teenagers don't need their parents involved with the education process.	When parents are no longer involved and lose touch with the school, they begin to lose touch with a major part of their child's life.
The greatest influence in a teenager's life is his peers.	Peers have influence. However, studies prove that parents have the greatest influence.
The transition to young adulthood is characterized by a rejection of parents.	This is a time of change but not rejection. Young adults establish their independence and individuality while continuing to connect with their families.
The secondary school level seems intimidating and difficult for adults.	Projects are assigned at the volunteers comfort level.
Today's busy adults don't have time to volunteer.	No effort is too small. Positions range from weekly to a one-time-only task.
If you don't have a student in the school you're not needed.	Strong community role models make a positive impact on students' lives.
Senior adults are not needed.	Senior adults are especially needed at all levels to share their wisdom and lifetime skills.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why are Criminal History Background Checks required of volunteers?

A: Our primary concern is the safety of the children. All volunteers must consent to an annual criminal history background check.

Q: Why must volunteers sign-in?

A: The district requires all volunteers to sign-in upon entering a school building. This is an additional safety measure for our children. The sign-in log also serves as a record in the event of an

emergency and for those of you who write off volunteer mileage on your income taxes.

Q: Why must I wear a volunteer badge? The teacher knows who I am.

A: This is yet another safety measure. It's true that your child's teacher knows you, but other staff members and students may not. Students who see strangers in the building without name tags are encouraged to report them to a staff member.

Q: What if I can only volunteer twice a month?

A: We always have a need for occasional volunteers.

Q: What if something happens and I can't make my scheduled time to volunteer?

A: Dependability and timeliness are important, but unexpected schedule changes occur. Please call the school to let the teacher know with as much advance notice as possible.

Q: What should I do if I start volunteering and it becomes a hardship for me?

A: Please let the teacher or volunteer coordinator know. We want you here, but we don't want you inconvenienced. Oftentimes a more flexible schedule can be worked out. We also would encourage you to try different volunteer activities if you'd like.

Q: What if I have more than one child and want to work in each of their classrooms?

A: Each classroom has different schedules and volunteer needs. We can work out a schedule for you to spend time in each classroom.

Q: What do I do if I don't enjoy correcting papers or photocopying and that's all the teacher asks me to do?

A: Tell the teacher. Make suggestions if you see other needs in the classroom. Let the teacher know what your interests are. No one wants you to do something you don't enjoy.

Q: What if I have questions or concerns about my child?

A: Please arrange for a separate time before or after school to conference with your child's teacher. Classroom time is not the time to talk about the individual needs of your child; the teacher will not be able to provide you with their undivided attention as their priority is supporting the students in the room.

PPS Volunteer Policy Documents

- [7.20.020-P Volunteers](#)
- [7.20.021-AD Volunteers Program - Implementation](#)

Thank You

Parts of this handbook were taken and adapted from volunteer information provided by the Beaverton, McMinnville and Rochester School Districts as well as the Odyssey Program in PPS. ❤️