

VASSALBORO COMMUNITY
SCHOOL
VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK
2023/2024



Vassalboro Community School

Volunteer Handbook

Table of Contents

Welcome	
Letter.....	3
Volunteer Program.....	4
Initial Steps to Take.....	4
Tips for Volunteers.....	5
General Information for Volunteers.....	5-7
Ethics.....	7
FERPA.....	8
Confidentiality of Educational Records.....	8-9
Procedures Relating to Child Abuse and Neglect.....	9
Starting Your Volunteer Experience.....	10
Working With Students.....	10-11
Learning Styles.....	11-12
36 Ways to Say “Good Job”	13
VCS School Volunteer Policy	14-16
Volunteer Agreement/Application Form	17-20

Vassalboro Community School

1116 Webber Pond Road
Vassalboro, Maine 04989
Tel (207) 923-3100 – Fax (207) 923-3104
www.vcsvikings.org

Alan W. Pfeiffer
Superintendent

Ira Michaud
Principal

Tabitha Brewer
Asst. Principal

Tanya Thibeau
Special Education Director

Dear Vassalboro School Volunteer,

On behalf of the Vassalboro Community School Board, staff and students, I want to thank you for your interest in and involvement in our schools. Reaching our goal of academic excellence requires a community wide effort. In addition to the commitment of our teachers, administrators and support staff, we must have strong community partnerships. School volunteers play a critical role in this effort. This handbook is designed to provide you with practical information that will assist you in your volunteer placement. If you have any questions that are not addressed in this manual, please speak with the classroom teacher or the school principal.

The education of our youth takes a whole community. Your time and energy will make a difference. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alan W. Pfeiffer
Superintendent of Schools

VCS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Volunteers donate time to help students, teachers, and staff. They work under the direction of the principal and staff members. Volunteers can:

- Relieve teachers of many non-teaching duties and tasks.
- Assist teachers in providing more individual help and instruction to students.
- Strengthen relationships and understanding between schools and the community.

Volunteer skills, interest, and time commitments vary. Therefore, various opportunities to volunteer are offered.

Classroom

Many teachers welcome volunteers in their classrooms. Classroom volunteers work with students in small groups or one-on-one, assist on class field trips or prepare instructional materials as needed.

School Wide

For those interested in contributing to school-wide level programs, the school library and the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) offer various opportunities for volunteers. The PTO hosts events that require volunteers to help with coordination, set up, supervision, and communication.

Special School Projects

Periodically throughout the year, the school may require volunteers to help with projects such as musicals or plays, picture day, family math night, a school field day, or specific theme related activities.

- Volunteering does not mean you have to come every day, all day or all year.
- Volunteering does mean you care and are committed to doing your part to make our schools and community a better place to live and grow.

INITIAL STEPS TO TAKE

Before beginning volunteer tasks, all volunteers must complete the following:

1. Attend an orientation session on the responsibilities and expectations of volunteers.
2. Submit to the school principal a signed Volunteer Agreement Form and Volunteer Application.

TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS

1. Try to model the same teaching techniques as the classroom teacher.
2. When students ask for help, give them assistance, but don't do the work for them.
3. Encourage and praise all students.
4. Keep directions and expectations brief and clear.
5. Become familiar with classroom and school rules and expectations.
6. Reinforce classroom and school rules and expectations.
7. Refer any disciplinary concerns to the classroom teacher.
8. Be respectful of teachers' personal workspaces.
9. Remember to turn off or silence your cell phone.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS

Identification

In an effort to increase safety and security, all volunteers need to wear a school name tag at all times when in our buildings. Adults not wearing proper identification should be directed to the school office.

Signing In and Out

Please sign in and out of the building when you volunteer. There is a volunteer sign-in area in the school office but ask the school secretary or front office if you need help.

Dependability and Punctuality

Students, teachers and staff members rely on the services volunteers perform. We ask that you contact the school if you are unable to volunteer on your scheduled day. Arrive ahead of time for your volunteer service.

Professionalism

Although the job is voluntary, the commitment is professional. Besides being responsible for maintaining an attitude of mutual respect and confidence, you should also become familiar with school and classroom policies and practices. Working with the teaching staff requires flexibility and a willingness to follow directions.

Attire

Staff attire sets a professional tone in the building and generates an atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning. Exceptions would be planned/approved activities that demand flexibility. Our personal appearance should remain professional at all times. On Fridays, Early Release Days, and Field Trip Days (staff involved in the field trip), it is acceptable for staff to wear jeans that fit appropriately and do not have tears. Staff should adhere to the expectations on the student dress code as outlined below.

- Hats, hoods and head coverings are not allowed in the building unless it is an activity for spirit day, or a religiously based custom/activity.
- Shoes are to be worn at all times while on the school property;
- The wearing of jackets in the classroom is discouraged;

- Staff should not wear anything that is representative of any illegal activity or causes distraction (ie., the wearing of T-shirts with discriminatory or racist connotations, alcohol, tobacco, drug captions or sexual connotations will not be allowed).
- Appropriate professional clothing should be worn by staff. (Midriff tops, excessively short skirts, low cut shirts, shirts and leggings/pants that allow undergarments to be visible, are considered inappropriate school dress). Clothing choices must keep private parts private. Appropriate staff dress is based on administrative discretion.

Questions/Concerns/Complaints

From time to time, volunteers may have questions or concerns about certain policies or practices that they observe at school. When this occurs, it is important to discuss the issue with the person involved. If the issue continues to be a problem, it's appropriate to contact the principal. If no resolution is reached at that level, the superintendent of schools may be contacted. If the matter continues to be a problem, the issue may be referred to the school board. This series of steps works effectively in the resolution of problems and toward the development of meaningful communication.

Confidentiality

All information regarding students is confidential. Teachers will share information with you that is necessary for you to carry out your duties as a volunteer. This may include medical, academic, and/or needed behavioral information. This type of information must never be shared with others. The school system has a legal responsibility to protect the rights of all students and we have the expectation that all volunteers will abide by the law. To help, here are some sample issues that can arise:

When you see or hear something

As a volunteer, you might see or hear things from staff or students that they would not want repeated outside of the school. No matter how innocent, cute, funny or charming a classroom event may be, it is not appropriate to repeat stories about students under any circumstances.

When parents ask you questions

Many parents are tempted to ask you about how children behave in school. You are not at liberty to tell. Politely let them know that they should speak with the classroom teacher.

When students tell you about their personal lives

As students become comfortable working with you, they might decide to share something personal. You need to keep this information private, even if you know the child and their family outside of school.

When you have a concern

If you hear or observe something that troubles you, tell the classroom teacher. If you feel your concern cannot be addressed appropriately by the classroom teacher, discuss it with the school principal.

Discipline

Inform the teacher when a behavior problem arises. Allow the teacher to carry out the consequence. As a volunteer, your job is to restate classroom and school rules and expectations when needed. If the situation calls for a disciplinary action, call on the teacher or other school personnel for assistance.

Scents, Perfumes, Colognes and Other Aromatic Substances

Many staff and students in our schools are allergic to scents of any kind. Please be considerate when applying perfumes, colognes, and other aromatherapy products. When in doubt-- don't. We wish every individual to express their individuality, however, we need to have our school be a safe environment for all who work here. Please be considerate in your use of scents.

Smoking

Tobacco uses in any form is prohibited in all school buildings, personal vehicles and transportation vehicles at all times and on school grounds.

If You Are Injured While at School

If you are injured while performing your volunteer duties, please notify the office immediately. Please complete and submit a "Volunteer Emergency Procedure" form to each school office where you work. The information will be used in case of an emergency.

If You Need Help

If you have questions, concerns, or just want to talk about your volunteer assignment, please talk with the classroom teacher or staff member with whom you are working or with the school principal.

Miscellaneous Notes

*Please secure your valuables where they are not accessible to students.

*Lunch is available for purchase through our School Lunch program. If interested, please check at the office upon arrival.

ETHICS

As a volunteer we expect that you will be treated with the professional courtesy and the respect all adults deserve. Likewise, we expect that you will demonstrate the same commitment to our students and school. You are in a unique position to interpret the educational programs of VCS to the communities—either favorably or unfavorably. Although there may not be complete agreement on the value of various techniques and procedures, the volunteer should be discreet in talking about teachers and schools. Discretion should be used in expressing personal reactions and opinions. All information learned about pupils is confidential information and should be treated as such. The divulging of such information to unauthorized persons is deemed to be highly unethical and illegal. The principal will be glad to talk with you about any procedures, circumstances, or conditions.

FERPA

FERPA stands for Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. It is a federal law. It makes it illegal to reveal to anyone outside of the school, and to most people inside the school, certain kinds of information. It is safe to assume, unless you are an actual “keeper of the record”, that you cannot say anything to anyone about children in the school.

For example:

- It is a clear violation to tell any child that another child is on medication of any kind.
- It is a clear violation of the law for any school employee to discuss with a friend or parent the ‘bad behavior of young John Q. Doe Jr.’”
- It is a clear violation to reveal to any other person that a specific child has a medical problem (this includes lice). If you have any questions regarding the school’s policy on medical information, please see the school nurse or principal.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF EDUCATIONAL RECORDS: IT’S THE LAW

As a volunteer in the school, it is essential that you understand your obligations under both state and federal law to maintain the confidentiality of information contained in students’ educational records. To help you meet that obligation, we are providing you with the following information. If you have any questions at all about this material, please contact the principal of the school or the Director of Special Education.

1. All educational records maintained by the school are made strictly confidential under state and federal law.
2. Educational records include any records in any form that directly relate to a current or former student or group of students.
3. You cannot reveal personally identifiable information that is contained in a student’s educational records to anyone outside of the school system except to the student’s parents, unless you have the express **written** consent of the parents to do so, on a consent form prepared for that purpose by the school.
4. “Personally identifiable information” about a student includes not only the name of the student and the student’s family, but also other information that would make the student’s identity easily traceable for persons who receive that information. It also would include descriptions of events, occurrences and incidents at school, when the identity of the persons involved would be easily traceable.
5. Even within the school system, you can reveal personally identifiable information about students to other school employees **only if** those other school employees have a legitimate educational interest in the information. Other teachers who currently work with the student and school administrators clearly have a legitimate educational interest in this information, and you can discuss such information with them. Before revealing such information to other school employees, however, you should seek prior

guidance from the building administrator as to whether those other employees would have a legitimate educational interest in receiving the information.

6. Requests by a student's parents or by any person not employed by the school to review educational records should be directed to the principal.
7. A copy of the school's complete policy on confidentiality of student records is available in each principal's office.
8. Failure to comply with these rules could lead to your discipline or dismissal by the school, and could expose you to personal litigation by a family who believes their confidentiality rights have been violated.

PROCEDURES RELATING TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse or neglect means a threat to a child's health or welfare by physical, mental or emotional injury or impairment, sexual abuse or exploitation, deprivation of essential needs or lack of protection from these by a person responsible for the child.

School volunteers who know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a student under 18 years of age has been or is likely to be abused or neglected must instigate an **IMMEDIATE** report to the school principal or assistant principal.

The report to the principal will include the following information, if within your knowledge:

1. The name and address of the child and the persons responsible for his/her care and custody.
2. The child's age and sex.
3. The nature and extent of abuse or neglect, including a description of injuries and any explanation given for them.
4. A description of sexual abuse or exploitation.
5. Family compositions and evidence of prior abuse or neglect of the child or his/her siblings.
6. The source of the report, the person making the report, his/her occupation and where he/she can be contacted.
7. The actions taken by the reporting source, including a description of photographs or x-rays taken.
8. Any other information that the person making the report believes may be helpful.

**Under the law, a person participating in good faith who makes a report of suspected child abuse and neglect or participates in a related child protection investigation or proceeding, is immune from any criminal or civil liability. However, civil penalties for a violation of a provision of the Child Protection statutes are severe. If you have questions about your role in reporting child abuse and neglect, please talk with the school principal.*

STARTING YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

When a teacher or staff member and volunteer initially meet, they should discuss the following:

1. Confidentiality
2. Days and times the volunteer will work.
3. Procedures he/she will use to keep in touch (i.e., informal meetings, email, or telephone).
4. Alternate plans for days when the teacher is absent and a substitute is in charge of the class.
5. Procedure to follow if a volunteer will be absent.
6. How the teacher will communicate the assignments to the volunteer (folder, note or other means).
7. Where the room materials are kept and the location of a convenient workplace.
8. The teacher's own classroom policies, procedures and rules such as management system, reinforcement techniques and where the volunteer can leave personal belongings.
9. Volunteers should follow teacher and staff instructions during fire drills, as well as lockdown procedures.
10. Volunteers should intervene if the safety of a child is in question, however volunteers do not discipline students.

If working with students in academic areas, the teacher and volunteer should also discuss:

- Pertinent background information about the student(s).
- 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 style and reinforcement techniques.
- Alternate plans if student(s) is absent.

WORKING WITH STUDENTS

As you observe and work in the classroom, you will 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, not by observing. Children learn by asking questions and searching for answers to their questions. They learn by discovery, experimenting and repeating experiences. They learn by using all of their senses whenever possible. They learn by sorting and combining objects and ideas. Students learn behavior by observing people they respect.

Volunteers can help students learn by:

- o Asking students questions that may lead them to the correct answer instead of telling them directly.
- o Allowing students to explore and discover by themselves.
- o Encouraging students to feel, smell, taste and listen, as well as looking at objects.
- o Allowing students to try new methods of doing things even though you already know an easier way. Avoid making models for students when they use art media.
- o Allow students to sort and combine according to their own ideas when speaking to students
- o Praise their good efforts
- o Use a tone of voice that will encourage them and make them feel confident
- o Avoid comparing students and their work
- o Give students a choice only when you intend to abide by the choice
- o State directions in a positive form
- o Allow students to observe you as a model for appropriate behavior

When working with students:

- Find out what the teacher wants you to work on ... get specifics.
- Tell students how you should be addressed.
- Encourage all students, not just the ones with the correct answer.
- Give each student time to answer. Don't allow other students to jump in and answer for him/her.
- Let students know that you enjoy your time with them. And enjoy yourself!

LEARNING STYLES

Not everyone learns in the same way. Your learning style is simply the way in which you learn best. Most people use all of their senses as they process information; one sense generally dominates. Here are some descriptions and suggestions that may be helpful in understanding the students with whom you work.

1. Auditory Learners

They learn best through verbal demonstrations. They prefer talking about a situation and enjoy listening to themselves talk.

- Read instructions aloud
- Have them repeat instructions to you
- If the student is having difficulty understanding, rephrase instructions

2. Visual Learners

They learn best by observing. They prefer watching demonstrations and have intense concentration and ability to visualize information. Students who are visual learners like to write, doodle, and study their environment.

- Keep a copy of the written instructions, charts, etc. in front of them

- Use visual aids for reference (maps, charts, pictures, etc.)
- Try having students write or draw problems on paper
- Encourage the use of a homework notebook to remember assignments.

3. Tactile and Kinesthetic Learners

They learn best by doing. They remember best by what they did, not what was seen or heard. They need frequent breaks when studying and are easily distracted when they are not able to move.

- Have students use manipulatives, such as money or blocks with a math problem.
- Learning aids, such as a globe, for geography
- Have students use their bodies to act out fiction or nonfiction stories.

ENCOURAGING WAYS TO SAY “GOOD JOB”



Wow! Good for you! Super! That's right!

Excellent! That's amazing! Good job! Great! Terrific!

Good thinking! Beautiful! Way to go! Marvelous!

Congratulations! Nice going! That looks great! Fantastic!

Now you've got it! Very good! That's really nice! Much better!

Keep it up! I'm so proud of you! You're working hard!

That's a good point! First class work!

Keep up the good work! That's the right answer!

You're really working hard today! You're on the right track!

Now you have the hang of it!

I appreciate the way you're trying!

**VASSALBORO COMMUNITY SCHOOL
1116 WEBBER POND ROAD
VASSALBORO, ME 04989**

SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

The Vassalboro School Board recognizes that community members can provide valuable services to the schools by sharing their time, talents and experience. An effective volunteer program allows students to benefit from individual attention, provides enrichment opportunities that supplement the regular educational program, allows teachers to focus on teaching and learning by relieving them of non-teaching tasks, provides interested community members an opportunity to become directly involved with education, and strengthens the relationship between school and community.

The Vassalboro School Board approves the use of volunteers to support the school system's instructional programs and extracurricular activities. The Vassalboro School Board adopts this policy to provide direction for the school system's volunteer program.

For the purpose of this policy, a volunteer is a person who provides services, without compensation or benefits of any kind or amount, on an occasional or regular basis in the schools or in school activities.

All volunteers shall be at least 18 years of age unless their volunteer work is part of a class, is done to fulfill a service learning or community service requirement for graduation, or is done by a recognized student organization.

Volunteers may provide assistance by:

- A. Tutoring students on a one-to-one or small group basis under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher;
- B. Using their special musical, artistic or other talents to provide enrichment experiences and extend student learning;
- C. Reading to children;
- D. Playing instructional games;
- E. Providing services in libraries, lunchrooms and playgrounds;
- F. Accompanying students on field trips;
- G. Assisting teachers in assembling instructional materials; and
- H. Assisting in school plays, music programs and other extracurricular activities.

Volunteers serve under the direction and supervision of the building principal or designated staff. When volunteers work with children, their activities will be under the direct and immediate supervision of the classroom teacher, coach, activity adviser, or other designated employee.

Approval, assignment, continuation, or termination of volunteers shall be at the discretion of the building principal.

Staff must have their use of volunteers approved in advance by the building principal. Volunteers will only be assigned to staff who request them.

Volunteers are expected to abide by all Board policies, procedures and school rules when performing their assigned responsibilities. The building principal shall make volunteers aware of applicable policies, procedures, and rules before they undertake their first assignment through a volunteer orientation, volunteer handbook, or other means.

Volunteers should perform only those tasks that have been assigned.

Volunteers will not have access to confidential information in student records except as allowed by federal or state law or regulations and will be responsible for maintaining confidentiality regarding information seen or heard while working as a volunteer.

Persons interested in volunteering time or services should contact the building principal. Prospective volunteers will be required to complete a written application.

In the interest of protecting the safety of students and staff, the school unit will conduct sex offender registry checks and may conduct criminal background checks on all volunteers who will be working directly with or will have unsupervised access to students, including those chaperoning students on field trips or school-sponsored excursions.

Information collected during this screening process will be treated as confidential to the extent allowed by law.

Volunteers may not transport students in private vehicles except as allowed by Board policy.

The school unit will provide liability insurance protection for volunteers while performing assigned services.

The Superintendent will be responsible for devising a method for evaluating the effectiveness of the volunteer program on an annual basis.

The Board will recognize volunteer service on an annual basis. The building principal will be responsible for appropriate school recognition of volunteers.

Legal Reference: 20-A M.R.S.A. § 1002

Cross Reference: EEAG - Student Transportation in Private Vehicles
IJOA - Field Trips and Excursions

Adopted: November 14, 2023

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT FORM

- I have read Vassalboro Community School's Volunteer Handbook, have attended volunteer training, and understand my responsibilities as a school volunteer.
- I understand as a volunteer in Vassalboro Community School, I must keep ALL student and staff information confidential. I agree not to access, review, disclose or use confidential student or staff information without specific authorization from a school administrator.
- I also understand that even when I am no longer a volunteer in the schools, any confidential information I have learned must continue to be kept confidential.
- I understand that any breach of confidentiality requirements will result in my immediate termination as a volunteer and may result in legal action against me.
- I understand that I must comply with all Vassalboro Community School policies and school rules applicable to staff as well as all directions from school administrators and staff while serving as a volunteer.
- I further understand that my authorization to serve as a volunteer may be terminated at the discretion of the superintendent and/or school principal at any time if they determine that such action is in the best interest of Vassalboro Community School.

Please complete the following information:

PRINT NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: (REQUIRED FOR BACKGROUND CHECK): _____

CHILDREN IN (Name of school): _____

(NAMES AND GRADES): _____

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER _____ DATE: _____

SIGNATURE OF ADMINISTRATOR _____

ADOPTED: NOVEMBER 14, 2023

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS REQUIRED TO HELP US COORDINATE VOLUNTEER SERVICES AND TO ENSURE STUDENT SAFETY

Name: _____
FIRST MIDDLE LAST

Any previous names: _____

Permanent address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail address: _____

Date of Birth (required for background check): _____

Areas (s) of interest for volunteering: _____

Children in _____ (names and grades):

NAME OF SCHOOL

List any education, training, or experiences you have had which would help us in meeting the needs of our students:

BACKGROUND:

The following information is asked of all individuals who volunteer to work with our children to help ensure the safety of our students.

1. Have you ever been charged with or investigated for sexual abuse or harassment of another person? Yes ____ No ____
2. Have you ever been convicted of a crime (other than a minor traffic offense)? Yes ____ No ____
3. Have you ever entered a plea of guilty or "no contest" (nolo contendere) to any crime (other than a minor traffic offense)? Yes ____ No ____

*If you have answered YES to any of the previous questions, provide full details on an additional sheet, including, with respect to court actions, the date, offense in question, and the address of the court involved. Conviction or other disposition of a crime is not necessarily an automatic bar to employment.

If you have lived outside of Maine, please identify the states and dates: _____

Refusal to provide authorization for criminal records checks and/or providing false or misleading information on this application shall constitute sufficient reason to deny approval to serve as a volunteer or termination as a volunteer in Vassalboro Community School.

I understand that Vassalboro Community School performs reference and criminal records checks on all volunteers and I authorize persons and entities contacted by Vassalboro Community School in connection with this application to provide information. I expressly waive in connection with any request for or provision of such information, any claims, including without limitation, defamation, emotional distress, invasion of privacy, or interference with contractual relations that might otherwise have against the school department, its agents and officials or against any provider of such information. I further understand that if I am approved as a volunteer, that I will be required to sign a Volunteer Agreement and attend a Volunteer Orientation.

APPLICANT SIGNATURE

DATE

OFFICE USE ONLY

___ Application reviewed for completeness
___ Criminal record checked (attach documentation)

Application Approved: _____
Application Denied: _____

Administrator or Authorized Official

_____ Date: _____