



# Guide to School— Community Relationships

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VOLUME 4 | PARENTS AND VOLUNTEERS



Division of Strategic Communications  
WICHITA PUBLIC SCHOOLS | 2023-2024 EDITION

Thank you for your interest in the Wichita Public Schools! Every day, our teachers and students benefit from the generosity of volunteers who take the time to share their time and talents with our students. The tasks performed by volunteers are vital to the continued operation and success of our schools. Sharing your life experiences, technical know-how and friendship with a young mind can make a huge impact on their life and their success.

Please take some time to review this handbook. It will give you an understanding of the volunteer program, our district as a whole and some helpful information to get you started. If you have any questions please feel free to contact the Division of Strategic Communications at 316-973-4515.

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### Questions or concerns? Let us know!

As we continue to move forward with improvements to our volunteer program, please feel free to share your feedback and experiences so we can better prepare materials and procedures for our volunteers. If you have questions, comments, feedback or concerns, please contact Suzy Finn in the Division of Strategic Communications at 316-973-4630 or by email at [sfinn@usd259.net](mailto:sfinn@usd259.net).

# VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION & TRAINING

## Registration Process

Before being placed, volunteers must do the following:

- 1) Complete the online application located on the Wichita Public Schools website.  
[www.usd259.org/volunteerregistration](http://www.usd259.org/volunteerregistration).

This form can be translated to Spanish and Vietnamese using the translate function in the upper right corner of the form. Those without computer or smart device access at home can complete the electronic form on site at a school.

- 2) Undergo a criminal background check conducted by WPS once the registration is received. Volunteers who pass the background check will be contacted to continue in the registration and placement process.
- 3) Once the background check is complete, volunteer information will be sent to the site coordinator at the school(s) that the volunteer indicated interest in on the registration form. From there, the site coordinator will work with school staff and the volunteer to ensure placement based on the volunteer's interest and building needs.
  - a. If the volunteer does not have a preferred school, the volunteer liaisons will work with site coordinators to identify a placement.

**Note:** Volunteers must complete a new form every year.

### *Clearance or approval of volunteers*

WPS requires anyone interested in volunteering to register. WPS reserves the right to determine whether a volunteer is a good fit and possesses suitable skills for the district, school or department. The district also reserves the right to end the volunteer relationship at any time for any reason, or to not accept a volunteer for any reason at any time.

## Volunteer Training

Training for volunteers is open to individuals, groups or organizations who desire to work with students in schools. Elements of the volunteer training include: best practices for tutoring and mentoring and the role of school volunteers. The training sessions are free of charge for all volunteers and their sponsor organizations. A site-based orientation will be provided at the assigned school.

Volunteer Training is offered as needed through the school year at the Alvin E. Morris Administrative Center, 903 S. Edgemoor in Room 809. Visitor parking is available in the lot near Door #1 at the Southeast corner of Lincoln & Edgemoor.

For more information or to schedule a training for you or your group, please contact **Alicia Allen** in Strategic Communications at **316-973-4515** or [aallen4@usd295.net](mailto:aallen4@usd295.net).

## Registration FAQ's

**Q: Do field trip volunteers need to complete a volunteer registration form?**

A: Yes, all field trip volunteers should complete a volunteer registration form as they have the potential to be with students in small groups during the day.

**Q: Do guest speakers need to complete a volunteer registration form?**

A: No.

**Q: Do parents need to complete a volunteer registration form for classroom holiday parties?**

A: No, but parents must complete proper check-in through Hall Pass in the main office.

**Q: Do volunteers need to complete a volunteer registration form to help with a school carnival or other after-school activity?**

A: Yes, any activity conducted after school hours must have its volunteers fill out a registration form.

**Q: How often do volunteers have to resubmit a registration form?**

A: Volunteers must complete a new form annually.

**Q: How does a volunteer update their contact information?**

A: Volunteers can update their information by contacting the site coordinator in their building. Information should be updated when there is a change (move, new phone number, etc.) or once per year.

**Q: What would result in a denial?**

A: A conviction or drug trafficking, child abuse, sex offenses, any pattern of behavior, open cases, felonies within the past ten (10) years, misdemeanors within the past five (5) years.

**Q: How long does it take to process a registration form?**

A: If the form is submitted via the online registration process, it will be processed within 48 business hours and school contacts notified. The amount of time it takes for a school to connect with an approved volunteer will vary based on the coordinator and/or principal's workload.

**Q: Do all registered volunteers have to undergo a background check?**

A: Yes. The Strategic Communications office runs all volunteers through nationwide background screenings.

**Q: If I'm a registered volunteer, do I need to sign in through HallPass?**

A: Yes. A district-wide policy requires all visitors, guests and volunteers to sign in through HallPass.

**Q: What is the difference between a guest, visitor and volunteer?**

A: **"Guest"** means an unsalaried person who, with principal approval, assists at a school on a non-regular or one time basis.

**"Visitor"** means an unsalaried person who attends a district sponsored event or activity or visits a district site for a short time.

**"Volunteer"** means an unsalaried person (i.e.: parents, guardians, family or community members) authorized by the Wichita Public Schools to perform volunteer services for the district. A volunteer is any individual who is not a guest or visitor at a school.

## **VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS AND ILLNESS**

### **In-Person Volunteer Expectations**

We value consistency in our volunteers; however, we understand that illness happens. We ask that you also value our students and staff by following some general guidelines.

- DO NOT volunteer on site if you are feeling sick or are awaiting test results for any flu- or strep-like symptoms. Notify your organization or school contact that you will not be there as scheduled so they can make appropriate adjustments.
- Volunteers and visitors will be expected to follow all Wichita Public Schools health protocols while in buildings, including self-screening, hand and health hygiene.
- Visitors will check in through HallPass (from the start of the school day until 10 minutes after the conclusion of school).

### **Virtual Volunteer Expectations**

We are allowing volunteers into buildings. Should this change, or should an organization opt to shift to virtual volunteering at any time, we have established some basic protocols for volunteers to follow.

While the format for volunteering may change, the expectations and suggestions on how to best work with students will not. Below are some virtual volunteer expectations.

#### ***Virtual Volunteering Guidelines***

- Follow all instructions provided by your organization or school contact.
- Check that your technology works and you're familiar with the platform being used to connect prior to your first volunteer activity.
- Learn about the options available in the platform being used to hide or blur your video background if you don't want others to be able to see your environment for your comfort or theirs.
- Do not take screen shots or pictures of the virtual interaction, especially if those capture any identifiable student information (name, grade level, school, teacher, etc.) or individuals who are not part of your virtual relationship.
- Dress in an appropriate and professional manner, and ensure others in your immediate area are as well when using video.

## **EMPLOYEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **At the School**

School-based volunteer coordinators are a vital link to successful volunteer programs. In cooperation with the principal, they jointly coordinate and direct their school's program and many outstanding volunteer activities. Each school models its volunteer program to meet the needs of the students and teachers at the school.

The responsibilities of the school principal or coordinator may include the following:

- Presenting training to staff members on effective utilization of volunteers
- Surveying needs of teachers for volunteer assistance
- Recruiting and registering volunteers, especially parents
- Arranging for orientation and training
- Assigning volunteers to specific teachers
- Serving as a resource person and advisor to school volunteers
- Providing a welcoming environment for the community
- Keeping accurate records of volunteer services and hours
- Coordinating school recognition for volunteers

### **At the District**

The Division of Strategic Communications provides district-wide support and coordination to the school-based volunteer programs in Wichita Public Schools. Our role includes the following:

- Developing and disseminating volunteer materials
- Presenting training workshops
- Recruiting volunteers from the community at large
- Working with school-based coordinators to develop and maintain school programs
- Networking with community involvement programs
- Coordinating and implementing special school or District volunteer programs

## POTENTIAL VOLUNTEER ROLES

There are many ways to volunteer at and support schools in our district. Below is a list of some of those ways. When registering as a volunteer, review these and have an idea of how your skills and time best align with the options. Each school will have different needs, so plan to be flexible and discuss several options with your volunteer coordinator.

- Tutor individuals or small groups in reading or math
- Read with an individual or small group
- Supervise arrival and dismissal outside
- Help with safety patrol
- Eat lunch with a student (Lunch Buddy)
- Help with lunch or recess
- Help with school events during and after school
- Donate classroom materials
- Helping Hand for the teachers during school or at home (copying, laminating, cutting out materials, Friday folders, etc.)
- Chaperone a field trip
- Help in your child's classroom
- Join the PTO
- Serve on the Site Council
- Speak in a classroom for career day
- Mentor students
- Help with Field Day
- Help with display boards for teachers
- Help with after school programs run by the school or partner organizations
- Share a special skill, hobby, collection or story to enrich the curriculum
- Translate and interpret for our families who are non-native English speakers or practice with students learning a new language
- Catalog, shelve or mend books in a school's library media center
- Mulch, rake, weed, paint or otherwise beautify a school campus

**What is FERPA?**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law that protects personally identifiable information (PII) in students’ education records from unauthorized disclosure.

FERPA includes provisions allowing students’ PII from education records to be disclosed without the prior written consent of parents, if the disclosure meets the criteria for one of the permitted consent exceptions.

The school official exception allows educational agencies to share PII from education records without consent with volunteers, as long as certain additional requirements are met.

The FERPA statute is codified at 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, and the FERPA regulations are found at 34 CFR Part 99.

**Acknowledgement of Volunteer Responsibilities under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

***Introduction***

You have volunteered for Unified School District No. 259, Sedgwick County, Kansas (Wichita Public Schools) to perform services that require you to access and use personally identifiable information (PII) from students’ education records. Your access and use of the PII is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

FERPA requires the school or school district to maintain “direct control” over your use and maintenance of students’ education records and to use reasonable methods to ensure that you obtain access to only those education records in which you have an educational interest.

If you have any questions about information in this document, they should be directed to the District’s Strategic Communication office, Alicia Allen, 316-973-4515.

***What should I do to protect student PII from education records under FERPA?***

It’s important that you take the following steps to protect student privacy:

- Do not disclose the PII to another party (except back to the School). The PII must not be shared with unauthorized users, and it must be protected from inadvertent disclosure due to careless handling.
- Do not use the PII for other purposes. The PII has been provided only for you to perform the volunteer service for which the school provided you the information. It should not be used for other purposes.
- Do not keep the PII after you complete your volunteer service. Destroy or return the PII to the school after completion of the service that you provided.

The undersigned acknowledges that he or she has read, understands, and will uphold all responsibilities as outlined in Acknowledgement of Volunteer Responsibilities under FERPA.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of school or district division serving)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)



## Photography and Social Media in Schools

Photos and video of students may be used for district-related social media, broadcast, web and print communication, in compliance with FERPA. All other information within a student's record is considered protected and may not be released without written permission.

FERPA allows for the publication of some identifying factors; however, caution always should be exercised in order to protect the identity of our students, especially younger children. Consider using first name only, or teacher name and a general class reference. District staff and volunteers have the obligation to be mindful of the online safety of our students.

Teachers can post photos and videos of students working on student projects, but should not post grades or identify students' individual work to comply with FERPA. If a student cannot be photographed, don't take the photograph, and don't post on social media in any form or fashion. Blurring a student's face or placing an emoji over the student's face to post on social media is not appropriate and draws attention to the student.

Parents must submit a written Request to Withhold Directory Information to the school if they do not want their student's information published. That request will be recorded in Synergy, and school staff is responsible for knowing which students may not be photographed or videotaped.

Special education students, if identified as receiving special education services, need to have parental consent before publishing information. This is because special education status is considered to be a part of a student's educational record not covered by the district's definition of Directory Information. If the parent/guardian of a student identified as received special education services agrees to allow their student to be identified, the Publication Consent Form must be used. WPS follows similar guidelines when photographing newcomer and refugee students if being identified as receiving those services.

Questions? Call Strategic Communications at 973-4515.

### ***Social Media Recommendations***

- **Do** share about your volunteer experience on social media – we want people to know about the many ways individuals and organizations support our schools
- **Do not** identify individual students in photos by full name
- **Do not** share about specific reasons you are working with specific students unless you have parent permission (i.e., anything that could identify a student's academic, behavioral or health needs)
- **Do not** send or accept friend requests from students of any age, or tag their profiles in any posts

## INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS

### Classroom Tips for Volunteers

- Take a personal interest in helping and working with teachers, staff and students.
- Arrive to the school with a positive, cooperative attitude in working with school personnel.
- Be adaptable and flexible when working with children.
- Because the world walks in our hallways, be receptive and open to different languages and cultures. Keep in mind that learning styles and norms vary from culture to culture.
- Keep your expectations in line with the students' age and developmental stage. Know that your patience may be tested.
- If you are unsure in any circumstance, ask a teacher or other school staff member. Not only will you get the answer you need, it will model positive behavior and allows students to see you learn.
- Be tolerant of mistakes when working with students – make sure they know that mistakes are a part of learning.
- Names are important. Learn how to say and spell your student's name(s) – that is the one thing they "own" when they come to school.
- Show that you are interested
  - Listen carefully and remember details
  - Ask open ended questions about the student.
- Build your student's self-confidence.
- Let the student make choices.

### School Procedures

- Be sure to bring your Driver's License - volunteers must sign in and out in the school office for each visit.
- Volunteers must wear their visitor badge at all times.
- Volunteers must follow school dress codes.
- Volunteers must follow cell phone use policies and should refrain from using cell phones and electronic devices while volunteering.
- Volunteers must follow smoking regulations.
- Volunteers should not bring any guests or other visitors on a volunteer assignment.
- Volunteers must follow all school district policies, procedures and rules.

## **Volunteer attendance and tardiness**

- If you know in advance that you will miss a scheduled volunteer session, please let the volunteer site coordinator know as soon as possible.
- If you are ill, please do not volunteer. Germs spread easily in a classroom. Please let the volunteer site coordinator at your building know.
- If you become ill or must leave while volunteering for any reason, please notify your supervising staff member and sign out in the school office.
- Punctuality is important so that the classroom is not disrupted by tardiness.

## **Guidelines to ensure the safety of students, staff and volunteers**

- Volunteers are not to be left to supervise students without a WPS staff member present.
- Do not be alone with students behind closed doors.
- Establish boundaries
  - High fives, fist bumps and side hugs are appropriate.
  - Be cautious about allowing students to sit in your lap to read, or any other behavior that may be seen as inappropriate.
- Alert a teacher, principal or other school staff member promptly if you suspect child abuse or neglect. Do not talk to the child directly about these issues.
- Do not give out personal contact information such as your address, phone, email or personal websites to students. Contact outside of your volunteer service at the school is not permitted.
- Do not engage students on any social media site, email, or texts.
- Never go off-site with a student unless you are on a school authorized and sponsored field trip accompanied by a WPS employee (teacher, administrator, etc.)
- It is the teacher or principal's responsibility to discipline students. Discuss any discipline problems with the supervising teacher before they escalate. Volunteers are welcome to verbally and politely request the student's attention, or to request they not use inappropriate or disrespectful language in your presence.

## **Volunteer Checklist**

You should receive a building orientation on your first visit to the school, but in the event that you do not receive one, don't hesitate to ask these questions of any staff member:

- Where are the restrooms located?
- What do I do in the event of an emergency (fire, tornado, or other crisis)?
- What doors are locked?
- If I exit through a door and find that it's locked when I try to re-enter, where do I go?
- What is the check-in/out procedure?
- Where can I store my belongings (purse, jacket, etc.) while volunteering?
- Who do I go to with questions?

## Important Information for Volunteers

Use this section to fill in details pertinent to your specific volunteer assignment.

<b>School Name</b>	
<b>School Phone Number</b>	
<b>Principal</b>	
<b>Volunteer Site Coordinator</b> (If Different than principal)	
<b>Volunteer Site Coordinator Phone</b>	
<b>Staff Supervisor/ Teacher Information</b>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Room Number</b>	
<b>Work phone</b>	
<b>Cell Phone (Optional)</b>	
<b>Email (Optional)</b>	
<b>Best way to contact</b>	
<b>Volunteer shift</b> (date, time, room, etc., if regularly scheduled)	
<b>Other Notes</b>	

*If you have questions or concerns, contact Strategic Communications:  
Alicia Allen, [aallen4@usd259.net](mailto:aallen4@usd259.net), 316-973-4515.*

## GUIDELINES FOR FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

Wichita Public Schools seeks to maintain and develop partnerships with faith-based and community organizations. We know that partnerships with a public school can bring many benefits and feelings of accomplishment to both parties.

However, this relationship must be handled with great care in order to stay within the parameters of what the law says can or cannot be done. The Constitution requires that public schools remain neutral in all matters involving religion, refraining from conduct that, in the eyes of a reasonable observer, promotes or disparages religion in general or any particular religion.

The following points are adapted from "Public Schools and Religious Communities: A First Amendment Guide," published by the American Jewish Congress, Christian Legal Society and the First Amendment Center. More detailed information is available at [www.freedomforum.org](http://www.freedomforum.org).

- Under the First Amendment, public schools must be neutral concerning religion in all activities. All partnerships and partnership activities must remain secular and be related to the public purpose of the activity served by the partnership.
- Any written notices or messaging regarding a partnership activity must remain secular in content.
- School volunteers should be reminded that all conversation with students should remain secular.
- Do not pray with students or encourage prayer.
- Do not preach about faith while participating in a partnership activity.
- Do not prohibit a student from speaking about religion.
- Participation in programs is not limited to religious groups. Schools must be open to participation by all responsible community groups.
- A student's grades, class ranking or participation in school programs cannot be affected by the student's willingness or unwillingness to participate in faith-based partnership activities.
- A student's religious beliefs will not prohibit that student from being part of a faith-based partnership activity.
- To the extent reasonably possible, partnership activities conducted at a faith-based facility should be performed in rooms without overt religious icons or symbols. However, neither public school nor church staff should cover icons or remove them from the room. Rooms containing proselytizing imagery or materials should be avoided.
- Faith-based and community partnerships should be detailed in writing.
- Any products or items distributed to students or citizens (such as T-shirts, pens, etc.) should not possess any wording or logo identifying either USD 259 or the faith-based organization.
- Any questions concerning the application of these guidelines to any particular situation should be addressed to Suzy Finn at 316-973-4630 or [sfinn@usd259.net](mailto:sfinn@usd259.net).

***Thank you!***



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