

UNIVERSITY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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A Note from the Principal

Volunteering is an opportunity to become a vital and viable part of the University Park PS community. Schools function best when they belong to communities of interested, involved individuals and families. You can bring a lot to our school in the form of your energy, time, ideas, or donations by volunteering.

To make our school a healthy, stable environment for learning takes all the people and processes working together. Teachers and Administrators work tirelessly to provide students with a strong education, sense of discipline, and respect for knowledge.

Parent volunteers can offer a huge resource and support base for the school community while showing their kids the importance of participating in the larger community. Not only will the school reap the benefits of your involvement — you will, too. By interacting with teachers, administrators, and other parents on a regular basis, you'll gain a firsthand understanding of your child's daily activities. You'll also tap into trends and fads of school life that can help you communicate with your children as they grow and change (all without intruding on their privacy or personal space).

Even if you haven't been involved in the past, it's never too late to start. In fact, it may be more important than ever to get involved this year.

Remember that volunteering not only benefits your kids, but will enrich the classroom, the whole school, and the entire community by providing students with positive interaction, support, and encouragement.

And don't underestimate the students — you may feel that what you have to offer might not interest them or might be above their heads, but you'll probably be pleasantly surprised. You'll help build skills, confidence, and self-esteem that will last beyond their school days.

Please understand that it is the classroom teacher, along with the Principal, that has the final say over whether classroom volunteers are to be used and whom those volunteers will be. Some teachers are comfortable with parent volunteers; others are not. It is most of all, a matter of instructional style.

On behalf of University Park Primary School, I thank you for your interest and commitment to our students.

Andrea Federico

Signature

Principal

Guidelines For Parent Volunteers

You will find that teachers use different practices and approaches as to how they do things in their classroom.

Therefore, it is important for you to take some time to visit with your teacher, and find out what it is they want you to do, how they want it done, and what they expect from you as a classroom volunteer. We cannot stress enough the importance of ongoing communications with your teacher. It is really the key to a good volunteer experience for everyone.

Here are some general guidelines for volunteers, teachers, and administrators to be familiar with as part of developing a good partnership with the teacher and the school:

The Role of the Volunteer: While the tasks you will be asked to do will vary, it is important to keep in mind that the role of the volunteer is always essentially the same: ***to enhance the functioning of the classroom by assisting the teacher.***

Sometimes you will work directly with students, but more often you will be taking care of some of the necessary details that go into keeping a classroom running. The more of these tasks a volunteer can do, the more time the teacher has available to do what they are trained to do: teach!

The teacher may ask you to do a certain task at a designated time each week (give spelling tests, listen to students read, take small groups to check out library books, etc.), or you may be asked to do a wide variety of jobs such as create a display, staple workbooks together, help with an art project, etc.

Therefore, it is very important that you understand your job from the beginning so that you can carry through with the work and not have to interrupt the teacher and the class. It is a good idea to discuss ahead of time, with your child, what your role will be as a parent volunteer so that they ***will not*** be expecting to have your undivided attention while you are in their class. It is important for them to understand that you are there to help the teacher and the other students in the class as well.

Keys to Effective Volunteering

Be Honest	in your approach and attitude. It will aid in developing trust.
Be Patient	when working with students. They may be having difficulty and don't need more pressure. Build self-confidence. Praise honestly, accentuate the positive, minimize the negative.
Be Flexible	in responding to the needs of students.
Be Friendly	and try to remember students' names. With a smile and a thank-you, you can accomplish miracles.
Be Respectful	to all. Treat individuals in the same manner you wish to be treated.
Be Discreet	with information that you hear and see. Volunteers will inevitably hear privileged information about pupils, families, teachers, or the school. Please respect everybody's right to privacy
Be Reliable	Arrive on time and call the school if you cannot fulfill your duty. Teachers and students will look forward to your presence.
Be Positive	As volunteers in the school, our goal is to contribute positively to the acceptance of education for all by working as a member of the school/community team.

Remember:

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." Winston Churchill

The Rewards of Volunteering

WHY DO PEOPLE GIVE THEIR TIME TO VOLUNTEER?

- A desire to help children in their education
- A commitment to supporting the education system
- An opportunity to network with others who want to be involved
- To acquire new skills (e.g. computer skills) and experiences
- To utilize their skills and training
- To gain a sense of accomplishment

WHAT DO PEOPLE GET FROM VOLUNTEERING?

- Satisfaction of helping children
- An increased knowledge of the workings of your school
- Increased rapport with school staff and peers of your children
- An increased sense of self-esteem
- Increased skills and experience
- A sense of belonging
- New friends

Remember:

“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely help another without helping himself.”*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

There may be times when you come into the classroom with some curiosity about how your child is doing in school. However, if this is your main motivation for volunteering, you probably will not be as effective a volunteer as you could be.

Volunteering in a class other than your child's is also an option. If you want to discuss your child's progress, or have other questions for the teacher, it is best to request a separate appointment with the teacher rather than trying to fit it in while you are volunteering.

If you have any concerns about the classroom curriculum, your teacher can best respond to such questions during conferences outside class time. There are ways for parents to become involved in curriculum development, and the principal is the best resource for more information about that process.

Confidentiality: It is essential to respect the privacy of all children at our school as well as that of their family. When you sign up to be a classroom volunteer you are agreeing to maintain the same standards of confidentiality expected of all of our school staff. Do not discuss such matters as: a student's academic progress, a student's grades, information you may learn about the student's family life, your opinions of a student's temperament or behaviour, etc. When in doubt, ask yourself if you would want your child or family discussed in this way without your permission. However, should you hear anything from a child which causes you concern for his or her safety or wellbeing, bring this to the teacher's attention immediately.

Responsibilities: Arrange a regular time with your child's teacher when you will be in to volunteer. The time arranged will depend upon the teacher's needs and your availability, but is important to follow through with your plan. Be there when you say you will, and be on time; remember, the teacher is counting on you and your help at that time. If you are unable to come at your regular time, ring the office as soon as possible. Never leave them wondering if they are or are not going to have a helper that day.

Volunteer Opportunities INCLUDE:

CLASSROOM HELPER:

- Volunteers are responsible for assisting the teacher with classroom tasks. This could be reading with individual students, making copies, helping students with assignments, making classroom displays etc.
- Excursions often require extra adult supervision. Volunteers may be needed on the bus, as well as supervising students at excursion site.
- The time commitment is depend on the teachers' needs.

LIBRARY HELPERS:

- It is helpful to have volunteers with: shelving books, checking books in and out, reading to students, helping students select books that are appropriate for their interest and reading levels, and general book and library upkeep (i.e. covering books, decorating the library, etc.). You can work in the library when your child's class is in there or at another time if that is more convenient.

PHOTO DAY:

- Volunteers assist the photographers handle individual and class pictures.
- The time commitment is a half-day at school, morning or afternoon shift.
- We need people to act as runners getting the classes to the gym for pictures, help with arranging the students and helping with picture envelopes to make sure that all the correct information is on them.
- Individuals are also needed to help arrange students and help with picture envelopes and money.

BIGGEST MORNING TEA:

- Volunteers assist to advertise the day to the school community and collect money.
- The time commitment is one morning
- Volunteers set up the hall, assist the students to access the food and assist to pack up at the end of the day.

ATHLETICS CARNIVAL:

- Volunteers assist with.....
- ?
- ?

SWIMMING PROGRAM:

- ?
- ?
- ?

PARENTS AND FRIENDS ASSOCIATION:

- Volunteers assist with organising fundraising events for the school.
- The committee meets twice a term to organise events and coordinate tasks with the assistance of the Principal/Assistant Principal
- They coordinate a sausage sizzle each term. The time commitment is a morning once a term.

SCHOOL COUNCIL:

- The school has 9 parent positions on school council and elections are held in Feb/March of each year.
- Parents on school council provide important viewpoints and have valuable skills that can help shape the direction of the school.
- Parent includes a guardian or person who is liable to maintain or has the actual custody of a student at the school.
- Each parent position is a two year term and the School Council meets 8 times per year. Meetings are held two per term at 6.00pm on a Monday evening.

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