

## **Volunteer Handbook**

# **Volunteering in Bruce Public Schools**

*Be Respectful Be Responsible Be Safe*

*The Bruce School District provides a student-centered environment with dynamic educational opportunities in an ever changing world.*

*The Bruce School District strives to create a collaborative learning community focused on results ensuring student success.*

Volunteer programs will:

- ❖ Enrich the curriculum.
- ❖ Enhance student's learning opportunities.
- ❖ Provide academic assistance for individual children.
- ❖ Increase students' self-esteem and motivation to learn.
- ❖ Provide satisfying opportunities for adults to make lasting contributions to students and schools.
- ❖ Assist teachers and other staff.
- ❖ Establish and strengthen community partnerships for quality education.
- ❖ Support efforts to achieve district academic standards.

## **Being a School Volunteer**

Volunteering in a school is a unique and exciting experience and a benefit to students, their schools and the volunteer. It is designed to promote and maintain a supportive relationship between students, their school and their community.

### **Volunteers should be:**

- ❖ Friendly and caring.
- ❖ Reliable and flexible.
- ❖ Understanding and appreciative of the work of the school staff and volunteer program.

### **Volunteers should have:**

- ❖ A professional attitude and an ability to work cooperatively with school staff.
- ❖ Interest in working with students 4-8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- ❖ Good moral character.
- ❖ Time and willingness to serve.
- ❖ An understanding of the important role that education provides in the lives of our children and our communities.

Please keep in mind that volunteering will involve learning new skills and learning about students. The school's role, and therefore the role of the school volunteer, is always to improve the academic achievement of our students. We do this in a variety of ways including academic instruction and personal support.

## **Becoming a School Volunteer**

### **To begin volunteering with the school district, you must:**

- ❖ Complete a Bruce School District volunteer application.
- ❖ Complete and sign a Disclosure Form authorizing the school to complete a Wisconsin State Criminal History Background Check.
- ❖ **ALWAYS** sign **in** and **out** through the school office whenever you come to the school.
- ❖ Wear a name badge as provided by the school.

## Responsibilities of School Volunteers

- ❖ Understand and accept the students in terms of their own background and values.
- ❖ Support and supplement the instructional program of the classroom teacher. **The volunteer's role is assistance, not replacement.**
- ❖ Communicate regularly with the teacher or afterschool volunteer coordinator via meetings, notes, logbook, telephone or email.
- ❖ Be prompt, dependable, and regular in attendance.
- ❖ Know and observe all regulations and procedures in the assigned school (i.e. fire drills, accident reporting, lunch and coffee privileges, and pupil restroom and drink privileges, inclement weather procedures).
- ❖ Discuss problems that arise with the teacher or afterschool volunteer coordinator.
- ❖ Notify the principal, counselor, teacher, or afterschool volunteer coordinator if a student confides in you about a situation of abuse or neglect. Staff will assist and support you with the reporting and follow-up protocols.
- ❖ Leave personal concerns and pressures at home. Leave school problems at school.
- ❖ Respect confidentiality with relationship to the school. Ensure that a child's work and behavior in school are held in confidence.
- ❖ Remember you are acting as a role model for children, not only in how you interact at school, but who you are as a person.

## Rights of School Volunteers

### **Volunteers have the right to:**

- ❖ Know as much about the school as possible, including its policies, its staff, and its programs.
- ❖ Sound guidance and direction by someone who is experienced, informed, patient, thoughtful and has the time to invest in giving guidance.
- ❖ A suitable assignment with consideration for personal preference, temperament, life experience, education and employment background.
- ❖ A variety of experiences, through transfer of one activity to another, and through special project assignments.
- ❖ Be heard, have a part in planning, feel free to make suggestions, and have respect shown for an honest opinion or different perspective.
- ❖ Recognition through day-by-day expression of appreciation, or some tangible evidence by being treated as a co-worker.

## Tips for School Volunteers

- ❖ Be patient when working with students. Give yourself time to find your niche.
- ❖ Names are important. Make sure you say the student's name the way the student wants it to be said. Learn to spell it correctly. Make sure the student knows your name and can pronounce it correctly.
- ❖ Treat individuals with respect and courtesy and expect the same in return.
- ❖ Show that you are interested in the student as a person by listening carefully to what is said and showing you care by words and actions.
- ❖ Encourage and support student successes. Build self-confidence by praising them honestly and frequently. Accentuate the positive and minimize the negative.
- ❖ Avoid making comparisons between students, between teachers and between schools.
- ❖ Always remember to be fair and consistent.
- ❖ Students make mistakes. Let them know that making mistakes is part of living. Don't be afraid of making mistakes yourself.
- ❖ Be trustworthy and honest in your approach and attitude. Students will trust and respect you when you are 'real'.

- ❖ If you will be absent, call the school. Students will be disappointed but will be reassured that you cared enough to call.

## Safety and Liability Issues

### **Where should I work with a student?**

Locations will vary, depending upon the availability and the preference of the student's teacher. You may be working with a student in a classroom, cafeteria or computer lab. Try to find a quiet space with as few distractions as possible. Always work in an area assigned by a teacher or afterschool coordinator and keep the door open.

In you are working with a student in an afterschool program it may be tempting to offer the student a ride home. **Never go off site with a student and never give them a ride in your car.** Your school volunteer experience is limited to the public school setting.

### **What are my confidentiality rights?**

As the relationship with a student progresses, he/she will begin to trust you and may start to confide in you. Take time to listen and show that you care. However, do not make a promise you cannot keep. If a student reveals information relation to possible abuse or neglect, let the student know that you care and are there to listen. Be sure to follow school guidelines and let the building administrator, teacher, or counselor know of the situation. There is always a chance that someone may already have insight into the situation, which could help you to understand and work better with that student.

Personal information about yourself should only be shared as it is relevant to the work you are doing with the student. DO NOT give our personal contact information such as your address, phone, email and person website address.

### **Can I hug a student?**

Some students, especially at the elementary level, will naturally become very attached and affectionate. Many students are craving affection and attention, so it is important that you handle the situation with sensitivity. Unfortunately, **front hugs should be avoided.** Instead, affection, such as "high fives". In addition, regardless of age, students should never sit on your lap.

### **What are some safer touch areas?**

Areas that are safest to touch are:

- Shoulders
- Upper Back
- Arms
- Hands

In general, the safest guideline is to avoid touching students.

### **What are some signs of possible child abuse and neglect?**

The following factors may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect. If any of the following signs are present in the student you are working with, **you are required to alert the teacher, principal, or counselor so that they can further investigate the situation.**

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems.
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.
- Lacks adult supervision.
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.
- Comes to schools or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home.
- Signs of injury, such as welts, bruising, cuts, burns, fractures, or swellings.
- A history of repeated, untreated, or unexplained physical injury.
- A contradiction between the story, "I fell off my bed" and physical evidence that has included repeated bruising.
- The student appears uncomfortable or fearful when talking about the injury.
- Child alludes to or seems preoccupied with sexual matters.

Signs of Neglect:

- Is frequently absent from school.
- Begs or steals food or money.
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses.
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.
- States that there is no one at home to provide care.

### **What is the purpose of these guidelines?**

The Bruce School District wants you, as school volunteers, to carry out your responsibilities in a caring and appropriate manner. We want you to feel comfortable about being with our students and encouraging them. We want everyone to feel safe. Having these guidelines will assist you in creating and maintaining a safe environment for you and our students with whom you will be assisting.

## **Boundary Invasion**

When volunteering it is important to remember your own personal boundaries and the boundaries of the students you are working with. Do not allow yourself to:

- Be alone with the student behind closed doors.
- Favor certain students by giving them special privileges or treatment.
- Initiate or extend contact beyond the school or afterschool day.
  - Such as taking the student on outings, away from protective adults.
- Engage in inappropriate communications
  - Such as talking to the students about personal problems or allow yourself to become a confidant to the child...it is not your purpose as a school volunteer.
- Use phones, email, text messaging, instant messaging or personal web pages/social networking sites to discuss personal topics or interests of the students.

**\*\*\* Keep our students safe\*\*\***

## **School Volunteer Information/Procedure Checklist**

When you first meet your teacher/afterschool coordinator, plan to discuss the following:

- Days and times to work in the classroom/school.
- Materials, strategies or games to be used.
- Teacher's/coordinator's classroom/school policies, procedures and rules (such as management system, reinforcement techniques, organizational plans, emergency procedures, where volunteer leaves personal belongings, and whether volunteer is welcome in teachers' lounge and lunchroom.
- Dates of any required or suggested trainings.
- Protocol for informing school/teacher/student about volunteer absence.
- Procedures for volunteer and teacher/afterschool coordinator to keep in touch (regular conferences, telephone conversations, notes, informal meetings.)
- Alternate plans for days when the teacher is absent.
- How the teacher/coordinator will tell you as a volunteer of your day's assignment (folder, note, or other means).
- How the students will address the volunteer (school or volunteer's preference of having students use first name of Mr. /Ms. / Mrs.).

If you work on academic areas with students, you should also discuss:

- Pertinent background information about the student(s) you will work with (within the appropriate standards of student information confidentiality).
- Strengths of the student(s).
- Needs of the student(s).
- Tips for working successfully with specific students (learning style and reinforcement techniques).
- Procedures for taking student(s) out of classroom for individual work.
- Designation of work area location.
- Alternate plan if student is absent.

- **Volunteer Agreement**
- **Copy of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)**
- **Copy of Student Records Policy**
- **Copy of Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting policy**
- **Copy of Volunteer Policy.**
- **Copy of Board Sexual Harassment Policy (both student and staff) provided to all long-term volunteers and/or mentors who have been screened and approved by the district as a volunteer; signed receipt required and verification maintained with volunteer/mentor application.**

\*All students, employees and parents/guardians, substitutes, volunteers must be notified of the names, office address, and telephone number(s) of the designated coordinator(s) of Title IX.

\*All students and their parents, staff and volunteers, enrolling after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year, are notified of the name and phone number of the district Title IX compliance coordinator (or building officer).



Bruce Public School District  
**Volunteer Handbook**

## **Volunteer Agreement**

### **Safety and Liability Issues**

\_\_\_\_\_ As the relationship with a student progresses, he/she will begin to trust you and may start to confide in you. You should take time to listen and show them that you care about them. However, do not make a promise you cannot keep. If a student reveals information relating to possible abuse or neglect situation, let the student know that you care and are there to listen but that you are required to pass this information on to a teacher, counselor, or principal who can offer them help.

\_\_\_\_\_ Personal information about yourself should be shared only as it is relevant to the work you are doing with the student. Do not give personal contact information such as your address, phone, personal website and email.

\_\_\_\_\_ Some students will naturally become very attached and affectionate toward you. Many students are craving affection and attention, so it is important that you handle the situation with sensitivity. Unfortunately, hugs should be avoided. Instead, carefully put your arm around a student's shoulder and turn it into a side hug. Use other signs of affection, such as "high fives". In addition, regardless of age, student should never sit on your lap.

### **Confidentiality**

\_\_\_\_\_ Students in the Bruce School District have the right to expect that information about them will be kept confidential by all school volunteers. Additionally, the U.S. congress has addressed the privacy-related concern of educators, parents, and students by enacting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (known more commonly as "FERPA" or the "Buckley Amendment").

\_\_\_\_\_ Each student with whom you work has the right to expect that nothing that happens to or about him or her will be repeated to anyone other than authorized school department employees, as designated by administrators at your school.

\_\_\_\_\_ You may not share information about a student even with others who genuinely are interested in the student's welfare, such as social workers, scout leaders, clergy, grandparents, or nurses/physicians. A grave medical emergency, in which confidential information may be

necessary for a student's care, is an exception. Thus, you must refer all such questions to the school employees authorized by the principal.

\_\_\_\_\_ Parents, friends, or community members may in good faith ask you questions about a student's problems or progress. Again, you must refer all such questions to the authorized school employees. You may not share information about a student even with members of your own family.

\_\_\_\_\_ Before you speak, always remember that violating a student's confidentiality isn't just impolite, it is against the law.

### **Working with Students from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds**

\_\_\_\_\_ Students in the Bruce School District come from different families, cultures, and communities—each with its own set of values and beliefs. Understanding the students' cultures and helping them understand the school culture will increase your ability to help them learn.

#### Agreement

I (print name) \_\_\_\_\_, as a school volunteer have read and agree to the above terms. In addition to the remaining guidelines in the Volunteer Handbook, I have been made aware of where to find the Volunteer Handbook and to whom I can speak to regarding any questions or concerns I may have.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please print full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Site

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please sign full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Coordinator signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

School, Family & Community Partnership Program  
Bruce Public School District

## **Volunteer Handbook**

### **Staff Directory**

Bruce School District

715-868-2585

Joni Wienert, Superintendent

Larry Villard, Principal

Jeannie Weisser, Lori Villard, Secretaries

Brittany Thompson, School Counselor

Donna Wishowski, AmeriCorps, Volunteer Coordinator

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

The volunteer coordinator, teacher, or principal at the school can assist you with any questions, concerns, problems, etc., that you may have while serving our students as a school volunteer.

