

Volunteer Involvement in Oregon Trail Schools

Volunteer Handbook



For information or assistance contact
your school volunteer coordinator or principal

Mission Statement

The mission of the Oregon Trail School District Volunteer Program is to provide opportunities for members of our community to enrich the educational development of students through positive participation in our schools educational, extra-curricular, and parent/teacher club programs.



How You Can Make a Difference

The aim of all teachers is to give their students the best opportunities for learning. These opportunities are brought about through listening, responding, instructing and meeting the special needs of their students.

Volunteers can help with the effective utilization of teacher time and skills. They can offer an extra pair of hands, eyes and ears. Through an organized school volunteer program, volunteers can enhance the educational opportunities to students by enriching the experiences beyond those the school can provide.

School volunteer programs succeed when teachers and volunteers form an effective education team and function as co-workers.

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.

Goals of the Volunteer Program

- To improve the quality of our schools by providing additional human resources.
- To enhance the educational development of students and volunteers.
- To provide an opportunity for interested community members to participate effectively in a school's program.
- To strengthen school/community relations through positive participation.
- To build an understanding of schools among citizens, thus stimulating widespread involvement in the total education process.



Questions Volunteers Often Ask

Why are Criminal History Background Checks required of volunteers? Our concern is the safety of the children. All volunteers must consent to an annual criminal history background check.

Why do volunteers sign-in? The district requires all volunteers to sign-in upon entering a school building. This is another safety measure for our children. Your sign-in log will also serve as a record for those of you who write off volunteer mileage on your income taxes.

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

What if I can only volunteer twice a month? We always have a need for occasional volunteers.

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

What should I do if I start volunteering and it becomes a hardship for me? Please let the teacher or volunteer coordinator know. We want you here, but we don't want you inconvenienced. Often times a more flexible schedule can be worked out. We also would encourage you to try different volunteer activities.

What if I have more than one child and want to work in each of their classrooms? Each classroom has different schedules and volunteer needs. We can work out a schedule for you to spend time in each classroom.

I have younger children. Can I bring them when I volunteer? Please arrange child care for your younger children. Even a quiet, sleeping baby draws the attention of the students away from their schoolwork.

What do I do if I don't enjoy correcting papers or photo copying and that's all the teacher gives me to do? 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 doing something you don't enjoy.

What if there is an emergency drill while I am volunteering? If there is a drill, you need to leave the building along with the students and staff. Leave through the nearest exit, or if you are in a classroom leave with the class. If there is an earthquake drill, turn away from the windows and seek protection under a desk or other sturdy furniture.

What if I have questions or concerns about my child? Please arrange for a separate time before or after school to conference with your child's teacher. Classroom time is valuable and is often tightly scheduled.

While working with students, what if I observe something that I'm concerned about? Share your concerns with a teacher or the principal. Also, please remember that volunteers have a responsibility to maintain confidentiality regarding all of our students. Sharing information about our students with anyone other than school employees is inappropriate.

Student Behavior

Volunteers are not expected to handle discipline problems. Never intervene in a dispute unless a student is in danger of being harmed. Call on staff members for assistance. See board policy JGA regarding physical discipline of students.

Use Common Sense

School volunteers who work directly with students can follow some easy steps to prevent false accusations of abuse or assault.

- Follow a “hands-off” policy.
- Avoid being alone with students in unsupervised locations.
- Do not write personal notes to students.
- Avoid conversations (or jokes) that involve private or sexual matters.

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

The Oregon Trail 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.

Tutoring Strategies

You may be asked to help an individual student or small group of students who need some extra attention. Students who have been absent or who are having difficulty with a particular problem will benefit from your special help. Following are some strategies that are important to keep in mind when working with students. The implementation of these strategies will help the student to feel more at ease and enjoy the learning process. Incorporate these strategies into your tutoring style in a natural manner. Do not worry about their full implementation at your initial meeting.

1. Be prepared. Once you receive the material you are to use in the tutoring session, be sure you are thoroughly familiar with it. A child can quickly spot an unprepared tutor and may think you are not interested.
2. Establish a one-to-one relationship with the student by talking for a minute about the student himself.
3. Make all tasks appear challenging but not overwhelming to the student. Do not say, "This is easy." If he/she fails at the task he/she may feel defeated.
4. Rather than giving the student the answer when he asks, direct thinking so he can discover the answer him/herself.
5. Introduce new material slowly.
6. If a task is too difficult, break it into simpler units. Some students cannot remember directions well or have a short attention span.
7. Demonstrate rather than just talk. Show as you tell.
8. Be patient. Be positive. Try, try again. And smile!
9. Allow the student the opportunity to take the initiative in situations he can manage.
10. Keep the lesson moving. If the student loses interest, change activities.
11. If the student does not know the answer, make sure he has time to think about it (silence often means he is thinking). But remember to help with answers before the student feels uncomfortable.
12. If you do not know the answer to a problem, or are unsure of the correct response, admit this to the student and work it out together. Feel free to ask the teacher for help when you need it.
13. If work is incorrect, stop the student before much has been done. Review directions again.
14. Give immediate reinforcement to correct responses.
15. Do not compare students.
16. Do not embarrass, belittle or degrade.
17. If the student is unwilling to cooperate, bring the session to a close. Do not allow frustration and anger to take over, causing you to lose ground.
18. Remember that the teacher is ultimately responsible for all discipline problems, and difficult situations should be referred to the teacher.

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 by 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.

OTSD Policy IICC-AR: Volunteers

A volunteer is a person who donates time at a school site or other educational facility to support instructional programs and co-curricular activities (i.e., organized sports, field trips and fundraisers).

1. School/district volunteers provide direct services to staff or students on either a regular and consistent basis, or a limited basis, under staff supervision;
2. Volunteer Mentors work directly with students on a regular and consistent basis, often without staff supervision;
3. Volunteer coaches work directly with students on a regular and consistent basis, generally with staff supervision, and must be certified through the NFHS Coaches Certification Program (ASEP) in accordance with OSAA rules.

No offer of voluntary services by any otherwise qualified person shall be rejected on the basis of race, color, sex (gender), marital status, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, age or disability. However, no individual who promotes discrimination, harassment, prejudice or racism shall be accepted as a volunteer.

The acceptance and utilization of the services of any person on a voluntary basis shall be at the discretion of the school principal or designee. Such services may be discontinued at any time.

To ensure the safety of Oregon Trail students, all volunteers are required annually to complete an online application that includes a criminal history background check and confidentiality agreement. A person who does not consent to the background check or the fingerprint-based criminal history will not be allowed to volunteer in the district.

- Principals will work with their school volunteer coordinator and district liaison to ensure compliance with this regulation;
- The district will pay the cost for background checks of volunteers;
- Information on completed checks will be maintained at the district's personnel office;
- A person who does not consent to the background check as required by the district will not be allowed to volunteer in the district;
- Under district policy the district is required to deny volunteer privileges to anyone convicted of certain felonies and misdemeanors (those listed in ORS.342.143). In addition the district reserves the right to deny volunteer privileges to persons based on the nature and recentness of crimes and overall criminal record. The district or the school principal may revoke a volunteer's privileges at any time if

the volunteer's presence is considered disruptive or unsafe to the learning environment;

- If a person has been denied the opportunity to volunteer because of an unresolved arrest, and the case is subsequently dismissed or the person acquitted, the person may reapply to become a volunteer.

Further, all volunteers shall:

1. Use established procedures upon entering a school, including signing in and wearing appropriate identification as required;
2. Perform services under the direction of an administrator, program supervisor (including licensed, classified or coaching staff) or trained volunteer coordinator;
3. Maintain a high level of confidentiality in regard to information gained;
4. Adhere to applicable laws and district policies, procedures and rules;
5. Not engage in political or religious activities while performing service for the district;
6. When driving vehicles meet all requirements defined in Policy EEAE - Student Transportation in Private Vehicles, and EEAE-AR - Proof of Vehicle Liability Insurance.