



2024-2025

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

ALACHUA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Welcome!

We welcome you as a volunteer in Alachua County Public Schools! The active participation of parents, college students, and community members in the classroom extends the effectiveness of teachers and staff. Volunteers help deliver invaluable services to students and schools that would not be possible without the support of the community.

Alachua County Public Schools is proud of the scope of community involvement in schools throughout the district. Each year, thousands of students receive the individual attention that is so vitally needed to help them succeed. With this, hundreds of teachers receive “extra pairs of hands” that are so appreciated in helping our classrooms run smoothly. We also value our partnerships with businesses, community organizations, and churches. And finally, our office supports classroom speakers, event judges, and field trip chaperones.

This handbook provides you with district standards and procedures for our volunteers, as well as guidelines and tips to help you in your role as a school volunteer.

School volunteers are vital to the success of our students and we greatly appreciate your participation. As a volunteer, you make a difference!

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelley Kostamo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelley Kostamo, Volunteer Coordinator
kostamkb@gm.sbac.edu



As a volunteer, I agree to abide by the following code of conduct:

1. I will complete a new Volunteer Application each school year.
2. I will sign IN and OUT at the front office every visit.
3. I will wear a volunteer name badge at all times while on campus.
4. I agree to never be alone with individual students who are not under the supervision of school teachers or staff.
5. I will maintain the confidentiality of all school or classroom information.
6. I will share with teachers and/or school administrators any concerns that I may have related to student welfare or safety.
7. I will not supervise a class in the absence of a certified teacher.
8. I will not discipline or directly teach students.
9. I will not establish or make decisions about instructional objectives.
10. I will abide by District Policy 8660, Transporting Students by Private Vehicles, when transporting students.
11. As a role model for the students, I will dress and act appropriately.
12. I agree only to do what is in the best interest of every child with whom I come into contact.
13. I agree to follow any district guidelines for adults pertaining to COVID-19 and/or other health/safety precautions.

I agree to follow the Volunteer Code of Conduct at all times or risk being dismissed from my volunteer placement.

Guidelines AND INFORMATION

As a volunteer, you will be assisting the staff at the school to provide an enhanced educational experience for the students. Your contribution is a vital one and will become an important part of the total instructional effort. Be sure that you take seriously your responsibilities as a member of the educational team.

In Alachua County, school volunteers must always work under the supervision of school staff members. Make sure that you are working in an open, visible area and do not allow yourself to be in a situation where your actions might be misconstrued. All volunteer activities take place on the school grounds during school hours under the general supervision of school staff. Exceptions can include chaperoned field trips and “away-from-school” volunteer activities such as projects done at home, booster club activities, and district-level activities. Pre-school children should not accompany volunteers. Young children in a classroom can interrupt the learning environment. Volunteers are required to follow staff directions in the event of a fire drill, lockdown, or evacuation.

Volunteer Application

Individuals must submit a completed volunteer application every school year. Applications are available online. Registered volunteers are covered by the Alachua County Public Schools’ worker’s comp insurance program. In case of an accident, please notify the school-level volunteer coordinator, the school secretary, or the principal immediately. Statements found to be false will be immediate cause for dismissal. The Alachua County Public Schools reserves the right to refuse volunteer placement to individuals with disqualifying criminal convictions. All volunteers are screened.

School Volunteer Coordinators

There is a district-level coordinator for the overall school volunteer program. In addition, each school has a designated volunteer coordinator.



Discipline

Teachers are responsible for the the discipline of students, not volunteers. Discuss any discipline problems with the supervising teacher before they escalate.

Signing In and Out/Name Tags

All volunteers must provide their government-issued ID the first time they sign in at a school. Volunteers are required to sign in and sign out each time they come to the school. Name badges are issued when you sign in and must be returned when you sign out. All volunteers are required to wear a name tag/name badge while on campus. Records are maintained for security purposes as well as documentation of community involvement hours which may be used for recognition as well as data for grant proposals. We recommend keeping track of your hours in a personal log for future reference.

Confidentiality

Work with students is always confidential. We encourage sharing your experiences with others, but in order to protect student privacy do not use the full names of students outside of school. A misplaced comment can be devastating to a student, a family, and the volunteer program. If you have questions or concerns, speak with the teacher, the school-level coordinator, or contact the district volunteer coordinator.

Reporting

Any volunteer who believes bullying or harassment has occurred should immediately report it to the school principal as per Board Policy 5517.01-Bullying and Harassment. Volunteers must also report suspected child abuse to the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-962-2873.

Attendance/Punctuality

It is imperative that you be prompt, dependable, reliable, and regular in attendance. If you must be absent, call the school as soon as possible and ask that the teacher or your supervisor be told of your absence.

Dress Code/Conduct

Volunteers are considered to be “paraprofessionals.” You are a role model for the students and should dress and act appropriately. Cell phones should not be visible or in use during your volunteer work. Never take pictures of students with your cell phone or show students pictures or videos on your phone. Do not engage our students on any social media sites, email, or texts.



WHAT DO SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS DO?

- Reinforce skills taught by the teachers.
- Help teachers give students more individual attention.
- Provide added enrichment to the curriculum.
- Assist with career awareness, exploration, and preparation.
- Assist teachers with instructional-related duties.
- Help students develop a more positive attitude about themselves, school, and academic achievement.
- Help prepare students to be productive citizens and lifelong learners.
- Provide many support services to schools and school programs.

Volunteer ROLES

Support Service Volunteers perform a variety of school duties assigned by staff members such as working in the office, monitoring hallways, assisting in the media center, clinic, or classrooms.

Resource Speakers provide curriculum enrichment by sharing information on careers, hobbies, travel, and other areas of expertise with students in area classrooms.

Activities Volunteers give important support as needed for special groups and/or projects. This may include serving on the PTA Board, booster clubs, Ad Hoc committees, field trips, career fairs, science fairs, fine arts activities, and other school-sponsored activities.

Volunteer

ROLES

CONTINUED

Classroom Assistants work closely with classroom teachers and staff, assisting in various projects, keeping records, preparing instructional materials, and interacting with students. Duties in elementary schools may include reading/telling stories, listening to children read, and preparing instructional materials. Duties in middle and high schools and adult education centers may include working on special projects, operating AV equipment, performing clerical duties, making instructional materials, reviewing homework, and assisting with testing.

Tutors work one-on-one with a student or with small groups of students who need help in academic subjects and assist with reinforcing basic skills.

School Advisory Councils (SAC) elect members to represent a broad cross-section of the school's student population and the area in which the school is located. The SAC functions as a resource to the principal and members work as a team to develop the school improvement plan.

Mentors are needed to work with selected students on a regular basis. The main goal is to motivate students to achieve their goals and stay in school. By establishing a one-on-one relationship, tutoring, setting short-term goals, and serving as a positive role model, mentors can provide encouragement and friendship to a student.

Business Partners is a broad-based program that promotes business involvement in schools. It is a sharing of resources between a business/organization and a school: one-to-one tutoring, classroom presentations, student and/or teacher recognition, field trips, displaying student work, judging student competition, donating materials/money, or implementing a unique program designed by the business and the partner school.

Tips for VOLUNTEERS

Find out about:

- ✓ Days and times you're expected
- ✓ Volunteer procedures and practices of your school
- ✓ Building layout and parking facilities
- ✓ What is expected of you as a volunteer
- ✓ What to expect of the student(s)
- ✓ Discipline and classroom policies
- ✓ What to do if you are absent or student is absent
- ✓ What to do if supervisor is absent
- ✓ Fire drills and safety policies

Emergencies

In case of emergency or when you have concerns for students' safety, please report immediately to a school staff member.

If you need help...

If you need more instruction in order to perform a task, just ask. Establish a method of communication with the teacher, either written or verbal. If you need to change your assignment, contact the school-level or district volunteer coordinator.

What does the teacher expect from the volunteer?

Promptness
Cooperative
Enthusiasm
Patience
Support
Dependability
Discretion
Positivity
Sensitivity
Initiative
Tact
Flexibility
Creativity
Courtesy

WORKING WITH INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

- Volunteers must always work under the supervision of paid staff members. Make sure that you are working in an open, visible area and do not allow yourself to be in a situation where your actions might be misinterpreted. There should be no contact outside of school hours.. There should be no contact outside of school hours.
- Introduce yourself and tell the student why you are here and when you'll be volunteering. Learn the student's name and how to pronounce and spell it.
- Get acquainted. Find out what interests the student has; tell the student some things about you. Try to establish rapport, but be patient. It may take time for you both to feel comfortable. Through your words and actions, let the student know that you care.
- Be dependable. You are modeling responsible behavior for the student.
- Build the student's self-confidence. Praise your student honestly and frequently. Accentuate the positive; minimize the negative.
- Keep your explanations and expectations few, short, and clear.
- Rather than giving the student an answer automatically, direct their thinking so the student can discover the answer by themselves.
- Do not get discouraged if you do not see immediate, significant changes in the student's attitude or academic achievement. The student's present situation has probably been building over time, and it will take time to change it.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Everyone knows that a little praise goes a long way in any classroom. But "a little praise" really should be something more than the same few phrases repeated over and over. Your students need more than the traditional "Good," "Very Good," and "Fine" if encouragement is the ultimate purpose. Here are some additional possibilities:



That's really nice.
Thank you very much.
Now you've figured it out.
I'm proud of the progress you've made.
I like the way you're thinking.
That's a good point.
That's quite an improvement.
Why don't you show the class?
Much better.
Keep up the good work.
Wow!

Excellent work.
You really outdid yourself today.
That's a very good observation.
That's coming along nicely.
Good thinking.
It looks like you put a lot of work into this.
Nice going.
How impressive!
I knew you could do it!
Very creative!
Terrific!

2024-2025 School Calendar

Monday, August 5 – Wednesday, August 9	Pre-Planning for Teachers
Monday, August 12	First Day for Students
Monday, September 2	Holiday – Labor Day
Friday, October 18	Holiday – UF Homecoming
Monday, October 21	Student Holiday – Teacher Workday
Monday, November 11	Holiday – Veterans Day
Monday, November 25 – Tuesday, November 26	Student/Teacher Holidays
Wednesday, November 27 – Friday, November 29	Holiday – Thanksgiving
Friday, December 20, Monday, January 6	Student/Teacher Holidays FLEX DAYS
Monday, December 23 – Friday, January 3	Winter Holidays
Tuesday, January 7	Classes Resume
Friday, January 17	Student Holiday – Teacher Workday
Monday, January 20	Holiday – MLK Jr. Day
Friday, February 14	Student Holiday - Teacher Work Day
Monday, February 17	Holiday - President's Day
Monday, March 17 – Friday, March 21	Spring Holidays
Monday, March 31	Student Holiday/Teacher Workday
Monday, May 26	Holiday – Memorial Day
Tuesday June 3	Last Day for Students

2025 Summer School

Wednesday, June 4	First Day of Summer School
Friday, July 5	Last Day of Summer School

School Hours

GAINESVILLE		HAWTHORNE	
*Elementary	7:45 a.m. - 1:52 p.m.	*Elementary	7:45 a.m. - 1:52 p.m.
Middle	9:20 a.m. - 3:37 p.m.	Middle	7:55 a.m. - 2:08 p.m.
High	8:30 a.m. - 2:42 p.m.	High	7:55 a.m. - 2:08 p.m.
ALACHUA / HIGH SPRINGS		ARCHER / NEWBERRY	
*Elementary	7:45 a.m. - 1:52 p.m.	*Elementary	7:45 a.m. - 1:52 p.m.
Middle	7:45 a.m. - 2:07 p.m.	Middle	8:25 a.m. - 2:42 p.m.
High	8:47 a.m. - 3:12 p.m.	High	8:35 a.m. - 2:47 p.m.

*Dismisses 75 minutes early on Wednesdays.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What should I wear?

Required attire may slightly vary depending on placement. You may want to ask your supervising staff member what attire will be appropriate for your assignment. Casual attire is allowed – including jeans and tee shirts – however, gym clothes and items with inappropriate sayings or references are not permitted.

- If you are questioning if it is appropriate attire or not- it is best to change into something else until you can ask at your school site.



How do I choose a school?

If you do not have an affiliation with a particular school in Alachua County, please reach out to the Volunteer Coordinator's Office at volunteers@gm.sbac.edu to find a placement.



I can't make it this week. What do I do?

If you must be absent, call the school and ask that the teacher or student be told you cannot come that day. They will be disappointed but reassured that you care enough to call.



School _____

School's telephone number _____

PLACEMENT INFORMATION

Teacher _____ Room _____

Grade Level _____ Date to Begin _____

Day(s) _____ Times _____

SIGN-IN LOG

Date	Supervisor	Time In	Time Out	Total

For general volunteer information, please contact the Volunteer Office
at (352) 955-7250 x 6411 or volunteers@gm.sbac.edu.