

VI. Volunteers: The School Board of Polk County encourages volunteer participation by individuals and groups in schools under its governance, through Volunteers in Polk Schools (VIPS).

A. Definition: A volunteer is any non-paid person who is appointed by the School Board to serve students in Pre K through grade 12, students enrolled in career centers and adult schools, under the supervision of school staff before, during and after school hours.

B. Responsibility: The Coordinator of Community Involvement shall be responsible for the direction of the Volunteers in Polk Schools (VIPS) Program and its compliance with all state and local regulations pertaining to volunteers, including approval, recruitment, training and evaluation.

C. Volunteer Categories:

1. School volunteers include, but are not limited to: family members, senior citizens, business and community members and elementary, secondary and college students.

2. Instructional Volunteers: Instructional volunteers provide direct services to students and staff. Services may include, but not be limited to:

a. Tutoring individuals or small groups in academic subjects;

b. Mentoring students who have been identified as being in need of academic support;

c. Providing curriculum enrichment for students as community resource speakers.

3. Support Service Volunteers: Support service volunteers provide assistance to the school and teachers on a regular basis. Services include:

a. Chaperones for on site and off site activities

b. Assistants for classroom teachers and guidance counselors in the media center, clinic and school office

4. Fundraising Organizations: Volunteer organizations (PTA, PTSA, PTO, Booster Clubs, etc.) support the school community for a specific purpose.

D. Procedures

1. Volunteer applicants provide the necessary information on the volunteer application and undergo a Florida Department of Law enforcement Level 1 screening before being approved as volunteers in Polk County Public Schools.
2. Volunteer applicants who meet Level 1 standards are approved as volunteers by the School Board. Applicants who do not meet Level 1 standards are subject to a review process.
3. College students who are participating in Polk County Public Schools, as part of their coursework leading to an education degree, undergo a Level 2 screening coordinated by the Senior Coordinator, Teacher Training. College students who are not education majors complete the volunteer application for approval.
4. Approved volunteers are subject to School Board policies governing health, safety, manner, dress and appearance.
5. Approved volunteers are covered by the School Board Workers' Compensation Program if an accident occurs during their volunteer service. Fundraising organizations (PTA, PTSA, PTO, Booster Clubs, etc.) are responsible for providing liability insurance to cover their volunteers.
6. Volunteers shall work under the direction and supervision of designated school staff.
7. Volunteers will not administer medication to students, grade subjective tests, place the grade on tests, discipline students or be left in charge of a classroom in the absence of a teacher.
8. Volunteers are subject to Florida Statute 1001.22 which protects the rights of privacy with regard to student information and records..

9. Administrators are responsible for providing proper orientation and training for faculty and volunteers under the direction of the Community Involvement Office.

10. Volunteers shall refrain from improper touching of an aggressive or sexual nature.

11. Volunteers must maintain records in the volunteer log at the school, including names, dates, hours of service and assigned tasks. All volunteers shall sign in and out in the volunteer log while volunteering in a school.

12. Volunteers may not bring children who are not registered in the school when they are serving in a volunteer role.

13. Volunteers must transport students for school sponsored activities in approved vehicles. Volunteers who transport students in their own vehicles for school-sponsored activities do so at their own risk since the Polk County School Board's liability coverage is only in force for vehicles owned, leased, or rented by the School Board.

14. Florida Statute 39.202 mandates that persons who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused, abandoned or neglected by persons responsible for the child's welfare shall report immediately such knowledge or suspicion to the central abuse hotline (1-800-96ABUSE) at the Department of Children and Families. Volunteers should report those concerns to the designated school staff member.