



# Volunteer Guidelines and Expectations

Volunteers represent our diverse community and help provide a quality learning experience by supporting our schools in a number of ways.

Research shows that involved parents and an involved community enhance student achievement!

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## Thank you for applying to volunteer!

Schools are safe, nurturing places for students to learn and grow, and the work you do makes that environment even more rich and meaningful. Individuals like you can help a child with their own personal development and make a difference in that child's life.

These guidelines are designed as a partnership tool. It includes basic information and tips for working with students. It also includes some important information that all school staff and volunteers must understand and abide by to ensure that students and adults in our schools are safe.

We would like to thank you, in advance, for your gift of time.

Dr. Arthur Tate  
Superintendent

## Davenport Community Schools

### Our Vision

Education that challenges conventional thinking, prepares all students to compete in a global society, and inspires our students, parents, staff, and community to answer the question, "What if?"

### Our Mission

To enhance each student's abilities by providing a quality education enriched by our diverse community.

### Our Beliefs

- We believe all children can and will learn in the Davenport Community School District.
- We believe each child deserves respect.
- We believe we must have high expectations for each child.
- We believe we must never limit children.
- We believe in the power of effective instruction.
- We believe effective instruction encourages students to be inquisitive and to explore and discover.
- We believe every child has the right to a safe environment.
- We believe a caring environment is important for student success because relationships impact learning.
- We believe extracurricular activities engage students in the educational environment.
- We believe effective schools nurture relationships and impact learning.
- We believe in the universal benefits of continuous quality improvement.

## **Goals of Davenport Community Schools (DCS) Volunteer Office**

- Provide opportunities for our diverse community to engage with our schools.
- Offer support for individualized educational assistance to students.
- Create opportunities for meaningful service.
- Support teachers and staff with non-instructional tasks (family fun nights, field days, etc.).
- Promote good will in the community for the schools and families served.

## **General Principles of the DCS Volunteer Office**

The DCS Volunteer Office is a program of DCS and is at all times guided by the principles and policies of the Davenport Community School Board.

A volunteer is not a substitute for a member of the school staff, but does provide supplemental and supportive services.

The relationship between volunteers and the school staff should be one of mutual respect and confidence.

Volunteers serving in Davenport Community Schools are bound by the policies, rules, regulations and procedures of the school district.

Volunteers, like any other employee, are to be supervised by each building Principal or other authorized school employees.

## Getting Started!

We encourage all volunteers to get to know the school staff. The classroom or office staff where you are volunteering will help you gather the following information and review it with you so you are comfortable and successful as a volunteer. Volunteers may provide service once, periodically, or at a regularly scheduled time and day each week.

I will ensure I understand the school's rules for adults and students.

I will ensure I understand the school's fire drill and safety procedures.

I understand that I am to review these guidelines and procedures along with relevant school site procedures.

### Helpful Questions to Ask:

- Where and how do I check in and out, and receive a "Volunteer" badge?
- Do the days and times of your volunteer availability fit for your supervising staff?
- How will the teacher/supervisor will inform you of the daily assignment? (folder, note, etc.)
- How should students address you? (the school or the volunteer may have a preference)
- What are the teacher/supervisor's classroom or school policies, procedures, and rules? (behavior management, organizational plans, emergency procedures, place for personal belongings, etc.)
- What are the procedures for notifying teacher/supervisor of your absence?
- Are there special needs or circumstances I should know about the student(s) I am working with?
- Who should I contact if there is a discipline issue? (Volunteers are not responsible for discipline.)
- May I take photos of students? (Always ask this question before taking photos.)
- What do I do if I am injured while volunteering?

All volunteers are expected to abide by DCS policies and procedures while serving in the school program or activity. These are available online at <http://www.davenportschools.org/schoolboard>

## Getting to Know Your School: A Checklist

### A. Building

- \_\_\_ Raptor Check-in/attendance procedures
- \_\_\_ Fire/Tornado drills/ Emergency closings
- \_\_\_ Lunchroom procedure
- \_\_\_ Substitute procedure
- \_\_\_ Playground rules
- \_\_\_ Confidentiality rules
- \_\_\_ Support staff

### B. Staff

- \_\_\_ Principal
- \_\_\_ Teachers
- \_\_\_ Reading Specialist
- \_\_\_ Other important contacts

### C. Volunteer Environment

- \_\_\_ Classroom rules/policies
- \_\_\_ Room arrangements
- \_\_\_ Tutor placement
- \_\_\_ Recess/Playground rules

### **Helpful Tip!**

#### **Top Characteristics of Successful Volunteers**

Enjoy students and have patience with young people and adults

Dependability

Flexibility

Confidentiality

Pride in volunteering

Enthusiasm and optimism

Respect for others and the wide array of school roles and responsibilities others have

## **Volunteer Support**

All schools have identified a volunteer liaison who will welcome you and coordinate your contact with a staff member with whom you will volunteer. The schools shall:

- Provide adequate orientation and training to prepare volunteers for a successful volunteer service.
- Be respectful and tactful in working with volunteers, while offering appropriate feedback and coaching as part of training.
- Be prepared and organized when volunteers arrive. This includes providing proper supervision, instruction, supplies, and work space.
- Treat volunteers as respected members of the work team, entrusting them with information to successfully complete their assignments.
- Be accessible and open to timely discussions regarding volunteer concerns and issues.
- Keep volunteers informed of any changes in policies or procedures.
- Find projects/assignments that are worthwhile and challenging, and that utilize a volunteer's current skills and/or provide opportunities to develop new ones.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to learn and grow while seeing the impact of volunteer efforts.

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

A sincere effort will be made to place volunteers in assignments that best match that their interests and/or talents. Here are just a few opportunities DCS may offer:

- Help in classrooms, library, office or on the playground
- Work with small groups – for example, in reading, writing, math or spelling
- Set up or take down projects for science, history, art or writing displays
- Help with field trips, parties or special events
- First Day School Supplies Drive
- Chaperone school dances
- Help with all-school events: vision screening, science fair, art display, track meets or field days
- Help elementary staff welcome new parents for Kindergarten Round-Up

Volunteers may offer their services individually or as part of an organizational project from groups such as:

- Parent Teacher Association (PTA/PTO)
- Business
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Professional Associations
- Civic Groups
- Faith Based Community
- Senior Citizen Groups
- Universities and Community Colleges
- Student Organizations

## Volunteer Program Guidelines and Expectations

Please read the following volunteer guidelines and expectations for the volunteer program. No statement herein is intended to conflict with existing School Board policies or with existing Administrative Regulations.

- *For the purposes of application and screening, we reference a volunteer as any unpaid person who performs duties, tasks, and functions giving them responsibility over and/or putting them in direct contact with child(ren) other than their own during school hours and at school-sponsored events.*
- Volunteers serve as helpers and shall conduct volunteer activities under the supervision of school staff. All instructional service is to be rendered under the control and supervision of staff. Volunteers understand that the volunteer relationship is terminable at-will.
- Volunteers shall confirm assigned responsibilities and expectations with the supervising staff member before beginning any activity. Volunteers will follow the building procedures for signing in and out each and every time of service and wear an identification badge/tag/pin required by the school.
- Volunteers will perform to the best of their abilities the volunteer assignment. Volunteers understand that there may be certain risks associated with volunteer assignments.
- Volunteers give consent for photographs, videotapes, or audiotapes to be taken during the course of the assignment for use by DCS for publicity purposes.
- Volunteers authorize DCS staff to administer basic first aid or appropriate emergency medical treatment in the event of an accident, injury, or illness as the circumstances warrant.
- Volunteers will not use computer systems, logins, or accounts that have been assigned to someone else. If authorized to use a DCS computer, volunteers will sign and abide by the DCS Learning Information Services technology user guidelines.

### Background Screening

Additionally, every volunteer must complete an application and background check. Each volunteer will be required to disclose prior convictions of the law, other than minor traffic violations or juvenile offenses, and complete an authorization form which contains the following language from the volunteer application and release form:

"I understand that the approval of the volunteer application is conditioned on the results of the background check which includes a criminal records check. My signature below authorizes the school to conduct a background investigation and authorizes release of information regarding general reputation, personal characteristics, criminal history (if any), credit history, prior work history and reports of child abuse or neglect. DCS reserves the right to consider any inquiry of this type to be made at a future date, should I remain as a volunteer for the district. In any instance when an inquiry of the type is made, now or in the future, the scope, nature and results of such inquiry will be made available to me upon written request."

Where a prior conviction is ascertained, the school system will consider the nature of the offense, the date of the offense, and the relationship between the offense and the position for which the person is volunteering to render services. Volunteers can find out more about DCS background screening and checks on the web site at [www.davenportschools.org](http://www.davenportschools.org).

All appeals of disqualification begin with a written request from the applicant, which must be submitted to the DCS Volunteer Office within (30) days of notification of disqualification. A panel will review the written appeal and disputed information, then schedule an appeal meeting with the individual or contact the individual. The

panel will make a decision based on factual information provided in the dispute letter and/or during the meeting. The members of the panel may be comprised of the following departments: Volunteer Office Manager, Davenport Police Department, and DCS Human Resources department. If deemed necessary, the panel may include other members.

**This process shall not be used to keep parents from participating in the academic support of their individual child(ren).** Background checks will not be required for parents to attend school functions to support their child(ren).

### **Volunteer Sign in and Hours Records**

It is important for volunteers to check in at the Raptor station to assure safety and accountability, and record all volunteer service hours. Accuracy and up-to-date records are important to both the schools and volunteers.

### **Recognition**

Volunteers are essential to the DCS mission. Many schools plan an annual recognition event for volunteers. Additionally, DCS employees recognize and show appreciation for the contributions of volunteers through the district's Helping Us Grow (H.U.G.) Award.

### **Volunteer Attire**

Attire —Volunteers are expected to maintain personal appearance that is compatible with school climate and culture. Volunteers are expected to use good judgment in selecting appropriate attire. Appropriate dress may vary depending on the service/work environment.

## **Safety Information**

Schools are to be safe, nurturing places for adults and students to learn and grow. To safeguard that environment, school staff and volunteers are asked to be aware and report activities that threaten the safety and well-being of others to the appropriate personnel, such as staff and principals.

### **No Tolerance - Harassment**

Prohibited harassment includes written or verbal abuse, slurs, jokes, threats, pranks or comments that stereotype individuals because of their race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or other legally protected status. Regardless of its form, Davenport Community Schools has a NO TOLERANCE policy. Visit our web page at [www.davenportschools.org](http://www.davenportschools.org) and click School Board then scroll down to Policies and Administrative Regulations.

### **Confidentiality is a Legal Requirement**

Any information you learn at school about students or adults is confidential. A good rule of thumb is to treat information about others at school in the same way you would want them to handle that information if it was about you or your family, and report to a staff member if you see or hear actions that concern you.

Volunteers shall not discuss the performance, actions, or any other information about any student except with the student's teacher, school counselor or principal. This is not only Davenport Community Schools policy but is also mandated by federal statute, The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 34 CFR Part 99. Confidentiality pertains to both written records and verbal statements.

### **Student Photos – FERPA Violations**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows every public school parent the right to refuse photographs at school taken of students in that family. School staff and volunteers are obligated to abide by the

federal law. If your volunteer assignment is photography, you must review all procedures and process with a staff member prior to any photos. Each student must have on file a Davenport photo release form.

### **Transportation**

Transportation of students will be provided by district authorized transportation/personnel. Student transportation in personal vehicles is strictly prohibited unless authorized by the school district and/or written authorization is provided by the parent of the student and agreed to by the directive supervisor/administrator in advance.

## **Other Information You Need to Know**

We value your volunteer time and experience and the difference you make for students. The district does not have specific insurance coverage for volunteers should you be injured while supporting student activities or programs. Therefore, before you volunteer, please review your health care policy and/or homeowner's policy to determine what coverage is available if you are injured while volunteering.

### **If you are injured while operating in an approved volunteer capacity:**

- Seek immediate first aid help and/or call 911. This might be your own action or the response of other adults or students with you.
- Report the incident to a staff member as soon as possible. Your report should go either to the staff supervising your volunteer time or to a staff in charge of the school or program where you are volunteering.
- School staff will fill out a district injury report form, secure your signature and forward it to the district HR office.

### **Guidelines for Safe Interactions with Students**

These guidelines for school volunteers may err on the side of caution. We believe you should do the same and be sure to ask questions of a school principal or the Volunteer Liaison whenever you need more information or have a concern.

**Areas of Caution:** Some actions, even without improper motive, are common trouble areas.

- Do not ask an individual student to come early to set up for a class or activity.
- Do not give a gift to a student at school.
- Do not allow a student to develop a personal interest in you. Report it to your building Administrator.
- Do not invite students for social activities outside school.

### **Where Should I Work with a Student?**

Locations will vary depending upon space availability and the preference of the supervising staff member. Try to find a quiet space with as few distractions as possible. Always work in a public area, on site.

### **What Are My Confidentiality Responsibilities?**

As your relationship with a student develops, he or she may begin to trust and confide in you. It is appropriate to take the time to listen to them and show that you care. If a student shares sensitive information relating to potentially abusive situations, let the student know that you are required to pass the information on to a teacher, supervisor, or principal who can offer them help. Personal information about yourself should be shared only when it is relevant to work you are doing with the student. Avoid giving personal contact information such as your address, phone number, or e-mail.

### **May I Hug a Student?**

Some students, particularly younger children, may express affection toward you. Children should never sit on your lap. Use “high fives” or handshakes. Remember to be aware of cultural perspectives regarding personal boundaries.

## **Communication & Feedback**

To ensure continued success of the volunteer program and volunteers, we feel it is very important to maintain ongoing communication between volunteers and school staff. We encourage you to share your thoughts, ideas and feedback regarding the program, volunteer assignments, problems, concerns, etc.

Furthermore, when volunteers make a decision to no longer serve, they are encouraged to share the reason. We encourage complete and honest feedback, suggestions/ recommendations, etc. This information is helpful to us in evaluating the program, ensuring volunteer satisfaction, and to ascertain that the program continues to be successful and efficient.

### **Thank you for applying to volunteer!**

Davenport Community Schools  
Achievement Service Center  
1606 Brady Street  
Davenport, IA 52803  
563-445-5000

**Davenport Community Schools wants you to carry out your volunteer responsibilities in a caring and appropriate manner. We want you to feel comfortable volunteering and want you and the students to feel safe. We offer these guidelines to assist you in creating and maintaining safe working environments for all.**



## NOTES