



***DESERT SANDS  
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT***

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[www.dsusd.us](http://www.dsusd.us)

# **SCHOOL VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**



## **OUR MISSION**

The mission of the Desert Sands Unified School District, a dynamic system of challenging educational choices, is to ensure that every student develops the knowledge, skills and motivation to succeed as a productive, ethical global citizen, by assuring equal access to student-centered learning provided by caring committed collaborative staff working in partnership with families and diverse communities.

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## INTRODUCTION & WELCOME

*“The best way to find yourself  
is to lose yourself in the service of others.”*

- Mohandas Gandhi

Welcome to the Desert Sands Unified School District and thank you for taking time to “lose yourself” in the service of our students. Volunteers have always played, and will continue to play, an important role in providing enrichment opportunities and the extra attention that enhances the educational experience of students. The support volunteers provide to our students, teachers and staff is invaluable.

We want you to get the most out of your volunteer experience; we want to make sure you are an informed volunteer. This handbook was created for volunteers who are parents, grandparents, retired persons, former teachers and administrators, community members, and business partners – in short, for anyone wishing to devote a portion of his or her time to one of the most vital systems in our community – public schools! We hope the information contained within will be helpful.

One hour a week, one day a week, one day on a special project – your efforts make a difference for students. Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Rutherford".

Gary Rutherford, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

# Desert Sands Unified School District

(Data as of 10/4/2012)

Area in Square Miles: 752

Communities Served: Bermuda Dunes, Indio, Coachella, La Quinta, Indian Wells, Palm Desert, Rancho Mirage.

Annual Budget: \$213,757,166

Total District Employees: 2,500

Number of Students Served: 28,878

- Consists of 33 School Sites
  - 20 elementary sites
  - 7 middle school sites
  - 4 high school sites
  - 2 continuation school sites
  - 1 alternative school site
- A Diverse Student Population
  - 0.4% Native American
  - 1.3% Asian
  - 1.9% Black
  - 0.6% Filipino
  - 62.7% Hispanic
  - 0.1% Pacific Islander
  - 27.9% White
  - 5.2% Multiple
- 26% of the student population is identified as Limited English Proficient
- 51% of the student population is eligible for a free or reduced price lunch.
- 8% of the student population is enrolled in Special Education programs.
- 13% of the student population is identified for GATE program (Gifted and Talented Education)

*As a volunteer in the Desert Sands Unified School District, it is important for you to know that we are a large school district with many resources and challenges. Many of the students you work with will have different life experiences than you. Your challenge will be to honor, encourage and assist students to fulfill their own unique potential.*

## **WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS DO?**

Volunteers perform many different tasks in the Desert Sands Unified School District. The following is a list of tasks performed:

- Computer support
- Resource room support
- Classroom parents
- Field trips
- Fund raising
- Special events
- Choir
- Library support
- Breakfast and lunch programs
- Photocopying and stapling
- Reading programs
- Organizing teaching materials
- Bulletin boards and other classroom displays
- Classroom cleanup
- Coaching
- Guest speakers
- Advisory and site plan committees
- School beautification
- Tutoring
- Communications (telephone committees/newsletters/flyers)
- PTA/PTO events
- Health programs
- Chaperones for dances, field trips

## **WHAT SHOULD A SCHOOL VOLUNTEER EXPECT?**

A school volunteer should expect:

- to be made to feel that the assistance given is worthwhile and contributes to the overall value of the education program
- to be treated with respect and consideration by all students and staff;
- to be given a suitable assignment taking into consideration both the educational and student supervision needs of the district and the volunteer's areas of interest, skills, and, if possible, convenience of location.
- to be given clear instruction and any training necessary for particular volunteer assignments;
- to be given proper orientation to the school with introductions to key personnel and information provided as to parking, storage or personal items, washroom and coffee/lunch facilities;
- to have an effective mechanism for two-way communication with staff (i.e. discussion time or regular memo exchange for ongoing direction and feedback);
- to be provided with direct support from staff if difficulties arise.



## WHAT TYPE OF VOLUNTEER WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE?

### **Non-Supervisory**

A volunteer that is **never** left alone with students. No fingerprint clearance required. i.e. classroom/office assistance.

### **Supervisory (AB346)**

A volunteer serving alone as a supervisor to students. i.e. driving students, field trips, tutoring, or any supervision away from the certificated teacher or approved supervisory employee.

*\*Volunteers driving students **must** also complete the Automobile Insurance Verification form through Risk Management.*

### **Volunteer Coach (Unpaid status only)**

Volunteer Coach (unpaid). Coach serving alone as supervisor or assistant to coach.

*\*If coaching in paid status (Walk-on Coach), must provide referral form from Athletic Director to Personnel. Required to complete further requirements i.e. Application, CPR, First Aid etc.*

### **Requirements to apply as volunteer:**

- ◆ Completed Volunteer Application online
- ◆ Valid U.S. Government Issued Identification (i.e. Driver License, Passport).
- ◆ Supervisory volunteers (AB346) must complete the fingerprint clearance process for:
  - DOJ-Department of Justice
  - FBI-Federal Bureau of Investigations
- ◆ Clearance through Megan's Law



## Steps to Take to Apply

Below are the procedures to follow to apply to be a volunteer:

- Go to District website: **www.dsusd.us**  
(click on Schools, then Online Volunteer Application)
- Complete online application:
  - \* Select Volunteer icon
  - \* Select which volunteer type you want to apply for.

### **Non-Supervisory Volunteer**

Complete sections 1, 2 & 5

Current U.S. Identification required and uploaded

Sign application and submit

### **Supervisory (AB346) Volunteer**

*(Fingerprint clearance required)*

Complete sections 1, 3 & 5

Current U.S. Identification required and uploaded

Sign application and submit

***Download Live Scan Form and location for processing.***

### **Volunteer Coach (Unpaid status only)**

*(Fingerprint clearance required)*

Complete sections 1, 4 & 5

Current U.S. Identification required and uploaded

Sign application and submit

***Download Live Scan Form and location for processing***

*\*Walk-on Coach (Paid status only) Must be referred by Athletic Director, with proper forms and report to Personnel Services for processing.*

*\*Current DSUSD employees have the following clearance:  
Certificated employees are cleared as AB346 volunteer. Classified employees are also cleared to volunteer but only within the school day. In the event the activity is outside the school day, FBI clearance is required.*

*If a break in service occurs additional fingerprint clearance may be required.*

## **WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A SCHOOL VOLUNTEER?**

A school volunteer has the following responsibilities:

- to remember that the principal has ultimate responsibility for all personnel, policy and programs in his/her school, including volunteers;
- to follow the policies of your assigned school (i.e. signing-in procedures where requested, local school behavior codes, etc);
- to be reliable. Accepting a school volunteer assignment means a regular commitment to be there – promptly and on schedule. Also, notifying the school in advance if you have to be absent;
- to assist, under the direction of qualified staff, following their instructions closely. Please remember that volunteers are in the school to assist and supplement – not replace the role of paid staff;
- to be receptive to, and participate in, orientation, training and meetings with staff, as offered or required.
- when asked, to offer constructive feedback to staff on your experience as a volunteer and make good use of their feedback;
- to remember you are a role model for students and the school community. Please maintain the highest standards of confidentiality and ethics;
- to keep open lines of communication. If you are not happy with your assignment, or any problem arises, it is your responsibility to discuss it with your supervising teacher;
- to refrain from using inappropriate language while at school. What is a harmless slang term to you may be offensive to another adult or a student;
- to always be well groomed and punctual, and wear your volunteer name badge;
- to leave personal concerns and pressures at home and leave school problems at school.

# GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS

- A school volunteer is there to enrich the educational program and student supervision. A school volunteer is not a teacher or an educational assistant, not a therapist or a counselor. A school volunteer is not on campus to develop friendships with students.
- Ask questions freely about programs, policies and equipment at a time appropriate both for the staff member and for yourself. Follow the staff person's established procedures. Talk to the teacher about any difficulties at appropriate times, not in front of students or parents.
- Do not interrupt the teacher during a lesson. Have a prior agreement with the teacher about how you will signal him or her for help.
- Help students to tackle their work but do not do their work for them. If they get off-track, help them get back on in a tactful manner..
- Speak in a positive way to students – point out the things they have done right, the things they do well. Rushing them or nagging causes more problems than it solves. Belittling a person or making comparisons is harmful.
- Remind students of appropriate behavior if they are disruptive or break rules. Show by example a calm, responsible attitude for dealing with problems. Remember, though, that corrective discipline is the responsibility of the principal and the teaching staff.

Show respect for our students who come from many diverse families, cultures and communities — each with its own set of values and beliefs.

## CAUTIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS

The District considers its primary responsibility to be the protection and nurturing of children. For this reason, we must do everything possible to prevent people who would prey on children from having access to our schools. Any suspicion of improper or illegal dealing with children will be handled swiftly and seriously, with the involvement of law enforcement as required and necessary:

- Do not use your position to promote your own religious, political, economic or social bias.
- Do not use student restrooms.
- Do not drive alone with a child in your vehicle.
- Do not take a child alone to the restroom, an office, a classroom or any other private place on campus.
- If you are directed to work with a student in an empty room, be sure to leave the *door open at all times*, and to sit at two desks which are easily seen by those passing by. Always work in a public area, on site.
- Do not arrange your area so that certain areas are hidden from view or so that places exist in your classroom in which one person could have unseen access to another.
- Do not socialize with students outside regular school hours and school activities. This includes phone calls, visits, regular mail or email, or transporting students in personal vehicles without express permission from the school district.
- Some students, especially at the elementary level, 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, a *front hug is unacceptable*, so carefully put your arm around a child's shoulder and turn it into a side hug. Use other signs of affection, such as "high fives" and handshakes.
- No volunteer may hold a student in his or her lap. All school personnel must be extremely careful not to touch a child in any way that could be interpreted as inappropriate.

## DISCLOSURE OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

In California, it is the legal obligation of all school personnel to report any suspected case of child abuse. If a child indicates to a volunteer that he or she has been, or is, the victim of abuse, or if a volunteer has strong suspicions that a student may be an abuse victim, the volunteer must inform either the supervising teacher or the principal. People in these positions are *mandated reporters*.

One of the most difficult things to handle may be when the student who asks the person in whom they have confided to “promise not to tell.” A volunteer cannot make such a promise and should be clear about that to the child. Don’t try to “counsel” the child.

Remain merely a sympathetic “listening ear” without being judgmental or trying to offer solutions. Assistance and counseling should come from those professionals with the responsibility and experience to provide it.



# HEALTH & SAFETY REGULATIONS

## Drug-Free Workplace

The Desert Sands Unified School District is a Drug-Free Workplace. Volunteers shall not have consumed alcoholic beverages or taken illegal drugs when working at a school.

## Smoking

Smoking is prohibited on all school property. Therefore, volunteers are not allowed to smoke during their time of service.

## Health

- Please do not come to school if you are ill. This includes a cold, sore throat or cough.
- Students learn by example, and we ask that you act as a model by using good health habits when you are at school.
- All school staff members are expected to maintain good personal hygiene. Be certain that you are keeping yourself well-groomed and physically approachable by children. They are especially sensitive to – and outspoken about - bad breath and body odor.

## Safety

- Be aware of the school playground regulations.
- Supervise climbing, running and contact activities carefully.
- Certain materials need to be watched closely: scissors, saws, woodworking tools, sand (it can damage eyes), glass items, pointed objects (such as a math compass), cooking utensils and pans.
- Do not allow a student to use a paper cutter or handle hot appliances, utensils or equipment.
- Report any dangerous conditions to your supervisor at once.

## Blood

The general public has been made aware of blood-transmitted diseases. If there is blood on a student, immediately secure a staff member.

## **Remember to follow all the safety rules of the school in which you are working.**

- √ If an accident occurs, immediately secure a staff member.
- √ Never move a child involved in an accident. A member of the school staff will initiate proper procedures for accidents.

# TIPS FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS

These tips from successful instructional volunteers will help you become a “pro”:

- Begin by telling the child something about yourself and your family. Share experiences and ask questions about favorite activities, interests and friends with the exception of those related to your own religious, political, economic or social bias.
- Try to learn the names of students as quickly as possible, including the correct pronunciation, and be sure the student knows your name. Use the child’s name frequently in your conversations.
- Work at the student’s level; sit or stand with him/her. Show your interest and involvement
- Be clear about what you’ll be doing at each session, whether it’s working on a specific academic skill, learning to play a new game or telling them a story.
- Try not to be late or absent for your sessions, as a child will quickly learn to count on your time together. If you must be absent, let him or her know ahead of time, if possible.
- Listen attentively, be aware of the child’s feelings, provide encouragement and praise frequently.
- If a child makes a mistake, let them know that making mistakes is part of learning. If a child cannot master the skill you are working on, consult the teacher for suggestions on different approaches and materials.
- Finish each session on a positive note. Take a few minutes to tell the child how much you enjoy working with him or her. Point out their accomplishments and let them know you appreciate how hard they are working.

# STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

The Desert Sands Unified School District has clearly defined policies on student behavior and discipline. The Board of Education strives to provide a supportive, caring and orderly school climate that will enable students to develop skills that can help them achieve their full potential intellectually, physically and socially, in accordance with the District’s mission statement.

Good school discipline means a sense of order prevailing in the classrooms and throughout each campus. The sense of order offers security and comfort as well as a background for teaching and learning. Discipline should proactively encourage and acknowledge good behavior and support actions which promote the pursuit of the best possible learning climate. School and classroom codes of behavior will therefore incorporate strategies for fostering, recognizing and rewarding positive behavior, in addition to outlining the potential consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Finally, school discipline is a process involving several partners in education: namely, the Board of Education, the educators, the parents and guardians, the students and the community. By working together, these partners can create, in each school, a teaching and learning environment that allows every student to reach his or her potential.



# CONFIDENTIALITY

Perhaps one of the greatest obstacles in the path of effective use of volunteers, especially parent volunteers, is the worry on the part of teachers and principals regarding the possible misuse of privileged information. Once anyone begins to work in a school setting, he/she becomes privy to knowledge about children's behavior patterns, academic ability, emotional maturity, relationships with others, etc. In some cases, information of this nature is imparted in order that the volunteer might work more effectively with the child. In other cases, it is simply acquired in the course of frequent contact in the school.

In addition, volunteers are in a position to learn more about staff members than would normally be learned from their "public image." One also forms personal opinions about the professional competency of the individual teachers and principals.

There is nothing wrong with the volunteer possessing such knowledge and arriving at personal conclusions. This knowledge or these opinions, however, should never be shared in the community or with anyone who has no legitimate need to know. Similarly, care must be taken not to make comments harmful to the reputation of any pupil, professional or other volunteer.

If problems develop, the line of communication regarding a situation in the school is always first with the staff member concerned and then, if necessary, with the principal.

A volunteer has every right to expect that his or her participation will be treated with the same confidentiality and respect.



# **VOLUNTEER INFORMATION/ PROCEDURE CHECKLIST**

When you first meet with your teacher/supervisor, plan to discuss the following:

- Days and times to work in the classroom/school
- Procedures for volunteer and teacher/supervisor to keep in touch (regular conferences, telephone conversations, notes, informal meetings)
- Alternate plans for days when the teacher/supervisor is absent
- How the teacher/supervisor will tell volunteer of 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 or Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms.)
- Materials, strategies or games to be used
- Teacher/supervisor's classroom/school policies, procedures and rules (such as classroom discipline/management system, reinforcement techniques, organizational plans, emergency procedures)
- Dates of required and suggested trainings
- Protocol for informing school/teacher/student about volunteer's absence

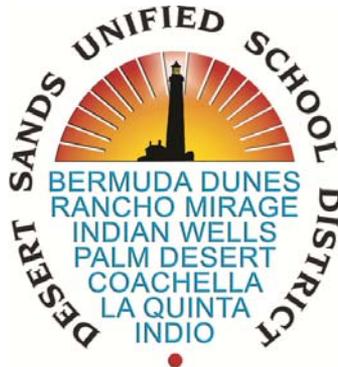
If you work on academic areas with students, you should also discuss:

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

And don't forget these "housekeeping" questions:

- Location of volunteers' parking
- Which restroom to use
- Where to leave your personal belongings
- Whether volunteers are invited to use the staff lunchroom and lounge
- Telephone usage rules

**The administration is available to assist you with any questions, concerns, problems, etc. that you may have.**



**Thank you for volunteering in the  
Desert Sands Unified School District!**