



PROCEDURE 498	
Adopted	October 6, 2008
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VOLUNTEERS IN SCHOOLS

1. PURPOSE

This administrative procedure has been developed to provide direction relating to volunteers in schools. System and school administrators encourage the use of volunteers in the schools of Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board. The presence of volunteers enriches the educational experience of students.

This administrative procedure has been established to encourage the participation of volunteers. It also addresses the responsibilities that school administrators have to plan for the effective use of volunteers and to protect all students in their care.

2. DEFINITIONS

A volunteer is an individual who agrees to undertake, without pay, a designated task that supports the school and student achievement and well-being. A volunteer supports a classroom, school or system-wide program under the ultimate responsibility of the principal at the school level. A volunteer is an optional support, the use of whom reflects decisions made at the school level. Volunteers shall not be involved in the evaluation of students, school personnel or program. Volunteers must maintain confidentiality with respect to personal information regarding students, their families, or staff, except as required to perform their duties and maintain staff and student safety. This procedure does not apply to student teachers completing the requirements of graduation from an accredited Faculty of Education, or HPEDSB students engaged in Cooperative Education placements.

2. VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

- 2.1 Parents, guardians and community members are welcome as volunteers in district schools. They can provide valued support to students and the school staff.
- 2.2 The personal interests, background, and commitment of volunteers can enhance programs, services, and educational opportunities in the school, while volunteering can provide valuable experience, personal growth and satisfaction for volunteers.
- 2.3 Volunteers are valued education partners who foster interaction and co-operation among the home, school and wider community and can support experiential learning opportunities.

3. THE PRINCIPAL'S RESPONSIBILITY

- 3.1 The principal is responsible for promoting a positive, safe and secure learning and working environment for students and staff members.
- 3.2 The principal is responsible for:
- a) determining the volunteering needs for the school;
 - b) the recruitment, selection and screening of volunteers in accordance with board policies and procedures;
 - c) approving and assigning volunteer tasks;
 - d) training and orientation;
 - e) the supervision of volunteers;
 - f) the assessment of the volunteer program; and
 - g) appropriate recognition of the volunteers.
- 3.3 The principal, at the beginning of the school year, will consult with staff, and the school council to determine the needs, preferences and tasks which could be supported by a volunteer. Staff should also be surveyed to assess their commitment and expertise in working with volunteers. The concerns of staff should be noted and resolved if volunteers are to be successful in the school.
- 3.4 A staff member may be designated in each school as a coordinator of volunteers. The principal and/or coordinator may then designate other staff members to act as supervisors for the volunteers.
- 3.5 Volunteers must be made aware of health and safety processes, legal liability, procedures for reporting suspected child abuse, and school emergency procedures such as a fire drill or school lockdown. Volunteers must know the process to follow if they encounter difficulties with a student and are expected to be aware of and adhere to the Board Code of Conduct and the School Code of Conduct. Form F498-2: Information for Volunteers should be given to persons interested in becoming a volunteer.
- 3.6 Periodic review of the overall volunteer program is necessary to measure its impact and to make adjustments necessary to its ongoing success.

4. RECRUITMENT

- 4.1 The recruitment process is aimed at filling the needs of the school while meeting the needs of the volunteers. All involved have a high duty of care under the *Education Act* and certain duties cannot be given to volunteers. An invitation should be extended to parents/guardians to volunteer in their schools. Form F498-1 is a sample Volunteer Application Form for schools to use for the purpose. The principal, in consultation with staff, should determine the best fit for a volunteer. Generally, it is not recommended to place a parent in the same classroom as his/her child.
- 4.2 The invitation to parents and guardians to be volunteers in the school will be most successful if the tasks are defined. The volunteers then have a clear understanding of the activities in which they may be involved. Knowing in advance how a person's time will be used is important in influencing potential volunteers to be part of the school support system. Volunteers also need to know that references may be checked and that a vulnerable sector check will be requested. This prepares volunteers and reassures them that a safe environment is maintained for the students and staff.

5. DUTY OF CARE

- 5.1 All staff members have a high “duty of care” under the *Education Act*, the *Child and Family Services Act* and other legislation. Though certain duties and responsibilities can be delegated to volunteers, staff members cannot divest themselves of this duty of care.
- 5.2 The investment of time in screening, preparation, and training of the volunteer should be in proportion to the time, extent and nature of involvement the volunteer will have with the students; i.e. the degree of impact and risk that the volunteer would reasonably have under the “duty of care”.
- 5.3 When parents or guardians who wish to volunteer in their home school are well known within the school community the principal, in consultation with staff, may screen and approve the volunteer candidate. All volunteers will require a vulnerable sector check. The required form can be obtained from the local police force and maintained in the school office to issue to volunteers who require a vulnerable sector check.
- 5.4 The principal shall use Form F498-2 to collect an offence declaration annually thereafter from the individual if they continue to volunteer at the school. Offence declarations shall be maintained in a secure office location to protect confidentiality. The principal/designate shall review offence declarations on an annual basis to ensure that the declarations remain updated and valid.
- 5.5 Existing volunteers who have a vulnerable sector check on file at the school that is more than two years old and who have not completed an annual offence declaration will be required to obtain a new vulnerable sector check and then may file an offence declaration with the school annually thereafter.
- 5.6 The principal retains the authority to accept or decline any volunteer’s offer of service without appeal and to halt, without appeal, volunteer activity.

6. LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS/CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

- 6.1 Volunteers are expected to adhere to the requirement for confidentiality under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and to comply with administrative procedures as they relate to them and their role within the school environment.
- 6.2 The proper use of privileged information is very important in a school setting. It protects the students and staff and at the same time ensures all volunteers the right to be treated with the same degree of confidentiality and respect. In a school environment volunteers will acquire information about students or staff. Volunteers should not share information with anyone other than appropriate staff. The volunteer should also refrain from expressing opinions that would cause harm to the reputation of staff or pupils.
- 6.3 Volunteers are not permitted to have access to student’s records for any reason. Under no circumstances will a volunteer be given such personal information as home phone numbers, addresses, birth dates, without the consent of the parent/guardian or student who is sixteen or older. Volunteers who are specifically assigned to assist administration and/or office staff may need to have access to some personal information. This is permissible only if there is a staff member directly supervising the volunteer.
- 6.4 The volunteer will be privy to only that personal information which he/she needs for a consistent purpose to perform the function he/she has been assigned. In some

circumstances, the volunteer may require background information on a student to best understand the particular needs of the student for the purpose of providing proper assistance. The teacher would share only the appropriate information and seek guidance from the principal if clarification is needed as to what information is permissible to share with the volunteer.

- 6.5 Volunteers are in a position to learn and observe more about staff members than would be learned or observed in a regular parent to teacher relationship. However, in no case should such knowledge or opinions be shared in the community. Likewise, care must be taken to refrain from expressing comments harmful to the reputation of each pupil or professional.
- 6.6 A volunteer has every right to expect that their participation will be treated with the same confidentiality and respect.
- 6.7 If a concern or inquiry arises, the volunteer should speak with the appropriate supervising staff member in a timely manner. Should further assistance be required, the staff member and volunteer should speak with the principal in a timely manner.

7. EXCURSION VOLUNTEERS/VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

Volunteers are expected to adhere to the requirements of Administrative Procedure 230: Out of School Learning and the Out of School Learning Handbook as it relates to volunteer supervisors for excursions and volunteer drivers.

Legal References:

- *Education Act, subsection 171 (1) Powers of Boards: Voluntary Assistants; section 265 Duties of Principal: Care of Pupils*
- *Child and Family Services Act*
- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- Ontario Regulation 521/01—Collection of Personal Information

District References:

- Procedure 133 – Accessibility Standards
- Procedure 135 – Equity and Inclusivity Education
- Procedure 145 - District Code of Conduct and School Codes of Conduct
- Procedure 151 - Access to School Premises
- Procedure 194 – Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy
- Procedure 230 – Out of School Learning
- Form 230-5 – Excursion Volunteer Application
- Form F230-6 – Authorization for Drivers
- Procedure 321 – Pediculosis in Schools
- Procedure 406 - Criminal Background Checks
- Form F498-1 – Volunteer Application
- Form F498-2 – Information for Volunteers
- Form F498-3 – Offence Declaration

Resources:

- Code of Conduct Resource Guide
- Out of School Learning Handbook