



YRDSB Volunteer Handbook: A Resource to Support Parental Involvement in Schools



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1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in volunteering in our schools. The York Region District School Board (YRDSB) values volunteers as education partners providing a valuable service to students and schools in support of Board priorities, student achievement, equity and well-being. Volunteers bring their skills and talents and support communication between the school, parents/guardians and the community. Volunteers are representative of the diversity of our communities, and they enrich schools and workplaces with their interests and experiences. The Board recognizes that Principals and school staff play a key role in supporting volunteers in the school.

Volunteers make a difference! We welcome and encourage the important role that family/caregivers and community members play in education. It is essential that you and the people you work with establish mutually-satisfying relationships which will prove helpful to our students. This relationship should rest on trust, cooperation and a clear understanding of the volunteer role.

2. WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS DO?

There are many opportunities for you to get involved at the school. Volunteers perform many different tasks in the York Region District School Board. The tasks may include but not be limited to the following:

- Field trips • Fundraising • Special events • Classroom support • Resource room support • Site plan committees • Choir • Library support • Hot lunch program • Safe arrival program • Drivers for school trips • Reading programs • Assisting with playground supervision • Assisting teachers with teaching materials • Coaching • Project work for staff • School Gardening • Tutoring • Well-being School Teams •

*Volunteers who coach are expected to be aware of the York Region Elementary School Athletic Association's (YRESAA) or York Region Athletic Association's (YRAA) guidelines for Coach Volunteers. A volunteer who coaches must be under the direct supervision of YRDSB staff at all times.

3. WHAT SHOULD A SCHOOL VOLUNTEER EXPECT?

- Proper orientation to the school with introductions to key personnel and information provided as to parking, storage of personal items, washroom and coffee/lunch facilities;
- Your assistance contributes to the overall value of the program in which you are participating;
- To be treated with respect and consideration;
- Clear instructions and any necessary information for the volunteer assignments (e.g., First Aid Responders, School Evacuation Protocols and other safety procedures);
- Be part of two-way communication with staff (i.e. discussion time or email exchange for ongoing direction and feedback);
- To work directly with a staff member at all times and be provided with direct support, if difficulties arise.

4. WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A SCHOOL VOLUNTEER?

- The Principal is responsible for all students, staff and visitors, including volunteers;
- Sign-in at the office, prior to beginning each volunteer activity, and sign-out when done;
- Wear school identification as outlined by the school to help identify yourself as a volunteer to staff and students;
- Let the school know when you are going to be absent from and/or late for a commitment to volunteer;
- If experiencing difficulty in carrying out assigned duties, bring the concern to the teacher supervisor and/or to the Principal, as appropriate;
- Follow the expectations of the school where you are volunteering (e.g., Peanut/Nut Awareness, Scent Awareness, Appropriate use of Technology, Respectful Workplaces);
- Speak to the student's teacher or the Principal (if the teacher is not available) about concerns related to a student's behaviour;
- Follow the direction of the staff you are assigned to. 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;
- Remember you are a role model for students and the school community;
- Maintain the highest standards of confidentiality as outlined in the YRDSB Confidentiality Agreement. As a volunteer you may come to know sensitive information (e.g., a student's academic ability, relationship with others, behaviour patterns);
- Notify the teacher if there are concerns about student behaviour;

- Support schools and students that values diversity and fosters respect among all members of the school community;
- Share your experiences and talents. Let the teacher know in which area you excel (e.g., telling stories, singing, playing instruments, handcrafts, computer use, photography, etc.);
- Learn the names of students you are working with;
- Speak in a positive way to students – point out the things they have done right, the things they do well.

5. DISCLOSURE OF POSSIBLE CHILD ABUSE

It is a legal obligation to report any suspected case of child abuse for children and youth under the age of 16 years. Additionally, staff and volunteers have the opportunity to report concerns for youth 16 and 17 years of age. In the case of a volunteer having suspicions which leave you concerned about a possible child protection or safety concern for a youth under the age of 18 years, it must be immediately reported to the Principal or member of management that you work with.

One of the most difficult things to handle may be when the student 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 with the child or youth. It can be helpful to be a listening ear, but avoid trying to counsel the child or youth. Assistance and counselling is available from professionals with the responsibility and experience to provide it.

6. HANDLING OF CONFIDENTIALITY STUDENT INFORMATION

Confidentiality is of the highest priority in your role as a valued school volunteer ([York Region District School Board's Policy and Procedure #158.0 Information Access and Privacy Protection](#)). Once a volunteer begins to work in a school setting, he/she becomes privy to knowledge about children's behaviour patterns, academic ability, emotional maturity, and/or relationships with others. In some cases, information of this nature is imparted in order that the volunteer will work more effectively with the child. In other cases, it is simply acquired in the course of frequent contact in the school. This knowledge should never be shared in the community.

Similarly, care must be taken not to make comments harmful to the reputation of any student, staff member or other volunteer verbally or on any social media platform. A volunteer should expect that his/her participation will be treated with the same confidentiality and respect.

All volunteers must sign a [Confidentiality Agreement](#).

7. HEALTH & SAFETY RELATED INFORMATION SHARING

Volunteers work with school staff to support the health and safety of all students and community members. Volunteers will participate in training that is applicable to their volunteer work as directed by the Principal by utilizing the [Safety Orientation Checklist for Volunteers](#). Additional training may be required if the Principal suggests that it will support your role as a volunteer.

Volunteers will familiarize themselves with applicable medical information (e.g., concussion history, anaphylaxis) while maintaining their confidentiality and ensure that every precautions for safe participation of students (e.g., supervision information, protocols that may need to be followed).

8. LIABILITY INSURANCE

Volunteers, when acting in a Board-approved activity, are insured under the School Insurance Program. If any incident occurs notify the staff member in charge immediately to ensure that proper steps are followed to remedy. Any person who voluntarily transports students in his/her own vehicle shall follow procedures as provided through school administration, in accordance with the Board's [Trip Driver Authorization Form \(NP-679-02\)](#).

Can I Drive Students as A Volunteer?

**Driving students is not an expectation of volunteering. Driving students is considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Should driving students be required, the school will provide a Volunteer Driver Form, which indicates agreement to drive students. The Principal provides final approval.

A driver must:

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Hold a valid Ontario Class G License
- Meet YRDSB's required insurance amount

For more information, please consult your Principal.

If I have an accident, am I covered under YRDSB insurance?

Volunteer drivers are not covered under YRDSB's Fleet Automobile insurance. If you are in an accident while driving students, you should contact your personal insurance company. YRDSB's negligence insurance will apply to volunteers participating in a school-sponsored activity. This insurance does not include a loss-of income provision if an injured volunteer loses time at work.

Volunteers are not provided with Workers' Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) or accident insurance through YRDSB.

YRDSB's liability insurance will protect volunteers supervising students for in school or co-curricular activities.

9. CARING & SAFE SCHOOLS

The YRDSB recognizes its responsibility for ensuring that all students attending our schools are safe by taking reasonable precautions to screen volunteers who are working with students. Volunteers shall:

- Comply with all Board requirements regarding Police Vulnerable Sector Screening checks and [Confidentiality Agreement](#);
- Be aware of the school's expectations for appropriate conduct and demeanor when interacting with staff and students, and to uphold and comply with the Board's [Standards of Conduct](#) policy and procedure and [Human Rights: Code Related Harassment and Discrimination](#) policy and procedure;
- Understand that the Board promotes a harassment and violence-free workplace and does not tolerate incidents of workplace harassment or violence from any person;
- Avoid potentially compromising situations with students, such as, but not limited to, one-on-one situations or working with students in isolated areas.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering in our schools!