

# High Park School 2024-2025 Volunteer Handbook



High Park School  
40 Highridge Way  
Stony Plain, AB  
(780) 963-2222

## Welcome from the Principal

Volunteers are an important link to learning for our students. As a volunteer you provide added opportunities to students by enhancing the schooling or learning environment. We are thankful for those who spend time volunteering in some manner during the school year. From supporting our hot lunch program to one time behind the scenes classroom helper, each of you, while giving what you can as a volunteer, help our students. Just as the African proverb says, “ It takes a whole village to raise a child,” we know that our students benefit from your efforts. Thank you Volunteers. I look forward to seeing you in the school. Be sure to stop by the office and say hello when you pick up your Volunteer ID Cards.

Ms. Nicole Marcinkevics

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## Introduction

Welcome to the growing ranks of school volunteers! We hope to encourage increased participation and partnership in our local school community. For the children of High Park School to reach their full educational, physical, emotional and social potential requires the commitment and involvement of all the members of the community: students, teachers, parents, guardians, community organizations and school administrators.

High Park School recognizes the importance of community involvement and volunteerism and many employees contribute endless hours of volunteer time. The purpose of volunteers is not to replace the work of the employee, but rather to assist the administration and staff in improving the quality of the school environment.

Volunteers make a difference!

Volunteer participation will be an opportunity for you to share with others in the enrichment of education for our students. You will discover the rewards of helping students achieve their personal best and at the same time gain useful experience yourself. We hope that the experience of volunteering in our school will offer you a greater awareness of the variety of challenges and opportunities confronting our education system.

## What do Volunteers do?

Volunteers perform many different tasks in High Park School. The tasks may include but not be limited to the following:

- Classroom parents
- Field trips
- Fundraising
- Special events
- Choir
- Library support
- Hot lunch program
- Photocopying and stapling
- Laminating
- Safe arrival program
- Reading programs
- Assisting Teachers with teaching materials
- Classroom cleanup
- Coaching
- Guest speakers
- Advisory committees
- Project work for staff
- School beautification
- Tutoring
- Communications (telephone committees/newsletters/flyers)
- School Council & Fundraising Association
- Health programs
- Chaperones

## What should a School Volunteer expect?

A school volunteer should:

- Be made to feel that the assistance given is worthwhile and contributes to the overall value of the program in which they are participating;
- Be treated with respect and consideration by all students and staff;
- Be given a suitable assignment in line with their areas of interest, skills, and, if possible, convenience of location;
- Be given clear instructions and any training necessary for particular volunteer assignments;
- Be given 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;
- Have an effective mechanism for two-way communication with staff (i.e. discussion time or regular memo exchange for ongoing direction and feedback);
- Be provided with direct support from staff if difficulties arise.

## 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, policies and programs in his/her school, including volunteers;
- To follow the policies of High Park School (i.e. signing-in procedures where requested, Code of Conduct);
- 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 do have to be absent;
- To assist under the direction of qualified staff following their instruction closely. Work only with those staff members in your assigned school who request your help and work only with students referred to by these Teachers;
- To remember that volunteers are in the school to assist and supplement - not replace the role of paid staff;
- To remember you are a role model for students and the school community. Please maintain the highest standards of confidentiality and ethics.

## Guidelines for Volunteers

- A school volunteer is not a Teacher or an Educational Assistant, not a therapist or a counselor, but first of all a person who accepts the students as they are. The volunteer can convey by his/her interest, attitude and sincerity that the student is a worthwhile person. Only when people feel good about themselves are they able to learn.
- Ask questions freely about programs, policies and equipment at a time appropriate both for the staff member and for yourself. Follow the staff member's established procedures. Talk to the Teacher about any difficulties at appropriate times, not in front of students or parents.
- Share your experiences and talents. Let the Teacher know in what area you excel (telling stories, singing, playing instruments, handcrafts, computer use, photography, etc.).
- Try to learn the names of students.
- 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.
- Work at the student's level; sit or stand with him/her. Show your interest and involvement.
- 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 disciplines the responsibility of the Principal and the Teaching staff.

## Volunteers as Mentor/Helpers “A Position of Trust”

Volunteers who work in a one-to-one relationship with students have a unique opportunity to help these students build feelings of competence and self-esteem, thus creating an environment for enhanced achievement. But with opportunity comes responsibility. As a student begins to realize that there is someone who does care, who takes a personal interest in the individual, that student may show increasing trust in the volunteer. It is essential that nothing happen to damage that trust.

This means that the volunteer must:

- Be a role model for the student;
- Accept the student as an individual;
- Follow through on all promised commitments.

## Disclosure of Possible Abuse

In Alberta, it is a legal obligation to report any suspected case of child abuse. If a child indicates to a volunteer that he/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.

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 to the child. Don’t try to “counsel” the child. Remain merely an empathetic “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.

## 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, they become 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 individual Teachers, Support Staff, 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 their participation will be treated with the same confidentiality and respect.

## Becoming a Volunteer in Parkland School Division

As part of Parkland School Division [Administrative Procedure 316](#), all volunteers are required to:

1. Complete a [Volunteer Registration Form](#)
2. Provide a Criminal Records Check
3. Provide a Vulnerable Sector Check
4. Sign a Confidentiality Agreement

When your service is likely to exceed ten hours of volunteer activity over the course of the current school year, volunteers are required to provide the school with a current Criminal Record Check. The record will be kept on file at each school you volunteer in throughout the school year. If you anticipate spending time in more than one school, please indicate “Parkland School Division” as the agency on the Criminal Record Check form.

A letter to waive the fee for a Criminal Record Check is part of the Volunteer Registration form and just needs to be signed by the Principal before you submit your paperwork to the nearest police station.

## Recognition

Volunteering is the giving of time, energy, and concern. It is an honorable and cherished responsibility of our society. High Park School wishes to thank each and every volunteer for their participation and dedication to the students of this school.

Together we can make each child’s years in High Park School a solid foundation upon which to build a lifetime of successful achievement.