

Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District

# Volunteer Handbook



## Acknowledgements

The Acton-Agua Dulce School District Volunteer Handbook was developed through the dedicated effort and collaboration of district teachers and administrators. We greatly appreciate the guidance, support, and time they gave to provide input.

We are indebted to the Acton Agua Dulce School District's Board of Trustees: Mark Distaso, Larry Layton, Ed Porter, and Matt Ridenour . We thank all who dedicated their time and insight to the development of our Volunteer Handbook by participating on the Task Force.

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We received guidance from the Volunteer Handbooks prepared by several school districts. We are particularly grateful for the examples from Peters Canyon Elementary School, Sulphur Springs USD and Tacoma Public Schools.

Finally, we are thankful to the parents and staff who provided feedback by submitting their input. Due to the effort and commitment of all these people, and likely others not mentioned here, the Acton-Agua Dulce District Volunteer Handbook is now our guiding document for improving volunteer programs at all Acton-Agua Dulce Unified Schools.



**Dr. Brent Woodard**  
Superintendent

**Meghan Freeman**  
Director of Student  
Services

**Dr. Steve Budhraj**  
AADUSD CFO

# Message from the Superintendent

*September 2013*

## Our Students

The Acton Agua Dulce Unified School District aims for outstanding programs for all our students. The creation of our Volunteer Handbook will provide continuity across all schools and provide our volunteers with detailed knowledge of District expectations and how our volunteers can best support our students and schools.

## Our Mission and Vision

The Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District is committed to pursuing and maintaining education excellence in order to achieve academic distinction at all campuses. We are committed to a vision of developing our youth into productive and creative individuals that can achieve their highest degree of potential and who will responsibly shape our future.

## The Volunteer Handbook

To make sure we reach optimal results for all students within the Acton-Agua Dulce Schools we developed this handbook to ensure that teachers and students receive clear, focused support from our parent volunteers ensuring student success necessary in today's complex and challenging world. This plan is a practical guide for all staff to ensure that we provide consistent, coherent services to each and every student in our district. All volunteers are expected to follow the plan as it provides specific ways for us to hold ourselves accountable for obtaining optimal results.

## Support to Schools and Teachers and Families

As we move ahead to implement this plan, we are fortunate to have the enthusiastic support of our board. We will provide professional development and guidance to each school volunteer so that they can provide the effective support that every student needs and deserves. We will also work closely with parents and community members to strengthen the bonds of collaboration between our schools and families in the education of all our students. We look forward to the significant growth that will come as our school volunteers implement this plan.

Sincerely,

Brent Woodard, Ph.D.  
*Superintendent*

## Introduction

The Acton Agua Dulce School District Volunteer Handbook serves as an operational guide for all school volunteers as we seek to implement outstanding programs for all of our students.

The plan, adopted by the local board in \_\_\_\_\_ describes how school volunteers will enrich the curriculum, enhance student learning opportunities, provide help for individual students, increase students' self-esteem and motivation to learn, assist teachers and other staff, and support efforts to achieve district academic standards. Most importantly, the Volunteer Handbook will provide satisfying opportunities for adults to make lasting contributions to children and schools while establishing and strengthening community partnerships for quality education.

Staff and volunteers should frequently consult this plan to ensure consistency and the delivery of the highest quality of

services to students and their families. The plan is published simultaneously in hard copy and on the internet. On the internet go to [aadusd.k12.ca.us](http://aadusd.k12.ca.us)

This plan is based on state and federal laws, district board policies, research, and the input from stakeholders to ensure that the very best practice and procedures will be used in the Acton-Agua Dulce schools. As such, it should be relatively easy for schools and the district to demonstrate compliance with laws and policies that have been put into place to safeguard student needs.

It is our expectation that all volunteers will implement this plan with fidelity, will monitor its outcomes, and will contribute to its revision and improvement over time. In this way, the AADUSD will ensure that programs and services for all students will be of the highest quality.

*The Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District is committed to the mission of providing excellent instruction that results in increased student achievement and creating a dynamic partnership with parents and our community.*

**Volunteer programs will:**

- Enrich the curriculum.
- Enhance children's learning opportunities.
- Provide help for individual children.
- Increase students' self-esteem and motivation to learn.
- Provide satisfying opportunities for adults to make lasting contributions to children and schools.
- Assist teachers and other staff.
- Establish and strengthen community partnerships for quality education.
- Support efforts to achieve district academic standards.

**Becoming a Volunteer**

All volunteers at schools in the Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District will need to have a current, cleared TB test and fingerprints on file. You may contact the District Office at (661) 269-0750 to schedule fingerprinting.

## Interests and Talents

Usually, individual classroom teachers coordinate their own in-class volunteer opportunities, such as for room parents, classroom helpers, etc. Sign-ups for these positions happen at Back to School night or through Friday folders or other classroom communication.

The various parent organizations provide educational enrichment opportunities for our students; such as cultural arts assemblies, after school programs, music, etc. Funding of these programs comes from fundraising activities and events. Numerous opportunities exist for volunteering with the parent organizations, and all volunteers are encouraged to attend the meetings, which are usually held on a monthly basis.

## Responsibilities of Volunteers:

### Professionalism

Although the job is voluntary, the commitment is professional. Besides maintaining an attitude of mutual respect and confidence, you should become familiar with school and classroom policies and practices. Working with the teaching staff requires flexibility and a willingness to follow directions.

Volunteers should:

- Understand and accept the students in terms of their own background and values.
- Support and supplement the instructional program of the classroom teacher.  
***The volunteer's role is assistance, not replacement.***
- Communicate regularly with the teacher and/ or office personnel via meetings, notes, telephone or email.
- Be prompt, dependable, and regular in attendance.
- Know and observe all regulations and procedures in the assigned school (i.e. fire drills, accident reporting, lunch and coffee privileges, inclement weather procedures, etc).

- Discuss any problems that arise with the teacher or principal.
- Notify the teacher or school administrator if a student confides in you about a situation of abuse or neglect. Staff will assist and support you with the reporting and follow-up protocols.
- A volunteer provides support not only to the students, but also to the teacher, the nature of which is based on the discretion of the teacher for whom you are volunteering. Your role may include copying, cutting, pasting, working with a group of students on a project, etc.
- Leave personal concerns and pressures at home. Leave school problems at school.

## Confidentiality

Volunteers must protect the teachers' and students' right to privacy. Once a volunteer begins to work in a school setting, s/he becomes privy to knowledge about children's behavior patterns, academic ability, emotional maturity, relationships with others, etc.

In addition, volunteers are in a position to learn more about staff members than would normally be learned from their public image. Regardless of how a volunteer comes by this type of information and/or develops personal opinions, it is considered privileged and must be kept personal and private.

- **Respect confidentiality in relationship to the school. Ensure that a child's work and behavior in school are held in confidence.**
- Remember that you are acting as a role model for children, not only in how you interact with others at school, but who you are as a person.
- Please do not share personal information about the student or student's family with other people.
- Please do not share specific information with a parent about their child based on your classroom experience, whether positive or negative.

- Please do not share knowledge and/or opinions about the professional competency of individual teachers and staff in the community or with anyone who has no legitimate need to know.
- Please do not 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.

## **Sign In & Sign Out**

All volunteers must sign in and out at the office and receive a **visitor sticker**. As a safety measure, it allows the school to know who is or who has been in the building. Signing in also helps the school to find you if there is an emergency. Lastly, signing “in” and “out” enables us to collect and tabulate volunteer hours necessary for many grant applications. When signing in please list all areas in which you will volunteer.

When signing in, please **have your volunteer ID card/ Sticker each and every time** you visit. This will help students, classified and certificated personnel know that you are allowed to be on campus during school hours.

## **Schedule Teacher Conference Time**

Important conversations deserve preparation and dedicated time. If you need to speak with a teacher about your child, schedule a mutually agreeable time outside of class-time.

## **Respectful Behavior**

Volunteers are expected to exhibit behavior that is respectful and assumes equality toward members of the same and opposite sex, and all ethnic/racial and religious



groups. Volunteers shall not make any comments that can be construed as negative to any student or parent. Volunteers shall respect cultural differences and attempt to broaden their knowledge and understanding of human relations.

Volunteers shall avoid promoting any commercial products, religious doctrines or beliefs, as well as any political candidates (this includes political buttons) or parties.

### **Discipline**

Allow the teachers to discipline children. If there are incidents of misbehavior, it is the teacher's job to deal with them. As a volunteer, it is helpful to be specific about rules and expectations with students. Keep limits and boundaries in place. Consistently and calmly work with students taking a neutral stance, restating rules and expectations and offering reasonable choices.

### **Dependability**

Students, teachers and staff members rely on the services performed by volunteers. If you are unable to volunteer on your scheduled day, please notify the teacher.

### **Parking**

You are welcome to park in any unmarked spot. Please check with the school office regarding specific parking restrictions, as each campus may be different.

### **Preschoolers/Siblings**

Please do not bring preschoolers or siblings when you volunteer. Exceptions may be made. Check with your teacher.

### **Coats/Purses**

Don't bring anything of value to school.

## **Smoking**

There is no smoking on school property.

## **Telephone/Cellular Phones**

Please turn off cell phones or place on silent mode. You may leave the school office number in case of emergencies.

## **Workroom**

The workroom contains the copy machine, die cutter, and paper supplies. Training will be offered in the use of this equipment. If you need help finding something, please ask someone in the front office.

Sometimes there can be a lot of demand for the copy machine. Priority is given first to teachers, then to paraprofessionals, and finally to volunteers. If you are using the machine and a teacher needs it, please make it available to her/him. If you are copying for a teacher please let others in the workroom know.

Be sure to clean up the workroom after you use it.

## **Restrooms**

Please use the adult restrooms located in the office. Please check with the school office regarding specific restrooms available, as each campus may be different.

## **Faculty Lounge/Meeting Rooms**

The faculty lounge is for staff use only. Please check with the school office regarding specific restrictions regarding the use of these facilities, as each campus may be different.

## **Emergency Procedures**

If there is a fire, earthquake, “Lock Down” drill or emergency exercise of any kind,

please follow the instructions from the teacher, assisting in the safeguarding of students.

**Fire:**

1. Close classroom doors, outside doors, and any fire doors that may be open.
2. Students walk silently in an orderly single line.
3. Exit following directions posted in the classroom.
4. Once outside, students join their homeroom teacher who checks attendance.
5. Stay in designated spot in silence until signaled to return to building.

**Earthquake:**

1. Drop, cover head immediately.
2. Crawl under desk or nearest table.
3. Listen for further instructions.

**Lock Down:**

1. Coded announcement will be given.
2. Close and lock all classroom doors.
3. Remain in the classroom until otherwise notified.
4. Do not let any student leave the room.
5. Students should be flat on the ground away from doors and windows.

**Safety and Liability Issues*****Where should I work with a student?***

Locations will vary, depending upon availability and the preference of the student's teacher. Try to find a quiet space with as few distractions as possible.

Always work in an area assigned by the teacher and keep the door open.

If you are working with a student in an after-school program, it may be tempting to offer the student a ride home. **Never go off site with a student and never give them a ride in your car.** Your volunteer experience is limited to the public school setting.

### ***What are my confidentiality rights?***

As the relationship with a student progresses, he/she will begin to trust you and may start to confide in you. Take time to listen and show that you care. However, do not make a promise you cannot keep. If a student reveals information relating to possible abuse or neglect, let the student know that you care and are there to listen. Be sure to follow school guidelines and let the building administrator, teacher, or counselor know of the situation. There is always a chance that someone may already have insight into the situation, which could help you to understand and work better with that student.

Personal information about yourself should be shared only as it is relevant to the work you are doing with the student. Do not give out personal contact information such as your address, phone, email and personal website addresses.

### ***Can I hug a student?***

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, **front hugs should be avoided**. Instead, 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". In addition, regardless of age, students should never sit on your lap.

### ***What are some safer touch areas?\****

Areas that are safest to touch are:

- Shoulders
- Upper Back
- Arms
- Hands

Remember to keep in mind the cultural perspective and personal context of touch from the student's perspective. Cultural influences, beliefs and personal history affect a student's comfort level regarding personal boundaries. **Some children are not comfortable with touch and may want more personal space.**

Respect their wishes. Recognize their signals that they do not want to be touched, such as avoiding you or drawing back or away from you when you touch. In general, touch all students in a consistent manner.

\*Special circumstances will arise where touch that exceeds these guidelines will be necessary. Special physical education needs, nursing and coaching may require additional student contact for the health and hygiene needs of the student. Be clear (to yourself and the student) about when, where, why and how you are touching the student.

### ***What are some signs of possible child abuse and neglect?***

The following factors may be present when abuse has occurred, but do not guarantee an abusive situation. If any of the following signs are present in your child, **you are required to alert the teacher, principal, or counselor so that they can further investigate the situation:**

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect.

#### Signs of Abuse:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems.
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.
- Lacks adult supervision.
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home.
- Signs of injury, such as welts, bruising, cuts, burns, fractures, or swellings.
- A history of repeated, untreated, or unexplained physical injury.
- A contradiction between the story, "I fell off my bed" and physical evidence that has included repeated bruising.
- The child appears to be uncomfortable or fearful when talking about the injury.
- Child alludes to or seems preoccupied with sexual matters.

#### Signs of Neglect:

- Is frequently absent from school.
- Begs or steals food or money.
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses.
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.

- States that there is no one at home to provide care.

### ***What is the purpose of these rules?***

The Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District wants you, as volunteers, to carry out your responsibilities in a caring and appropriate manner. We want you to feel comfortable about hugging and touching kids. We want everyone to feel safe. Having guidelines will assist you in creating and maintaining a safe environment for you and the students with whom you work.

## **Boundary Invasion**

When volunteering it is important to remember your own personal boundaries and the boundaries of the children and youth you are working with. Here are some boundaries to keep in mind when volunteering with children in the Acton-Agua Dulce Public Schools. By keeping these boundaries in mind you are protecting yourself and the child from boundary invasion and violations. Do not allow yourself to:

- Favor certain students by giving them special privileges or treatment.
- Be alone with the student behind closed doors.
- Initiate or extend contact beyond the school day, such as taking the student on outings, away from protective adults.
- Engage in inappropriate communications; such as, talking to the child about the child's personal problems or allow yourself to become a confidant of the child - it is not your job.
- Use phones, e-mail, text-messaging, instant messaging or personal web pages/social networking sights to discuss personal topics of interests with students.

***Keep our students safe.***

## **Working with Students from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds**

***Students in the Acton-Agua Dulce School District come from many different families, cultures, and communities—each with its own set of values and beliefs. Our individual culture, beliefs, values and behaviors seem natural, a part of who we are such that sometimes it is often challenging to understand others with unique traditions.***

Because of the many unique ethnic groups represented in Acton-Agua Dulce Unified Schools, children speak many different languages and have many varied beliefs and customs. Children from diverse cultures are acclimating—that is, living

in both cultures. Each individual must honor the beliefs and habits of their culture of origin, while learning to respond to the beliefs and habits of the school culture. Volunteers should be aware of the delicate balancing act students live every day. Cultural differences may affect a student's background knowledge, learning style, behavior, and social skills. Specifically, you may experience cultural differences with regard to:

- Varying learning styles
- Eye contact
- Sense of time
- Effective discipline
- Student motivation
- Personal space and appropriate touch

*Understanding the students' cultures and helping them to understand the school culture will increase your ability to help them learn.*

## **Volunteer Information/Procedure Checklist**

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

- Days and times you are expected to work in classroom/school.
- Procedures for volunteer and teacher/supervisor to keep in touch (regular conferences, telephone conversations, notes, informal meetings.)
- Alternative plans for days when the teacher/supervisor is absent.
- How the teacher/supervisor will tell you as a volunteer of your 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./Ms./Mrs.)
- Materials, strategies or games to be used.
- Teacher's/supervisor's classroom/school policies, procedures and rules (such as management system, reinforcement techniques, organizational plans, emergency procedures, where volunteer leaves personal belongings, and whether volunteer is welcome in teachers' lounge and lunchroom.)
- Protocol for informing the school/teacher about the volunteer's absence.

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

- Pertinent background information about the student(s) you will work with (within the appropriate standards of student information confidentiality).

- Student(s) Strengths.
- Needs of the student(s).
- Tips for working successfully with specific students (learning style and reinforcement techniques.)
- Designation of work area location.

## **Tips for Volunteers**

Some examples of ways you may be able to help in the classroom include:

- Arranging bulletin board displays
- Assembling Friday folders
- Assist with special award days
- Binding books
- Collating and stapling papers
- Chaperoning on field trips
- Escorting children to library, cafeteria, recess, office, etc.
- Helping contact parents
- Helping select library books
- Helping students who were absent catch up on missed work
- Organizing class parties
- Playing or making instructional games
- Reading with or to children
- Recruiting other volunteers for classroom activities
- Reproducing materials
- Supervising groups taking tests
- Helping in math, reading or writing
- Working with a small group of students
- Sharing your special talent or interest
- Be patient when working with students. Give yourself time to find your niche.
- Names are important. Make sure you say the student's name the way the student wants it to be said. Learn to spell it correctly. Make sure the student knows your name and can pronounce it correctly.
- Treat individuals with respect and courtesy and expect the same in return.
- Show that you are interested in the student as a person by listening carefully to what is said and showing you care by words and action.
- Encourage and support student successes. Build self-confidence by praising them honestly and frequently. Accentuate the positive and minimize the negative.
- Avoid making comparisons between students, teachers and schools.



If you find that you are spending more time making copies or prepping for activities than is satisfying to you, talk to the teacher about some of these other ways you may be able to help. But, recognize that, for various reasons, not all teachers allow volunteers to do all of these tasks.

It is not always possible or preferable for you to work with your own child. Different children react in different ways when their parents are in the classroom. Some demand more attention, while others totally ignore their parents. Be sure to discuss your role as a volunteer with your child, and explain that you might not be able to give him/her your usual attention. If a teacher determines that you should not work with your own child, please respect that decision.

Remember that you are in school for a relatively short portion of the week. Therefore, your perception of something can be mistaken because you are not aware of the whole situation. If you have questions about methods or programs, ask the teacher about them directly and privately; do not speculate with friends. If a student is difficult to work with, ask the teacher for assistance.

*Thank you for all you are doing for the students of the Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District.*

# Volunteer Agreement

## Safety and Liability Issues

\_\_\_\_\_ As the relationship with a student progresses, he/she will begin to trust you and may start to confide in you. You should take time to listen and show them that you care about them. However, do not make a promise you cannot keep. If a student reveals information relating to a possible abuse or neglect situation, let the student know that you care and are there to listen but that you are required to pass this information on to a teacher, counselor, or principal who can offer them help.

\_\_\_\_\_ Personal information about yourself should be shared only as it is relevant to the work you are doing with the student. Do not give personal contact information such as your address, phone, personal website, and email.

\_\_\_\_\_ 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, front hugs should be avoided. Instead, 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." In addition, regardless of age, students should never sit on your lap.

## Working with Children from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds

\_\_\_\_\_ Students in Acton-Agua Dulce Public Schools come from many different families, cultures, and communities--each with its own set of values and beliefs. Our individual culture, beliefs, values and behaviors seem so naturally a part of who we are that it is often challenging to understand others with unique traditions. Understanding the students' cultures and helping them to understand the school culture will increase your ability to help them learn.

## Confidentiality

\_\_\_\_\_ Students in the Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District have the right to expect that information about them will be kept confidential by all volunteers. Additionally, the U.S. Congress has addressed the privacy-related concerns of educators, parents, and students by enacting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (known more commonly as "FERPA" or the "Buckley Amendment").

- Each student with whom you work has the right to expect that nothing that happens to or about him or her will be repeated to anyone other than authorized school department employees, as designated by the administrators at your school.
- You may not share information about a student even with others who are genuinely interested in the student's welfare, such as social workers, scout leaders, clergy, grandparents, or nurses/physicians. A grave medical emergency, in which confidential information may be necessary for a student's care, is an exception. Thus, you must refer all such questions to the school employees so authorized and indicated to you, typically the student's teacher or principal.
- Parents, friends, or community members may in good faith ask you questions about a student's problems or progress. Again, you must refer all such questions to the authorized school employees. You may not share information about a student even with members of your own family.
- Before you speak, always remember that violating a student's confidentiality isn't just impolite, it's against the law.

I, (print name) \_\_\_\_\_, as a volunteer have read and agree to the above terms. In addition to the remaining guidelines in the Volunteer Handbook, I have been made aware of where to find the Volunteer Handbook and to whom I can speak to regarding any questions or concerns I may have.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please print full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer site

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please sign full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date