

Volunteer guidelines

tips for a positive volunteer experience

What 4J gets from volunteers

Volunteers make the impossible possible. In today's schools, there are simply far more jobs and responsibilities than there are people to do them. By helping with special events and routine tasks, volunteers allow teachers and staff to focus more on helping children learn and grow. The school can accomplish more, and offer children and families more services, with the help of volunteers.

What do you get?

4J gets a lot from its volunteers. But the return for volunteers can be great, too. Here are just some of the benefits for volunteers:

- **You may develop new skills** which you may use in future paid work.
- **New friendships** with people of all ages and backgrounds.
- Perhaps most importantly, you can **share your special skills and talents** with students, and **make a real difference for children** and our community.



Some other benefits include:

- **Mileage:** Volunteers may be able to deduct, on their federal and state tax returns, the number of miles driven to and from their volunteer site. Remember to keep track of mileage. If you take a bus or a taxi to your volunteer site, you may be able to deduct those costs, too. Please read the tax rules thoroughly or ask a tax professional if these deductions work for you.
- **Teacher license renewal:** 120 hours of volunteer experience within one academic school year may be substituted for up to three credit hours as experience necessary for Oregon teaching license renewal; 360 verified volunteer hours may substitute for all nine credits needed (OAR, section 584-48-0020). For more information, see your principal.

How to be a good volunteer

- **Be a good ambassador.** As a volunteer, you will represent the school and the district not just "on the job," but everywhere in the community. Help spread the word about the good things that your school is doing. Answer questions when you can, or urge people to call the school for more information. Above all, please don't speak badly about the school. If you have concerns about anything happening in the school, please speak to the principal.
- **Be courteous and respectful.** You make the school a happier place by doing so, and this helps the school be a good member of its community. The appreciation you receive makes your volunteer time more fun, too.
- **Set a good example for students and visitors by following school and district rules. This includes dress, language and conduct.** We expect our students to dress

modestly and use respectful language, and we expect the same from our volunteers. Please, no revealing clothing. Also, no alcohol, tobacco or drug references are allowed on clothing. By wearing businesslike clothes and using respectful language, you can help set a good example for students that school is an important place that deserves our respect.

- **Be punctual and reliable.** Volunteers are most helpful when they can be counted on. If you can't make it for your shift or will be late, please call the school office as far in advance as possible. Be fair and realistic with yourself about the times you can volunteer, and then stick with that schedule. Make it a priority.
- **Keep confidential information confidential.** As a volunteer, you may learn confidential information about 4J students. This includes grades, behaviors and disciplinary actions, Individual Education Plan (IEP) information, and more. It is critical that you keep that information confidential, and not divulge it, even to friends or family. Students are trusting you to maintain their rights and privacy.

Assignments

- Volunteers are placed by, and work under the direction of, school administrators.
- **Assignments in special cases:** A special rule applies when the volunteer applicant is a spouse or significant other of a parent who is a non-custodial parent under the terms of any court decree. The school will not accept the applicant's proposed assignment in the room or class of a child of the non-custodial parent, without the prior written consent of the custodial parent, or a court order.

Learn the basics

Your job will be easier if you learn the following:

- The layout of your school or other volunteer site, including the location of restrooms, supply and workroom areas, staff lounge areas, storage for personal belongings, and entrances and exits
- Where to sign in and out, and how to get a name tag
- How and where to use the school phone
- How to operate any necessary equipment, like a copy machine, fax or computer
- What to do in an emergency (see following sections)
- Who to call if you can't make it in
- Where to park
- Your school's calendar and schedule
- School discipline policies
- How to order lunch from the cafeteria

Background checks

For the safety of our students, all 4J volunteers are required to pass a criminal background check before they are placed near students. For more information, go to www.4j.lane.edu/schools/volunteers.

Name badges

All 4J volunteers must wear a district name tag, so staff and students will recognize you as a safe volunteer.

Sign-in

All 4J volunteers are required to sign in at the start of a volunteer shift. This lets the office staff know you are in the building and where they can find you if they need you. This also makes sure you are covered by the district's liability insurance in case of an accident. 4J also collects volunteer statistics and uses them in applying for grants that help schools.

Healthy volunteers

Schools need to provide a healthy and safe environment for students, staff and visitors. Please don't come to school if you are ill. Remember to call the school if you won't be in. Some schools keep a "substitute volunteer" list; check with your school office.

Emergencies

Each classroom and office should have a copy of the 4J **Emergency Procedure Manual**. You should ask for a copy, and *read it thoroughly*. The manual includes procedures for many emergency situations, including evacuations, lock downs, injuries, fires, electrical outages and child abuse reporting. You should speak with your principal about how you can help in the event of an emergency. Schools hold regular drills for various emergency procedures; find out your role during these drills and help out by sticking to the plan.

Evacuation

Each district building has an evacuation map posted. Please study it and become familiar with the required evacuation routes. Success during emergencies relies on everyone following the same plan. Also note the location of exits and fire alarms.

Harassment and discrimination

Harassment and discrimination of any type are not permitted in Eugene School District 4J. See the 4J Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook, or the school board policy on Intimidation, Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination, Hazing and Retaliation (Code JB), for the complete district policy and definitions of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying and retaliation. These documents are available in the school office. If you observe harassment or discrimination, you should stop what is happening, if it is safe to do so, and *always* report the incident to the principal. This is crucial.



Child abuse

Volunteers should report suspected incidents of child abuse. This can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, and malnutrition or neglect. See the *principal*, and refer to the section on child abuse reporting in the 4J Emergency Procedure Manual. **Do not** share this information with the child's family. **Do not** share the information with *anyone* else. **The information must be kept confidential.**

Intruders and strangers

All visitors to 4J schools are expected to go straight to the office to check in. Buildings should have signs on all outside doors with maps directing people to the office. All visitors to schools, including volunteers, should wear badges that identify them. If you see

someone in the school who is not a staff member and who does not have a volunteer or visitor badge, please do the following:

1. Approach the person and from a safe distance (what feels safe is up to you) and politely ask the person if you can help them.
2. If they are looking for a particular room or person, offer to take them to the main office so they can get a badge and the office staff can help them find who or what they need. The person may be looking for the office.
3. Always be courteous. You can apologize for the inconvenience of needing to take the person to the office to get a visitor's badge, but explain that students feel safer when they know the adults in the building are supposed to be there.
4. If you do not feel safe approaching a person in the building, note the person's appearance and location, and go straight to the office and share the information.

Weapons policy

Eugene School District 4J has a "zero-tolerance" policy for weapons in district buildings. No one except for police, or persons specifically designated by the superintendent, may carry any weapon onto 4J property (see school board policy section KGB). According to state law (ORS 166.370), violation is a Class C felony. If you suspect that someone is carrying a weapon on 4J property, please note the person's appearance and location and report the information to the principal or another administrator immediately.

Rumors

If you should hear a rumor about some kind of threat to the school or people in it, tell the principal as soon as possible. The principal will work with district officials and public safety personnel to follow up on rumors and make sure schools are safe. Do not assume a rumor is false, but do not assume a rumor is true and help spread it. Inform the principal and let her or him separate fact from fiction.

In case of problems...

If you have problems in your volunteer assignment, talk to your immediate supervisor. If you have problems with your supervisor, speak with the building volunteer coordinator. Please let these people know about any difficulties you are having in your work so you can work together to find a solution. We want you to be productive *and* happy.

Information resources

These publications are available online at www.4j.lane.edu, in school offices, and at the 4J Education Center, 200 N. Monroe:

- The **4J Handbook and Calendar** includes information about programs and policies.
- The **4J Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook** includes important rights and rules for students.
- 4J's **School Board Policy**

For more information about volunteering in 4J schools, please see www.4j.lane.edu/schools/volunteers or call 541-790-7737.

updated
August 2011

