

Alice A. Macomber Primary School

# Volunteer Handbook



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## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the volunteer program at the Macomber School is to assist staff in providing a nurturing and supportive first school experience for the young learners in our care.

## **Dedication**

The Westport Community Schools' Volunteer Program dedicates itself to the children of Westport. May our efforts make a difference in their education.



**Alice A. Macomber  
Primary School**

154 Gifford Road  
Westport, MA 02790  
508-678-8671 Fax 508-673-4284

**Christine Staskiewicz, Principal**  
[cstaskiewicz@westportschools.org](mailto:cstaskiewicz@westportschools.org)

Dear Macomber Volunteer:

On behalf of the Macomber students and staff, we would like to welcome you to our school. Your time, caring, and special talents are important to us.

Although the School Committee has developed a broad policy regarding volunteers in schools, we think having specific guidelines for the Macomber School will be helpful. It is hoped that the following school-based policies will clarify the role of volunteers in our school.

We would like your volunteer experience at the Macomber School to be both satisfying to you and beneficial to the children. This handbook has been prepared for you to provide information and to answer some frequently asked questions. We hope that it will be helpful.

The teacher or staff member with whom you are working will always be happy to help you, and we do hope that you will give us any suggestions you might have that will help us to continually strengthen the bond between the community and our school through volunteerism.

Sincerely,

Christine Staskiewicz  
Principal

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the volunteer program is to:

- Stimulate community interest, understanding, and support of public education;
- Supply volunteer services as requested by the school;
- Offer more children additional individualized attention;
- Assist the professional personnel so that they may perform their duties more effectively;
- Promote and improve collaboration;
- Promote family education and support through programs, services, and training;
- Enhance family strengths and facilitate active family involvement in children's education;
- Provide a variety of training opportunities to those working with young children that will enhance their skills; and
- Build an infrastructure and promote public awareness within the community to support programs and services for young children and their families.

## **About the Program**

The principal is the administrator and instructional leader in the school. Under his/her guidance, the school staff, including volunteers, work to meet the needs of the students. The volunteer program works closely with the principal and staff of the Macomber School. This cooperative effort works to meet the needs of all students.

The Macomber School Volunteer Program provides opportunities for parents and community members to volunteer in our schools and share in the experience of educating our children. Anyone who wishes to contribute his or her services to the school can be of help. Persons of all ages and backgrounds have something valuable to offer.

Volunteers increase school-community relations by bringing more adults from the community to the students. Volunteers help improve instruction in the school by performing tasks that allow the teachers more time to teach. They also provide the classroom with the opportunity for more individualized attention and instruction.

The success of the volunteer program lies in the many dedicated people who come in each and every week. They are the cornerstones of the program – the reason it is so successful. When you join the Macomber School Volunteer Program, you become a partner in the education of the children of Westport.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Who can be a school volunteer?**

A school volunteer can be a parent, senior citizen, community person, student, etc. – anyone who is willing and can give the time. A volunteer packet must be completed and approved before you begin volunteering. This includes a CORI (Criminal Offender Records Information) that must be done yearly. In addition to a CORI, fingerprinting is required for field trip chaperones.

### **2. I'm not a teacher. Can I still volunteer?**

Yes! A teaching background is not required because volunteers work under the direction of professional staff. The qualifications needed to be a school volunteer are a personal desire to help and a willingness to make a definite time commitment.

### **3. Are there security procedures that I should be aware of?**

Only the side door to the school is available for entering. Ring the buzzer to be admitted. All other building doors are locked. Once inside the building, please sign in and receive a Volunteer Pass.

### **4. I would like to volunteer, but I have a younger child. May I bring my child with me?**

Unfortunately no, bringing younger children with you to school presents a liability problem for the school. In addition, having a very young child in a classroom interrupts class procedures, disrupts the students, and prevents the volunteer from giving full attention to the work the teacher has prepared. However, you can still help the school by making arrangements to do volunteer work at home.

### **5. What are some tasks school volunteers do?**

Volunteers within the classroom work with children individually or in groups; assist teachers with such instructional tasks as listening to children read and reading to them, helping children prepare projects or art work, helping children with specific assignments and with reinforcement. Volunteers also help with field trips and special events.

### **6. Suppose I don't feel qualified to perform the assignment I have agreed to undertake?**

Feel free to say so. If you don't feel comfortable talking to the teacher, then call the principal. Remember, there are enough different jobs for everyone to feel comfortable.

### **7. May I choose the teacher with whom I want to work?**

Volunteers are only placed in classrooms where teachers have specifically requested assistance.

### **8. When does a school volunteer work?**

It's up to you. Dependability is important. Hours are flexible and will be individually arranged. A school volunteer must feel a commitment and responsibility to attend regularly.

**9. Is there a dress code?**

Take your lead from the staff and dress appropriately for the job you are doing. It is best to neither overdress nor under-dress. Casual clothing is fine, but we ask that your attire be neat and conservative. Volunteers should be neat and clean in their person and attire when on duty.

**10. I'd like to volunteer, but I can't offer my services on a regular basis. Can I still volunteer?**

Yes! You may be a special activities volunteer, who is involved with special school projects, such as field trips, baking, celebrations, and community partnership events.

**11. How should I act in the classroom?**

Volunteers should be examples to students in the classroom. Please do not converse with other volunteers while children are in the class. This is disruptive to lessons. The use of good manners provides a positive role model for children. It is important to encourage independence as well as appropriate levels of interaction. Please try to follow the teacher's lead by accepting children's final work products regardless of how they may appear to you. Redirect children when necessary and provide open-ended questions. Remember to speak to children on their level. Most importantly, please take your volunteer work seriously. Teachers as well as children will be expecting you to be a role model.

**12. Will I actually be working with children or with the teacher?**

Who you will be working with will depend upon the needs of the individual teachers.

**13. Will I be asked to help children in the bathroom?**

Volunteers should not be in the bathroom but should stand at the door in sight of other adults. Children occasionally need help buttoning or zippering. If you feel uncomfortable helping a child in this way, please ask a regular staff person to help. The school nurse handles students that have bathroom accidents or need special attention.

**14. What are some important guidelines for relating to children?**

- Do be friendly and pleasant and try to develop mutual respect.
- Do be a good listener. Allow children to express themselves, while also being helpful and informative.
- Do respect children's opinions and sense of privacy.
- Do keep directions clear, simple, and to the point. Assist children if they have problems doing what is expected.
- Do always talk to children, not at them. Use a simple vocabulary. Keep in mind that children often take things literally.
- Do not initiate physical contact with children (e.g., hugging, sitting in lap)

**15. Are there school rules that I should know?**

Each class has its own individual procedure and rules. Try to familiarize yourself with these. Meet with the teacher before your first classroom experience and discuss the rules. Keep them in mind when working in the classroom.

**16. Are there rules for the cafeteria?**

Yes. The student rules are:

- use the bathroom before coming to the cafeteria.
- raise your hand if you need help or have a question.
- talk softly, using an “inside” voice.
- do not share food or touch another student’s lunch.
- keep your hands and feet to yourself.
- raise your hand and ask permission before throwing trash away.
- check the table and floor around you to make sure you have picked up all your trash.

**17. What do I do about discipline?**

Nothing. Immediately notify the teacher if you are encountering a discipline problem. Disciplinary action is the legal and moral responsibility of teachers. Volunteers should never be put in a position of having to enforce discipline. Volunteers should never physically prompt a student.

**18. Is it possible to purchase lunch?**

Adult lunches and salads may be ordered in the morning. An adult lunch menu is available at the front desk. Your order can be put in at the office. You may sit with your child during lunch.

**19. Is there somewhere I can smoke?**

Smoking is not allowed in school buildings or on school grounds.

**20. Can I use the copy machine, the die-cut machine, and the laminator?**

Volunteers may not use the laminator. You may use the copier in Room 5 or the copier in the staff lounge annex. The die-cut machine is on a rolling cart and available to individual teachers. Please ask your teacher to instruct you on the use of these machines.

**21. My friends and neighbors will ask me about school. What may I say?**

We want you to talk about your school and your involvement. But, you may have access to “privileged” information which, of course, should be treated as such. Your job in school is as a professional working with other professionals.

## **Volunteer Qualifications**

No special educational background is required. But you should . . .

- Enjoy working with children.
- Be willing to donate time each week during the school year or be available to participate in special or short-term projects.
- Be willing to serve under professional supervision or direction.

- Be punctual and reliable in fulfilling your assignment.
- Remember to treat all information as **CONFIDENTIAL** and make **NO** statements outside the school regarding children, personnel, or materials worked on.
- Those accepted into the program must sign a confidentiality sheet stating that they respect the privacy of our students and understand the importance of keeping confidential matters confidential.
- Be capable of adjusting to the staff's way of doing things and be willing to follow their direction at all times.
- A CORI (Criminal Offender Records Information) background check will be conducted on every applicant.
- Remember, a volunteer is never considered a substitute for a member of the school staff.

## Guidelines for Volunteers

The staff of the Macomber School values your commitment and participation in the volunteer program. The following procedures are identified to help make your contribution to the school a rewarding one for you, the children, and the staff.

1. When entering the school, please sign in at the office. The volunteer sign-in book is located on the desk in the lobby.
2. Please notify the school if you are unable to volunteer on your assigned day. This allows the school staff to make any necessary adjustments in their workday. The telephone number at the Macomber School is (508) 678-8671.
3. Please be on time as arranged with the teacher.
4. Due to fire safety requirements, the maximum amount of volunteers in a classroom at one time is four. If the need arises, teachers will use a rotating system to choose volunteers.
5. Confidentiality is **CRUCIAL**. Every child is entitled to his/her privacy, and any information regarding a particular student or staff member is to remain **CONFIDENTIAL**. There are no exceptions.
6. If you do take photographs of children other than your own, please do not post them on social media websites unless you have the explicit permission from the parent/guardian.
7. Each volunteer must sign a confidentiality sheet acknowledging his/her respect for the privacy of our children and the importance of confidentiality.
8. Please refrain from cell phone use during your visit. All cell phones should be silenced to prevent disruption of the class and kept with your belongings away from the children.
9. As a volunteer, you may observe something you don't understand or have questions or concerns about. In this situation, please discuss your questions with the classroom teacher. If you feel your concerns have not been addressed, speak to the school principal as soon as possible. The Superintendent can be contacted if you feel the concern raised is still an issue.

10. No volunteer will be able to work until all paperwork has been completed. Volunteer badges will be issued at this time and must be worn so they are clearly visible at all times.
11. Bring concerns or issues that arise to the attention of the principal as soon as possible. The principal will address any concerns or issues involving the program as well as the manner in which a staff member addresses children.
12. Remember that any violation of the guidelines and procedures outlined in the Handbook may result in suspension and/or removal from the volunteer program. Complaints and/or problems will be processed through the building principal.
13. Learn fire drill and exit procedures, as well as emergency evacuation procedures.
14. Please arrange conferences concerning your own children in the routine manner. It is extremely difficult for teachers to respond to spur-of-the-moment and casual questions about your children.
15. Please limit discussions with the teacher in class. Arrange a time other than your volunteer time if you have anything you would like to discuss with the teacher.
16. Do respect the way the teacher runs her class. Remember that your role in the classroom is an auxiliary one. School volunteers always work under the direction of the teacher.
17. Refer all discipline problems to the teacher for appropriate action. Leave the actual disciplining to the teacher.
18. Respect the limited time teachers have for class preparation and give them priority for photocopying. If you have time you can offer to copy for them or let them use the machine ahead of you.
19. Please be sure to wash your hands upon arrival, before assisting with any food preparation and after handling garbage. Please utilize proper hand washing procedures (see nurse).
20. Help children in obvious need of assistance. Always encourage children.
21. HAVE FUN!!!

### **Emergency Procedures**

If there is an emergency exercise of any kind, please follow your class and do as the teacher instructs the students. Please refer all health issues to the school nurse.

### **Field Trip Specifics**

Field trips can be especially challenging. Teachers recommend that volunteers,

- Act as an authority figure.
- Realize your 1st responsibility is to help, NOT socialize.
- Impart NO special favors.
- Abide and enforce the parameters set forth by the teacher.

## **Confidentiality Is Important!!!**

Each volunteer will be required to sign a confidentiality statement and return it to the principal before his/her assignment begins.

By signing the confidentiality statement the volunteer agrees to:

1. Keep confidential any information about the teacher-student learning process.
2. Discuss individual students with **school staff only**.
3. Limit any information concerning a particular child on a need-to-know basis.
4. Not post students pictures (other than your own) with which you DO NOT have permission from a parent/guardian on social media sites.
5. **Never** discuss any child outside of the school environment with **anyone**.  
**Please put yourself in the other parent's position and ask yourself this question: "Would I want someone making a comment about my child?"**
6. There may also be a time when a student shares something with you that causes you some concern... concern about their personal safety. If this should be the case, please immediately contact the classroom teacher or principal. That person will know the proper procedure to deal with this situation.

## **Bulletin Board**

Our school bulletin board is located in the main lobby by the cafeteria door and is our "official" way of keeping everyone informed about new policies, changes in procedures, and special events. Information of general interest is posted regularly on the bulletin board. Please read the bulletin board regularly so that you will be familiar with the information posted on it.

The WESMAC PTO bulletin board is located in the cafetorium.

## **Benefits of Volunteering**

Benefits to volunteers include the following:

- Development of marketable skills for future career opportunities.
- Training and other learning opportunities.
- Documentation of training and work experience.
- **Free parking in our parking lot!**

## **10 Self-Esteem Building Affirmations for Volunteers**

Say these affirmations to yourself every day. Positive self-talk helps build self-esteem and reduce stress.

1. I am proud to be a volunteer.
2. By helping others, I make the world a better place.
3. Volunteering allows me to show my good character, skills, and dedication.
4. Volunteering provides an invaluable service to the community.
5. My time is a special and unique gift that is my pleasure to give.
6. I know what I give will come back to me in many beautiful and unexpected ways.
7. Volunteering is a great way for me to give thanks for my own good fortune.
8. By helping others, I make new friends and experience a fulfilling activity.
9. One of life's greatest pleasures comes from helping others.
10. Finally, I know that I make a positive difference in people's lives and that makes all my work worthwhile.

## Receipt and Acknowledgement of Volunteer Handbook

I understand that my signature below indicates that I have received this copy of the handbook and that I agree to read it prior to my first volunteer assignment.

As a volunteer in the Westport Community Schools Volunteer Program, I realize I am subject to a code of ethics similar to that which binds the professional. I assume certain responsibilities and expect to be held accountable for them. I understand that each child is entitled to his or her privacy and agree to treat information regarding each child and teacher as confidential. I understand the importance of **CONFIDENTIALITY** and will keep **CONFIDENTIAL** matters **CONFIDENTIAL**.

As a volunteer, I agree to serve without pay but with the same high standards that are expected of the staff. I believe my attitude toward volunteer work should be professional. I believe I have an obligation to my work, to those who direct it, to my colleagues, to the children, and to the community.

Being eager to contribute to the education of our children, I accept this code for volunteers as my code, and I agree to follow the policies and guidelines of the Westport Community Schools Volunteer Program.

I understand that the policies and rules described in this handbook are subject to change at the sole discretion of the Westport Community Schools.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer

Please Print: \_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_