



Volunteer Handbook

Visit the district's website to learn about the required qualifications, background check, and application to volunteer at Atkinson Elementary School.



<http://www.hendersoncountypublicschoolsnc.org/human-resources/volunteers/>



Atkinson Elementary School
2510 Old Kanuga Road
Hendersonville, NC 28739
(828) 697-4755
Fax (828) 698-6120

Dear Volunteer:

Welcome to Atkinson Elementary. On behalf of the students, teachers and staff, we would like to thank you for your willingness to share your time and talents. The work you do will have a direct and constructive influence on the quality of education provided to our students. Your participation in our school community should provide a rewarding experience for you and our students.

Volunteer opportunities include:

- tutoring small groups or individual students;
- reading to students and/or listening to students read;
- assisting students with special projects;
- assisting with school and/or classroom activities/events;
- providing a positive adult contact for a student;
- providing classroom presentations/demonstrations;
- assisting the clerical staff with phone calls, typing, or filing; and
- making visual aids and materials.

We hope that your experience as a volunteer will be personally challenging and gratifying. You now have the opportunity to contribute your knowledge and skills to many students and to better understand our school and the ways students learn. Our hope is that you will find personal satisfaction in what you do.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the volunteer program here at Atkinson, please contact us at 828-697-4755.

Volunteer Handbook

“We make a living by what we get,
But we make a life by what we give.”
-Winston Churchill

Table of Contents

[Volunteer Handbook](#)

[You Are Part of an Education Team](#)

[Goals:](#)

[Working closely with the classroom teacher and school staff includes:](#)

[Ethics and Confidentiality of Volunteering](#)

[Volunteer Expectations](#)

[Volunteers are expected to:](#)

[Ground Rules for School District Facilities](#)

[Maintain Student Confidentiality](#)

[Human Dignity Policy](#)

[Keys to Success](#)

[Learn Names](#)

[Set the Climate](#)

[Allow Students to be Themselves](#)

[Allow Discovery](#)

[Follow the Teacher’s Lead](#)

[Be a Positive Role Model](#)

[Students’ Learning Styles](#)

[Students with Special Needs](#)

[Elementary Students](#)

[“At Risk” Students – Students Needing Additional Support](#)

[Suggestions for Classroom Volunteers](#)

You Are Part of an Education Team

Volunteers who are committed to helping students be successful are important members of the school team. These individuals are essential to bringing the outside world to the school. Students need contact with individuals who can share experiences and bring other perspectives into the classroom. They need adults who can guide them through the learning process.

Goals:

- o Enrich the curriculum
- o Enrich student's learning opportunities
- o Provide help for individual students
- o Provide opportunities for meaningful service
- o Relieve teachers of some non-instructional tasks
- o Establish a school and community partnership for quality education
- o Enhance all aspects of the educational process

Working closely with the classroom teacher and school staff includes:

- o Following the direction of a school staff member
- o Accepting direction and suggestions from teachers
- o Respecting the privacy of teachers and students by not discussing school matters away from the classroom
- o Understanding that evaluation of a student's learning can only be done by the teacher
- o Committing to working in a classroom to support and improve education for all students
- o Seeking help from the teacher when you need additional information or instruction
- o Sharing ideas and constructive comments with the teacher
- o Acknowledging that teachers are responsible for discipline in the classroom
- o Referring to the classroom teacher or regular school staff member for final solution of any student problem which arises, whether of an instructional, medical or operational nature

Ethics and Confidentiality of Volunteering

Please remember these simple communication rules:

1. If you are having difficulty with a student, discuss it first with the child's teacher.
2. If you are having difficulty with a teacher, discuss it first with that teacher, then with the site volunteer coordinator.
3. Immediately report any concern you have for a student's welfare or safety to the teacher, school nurse, counselor or school administrator.
4. Refrain from sharing negative information about students, teachers, or volunteers with other volunteers or community members. There are communication channels for problem solving, but idle talk doesn't help – it hurts.

Volunteer Expectations

Volunteers are expected to:

- o Sign in and wear an ID badge on school grounds at all time
- o Wear professional attire
- o Show respect for all staff and students

- o Share concerns regarding students with the school staff only

If you cannot make your scheduled volunteer time, please call the school so the teacher and students will know you will not be there. Please do not bring younger children to the school during your volunteer hours. You will also be asked to turn off your cell phone while you are volunteering in the classroom and are discouraged from making personal calls while on the school campus.

Ground Rules for School District Facilities

- o No smoking or tobacco allowed, including on athletic fields and in district vehicles
- o No weapons allowed
- o No drugs or alcohol allowed
- o Do not use school equipment for personal purposes

Maintain Student Confidentiality

Volunteers are expected and required to keep all ‘student information’ that they obtain while working as a volunteer for the district confidential. In fact, federal law strictly prohibits school districts and district volunteers from releasing any student information without parent/guardian permission. Student information includes all academic, medical and personal information. Volunteers cannot take photos of students during their volunteer activities and post them publicly without authorization from the school. Student work, like artwork or papers, is also protected by law and cannot be shared publicly without written permission.

Disclosure of student information by a volunteer is a violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and may subject the volunteer and the district to civil liability. It is very important that you keep information about students confidential. It is important that you do not discuss students or their progress with others –even their parents. Do not make references to student’s abilities in front of other students. The only person who should be told about a student’s work is their teacher. If parents ask about their student’s progress, suggest in a friendly way that they contact the teacher.

Human Dignity Policy

Recognizing and valuing that we are a diverse community, it is part of our mission to provide a positive, harmonious environment in which diversity is respected and encouraged. A major aim of education at Atkinson Elementary is the development of a commitment to the core values of a democratic society. In accordance with this aim, we strongly emphasize a core value of mutual human respect for each person regardless of individual differences and/or, characteristics including for example, but not necessarily limited to race, gender, age, disability, physical condition, sexual orientation, ethnic group or religion. We expect this value to be manifested in the daily behaviors of students, staff and volunteers.

Keys to Success

Learn Names

A student’s name or nickname is your first contact point. Be sure that you pronounce and spell it right. Make sure the student knows your name as well.

Set the Climate

By being alert and listening, you will develop sensitivity to the needs of the student. Your working relationship with each individual student will be your best tutoring tool.

Begin each session with positive comments or questions about the student's family, friends, or activities. Use honest praise whenever possible. Always leave the student with a word of praise.

Allow Students to be Themselves

Every student is unique. Make each one feel that he or she is an important special person. Avoid comparing students with others in their schools or in their families.

Allow Discovery

Allow students time to think about answers. Guide them by asking questions which will lead to correct responses. Remind the student that everyone makes mistakes . . . even you. Making mistakes and learning how to correct them is an important part of learning.

Follow the Teacher's Lead

Keep the students headed in the direction set by the teacher. Hold the students to the same class standards of behavior and work. Talk openly and often with the teacher to determine what is expected of you and the students.

REMEMBER: the teacher has the final responsibility for all planning and activities that occur in the classroom. Discuss specific student concerns with the teacher or principal, but keep all confidential information about students within the school.

Be a Positive Role Model

Your conduct, dress, personal hygiene, and dependability will set an example for what is expected of students. Being on time and being reliable give tremendous support to the teacher. In case of an unavoidable absence, a call in advance will allow the teacher to make other plans and to reassure the students that you care.

Students believe and remember everything you say. **If you make a promise to a student, be sure to keep it.**

Students' Learning Styles

“The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Every person has a tendency to acquire skills or learn in a certain way. Within a family, parents often learn differently from each other and from their children; brothers and sisters also have different learning styles and degrees of success in school.

Tutors can be much more effective if they are aware of students' individual learning styles. When a student does not understand a concept through one learning style, another can be used. As an example, if a student is unable to understand material written on the board or in a book, then oral presentation may be more effective. Development of many learning styles gives students a better chance to learn.

Research has shown that approximately 30% of elementary school-age children learn best through seeing, 25% learn best by hearing, and 15% learn best by touching and doing. The remaining 30% learn equally well by each method. It is estimated that 80% of material presented to school-age children is visual. In later grades, more students are able to learn visually. Over 75% of adults learn efficiently through visual means.

Auditory learners learn best by **hearing** the information. Questions and directions should be given orally. Discussion of material is best for these students. The more they hear the material, the more recall is possible. The use of CDs, DVDs, recordings and lectures greatly benefits auditory learners.

Visual learners learn best by **seeing** information. Directions and assignments should be written. Visual presentations of materials through the use of graphs, charts, outlines, and notes are most effective for these students. If oral instructions are given, they should be presented in short, clear sentences. Recall, for the students, is strengthened through the practice of writing and outlining the subject material.

Tactile learners learn best through **hands-on** activities. Task cards, computers, and math manipulatives provide effective methods.

Kinesthetic learners learn best by **experiencing** the information. Methods of presentation include acting, building, interviewing, role-playing, and observing.

Students with Special Needs

The English Language Learner is a student who is learning English in addition to his or her native language. Tutors of English language learners help students acquire English skills while studying specific subject areas.

When teaching the English language, you will be given materials developed for the appropriate level of the individual student. Remember that you are working in the student's second language. When helping the student study math, science, or other subject matter, use the following guidelines:

- o speak clearly and naturally
- o avoid talking too quickly
- o focus on communication, **not** on grammar
- o use gestures, facial expressions, and a variety of visual aids
- o avoid the use of idioms and slang
- o be patient and help the student to be patient

The Special Education Program serves students between birth and 21 years of age who have exceptional needs and whose disabilities may limit them educationally. As a result, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is written for each Special Education student. Handicapping conditions range from children with learning disabilities, other health impairments, hearing impairments, and autism.

Atkinson Elementary has Special Education programs within our regular school program that often serves students in a resource setting in small groups. Volunteer tutors in Special Education classes work closely with teachers to provide one-to-one attention.

Academically & Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program provides identification, motivation, and challenge to exceptionally bright and capable students. Identification categories include intellectual ability, creative ability, specific academic ability, leadership ability, high achievement, and visual and performing arts talent. AIG cluster classes serve identified AIG students and high achievers.

“None of us has gotten where we are solely by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. We go here because somebody... bent down and helped us.”
-Thurgood Marshall

Elementary Students

Reading takes place when the student understands what he/she is reading. Reading is not just the mechanics of putting sounds together to form sentences; it is a thinking process. Some tips when working with students in reading include:

- o Help students find the main idea.
- o Ask students comprehension questions; who, what, when, where, why.
- o Have students read silently before reading aloud.
- o Encourage students to write words they want to learn.
- o Have students tape stories to improve their expression.

Math strategies emphasize understanding. From kindergarten on, the skill of solving problems should be continually developed. Some activities which encourage problem solving are talking and listening to each other, making decisions, and collecting, organizing, and interpreting information. In the primary grades, students should be involved in hands-on activities. Manipulating objects is a very effective way to provide students with concrete math experiences.

The skills of computation are important at all levels, and it should not be isolated from the problem solving process. Students should form the habit of estimating before calculating any answers. Check with the teacher to determine the specific purpose of the tutoring lesson.

“At Risk” Students – Students Needing Additional Support

The Henderson County Public School District has a promotion/retention policy for grade levels K-12. Early in the school year, certain students may be identified as “at-risk” when it appears that they are in danger of repeating the grade.

Research shows that many students who are going to have problems in school can be identified when they are in second, third, or fourth grade. They are generally behind the other students in math, reading, or science. Many have trouble dealing with interpersonal relationships. Studies of school dropouts suggest that students wished that “someone had cared” about them. Tutors can provide the one-to-one support and caring which is needed to help these students succeed.

Suggestions for Classroom Volunteers

1. Relax and be yourself. Students are quick to see any pretenses.
2. Call the child **by name** at each opportunity. If you aren't sure of the pronunciation, ask the student to help you.
3. Listen attentively to the child. Encourage him/her to watch you as you talk. (Working across from each other helps reinforcement of speech better than working side by side.)
4. Personal concern for the child is one of your greatest assets. Work to build a relationship. Keep in mind that what you do is as much a language as what you say.
5. Start where the child is successful in the subject matter and proceed slowly into what he needs to learn. Always end the session with a successful experience.
6. One of your important jobs is to build the child's self-image. If a child thinks he can do something – he can!
7. Praise the child for even the smallest success, but never praise a child falsely if you want him to trust what you say.
8. Approach a subject (reading, math, etc.) in a very specific way. In planning with the child, keep your expectations few, short and clear. Present alternatives instead of “no-no's.”
9. Volunteers should remember that each session is also a language experience with speaking, listening, reading and writing. The volunteer is an example and should speak in a quiet, controlled voice.
10. Be relaxed and confident – the student will relax with you.
11. Students believe and remember everything you say. **If you make a promise to a student, be sure to keep it.**
12. Volunteers, by example, can teach appropriate behavior. Show by demonstration the quiet way of entering a room, how to pull the chair out and sit down gracefully. By being polite to the child you are helping the child learn manners.
13. **BE FLEXIBLE:** Don't be afraid to admit your mistakes. No one is perfect or knows everything and students are delighted at this honesty. It gives them a chance to become a teacher to you or an opportunity for the two of you to learn together, both of which are important academically and personally.
14. **BE PATIENT:** Remember that teachers are human; they will have good days as well as bad and will not be operating at 100% efficiency all the time. No one does!
15. Share your experiences with teachers to aid in planning for future activities.
16. **Please remember that teachers are legally responsible for everything that takes place in the classroom and, therefore, they must make all decisions on programs and behavior.**