



## Parent Volunteer Handbook

Welcome to the CAWNY Volunteers. We are thankful that you have chosen to volunteer your services to our students. With the support of volunteers such as yourself, the opportunity to meet the individual needs of each child is greatly increased. The Governing Board encourages parents/guardians and other members of the community to share their time, knowledge and abilities with our students. Community volunteers in our schools enrich the educational program and strengthen our schools' relationships with homes, businesses, public agencies and private institutions. The education of the youth of today takes a whole community. Caring members of our community bring new energies and resources into our schools. All over the country schools are drawing support from their communities through the efforts of volunteers who work in our schools, become career mentors, contribute goods and supplies, and those that support our schools financially through endowments and grants. This handbook is designed to provide you with practical information that will assist you in your volunteer placement. It is our goal that the time you spend with our students is worthwhile for you as well as the students. If you have any questions that have not been addressed in this handbook, please feel free to call (716) 433-1652.

Once again, thank you for helping make a difference in the lives of students at CAWNY!

### Suggestions for Starting Your Volunteer Experience

Following are suggestions that should prove helpful in developing a successful partnership with our students and teachers:

#### Meet with Teacher or Staff Member Before You Start

Go over "Initial Checklist."  
Ask questions of your teacher (or other staff member) if you are unclear about something.  
Keep communication open.

#### Get to Know the School Grounds

Know the location and phone number of the school office.  
Know the location of important rooms such as the library, cafeteria, office, bathrooms, etc.  
Find out where to park.

#### If You Are Volunteering in a Classroom, Spend Some Time Observing the Class

Become familiar with classroom routines.  
Identify location of supplies within the classroom.

#### Establish Positive Relationships with Students

Be friendly; let them know you are glad to be there!  
Be encouraging to students.

## When Working with an Individual Student

Let the student know that you care about their thoughts and ideas.

Accept the student for who s/he is...don't try and make them into something they are not.

You are here to help, not change them.

Be encouraging.

Recognize effort as well as products.

If you don't now an answer to something, admit it and work it out together...nobody knows everything.

Let the child know that you enjoy your time with him/her...and enjoy yourself!

## When Working with Groups of Students (large and small groups)

Find out what the teacher wants you to work on...get specifics.

Indicate to the children how you would like to be addressed - the teacher may have preferences in this area.

You may want to have the children wear nametags so that you can address them personally.

Discuss with the teacher ahead of time what classroom management techniques you should be using in the event of the need for discipline, or if the teacher wants to handle this.

Encourage all the students, not just the ones with the correct answer.

Give each student time to answer...don't allow other students to jump in and answer for him/her.

Let the children know that you enjoy your time with them...and enjoy yourself!!

## Learning Techniques

Not everyone learns in the same way. Your learning style is simply the way in which you learn best. Most people use all of their senses as they process information; one sense generally dominates. Here are some descriptions and suggestions that may be helpful in understanding the students with whom you work:

### Auditory Learners

They learn best through verbal demonstrations.

They prefer talking about a situation and enjoy listening to themselves talk.

Read instructions aloud.

Have them repeat instructions to you.

If the student is having difficulty understanding, re-phrase instructions.

### Visual Learners

They learn best by observing.

They prefer watching demonstrations and have intense concentration and ability to visualize information.

Students who are visual learners like to write, doodle, and study their environment.

Keep a copy of the written instructions, charts, etc. in front of them.

Use visual aids for reference (maps, charts, pictures, etc.)

Try having students write or draw problems on paper.

Encourage the use of a homework notebook to remember assignments.

### Tactile (Kinesthetic) Learners

They learn best by doing.

They remember best by what they did, not what was seen or heard.

They need frequent breaks when studying and are easily distracted when they are not able to move.

Have students use manipulatives, such as money or blocks with a math problem or learning aids, such as a globe, for geography.

Have students use their bodies to act out fiction or non-fiction stories.

## **Characteristics of Children Aged 5-8 Years**

### **Physical Characteristics**

Full of energy, may find it difficult to sit still;  
Tire easily;  
Aware of physical limitations;  
Increasing fine motor skills (e.g., using scissors, writing);  
Proud of their accomplishments;  
Prefers to participate rather than observe.

### **Self-Image**

Self image based primarily on what they think others think of them;  
Proud of their own accomplishments; want to be treated as individuals;  
Eager to please adults they admire;  
Becoming more independent of home and parents;  
Flourish from positive reinforcement about specific things;  
Sometimes adamant about their likes and dislikes.

### **Relationship with Others**

Try out new ways of getting along with others;  
Imitate adults in attitudes and actions;  
Sensitive about feelings--both their own and others;  
Aware of individual differences in physical appearance;  
Still seek acceptance and encouragement primarily from parents and teachers;  
Beginning to develop a sense of right and wrong in attitudes and actions toward others.

### **Interest in Learning**

Beginning to draw conclusions from practical experience;  
Still have private worlds of fantasy and wonder;  
Eager to learn;  
May surprise adults at times with their insight;  
Eager to try new activities but frustrated by attempting things beyond their capabilities.

## **Characteristics of Children Aged 8-12 Years**

### **Physical Characteristics**

Growing steadily; physically active;  
Differ widely in physical maturity (girls likely to mature earlier than boys);  
May be maturing sexually and having questions about their bodies;  
Becoming increasingly interested in improving personal appearance.

### **Self-Image**

Becoming more independent of adults;  
Often frustrated when they do not measure up to their own expectations or those of others;  
Want to make their own decisions;  
Often mention what they would like to be when they grow up;  
Want tasks to perform; want to be useful.

## Characteristics of Children Aged 8-12 Years (continued)

### Relationship with Others

May be aware of the opposite gender but unsure of relationship;  
Teasing often denotes attraction to opposite sex;  
Have increased concern about right/wrong (example: lying, cheating);  
Developing more responsibility for forming and keeping friendships;  
Interested and informed about people around the world;  
Values of peer group generally accepted over those of adults.

### Interest in Learning

Developing longer attention span;  
Interested in current events;  
Increased skills in reading and expressing ideas in writing;  
Often try to be perfectionists which can result in frustration;  
Learning to think abstractly.

## Confidentiality

You will be serving in a unique capacity with our students. Sometimes students share things with a volunteer that they have not shared with anyone else. This information may be about private family matters, or information about themselves that they are entrusting to you. It is very important to the integrity of your work with students that you do not share this information with others. If you feel it is important that another person have this information, please talk to the teacher or the principal.

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.

In the past, we have had a lot of gossiping about other people's children. Therefore, it is extremely important that you do not talk with other parents about other children in the classroom observed while you were volunteering. Most people do not want anyone saying anything about their child. Please respect student and parent rights. If anything happens in the classroom, it is the teacher's responsibility to contact the parent.

***Please remember that volunteering to work in the classroom is a privilege – not a right.  
Violations of confidentiality may cause school authorities to suspend that privilege.***

## Expectations of Parent Volunteers

1. Please dress appropriately for working with children! Low cut blouses or short shorts are not appropriate!
2. Parents/ volunteers may not "discipline" another parent's student.
  - If a situation occurs between two children while at home, please talk with the parent or child while at home. Rules for adults are quite different when on school grounds.
  - If a situation between two children occurs at school whether it involves your child or other children, please notify the teacher and let the school officials take care of the discipline.
3. If you cannot make the pre-arranged time, please let the teacher know as soon as possible so lesson plans can be changed.
4. Please do not just drop in to offer help unless the teacher says this is okay. All volunteering should be pre-arranged with the teacher. Lesson plans are commonly written around volunteers availability. Teachers will not have time to put together work for you to do with 20 or 30 children in the classroom.
5. Parents should not offer rides to students unless they have prior arrangements with that student's parents and the parent/ guardian of the child has notified the school.
6. Cell phones should be off while you are working with children, except in case of emergencies. If you must take or make a call, please do so outside of the classroom. Talking on the phone is very distracting to the students. It can also give them impression that what they are doing is not as important as the conversation.
7. Parent Volunteers should make other arrangements for siblings and/or other children while volunteering in the classroom. Younger children and older siblings are distracting to the educational environment.

## **Initial Volunteer Checklist**

When you begin your volunteer experience, please discuss the following with the teacher:

1. Signing in and out of the building and wearing a volunteer badge
2. Your schedule
3. School-wide rules and which ones apply to adults as well as students
4. The teacher's classroom policies, procedures and rules, as well as his/her management system, methods of reinforcing students, and emergency procedures
5. What your specific duties will be, materials you should use, and strategies to use when working with students.
6. How and when to contact your teacher/staff member regarding a change in your schedule, etc. Consider exchanging phone numbers.
7. Alternate plans for days when the teacher is absent and a substitute is in charge of the class.
8. How the students will refer to you (first name, Ms., Dr., Mrs., Mr., etc)
9. Procedures for taking student(s) out of the classroom for individual work, if applicable
10. Your special interests, talents, and skills
11. Confirm scheduled school holidays and identify any pre-planned field trips that fall on your scheduled day(s).

## **Volunteer Opportunity at CAWNY**

Working in classrooms  
Tutoring individual students  
Mentor Programs  
Literacy Programs  
Community Service  
Playground Assistance  
Clerical Support  
Serving on a school committee  
Parent/Teacher Association  
Classroom presentations  
Library Media Center

## **Parent Volunteer Handbook**

I have read and understand the expectations and confidentiality of being a classroom and/or school volunteer. I understand that if confidentiality or expectations are violated, I may not be able to continue to offer my time as a classroom volunteer.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_