**Shelton Elementary Classroom Volunteer Handbook**

Research shows that kids perform better in school when parents are involved. Grades are higher, test scores improve, and attendance increases. Your time and effort is invaluable and is greatly appreciated by students, parents, and staff!

**Welcome!**

Thank you for offering your valuable time to our students and our school! The information in this handbook is offered so that volunteers will feel prepared and will have a successful volunteer experience at Shelton Elementary. Please take the time to review this information, sign the last page, and return it to the school prior to your first volunteer experience.

**Getting Started:**

*How can I help Shelton’s teachers?*

* Some teachers may request assistance in working with students. This can involve activities such as reading to students, listening to students read, leading simple small-group activities, and working one-on-one with students.
* Teachers also need help with clerical projects such as stuffing Friday Folders, cutting materials, tearing out workbook pages, preparing materials, filing, and assembling handouts.
* You can help organize or volunteer at school events such as classroom parties. Notices will be posted on the school and PTSA websites, and emails and flyers are sent home when volunteers are needed for various school activities.

*I’d like to help in the classroom. How do I find out which teachers need help?*

Please visit the PTSA website: http://www.sheltonptsa.org to view teachers’ calendars, or contact the PTSA Volunteer Program Chairpersons. Jessica Smith (jpsmith24@gmail.com) is the contact for grades K-3, and Tricia Chang (changt@mac.com) is the contact for grades 4-6. They will assist you in finding a good fit for your time and interests.

*I’ve never volunteered in a classroom so how will I know what I’m supposed to do?*

Each teacher’s needs are different and are posted on their volunteer calendars. In addition, you can discuss your interests and comfort level with specific subjects and tasks with the teacher prior to volunteering to ensure a good fit for you and the teacher.

*How will I know what days/times the teacher needs me?*

Classroom teachers have online schedules that you can access via the PTSA website (http://www.sheltonptsa.org) which list the days, times, and activities for which volunteers are requested.

*I’d like to help in the classroom but don’t think I can do so regularly. Can I still help?*

Teachers are generally happy to have any help that is offered to them. Feel free to sign up for any times that you are willing to help on the online classroom calendars.

*My schedule doesn’t allow me to be in the classroom during the school day. Is there anything else I can do to help?*

Some of the project help (cutting things out, assembling, etc.) can be done on your own time. That work can be sent to and from home with your Shelton student so you don’t even have to be in the building to help. Please contact your child’s teacher directly to find out if you can assist in this way.

Some activities take place after school hours, and as those activities are planned, you can volunteer to help as your schedule allows. The PTSA often needs help outside of school hours as well. Information regarding activities like these are generally communicated to parents via the school website, PTSA website, and emails.

**OK, I’ve Signed Up to Volunteer! What’s Next?**

*What do I do when I arrive at Shelton for my volunteer assignment?*

* Please set your cell phone to vibrate.
* Sign in at the front desk and get a nametag. Indicate on the sign-up sheet where in the building you expect to be (teacher’s name, media center, etc.).

*What do I do when I arrive at the classroom?*

* + Enter the room quietly and avoid distracting students and the teacher from whatever activity is taking place.
	+ Sometimes teachers will have a task ready for you and you can get started right away. Other times, teachers may need you to wait quietly for a few moments until they can give you instructions.
	+ Students may be excited to see you—this is what is so great about being in the classroom. However, please do not allow your presence to be a disruption!

What types of activities will I be asked to do in the classroom?

Sometimes, teachers may ask you to work with students, and sometimes they may need your help with clerical types of activities. The online calendars will give you some indication as to the type of assistance that you may be asked to provide for a given time slot.

*The teacher has asked me to correct papers. How do I know what kind of grade to assign?*

The teacher may want you to identify mistakes, add encouraging comments, or meet with the student to review the mistakes instead of assigning a grade. Ask the teacher to make sure that you understand what the teacher expects.

*My child loves it when I am in his/her classroom. Can I work with just my child?*

It is most beneficial to the teacher and students to have volunteers working with all children. Please let your child know in advance that you will be working with all children in the classroom so he/she knows what to expect.

*I have an older/younger child who is not a Shelton student. Can I bring my other child with me when I volunteer?*

For general classroom volunteering, it is best not to have other children with you so that you can focus your attention on the students. For school events such as assemblies and parties, other children may be welcome to accompany you. If in doubt, check with the teacher.

*I saw a student acting inappropriately. What should I do?*

Notify the teacher and let the teacher handle the problem. Do not discipline a student.

*What do I do in the event of a safety/fire drill?*

If you are helping in/near the classroom, please stay with the teacher and follow their instructions.

If you are working in a small group somewhere else in the building:

Fire drill: Please exit the nearest door and walk to where the class is supposed to be waiting. The students will know where they go.

**A Few Last Reminders:**

***Confidentiality***

* While volunteering at Shelton, you may witness awkward situations or learn about individual student’s special needs or circumstances. Please be respectful of the privacy of all parties involved and do not discuss sensitive information with others. Even an offhand comment can snowball into an unpleasant or hurtful situation.

***Reliability***

* If you sign up to volunteer at a specific day/time, please be reliable and show up! If you are unable to make it, please let the teacher know ASAP via email or phone.
* If you decide you are no longer able to volunteer regularly, let the teacher and PTSA Volunteer Chairperson know so that he/she can find a replacement.

***Classroom Etiquette***

* Please remember that you are entering the teacher’s domain and to be respectful of how teachers manage their classrooms. They may be using instructional tactics or guiding students to a conclusion that may not be immediately obvious to you.
* To minimize distractions, use a quiet voice when working with students or asking the teacher a question.
* Please be respectful of the teacher’s time. Avoid discussing your child’s progress or other personal topics when volunteering.
* During a classroom discussion, you may be tempted to throw in an additional comment or clarification—please don’t! Let the teacher lead discussions.
* Please refrain from having side conversations with other volunteers while in the classroom. Step outside if you and another volunteer need to have a discussion.
* Dress appropriately—jeans and casual clothing are acceptable for volunteers but shorter shorts, spaghetti straps, muscle shirts, sagging pants, and any other revealing clothing are inappropriate for a school setting. Please refer to the school dress code for full details.

***Classroom Party Guidelines***

As a classroom volunteer, you may be involved in planning or providing snacks for classroom parties. Guidelines are in place for serving healthier options during all school functions. Please note the following:

* Milk or 100% juice should be the primary beverages served during school events. Soft drinks/ soda are not permitted.
* Healthy snacks such as fruit / veggie / cheese trays and whole-grain crackers should make up the majority of the food served (75%). While treats such as cookies, cupcakes, ice cream and candy are permitted, they shouldn’t total more than 25% of the food served.

**Shelton Volunteer Confidentiality Statement**

As a volunteer assisting at Shelton Elementary, you have been authorized by the principal to act as a school official subject to the direction and control of the school’s administrators and teachers. As a school official, you may under limited circumstances have access to student education records in connection with your authorized duties. Student education records include:

* All records with students’ names
* Files with students’ names
* Documents with students’ names
* Other materials with students’ names

All information regarding students, families, and staff is strictly confidential. Volunteers will also respect the confidential nature of any verbal or written communication received regarding staff, students, or families.

All volunteers are expected to practice discretion in any verbal communication by not discussing children, staff, or families in front of others.

By signing below, you agree to maintain the confidentiality of all student education records. This means that you agree not to disclose student education records or personally identifiable student information.

I have read the Volunteer Handbook and I agree to follow its guidelines.

I understand and agree that failure to maintain confidentiality may disqualify me from further service as a Shelton volunteer.

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

Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_