

Spears Elementary Volunteer Handbook 2009-2010



August 2009

Dear School Volunteer,

We want Spears Elementary to be a school that truly reflects our motto “TEAM...Together Everyone Achieves More!” Thank you for joining the Spears TEAM and pledging to be a partner in your child’s education by volunteering in our school. You have chosen to get involved in the exciting things happening at Spears Elementary. We welcome you to our TEAM and greatly appreciate your help.

The Spears Elementary Volunteer Handbook is designed to provide you with information and guidelines to help you perform your volunteer services as effectively as possible. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. After reading through the handbook, please print and sign the *Statement of Commitment* on the last page and return in to your child’s teacher or the school office. Once you have passed the online background check,

<https://volunteer.friscoisd.org>

and submitted your *Statement of Commitment*, you are ready to volunteer!

The teachers, administrators, and students are extremely grateful for your willingness to assist our school. Thank you for sharing your time and talents with us. We hope that you find your volunteer experience both meaningful and rewarding.

Sincerely,

Martha Moroch
Principal

Chris Holland
PTA President

Introduction

Volunteers have an important and valuable role at Spears Elementary, whether volunteering for the school or for the PTA. It does not matter if you volunteer for one hour or one hundred hours over the course of the school year; any help you give is essential in enhancing the education of our students. Some volunteers may assist the teachers with instructional or clerical tasks. Others may help shelve books in the library, serve as a PAL (Parent At Lunch), or work with the PTA on the carnival or other fundraisers. Besides supporting the school, your volunteer efforts teach our children the obligation we all have to give some of our precious time to worthwhile causes. We hope you find your volunteer experience to be a rewarding one.

To get the most from your volunteer experience, it is important to be informed. This handbook contains important information about your work at Spears Elementary; please take time to read through it. Additional information may be found in the *Elementary Student Handbook*, <http://www.friscoisd.org/parentsStudents/StudentHandbooks.htm> If you have questions about volunteering, please contact the PTA or the school.

How to Be a Successful Volunteer

No matter what kind of volunteer work you do, or who you do it for, there are some common qualities that will help you be a successful volunteer at Spears Elementary.

Have an interest in our students

- ✓ Believe that each child can learn and succeed.
- ✓ Accept children of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and personalities.
- ✓ Encourage children to do their best and offer genuine praise.
- ✓ Be friendly—learn students' names and be a good listener.

Support the staff

- ✓ Be respectful of the teachers.
- ✓ Do not publicly question or criticize the teacher or the methods used.
- ✓ Ensure that your interpretation of rules and expectations matches that of the school or classroom.
- ✓ Involve appropriate school personnel when students disobey school or classroom rules; don't take corrective measures into your own hands.

Be committed and dependable

- ✓ Make sure you have the time to serve.
- ✓ Be prompt and reliable; people are counting on you to be there!
- ✓ Set an example for the students by dressing appropriately and demonstrating good citizenship.
- ✓ Let people know if schedule changes prevent you from keeping a commitment.

Maintain confidentiality

- ✓ Ensure that children's work and behavior are held in confidence.
- ✓ Discuss matters relating to a student's behavior and performance only with appropriate school staff members.

Communicate

- ✓ Ask if you are unsure about how equipment works or how your job is supposed to get done—there are no dumb questions!
- ✓ Don't let small problems turn into big ones.
- ✓ Provide feedback to the appropriate person about volunteer experiences.

**SPEARS ELEMENTARY
VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK
(in alphabetical order)**

Attendance/Absences

If you are unable to volunteer at your assigned time, please arrange for a substitute volunteer, call the staff member with which you are scheduled to work, or contact the school office, 469-633-2900.

Background Check

Each school year, all adult volunteers must complete DPS background checks through FISD and be approved before being allowed to volunteer one-on-one with students or attend field trips. To submit your information for volunteering, please do so online, <https://volunteer.friscoisd.org/>

Classroom Parties

1. Three parties are allowed each year: Before Winter Break, Valentine's, and End of the Year-Celebration of Learning.
2. Room Representatives responsible for planning parties should meet and reach consensus about snacks, crafts, and games.
3. Team Leaders need to approve party plans for each grade level. Room Representatives need to communicate plans to each classroom teacher.
4. Communication from Room Representatives needs approval from the principal and PTA president. To communicate with parents, use the pre-approved letters.
5. The Winter Holiday party (Dec. 18, 2009) and the Valentine's Day party (Feb. 12, 2010) will be scheduled from 2:00-2:45 p.m. for Kindergarten through 5th grade.
6. When planning for Winter Holiday parties, please be mindful that every family has its own religious beliefs.
7. End of the Year parties will be held on the last day of school, June 4, 2010. K-4th grades will be scheduled on the same day. The 5th grade party will be held off campus.
8. No parties may be held during the lunch hours due to cafeteria guidelines, i.e., no pizza parties, hot dog lunches, etc. Foods that are restricted during the school day include:
 - a. Foods that must be kept at a warm or hot temperature (such as meats, pizzas, etc.) Hot foods must be provided through the school cafeteria.
 - b. Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value (for more information go to www.squaremeals.com).
9. Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value (FMNV) may be served at the three parties only. These three days are the only exceptions approved by the state of Texas.
10. Respect confidentiality! If you have questions, talk to the classroom teacher.

11. Please remember that classroom parties are for school-aged children. If possible, other arrangements should be made for younger siblings. If younger children need to attend with their parents, please bring a snack for them as party snacks are provided for the classroom students only. Remember that teachers need to concentrate on the discipline of their own students, and it is the parents' responsibility to be sure that younger siblings are behaving appropriately during parties.

Confidential Information

Information learned about students while volunteering is considered confidential and is not to be shared. Volunteers who have a concern about a student should talk with the teachers, Principal, Assistant Principal, or Counselor.

Copying and Laminating Procedures

All copying and laminating jobs will be picked up, completed, and left in the main workroom next to the gym.

- ✓ An organizational system (crate, file, tray, etc.) will be set up in the workroom for each grade level.
- ✓ Teachers will leave all materials to be copied and/or laminated in the area assigned to each grade level.
- ✓ Specific instructions will be provided with each job.
- ✓ Volunteers will need to know the teacher's code to use the Xerox machine, and the code will be provided by the teacher. This code is only to be used for copies made for the classroom or teacher. Large copy jobs need to be sent to the FSD Copy Center at CTE.
- ✓ Volunteers will collect materials from the grade level area in the workroom, make copies/laminate, and return completed copies to the grade level area in the workroom.
- ✓ Teachers will pick up completed copies and laminating from the workroom.
- ✓ **Volunteers must be trained before using the laminator.**

Deliveries for Students or Teachers

All items brought to school for students or teachers will be left with the Receptionist in the school office. The Receptionist will contact the teachers by phone or email to let them know about deliveries for students. Teachers will determine an appropriate time for the students to come to the office to retrieve their items. Items for teachers will be given to the Receptionist and she will place the items in the teachers' mailboxes.

Dress Code for Volunteers and Adult Visitors

Elementary-aged students are very impressionable, especially those nearing adolescence. It is important for all adults in the school setting to serve as positive role models by following school rules including the dress code.

Volunteers and visitors must sign in at the school office, receive a visitor's badge/sticker, and meet the standards of the school dress code as follows:

1. Shorts, dresses or skirts must be loose fitting and approximately fingertip length including tennis skirts and/or workout clothes.
2. Inappropriate or revealing clothing will not be permitted:
 - No spaghetti strap tops
 - No halter tops
 - No bare midriffs (shirts ending above the waistline)
 - No tube tops or see-through clothing.
3. Clothing with offensive pictures or slogans will not be allowed including clothing with liquor or tobacco advertising.
4. Shoes must be worn at all times.

PALs (Parents at Lunch)

Parents who volunteer at lunch should familiarize themselves with the Spears Café procedures and expectations below so as to support the teachers in the enforcement of cafeteria rules:

Spears Cafeteria Expectations

Students will...

- ✓ Line up outside of lunchroom doors until time to enter the serving line.
- ✓ Stay in their seats at their table.
- ✓ Sit facing the tables with their feet on the floor.
- ✓ Whisper to the people beside them.
- ✓ Not share or exchange food.
- ✓ Use gym restrooms for emergencies.
- ✓ Raise their hands if they need help.
- ✓ Empty their trays one table at a time then line up with their classes.
- ✓ Sit quietly in their class lines while waiting for their teachers.

Each teacher/parent will carry a basket or wear an apron with pockets full of extra items from the utensil table so that students do not get out of their seats unnecessarily.

Students are to eat the lunch that they purchase or bring from home. **For the safety of all students parent volunteers should not purchase lunches for students other than their own**

child(ren). Students may have restrictions on their lunch accounts set by their own parents, or students may have food allergies. If there is a problem with a student's lunch, the teacher and/or café staff needs to be alerted.

If the noise level gets too loud, a teacher on duty will use the microphone to ask the student to lower their voices. Five minutes before the end of lunch, a teacher will use the microphone to signal for voices off. The teacher will call out tables for students to throw away trash and dump their trays in the nearby trash cans before walking their trays to the kitchen window. Students will then proceed to the designated area for their class and wait quietly for their teachers.

PATs (Parents as Tutors/Mentors)

Parents as Tutors/Mentors are required to complete and pass a DPS background check online through www.friscoisd.org. If you are interested in tutoring or mentoring students during the school day, please let your child's teacher know. If the homeroom teacher does not need tutoring/mentoring assistance, she may give your name to the assistant principal to keep on file for other teachers' needs.

Parent tutors/mentors may be asked to work with students individually or in small groups. They may be asked to offer assistance in reading, math, writing, social studies, or science. The teacher will let the parent know what s/he needs to work on with the student(s).

Tips for Tutoring/Mentoring

- ✓ Set a positive, friendly tone when working with students... a mood that promotes good feelings and learning. It takes time and patience to build the desired relationship in which you and the student(s) feel comfortable.
- ✓ Names are important to people. Learn the students' names and their correct pronunciations as soon as you can. Also, be certain students know what you want to be called.
- ✓ Give honest, specific, and deserved praise for student achievement and effort. Success breeds success, and you are in a unique position to focus on students' strengths and positive behavior. When you must criticize, keep it constructive and try to preface the corrective remark with something positive or encouraging. A light or witty comment helps mistakes seem less tragic.
- ✓ Realize that most young people have short attention spans. Make every effort to respond to a child's need for movement and variety. If students are restless, disinterested, chatty, or misbehaving, they are probably not learning much, and you may end up frustrated.
- ✓ If you are tutoring/mentoring an individual, take breaks as needed. If you are helping a small group, refocus their attention and spark their interest if students get distracted. Be flexible and aware of cues from the students that it is time to move on or switch gears.
- ✓ Be patient. Sometimes progress is slow. All children are different, but each has the same need for your attention and interest in his/her accomplishments.
- ✓ Your warmth and enthusiasm have a very positive effect on children. Show simple gestures of caring... a smile, a pat on the back, a high five!

- ✓ Treat students with the courtesy and respect that you expect in return. And if you do not get these desired responses from a student, try not to take it personally. Assume that the child is having a problem, which is not related to you. Be fair, consistent, and impartial; and, by all means, keep your sense of humor!
- ✓ Model proper language usage. Children learn language from the language they hear. Expect to hear some fantasies, tall tales, and incorrect and unacceptable language. Some children hear language and see behavior at home, which is not acceptable at school. Instead of criticizing a child's home, explain the type of language and behavior that are appropriate for school use.
- ✓ Make good use of wait time. It is easier to maintain discipline when students are busy working on worthwhile, interesting tasks. If possible, fill transition moments with a thought-provoking question, a riddle, a song, a mini-activity, or encouragement to reflect on the day or the lesson. Young people love to voice their opinions and know they are heard.
- ✓ Try to enjoy children because they are different rather than merely tolerating differences. Look for the unique contribution each student can make.
- ✓ If you have a close relationship with a student, such as in a tutoring/mentoring situation, be sensitive to the possibility that she/he might take your absence personally. If you are unable to attend a tutoring/mentoring session, a special message to that student might alleviate this potential problem.
- ✓ While tutoring/mentoring a child, if there is ever a problem that you feel uncomfortable handling, please talk with the child's teacher or the counselor. Remember, confidentiality is of the utmost importance at all times.

Relationships with Teachers

- ✓ Volunteer time is valuable and very much appreciated! Be sure the teacher knows in advance when you are coming, so that he/she can plan ahead and be prepared with the necessary materials and supplies.
- ✓ Save private conversations with the teacher for times when students are not present. Do not interrupt classrooms when teachers are teaching. It is easy to lose the momentum of an activity when students are distracted or forced to wait while adults carry on conversations.
- ✓ Please do not use your volunteer time to speak to your child's teachers or other staff members about your child. Schedule an appointment with your child's teachers or school staff to address any questions or concerns related to your child.
- ✓ Leave discipline matters to the teacher. The teacher is responsible for maintaining classroom order, even when other adults are working with students in the room. If you have a discipline problem with a student that cannot be resolved by gentle prompting or a few positive words, speak with the teacher.
- ✓ Respect the confidentiality of all information and activities related to school staff, faculty, students, and their families. Stay enthusiastic and positive!

Sign-In Procedures

All volunteers must sign in/out at the front office and wear a badge/sticker. A valid drivers' license must be scanned on the initial visit to the school.

Study Trips (Field Trips)

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips shall be required to ride in transportation provided by the school to and from the event. Exceptions may be made if the student's parent or guardian personally requests that the student be allowed to ride with the parent, or presents to the principal the day before the scheduled trip a request in writing allowing the student to ride with an adult designated by the parent. The district shall not be liable for any injuries that occur to students riding in vehicles that are not provided by the school. *FISD Policy FMG (Local)*

Parents/guardians attending study trips are required to complete and pass a DPS background check online through www.friscoisd.org . If a parent or guardian is attending the study trip as a chaperone and is assigned the duty of supervision of students, he/she will not be allowed to bring siblings. If the parent or guardian is going on the trip as a parent and is not chaperoning, then siblings are allowed to go if the study trip is age-appropriate and if the presence of the sibling does not interfere with the study trip's activities. Parents will be responsible for paying their own entry fees as well as those of siblings that may attend. No parent is permitted to ride the school bus. *FISD Student Handbook*

All parents traveling in their cars along with the buses need to stay behind the buses. It is very dangerous for the buses conveying to have cars traveling in between them. *FISD Department of Transportation Guidelines for Field Trips*

Suspected Child Abuse

Child abuse is defined as any mistreatment or neglect of a child by an adult resulting in serious injury or harm to a child. Any adult who suspects child abuse should notify the school counselor.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

As a volunteer at Spears Elementary I agree to:

- Follow all guidelines outlined in the Spears Elementary Volunteer Handbook as well as FISD policies and regulations applicable to my position as a volunteer.
- Set an example for the students by following the dress code and school rules.
- Honor the commitment to work as scheduled. If I must be absent from a scheduled commitment I will notify the teacher, staff member, or PTA representative.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Child's Name

Teacher

Child's Name

Teacher

Child's Name

Teacher

Child's Name

Teacher

Before volunteering, please sign the statement of commitment and return it to your child's teacher or the school office.