



TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

simplify and strengthen your volunteer program



Powered by **VOLUNTEER**♥**NOW**

Where schools and communities *connect*



As your school district strives to provide an excellent education for every child, you need a simple and effective way to recruit and manage the volunteers who support that mission and work in your schools.

We know that volunteers change everything - where they live, work and play. This powerful collective of individuals has a tremendous impact on our economy and our quality of life. VolunteerNow, the technology nonprofit that powers the national VOLY.org platform, provides the tools and expertise districts need to transform schools through volunteers.

Our leadership and technical teams include individuals who have worked in the education technology market for years, and have volunteered extensively in our public schools, including as board members.

Supporting students and teachers through community engagement does not have to be complicated. This guide can help your district create an easy-to-use, efficient and powerful volunteer program, designed by national volunteerism experts.

A high-quality, standardized, district-wide volunteer program allows teachers and administrators to focus on the future: our children.

Volunteers can provide an enriching, well-rounded experience to students and school districts, if utilized properly.

Volunteering is a national pastime, and a critical one to our society. For the past 20 years, millions of Americans have donated their time to school districts, nonprofits and causes they care about, to the tune of more than 9 million fulltime-equivalent employees.

And volunteering in schools is not a new trend. Research has shown that principals consider volunteers to be a critical resource in improving the climate of their schools, and that an effective community engagement program is an integral part of district success. In turn, volunteers overwhelmingly have a positive view of their community's districts and administrators, and take a more vested interest in local education as a result of giving their time.

Successful community engagement bridges the gaps in funding and staffing, and allows children to feel connected and supported. From writing great volunteer opportunities to reporting hours, the structure of your district's volunteer program can make-or-break volunteer impact.



..... CASE STUDY: LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT IN TEXAS

The second largest district in Texas, and one of the top 20 largest districts in the country, estimated that about 12,000 volunteers were involved in its program in 2015. Each of the 238 schools had its own process for recruiting, engaging and tracking volunteers, whether that was as sophisticated as a spreadsheet and email blast, or as casual as asking parents individually, face-to-face.

With more than 160,000 students, and 80% at or below the poverty rate, community engagement was essential for this district to keep kids in class and feeling supported. It was time to modernize.

At the start of the 2016-2017 school year, this Texas district launched an innovative new program using VOLY.org across all campuses to provide structure and simplicity to a large, but inefficient volunteer system. One month after the launch, the district had 10,000 volunteers registered, background checked and matched to opportunities.

When the academic year came to a close in June 2017, this district counted more than 27,000 volunteers who contributed 436,236 hours, and generated almost \$11 million in manpower. Almost one year later, registered volunteers climbed to 40,000 - and counting.

..... CASE STUDY: LARGE CHARTER SCHOOL SYSTEM

In 2016, a 56-campus charter school system in Houston implemented a new strategy for recruiting volunteers. Throughout the 2016-2017 school year, more than 6,000 volunteers registered with the system's custom VOLY.org platform, and more than 800 opportunities were posted by all campuses. About 70% of their postings received responses, and volunteers ended up donating 17,186 hours during the academic year.

Each volunteer opportunity that recruited a volunteer generated about 21 hours. When those opportunities were shared again and included improved language for a more compelling post, volunteers gave more time – just above 30 hours per opportunity.

So, how did they do it? Keep reading for our step-by-step guide for building and implementing a comprehensive, effective volunteer program for your district.

Communication and Recruiting

For more than 40 years, the mantra we have heard from thousands of nonprofit volunteer managers is “after money, we need volunteers”. School districts are no exception.

It’s easy to recognize the need for additional hands, and to start asking a few parents sporadically to alleviate the most pressing struggles. But beyond those immediate needs, how does a district successfully engage the community at multiple levels?

The answer to that involves district personnel evaluating current systems, while asking themselves: are we ready to accept and manage volunteers? Turning a critical and analytical eye to your volunteer program ensures you don’t miss key opportunities for success.

Points to consider include staffing realities, target audiences, and tools you have at your disposal to track volunteers through the recruitment and management process. These tools could be a spreadsheet, pen and paper, or dedicated software.

Additional factors to consider would be: what is your end goal for your volunteer program? Do you have engagement benchmarks for parent volunteers? Would you like to see a stronger community-school relationship?

Spend a working lunch with key staff to answer these questions and develop a plan in writing. **Then, it’s time to share your volunteer needs with the community!**

VOLUNTEERS AT A GLANCE:

The system you create should give you all the data you need in an easy-to-find, accessible format.

The screenshot shows a web dashboard for a school district. At the top, there's a navigation bar with "FOR SCHOOLS" on the left and "Welcome back School Admin!" on the right, along with "School Dashboard" and "Logout" links. Below this is a header with the "Independent School District" logo (a star) and four menu items: "Causes", "Opportunities", "Teams", and "Schools". The main content area is divided into several panels. On the left, there's a panel for "W.A. Blair Elementary School" featuring a panther mascot logo and a "minimize" button. To its right is a "Create An Opportunity" panel with a calendar icon and a "View All Opportunities" link. Next is a "FANS OF YOUR SCHOOL" panel with a heart icon and a "Manage My School" link. Then, an "Opportunities" panel with a clock icon and "Awaiting Your Hours" text. Finally, on the right, there's a "Total Volunteer Hours" panel showing a "0.0" value and a "Search for Volunteer" button. A note below the hours says "Increase this number by posting more opportunities or monitoring those you already have posted."

Detailed, compelling messaging is essential to effective volunteer recruitment.

Once your district has decided what kind of volunteer program it would like to have, the next step is to visualize and plan for the types of volunteers you need. Consider skills, potential availability, demographics, or community and mission-alignment when planning who you might target for volunteer support.

Your district recruitment strategy will inform how you describe your volunteer needs and requests. Who is your target audience, and what is the best way to reach them? What tools do you have, such as social media or graphic design? Common tactics for reaching parents and community partners include a dedicated section on your district website, regular promotional emails, social media sharing and/or physical handouts sent home with students.

Whichever outlet your district uses, a few recruitment basics apply for creating volunteer opportunities. **Each “post” or opportunity should:**

- Capture attention
- Speak to your target audience
- Highlight the mission or cause (how will this volunteer work impact students?)
- Be specific and provide details to save time
- Break down large events into specific, manageable tasks

Each volunteer opportunity needs its own “posting”. Don’t lump many needs into one long request, whether it’s an email blurb or Facebook post. And just like tailoring a cover letter or resume for individual employers, each target audience group needs to hear your request in their language. When creating volunteer opportunities, consult with your marketing department to ensure you use current logos and graphics, and to provide consistent messaging.

For example, if a teacher needs five reading group leaders per class, your volunteer request will look slightly different for parents versus your community partners. A company might be able to send an entire team or department to cover all classes in one fell swoop; you should ask for that. Parents, however, will need to be asked to participate as an individual for one class.

A good recruitment message serves multiple purposes:

- Clarifies expectations for you and the volunteer
- What they will be doing, when they are needed and what skills are required
- Showcases your district
- Saves time by screening out unqualified volunteers

COMMUNICATION AND RECRUITING

Help potential volunteers see themselves as supporters of your district. By targeting each message to the preferred audience, you can be more specific and attract the most qualified and engaged volunteers.

Here are a few examples of compelling and engaging volunteer opportunities for schools:



Morning Student Car Greeters



Campus Engagement

Are you a morning person? Be a Morning Car Student Greeter to assist in getting our students out of their cars and in to school to be on time. Please arrive at 7:30am. [Learn More](#)



Stemmons Stallion Lunch Buddy

Lunch and Recess Duty

Please come help the younger students with opening the milk, ketchup, etc. PreK:10-10:30 Kinder:10:15-10:45 2nd:10:30-11 1st:10:45-11:15 [Learn More](#)

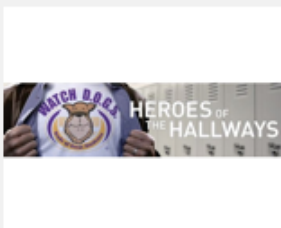


Roaring Readers Under Construction



Classroom Support

Volunteers in our Roaring Reader program work one-on-one with students to support reading skill development. Tutors work 30 minutes, 1 hour, or more per week depending upon your schedule. We look forward to working with you! [Learn More](#)



WATCH Dogs!



Campus Engagement

Watch D.O.G.S WATCH D.O.G.S. is a program of the National Center for Fathering focusing on prevention of violence in schools by using the positive influence of fathers and father-figures to provide an unobtrusive presence in the schools and to be a [Learn More](#)

You've written stellar volunteer opportunities expressing exactly what you need – now it's time to share. Drop those blurbs into an email, post on social media, or copy into a handout to spread the word, and watch volunteers respond.

Orientation and Training

It's the first day of your revamped volunteer program, and you have a dozen fresh, helpful, eager faces – what's next? First, don't just turn them loose. These volunteers want to be engaged with your district on a deep level, and now that the time for actual work has come, you want to harness and maintain that level of energy and interest. A great orientation or training can do just that.

Volunteers equipped with the right tools to mentor, supervise or perform their tasks will be more successful. Providing even a brief slideshow orientation can suffice.

Orientation checklist:

- Big picture - district overview
- Importance of their role
- Volunteer handbook
- Key policies and procedures
- Sign waiver(s)
- Introduce to direct supervisor

Volunteer-job training checklist:

- Review job description
- Tools and supplies
- Expected outcomes
- Safety precautions
- Who to ask



Reporting and Tracking

Is your district getting the most out of its volunteers? You won't know if you don't track!

Keeping tabs on the number of hours volunteers spend at each school can help your district understand its needs better, and assist with key components of your volunteer program such as recruitment, recognition and retention.

Accurate reporting demonstrates community involvement and could lead to an increase in resources. It validates your programs and your school's credibility, and helps recruit additional volunteers and community partners. Successful reporting and tracking also allow a district to place individual and group volunteers where they can be the most effective for students.

Always keep applications, background checks, timesheets, waivers, and emergency contact information, and any volunteer evaluations you might conduct.

The screenshot shows the Volunteer Manager web application interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a language selector, a welcome message, and links to the School Dashboard and Logout. Below this is a main navigation menu with icons for Causes, Opportunities, Teams, and Schools. A secondary navigation bar displays the user's location as 'Hi, Example Elementary School' and provides links to Dashboard, Opportunities, and Manage School. On the left, a sidebar menu under 'MANAGE SCHOOL' lists various options, with 'Fans' highlighted in red. The main content area is titled 'Fan Details' and includes 'Export' and 'Sort by Tags' buttons. Below the title is a search bar and a filter bar with options like 'Student between age 13 - 17', 'DISD Employee', 'Student observer', and 'General'. A table lists the fan details for John Smith, including his email, phone number, application type, orientation date, background check status, and 2017-2018 hours.

Volunteer	Email	Phone	Application	Orientation	Background Check	2017-2018 Hours
John Smith	johnsmithvolunteer@gmail.com	(123) 456-7890	General	8/15/17	Approved	100

Solutions

Engaging and managing a volunteer workforce on numerous campuses can be time-consuming, but the right tool makes the job much easier. Intuitive technology is a smart investment for districts really looking to make an impact through volunteers. Choose a program or process that helps you create faster, more frequent and more meaningful engagement for your volunteers, improving efficiency for district level and campus level volunteer coordinators.



As experts in transforming communities through volunteerism, our team at VOLY.org, powered by VolunteerNow, can help bring your volunteer program into the 21st century.

An innovative, web-based volunteer recruiting, management, and reporting platform, VOLY.org is designed to directly support district and classroom needs. This proprietary software-as-a-service allows your district to engage the community through your unique district-level landing page, through individual school pages, and an unlimited number of users and opportunities to post. **From automated tools for tracking, scheduling and reporting, to templates for writing great volunteer opportunities, VOLY.org helps build capacity in schools across the country.** **To request a demo, please contact schools@voly.org.**

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Transforming communities through volunteerism

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