

Guidelines for Volunteers

General

In order to be effective, you must establish a rapport with the teacher and students. This can be done only by attendance in the classroom on an average of at least one day a week, with attentive observation. Your commitment is to a minimum of 20 days in the school year. It is expected that personal activities will result in absence from the classroom; however, it is recommended that these not occur in the early weeks of volunteering.

To get a feeling for how volunteers are providing assistance, you will audit a continuing volunteer for at least one day in the classroom.

Together with a volunteer coordinator, you will meet with the lead teacher and principal. After you have described your scientific credentials and professional experience, the coordinator will give examples of volunteer contributions, and lead a discussion of how you can contribute. Items to be covered include the grade(s) and teacher(s) you will be assisting, specific supporting activities, and the day(s) of your attendance. These are expected to evolve with experience.

For maximum effectiveness, it is very desirable to synchronize your attendance with the classroom activities. Synchronization between you and the teacher can be readily achieved via email or telephone.

Establishing a close rapport with your teacher(s) is very important. Your volunteer coordinator is available to discuss issues that may arise and help in achieving this objective.

The teacher will introduce you to the classes on the first visit, and encourage you to tell the students something about your experiences in science. This is an opportunity to convey enthusiasm for the scientific endeavor. Students are naturally curious about persons with whom they are expected to interact, and they deserve to know something about the volunteer's qualifications and limitations.

This is a team effort. Teachers must be present and engaged at all times when you are in the classroom. The teachers will make it clear to their class that you are a valued member of the teaching team. It is necessary for each member of the team to support the other in the teaching process.

Classroom order and discipline are solely the teacher's responsibility.

Curriculum guides will be provided to you so that you are aware of the course material.

Volunteers in the Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools do not have to undergo security clearances if their interactions with students always occur with a teacher or other school employee present. This qualifier will apply to all volunteers participating in the Project. In the event that you want to work alone with a student, you must do so outside of the Project. The MCPS has procedures for enabling this