



## Volunteer Program Frequently Asked Questions

### Who is a school volunteer?

A school volunteer is any person who is willing to take the time to share their knowledge, skills and abilities for the good of the school community. A school volunteer may choose to work with students in collaboration with school staff or may choose to work in a capacity that does not directly involve students. School volunteers are not limited to parents. A volunteer can include any extended family members, community members and alumni.

Qualifications for being a volunteer are:

- A personal desire to help in some capacity
- An interest in working to support the school community
- Having the ability to follow school policies and procedures
- Having the ability to make a specific time commitment

### How do I become a volunteer?

The first step to becoming a volunteer is completing the *Volunteer Application*, which is located on the school website at [bearcreekschool.com](http://bearcreekschool.com) under "Parents" tab, then select "Volunteer Application".

The next step is to obtain the following:

- Child Abuse History Certification from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services
- Report of Criminal History from the Pennsylvania State Police
- If you have resided outside of Pennsylvania anytime within the last ten years you will also need Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Fingerprinting

Links are available on the school website at [bearcreekschool.com](http://bearcreekschool.com) under the "Parents" tab, then select "Obtain Clearances".

All volunteers are required to obtain new/updated certifications every 60 months (five years). Certificates are only provided free of charge once every 57 months. Volunteer clearances may not be used for employment or any purpose other than volunteering.

All new volunteers must submit certifications prior to the commencement of service. The school's designated Volunteer Coordinator will provide an orientation regarding school policies and volunteer procedures. If additional questions arise, please direct your questions to the Volunteer Coordinator.

### **What does a volunteer do?**

Volunteers may assist in many facets of the school operation, including classroom helpers, school health assistants, dining hall and recess monitors, classroom readers, garden/outdoor maintenance, organizing and manning special events, club activities, and assisting with sporting events and extracurricular activities. Volunteers must maintain strict confidentiality concerning information they learn about students and staff. Any information about students must be kept between yourself and the staff member you are assisting. A misplaced comment can be detrimental to a student, family, and the school's volunteer program.

### **What volunteer opportunities are available?**

There is a volunteer opportunity to suit most everyone's interests. The following is an overview of possible volunteer opportunities, but is not an exhaustive list. These opportunities may not be available on a consistent basis, as some are seasonal or once-a-year events. Bear Creek Community Charter School reserves the right to recruit volunteers as the need arises. However, if you have an interest in volunteering in a capacity that is not on this list, please contact the Director of Student Affairs, as new ideas and opportunities are continuously evolving.

As you consider the possibility of volunteering, ask yourself the following:

- How much time can I commit (one day a week, one day a month)?
- What days and/or hours am I available?
- Do I want to work directly with students?
- Would I prefer to work within the classroom or in another capacity?
- Do I have a special talent or job skill that would be of interest to students that I could share through a club, extra-curricular program or on career day?
- What is my motivation for volunteering?

It is suggested that if you are a parent or family member and you wish to volunteer, do so in a capacity that is with a different grade than your child/ family member in order to give the child an opportunity to develop independence.

### **What are the expectations of a volunteer?**

Volunteers are expected to present themselves in a similar manner as a school staff member. Volunteers must keep in strict confidence all information received by them regarding the affairs of students and school operations in general, as set forth below:

- It is the nature of a school that volunteers may gain knowledge of student performance, and medical, psychological, or other sensitive information. Our students and their parents depend on the school to protect this information and the privacy of their affairs;
- Volunteers are expected to refrain from discussing personal and/or confidential information inside the organization, and with no one outside the school;
- Confidential information obtained as a result of volunteering with the school is not to be used for the purpose of furthering any private interest, or as a means of making personal gains. Use or disclosure of such information can result in civil or criminal penalties for the individuals involved.

The above statements of policy regarding the privacy and confidentiality of student information apply with equal force to school affairs. Volunteers should discuss concerns with school staff only in the course of their volunteer duties. School business should not be discussed with anyone outside the organization.

Student records are confidential and are protected from unauthorized inspection or use. Volunteers should refrain from reviewing any work, grades, or other student records without permission from the Director of Student Affairs.

Volunteers are expected to become familiar with the rules for the area in which they volunteer (classroom, dining hall, playground, etc.). Volunteers should not be engaging in conversations with other volunteers or school staff unless it pertains to the school environment or the current activity.

Volunteers may not take pictures of students unless permitted by a school administrator for a school activity or project. Volunteers should not post any student photographs or student information (other than their own child) on social media.

Volunteers may not hold informal parent/teacher conferences or leisure conversations with staff members or other volunteers during volunteer time. Conversations with teachers, staff members or other volunteers should not disrupt or interrupt class time.

#### **What are the dress code requirements of a volunteer?**

Volunteers should adhere to the same dress code requirements as staff members. Bear Creek Community Charter School employees and volunteers serve as role models for our students; therefore, all employees and volunteers are expected to project a professional image that sets positive dress and grooming examples for students and shall adhere to standards of dress and appearance that are compatible with an effective learning environment. Clothing must be neat, clean, in good repair, and appropriate for on the job appearances at all times. Volunteers shall not wear on the outside of their clothing, jewelry, or similar artifacts that are tobacco or alcohol related, obscene, distracting, or may cause disruptions to the educational environment.

#### **Appropriate Dress Attire for Female Volunteers:**

1. Dresses and skirts which are no shorter than three inches above the knee. Dress and skirts which are ankle length and/or tight enough to hinder walking are not acceptable attire. The slit of a dress or skirt must come no higher than three inches above the knee.
2. Slacks and Capri pants may be worn in an appropriate manner. Capri pants must be below the knee. Shorts must be at least fingertip length when arms are held down at the sides.
3. Jeans or similar clothing of any color is acceptable as long as is not excessively frayed or worn.
4. T-shirts are allowed, except those that advertise products or services, or have language that the school finds unacceptable. Low cut blouses, see-through clothing, off the shoulder, halter style, tank tops, strapless tops, spaghetti straps, or clothing which reveals the midriff are not allowed. Sleeveless clothing must cover undergarments.
5. Underwear must be worn and should not be visible.
6. Exercise pants, sweatpants or other athletic clothing are not allowed, unless the volunteer is specifically volunteering within physical education classes.

7. Flip-flops are not allowed. Shoes may not pose a trip hazard or safety concern.
8. Earrings on females are the only visible piercing allowed.
9. Hats are not to be worn inside.
10. Tattoos may not be visible.
11. Clothes should not be worn too tight, too loose, or transparent. No visible cleavage.
12. Extreme, unnatural hair color is not allowed.

Appropriate Dress Attire for Male Volunteers:

1. Men may wear a T-shirt or a collared sport/golf shirt.
2. Slacks and casual dress pants are acceptable. Shorts must be at least fingertip length when arms are held down at the sides.
3. Jeans or jean clothing of any color are acceptable as long as they are not excessively frayed or worn.
4. Underwear must be worn and should not be visible.
5. Shoes and sandals without a back strap are unacceptable. Flip-flops are not allowed. Shoes may not pose a trip hazard or safety concern.
6. Facial hair must be kept neat and clean. Hair length should not impair vision.
7. Hats are not to be worn inside.
8. Earrings on males are the only visible piercing allowed.
9. Tattoos may not be visible.
10. Clothes should not be worn too tight, too loose, or transparent; No visible cleavage.
11. Extreme, unnatural hair color is not allowed.

**Am I able to eat lunch at the school if I am volunteering during lunch hours?**

Volunteers who are going to be at the school during lunch hours (10:20 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.), may choose to order lunch at the main office before 9:00 a.m. each day by either calling the Main Office or placing their name on the office order sheet anytime during the week prior to 9:00 a.m. The cost of the lunch would be at the current adult lunch rate and may be taken from your child's school lunch account or a cash payment may be made (refer to the Bruin's Den Café Menu.) Volunteers should eat at the tables in the Commons outside of the Dining Hall. Students should not be removed from the Dining Hall to eat with a volunteer.

## **Volunteer Job Descriptions**

### Classroom Volunteer (any subject area)

- Be a classroom reader (read a story to the class, or read a chapter or two a week from a novel with older students)
- Assist with science labs (setup and student assistance)
- Go on hikes or go outdoors with a class to assist with maintaining safety
- Assist with small student groups, such as reading, to help keep students on task
- Assist with putting up bulletin boards
- Assist with monitoring the hallway during bathroom breaks
- Assist younger students with snack time, learning activities, and packing up

### Specials Class Volunteer (Art, Music, PE, EE, Social Studies grades 1-4)

- Assist the specials teacher with keeping students on task
- Go on hikes or go outdoors with a class to assist with maintaining safety
- Assist with small groups of students, to monitor activities
- Assist with putting up bulletin boards or setting up class activities

### Dining Hall Monitor

- Assist students with opening packages, containers, and milk cartons
- Remind students to clean up their area
- Assist students with table clean up
- Remind students to use their inside voices
- Assist with maintaining order within the Dining Hall

### Recess Monitor

- Assist school staff with monitoring students on the playground for safety
- Redirect students when necessary for maintaining safety
- Assist school staff with transitioning students to and from the playground area

### School Health Volunteer

- Assist the nurse with maintaining documentation during health screenings
- Assist with moving students through the screening process

### Field Trip Chaperone:

- A minimum of 18 volunteer hours are required - refer to the Student/Parent Handbook
- Assist teachers during the trip with maintaining safety during transport and while at the facility
- Monitor and take responsibility for a group of students assigned by the teacher; reinforce school rules and behavior expectations
- Specific chaperone guidelines are provided by the school and/or the facility being visited

### Grab & Go Breakfast

- Assist with assembly of Grab & Go Breakfast options based on student choices
- Assist with maintaining breakfast items on the cart; acquire refill items as needed
- Return the cart and any unused breakfast items to the Service Corridor
- Wipe down the cart after each use
- Restock the Grab & Go Bags for the next morning

## Special Event / Activity Volunteer

Earthfest volunteers may:

- Assist with conducting an activity
- Assist with monitoring groups of students and transitioning from station to station
- Assist with older students (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade) at the Bear Creek Camp

Picture Day volunteers may:

- Assist with monitoring student's arrival and departure from the gym
- Review homeroom lists and check off names as students arrive for pictures
- Add labels to each photo card as a student identification
- Assist students with being 'picture ready' just before camera time

Trunk or Treat / Community Halloween Event volunteers may:

- Monitor an activity station
- Assist with monitoring the flow of foot traffic around the school campus
- Assist with directing community members and families to the various activities occurring around the school

Play Practice volunteers may:

- Assist students with rehearsing their lines
- Assist with creating/ assembling props and costumes
- Assist with backstage duties, such as ensuring students enter the stage at the appropriate time, have their necessary props, etc.
- Assist with lighting and/or sound effects
- Monitor and take responsibility for a group of students assigned by the Play Director; reinforce school rules and behavior expectations

Bear Creek Night volunteers may:

- Assist teachers and students with preparation for the event
- Assist with monitoring students during the event
- Assist with take down and clean up from the event
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Field Day volunteers may:

- Monitor and assist with running a station
- Assist students with refilling water bottles or getting a drink
- Assist with the setup and cleanup of a station

Sporting Events (Home Games) volunteers may:

- Assist with setup, sales, and/or cleanup of the concession area
- Assist with keeping score and operating the scoreboard
- Assist Coaches with fundraising events or activities

## **Volunteer Opportunities available through the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)**

A variety of volunteer opportunities are also available through the PTO. While some of these opportunities are committee-based, others are taken on a first come, first served basis. The PTO meets the second Wednesday of each month, September through May, of each school year. Please attend a PTO meeting to obtain more detailed information regarding these and other opportunities.

Box Tops for Education  
Scholastic Book Fair  
Krispy Kreme Doughnuts  
Homeroom Parent

Night at the Races  
Gertrude Hawk Chocolates  
School Apparel/ Spirit Wear  
Classroom Parties

School Dances  
Yearbook  
Spring Festival  
Santa's Workshop

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. I would like to volunteer but I am not available on a regular basis. Can I still volunteer?**

Yes! There are opportunities that occur monthly, after school, or for special events that do not require an ongoing commitment.

### **2. I have never volunteered before and do not have a teaching background. Should I still volunteer?**

Yes! A teaching background is not required for being a volunteer. Volunteers work closely with and under the direction of school staff. Any necessary training or guidelines will be provided by the school staff to assist you.

### **3. I would like to volunteer but I have a younger child at home. May I bring my younger child with me?**

No. Younger children should not be brought with you, as it presents a liability for the school. In addition, having a younger child in the classroom may cause a disruption to the learning environment and prevents the volunteer from giving their full attention to their volunteer activities. However, there are (at times) some volunteer activities that may be conducted at home, which may permit you to still volunteer in a different capacity.

### **4. I would like to volunteer in my child's classroom and/or choose the teacher with whom I want to work. May I do that?**

Volunteers are typically not placed in the same grade or classroom as their child. Volunteers are placed where teachers have requested assistance and where there is a need. It is suggested that parents and family members do not request to volunteer in the same grade and/or classroom that their child is in as to permit the child to develop independence.

### **5. I do not feel qualified or comfortable with the volunteer opportunity I have been given. What should I do?**

Please let the teacher or the Director of Student Affairs know that you have concerns. There are many different opportunities. You may request a reassignment.

**6. What about discipline? Should I redirect the students?**

Disciplinary action is the responsibility of the teachers and the school staff. Volunteers do not enforce discipline. Think instruction instead of discipline. Remind students what they are supposed to be doing. Request students to work according to the rules in the classroom. Immediately notify the teacher if there is a discipline problem.

**7. My friends and neighbors ask me about what I do at the school. What should I say?**

You may talk about your involvement and what you do at the school in general terms. Please do not talk about specific students, staff, or school practices. Privileged information is important to school business, covered by Federal Law, and must never be discussed outside of the school environment. Criticizing or discussing students in regard to their grades or behavior, school personnel and school practices is also not acceptable. A misplaced comment can be hurtful to the school, the staff and our students. It can be detrimental to the Volunteer Program in general. As a volunteer, you not only serve the needs of the children, you provide an important link between the school and the community. Students, their parents, and the community will view you as a representative of the school. They will pay close attention to what you say about the school, the staff and the educational programs. We hope that your volunteer experience will enable you to share the many positive things that students and staff are doing.

**8. Is there a dress code requirement for volunteers?**

Volunteers should adhere to the same dress code requirements as staff members. Bear Creek Community Charter School employees and volunteers serve as role models for our students; therefore, all employees and volunteers are expected to project a professional image that sets positive dress and grooming examples for students and shall adhere to standards of dress and appearance that are compatible with an effective learning environment. Clothing must be neat, clean, in good repair, and appropriate for on the job appearances at all times. Volunteers shall not wear on the outside of their clothing, jewelry, or similar artifacts that are tobacco or alcohol related, obscene, distracting, or may cause disruptions to the educational environment. Tattoos must not be visible. Only ear piercings should be visible.

**9. Am I permitted to use my cell phone while volunteering?**

Cell phone use is discouraged during the school day. Staff and students are required to have their phones turned off (made inoperable) and stored away. Volunteers should adhere to the school policy in regard to cell phone use.

**10. Am I able to choose the students that I chaperone while on a field trip? May I refuse to be responsible for certain students?**

School staff will assign a group of students to you for field trips. If you have concerns about a particular student(s) in your group, or you are having difficulty with a particular student(s) while on the trip, please speak to the school staff accompanying you.

**11. How do I keep track of my hours? How do I submit them to the school?**

Volunteer slips are also available from the Main Office. Volunteer hours may also be kept on a sheet of paper and are requested to be handed in monthly to the Main Office staff. Please be sure that your first and last name are clearly printed on the form. Volunteer hours should be turned in by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month to maintain an accurate record of volunteer hours. Please refrain from handing in all documentation of volunteer hours for the school year at one time.