



VIPS 

COORDINATOR
HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the **Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) Coordinator Handbook!** We would like to thank you for agreeing to serve as VIPS Coordinators. This role is vital to the success of your campus and is key to being able to marshal resources for your students.

As a VIPS Coordinator, you are entrusted with the safety of students and your schools reputation in the community. For many volunteers, you are their first and most important contact at your campus.

This handbook is intended to help you to implement the very best volunteer program possible at your campus. In this book you will find tips and tools to help you plan your volunteer program from start to finish, including volunteer recruitment, training, placement, supervision and recognition. It also covers how VIPS Coordinators should interact with teachers, principals and other campus leaders.

In addition to the resources in this booklet, VIPS Coordinators can access resources on the VIPS website or call us for assistance in the VIPS office. We are so pleased to be able to partner with you to ensure that our students get the benefits of community volunteerism.

Thank you again for stepping up to be a VIPS Coordinator. If you have any questions, comments or concerns please do not hesitate to contact the VIPS office at **713-556-8477** or at **vips@houstonisd.org**.



“Volunteers are not paid; not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.”

– Sherry Anderson

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ABOUT HISD

MISSION

The Board of Education's mission is to equitably educate the whole child so that every student graduates with the tools to reach their full potential.

VISION

Every child shall have equitable opportunities and equal access to an effective and personalized education in a nurturing and safe environment. Our students will graduate as critical thinkers and problem solvers; they will know and understand how to be successful in a global society.

CORE BELIEFS

- We believe that equity is a/the lens through which all policy decisions are made.
- We believe that there should be no achievement gap among socio-economic groups or children of ethnic diversity.
- We believe that the district must meet the needs of the whole child, providing wraparound services and social and emotional supports.
- We believe our classrooms/schools should be safe, vibrant, joyful spaces where students are guaranteed access to a challenging and deep educational experience.
- We believe that instruction should be customized/personalized to meet the learning needs for each individual child, including students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, and English Language Learners, so they have the support and opportunity they need to flourish.
- We believe that recruitment and retention of qualified and effective personnel are the keys to enhancing the quality of education and increasing student achievement.
- We believe that the community has a right to transparent operations across the district in all schools, departments, and divisions.
- We believe that meaningful engagement with the community is important in all major decision-making.



OVERVIEW OF HISD BOARD POLICY GKG1 (The Community Relations School Volunteer Program)

The Community Relations School Volunteer Program Policy GKG1 regulation outlines the requirements for the District's Volunteer In Public Schools Program. For more information and to read the policy, go online to:

<http://HoustonISD.org/vips>

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

OVERVIEW OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VIPS COORDINATORS

VIPS VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS will:

1. Assist the school in meeting the educational needs of the students by matching the volunteers' abilities to those needs. Volunteer Coordinators are one of the key links between the community and the school.
2. Be cognizant of the volunteers who are serving on the campus as mentors, tutors, field trip chaperones, business partners, PTO/PTA members, booster club members, homeroom parents, etc.
3. Enforce district policies regarding volunteers. Volunteers must; 1) Register Online; 2) Agree to annual background check; 3) complete Online Training; 4) sign Acknowledgment of Policy; and 5) check-in using the **VIPS/RAPTOR Management System**. In accordance with GKG1 board policy, a background check for criminal history will be done each school year on all volunteers. While there is no perfect means to guarantee the safety of our students, every reasonable effort will be made to do so.
4. Continually evaluate campus volunteer opportunities. In order to match the students' needs with those of the volunteers' abilities, the Volunteer Coordinators must have a complete understanding of the volunteer opportunities available at the school and continually monitor them. Each campus has special needs, so new programs may be required and old ones modified or discontinued.
5. Survey staff to determine needs, and then informs staff of the procedures for getting the help that is needed. Ongoing communication is essential so that preparations can be made to accommodate the campus' requirements. When everyone works together, the volunteer program can be a success, but it takes the commitment and positive leadership of the Volunteer Coordinators to really thrive.
6. Conduct training for the school's volunteer orientation. This is an opportunity to welcome volunteers to the school, cover important topics, requirements, and procedures, and to thank them for donating their valuable time as volunteers.
7. Recruit, train, and retain volunteers as well as recognizes the volunteers' accomplishments in the school. It is important that the Coordinator keep good records of what the volunteers want to do, when they would like to help, and what their abilities are.



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES (CONTINUED)

Campus Rules and Facilities

The more you know about people's abilities and talents (as well as what tools you can use at your campus), the better prepared you will be to accomplish your goals. It is also very important to follow established school guidelines.

1. **Get to know your campus rules.** Each school has a set of guidelines that must be followed, such as expected conduct and appropriate attire. If the school does not have a one-page handout of this pertinent information, ask if you could create one to give to your volunteers once it has been approved by the school's administration.
2. **Be sure to find out if your volunteers will be allowed to use campus equipment and materials.** Remember that school staff always has priority for using these items. Learn whether you are able to put volunteer information in the school's newsletter.
3. **Get to know what resources are available at the campus.** Learn which restrooms, cafeteria lines, phones, parking lots, libraries, and bulletin boards, etc., are available for use and when, then let your volunteers know. Learn whether you are able to put volunteer information in the school's newsletter.

The VIPS Coordinator-Teacher Relationship

As VIPS Coordinators, you should ensure that teachers are aware of the expected relationships with volunteers. The volunteer works under the direction and supervision of the classroom teacher. The volunteer should not be left alone to supervise a class or be held responsible for the discipline, diagnosis, prescription, or evaluation of students.

The major responsibilities of the teacher regarding VIPS are to:

- Acquaint volunteers with classroom procedures, materials, and records needed to carry out assignments;
- Plan the work the volunteers will do before the volunteer arrives and give clear, specific instructions and support;
- Provide appropriate training for specific volunteer situations;
- Provide information about students to enable volunteers to help students effectively;
- Keep all volunteers informed about any changes in classroom schedules that may affect their schedules
- Do not allow volunteers to grade papers or record grades in grade books; and
- Express appreciation for volunteers' contributions, giving them feedback periodically and making them feel welcome.

It is your responsibility to train all campus staff and volunteers about the VIPS volunteer program.

RECRUITMENT



VIPS Coordinators are responsible for recruiting volunteers for their respective campus. Each school will partner with the VIPS program to attract, recruit and retain volunteers at your campus. Below are a few guidelines to help with recruitment.

- Recruitment of volunteers begins with inspiring volunteers to be a part of your school's mission. Share with your volunteers your mission and vision so that they can determine for themselves how they fit in and connect with their volunteer experiences.
- Ask the volunteer what they are looking for when they give of their time.
- Establish clear expectations and include the volunteer in the process of setting expectations.
 - What kinds of volunteering experiences have they had in the past and how can their experiences add value to their volunteer experience at your school?
 - How frequently would they like to volunteer at the school?
- Make sure to share with the volunteers how their contributions are advancing and strengthening your school's students and faculty.





RECRUITMENT (CONTINUED)

START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

1. VIPS Coordinators should start the school year by determining which volunteer opportunities are already in place at their campus and get feedback. Write down any opportunities you would like to maintain and discuss any new options.

- Create a VIPS Campus Contact Team to discuss ideas about your school's VIPS program. Potential members may include front desk staff, office clerks, wraparound specialists, and other designated staff.
- Discuss each team member's role. Discuss your campus programs. Decide together which existing programs you want to continue/improve and which programs you would like to implement.
- Visit with your team and find out how often you should connect with each other. Would a monthly meeting (to report progress, discuss changes, or share the current number of volunteer hours) be possible?
- Discuss specific school procedures that your volunteers will need to follow. Examples: find out what volunteers should do in case the school experiences an emergency or fire drill, where volunteers can secure their purses, whether they are able to use the staff lounge, which restrooms they are to use, where they are to park, etc.
- Work closely with your campus' front office staff to establish strong procedures. Front office staff should be able to identify an approved volunteer, assist with tracking volunteer service hours, and answer general volunteer questions. Note that for the safety of HISD students and staff, volunteers must always sign in upon arrival and out upon departure from the campus. In addition, a visitor pass must be worn at all times.



2. Attend the first new teachers' meeting or first faculty meeting at your school. Ask your supervising administrator to introduce you and have VIPS materials with you (fliers, forms, surveys, etc.) to inform everyone about how they can help you meet their needs with volunteer assistance.

- Stand to address the audience so that everyone will recognize the VIPS Campus Contact Team.
- Let the faculty know that you are the person volunteers need to contact and what procedures have been established for them to reach you.
- Create and share a volunteer request survey with teachers and ask them to complete it (i.e., what they need from volunteers, what times, what days, which programs, or any additions). The survey gives the staff total awareness of what is available. Having them participate in the survey makes them part owner and helps them to receive the services they really need.



3. Attend your school's registration days, Open House, or evening events.

- This is an excellent time to have an area where you can put up a banner that encourages volunteering and have some information out on the VIPS program along with the volunteer forms. If possible, have a computer accessible for interested applicants to apply online.
- If this involves long hours or several days, you could rotate experienced volunteers to help out.
- You might be able to put "We Welcome Volunteers" up on the school's marquee at this time.
- **Invite former volunteers to return for the upcoming school year and remind them to register in VIPS.** Be sure to gather feedback and thank them for volunteering at your school.

What to Share with Prospective Volunteers

A volunteer must express a genuine interest in helping students. The volunteer should be a friendly, reliable, and flexible person willing to become an integral part of the school and work within the program. Volunteers should do the following when volunteering at the campus:

- Register using VIPS/RAPTOR Management System online and agree to the annual background check
- Create your free Virtual Volunteer account at www.v-volunteer.com
- Complete VIPS orientation online
- Log in and out via the school kiosk or from your free virtual V Soft account at www.v-volunteer.com
- Be nonpolitical when volunteering in the school
- Notify the school office if unable to volunteer on their scheduled day
- Wear appropriate clothing for school setting
- Adhere to supervision request while volunteering
- Respect the confidence of teachers and students
- Only work in an approved role
- Comply with HISD and school regulations while on campus
- Use appropriate channels of communication for comments and suggestions
- Observe, support and adhere to guidelines set by the principal
- Give regular, clear feedback to VIPS Coordinators, and
- Have FUN.

APPLICATION AND SCREENING



VOLUNTEERING IN HISD

Anyone interested in volunteering in Houston ISD must register online and undergo an annual criminal background check. All background checks are processed by a third party vendor and the results are uploaded into the VIPS/ RAPTOR Management System. The district pays an annual flat rate for processing background checks. The district's guidelines require anyone – parents, community volunteers, mentors, tutors, ministers, etc. – interested in serving as a classroom volunteer or as a field trip chaperone, or in any school-related activity complete the district's VIPS (Volunteers in Public Schools) online registration and be approved.

Volunteers must complete the online application annually at www.houstonisd.org/vipslogin and agree to the annual background check, complete the online volunteer orientation and sign the required forms.

You may assist any interested volunteer with the registration process by providing them with the VIPS flyer which can be accessed from the VIPS website.

Parents who are not cleared through the VIPS program background check process for any reason can still be engaged in their child's education and still have parental rights, which includes attending parent teacher conferences, open houses, or a school-wide event that their child is participating; however, they cannot volunteer in any capacity.

VIPS Website: <http://HoustonISD.org/vips>

SCHOOL VISITATION IN HISD

Principals are responsible for setting visitation guidelines for their school. The principal decides how long a visitor can remain in a classroom or on campus. The VIPS background check process is not to be confused with the process that all visitors encounter when they enter a campus. RAPTOR, a security software, is used to scan IDs and check against sex offender databases across the country. All visitors who are cleared through RAPTOR are presented a temporary badge that includes their photo, name and place where they are visiting. Anyone entering an HISD campus must show proof of a valid photo ID before being allowed to visit anyone on campus.





ORIENTATION & TRAINING

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Holding a strong and informative volunteer orientation is the best proactive measure to preventing challenging situations. It is very important that each new volunteer has a complete orientation. Volunteers are required to complete a district wide orientation located on the VIPS webpage. This training and accompanying manual cover important policies and procedures. In addition, volunteers must acknowledge receipt of the training and complete the Code of Ethics and Code Civility Pledge.

It is your responsibility to inform volunteers about appropriate volunteer behavior and all school rules. Ideally, you would do this by hosting a volunteer training on your campus.

Please have copies of your school's rules and regulations available for your volunteers. Take the volunteers on a tour of the school. The tour will help volunteers feel more comfortable, reinforce campus expectations, view the opportunities for volunteering, as well as familiarize volunteers with the campus.



RESOURCES

VIPS website:
<http://HoustonISD.org/vips>

- Annual Background Check Procedures
- VIPS Flyer
- Volunteer Orientation
- RAPTOR Application
- Volunteer Code of Ethics
- Volunteer Code of Civility
- Code of Civility Pledge
- VIPS Appeals
- VIPS/RAPTOR Support and Access
- Volunteer Opportunities

PLACEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS



Volunteers will perform a variety of tasks depending on the assignments that are given to them at the campus. The principal will work with the faculty and VIPS Coordinators to determine what volunteer needs there are at the campus.

This could include the following volunteer opportunities: office/classroom/library assistance, field trip chaperone, mentoring/tutoring, PTO/PTA, community service projects, career day speakers, band/booster clubs, and other tasks as assigned by the VIPS Coordinators. Volunteering helps to extend the resources in the school to better support the teachers and impact overall student success.

SAMPLE VOLUNTEER ROLES AND DESCRIPTIONS

Volunteers may volunteer in any of these respective roles:

Volunteer Reader

Spends time weekly reading to a student/student(s) as part of the Read Houston Read or Real Men Read programs or other literacy initiatives.

Mentor

Spends time with a student developing a relationship that fosters the overall growth and development of the student's self-esteem, confidence and academic success.

Office Assistant

Assist with office duties such as copying, preparing folders, fliers for announcements and other duties as needed in the office.

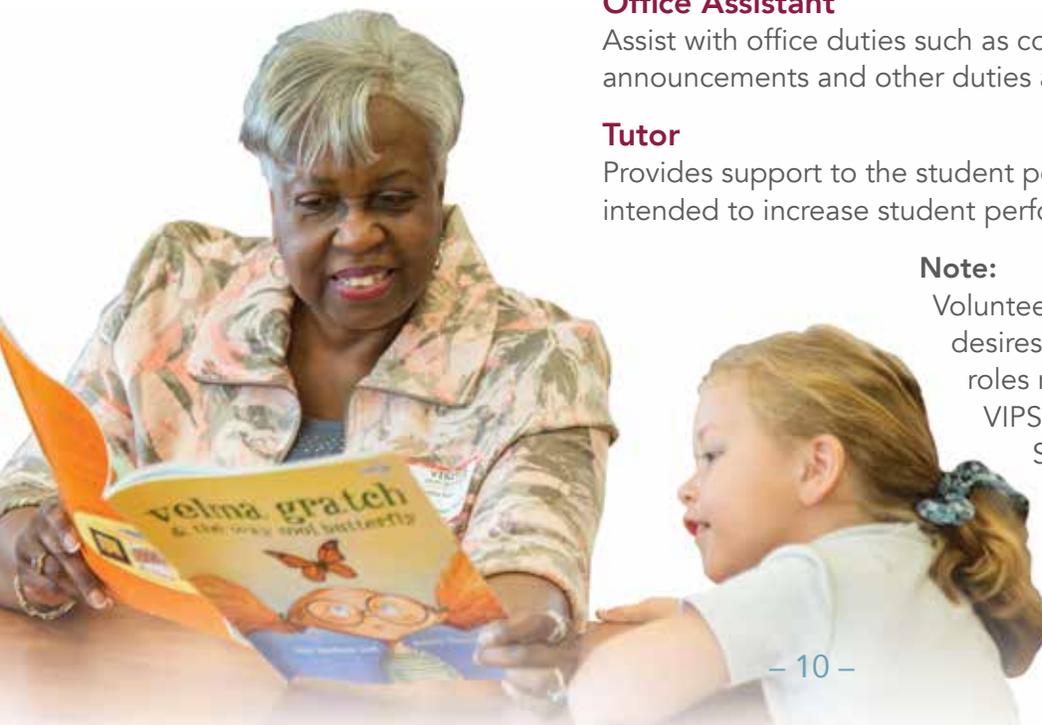
Tutor

Provides support to the student pertaining to a specific subject matter intended to increase student performance and outcomes.

Note:

Volunteers should be placed based on their desires, skills and abilities. Most volunteer roles require some specific training.

VIPS Coordinators and other Campus Supervisors should plan to train volunteers for their roles on campus.



SUPERVISING VOLUNTEERS

GET TO KNOW YOUR VOLUNTEERS

It is important to really get to know your volunteers. This means taking time to understand what they find satisfying about volunteering and any concerns they may have about the role or the organization. Volunteers do get bored; they have other things going on in their lives. A manager of volunteers may be coordinating several hundred volunteers so finding the time to talk to each individual or group may be difficult. However, ensuring volunteers are given opportunities for giving and receiving feedback on their work is essential. Exit interviews are particularly helpful in this respect.

Understanding your volunteers will help you to:

- revise roles to ensure they are still relevant and valuable
- provide new opportunities for keeping volunteers involved and motivated
- enable you to continually improve how volunteers are organized.

GETTING FEEDBACK FROM VOLUNTEERS

There are different ways of getting feedback from your volunteers. Traditional methods include questionnaires, interviews and focus groups.

Key Tips

- Make sure they understand the task and why it's important
- Offer positive and corrective feedback
- Involve them in decision making and planning
- Create an environment of partnership
- Listen and value volunteer input
- Be accessible
- Never waste volunteers' time
- Share the impact and value of the services provided

Occasionally a volunteer may not adhere to set expectations.

Below are ideas to assist in these situations.

- Tactfully, in private, remind the volunteer of the correct procedures that need to be followed.
- Ask the volunteer if they are happy with what they are doing or where they are working.
- If necessary, re-train the volunteer to perform the task.
- If needed, try changing the task or the location.
- Try pairing the volunteer with an experienced volunteer to aid as a role model.
- Try allowing "breathing" space.
- If the volunteer continues to not meet set expectations, the principal and the VIPS Coordinator will need to decide on a course of action. If necessary, the VIPS Coordinator may contact the central **VIPS** office for assistance.



RECOGNITION & RETENTION

Recognition is very important. It not only lets your volunteers know how much they are appreciated, but it also helps retain them. While the central VIPS office annually acknowledges the services of the district's volunteers there are many ways and methods that the campus can use to recognize its volunteers throughout the year.

Some suggestions:

- Give praise in any following ways:
 - School newsletter
 - School marquee
 - Banners
 - Phone calls
 - Welcome sign near VIPS sign-in book
 - Bulletin board
 - Handwritten thank you notes
 - Treats and snacks
- Use child generated artwork.
- Make volunteers aware of the impact of their service on the school.
- Place volunteer photos on a school bulletin board.
- Offer coffee by using a little sign near the coffeepot.
- Include volunteers when the whole staff is celebrated.
- Give out VIPS end-of-year certificates and recognition items.
- Have refreshments/snacks when several volunteers are helping on a project.
- Encourage volunteers to share their ideas.
- Celebrate!



ENDING VOLUNTEER SERVICE

There are multiple reasons why volunteers choose to end their volunteer experience. As Coordinators we want to be sure that we are obtaining feedback about their overall experience so that we can use this information to foster and improve the overall volunteer experiences.

Key questions for an exit interview:

- What brought you into our program/campus?
- What is your main reason for leaving?
- What was the most enjoyable part of your role?
- What was the least enjoyable aspects of your volunteering role?
- Do you feel you received adequate support in your role?
- Do you feel you received adequate training in your role?
- What would you suggest needs to be improved to make the experience better for other volunteers in the future?
- Would you recommend others to volunteer?

Make every effort to end the volunteer experience on a positive note.



IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

FOLLOWING ARE IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE VIPS PROGRAM

For general assistance, call the main line at **713-556-8477**.

For specific questions, the following personnel are available to assist you:

Name	Title	Phone
Monique Johnson-Garner	VIPS Program Administrator	713-556-7206
Sally Morin	VIPS Program Liaison	713-556-7210
Najah Callander	Director Community Relations	713-556-7225

The central VIPS office offers:

- Information about volunteering throughout the district
- Training and support for campus VIPS Coordinators
- Registration and security check services for VIPS Coordinators
- District recognition of volunteers
- Ideas and materials for volunteer recruitment and support for volunteer events
- Encouragement and support of volunteer programs

VIPS WEBSITE

All forms and resources can be found on the VIPS website at <http://HoustonISD.org/vips>

HELPFUL REMINDERS

- Always consult your supervising administrator and principal before you take any action.
- Network with the volunteer coordinators throughout the district.
- Get to know your mentor facilitator, family liaison, parent organization officers, booster club officers, and FACE and Wraparound Specialist.
- Create a core team of volunteers at your campus to assist you and then delegate!
- Recruit new volunteers throughout the year.
- Meet with your campus supervising administrator monthly to learn which events are coming up so that you can anticipate the school's needs.
- Keep your volunteers apprised of what is happening each month via the school newsletter, marquee, bulletin board, etc.
- Revise, at any time, a program or a system that could be improved.
- Always make sure your volunteers feel needed, wanted, and appreciated.
- Utilize Raptor Volunteer Events to set up events at your campus.

The VIPS Administrative staff at Hattie Mae White is always willing to support VIPS Coordinators at school campuses. As a reminder, please do not forward calls from parents and volunteers to HISD Central Administration regarding status of applications or background checks. We always welcome calls from VIPS Coordinators when assistance is needed.

**THANK YOU
FOR ALL THAT
YOU DO TO
SUPPORT VIPS!**



VIPS 

HISD
**Strategy &
Innovation**

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
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