

*Gravely Elementary School  
Volunteer Handbook*



**Gravely Elementary School  
4670 Waverly Farm Drive  
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# **Gravely Elementary School**

## ***Volunteer Handbook***

### **Welcome to Gravely Elementary School!**

We are thankful that you have chosen to volunteer your time and talent for our students. With the support of volunteers such as yourself, the opportunity to meet the individual needs of each child is greatly increased.

Gravely Elementary staff encourages parents/guardians and other members of the community to share their time, knowledge and abilities with our students. Community volunteers in our schools enrich the educational program and strengthen our schools' relationships with homes, businesses, public agencies and private institutions.

This handbook is designed to provide you with practical information that will assist you in your volunteer placement. It is our goal that the time you spend with our students is worthwhile for you as well as the students. If you have any questions that have not been addressed in this handbook, please feel free to contact Dr. Trammell to discuss your concerns.

Once again, thank you for helping make a difference in the lives of students of Gravely Elementary School.

Sincerely,

Michael Kelchlin  
Principal

Kisha Trammell Ph.D.  
Assistant Principal

## **Building a Strong Volunteer Community**

Gravelly has a strong tradition of parent involvement. Since volunteers are such an integral part of Gravelly, it is important to keep our high expectations. Gravelly is a very busy learning environment with over 70 staff members and approximately 890 students. We value the thousands of volunteer hours that the members of our community give to assist our school in improving the learning of our students. It is important for all volunteers to remember the following:

- Be responsible and safe – always put children first
- Respect confidentiality. Students and staff have a right to privacy.
- Be professional
- Communicate openly with our staff
- Ask for help when needed
- Share your experiences with others and encourage new volunteers
- Commitment – once you volunteer, others depend on you

## **Starting Your Volunteer Experience**

The following suggestions are helpful in developing a successful partnership with our students and teachers.

### **1) Meet with the teacher/staff member before you start.**

Volunteers are placed with teachers or other staff members who have requested volunteer assistance. Some have specific roles and tasks for their volunteers, while others identify those tasks on an as needed basis.

- Discuss initial expectations
- Ask questions of your teacher (or other staff member) if you are unclear about something.
- Keep communication open

### **2) Get to know the school grounds.**

- Know the location and phone number of the school office
- Know the location of important rooms such as the library, cafeteria, workroom, office, bathrooms, etc.
- **Know where to park - everyone parks in the school parking lot— NOT on Waverly Farm Drive**

### 3) If you are volunteering in a classroom

- Become familiar with classroom routines
- Identify location of supplies within the classroom.

### 4) Establish positive relationships with the students

- Be friendly; let them know you are glad to be there!
- Be encouraging to students.

**Have a good time and thank you!!!**

## **PROCEDURES and POLICIES**

- ALWAYS sign in and out at the school office. You will need an ID.  
It is important for staff to know that you are in the building and we are able to locate you in case of an emergency.
- Remember to SIGN OUT as you leave.
- ALWAYS wear your Visitor badge made by the front office through our Raptor system.
- As a courtesy to others, please TURN OFF or SILENCE your cell phone while in the school building. It is a county policy for everyone to follow.
- Visit ONLY the teacher who is expecting you. We are very careful to protect instructional time and avoid interruptions.
- Dress Code – Follow school guidelines for student dress code. Dress comfortably, and remember that you are a role model for our students.
- Student Discipline – It is the teacher's responsibility to discipline students, not the volunteer.



**Getting Off to a Good Start**

### **When Working with an Individual Student:**

- If you are working with an individual student, take some time to get to know him/her.
  - Find out what interest's your student has.
  - What sports do they play, favorite TV shows, favorite games?
  - Does s/he have a pet? Talk about the pet.
- Be a good listener. Let the student know that you care about their thoughts and ideas.
- Accept the student for who s/he is...don't try and make them into something they are not. You are here to help, not change them.
- Be encouraging. Recognize effort as well as products.
- Let the child know that you enjoy your time with him/her...and enjoy yourself!!

### **When Working with Groups of Students (small or large groups)**

- Find out what the teacher wants you to work on...get specifics.
- Indicate to the child(ren) how you would like to be addressed.
- You may want to have the children wear nametags so that you can address them personally.
- Discuss with the teacher ahead of time the group management plan and what is expected if a student is uncooperative.
- Encourage all the students, not just the ones with the correct answer.
- Give each student time to answer...don't allow other students to jump in and answer for him/her.
- Let the children know that you enjoy your time with them...and enjoy yourself!!

### **Reading Strategies/Prompts for Early Readers**

- Look at the picture
- Go back to the beginning and read it again
- "Get your mouth ready for the first sound"
- Think about what makes sense
- Does your reading sound like talk?

## **Some Characteristics of Children Aged 5-8 Years**

### **Physical Characteristics**

- Full of energy; may find it difficult to sit still
- Tire easily
- Aware of physical limitations
- Increasing fine motor skills (e.g., using scissors, writing).
- Proud of their accomplishments
- Prefers to participate rather than observe

### **Self-image**

- Self-image based primarily on what they think others think of them.
- Proud of their own accomplishments; want to be treated as individuals
- Eager to please adults they admire
- Becoming more independent of home and parents
- Flourish from positive reinforcement about specific things
- Sometimes adamant about their likes and dislikes

### **Relationship with Others:**

- Try out new ways of getting along with others
- Imitate adults in attitudes and actions
- Sensitive about feelings—both their own and others
- Aware of individual differences in physical appearance
- Still seek acceptance and encouragement primarily from parents and teachers
- Beginning to develop a sense of right and wrong in attitudes and actions toward others

### **Interest in Learning:**

- Beginning to draw conclusions from practical experience
- Still have private worlds of fantasy and wonder
- Eager to learn
- May surprise adults at times with their insight
- Eager to try new activities but frustrated by attempting things beyond their capabilities

## **Some Characteristics of Children Aged 8-12 Years**

### **Physical Development:**

- Growing steadily; physically active
- Differ widely in physical maturity (girls likely to mature earlier than boys)
- May be maturing sexually and having questions about their bodies
- Becoming increasingly interested in improving personal appearance

### **Self-Image:**

- Becoming more independent of adults
- Often frustrated when they do not measure up to their own expectations or those of others
- Want to make their own decisions
- Often mention what they would like to be when they grow up
- Want tasks to perform; want to be useful

### **Relationship with Others:**

- May be aware of the opposite gender but unsure of relationship; teasing often denotes attraction to opposite sex
- Have increased concern about right/wrong (example: lying, cheating)
- Developing more responsibility for forming and keeping friendships
- Interested and informed about people around the world
- Values of peer group generally accepted over those of adults

### **Interest in Learning:**

- Developing longer attention span
- Interested in current events
- Increased skills in reading and expressing ideas in writing
- Learning to think abstractly
- Often try to be perfectionists which can result in frustration

## **Confidentiality**

You will be serving in a unique capacity with our students. Sometimes students share things with a volunteer that they have not shared with anyone else. This information may be about private family matters, or information about themselves that they are entrusting to you. It is very important to the integrity of your work with students that you do not share this information with others. If you feel it is important that another person have this information, please talk to the teacher, counselor or the principal.

There may also be a time when a student shares something with you that causes you some concern... concern about their personal safety. If this should be the case, please immediately contact the **classroom teacher, counselor or principal**. That person will know the proper procedure to deal with this situation.

Below are some samples that could arise:

**“Wasn’t it cute when John...”** No matter how innocent, cute, funny or charming a classroom event may be, it is not okay to repeat stories about students.

**When parents ask you questions...** Many parents are tempted to ask you about how their children behave at school. This is especially likely if you are friends outside school. It is not okay to put volunteers in this awkward position. Advise parents to talk with school staff if they have concerns.

**When you see or overhear something...** As a volunteer, you might see or hear things from staff or students which they would not want to have repeated outside the school. Please respect this confidential nature of volunteering. If you have concerns, talk to the teacher, counselor or principal.

**“What do you think about (teacher)?”** ... As a volunteer, you are here in support of students and teachers, to help – not observe or judge. Do not critique or compare teachers/staff.

## **Initial Volunteer Checklist**

When you begin your volunteer experience, please discuss the following with the teacher:

1. Your availability for volunteering
2. The teacher's classroom policies and procedures (including how and when to talk with/interrupt the teacher)
3. Your specific duties and the materials you should use
4. Your specific interests and talents

Teachers will plan a volunteer schedule based on your availability and classroom needs. You will be contacted by the teacher with the classroom volunteer schedule.

**Always remember, you are appreciated!  
We value the time you give to Gravely.**

**Thank you!**



## **Guidelines for Volunteers**

### **Prince William County School Board Policy**

Below are a few details from school board policy:

- Volunteers will work within guidelines established by the school administration and will work under the direction and supervision of teachers and school staff members
- Volunteers will not have access to student records and grades
- Volunteers may not supervise a class during a teacher's absence
- Volunteers **may not** bring children who are not registered in the school when they tutor, mentor, assist in the classroom media center, office, cafeteria, clinic or health screenings or when chaperoning field trips

### **Fire Drills/Tornado Drills/Evacuation Drills**

Gravely Elementary is required to conduct Fire Drills. If a drill is conducted while you are anywhere in the school, please exit the building immediately. Our students and staff also practice other drills to ensure students know how to respond if these situations were ever to occur during the school day.

### **Notice 511-10-1**

#### **Guidelines for Volunteering in Prince William County Schools**

This notice is attached for your reference. We will read and sign receipt of this notice.