

Mt. Blue Regional School District RSU 9

Volunteer Handbook



COMMUNITY | CULTURE | CURRICULUM
Working together to provide high-quality educational
opportunities for all

2023-2024



Mt. Blue Regional School District
RSU 9 Volunteer Handbook

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Superintendent's Welcome

Dear School Volunteer,

On behalf of the Mt. Blue Regional School District Board of Directors, staff, and students, I want to thank you for your interest in volunteering in our schools. We know that time is precious, and appreciate you wanting to spend yours volunteering for our students. School volunteers make a difference -- YOU make a difference!

Volunteers play an integral part in the day-to-day activities in our schools. Volunteers enhance all aspects of the educational process by providing student enrichment, individual educational assistance, and relieving teachers from some non-instructional tasks. Volunteers also stimulate community interest and support through direct and positive interactions with our students.

It is our hope that this handbook will provide you with information that will support your success as a volunteer in our schools. Please make sure that if after reviewing the information contained in this handbook you have any questions please speak with the classroom teacher or our school's principal.

Special thanks go to you for your willingness to support our most critical present and future resource, our students as they grow and prosper!

Very truly yours,

Christian M. Elkington
Superintendent of Schools



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About Mt. Blue Regional School District - RSU 9

Formed in the 1960's, Mt. Blue Regional School District (RSU 9) is a sprawling school district in Western Maine that includes ten towns (Chesterville, Farmington, Industry, New Sharon, New Vineyard, Starks, Temple, Vienna, Weld, and Wilton) and spans in parts of three counties, Franklin, Kennebec, and Somerset.

The district is home to five elementary schools located in New Sharon (1), Farmington (2), and Wilton (2); a middle school in Farmington; and a state-of-the-art learning center campus comprising a high school, career and technical education center, and adult education center located in Farmington. The district's administrative offices are located at the learning campus in Farmington, the seat of Franklin County.

Mt. Blue Regional School District communities value the arts, culture, and education and have a tradition of supporting its public schools. An elected Board of Directors of 16 members governs the school district and the Superintendent serves as the chief operating officer.

Mt. Blue Regional School District has long enjoyed a cooperative relationship to advance teaching and learning with the University of Maine at Farmington.

Our Vision

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Working together to provide high-quality educational opportunities for all



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District and School Contact Information

Central Office

Superintendent - Christian Elkington
Assistant Superintendent - Monique Poulin
Director of Finance - Alison Gamache
Director of Human Resources - Erin Landry
129 Seamon Road, Farmington, ME 04938
207-778-6571

<p>G. D. Cushing School (PreK-1) 21 Cushing Drive Wilton, ME 04294 Principal – Keith Acedo Secretary – Lori LaPlant 207-645-2442</p>	<p>Cascade Brook School (3-5) 162 Learning Lane Farmington, ME 04938 Principal – Dr. Nicole Goodspeed Secretary – Kathy Childs 207-778-4821</p>
<p>W.G. Mallett School (PreK-2) 116 Middle Street Farmington, ME 04938 Principal – Tracy Williams Secretary – Laurie Hastings 207-778-3529</p>	<p>Mt. Blue Middle School (6-8) 269 Middle Street Farmington, ME 04938 Principal – James Black Secretary – Stephanie Bolduc 207-778-3511</p>
<p>Cape Cod Hill School (PreK-5) 516 Cape Cod Hill Road New Sharon, ME 04955 Principal – Carol Kiesman Secretary – Crystal Oliver 207-778-3031</p>	<p>Mt. Blue High School (9-12) 129 Seamon Road Farmington, ME 04938 Principal – Joel Smith Secretary – Karri Dwyer 207-778-3561</p>
<p>Academy Hill School (2-5) 585 Depot Street Wilton, ME 04294 Principal – Keith Acedo Secretary – Amy Eustis 207-645-4488</p>	<p>Foster Career & Technical Education Center 129 Seamon Road Farmington, ME 04938 Director – Melissa Williams Secretary – Karri Dwyer 207-778-3562</p>

Volunteer Program

Goals

- To enhance all aspects of the educational process by providing student enrichment, individual educational assistance, and relieving teachers of some non-instructional tasks so they can spend more time working directly with our students.
- To stimulate community interest and support through direct and positive participation in Mt. Blue Regional School District schools.

Opportunities

Volunteers donate time to help students, teachers, and staff. They work under the direction of the principal and staff members. Volunteers can:

- Relieve teachers of many non-teaching duties and tasks.
- Assist teachers in providing more individual help and instruction to students.
- Strengthen relationships and understanding between schools and the community.

Volunteer skills, interests, and time commitments vary. Therefore, various opportunities to volunteer are offered.

Classroom

Many teachers welcome volunteers in their classrooms. Classroom volunteers work with students in small groups or one-on-one, assist on class field trips or prepare instructional materials as needed.

School-Wide

For those interested in contributing to school-wide level programs, the school library and the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) offer various opportunities for volunteers. The PTO hosts events that require volunteers to help with coordination, setup, supervision, and communication.

Special School Projects

Periodically throughout the year, the school may require volunteers to help with projects such as musicals or plays, clean-up day, picture day, family math night, a school field day, or specific theme-related activities.

- Volunteering does not mean you have to come every day, all day, or all year.
- Volunteering does mean you care and are committed to doing your part to make our schools and community a better place to live and grow.



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Persons interested in volunteering time or services are required to complete the online [Volunteer Registration Form](#). In the interest of protecting the safety of our students and staff, RSU 9 will conduct criminal background checks, including sex offender registry checks, on all volunteers who will be working directly with or will have access to students, including those chaperoning students on field trips or school-sponsored excursions.

Information collected during this screening process will be treated as confidential to the extent allowed by law.

If you have a special skill or project you are involved in. Check in with us to see if there are any opportunities to get involved!

Volunteer Expectations

The staff and administration of Mt. Blue Regional School District view school volunteers and chaperones as mentors and role models for our students. As such, we have certain expectations of ALL volunteers, whether you're with us once for 10 minutes, helping out in a classroom weekly, or chaperoning an annual field trip.

The EXPECTATIONS are as follows:

- **Sign in and wear a name tag** - each school office has a visitor/volunteer log - school staff needs to know who is in our schools, and more importantly, who is interacting with our students.
- **Respect confidentiality** - all information regarding students is confidential. Teachers may share information with you that is necessary for you to carry out your duties as a volunteer. This may include limited medical, academic, and/or needed behavioral information. ***This type of information must never be shared with others.*** The school system has a legal responsibility to protect the rights of all students and we have the expectation that all volunteers will abide by the law. To help, here are some sample issues that can arise:
 - ***When you see or hear something*** - as a volunteer, you might see or hear things from staff or students that they would not want to be repeated outside of the school. No matter how innocent, cute, funny, or charming a classroom event may be, it is not appropriate to repeat stories about events in class or our students under any circumstances.
 - ***When parents ask you questions*** - many parents are tempted to ask you about how children behave in school, how things were in the room, etc. *You are not at liberty to tell.* Politely let them know that they should speak with the classroom teacher and that as a volunteer you are supposed to keep things confidential.
 - ***When students tell you about their personal lives*** - as students become comfortable working with you, they might decide to share something personal.



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You need to keep this information private, even if you know the child and their family outside of school.

- *When you have a concern* - if you hear or observe something that troubles you, a comment from a student, something you witness, tell the classroom teacher. If you feel your concern cannot be addressed appropriately by the classroom teacher, you must discuss it with the school principal.

- **Be on time** - punctuality is vitally important. Schools run on schedules and teachers rely on volunteers to show up as scheduled. If you are sick or unable to attend a scheduled volunteer session, call or email the school/teacher you are placed with immediately.

- **Dress appropriately** - personal appearance and the mode of dress adopted by an adult can have a definite effect on the learning atmosphere. While it is recognized that fashions change, the consistent standard for personal appearance and the mode of dress should be compatible with at least what our staff wears.

- **Stay off your phone** - better yet, leave it in your backpack, or pocket and turn it off.

- **Be professional** - although the job is voluntary, the commitment is professional. Besides being responsible for maintaining an attitude of mutual respect and confidence, you should also become familiar with school and classroom policies, practices, and expectations. Working with the teaching staff requires flexibility and a willingness to follow directions.

- **Communicate with school staff** - if you see or hear something concerning, or if your placement is not working.

- **No contact with students outside of school** - your volunteer position and relationship with the students are site/school-based and not for you to create a relationship away from school.

- **Be appropriate** - in your conversations and language/word choice.

- **Stay busy** - don't just stand around, move around the room. If students don't need your help, offer to help the teacher in some other way.

- **School Conduct** - inform the teacher when a behavior problem arises. Follow the redirection suggestion given to you. If a consequence needs to be given, allow the teacher to carry it out. As a volunteer, your job is to restate classroom and school rules and expectations when needed. If the situation calls for disciplinary action, call on the teacher or other school staff for assistance.



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- **Scents, Perfumes, Colognes, and Other Aromatic Substances** - many staff and students in our schools are allergic to scents of any kind. Please be considerate when applying perfumes, colognes, and other aromatherapy products. When in doubt-- don't.
- **Smoking** - tobacco use in any form is prohibited in all school buildings, personal vehicles, and transportation vehicles at all times and on school grounds.
- **If You Are Injured While at School** - if you are injured while performing your volunteer duties, please notify the school office immediately.
- **Miscellaneous Notes** -
 - Please secure your valuables so they are not accessible to students.
 - Lunch is available for purchase through our School Lunch program. If interested, please check at the office upon arrival.
- **Questions/Concerns/Complaints** - from time to time, volunteers may have questions or concerns about certain policies or practices that they observe at school. When this occurs, it is important to discuss the issue with the person involved. If the issue continues to be a problem, it's appropriate to contact the principal. If no resolution is reached at that level, the superintendent of schools may be contacted. If the matter continues to be a problem, the issue may be referred to the school board. This series of steps works effectively in the resolution of problems and toward the development of meaningful communication.

Helpful Tips for Volunteers

- Try to model the same teaching techniques as the classroom teacher.
- When students ask for help, give them assistance, but don't do the work for them.
- Encourage and praise all students.
- Keep directions and expectations brief and clear.
- Become familiar with classroom and school rules and expectations.
- Reinforce classroom and school rules/expectations, but don't be the "rules enforcer".
- Refer any disciplinary concerns to the classroom teacher.
- Be respectful of teacher or staff personal workspaces.
- Remember to turn off or silence your cell phone.

Starting Your Volunteer Experience

When a teacher or staff member and volunteer initially meet, they should discuss the following:

1. Confidentiality
2. Days and times the volunteer will work.

3. Procedures he/she will use to keep in touch (i.e. informal meetings, email, or telephone).
4. Alternate plans for days when the teacher is absent and a substitute is in charge of the class.
5. Procedure to follow if the volunteer will be absent.
6. How the teacher will communicate the assignments to the volunteer (folder, note or other means).
7. Where the room materials are kept and the location of a convenient workplace.
8. The teacher's own classroom policies, procedures, and rules such as management system, reinforcement techniques, and where the volunteer can leave personal belongings.
9. Volunteers should follow teacher and staff instructions during fire drills, as well as lockdown procedures.
10. Volunteers should intervene if the safety of a child is in question, **however, volunteers do not discipline students.**

If working with students in academic areas, the teacher and volunteer should also discuss

1. Pertinent background information about the student(s).
2. Special needs and strengths of the student(s) and skills that need to be developed.
3. Tips for working with the student(s), such as learning style and reinforcement techniques.
4. Alternate plans if the student(s) is absent.

Working with Students

As you observe and work in the classroom, you will notice that instruction is delivered in many ways. Changes in technology, greater understanding of how the brain works, new jobs, and career requirements have changed the way teachers teach and what we now know about how students learn.

Students learn by doing, not by observing. Children learn by asking questions and searching for answers to their questions. They learn by discovery, experimenting, and repeating experiences. They learn by using all of their senses whenever possible. They learn by sorting and combining objects and ideas. *Students learn behavior by observing people they respect.*

Volunteers can help students learn by

- Asking students questions that may lead them to the correct answer instead of telling them directly.
- Allowing students to explore and discover by themselves.
- Encouraging students to feel, smell, taste, and listen, as well as look at objects.
- Allowing students to try new methods of doing things even though you already know an easier way. Avoid making models for students when they use art media.
- Allow students to sort and combine according to their own ideas.
- When speaking to students
 - Praise their good efforts



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- o Use a tone of voice that will encourage them and make them feel confident
- o Avoid comparing students and their work to others
- o Give students a choice only when you intend to abide by the choice
- o State directions in a positive form
- Allow students to observe you as a model for appropriate behavior

When working with students:

- Find out what the teacher wants you to work on ... get specifics.
- Tell students how you should be addressed.
- Encourage all 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 students know that you enjoy your time with them. ***And enjoy yourself!***

Ethics

As a volunteer, we expect that you will be treated with professional courtesy and the respect all adults deserve. Likewise, we expect that you will demonstrate the same commitment to our students and school. You are in a unique position to interpret the educational programs of RSU 9 to the communities—either favorably or unfavorably. Although there may not be complete agreement on the value of various techniques and procedures, the volunteer should be discreet in talking about teachers, staff, or our schools. Discretion should be used in expressing personal reactions and opinions. ***All information learned about pupils is confidential information and should be treated as such.*** The divulging of such information to unauthorized persons is deemed to be highly unethical and illegal. The principal will be glad to talk with you about any procedures, circumstances, or conditions.

FERPA

FERPA stands for Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. It is a federal law. It makes it illegal to reveal to anyone outside of the school, and to most people inside the school, certain kinds of information. It is safe to assume, unless you are an actual “keeper of the record”, that you cannot say anything to anyone about children in the school.

For example,

- It is a clear violation to tell any child that another child is on medication of any kind.
- It is a clear violation of the law for any school employee to discuss with a friend or parent the ‘bad behavior of young John Q. Doe Jr.’
- It is a clear violation to reveal to any other person that a specific child has a medical problem (this includes lice). If you have any questions regarding the school’s policy on medical information, please see the school nurse or principal.

Confidentiality of Educational Records: It’s the Law

As a volunteer in the school, it is essential that you understand your obligations under both state and federal law to maintain the confidentiality of information contained in students’ educational records. To help you meet that obligation, we are providing you with the following information. If you have any questions at all about this material, please contact the principal of the school or the Director of Special Services.

1. All educational records maintained by the school are made strictly confidential under state and federal law.
2. Educational records include any records in any form that directly relate to a current or former student or group of students.
3. You cannot reveal personally identifiable information that is contained in a student’s educational records to anyone outside of the school system except to the student’s parents, unless you have the express **written** consent of the parents to do so, on a consent form prepared for that purpose by the school.
4. “Personally identifiable information” about a student includes not only the name of the student and the student’s family but also other information that would make the student’s identity easily traceable for persons who receive that information. It also would include descriptions of events, occurrences, and incidents at school, when the identity of the persons involved would be easily traceable.
5. Even within the school system, you can reveal personally identifiable information about students to other school employees **only if** those other school employees have a legitimate educational interest in the information. Other teachers who currently work with the student and school administrators clearly have a legitimate educational interest in this information, and you can discuss such information with them. Before revealing such information to other school employees,

however, you should seek prior guidance from the building administrator as to whether those other employees would have a legitimate educational interest in receiving the information.

6. Requests by a student's parents or by any person not employed by the school to review educational records should be directed to the principal.
7. A copy of the school's complete policy on confidentiality of student records is available in each principal's office.
8. Failure to comply with these rules could lead to your discipline or dismissal by the school and could expose you to personal litigation by a family who believes their confidentiality rights have been violated.

Procedures Relating to Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse or neglect means a threat to a child's health or welfare by physical, mental, or emotional injury or impairment, sexual abuse or exploitation, deprivation of essential needs, or lack of protection from these by a person responsible for the child.

School volunteers who know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a student under 18 years of age has been or is likely to be abused or neglected must instigate an **IMMEDIATE** report to the school principal.

The report to the principal will include the following information, if within your knowledge:

1. The name and address of the child and the persons responsible for his/her care and custody.
2. The child's age and sex.
3. The nature and extent of abuse or neglect, including a description of injuries and any explanation given for them.
4. A description of sexual abuse or exploitation.
5. Family compositions and evidence of prior abuse or neglect of the child or his/her siblings.
6. The source of the report, the person making the report, his/her occupation, and where he/she can be contacted.
7. The actions taken by the reporting source, including a description of photographs or x-rays taken.
8. Any other information that the person making the report believes may be helpful.

Under the law, a person participating in good faith who makes a report of suspected child abuse and neglect or participates in a related child protection investigation or proceeding is immune from any criminal or civil liability. However, civil penalties for a violation of a provision of the Child Protection statutes are severe. If you have questions about your role in reporting child abuse and neglect, please talk with the school principal.

Learning Styles

Not everyone learns in the same way. Your learning style is simply the way in which you learn best. Most people use all of their senses as they process information; one sense generally dominates. Here are some descriptions and suggestions that may be helpful in understanding the students with whom you work.

1. Auditory Learners

Learn best through verbal demonstrations. They prefer talking about a situation and enjoy listening to themselves talk.

- Read instructions aloud
- Have them repeat instructions to you
- If the student is having difficulty understanding, rephrase instructions.

2. Visual Learners

They learn best by observing. They prefer watching demonstrations and have intense concentration and the ability to visualize information. Students who are visual learners like to write, doodle, and study their environment.

- Keep a copy of the written instructions, charts, etc. in front of them
- Use visual aids for reference (maps, charts, pictures, etc.)
- Try having students write or draw problems on paper
- Encourage the use of a homework notebook to remember assignments.

3. Tactile and Kinesthetic Learners

They learn best by doing. They remember best by what they did, not what was seen or heard. They need frequent breaks when studying and are easily distracted when they are not able to move.

- Have students use manipulatives, such as money or blocks with a math problem.
- Learning aids, such as a globe, for geography
- Have students use their bodies to act out fiction or nonfiction stories.

36 Ways to Say “Good Job”

Wow!	Good for you	Thank you very much
Super	That’s right	I’m so proud of you
Excellent	That’s amazing	You’re working hard
Good job	Great!	That’s a good point
Terrific	Good thinking	That was first-class work
Beautiful	Way to go	Keep up the good work
Marvelous	Congratulations!	That’s the right answer
Nice going	That looks great	You’re really working hard today
Fantastic	Now you’ve got it!	You’re on the right track
Very good	That’s really nice	Now you have the hang of it
Much better	Keep it up	I appreciate the way you’re trying

Volunteer Registration and Approval Process

Please read this process thoroughly BEFORE you complete the Volunteer Registration Form.

The process of becoming a volunteer for the Mt. Blue Regional School District is as follows:

- Registration

Volunteers must register each school year. The registration form is available online at <https://www.mtbluersd.org/departments/volunteer-in-rsu-9-schools>. If you are volunteering for a specific student or more than one student, you must complete a separate form for each student. You should register early in the school year or semester to ensure you are cleared to volunteer in time for those early events. Please allow a minimum of five (5) business days for processing. All registrations will receive a response so long as a valid email address is included on their registration form.



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- **Criminal Background Check**

A criminal background check is completed on ALL volunteer registrations. If you are volunteering for a specific student, background checks will only be repeated when your student moves up to a new school.

- **Volunteer Orientation**

Volunteers who have not attended an orientation in the past, must attend a Mt. Blue Regional School District Volunteer Orientation Session at the school you are requesting to volunteer with. The purpose is to review our Mt. Blue Regional School District Volunteer Procedures so all volunteers will share a clear and common understanding of their expectations.

- **Approval and Notification**

Volunteers will be contacted by the Central Office when the registration and background check is approved. Please allow a minimum of five (5) business days for processing.

Questions? Please contact your child's school.