



Family Participation Policy and Guidelines for School Volunteers

Introduction

Volunteers are an indispensable component of the life of our school. Our program of “Family Participation” encourages your involvement in the school. Through involvement, we get to know one another and you have a chance to develop a real sense of “belonging” to the school. Your volunteer efforts are especially needed in fund-raising activities which provide the support that makes it possible to keep our overhead and tuition within manageable levels.

Parental Requirements

Every Pre-K (5 days) to grade 6 family must sign our “Family Participation Agreement” to donate twenty-five (25) hours per family, per year, regardless of the number of children attending St. Thomas. For Pre-K (3 days) the commitment is fifteen (15) hours and for Pre-K/ (2 days), then (10) hours. Of these hours, five (5) must be reserved by every family to support the Spring Fever Fair, our largest fund-raiser. Any family member of junior high age or older, except the students themselves, may fulfill the hours required.

Cooperation

Whatever project you select and are asked to perform usually has a level of commitment. If a teacher, program coordinator or chair person is expecting you on a particular day and time, that person has probably planned you into the day’s activities and it would be an inconvenience not to follow through or be prompt. If an emergency should arise, please call.

Confidentiality

If you choose to work in school, please remember that most of what you see, experience or become aware of is confidential. A student’s progress or lack thereof, special education program, behavior or personal problems are all private. Whatever is seen in the classroom must stay in the classroom. A breach of confidentiality is not only a break down in trust but a violation of law. All of our children have an equal right to that kind of privacy so that they can be free to grow in a non-prejudiced environment. To share something you may witness with others is not only unfair to everyone but may be out of context/character and very inaccurate.

Program Penalty

Families who do not fulfill their agreement will be billed \$10.00 per hour for the unfulfilled hours of service.

Special Circumstances

If for any reason it becomes impossible for a family to fulfill the required twenty-five (25) hours, please contact the school principal.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q. What if I have more than (1) child enrolled at St. Thomas?**
A. You are only required to donate the specified number of hours PER FAMILY, per year.
- Q. Who is considered “family”?**
A. Any actual relative of a St. Thomas student who donates his/her time and is at least of junior high age is considered “family”.
- Q. Can St. Thomas students help fulfill a family’s commitment?**
A. No, but because this is a program designed to encourage family involvement, our students are certainly encouraged to participate with their families.
- Q. Can I ask someone not related to fulfill hours?**
A. No, the intent of the program is “family” involvement.
- Q. What if I exceed my hours?**
A. Please continue to complete vouchers and submit them so we can document the number of hours required for a particular fundraiser or task.
- Q. What if more than (1) family member participates in an event?**
A. EACH family member will accumulate hours toward their commitment except that attendance at a PTO Meeting will generate only one (1) hour credit per family regardless of the number of members in attendance.

Recording of Volunteered Hours

Hours are accumulated and logged by a voucher system. Please treat these vouchers like cash! It is your responsibility to assure that vouchers are completed and submitted. Each time you volunteer, it is important to:

1. Complete an "Involvement Voucher"
2. Have the supervising person sign it.
3. Deposit it in the "Voucher Box" in the office.

To wait for long periods of time between the event and the voucher taxes the memories of everyone involved, complicates record keeping and makes tracking the number of hours necessary to complete a project difficult.

Please remember:

1. All vouchers must be validated by a committee chairperson, teacher or the school principal.
2. Vouchers are available at every volunteer event of the year.
3. Hours may be accumulated from July 1 to June 30 and may not be carried over into the new school year.

Sample Voucher

Family Participation Voucher	
Student(s) Name(s):	_____
Grade(s):	_____
Volunteer's Name(s):	_____
Family Relationship:	_____
Job Description:	_____
Chairperson/Teacher:	_____
Hours Worked:	_____
Date(s):	_____
Approved by, _____	

Family Volunteer Opportunities

School Volunteer (Small Group Volunteer or One to One Interaction) – The Diocese of Portland has certain requirements for those who volunteer in school and work with the students on a regular basis; either one to one or in small groups away from the classroom. Volunteers are required to complete an application and submit to background checks into criminal history, Department of Human Services, sex offender registry and driving record as well as any others that may be deemed necessary. (For your review, a portion of this application has been inserted onto the proceeding page.) It is also required that volunteers undergo training in the “Protecting God’s Children” program as well as acknowledging the Diocesan Code of Ethics and abiding by its principles.

There are choices in the way in which one can volunteer in the school during the course of the day. This includes being a classroom volunteer. Serving in this way may mean working directly in the classroom with students in such areas as math and reading. It may involve preparing materials for classroom use; copying papers, cutting out items and collating. Sometimes your presence in your child’s classroom may be distracting to your child. It is important not to encourage your child’s inattention to the task at hand. It is somewhat awkward for the teacher (and the student!) to have to redirect your child in your presence. Occasionally, you may be asked to complete work outside of the classroom.

Assisting in the classroom or acting as a proctor/mentor to a student completing a task often presents the temptation to “prompt” the student with whom you may be working. If we see a student apparently struggling to accomplish a task, our natural inclination as parents is to provide support. Sometimes this can be counterproductive and skew the results for the teacher or evaluator. A good rule of thumb might be: “Don’t prompt unless prompted to do so by the teacher. Please do exactly what is requested of you.”

Academic Fair – Oration Contest – These are two spring events that are available to students. The Academic Fair involves students in grades four, five and six. The Oration Contest is for students in grades five and six. Judges are needed for both of these events. The Academic Fair judging is done by groups of people for each category. The Oration Contest is an evening event and requires three judges. Both competitions are judged using a rubric. To volunteer, please contact the Teachers in these grades.

Baked Goods - Baking 2 dozen cookies, 2 pounds of fudge, a cake, or 24 cupcakes will equal one (1) volunteer hour. A maximum of 2 volunteer hours per family is allowed for baked goods at the Spring Fever Fair. Store bought items will be accepted at any fundraiser (bottle drive, Spring Fever Fair) but will not be counted as volunteer hours.

Diocese of Portland, Maine Volunteer Application (Sample)

Your willingness to share your faith, gifts and skills is appreciated. Providing safe and secure programs for our members is of utmost importance to us. The information gathered in this Volunteer Application is designed to help us provide the highest quality Catholic programs for the people of our community. **Please read each of the following statements carefully and initial each to indicate your understanding and agreement.**

_____ I hereby authorize the recipient of this Application, or its agent or designated vendor to conduct a personal and professional background and reference check. I hereby authorize such personnel to contact any references, past and current employers, church, youth organizations, agencies where volunteer service has been completed, and any individual or organization which might be relevant to my desired position. Such individuals and organizations are authorized to release such information as may be requested. I hereby release all such persons from liability or damages incurred as a result of furnishing such information. I understand that an unsatisfactory reference shall be grounds both for rejecting my Application and, should I have already begun volunteer service, for termination of that service.

_____ I understand that a background check will be conducted in conjunction with my service and that I am subject to investigation at any time during my service. I hereby authorize Diocesan personnel, or their agent or designated vendor to, in their sole discretion, undertake such an investigation at any time during the course of my service. In the course of my service, these checks will include but are not limited to a comprehensive criminal history records check, a Department of Human Services check, a sex offender registry check, and driving record check in conjunction with my volunteer service.

_____ I agree to observe all Diocesan and Parish guidelines and policies governing my volunteer service.

_____ I understand that the Diocese and Parish have a "ZERO TOLERANCE FOR ABUSE" policy and take all allegations of abuse seriously. I further understand that they will cooperate fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Abuse of minors or vulnerable adults are grounds for immediate termination of my service and possible criminal prosecution.

_____ I understand that I can withdraw from the application process at any time.

After reading all of the terms of this Application, I hereby affirm that I understand and agree to the provisions of the same. I also agree that my volunteer service with the Diocese and the Parish is on an "at-will" basis, meaning that such may be permanently discontinued by either the Diocese or the Parish (through termination of my service) or myself (through voluntarily resigning) at any time without notice and without any recourse of any kind by either party. I agree to conform to Diocese or Parish rules and I also agree that I shall be subject to other conditions which the Diocese or Parish may adopt. I affirm that the information in this Application is true and complete, and any intentional deception herein may be considered sufficient cause for termination.

My signature below indicates that I have read and understand all of the above. **Do not sign until you have read, understood, and initialed your agreement to each of the above statements.**

Applicant Signature: _____ **Date:** ____/____/____

Revision Date: 08/15/06

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Basketball Program – The school has basketball teams for boys and girls in grades four through six. The number of teams depends upon students seeking to play and availability of coaches. The practices occur in the St. Ignatius Parish Hall. Coaching includes practices, games (away and home), securing officials, scheduling, distributing and collecting uniforms and ensuring safety and order of the facilities. The first and foremost responsibility of the coaches is to secure player safety. Other volunteer activities for this program are hall monitors (spectators need to obey the rules of the building and practice safety), clean-up, officiating and score keeping. Coaches need to comply with the Diocese Guidelines.

Bottle Drive – Chair people for this fundraiser must contact a redemption center to make arrangements. This task also includes assigning routes, soliciting volunteers to drive the routes, collect and sort bottles, complete vouchers and provide baked good for refreshments.

Cafeteria Volunteer -This activity consists of serving meals and cleaning tables from 11 AM to 1 PM on school days Monday through Friday. Even though people may commit for the entire year, volunteers are needed daily. If interested contact the Cafeteria Manager.

Class Field Trips – When possible, classes take field trips to enhance the learning experience for students. Most of the time, students will ride on a bus and parent volunteers will drive to the site in cars. There are other times in which parents will be asked to drive students in their cars. In order to do this, the parent must meet diocesan requirements. This includes proof of insurance, a current inspection sticker and a safe driving record. Completed forms for parent drivers need to be approved by the Principal. Notices of field trips asking for chaperones will be sent home by the Classroom Teacher.

Classroom Parent – This activity involves making phone calls to solicit volunteers or items needed for classroom celebrations and programs. The volunteer works directly with the classroom teacher who will make requests. The volunteer is given a classroom roster with phone numbers; which is kept confidential. If interested, please contact your child's Teacher.

Communication Distribution Volunteer - The preparation of materials to be distributed involves stapling, stuffing and addressing. To volunteer to assist in this area please contact the Office.

Community Breakfast - There are several things that need to be done well before the breakfast in February. First, a month before the event, a volunteer needs to create donation letters and then follow-up with phone calls to potential donors. (One reliable person is needed; we can't have the breakfast without these donations). Also, a volunteer is needed to create tickets. The tickets need to be cut, organized and stuffed in envelopes to go home with students. The day before the breakfast, volunteers are needed to set-up. This includes lifting tables and chairs and arranging them in the dining room area. The day before the breakfast, parents are asked to bake muffins (usually second and third grade parents – but anyone is invited to bake). The maximum volunteer hours received for baking is 2 hours for 2 dozen muffins. Very early the morning of the breakfast, help is needed in the kitchen. The kitchen preparation is dependent upon the menu for that year, but usually cutting food is necessary, as well as cooking and preparing some food ahead of time. Also, throughout the morning, people are needed to put dishes in the dishwasher, dining room "wait staff" (serve coffee, wipe tables, put out place settings, etc.), kitchen staff (cooking food, volunteers serving food). A clean-up crew is necessary when the breakfast is over. This may include putting tables and chairs away, vacuuming the floor, cleaning pots and pans in the kitchen, etc.

Development Council - The purpose of this council is to publicize the events of the school, support the efforts of the staff and contribute to the financial stability of St. Thomas. The council meets once a month during the school year. They should be individuals interested in obtaining support for the school. The council is comprised of not less than seven or more than thirteen individuals which includes a President, possibly a Vice-President, a Treasurer and a Secretary. A commitment of at least one year but usually for three years is suggested. There are several volunteer opportunities through sub-committees. Some of these are a) a Publicity Committee, to develop an in-depth public relations program, b) an Alumni Association Committee, to help support programs for St. Thomas School, c) a Volunteer Recruitment Committee, to develop ways of increasing enrollment d) a Fundraising and Finance Committee to explore all sources of revenue and to develop an Annual Capital Campaign and e) a Marketing Committee, to develop ways to market St. Thomas School.

Family Nights – These are events that will occur once a month. Volunteering for these activities includes setting up, directing activities, providing refreshments and clean up. Themes may include a social, Halloween party, making Christmas ornaments and celebrating cultural diversity. To volunteer, speak to one of the Teachers or Development Council members.

Food Pantry – At several times during the year, including Thanksgiving and Catholic Schools' Week, we collect donations for the area food pantries. At Thanksgiving, this collection extends to the parish. We seek families to volunteer to collect the donations at Masses and bring them to the school or to deliver them to our local food pantries.

6th Grade Graduation – The fifth grade parents organize and host the reception for the sixth graders and their families after the graduation Mass. A chair (or co-chairs) is needed for this event. Responsibilities include setting the menu, calling parents for food donations, seeking volunteers, decorating and set up of the hall, serving and clean up. To volunteer speak with the sixth grade Teacher.

Library Aide - Duties include putting books in order on the shelves, checking books out for students, using the card catalog on the computer and reading stories to Kindergarten students. Contact the Principal to volunteer.

Magazine Drive – The chairperson needs to contact the company and order the materials needed for the magazine drive, which takes place at the end of September. The chairperson then confers with the principal as to how to get the information out to the students and families. The chairperson and other volunteers record and collate the orders as they are returned according to previously set turn in days. The orders are sent to the company and the prizes are distributed to the students when they arrive at the school. The chairperson collaborates with the principal to design sales incentives for the school. The chairperson also arranges pizza parties for the top selling classes on each floor

Milk & Cookies Club - There is a core group of people (2-3) who coordinate this activity. They meet on average twice a month for Milk & Cookies Club. Usually a couple of books are picked out ahead of time with a theme and either a craft, finger songs or movement to accompany the book. Preparation ahead of time is necessary to plan a craft (cutting things out of construction paper, stapling, etc.). One should have skills of patience working with young children, a good disposition and enjoy being around preschoolers. Also, bring in or baking cookies is essential as well as bringing milk, napkins, cups, etc.

Multi-cultural Presentations - Volunteering in this activity would consist in finding resources, contacting individuals and presenting programs which would expose St. Thomas students to various cultures. These presentations could include: songs, dance, language, dress, food, arts & crafts, way of life etc. To volunteer please speak to a classroom teacher.

Newton Center Masses - The fourth, fifth and sixth graders take turns once a month or every other month walking to the Newton Center Nursing Home to visit the elderly and to help the priest with Mass. Volunteers are needed to walk with the children to the nursing home and to encourage them to meet and integrate with the patients.

Olympic Day – This June event is a day for students to compete in sports. Activities include a variety of races and skill competitions. Volunteer responsibilities include setting up the course for the day (7:30 AM), field judges (to determine winners, timing events), score keepers (tallying the scores on a board, as well as filling in individual student certificates), gathering necessary equipment, team parents (ensuring students are participating in events, keeping order for the success of the day) and cleaning the field at the end of the day (includes putting the equipment away, collecting trash). An announcer is needed for the day as well. The Olympics are separate for grades K, 1-3 and 4-6. Kindergarten Olympics are scheduled depending on the last day of school for Kindergarten. The Olympics for the other grades are held on the same day in two different parts of the school field. There is also a barbecue luncheon that requires volunteers to set-up, cook, serve and clean-up. Sign-up sheets are sent home in May.

Open House - St. Thomas School has an open house each year. It takes place the end of August. All students, parents and parishioners have an opportunity to meet teachers, tour the school and enjoy lunch in the cafeteria. A few people are needed to organize this event. In July, a lunch menu needs to be set and a meeting with the Knights of Columbus is necessary, to confirm their assistance in cooking and serving. News releases to local papers and Channel 12 need to be completed in a timely fashion. Phone calls must be made to solicit volunteers to insert flyers into the church bulletins. An open house announcement should be submitted to the rectory well in advance of the event.

Presentations – The school, in February, hosts an event during Catholic Schools Week called Enrichment Day. Family and community members are invited to share hobbies, interests and careers with small groups of students in a workshop format. A sheet will be sent home in January seeking volunteers for this day or you can contact any of the teachers. If you have an interest or skill that you would like to share with the students, at any time, please speak with the principal or classroom teacher. Junior Achievement consistently seeks volunteers to implement its program in classrooms.

PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) – The PTO consists of a President or two Co-Presidents, a Treasurer and the Secretary. The President(s) are on the agenda at the monthly School Board meeting to report. This report includes PTO activity as well as bringing attention to any questions comments and concerns. The main purpose of the PTO is to represent the parents of the school. These meetings are also an opportunity to meet other families and gain information about what is occurring in the school community.

The board members meet throughout the school year (prior to the PTO meeting) with the Principal. At this meeting fundraising is reviewed as well as other issues including setting the PTO agenda for the school year. The term for each member is three years. At the end of each school year, if there are any openings on the board, a new member is nominated and voted on by the parent membership body.

Publicity - Publicity involves keeping the parish families and the public informed about the activities that take place within the school or accomplishments that students have achieved. The different avenues of publication are the local newspapers, Metrocast channel 12, the church bulletin, the Harvest magazine and the school newsletter. Those involved with publicity should be available to take photos and write news releases about the events. Accumulating the year's events and creating a portfolio are included in this job as well.

Record Parent Volunteer Hours – The hours that families volunteer need to be recorded and reported accurately. There is a computer program that has been created to complete this task. The task includes collecting volunteer sheets, entering them in the program and generating reports to be sent home with the report cards that are distributed four times a year. A report also needs to be given to the Principal for purposes of billing families who have not completed their hours.

School Dance– Chairing the dance involves securing the hall, music (contracts for these need to be approved and signed by the Principal), creating a theme and seeking volunteers. This task also includes pre-dance ticket sales as well as publicizing the event. Volunteer jobs include ticket sales at the door, soliciting prizes for the raffles, selling raffle tickets at the dance, setting up and decorating as well as clean-up.

School Maintenance – Volunteers are needed for painting and yard work. Yard work includes mowing the field, spreading cedar chips under the playground equipment, sweeping sand off the playground and garden maintenance. Painting the playground (games such as four squares) and installing playground equipment are also volunteer activities.

School Uniform Swap - A volunteer is responsible for keeping the area where the uniforms are dropped off clean and tidy. This is done by checking the uniforms brought in (to be sure they are not stained) folding the pants and shorts or hanging the shirts and dresses/skirts on hangers by sizes. Checking in once a week or every other week is helpful. Being available for the Open House to arrange and display the clothes for the swap is also needed. Contact the Principal to volunteer.

Skills – The school community consistently seeks people with specialized skills. These include but are not limited to: landscaping, fundraising, electrical, plumbing, carpentry, computer proficiency (repair, maintenance, installation, knowledge of programs and systems, keyboarding, word processing), sewing (costumes, curtains, etc.) and any other talents or skills you are willing to share. To volunteer, please contact the Principal.

Website Manager - Commitment includes maintenance and updating the school's website in a timely manner. A scanner is required for part of this project. The manager communicates with the Principal and various boards to obtain current information. The Principal approves all postings to the website which may include agenda, minutes of meetings, notices, menus and policies of the school. To volunteer, contact the Principal.

Spring Fever Fair – The Spring Fever Fair is the largest fund raising event that St. Thomas School currently has. Historically it is run the last full weekend in April at the Sanford Memorial Gymnasium. There is a tremendous amount of work that is involved with organizing, promoting, operating and maintaining the Spring Fever Fair. The fair is overseen by a “committee”. A chairperson for each of the following activities is needed and must report to the “committee”:

In addition to specific responsibilities listed below, all chair people will need to solicit volunteers, set-up and clean-up their stations/tables.

Baked Goods –Solicit goods, package and price them.

Cafeteria – Choose menu, order food, prepare and serve.

Children’s Games – Determine games, order prizes.

Craft Table - Get donation, sell items at fair

Fudge Table - Solicit bakers for fudge, cut, weigh, package and price fudge.

Jewelry Table – Collects jewelry, price, and package or arrange jewelry,

Major raffle – Find sponsor for ticket printing, prepare bulk mailing, sell and record ticket sales during the fair.

Penny Auction –Solicit donations, prepare buckets, sell and draw tickets at the fair, call winners and send Thank You notes to sponsors.

Plant Table – Collect, price and arrange plants.

Special Prizes – Solicit donations, sell tickets at fair and send out Thank You notes to all who gave donations.

Sports Table – Obtain donations and sell equipment at the fair.

Trash & Treasures – Reserve storage facility, set-up on Saturday, sell on Sunday, and dispose of all items not sold.