



SOMERSET ACADEMY
— WEST FLORIDA —

Volunteer Handbook

2026–2027 School Year

Somerset Academy West Florida
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Shannine Sadesky, Principal

WELCOME TO THE SOMERSET ACADEMY WEST FLORIDA VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Somerset Academy West Florida is built on a partnership among students, families, staff, and the broader community. Volunteers are a vital part of that partnership. By choosing to serve in our school, you are directly supporting student success and helping us create a safe, caring, and engaging learning environment from kindergarten through 12th grade.

This handbook explains expectations, procedures, and opportunities for volunteers at Somerset Academy West Florida. Please keep it as a reference and feel free to ask questions at any time.

For additional support, contact:

- School Principal: Shannine Sadesky ssadesky@somersetwf.org

You are strongly encouraged to attend any training offered for your specific role. These sessions will help you become familiar with our school culture, policies, and best practices when working with students.

IMPORTANT: CHECK-IN & IDENTIFICATION

For the safety of our students and staff:

- Always report to the front office when you arrive with your government issued id.
- Sign in on the school's volunteer log/computer system.
- Wear your visitor badge at all times while on campus.
- Sign out before leaving the school.

This process is required on every visit, for every volunteer.

WHY VOLUNTEER AT SOMERSET ACADEMY WEST FLORIDA?

Volunteering at our school benefits students, families, and the volunteers themselves. Some key benefits include:

- **Support for Students and Teachers**
Even a small amount of time can provide meaningful academic and emotional support for our students and valuable assistance for teachers.
 - **Connection to the School Community**
Volunteering helps you build relationships with staff, families, and students, and gives you a better understanding of our instructional programs and school culture.
 - **Personal Growth and Fulfillment**
Volunteers often report improved communication skills, stronger community ties, and the satisfaction of contributing to student success.
-

MAKING YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE SUCCESSFUL

You are giving your time and energy; we want your experience to be positive and productive.

Ask Questions

Before you begin, and any time during the year, please ask:

- What are my specific responsibilities?
- Who do I report to?
- What training or instructions do I need?
- What should I do if I am unsure about a task or a student situation?

Understand Expectations

- Clarify your schedule, the length of your commitment, and your assigned duties.
- Start with a manageable time commitment and adjust as needed.
- Make sure you are comfortable with the assignment; if not, talk to the Volunteer Coordinator.

If It's Not a Good Fit

Sometimes a particular assignment or schedule may not work well.

- Notify the Volunteer Coordinator or supervising teacher.
- We will work with you to find a better placement or a different way you can contribute.

Enjoy the Experience

Volunteering should be meaningful and enjoyable. When volunteers and staff work as a team, students benefit most.

GENERAL INFORMATION & EXPECTATIONS

Parking

Parking procedures vary by time of day.

- Ask the front office where volunteers should park.
- Do not park in fire lanes, bus loops, or reserved/handicapped spaces (unless you have proper authorization).

Registration & Screening

For the protection of all students:

- All volunteers must complete a **Somerset Academy West Florida Volunteer Application**.
- An **Affidavit of Good Moral Character** and/or background screening, as required by law, must be completed and cleared before you begin volunteering with students.

- Some roles (e.g., mentors, frequent one-on-one work with students, field trip chaperones) may require additional screening, including fingerprinting, in accordance with state requirements.

Attendance & Reliability

Students and staff count on you.

- Report at your scheduled time.
- If you cannot come, notify the school as early as possible (front office and/or the supervising teacher).
- Consistent attendance helps students feel secure and supported.

Identification Badges

- Wear your visitor badge where it is visible at all times.
- Return temporary badges to the office when you leave.

Recording Volunteer Hours

The school is required to track volunteer contributions.

- Sign in and out every time you volunteer.
- Hours may be used toward recognition, school awards, and official reporting, and can also document your experience for employment or educational purposes.

Professional Conduct & Appearance

Volunteers are role models.

- Dress modestly and appropriately for a K–12 school environment.
- Follow the same standards of respect and professionalism expected of staff.
- Refrain from using inappropriate language or discussing sensitive, adult-only topics in front of students.
- Silence your cell phone during volunteer time; step out of the classroom or student area if you must take an urgent call.

Medication

Volunteers may **not**:

- Administer any medication to students.
- Handle student medications or medical treatments.
If a student needs medical attention or medication:
- Notify the teacher or take the student to the office as directed by school personnel.

Discipline

Classroom and school-wide discipline are the responsibility of school staff.

- Do not administer discipline, physical or verbal, to students.
- If a behavior issue arises, immediately inform the teacher or staff member in charge.
- Follow the teacher's instructions and the school's code of conduct.

Confidentiality

You may see or hear information about students that is private.

- Do not discuss individual students' grades, behavior, records, health, or personal circumstances with anyone outside the appropriate school staff.
- Do not share student information or images on social media, in emails, or in casual conversations.
- Treat everything you observe in the classroom or school as confidential unless a safety concern requires immediate reporting to staff or administration.

Accidents & Emergencies

If a student is injured or there is an incident while you are present:

- Immediately notify the supervising teacher or nearest staff member.
- Do not attempt to move a seriously injured student unless they are in immediate danger.
- Follow staff instructions; an incident report will be completed by school personnel.

If you are injured:

- Report to the front office as soon as possible.
- Follow the school's procedures for documenting volunteer injuries.

SOMERSET ACADEMY WEST FLORIDA VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We offer a variety of roles to match different skills, schedules, and interests. Not all roles are available at all times; placements depend on student and teacher needs.

Classroom Assistant

- Supports the classroom teacher with non-instructional tasks.
- May help prepare materials, organize supplies, assist students with simple activities, or supervise small groups under the teacher's direction.

Clerical / Office Assistant

- Assists office staff or teachers with routine tasks: copying, filing, sorting, assembling packets, data entry (as permitted), etc.
- Helps free staff time to focus on instruction and student services.

School Advisory Council (SAC) Member

- Serves on the school's advisory body, collaborating with administration, staff, and parents.
- Participates in discussions related to the school improvement plan, academic goals, and community outreach.
- Interested community members and parents may express interest in serving as SAC members; membership follows applicable laws and bylaws.

Arts & Creative Support

- Assists art teachers or classroom teachers with art and creative projects.
- Helps set up materials, support students as they work, and maintain a clean, organized space for creative activities.

Reading & Language Arts Support

- Works with students under the direction of the teacher to build reading, writing, and language skills.
- May listen to students read, help them practice vocabulary, support writing assignments, or manage literacy centers.

Math Support

- Assists students one-on-one or in small groups with math practice, as directed by the classroom or math teacher.
- Reinforces concepts and skills introduced in class.

Physical Education / Activity Support

- Assists the classroom teacher with organized activities.
- Helps monitor safety, encourage participation, set up or put away equipment, and support school events such as field days.

Special Event Volunteer

- Provides support for occasional events or projects, such as testing days, assemblies, performances, family nights, or celebrations.
- Duties may include set-up, check-in, logistics, and clean-up.

Lunchroom Support

- Helps supervise in the cafeteria alongside staff, encouraging safe and respectful behavior.
- Assists younger students with opening items and finding seats, following school procedures.

Homeroom / Classroom Parent

- Coordinates with the teacher to assist with classroom celebrations and communication with families.
- Helps organize volunteers for classroom-specific events.

Academic Enrichment (e.g., Math or Reading Programs)

- Assists with school-sponsored enrichment programs (such as math challenge clubs, reading incentive programs, etc.).
- May distribute and collect materials, help track participation, and support related activities.

Health Screening Support (e.g., Vision/Hearing Screening)

- Assists staff with student flow and logistics on screening days.

- May help manage lines, check names off lists, and guide students to and from classrooms.
- Training and direction are provided; screenings themselves are conducted by qualified personnel.

At-Home Projects

For those who cannot be on campus regularly:

- Prepping materials (cutting, sorting, assembling packets).
- Creating displays or simple instructional aids as directed by teachers.
- These tasks are coordinated through the teacher or Volunteer Coordinator.

Field Trip Chaperone

- Supports teachers in supervising students off campus.
- Must comply with all school and district field trip and background screening requirements.
- Follows teacher instructions and school policies at all times during the trip.

Program & Event-Based Opportunities

Volunteers are often needed for:

- School picture days
- School festivals or carnivals
- College and career days
- Competitions or showcases (academic, arts, STEM, etc.)
- Parent-teacher organization (PTO/PTA) events (if applicable)

Community Resource Speakers

- Parents and community members may be invited to share expertise related to careers, hobbies, travel, culture, or specialized skills.
- Presentations are coordinated in advance with staff and must align with school guidelines and curriculum goals.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

1. How do I become a volunteer at Somerset Academy West Florida?

Contact the Principal or front office. You will:

1. Complete the school's Volunteer Application.
2. Sign the required Affidavit of Good Moral Character and any additional forms.
3. Undergo background screening, if required for your role.
4. Attend a volunteer orientation (recommended) and any specific training for your assignment, if offered.

2. What qualifications are needed to volunteer?

We ask that volunteers:

- Have a genuine interest in helping students.
- Respect school policies and follow staff direction.
- Commit to a reliable schedule, as agreed with the school.
- Maintain confidentiality and professionalism.
No teaching certificate is required; you will always work under the supervision of school staff.

3. May I bring my preschool child or other non-school-age children with me when I volunteer?

No. For safety and liability reasons, volunteers may not bring children who are not enrolled at Somerset Academy West Florida with them while volunteering on campus or on field trips. Young children can also distract students and limit your ability to help effectively.

If you have small children, consider:

- At-home volunteer projects, or
- Arranging babysitting cooperatives with other volunteers.

4. What can I share with friends or neighbors about my volunteer work?

You are encouraged to be a positive ambassador for our school—share your involvement and the good work students and staff are doing. However:

- Do not discuss individual students' grades, behavior, health, or personal situations.
- Do not post photos or information about students on social media, even if their faces are not clearly visible, unless explicitly authorized in writing by the school. If in doubt, keep it private and ask the Volunteer Coordinator for guidance.

5. May I choose the teacher or grade level I want to work with?

You may indicate your preferences on your application, and we will try to honor them. However:

- Volunteers are placed based on teacher requests, student needs, and scheduling considerations.
- Final placement decisions are made by school administration and/or the Volunteer Coordinator.

6. What if my volunteer assignment is not working out?

Please speak with the Principal or office manager.

- We understand that interests and schedules can change.
- We will try to adjust your assignment or schedule or discuss other ways you can serve the school.

7. How do I handle student discipline issues?

- Do not discipline students yourself.

- If a student is disruptive, unsafe, or disrespectful, calmly notify the teacher or nearest staff member.
- Follow their directions; they are responsible for implementing the school's discipline policies.

8. What should I do if I cannot come at my scheduled time?

- Call or email the school as soon as you know you will be absent.
- Let the front office know you will not be in.
Teachers plan student activities based on your expected support, so your communication is important.

9. Why must I sign in and out every time I volunteer?

Signing in and out is required in order to:

- Maintain campus security and know who is on site.
- Document volunteer hours for recognition and reporting.
- Be able to reach you in an emergency while you are on campus.
- Support eligibility for awards and recognition for school volunteer involvement.

TUTORING & STUDENT SUPPORT TIPS

When working directly with students—whether tutoring, mentoring, or assisting in class—your relationship and approach matter as much as the content you support.

Build a Positive Relationship

- Learn and use the student's preferred name and pronounce it correctly.
- Make sure the student knows your name; write it on a card or the board if needed.
- Show genuine interest by asking about school subjects, hobbies, or interests in a friendly, age-appropriate way.

Listen Carefully

- Give students your full attention when they speak.
- Encourage them to explain their thinking or how they arrived at an answer.
- Acknowledge their feelings and efforts.

Be Encouraging and Patient

- Students learn at different speeds and in different ways.
- Celebrate small successes and honest effort, not just correct answers.
- Let students know that mistakes are normal and part of learning.

Support Confidence

- Offer specific praise ("You really worked hard on that problem" rather than "Good job").
- Avoid comparing one student to another.
- Focus on improvement and growth rather than perfection.

Keep the Student on Task

- If the conversation drifts away from the assignment, gently redirect:
 - “Let’s come back to this problem and see what we can do next.”
- Break tasks into smaller steps so the student can experience success.

Use Repetition and Variety

- Review important skills more than once.
- Practice the same concept in several different ways (reading, writing, hands-on, verbal repetition) when appropriate.

Respect Boundaries

- Do not promise rewards or special favors that you cannot provide.
- Maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries.
- Refer any concerns about a student’s well-being to the teacher, counselor, or administrator immediately.

Communicate with the Teacher

- Ask the teacher what specific skills or goals to focus on.
- Share observations about the student’s progress or challenges with the teacher privately.
- Allow the teacher to guide instructional decisions; your role is to support, not replace, the teacher.

NOTES

- This handbook outlines general expectations and opportunities for volunteers at Somerset Academy West Florida. Additional procedures may be in place for specific programs, events, or grade levels.
- Policies and procedures are subject to change in response to updated laws, district policies, or school needs. Updated information will be communicated through the school office and/or Volunteer Coordinator.

We appreciate your commitment to the students and staff of Somerset Academy West Florida. Your time, skills, and care make a real difference.

SOMERSET ACADEMY WEST FLORIDA

Volunteer Application 2026–2027 School Year

Thank you for your interest in serving as a volunteer at Somerset Academy West Florida.
Please complete all sections so we can match your skills and availability with school needs.

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Name (please print): _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Primary Phone: ☐ Home ☐ Work ☐ Cell Number: _____

Alternate Phone: ☐ Home ☐ Work ☐ Cell Number: _____

Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY): ____ / ____ / ____

**Email Address
(required):** _____

Current Employer (if any): _____

Occupation/Job Title: _____

EMERGENCY & REFERENCE INFORMATION

Emergency Contact Name: _____

Relationship to You: _____

Emergency Contact Phone: _____

Personal Reference (non-family): _____

Reference Phone: _____

BACKGROUND & INTERESTS

Community Organizations, Clubs, or Groups (if any):

Education/Training (highest level completed, certifications, special training):

Interests, Hobbies, Skills, or Sports:

Previous Volunteer Experience (school or other):

Have you volunteered in Escambia County schools before?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, where and when?

How did you learn about the volunteer program at Somerset Academy West Florida?

☐ School Website

☐ Staff Member

☐ Parent/Guardian

☐ Social Media

☐ Community Organization

☐ Other: _____

Why would you like to volunteer at our school?

PLACEMENT PREFERENCES

(We will do our best to honor your preferences, but placements depend on school needs.)

Specific area or program preferred (if any):

Approximate number of hours you wish to volunteer each week: _____

Days you are generally available (check all that apply):

☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday

Best time(s) of day (check all that apply):

☐ Morning ☐ Midday ☐ Afternoon ☐ After school hours

AGREEMENT

I understand that:

- My volunteer placement is at the discretion of school administration.
- I understand that I may not bring anyone with me who is not an enrolled student at Somerset Academy West Florida.
- I must complete and sign all required forms, including the Affidavit of Good Moral Character and any background screening documents, prior to working with students.
- I will follow all Somerset Academy West Florida policies and procedures, including confidentiality requirements and directives from school staff.
- Volunteering is a privilege, and the school may end my volunteer assignment at any time.

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

For School Use Only

Date Application Received: ____ / ____ / ____

Volunteer Orientation Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Initial Placement/Assignment: _____

Approved By (Print Name/Title): _____

Signature: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

SOMERSET ACADEMY WEST FLORIDA

Volunteer Affidavit of Good Moral Character 2026–2027 School Year

This form must be completed and signed by all volunteers prior to placement.

VOLUNTEER IDENTIFICATION

Full Legal Name (as it appears on government ID):

Other Names Used (maiden name, prior married names, aliases):

Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY): ____ / ____ / ____

Volunteer Assignment / Intended Role (if known):

DISCLOSURE OF CRIMINAL HISTORY

For the safety of our students and staff, all volunteers must answer the following question.

Have you **ever** been found guilty, pled guilty, or entered a plea of nolo contendere (no contest) to any criminal offense other than a minor traffic infraction?

- This includes any offense for which adjudication was withheld or reduced.
- This includes charges that may have been sealed or expunged.
- Driving Under the Influence (DUI) is **not** considered a minor traffic infraction and must be reported.

☐ **No** – I have never been found guilty, pled guilty, or entered a plea of nolo contendere to any charge other than a minor traffic infraction.

☐ **Yes** – I have a record as described above. I understand I must list each arrest or charge below, regardless of the outcome or date.

If you answered "Yes," please provide complete information for each incident:

City Where Arrested	State	Date Arrested	Charge(s)	Final Disposition (e.g., adjudication withheld, reduced charge, probation, fine, time served, etc.)

(Attach an additional page if more space is needed.)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT & CERTIFICATION

By signing below, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. The information I have provided on this form is true, complete, and accurate to the best of my knowledge.
2. I understand that withholding information or providing false or misleading information may result in denial or termination of my volunteer status.
3. I consent to Somerset Academy West Florida (and its management organization, as applicable) conducting any background checks, including criminal history checks, deemed necessary or appropriate under state law, district policy, or school policy.
4. I understand that my eligibility to volunteer will be determined in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, and that the school's decision on my volunteer status is final.

Volunteer Signature: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Printed Name: _____

ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

(Completed by School Personnel)

Background / Sexual Offender/Predator Screening:

- Date Screening Completed: ____ / ____ / ____
- Database/Website Used: _____
- Result: ☐ Cleared ☐ Not Cleared ☐ Additional Review Required

Verified By (Print Name): _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Comments/Notes (if applicable)