



Merit Academy Visitor and Volunteer Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define the rules and guidelines for Merit Academy visitors and volunteers. Merit Academy encourages parents and other citizens to visit our school, and we believe there are many potential benefits which can result from increased interaction with the public. At the same time, Merit Academy has an interest in avoiding disruption to the educational process and protecting the safety and welfare of students and staff. Accordingly, a balance must be achieved between the potential benefits and risks associated with the presence of visitors in our school. We have adopted the following policy to help enforce these principles.

Visitors

A. All School Visitors:

- i. A “visitor” is defined as any person seeking to enter the school building who is not an employee of Merit Academy, a member of the Board of Directors or a student currently enrolled in Merit Academy.
- ii. All visitors to Merit Academy shall be vetted, at each visit to the school, by local security software.
- iii. All visitors shall report to the school office when arriving or leaving the school premises. Notices will be displayed indicating that all visitors are required to register with the school office and obtain authorization in order to remain on the school premises. All visitors shall be required to wear appropriate school-issued form of identification when on the school premises.
- iv. Any visitor without proper identification will be directed to the front office.

B. Visitors to Instructional Areas:

- i. Access to particular classrooms or other instructional areas of the school may be restricted at the sole discretion of the administration.
- ii. Because classrooms and other instructional areas are particularly vulnerable to disruption, visitors to one of those areas must carefully follow the instructions of



Merit Academy Visitor and Volunteer Policy

the staff in charge of that area; failure to follow such instructions may result in the revocation of visitation privileges.



Merit Academy Visitor and Volunteer Policy

C. Special Situations:

- i. Both custodial and non-custodial parents of a student have the right to visit their child's school unless the school receives a court order restricting such contact.

D. Right to Deny Access:

- i. The Dean of Students, Director of Development, or his or her designee, has the authority to deny visiting privileges to any individual if it is deemed to be in the best interest of the students and/or employees, with or without notice. Any such individual shall be directed to leave the school premises immediately; failure to leave the school premises upon direction may result in the involvement of law enforcement authorities.

Volunteers

All visitors and volunteers to Merit Academy must agree to abide by the following Volunteer Code of Conduct and submit a signed Merit Academy Volunteer Acknowledgement Form prior to their first visit.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

In order to promote a safe environment in our school, it is essential for all school volunteers to adhere to a professional code of ethics. Each school volunteer is required to follow the rules defined in this policy. Failure to follow these rules may result in a revocation of volunteer privileges.

In order to promote a safe environment in the school, all school volunteers must adhere to the following rules:

Confidentiality. Any information pertaining to a child must remain in the classroom. It is never appropriate for a volunteer to discuss a child's progress with anyone other than that child's teacher or school administration. Failure to maintain confidentiality of all school and student information, along with any education records to which you are exposed, may disqualify you from further service as a Merit Academy volunteer.



Merit Academy Visitor and Volunteer Policy

Dependability. Be reliable. The teachers/staff have planned activities for you and the students. If something comes up, please be considerate of those depending on you and arrange for a

replacement and call the office. All volunteer work at the school and in the classroom must be scheduled in advance, not on a drop-in basis.

Communication. Your volunteer work should be a learning experience for you. When you have questions about policies and procedures, ask the appropriate staff member for clarification.

Support. As a Merit Academy volunteer, you will be in a support position. Your role is to support the classroom teacher and school administration at all times. The administration, teachers and staff are responsible for the education and safety of the students at Merit Academy, and they have asked for your help in achieving their objectives.

Consistency. Be consistent with Merit Academy's and the teachers' rules for behavior and the policies for the school. Always remember that the teacher is the authority in the classroom and must be supported by all the volunteers. Never assume responsibility for the discipline of students. If you witness inappropriate behavior or other infraction of school rules, please report it to a staff member.

Respect for Learning Process. Do not use your volunteer time at the school for an informal parent/teacher conference. This can be disruptive to the learning process for all the students. Please arrange to discuss your child's progress with the teacher at a different time. While volunteering in the classroom, please be as discreet as possible and do not interrupt the teacher.

Role Model. You are a role model for the students when you volunteer. Please act accordingly and dress appropriately.

Siblings. In order to give your full attention to your volunteer job, please do not bring your young children to the school while you volunteer. Please make other arrangements for younger children for the time you plan to be volunteering at the school (siblings only allowed in designated areas without special permission).

Building Access. Please do not enter areas designated as Staff Only, including the staff lounge, unless given explicit permission to do so. The staff lounge is a place for the staff to be able to freely collaborate on their curriculum delivery including the needs and performance of specific students. It is inappropriate for volunteers to overhear or be involved in discussions involving specific students.



Merit Academy Visitor and Volunteer Policy

Representation. As a volunteer, you are not an authorized agent of the school. In the course of your volunteer work, at no time may you imply or state that you are a representative of the school. You cannot make commitments on behalf of the school, unless given express written authorization, direction and terms by the Board of Directors.

Safety Procedures. All volunteers and visitors are required to follow school safety procedures. Volunteers, as with all visitors, must enter from the school lobby.

Emergencies. All volunteers must follow staff direction in the event of a drill or actual emergency. Volunteers and visitors should report emergencies or dangerous situations of any kind immediately to a staff member. In the case of a medical emergency, a volunteer should call 911 first. Merit Academy has specific procedural guidelines for emergencies.

Supervision of Students. A single volunteer shall never be alone with a child or a group of children. If a volunteer is working one-on-one with a student, it must always be within an area where at least one other adult is present or in an open area (or with the door open). This helps to protect the children, as well as adult volunteers, and will help ensure that Merit Academy will always be a safe environment for the students.

Field Trip Supervision. Please refer to the Field Trip Policy for guidelines regarding volunteering on field trips.