



Parent Volunteer Handbook

August 2012

Volunteering at Pali: Background Information

Congratulations!

If you're reading this handbook, it probably means that you're a member of the Palisades Elementary Charter School community. You and your children will be participating in one of the finest public elementary schools in Los Angeles. Pali Elementary has it all - challenging academics; art, music, drama and other enrichment activities; and a close, inclusive community. In recent years, we've had some of the highest test scores in the District and have been named a California Distinguished School.

How do we do it?

Well, first and foremost, we've got one of the most talented, and dedicated faculty and staff any elementary school could have. Second, we have many wonderful parents who donate substantial amounts of their time, and yes, money, to provide additional education and enrichment programming and staff that Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) doesn't provide. (Hopefully you'll be one of those parents!)

Parent Involvement

Because many parents at Pali Elementary volunteer their time and money to enhance the quality of our school, Pali Elementary is able to offer students what many other California public schools are unable to offer. We count on parents' active participation in the classroom, on school committees and at special events. This parent involvement not only expands the resources available to our children, it also gives the school a unique community feeling, since those who participate are able to influence and help shape the environment of the school. Volunteering at the school will increase the enjoyment for your entire family and enhance your child's learning experience.

Pali Elementary has a strong tradition of active parent involvement. Given recent budget cuts, our school needs parent volunteers more than ever, **so, in addition to requesting an annual donation of \$1,000 from each Pali Elementary family** (or a tax-deductible donation of some amount based on each family's personal situation so that we can have as high a participation level as possible), **we are requesting that all parents (and interested grandparents and other family members!) volunteer at least 20 hours during the school year**, such as by chaperoning school outings, preparing classroom projects at home, helping in PEP-supported classes or working on a school fundraiser or community service event. This amounts to around 2 hours each month to improve your child's education and experience at Pali Elementary.

These are hard times for public education, so we urge you to do all you can. We are mindful that many parents work during school hours, so we have assembled a specific list of volunteer opportunities which can be done outside of school and school hours (see appendix for details).

Being an Effective Volunteer

Volunteering Requirements

Submit Negative TB Verification District policy requires volunteers to confirm that they do not have TB every two years. Please obtain a tuberculosis skin test verification form from the school office or your doctor's office, get tested, and then return the form to the office if you receive negative TB results. The form will be kept on file in the *Room Parent Volunteer Binder*, located in the school office.

Provide Proof of Automobile Insurance A completed automobile insurance form must be on file in the office prior to driving on a field trip during the school year. A new form must be completed and filed each academic year. Completed forms will be kept in the *Room Parent Volunteer Binder*, located in the school office.

Sign in at the Office and get a *Visitor's Pass* before beginning your work in the classroom. This is required for safety purposes, and helps the school keep track of the number of hours parents volunteer at the school, which is required when the school applies for awards and grants.

Guidelines for Volunteers:

- Set a Good Example: Be responsible for our students.
- Be prompt, professional.
- Please be courteous and follow the rules (including signing in and out at the office desk).
- Use TRIBES - our school's conflict resolution program.
- Volunteering is a commitment – please find a replacement if you can't come in. The classroom's schedule is built upon your attendance.
- Please stay home if you are sick and do not bring younger siblings to school when you are volunteering in the classroom.
- Help us recruit other parents by talking about the positive experiences you've had.
- Please be constructive with your thoughts and suggestions and give them to the teacher only when it is appropriate. Do not ask about other students.
- Confidentiality – Any communication with, or information about, individual students (including their performance or actions in class) must be kept strictly confidential. Do not discuss individual students with anyone other than the child's teacher or Ms. Ingle. Please understand that the teacher or the principal may not be able to answer any questions because of confidentiality, and this is to be respected. Breaching confidentiality can be hurtful to children, their families and the staff. Respect for confidentiality is of a vital importance to the trust we wish to build within our community and one of your most important responsibilities as a volunteer.
- Students are never to be left unsupervised by a certificated teacher, according to LAUSD rules. For your understanding and the students' protection, all student activities must be supervised, and no student is allowed inside the classroom alone.
- Any conflict or discipline issues need to be brought up with the supervising teacher of that activity immediately and discretely.

Volunteer Opportunities at Pali

There are many ways to offer your volunteer services to Pali Elementary. The two main avenues are through your child's classroom and through PEP. You also may join one of Pali Elementary's Governing Council Committees, which have oversight of school governance, budget, curriculum and more. (See the Pali website www.palieementary.org or the Parent Handbook for a description of the Governing Council and its Committees.)

The following is a description of many of the PEP and classroom volunteer opportunities available to you at Palisades Elementary. We hope you find several areas that are interesting to you. Please contact the current PEP co-chairs or event/activity chairs (contacts available online or in the separate "List of Volunteers") to find out more about how you can get involved!

If there is something that you're interested in which is not represented here, please contact the PEP co-chairs. They will either direct you to the right folks or get you started on developing your own program using the process set forth in the school's charter (see attached New Ideas Approval Process flow chart). Our community welcomes new ideas!

1. Classroom Volunteers and In-Class Enrichment Programs

Each teacher has a different set of volunteer needs and their own way of integrating parent volunteers into their classroom. Most kinder and first grade teachers ask parents to volunteer in the classroom to assist the teacher and the instructional aide, while this is less common in the upper grades. Roles you may play in the class are: room parent, field trip coordinator, library support, tech. support, class treasurer, etc. Given recent and ongoing budget challenges, the teacher may even ask you to help photocopy or do other things, so that they can keep instructing.

Several PEP programs in the classroom also require volunteer support to run smoothly. PEP Programs most in need of in-class volunteers are: Discovery Garden, Library, Arts Matter (grades 3 to 5), Art Cadre, Salad Bar and Technology. These activities may require monthly help or may have more frequent needs. Parent liaisons also assist in our PEP-funded P.E., Tribes, Music and Drama programs. Being involved as a volunteer in these programs are a great way to give back to your school – and to spend time with your children at school!!!

Discovery Garden is an integral part of the school curriculum. For grades K-3, each class works on planting and harvesting its own plants – gardening activities are integrated with the curriculum. In grades 4 and 5, students can join the gardening club. 1 to 2 garden volunteers per class are needed to assist in planting, harvesting and working with students on curricular activities; volunteers also work on planting and harvesting plants for sale at fundraising events, such as Open House and Yee Haw Day. Several Discovery Garden co-chairs run the garden curriculum, and work with the class volunteers to schedule and work on projects in coordination with your classroom teacher (to help with scheduling etc.).

Library is a tremendous resource for our children. 1 to 2 volunteers are needed per class to assist teachers during scheduled library class times, and to staff the library so that it can remain open and be available for our children during lunch. A library committee coordinates staffing of the library during the lunch hour, assists with shelving, cataloging and ordering books and manages overall library décor, organization and cleanliness. The library committee can also create and maintain a book wish list, develop monthly book

themes, coordinate readings from visiting authors and work with the Book Fair coordinators to ensure that the Book Fair inventory includes summer reading recommendations.

Arts Matter is an arts curriculum for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders taught by parents. There are six to eight lessons per grade level. Arts Matter parent volunteers introduce the children to varied artists, great works of art, and hands-on art making that's educational and engaging. The students will learn the history, elements, concepts and skills that are involved in the creation of a specific work of art. Many of the art history lessons apply to social studies, language, and math. The Arts Matter curriculum is aligned with California Visual and Performing Arts standards (VAPA). Volunteers are needed to research and present classes monthly on particular artists using the provided age-appropriate curriculum. Chairs are also needed to run the program, schedule sessions, provide materials, etc.

Art Cadre is an art program which is funded by a grant from the Pacific Palisades Women's Club and run by two former Pali Elementary parents. 1st to 3rd grade students contribute to school-wide installation projects that both expose our children to innovative techniques and beautify our school. Volunteers are needed in each classroom to help conduct the projects and a liaison coordinates the program.

Salad Bar - LAUSD provides a salad bar on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but we need parent and 5th grade volunteers to help serve. Parent volunteers help our children make healthy choices and serve. The children love seeing their parents at lunch time!!! Each class is responsible for staffing the salad bar a couple of times a year. The salad bar committee coordinates the staffing of the salad bar in our cafeteria.

Technology - PEP funds a fabulous technology program. Classroom volunteers, typically recruited by teachers, are needed to help address the children's technological needs during class time, including in the computer lab. Technology liaison(s) coordinate school-wide technology updating and upgrading, work with the staff and serve on the Technology Committee.

Physical Education / Tribes - PEP Funds a Physical Education Coach and a Yard Supervisor/Conflict resolution Coach trained in T.R.I.B.E.S., who also work with the 3rd to 5th grade Peace Makers during recess and lunch. In-class-volunteers are not needed, but parent volunteers do serve as liaisons for both the P.E. and T.R.I.B.E.S. program.

Music / Drama – In-class volunteers are not needed for our fabulous PEP-funded music (K-3rd) and drama (4-5th) programs. A parent liaison coordinates these programs and plans our fabulous Spring concerts.

Volunteer Opportunities During Non-School Hours

Here are a few volunteer opportunities that can take place away from school during non-school hours. If there are specific programs that interest you which are not listed here, please contact the PEP chairs, program chairs or volunteer coordinators to inquire whether there are any volunteer opportunities for non-school hours.

Making phone calls and sending emails to support our Annual Giving campaign.

Writing and distributing thank you letters for Auction.

Data entry for, and drafting of the Auction Catalog or Party on Pali.

Solicitation of donations for Auction or Community Supporters.

Baking items for the Hospitality Committee or class events.

Set up, clean up or staffing for one of our weekend or evening events like Yee Haw Days, Bingo Night, Open House or the Auction.

Researching grant opportunities.

Organizing teams and schedules for Olympic Day.