



Dear Community Member,

We would like to invite you to participate in our Community Volunteer Program. We are often asked by parents, and other interested parties, if they can come and “observe” at the school. We have always understood that people want to learn more about Patchwork, but have felt that having people watch just doesn’t give one a good sense of what it is like. Therefore, we have decided that one of the best ways for us to really show you what Patchwork is all about is for you to come and participate in it!

We know that people have backgrounds ranging from little to no experience with children (other than your own if you have them) to experienced teachers, therapists, etc. Therefore, just to make sure we are all on the same page, we ask that you please read through the following in order to help us create a consistent environment for all of our children:

- **How Should I Interact With the Children?**

- o We encourage you to interact with the children! Please introduce yourself by name and ask their names in return. You are then welcome to engage the children in conversation and/or play! In general, it is helpful to get down on the child’s level when interacting.
- o We ask that you encourage children to first try to solve problems on their own, including tying their own shoes or finding their coats.
- o If you witness a conflict, or feel conflicted about an interaction, we encourage you to remember these three steps:
 - 1) **Observe** – don’t jump in if the children are talking things through and working out the problem on their own.
 - 2) **Scaffold** – if they are clearly not making progress, or if you feel things are escalating too far, then say “This doesn’t seem to be working” or ask a question such as “did you want to say stop?” Then, if you feel comfortable helping the children work through the conflict, please go ahead, or feel free to ask a teacher for help.
 - 3) **Mediate** – if you are noticing a repetitive problem, please let a teacher know so that they can help determine if a meeting is in order.
- o In general, we ask you to try to use the language of Non-Violent Communication (from the Marshall Rosenberg book you received at the beginning of the year) whenever possible. As a reminder, NVC consists of
 - Stating your **observations** (or guessing at the other person’s observations)
 - Stating your **feelings** (or guessing at the other person’s feelings)
 - Trying to determine what **needs** aren’t being met
 - Creating a clear **request**

- **What Can I Expect From the Teachers?**

- o The teachers will be trying to give you space to find your own way, just as we do with the children and one another, but if you have any questions, please feel free to ask! Talking with each other is one way that we model good communication!
- o Teachers may also offer you particular jobs or tasks that come up throughout the day, which you are welcome to help with as much or as little as you like.
- o Teachers will also be happy to assist you with any offerings, or hear your thoughts and ideas!

- **Will There be Moments of Crazy?**

- o Yes, there will be chaotic moments every day! This is normal! When children are allowed to feel free, they will at times be loud, crazy, and active! We aren’t trying to stifle or stop them in these cases, we just want to channel the energy such that the “inner wildness” can come out to play without disrupting others. In these moments, the most important way you can help is to remember to breathe! Remaining calm helps the children to regain their sense of calm.

- **How Can I be Helpful?**
 - o Please let us know when you arrive that you will be a Support Volunteer for the day, and check to see if there are any special events, activities, or tasks for the day.
 - o Some great jobs are:
 - Helping children sanitize and wipe tables before and after eating
 - Sweeping the floor after snack and lunch
 - Opening lunch packages and containers (but first encourage the children to try it themselves, to use scissors, or to ask a friend)
 - Putting dishes in the dishwasher (please scrub thoroughly first)
 - Helping with clean-up
 - General tidying throughout the day
 - Helping children with coats, shoes, etc. (again, be sure to encourage them to try it on their own first, or teach them how to do it)
 - Reading books!
 - Playing!
 - Bring an offering – this is not required, but is always wonderful! You can let a teacher know, or just announce your idea in morning meeting.
 - o When you leave, please let us know how your day went and share any feedback or questions!

- **Are There Things I Shouldn't do?**
 - o We ask that you leave diaper changes and potty help to the teachers to ensure that the children are completely comfortable with who is helping them. If a child asks for your help with the potty, please let a teacher know so that they can accompany you.
 - o Also, please don't worry about answering the phone or the door, teachers or directors will handle this type of thing, too.
 - o We will not be doing background checks or fingerprints for Support Volunteers, as we do not expect that you will be entirely alone with children. Teachers will always be close by and checking in regularly.

- **What and Who Should I Bring?**
 - o You can bring just about anything! Bringing something to share is a great idea – just as with the children, though, be sure to find a good place to keep it so it won't get lost or broken! You are welcome to store your belongings in the office closet while you are at school.
 - o We also encourage you to bring pets, babies, older children, grandparents, friends, or anyone else that would like to visit! We just ask that you let us know who you are bringing, that you keep track of these extra people, and where appropriate, let them know how they can participate!

- **Remember that you are a person in the environment, too, so make sure you are taking care of your needs, also!**
 - o You are welcome to sit down and have a bite of snack, to bring a lunch for yourself, and to take water, relaxation, and bathroom breaks as needed!

- **What are the benefits?**
 - o You will be contributing to your community in the most valuable way possible – by offering up yourself and your time!
 - o You will be of great support to the teachers, allowing them to focus more of their time on being with the children, and offering excellent opportunities throughout the day!
 - o You will learn from and alongside the teachers about how to apply the philosophy in real-world situations that can improve your own parenting and/or teaching!

Thank you for considering donating your time – we couldn't do all that we do without you!

I have read the Support Volunteer FAQ and am excited and ready to participate!

Name_____

Signature_____Date____/____/____

Teacher Assistant Volunteer FAQ

- **What are the additional roles/duties for a Teacher Assistant Volunteer?**
 - o Basically we'd like to work with you to choose a particular area of the school that you would like to be responsible for organizing and sanitizing. This could be the dress-up clothes, the block-area, the books, the studio, or any other spot that is of interest to you!
 - o We may also ask you to assist with specific offerings that are happening, or preparation for other projects and activities that may be going on.
 - o In addition, we ask that you assist the teachers in helping any Support Volunteers in learning the daily routine and finding helpful tasks.

- **What is the commitment requirement?**
 - o The minimum requirement is that you attend at least twice per month, and we ask that the maximum be no more than two days per week.
 - o We also ask that you let us know ahead of time if you will not be able to make it, or that morning if you are missing due to an illness.
 - o We ask that you attend as many Learning Dialogues as possible, as these will help you to feel more comfortable with the language and philosophy of the school. In addition, we will occasionally hold extra Teacher Assistant Volunteer workshops that we will ask you to attend.

- **What are the benefits?**
 - o You will be contributing to your community in the most valuable way possible – by offering up yourself and your time!
 - o You will be of great support to the teachers, allowing them to focus more of their time on being with the children, and offering excellent opportunities throughout the day!
 - o You will learn from and alongside the teachers about how to apply the philosophy in real-world situations that can improve your parenting and/or teaching skills!
 - o After volunteering for one year, you will also be eligible to apply for substitute positions at the school.

Thank you for considering donating your time – we couldn't do all that we do without you!



The Patchwork School
Teacher Assistant Volunteer Application

Name _____

Email Address _____

School Year Applying For _____

1. What are your previous experiences (besides Patchwork) working with children?

2. Why do you think The Patchwork School is a good fit for you?

3. What is your preferred schedule and what other options would you consider?

I have read the Support Volunteer & Teacher Assistant FAQ's and am excited and ready to participate!

Signature _____ Date ____/____/____