

Parent Volunteers and Private Elementary Schools

Description

I've been very proud to help our school over the past four years by volunteering in various capacities. To give you an idea of some of the many volunteer activities for parents at private elementary schools, here's a quick summary of my volunteer work at The Willows School:

The Book Fair: When my daughter started kindergarten, I volunteered to solicit and coordinate the food vendors for the Book Fair. This is my favorite Willows School event. It was a lot of work, but also really fun!

Annual Giving: Our first year at the school, I helped raise money for the school during the annual Phone-A-Thon, a parent-to-parent evening of fundraising.

Auction Co-Chair: The next year at the school, I served as co-chair of the school's biggest parent-run fundraiser, the auction. This was a full-time volunteer commitment. The other co-chairs and I started work in August for an event that was scheduled for March! I worked with some really great parents and learned so much about the school in the process. Would I do it again? No way! It's a TON of work and a huge time commitment. There are also a lot of strong personalities involved with an event like this. Despite a few glitches and some *unforgettable* personality clashes (involving me, in case you were wondering), our auction was a big success.

I also co-hosted two really fun auction parties with a friend. Ours was a jazz dance party at Swerve on 3rd St. with lunch from Joan's on Third. Parents sign up for the party and the cost to attend benefits the school.

Annual Giving Class Captain: When my daughter was in second grade, my husband and I became co-captains for the Annual Giving Campaign, which means that we were responsible for raising money from parents in our child's class. I really liked this work and have continued in this role for 3rd grade.

I'm much better volunteering behind the scenes with fundraising or other activities that don't involve the kids. I've never volunteered to read to the kids in the library or chaperone field trips. I don't decorate the classrooms for Halloween or work in the school garden. I just don't have the patience to work with a class full of kids! And, there are always so many other parents who want to volunteer with the kids that I never get asked to do it.

Just Do It! You'll probably try out various volunteer activities before you find something you really like to do to help your school. Some of you are working moms and dads. You'll probably find different volunteer activities than parents who stay at home. That's great. I think one of the most important things is to volunteer, no matter how big or small the project. There's a lot to be done and you'll be needed. My advice? Start slowly. Make sure you're reliable and you'll be asked to

take on larger projects.

We discuss this in our book, but it's worth repeating. Parent volunteers are a much-needed commodity at private schools. If you can lend experience in areas that are needed by the school, you should definitely mention this in your written application and your parent interview. For example, computer skills, graphic design skills, artist, year book experience, fundraising, event planning, restaurant owner, program coordination (i.e. after school program), landscape design for gardening are just a few of the many needs private elementary schools have. If you have any of these skills, let the schools know!

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