



Tips for Involved Parents from Gwinnett County Public Schools

Be There is a national movement that inspires parents to become more involved in their children's education. Teachable moments are everywhere. Be your child's favorite teacher. Connect in meaningful ways and your simple actions will reap immense rewards at home, play, and school!

Encouraging your son or daughter to volunteer

Some very involved teens— **student leaders at North Gwinnett High**— have these tips for parents on encouraging volunteerism in their own son or daughter. And, on the back of this flyer, check out some of the benefits of volunteering, plus suggestions for volunteering as a family from United Way.

- **Encourage your child to get involved in at least one extracurricular activity in school!** Involvement helps your student to...
 - Build interpersonal skills, such as effective communication with others, building empathy, motivating others, and working in groups.
 - Create a more personal, meaningful experience at school. Students feel a sense of purpose, belonging, and connectedness when they get involved.
 - Excel academically by learning valuable skills, such as time management, balancing tasks, prioritizing, and organizational skills.

“ If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.”
Booker T. Washington



- **Give your teen the freedom to choose to get involved where his or her interests and/or skills lie** to create a more authentic, meaningful experience. Avoid pushing students to do something they are not interested in. It is important for them to have your support in how they choose to serve. Students who select their own service activity or organization to support are far more likely to enjoy the experience, stay involved over time, and feel they are making a difference. In fact, a student's passionate volunteer interest in school may become a lifelong cause!
- **Communication is key.** Talk to your teen about his or her volunteer work. Ask questions like these—What's involved in the project or event? What do volunteers do? Who benefits? What have you learned? How do you feel you are making a difference? This shows your child that you care about his or her involvement and are interested in learning about it. Frequent communication also helps develop a closer relationship between parent and child.
- **Get involved yourself!** Model to your child the benefits of school and community involvement and service. Better yet, volunteer alongside your student in some community service initiative. This is an excellent way to learn and grow together!

Promoting volunteerism at home *(continued)*



How volunteerism benefits the student volunteer

Collins Hill High Counselor Margaret Cheeley sees these benefits for students who volunteer:

- Students develop positive self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.
- They learn the value of hard work by helping others.
- Student are better able to put their own problems into perspective.
- They learn and master valuable skills for future use.
- Students gain a positive and meaningful addition for their college application or resume.
- They learn life skills, such as responsibility, organizational skills, and leadership.
- Students learn about the importance of giving back and see how they can make a difference.
- They have contact with positive adult role models.
- Students expand their awareness of the world beyond their own experience.
- They receive inner satisfaction from helping others.

A few more benefits cited by United Way...

- Volunteering helps teach social responsibility. Students develop empathy and compassion.
- Teen volunteers are less likely to be involved in risky behaviors and more likely to make healthy life choices.
- Teens who volunteer, or who are influenced by an adult volunteer, are more likely to volunteer when they are adults.
- Students see first-hand how they can improve the community in which they live.

United Way's 'Top 10 signs of a family-friendly volunteer experience'

- Activity accommodates various ages, skills, and interests.
- Flexible scheduling works for whole family.
- The activity has a direct, visible impact on quality-of-life issues like education, health, or home.
- Families have an opportunity to reflect on the activity and their feelings.
- The activity requires a limited time commitment.
- Families are introduced to new experiences and environments.
- Participants interact with other families volunteering.
- Children and youth receive on-site training.
- Easy-to-read and understandable instructions are provided.
- It's active and fun!

Before, during, and after your family volunteer experience

More tips from United Way...

- **Start slow.** Try one-time or short-term activities.
- **Volunteer with other family groups** through PTA, religious organizations, neighborhood events, or workplace opportunities.
- **Ask questions** to assess the best fit. Why do you want to volunteer? Who do you want to help? How frequently can you volunteer? What talents and skills can your family offer? What do you want the family to learn from the experience? Is the project age-appropriate and family-friendly?
- **Supervise your child during the activity** to ensure his or her safety as well as a good volunteer experience for everyone.
- **Reflect on your volunteer activity together.** Talk about your reactions on the way home or over dinner. Keep a journal with photos and stories from your volunteer activities.



*Together, we will be there for our students—
Gwinnett County Public Schools and YOU!*

Make the ordinary extraordinary!

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Ready to volunteer?

Look for opportunities through your school, faith group, or other community organization or enter your zip code at www.LiveUnited.org/Volunteer to find ways to volunteer nearby.