

Volunteer Handbook



THINK
Together

2007 - 2008

THINK Together
Volunteer Department



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WELCOME TO THINK Together!!!

THINK stands for Teaching, Helping, Inspiring, & Nurturing Kids. THINK Together is a network of after school programs established to help students who are academically performing far below grade level and/or at risk of leaving school prior to graduation. Thank you for participating in THINK Together's mission:

To provide high quality academically-oriented after school programs for K-12 students regardless of race, creed, or socioeconomic status.

Volunteer tutors may work with these students by focusing on English/language arts, math or science. In addition to homework assistance and academic intervention, THINK Together provides enrichment activities that promote character development and social responsibility, nutrition education and physical activity.

Volunteers are highly valued at THINK Together. Volunteering just one or two hours a week can make a tremendous difference in the life of a student. Our volunteers serve as role models for our students, offering diversity of background, interests, gifts and talents. Through one on one support and encouragement, volunteers promote social interaction and forge positive relationships among students and their peers. All volunteers are trained and supported by THINK Together staff. We are deeply committed to making your experience with THINK Together a rewarding one.

We appreciate your honest feedback and input for the continuous improvement of our service, and encourage your suggestions and questions at all times.



Who Works with THINK Together?

Employees and volunteers may be subject to the following screening requirements: tuberculosis (TB) test, background check and official identification (driver's license, social security card, photo I.D).

VOLUNTEERS

Community Volunteers

We have many volunteers who are working adults and give their time to help the youth in our programs. Adults come from the community and from local colleges and universities (but are not volunteering for a class). Other adults are semi-retired or retired and are often members of partnering faith based organizations and community groups.

Youth Volunteers

These are students from local elementary, middle and high schools who are interested in giving back to the community and work as volunteer tutors. Youth volunteers are most effective working with students in grades 1-5.

College Student Volunteers

These students come from local colleges and universities. They may be completing field work or an internship for a course and/or credit. Most of these volunteers work with us for at least 10-18 weeks as part of their educational experience.

EMPLOYEES

Site Coordinator

The Site Coordinator manages the overall structure and supervision of the program. In addition, the Site Coordinator maintains relationships with educational and community partners, including volunteers and parents of students.

Program Leader

A Program Leader manages a group of 20-22 students and monitors the interactions among these students and volunteers. Program Leaders usually work 15-20 hours per week.

Work Study Employee

The Work-Study program provides jobs for undergraduate and graduate students, a form of financial aid allowing them to earn money to help pay for educational expenses. The program encourages community service work and work related to the students' courses of study. Work-Study employees may have increased responsibilities due to their work experience.

Americorp Member

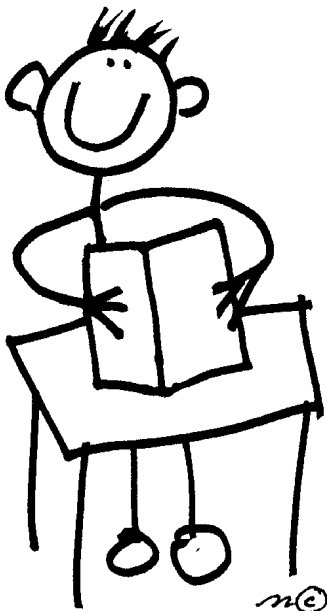
Americorp Members serve as specialists in academic tutoring, character education/service learning, and physical education. Americorp members often fill the role of Program Leader at a site or may have increased responsibilities due to their work experience.



THINK Together Program Components

THINK Together provides students with an after school experience which is healthy, safe and conducive to learning. The following program components support our goal of bridging the academic achievement gap that exists between students. These components facilitate interaction and support from our team of staff and volunteers:

- Healthy snack
- Homework help and tutoring
- Academic enrichment – THINK Together utilizes a variety of supplementary curricula in areas such as math, literacy, the arts, and science
- Other enrichment activities (including cultural and seasonal celebrations, leadership workshops, presentations and seminars)
- Physical Activity (structured, vigorous, and includes nutrition education)



The structure of our programs may vary from site to site. Generally, our community sites have a less rigid schedule than our school sites and focus heavily on homework assistance, while our school sites incorporate all of the above components.



Volunteer Policies

Participating in the development and growth of the children at our sites is a tremendous privilege and responsibility. Creating and maintaining an environment that is safe, healthy, and conducive to learning is of utmost importance. Therefore, we expect all participants to adhere to the following policies. If at any time you become aware of any violations of, or lack of compliance with these policies, please inform the Site Coordinator.

SAFETY POLICIES

- THINK Together staff is responsible for the supervision of the program site. At no time are volunteers left alone with children; a paid staff member must be present.
- Keep students within your field of vision at all times. Therefore, doors, window shades, and curtains are to remain open during operating hours, whenever possible.
- Strict confidentiality concerning personal matters of the students, staff and volunteers must be practiced at all times. This includes student records, home addresses, telephone numbers, health information, files and reports, as well as any personal matters a student confides to another individual. The only instance in which a volunteer may break this policy is if a student's health, safety, and/or well being are in danger.
- Any suspicion of neglect or sexual, physical, or emotional abuse should be reported to the Site Coordinator. Proper documentation and reporting of such incidents are the sole responsibility of the Site Coordinator. An incident report will be sent to the THINK Together main office, following an immediate phone call to the proper authorities (Child Abuse Registry, Police Dept.)
- For the protection of the children, volunteers and staff, THINK Together does not promote or sanction socializing or association with program participants under 18 outside of THINK Together activities.
- Volunteers are not to use restrooms designated for students. The Site Coordinator will identify restroom locations for volunteer use at the On-Site Orientation. Check with your Site Coordinator for specific restroom protocol at your site.
- Accidents causing bodily harm are to be reported to the Site Coordinator, who will take proper care in following standard emergency procedures.

- Volunteers who themselves suffer a potentially serious injury should report the injury to the Site Coordinator when it happens. If you need assistance in getting to a doctor, please request it. Do not endanger yourself or others by driving if you are dizzy, faint or otherwise unable to drive whether or not the condition is related to work.
- Check with your Site Coordinator for safety training and evacuation procedures at your site. If you are EMT or CPR certified, please inform your Site Coordinator on your first site visit.
- If the emergency contact information you initially provided on your application changes, please notify your Site Coordinator immediately.
- Safety conditions largely derive from common sense and diligence related to behavior and work environment. Students must be supervised to play and study safely. Inappropriate running, climbing, game playing, pushing, et cetera must be stopped.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Appropriate language, manner, and conduct at the site are expected at all times. The following are examples of inappropriate conduct:
 - ☐ Cursing, derogatory and offensive remarks
 - ☐ Bullying, threatening comments or intimidating gestures
 - ☐ Use or display of tobacco, sexual materials, drugs and alcohol
 - ☐ Sexually oriented discussions, jokes, questions or gestures
- Relationships among all participants in the THINK Together programs must be maintained in a respectful and professional manner.
 - ☐ Inappropriate physical contact and flirtatious behavior is unacceptable.
 - ☐ Staff and volunteers are never to initiate physical contact with the students. Remember, some people do not like to be touched. Respect boundaries.
 - ☐ Physical displays of affection and approval should be offered with the utmost discretion (a handshake or pat on the shoulder are the most appropriate).
- For security purposes:
 - ☐ All volunteers must sign in and out each time they attend the THINK Together program, indicating arrival and departure times. Please note sign-in procedures will vary at each site.
 - ☐ All volunteers must wear a name/identification tag while at the site.
 - ☐ If you notice any suspicious activity while you are at your site, please alert your supervisor immediately.
- Regular volunteer attendance is important to consistently provide high-quality services. Should you be unable to attend your site due to a schedule conflict or illness, please call the Site Coordinator as early as possible. Vacations or other absences should also be communicated as far in advance as feasible to allow for substitute coverage to be arranged.
- All outside materials and resources not endorsed by THINK Together must be cleared by the Site Coordinator before distribution (i.e. pamphlets, flyers, fundraisers, et cetera).

- Please refrain from cell phone use while working on site. If you are expecting an important phone call, please notify your supervisor that you will need to keep your cell phone with you for the duration of your visit.

DRESS CODE

Volunteers serve as role models for students and should maintain professional standards of dress and grooming. We encourage volunteers to wear clothing that demonstrates their high regard for education and presents an image consistent with their volunteer responsibilities. As you will be working with young and impressionable minds, we require that you dress casually, yet modestly. Remember, you *may* be active on site, playing games or sitting on the floor in a reading circle (as examples), and should dress accordingly.

In accordance with the dress code stated below, the Site Coordinator will ultimately determine appropriate attire for the site in consideration of the specific school district or church dress code policies and those of THINK Together.

1. **Pants** for men and women should not be overly tight or low cut. Excessively baggy or sagging pants are prohibited. Jeans must be in good repair, of suitable length (not dragging on the ground) and clean. Undergarments must not show. Capri-length pants are acceptable.
2. **Skirts** or skorts must be no shorter than just above the knee.
3. **Tops** for men and women must tuck into or significantly overlap the top of pants or skirts. Women's tops must completely cover underwear and underwear straps, not be so tight that underwear is outlined, be high enough at the neck to cover all cleavage when standing or bending over, and not be transparent. Women may wear sleeveless shirts provided underwear is not exposed. Spaghetti-strap or halter-tops are not allowed.
4. Beanies, caps and hoods are not allowed. Head coverings worn for religious observances are allowed. Shade hats or caps may be worn for sun or heat protection when working outdoors.
5. Attire that includes subject matter, language or images that are harassing, discriminatory, vulgar or obscene in the view of THINK Together management is also prohibited.
6. Excessive face jewelry is not allowed. No lip or mouth jewelry may be worn. Visible tattooed art that is, solely in the view of THINK Together, vulgar or inappropriate must be covered.
7. Hair must be tidy; facial hair must be neat and trimmed.
8. **Shorts** must be no shorter than mid-thigh and of appropriate cut to provide for modesty during active periods.
9. Reasonable exceptions to the general dress code may be made for field trips or for special requirements with the approval of management.
10. All volunteers must wear **closed-toed shoes on site**. Tennis or sport shoes are recommended; however, flats and closed-toed sandals; open-backed clogs, tennis shoes or mules; loafers; lace ups; boots or other closed-toed shoes are permitted. Flip-flops and high-heeled shoes are prohibited at sites for safety reasons.

No-Harassment Policy & Response Actions

THINK Together is committed to providing a work environment that is free of unlawful harassment and the Organization strictly prohibits all forms of unlawful harassment, which includes harassment on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, actual or perceived gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, uniformed service member status, marital status, pregnancy, age, protected medical condition, handicap or disability or association with a person in a protected category or any other category protected by applicable state or federal law.

Harassment may be physical, visual or verbal in nature and also includes unwanted sexual advances. As examples only, harassment can include unwelcome touching, massaging, hugging; sexual joking, questions or references; sexual cartoons, magazines, pictures, photos.

The Organization's policy against harassment applies to all employees and volunteers of the Organization, and prohibits managers, supervisors and employees from harassing co-workers as well as the Organization's customers, vendors, suppliers, independent contractors, volunteers and others doing business with the Organization. In addition, the Organization prohibits its customers, vendors, suppliers, independent contractors, volunteers and others doing business with the Organization from harassing our employees and students.

What You Should Do If You Feel You Are, Or Have Been, Harassed

If you feel that you are being harassed by another employee, supervisor, manager, volunteer or third party doing business with the Organization, you should immediately contact the Site Coordinator, Executive Director, or any member of management with whom you are comfortable speaking. In addition, if you observe harassment by another employee, supervisor, manager or non-employee, please report the incident immediately to the Site Coordinator or another manager with whom you are comfortable.

Your notification of the problem is essential to us. We cannot help resolve a harassment problem unless we know about it. Therefore, it is your responsibility to bring your concerns and/or problems to our attention so that we can take whatever steps are necessary to address the situation. The Organization takes all complaints of unlawful harassment seriously and will not penalize you or retaliate against you in any way for reporting a harassment problem in good faith.

All complaints of unlawful harassment that are reported to management will be investigated as promptly as possible and corrective action will be taken where warranted. Appropriate action will also be taken in response to violation of this policy by any non-employee.

All complaints of unlawful harassment that are reported to management will be treated with as much confidentiality as possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.



Frequently Asked Questions from Volunteers

1. What are my role and responsibilities?

Your role at the site is to model a positive attitude while helping students with their homework and other activities, and to encourage students to make positive choices that will help them achieve their academic goals, perhaps even to discover new ones! The responsibilities of a volunteer are to help students complete their homework and facilitate small groups working on special tasks.

2. Who is my direct supervisor?

Your direct supervisor is your Site Coordinator. He/she may appoint supplementary supervisors if need be. It is important that you feel connected to the site and feel free to approach the Site Coordinator with any praise, concerns, or suggestions you may have.

3. How can I help English Language Learners?

If you experience difficulty communicating with a student because of language barriers, you may ask your Site Coordinator for appropriate instruction or alternatives.

4. Am I making a difference with the student's education if I am only there once a week?

This is a very common question. The answer is yes! Several attempts may not reach the student, but that one visit could. Be patient in measuring "progress" with students. You may not see results until the end of the school year. You are making a difference!

5. What do I do when I am asked to do other activities such as play basketball with the kids at the site when I really want to tutor?

While some volunteers may enjoy playing basketball with the students, others may not. It is important to let your Site Coordinator know where you would feel most comfortable. Many volunteers make special arrangements in their schedules specifically to help students with their homework. This intention should be honored. If ever you are uncomfortable with a volunteering task, please share your concerns with the Site Coordinator.

6. Who is responsible for notifying me of schedule changes?

Site Coordinators are responsible for communicating dates the site will be closed, which may include national holidays, school staff development days, or THINK Together staff development days. Most sites are closed for two weeks in December during Winter Holiday and one week in April for Spring Break. School-based sites are open until 6pm every day that school is in session, including minimum days and conference weeks; the program may begin early on some days. If ever in doubt, please address any inquiries to the Site Coordinator.

7. What do I do if I feel a child might have special needs?

If after a span of time tutoring the same child you suspect he/she may have special needs that have been overlooked, you should bring it to the attention of the Site Coordinator.

8. Can you give me any tutoring tips I can use while I'm volunteering at the site?

Yes! Let's go over some right now. Please turn the page...



Tutoring Tips

- Take the initiative! Do not always wait for a student to ask you for help; engage the student by asking open-ended questions.
- After you have done a couple of example problems with the student, encourage him/her to work independently. Periodically return to check on their progress.
- Do not give the student the answer! Instead, help the student figure out solutions with you "leading the way."
- Provide continuous, appropriate feedback and recognition.

Examples of open-ended / leading questions:

- Can you explain to me how you got that answer?
- What is the question asking you to find?
- How did you do the last problem?
- Did you read the example? Was there any part of the example that was difficult for you to understand?
- Can you explain in your own words what you just read?





Photo Release

I hereby give THINK Together, its legal representatives and assigns, the right and permission to publish photographs or videotapes that may include me that are taken at headquarters, during center activities or at special events sponsored by THINK Together. Should I appear in any such photos or videotapes, THINK Together is in no way responsible to remunerate me during my employment or volunteer period or afterward under any circumstances. Such photos and videotapes may be used in publications, audio-visual presentations, promotional literature, advertising or any other manner.

I hereby warrant that I (or the undersigned parent/guardian) am over (18) years of age and am competent to contract in my own name so far as the above material is concerned.

Yes, I give THINK Together permission to use my pictures

No, I do NOT give THINK Together permission to use my pictures

Acknowledgement of Volunteer Policies

I have read and agree to comply with THINK Together standards and policies as stated in this handbook dated January 2007, especially regarding the code of conduct, dress code, safety practices and harassment reporting.

Printed Name of Volunteer

Signature of Volunteer

Date

If *under 18*, Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

(Please detach this form and submit to the Volunteer Development Department signed and dated.)