

Gifted and Talented Enrichment Program Volunteer Training Handbook 2012-2013



Information and Training for Volunteers in Thompson School District's Gifted and Talented Enrichment Program Offerings 2012-2013 School Year

Program: _____
School-Level Program Sponsor (TSD Staff): _____
Other School-Level Program Coordinator(s): _____
District-Level Program Coordinator: _____
Enrichment Program Coordinator (GT Office): _____ Jennifer Solt, jennifer.solt@thompsonschoools.org, 970-613-5057

Welcome

Above all else, thank you! Your involvement in our enrichment programs provides essential guidance, supervision, and educational leadership on behalf of our students.

The Thompson School District's Gifted and Talented Office currently oversees and coordinates six district-sponsored enrichment programs: chess, MathCounts, robotics, Odyssey of the Mind, Shadows in the Arts, and spelling. In addition, the office organizes and oversees the Summer in Thompson: Experience in Math and Science (ST-EMS) program. Our six enrichment programs each have at least one district-level program coordinator who is a paid consultant through the district and who oversees the details of the enrichment program. Our district teaching staff and volunteers keep the wheels turning on these programs that engage hundreds of district students each year.

While we believe that district-sponsorship of these enrichment programs provides the best equity in access for all Thompson School District students to these programs, provides the best safety and liability protection for both participants and volunteers, keeps us consistent with one another and fair in our competitiveness from team to team and school to school, we recognize that not all teams may be able to operate under the parameters of the district requirements. Therefore, the coaches, students, and families of each individual team must determine whether or not district-sponsorship is a good fit for their individual team. An "Agreement for Sponsorship or Support" form must be submitted to the district's GT office prior to the first team practice or meeting with kids. This form asks whether the team intends to be a district-sponsored team or not. Once submitted, this designation of district-sponsorship or non-district sponsorship cannot be changed until the following school year.

Any team choosing the district-sponsored designation must agree to abide by any current governing TSD policies and guidelines. For the purposes of convenience and clarity, the primary policies and guidelines governing our enrichment programs are outlined in this packet but are not limited to what is located here. In this document Gifted and Talented is abbreviated as "GT," the Thompson School District is abbreviated "TSD," and the Board of Education is abbreviated "BOE" in all future references. All district policies are available at the TSD website: <http://thompson.k12.co.us/>.

If you have any questions regarding volunteering in GT enrichment programs, please contact the district's GT Enrichment Program Coordinator Jennifer Solt at jennifer.solt@thompsonschoools.org or 970-613-5057.

Screening and Training

On January 18, 2012, the TSD BOE approved a new policy which requires ALL volunteers in the district to register online and submit to a criminal background check and to update their profiles annually. This registration and clearance or update must be completed prior to beginning volunteer service. This check is required not only for those helping out on a regular basis in the classroom, or coaching a team, it is also required for those who serve at one-day district sponsored events. These guidelines are governed through TSD BOE Policy KJ, located in the appendix.

1. Volunteers may not work with children until they are issued a volunteer badge through the district. This badge must be worn at all times the individual is in service as a volunteer with TSD.
2. If required district or organizational training is offered for this program, any supervising adults (including all volunteers) will attend for every program and in every year he/she volunteers.

Instructions for Registering as a Volunteer:

1. To register, volunteers should go to the district website, www.thompsonschoools.org and click on "Volunteer Registration" listed under "Quick Links" on the home page. The registration process is easy and takes less than five minutes.
2. Volunteers will be instructed to create a Username (we suggest using your e-mail address) and Password. Be sure to remember both!
3. Once registered, volunteers do not need to re-register when their students move up to middle or high school or if their volunteer information changes. Volunteers can update their profiles at any time by logging on to the district website, www.thompsonschoools.org and then choosing Parent (or Community) > Volunteer from the drop-down menu on the home page. Choose "Update your Profile" from the box on the VITAL page. Log in using the User Name and Password originally set up and then choose from the list shown to make the appropriate changes. Be sure to save the changes.

Program Purpose

According to the TSD "Guidelines for Conducting Co-Curricular Activities (Outside Regular School Hours)" (Appendix 1A), "district-sponsored activities are considered extensions of the classroom or school setting and, as such, must be age-appropriate for the participants involved and within the abilities of that specific group." Our enrichment programs are learning opportunities that are meant to enrich a child's understanding of the curriculum he or she engages during school hours.

While the programs themselves contain guidelines that are prescreened to ensure their educational and age-level fit in our district, be aware that this is a minimum expectation for any district-sponsored enrichment program. If at any time, you feel concern about the educational quality or age- or ability-appropriateness of your activities, please contact the district GT office.

Supervision Expectations

According to TSD BOE policy JJ-R (see appendix), all activities must be supervised. This supervision for enrichment activities includes at least one faculty advisor (sponsor) who supervises, directs and attends all team practices, meetings, activities, or gatherings. Additional supervision may be required to maintain a safe environment.

Sponsors or coaches of enrichment programs may be either a district employee or a volunteer who is under the direct control and supervision of a district employee. Please note that a volunteer registration with the school district does not make it legal for a volunteer to be alone with children.

In addition, the following statements set standards for supervision expectations based on Appendix 1A, the Risk Management Handbook for Coaches and Sponsors (available under Athletics and Activities at the TSD website), and Appendix JJ-R.

1. If your program takes place outside of the normal school day, when children are present you must have two adults present at all times to provide leadership and supervision.
 - a. It is highly suggested these adults be unrelated.
 - b. If one adult is absent and another district employee (or pre-screened volunteer) is unavailable, the meeting or activity must be canceled for that day.
2. Adults will create and maintain a safe environment. They are also responsible for reporting injuries or concerns. Details of the expectations for a safe environment are available in Appendix 1A.
3. Supervision is required at all times and in all places. **If you can't see the students, they're not being supervised.**

District and GT expectations for volunteers follow what we know about best practices in volunteer and child safety. They include the following additional points:

1. District-sponsored groups hold meetings, practices, and rehearsals on school property. Personal residences are not to be used for this purpose. There are **no exceptions** to this policy for district-sponsored teams/groups.
2. Leaders should perform a quick site check before students arrive to ensure the location, furniture, or equipment is appropriate and safe for the intended use.
 - a. If there are any immediate safety concerns, the meeting should be canceled until school officials can remedy the problem.
 - i. Other non-threatening concerns should be shared with the school principal and district staff supervising the program as soon as possible. Please see the "Safety Hazards Report Form" in Appendix 2A.
 - b. Leaders should be comfortable with all emergency evacuation or lock-down procedures.
3. Before working with children, volunteers should check with the school-level program sponsor to understand the boundaries of what resources and facilities can and cannot be used and what expectations are in place for caring for the facility, including clean-up, shutting down equipment, locking doors, closing windows, and turning off lights. It is the leaders' responsibility to ensure all school, district, and classroom rules and policies are upheld at all times.
4. Leaders and groups should not meet behind closed doors/windows. Whenever practical, keep room door(s) open. If a door must be closed, keep other sightlines open into the room. In other words, do not block visibility into the rooms where adults and children are meeting together.
5. Groups will not hold practices on school breaks, holidays, or other times when the schools are closed, unless specific written permission and arrangements are made in advance with the district program coordinator, the school's principal, and the district GT office. These requests are not typically granted and may require different guidelines and fees. Meeting on-site on the weekends is based on supervision and building use availability. This must be approved by the building principal.
6. Please be familiar with fire evacuation routes and review these with your group at your first meeting. Be aware of the location of tornado shelters, emergency phones, and AEDs. Finally, discuss school lock-down procedures with your supervising staff member.
7. The best thing you can do on behalf of the kids, your program and yourself is to document, document, document.

Facility Requests

All meetings and other activities that occur within a district facility must be booked through the district. District sponsored teams should call Jennifer Solt in the GT Office to book a room at an individual school building or book the room through the school's main office. Non-district sponsored teams must book through the Facility Use Office (970-613-5351) and use charges will apply. These procedures are outlined in the district's website. As of October 1, 2011, the district assigns Event Staff to all events through the Facilities Department. If you have specific requests or need assistance, please contact the GT Office.

Membership

District-sponsored teams cannot self-select its members. Participation in the team must be open to all students from the school as space is available. Memberships open only to recruited members does not provide equitable opportunities and does not support the district vision statement. Student participation must be voluntary. Details of organizational membership are discussed in Appendix JJA.

Transportation

Transportation to and from regular meetings, rehearsals, and practices is the responsibility of the legal parents or guardians of each participant. For liability and supervision reasons, staff and volunteers are not expected or encouraged to provide transportation in personal vehicles for these regular meetings to any participant beyond his/her legal children or children.

Transportation to and from district sponsored events (such as meets and tournaments) is discussed in the TSD Risk Management Handbook for Coaches and Sponsors (available under Athletics and Activities at the TSD website), which states, "TSD generally provides district transportation for students to and from a great many activities and events. However, the district is unable to provide district transportation in all circumstances and to all events or activities."

Below, in the order of preference, are the acceptable means of transporting participants.

1. District vehicles driven by district drivers
 - a. A school bus or small vehicle (15 or less capacity) driven by a professional operator
 - b. Small vehicle operator training classes are offered by reservation through TSD's transportation services.
2. District staff arranged transportation in private vehicles, utilizing volunteer drivers over the age of 21. This must be cleared through the district office (begin with the GT office) and specific permission forms and guidelines govern this. The TSD Risk Management Handbook for Coaches and Sponsors provides additional details (available under Athletics and Activities at the TSD website).

Permission forms are required for any travel besides travel to and from the practice site, **including travel to local events**. Please make sure these permissions are on file for every participant prior to traveling.

Out-of-State and Overnight Travel

If you think there is any possibility your team will qualify for travel out of state or overnight for tournaments, please submit the paperwork requesting permission to travel first thing in the fall semester (or the previous spring). This allows the district and your team to be in clear communication from the beginning, it allows you to receive permission early enough to begin fundraising, and it minimizes scheduling hurdles or other conflicts that often arise with last minute requests. Even once permission to travel is granted, you may still make the decision to cancel the trip.

Personnel in the District GT Office are available to help with the pre-approval to travel paperwork. Estimations based on past years and current circumstances are allowed and can be changed before final travel approval. The policies governing such travel are outlined in Appendix IJOA and IJOA-R.

Overnight trips within the state and out-of-state trips must be approved by the principal and the superintendent or designee. If the trip is out-of-state, it must be determined:

1. that the trip or a similar trip is not available within the state,
2. that the trip is a national event and that participants are members of a state charter and/or participation has been earned through exceptional performance or by exclusive invitation based on merit.

The request for approval of overnight and out-of-state student travel must be submitted at least 30 days before the date of the trip. The 30 day time requirement is waived when a team or student participating in a competitive activity advances to the next level of competition and there is less than 30 days available. Please see the note above about applying early in the school year.

Additional guidelines and policies specific to overnight and out-of-state student travel exist and must be followed. If your group/program anticipates this kind of travel, please contact the GT Office for more information, again, prior to the start of your program season, if possible.

Permission Slips and Family Communications

Both for liability and communication reasons, **all participants of the program must have written permission by a legal parent or guardian to participate in an enrichment program.** These are available from the district coordinator for your program.

It's the responsibility of the school-level program sponsor and program volunteers to ensure that all participants have this permission on file.

Permission forms for any trip or event should be forwarded to the GT Office after the trip or event has concluded. From there they are passed on to the insurance/risk management office. Likewise, permission *forms to participate* in the program should be sent to the GT Office *following* the program season.

Discipline

Verbal or physical intimidation, including corporal punishment, should not be used as a form of discipline. Acceptable force is defined under six categories, according to Policy JKA, and cannot be used outside of these purposes:

1. To prevent a student from an act of wrong-doing
2. To quell a disturbance threatening physical injury to self or others
3. To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects that are within the control of a student
4. For the purpose of self-defense
5. For the protection of persons or property
6. To maintain discipline

No force that restricts a student's freedom of movement involuntarily can be applied for more than five minutes.

Be clear about your expectations and rules from the beginning and remind students periodically of what they are. A good rule of thumb is to praise publically and punish privately.

Discipline procedures vary from program to program and grade level to grade level. Your school-level program sponsor or district-level program coordinator will provide additional information specific to the group you are leading.

Please be familiar with the TSD Code of Conduct (Appendix JICDA).

Reporting Incidents

Reporting accidents and injuries is an important, and necessary, part of your job as a volunteer. The district uses these reports to track student and guest injuries to identify trends and potential gaps in safety training or enforcement of safety rules. The information provided on the injury report is not a medical diagnosis but is based on the injured individual's description of symptoms.

Please make sure you have the Activity Emergency Form on file (copied to the back of the permission form), see Appendix 3B. Appendix 4A and 4B contains the incident reporting forms.

Reporting Child Abuse

District employees are required by law and by Board of Education policy JLF to report any known or suspected child abuse or neglect or circumstances or conditions that would lead to abuse or neglect.

As an adult in direct care of our district's children, please note that you may receive information that leads you to know or suspect abuse of a child. You do not need to have proof, nor shall you investigate the claim, but you do have a responsibility to confidentially report this information to any district employee (preferably the one in charge of supervision for your activity) or to child protective services as soon as possible.

Communicating Concerns

If you have concerns about the students, the families, the staff, the program, or the facility, please contact one of the names on the first page of this packet. Your district-level program coordinator may also provide names of others in the organization. Please allow those who can make decisions know of your concerns so they can be addressed and/or resolved.

Fundraising

Specific state and district laws and policies govern fundraising for district-sponsored groups and activities. Please contact the GT Office before embarking on ANY fundraising activities.

Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco

The use, manufacturing, possession, sale, or being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances (as defined by federal, not state, law) while volunteering with TSD is prohibited.

The use of tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco and any other product that contains or is derived from tobacco and is intended to be ingested or inhaled by or applied to the skin of an individual, is prohibited while on district property. See BOE Policies ADB, GBEC, and ADC.