

MAGGIE L. WALKER GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL

1000 N. Lombardy St., Richmond, VA 23220

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



CONTENTS

● Executive Director’s Welcome	Page 3
● Introduction to Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School	Page 4
● Enrollment and Faculty	Page 4
● The MLWGS Experience	Page 4
● Our Mission	Page 4
● Our Vision	Page 4
● Practical Information	Page 5
● Volunteer Description	Page 5
● How to Apply to Become a Volunteer	Page 6
● After Orientation/Training	Page 6
● Student Interaction Guidelines	Page 7
● Student Confidentiality and Privacy	Page 8
● Dress Code	Page 9
● Key Reminders for Volunteers	Page 10
● Emergencies	Page 10
● Telephones	Page 10
● Drug and Alcohol Free School	Page 10
● Page Left Intentionally Blank	Page 11

Welcome to the Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School! As the Executive Director, I serve with deep gratitude and tremendous excitement in a school community rooted in excellence, purpose, and pride.

This handbook is designed to serve as a practical guide throughout the year. I encourage you to pay special attention to the sections highlighted in **bold**, as they contain key information to support your daily work and uphold the standards expected of all professionals in our building.

As we move forward together, let us draw inspiration from the legacy of our namesake, Maggie L. Walker, who reminded us: *“It is an awful thing to hide our talent in the ground and refuse to use it.”* Her words challenge each of us to lead with purpose and to fully share our gifts with our students, our colleagues, and our community.

The four pillars of The Walker Way are courage, compassion, community, and collaboration. These values are more than just ideals; they are active commitments that shape how we engage with one another and carry out our work each day.

Equally essential is our shared commitment to professionalism. This includes maintaining respectful communication, demonstrating preparedness and reliability, adhering to school policies, supporting one another as colleagues, and modeling integrity and excellence for our students. These are not just expectations; they are the cornerstones of a thriving, high-performing learning environment.

Our collective dedication to our students, to each other, and to the broader MLWGS community makes this school truly extraordinary. I am honored to walk beside you as we embark on a year grounded in purpose and possibility.

Your warmth, patience, and consistency help students feel valued and capable. Thank you for being a positive role model in their lives!

With pride,

Kristin K. Janssen
Executive Director



INTRODUCTION

The Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School for Government and International Studies is a regional public magnet high school that brings together academically advanced students from fourteen school divisions across Central Virginia. The school was created to offer a challenging and interdisciplinary curriculum that prepares young people to think critically, understand global systems, and contribute meaningfully to civic life. This purpose remains central to our work today.

ENROLLMENT AND FACULTY

The school enrolls approximately seven hundred eighty students in grades nine through twelve. The faculty includes sixty-seven full-time teachers, eight part-time teachers, and several university-affiliated instructors. The combination of experienced educators, varied professional backgrounds, and a strong commitment to interdisciplinary instruction supports a learning environment that encourages curiosity, inquiry, and academic independence.

THE MLWGS EXPERIENCE

The experience at the Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School is defined by a commitment to interdisciplinary learning, advanced world language study, research and mentorship opportunities, a rich variety of academic and cultural clubs, and a strong tradition of community engagement. Students participate in debate, robotics, music ensembles, competitive academic teams, student publications, service clubs, and global studies research. These activities encourage leadership, creativity, and collaboration and contribute to a well-rounded and vibrant school community.

MISSION

The Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School for Government and International Studies provides rigorous, inclusive, and interdisciplinary educational experiences that cultivate curiosity, creativity, and civic engagement. Within a welcoming and collaborative community, the school promotes global awareness and ethical leadership. Guided by integrity, empathy, and The Walker Way, the school prepares well-rounded learners who think critically, lead with courage, and contribute meaningfully to their communities and to the wider world.

VISION

The Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School for Government and International Studies will be recognized as a model of innovative and globally minded education. The school seeks to inspire graduates who value lifelong learning, demonstrate fluency in cultures and languages, and serve their communities with purpose and integrity. Students will leave the school as bold thinkers and compassionate citizens who are equipped to shape a more connected and thoughtful world.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Outlined in this section is information on personnel policies and guidelines that a volunteer should be aware of as an employee of Maggie L. Walker Governor's School.

A. Important Phone Numbers

Assistant Director - Max Smith	804-354-6800x2120
Assistant Director – Lisa Williams	804-354-6800x2110
School Secretary/Receptionist Valenta Williams	804-354-6800x1000
Human Resources: Barbara Marshall	804-354-6800x2190
Activities Director: Paige Hawkins	804-354-6800x1440
Security	804-354-6800x1001, x1003

B. Regional School Board Policies: <http://mlwgs.com/welcome-to-mlwgs/regional-school-board/constitution-by-laws-and-policies/>

C. Operating Calendar: <http://mlwgs.com/calendar/>

VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

Title: Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Volunteer

Location: Richmond, Virginia

Commitment: Flexible, typically 2–10 hours per week (during school hours or after-school programs)

Reports to: Designated Teacher or Staff Member

Orientation/Training: Required

Duration: Ongoing (semester or school-year commitment preferred, but short-term opportunities available)

Role Overview: As a School Volunteer, you will support students, teachers, and staff in creating a positive, engaging, and productive learning environment. Volunteers play a vital role in enhancing educational experiences, mentoring students, and assisting with school activities.

Key Responsibilities

- Assist teachers in the classroom (e.g., helping with small group instruction, reading support, or hands-on activities)
- Tutor or mentor individual students or small groups in academic subjects (math, reading, science, writing, etc.)
- Support after-school programs, clubs, or extracurricular activities (e.g., sports events, art club, debate team, STEM workshops)

- Help with administrative tasks (organizing materials, preparing classroom resources, filing, or data entry)
- Chaperone field trips or school events
- Assist in the library, computer lab, or career/college counseling center
- Support special events (school fairs, parent nights, award ceremonies, fundraising activities)
- Serve as a positive role model, promoting respect, responsibility, and enthusiasm for learning

Qualifications & Requirements

- Must be 18 years or older (or a responsible high school senior/college student with approval)
- Pass a background check (required by most schools for child safety) and TB Screening
- Enthusiasm for working with teenagers and a genuine interest in education
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Patience, reliability, and a non-judgmental attitude
- Subject-specific expertise welcomed but not required (e.g., math, science, languages, arts, technology)
- Commitment to confidentiality regarding student information
- Completion of any required school volunteer training/orientation

Benefits of Volunteering

- Make a meaningful impact on young people's lives and academic success
- Gain experience working with youth (great for resumes, college applications, or career development in education, counseling, etc.)
- Build connections with faculty, staff, and the local community
- Receive a letter of recommendation or service hours verification (if needed)
- Enjoy a rewarding and energetic environment

HOW TO APPLY

Interested individuals should contact the school's main office to complete an application, submit to a background check, TB screening, and attend a brief orientation session.

AFTER ORIENTATION TRAINING

- You will receive your volunteer badge and a possible schedule.
- A staff member will be your primary contact for ongoing support.
- Additional role-specific training may be provided on your first day.

STUDENT INTERACTION GUIDELINES

Our volunteers play a vital role in creating a safe, supportive, and positive environment for students. How you interact with students can have a lasting impact, so please follow these guidelines at all times:

- **Be Positive and Encouraging**
Use kind, respectful, and uplifting language. Focus on effort and progress rather than just results (e.g., “I can see how hard you worked on this!” rather than “Why didn’t you get it right?”).
- **Maintain Appropriate Boundaries**
- **Always interact with students in open, visible areas when possible.**
- **Avoid being alone with a single student behind closed doors.**
- **Do not engage in private communication with students outside the program** (e.g., personal phone calls, texting, social media, or email) unless explicitly approved and monitored by program staff.
- **Respect Confidentiality**
Information shared by students (academic struggles, family situations, etc.) should remain confidential unless it involves safety concerns. If a student discloses something concerning (abuse, self-harm, etc.), immediately inform the designated staff member or administrator.
- **Use Appropriate Physical Contact**
Physical contact should be minimal and only when necessary (e.g., a high-five, handshake, or brief side-hug if culturally appropriate and welcomed by the student). Never touch a student in a way that could be misinterpreted. When in doubt, avoid physical contact.
- **Communicate Respectfully**
- **Address students by their preferred names or nicknames.**
- **Avoid sarcasm, teasing, or comments about appearance,** even if intended as jokes.
- **Never yell, swear, or use demeaning language.**
- **Promote Inclusion and Equity**
Treat all students with equal respect regardless of their background, academic ability, behavior, race, gender, religion, or any other characteristic. Challenge bias (including your own) and intervene calmly if you witness bullying or exclusion.
- **Manage Behavior Positively**
If a student is disruptive, use calm redirection rather than punishment. Example: “Let’s focus on the activity so everyone can learn” instead of “Stop talking or you’re out.” Seek staff support if behavior escalates.
- **Model Good Digital Behavior**
If using devices with students:
 - A. Never take or share photos/videos of students without explicit staff permission and parent/guardian consent.

B. Do not friend or follow students on personal social media accounts (now or in the future).

- **Recognize Your Role**

You are a mentor and supporter—not a parent, counselor, or best friend. If a student seeks advice beyond your role (emotional crises, family issues, etc.), gently redirect them to appropriate staff or resources.

Report Concerns Immediately

If you feel uncomfortable with a student’s behavior toward you, or if any interaction feels inappropriate, report it to a staff member or administrator right away—even if you’re unsure.

STUDENT CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

As a volunteer with Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School, you may have access to information about students that is private and protected by law. Maintaining confidentiality is both an ethical responsibility and a legal requirement. All volunteers are expected to strictly adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Confidential Information

Confidential student information includes, but is not limited to:

- Academic records, grades, and test scores
- Attendance records
- Behavioral or disciplinary records
- Health or medical information
- Family or personal circumstances
- Special education needs or Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Any personally identifiable information (name, address, student ID number, photographs, etc.)

2. Protection of Confidentiality

- Never discuss a student’s personal or academic information with anyone who does not have a legitimate educational need to know — this includes other volunteers, parents (including your own friends or family), and members of the community.
- Do not share confidential information in public areas (hallways, staff lounge, cafeteria, etc.) where conversations may be overheard.
- Do not post any information, photographs, or comments about students on social media or any public platform — even without using names.

- If you recognize a student outside of school, do not disclose that you work with or know the student in a volunteer capacity unless the student initiates the interaction.

3. Use and Storage of Information

- Only access student information when it is necessary to perform your volunteer duties.
- Do not remove, copy, or photograph any student records, files, or documents (physical or electronic).
- Secure any written or printed materials containing student information and return or shred them as directed when no longer needed.

4. Reporting Concerns

If you have concerns about a student's safety or well-being (e.g., suspected abuse, neglect, or risk of harm), report the concern immediately and only to a staff member (usually the volunteer coordinator, executive or assistant director, or school counselor). Do not discuss the concern with others.

5. Legal Obligations

Student records are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and applicable state laws. Unauthorized release of confidential information may result in legal consequences for you and the organization, as well as immediate termination of your volunteer privileges.

6. Acknowledgment

By signing the Volunteer Agreement, you acknowledge that you have read, understand, and agree to abide by this confidentiality policy. Breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously and may result in removal from the volunteer program.

DRESS CODE

In dress, conduct, and interpersonal relationships, volunteer members should recognize that they are being continuously observed by students. Their actions and demeanor may be reflected in the conduct of the students.

It is of paramount importance that volunteer members set good examples in conduct, manners, dress, and grooming.

A. Criteria

The attire of volunteers during the hours when school is in session must be judged in light of the following:

- Dress should reflect the professional position.
- Attire should be that which is commonly accepted in the community.
- Clothing should be appropriate to the volunteer's assignment.

B. Application

In most circumstances, the application of the above criteria to volunteers would call for trousers and shirt or polo, or trousers with a sweater and shirt for men; and dress, skirt, and blouse, or blouse and slacks or pantsuits for women.

KEY REMINDERS FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS

- Always sign in at the front office and wear your volunteer badge visibly.
- Maintain confidentiality—student information stays at school.
- Never be alone with a student behind a closed door.
- Report any concerns immediately to your supervising staff member or administration.
- Have fun and enjoy building positive relationships with our students!
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EMERGENCIES

In the case of an emergency, the executive director or their designee must be notified and arrangements made for students before leaving the building.

TELEPHONES

School telephones are used only for official business except in the case of an emergency. Cell phones should be turned off during class.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOL

Maggie L. Walker Governor's School provides guidelines for the establishment of an alcohol and drug-free workplace. This regulation forbids the manufacturing, distribution, dispensing, possession, and use of any controlled substance as defined in the Drug Control Act of 1988.

