



**29 years
& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

**A Weekly Community of Practice Network
for Sharing and Interchange**



July 13, 2015

Special Issue on Volunteers at Schools

Request from a Colleague

>About volunteers to enhance student & learning supports

Examples of Volunteer Handbooks from School Districts

- >For Coordinators***
- >For volunteers***

Featured Center Resources

>For continuing education of volunteers and school staff

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**Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested.
The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.**

**For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of
the weekly exchange, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

**For previous recent postings of this community of practice, see
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>**

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Note: In keeping with the 2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports,* this community of practice network has expanded in number of participants and topics discussed.* The thematic emphasis is on (1) daily concerns confronting those working in and with schools, (2) the transformation of student and learning supports, and (3) promoting whole child development and positive school climate.

Request from a colleague: “I’m really interested in the training component of learning supports for school professionals (including teachers, aides, volunteers). I loved the idea of incorporating volunteer networks and community agency partnerships to address gaps in school care - but would there be a training process for volunteers and/or a vetting process for agencies? What would training look like for volunteers who will be in classrooms (1 day seminar, coaching, feedback, observation etc)? As a background to this question - I volunteered for an after school program in my community that partnered with a local public school, and although all the volunteers/employees cared about the children - no one had formal training in teaching and program planning was always disorganized. In this context, this was better than these children going home to empty apartments and watching tv... but it definitely could've been improved upon. I also worked in public school special ed classrooms through a research study and worked with teachers who had never had any formal training in autism (despite having multiple children with autism in their classroom).”

Center response: Thinking about recruiting, welcoming, orienting, preparing, and maintaining volunteers to work in classrooms and throughout the school is a great focus for the summer. Here are some resources to use in reviewing what a school has planned and considering what might be added.

To link to a broad range of resources, start with our online clearinghouse Quick Find on

> *Volunteers* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/volunteers.html>

There are several resources listed there that will be a good stimulus for planning and development. One example from our Center work is

> *Volunteers as an Invaluable Resource* –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/voluntresource.pdf>

Here’s an Excerpt:

Volunteers can be a multifaceted resource in a classroom and throughout a school. For this to be the case, however, the school staff must value volunteers and learn how to recruit, train, nurture, and use them effectively. When implemented properly, school volunteer programs can enable teachers to personalize instruction, free teachers and other school personnel to meet students’ needs more effectively, broaden students' experiences, strengthen school-community understanding and relations, enhance home involvement, and enrich the lives of volunteers. In the classroom, volunteers can provide just the type of extra support needed to enable staff to conference and work with students who require special assistance.

Volunteers can be recruited from a variety of sources: parents and other family members; others in the community such as senior citizens and workers in local businesses; college students; and peers and older students at the school. There also are organized programs that can provide volunteers, such as local service clubs. And, increasingly, institutions of higher education are requiring students to participate in learning through service. Schools committed to enhancing home and community involvement in schooling can pursue volunteer programs as a productive element in their efforts to do so.

Few teachers have the time to recruit and train a cadre of volunteers. Teachers can work with student support staff and the school administration to set up a volunteer program for the school. Initially, a small group of volunteers can be recruited and taught how to implement and maintain the volunteer program (e.g., how to recruit a large pool of volunteers, help train them, nurture them, work with them to recruit replacements).

The cost of volunteer programs is relatively small compared to the impact they can have on school climate and the quality of life for students and school staff.

We discuss the many roles for volunteers in the new book we have put online to stimulate efforts to transform student and learning supports. See Chapter 7: “Community Outreach and Collaborative Engagement” in *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Here is a Exhibit that is presented in that Chapter:

The Many Roles for Volunteers in the Classroom and Throughout the School

I. Welcoming and Social Support

A. In the Front Office

1. Greeting and welcoming
2. Providing information to those who come to the front desk
3. Escorting guests, new students/families to destinations on the campus
4. Orienting newcomers

B. Staffing a Welcoming Club

1. Connecting newly arrived parents with peer buddies
2. Helping develop orientation and other information resources for newcomers
3. Helping establish newcomer support groups

II. Working with Designated Students in the Classroom

- A. Helping to orient new students
- B. Engaging disinterested, distracted, and distracting students
- C. Providing personal guidance and support for specific students in class to help them stay focused and engaged

III. Providing Additional Opportunities and Support in Class and on the Campus

- A. Recreation
- B. Enrichment
- C. Tutoring
- D. Mentoring

IV. Helping Enhance Positive Climate Throughout the School – including Assisting with "Chores"

- A. Assisting with Supervision in Class and Throughout the Campus
- B. Contributing to Campus "Beautification"
- C. Helping to Get Materials Ready

Of course, when it comes to students who need special assistance, teachers can really benefit from opening the classroom door and bringing some good volunteers. We discuss this in:

>Opening the classroom door – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/spring01.pdf>

As emphasized in that resource, if all students are to have equal opportunity for success at school, teachers, administrators, and education support staff must learn to open up the school and especially the classrooms and invite in a variety of forms of assistance. Volunteers are one invaluable form of assistance. Properly prepared, volunteers can enhance social and academic support and work in targeted ways with students who manifest problems. In doing so, they can help make the classroom a more caring context for learning and enable teachers to develop a classroom infrastructure that transforms a big class into a set of smaller units. They can also help increase the array of strategies for accommodating and teaching students in ways that compensate for differences, vulnerabilities, and disabilities, which enhances equity of opportunity and can prevent many problems.

The teacher would like you to pay a little attention.



In general, then, volunteers can be especially helpful working under the direction of the classroom teacher to establish a supportive relationship with students who are having trouble adjusting to school.

Volunteers may help students on a one to one basis or in small groups. Group interactions are especially important in enhancing a student's cooperative interactions with peers. One to one work is often needed to develop a positive relationship with a particularly aggressive or withdrawn student and in fostering successful task completion with a student easily distracted by peers.

Volunteers can help enhance a student's motivation and skills and, at the very least, help counter negative effects that arise when a student has difficulty adjusting to school. The majority of people who seek out the opportunity to volunteer at school are ready, willing, and able to get into the classroom and interact well with students. These individuals are naturals. All they need is a clear orientation about what is expected, as well as ongoing supervision designed to help them learn to be increasingly effective in working collaboratively with teachers and dealing with problems.

There are some volunteers who are not naturals. However, many of these individuals can learn rapidly and be extremely helpful with just a bit of investment of time and effort.

For strategies on preparing volunteers to come into the classrooms, see

>Volunteers to help Teachers and Schools Address Barriers to Learning
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/volunteer/volunt.pdf>

And see the next sections for more resources to address volunteer matters.

Listserv participants: What can share about enhancing a school's capability to recruit, prepare, and mobilize an effective volunteer program? Looking forward to hearing from you. Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu
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Examples of volunteer handbooks from school districts

Many schools have resources online to guide development and maintenance of volunteer programs.

Here is a sample of volunteer coordinator handbooks:

- >San Diego Unified School District
http://www.sandi.net/cms/lib/ca01001235/centricity/domain/62/volunteercoordinatorhandbook_final2011.pdf
- >Seattle Public Schools
<http://www.seattleschools.org/modules/groups/homepagefiles/cms/1583136/File/Departmental%20Content/ocl/pdf/volunteers/vcmanual.pdf>
- >Garland Schools
http://www.garlandisd.net/departments/parenting_support/documents/2010%20Volunteer%20Handbook%20-%20Coordinator.pdf
- >Orange County
<http://ocps-internet.ocss-va.org/hr/Shared%20Documents/Volunteer%20Handbook.pdf>

Here is a sample of handbooks for volunteers:

- >Volusia County Schools
<http://myvolusiaschools.org/volunteer-partnership/Documents/School%20Volunteer%20Handbook.pdf>
- >Baltimore County Public Schools
<https://www.bcps.org/parents/pdf/BCPS-New-Volunteer-Handbook.pdf>

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Featured set of center resources:

>For continuing education of volunteers and school staff

In addition to the references already cited, here are two more focused specifically on volunteers:

- >Guiding and Supporting Volunteers
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/guiding_volunteers.pdf
- >Volunteers are an Important Part of a System of Student and Learning Supports
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/vols.pdf>

Volunteers working with students in classrooms can benefit from learning more about good teaching and how schools can do more to address barriers to learning and teaching. One way to do this is to direct them to the continuing education resources the Center has developed on these matters for school staff. The following are examples that can be used as part of a group or online individual learning with follow up discussion:

> *Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning*

>> Unit I: Personalizing Learning

>> Unit II: More is Needed to Address Barriers to Learning

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personalizeI.pdf>

> *Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning:
Classroom-Focused Enabling*

>> Module I provides a big picture framework for understanding barriers to learning and how school reforms need to expand in order to effectively address such barriers.

>> Module II focuses on classroom practices to engage and re-engage students in classroom learning.

>> Module III explores the roles teachers need to play in ensuring their school develops a comprehensive approach to addressing barriers to learning.

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf>

*For information about the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

***Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights;
transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to
enabling equity of opportunity and promoting whole child development***

***Please share relevant resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences!
Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu***

***Note: Responses come only to our Center at UCLA for possible inclusion
in the next week's message.***

***We also post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange* on
our website at***

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>

and to *Facebook* -- access from the Center's home page

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>