

Building Blocks: Education

Volunteers: A Rich Resource

Why begin a volunteer corps in your school community? Volunteers are powerful instruments to advance school goals. In times of budgetary constraints volunteers offer supplemental office services, classroom assistance, and other support to regular staff. While parents may be the first group that interest surveys are sent to, many school communities have found additional help in the larger community. Retired residents are often willing and able participants, and enrich the environment with intergenerational activity.

As with all successful programs, organizing and logistics will guarantee future growth. Appropriate training is critical to a successful program. These orientations help to fully equip volunteers. The range of assistance can be requested for not only the regular school day when volunteers can provide valuable one-to-one tutoring for individual students or small groups, but also special occasions such as Career Day, Family Nights, Technology workshops. Supplemental services provided by local businesses, nearby colleges, and older students from the district's high school can help to meet specific needs.



Develop a plan, host the training, manage, celebrate and show appreciation to the volunteers; these are key elements that build capacity.

It doesn't take long after initiating a volunteer program to begin to see the benefits. The number of requests for volunteers begins to increase. Volunteers in the school recognize the hard work of teachers. Teachers appreciate the extra help. Students are benefited by the extra support and enrichment. Opening the doors of the school encourages an atmosphere of trust and shared responsibilities for increasing student achievement and success.

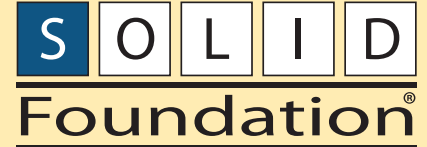
Pennsylvania Practices Volunteering

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The Mt. Carmel Elementary School Solid Foundation team recognized the benefit of school volunteers. However, there were not many opportunities for volunteering for a variety of reasons. After completing their Needs Assessment, the team realized that the best way to encourage volunteering was for them to write their Action Plan around the Building Block "Policy". They completed research and worked as a team to write a volunteer policy for their school district. They met with school board members to educate them regarding the benefits of school volunteers and asked for their



input on their proposed policy. After one year of planning, the volunteer policy was brought before the school board. It passed! So in this final year of the Solid Foundation process, the team wrote their Action Plan around how to implement this new policy. There will be volunteer training, recruitment and input from the staff on how best to use the volunteers. Their goal is to raise student achievement through thoughtful use of family-school partnerships.



Reading • Studying • Respect • Responsibility

Solid Foundation is a school-based team process that helps:

- Strengthen family-school connections
- Engage parents in their children's learning
- Improve student, academic and social learning



Check out Section 5, pp. 25-30 of your Solid Foundation Resource manual for information and planning tools for Volunteers. Or refer to the online Resource Manual under Building Block: Education-General on the left hand side.

Research shows that an organized program of school-family-community partnerships with activities linked to school goals:

- Improve schools
- Strengthen families
- Invigorate community support
- Increase student achievement and success

NEED HELP?

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**More information
can be found at:**

www.Center-School.org/pa-pirc
www.adi.org/solidfoundation
www.Families-Schools.org

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