

Section I

WISDOM FROM LOCAL VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS

What has been your most successful strategy in recruiting volunteers this school year?

- A questionnaire that goes home to all parents at beginning of school year
- Personal contact
- Phone calls
- Word of mouth by other community volunteers
- Consistent requests in weekly “take home” letter from principal
- Clear job descriptions
- Photo board of who volunteers and what they do
- On-going committees of Parent Group (cookies, awards, newsletter)
- On-going activities of the school (appeals, Senior Projects, Career Center)
- Contacting universities to access education majors
- Phone call that include future volunteer opportunities as well as current ones
- Sign ups in school during public elections (when school is voting location)
- Newsletter wish lists and want ads
- Kindergarten parent orientation in the fall
- Tripping people in the hallway
- One-to-one approach that included tour of school and introduction to staff
- Speaking at community organizations’ meetings
- Setting up free fun events for parents and using the events to recruit volunteers
- The use of mentor parents to assist K and K-1 parents new to school
- Parent survey
- Networking through Seattle Tutoring Coalition
- Networking in the community
- Solicited at school events that bring parents out (Freshman Potluck, Open House)
- Being visible, having an office
- Developing a data base using parent surveys
- Parent orientation early the first day of school that offers specific opportunities
- Personal contact made in main hallway before school or events
- School newsletter listing of volunteer needs
- “First day packet” to all parents that includes volunteer sign up
- Solicitation on form for specific Chapter I tutor/ assistance needs
- Held community recruiting evening at neighborhood community center

What strategies has your school used to make parents and volunteers feel welcome at school?

- Volunteer handbook with basic info about school
- Individual contact, tour of school, introductions, follow-up calls
- Careful matching of volunteers with time and position
- Excited staff
- Phone tree, parent representatives, parent steering committee
- Signs in multiple languages
- New parent/child orientation
- Awards
- Volunteer bulletin board listing opportunities, creating a parent/volunteer information table in the staff room
- Parent center in school that parents and volunteers are directed to, a place to hang their hat
- Drop-in Wednesday coffee group
- Bulletin boards with information in various languages
- Volunteer coordinator's picture on bulletin board so people know who to look for
- Big visible signs thanking volunteers
- Volunteers have use of teacher's lounge to hang coats, use phone, etc.
- Pictures of major school events are posted so that people may see themselves helping out and enjoying themselves
- Special thank you for Valentine's Day
- Improved orientation process and welcoming atmosphere in all areas of the school
- Specific organizational structure via parent room coordinators
- Name tags for frequent volunteers
- Thank you notes to those performing thankless tasks
- "Family room" for parents and volunteers
- Greeting and chatting when parents sign in the office
- Parent resource room for meeting, relaxing
- All-school collaborative approach
- Meeting prospective parents when they visit in February and March
- Monthly "Volunteer News" in PTA's newsletter, mail newsletter to community volunteers
- Volunteer badges

What is the most valuable thing you learned that helped you be successful in this job?

- Developed forms to use when screening volunteers
- Stop, look listen, then call!
- Finding out what teachers need/want
- A smile and a personal touch to go a long way in making all volunteers comfortable
- Person to person contact makes all the difference
- Follow-up to see if volunteer feels effective, useful
- Persistence
- Setting limits, say NO when you need to
- Network with others, get support from school staff
- Reach families through the children, if you convince families that something effects their children they are more likely to participate
- Asking parents their opinion and ideas provides valuable insight and information
- Have big dreams but be willing to start with small steps
- Computer skills
- Asking for something specific gets more of a response rather than a general or vague request, have some specific dates ready when recruiting
- Know everything, try to know everyone, walk the halls after school
- The first day of school is the best time to recruit
- Get parents and students full names, since many have different names
- You really need to assess the comfort level of your volunteers to maintain volunteer longevity
- Thank people personally and publicly to let others know what has been done
- Be as creative as possible
- Have business cards
- Work closer with staff and principal
- Feedback and listening more to parents informally
- Be alert to opportunities as they arise