

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS—Part 7

Volunteer Support and Program Management

Daily management of your programs will depend on your time and energy. As emphasized in previous sections of this book, always focus on your goals and try to maintain a reasonable amount of work. Aim for quality, not quantity. Attention to the following issues will help you maintain effective programs.

❖ **Ongoing Communication**

- See the Making Communication Manageable page in this section
- Maintain appropriate levels of communication between you, the volunteers and other staff
- Meetings and phone calls are often challenging to your schedule, but can be effective if planned and brief
- Communicate with written notes or a logbook
- Use email if possible
- You can always follow up verbally if necessary
- You should communicate instructions, tasks and updates
- Have volunteers communicate progress, problems, questions
- Some other ideas for ongoing communication
 - Volunteer support meetings
 - One on one supervisory meetings with volunteers
 - Volunteer mentors (matching new volunteers with “veteran” volunteers)
 - Weekly/monthly check-in by phone (telephone tree)

❖ **Keeping Records**

- Track your progress and procedures to measure your movement toward meeting your program goals and assist in future volunteer programming
- Keep track of volunteer schedules when possible. Make sure you are not burning people out and check in with people who you miss.
- Make notes of what works and what does not. This will help future people in your position or those at other schools.
- Make notes of volunteer successes to use for appreciation and program marketing.
- Also note any challenging or contentious interactions with volunteers.
- Keep track of the children your volunteers are serving. This may allow your school to understand the impact volunteers have on student achievement.
- If you are working on specific projects or events, keep a list of tasks and steps you take to assist in future planning efforts.

❖ **Preparing students and staff to work with volunteers**

- Volunteers should be respected as another staff person.
- They should also be treated as honored guests.
- Students/Staff should use common courtesy and show appreciation.
- They should also know that volunteers have a job to do.
- Other staff should understand their responsibilities for supporting volunteers.
- Involve other staff in establishing programs.

❖ **Making arrangements for volunteers in your absence**

- Structure your programs in ways that don't depend on you being there.
- If you know that you will be gone during times volunteers need you, let them know ahead of time who to speak with for information, or alternative ways to communicate with you.
- Confirm with another staff person or two that can fill in for you with particular situations.
- Offer gentle reminders to other staff when you will be on vacation and let them know if there are any situations that the school should be prepared for.

❖ **Integrating volunteer recognition into daily operations**

- Know your volunteers: their names, the names of their partners and children, their pets, etc. Ask them how they are and listen to them.
- Periodically give out interesting articles or other resources that will increase their knowledge or help their work.
- Provide a place where they can take breaks, talk to you and each other, perhaps have a cup of coffee or tea.
- Write updates about the volunteer program or feature various volunteers in the newsletter and make sure the volunteers get copies.
- Write daily/weekly notes to them in a communication log.
- Help the principal to know whom the volunteers are.
- Provide personalized name badges and a place to store or place them at school.
- Make sure everyone at school is involved with appreciating volunteers, not just you.
- See the Volunteer Appreciation section of this book for more ideas.

❖ **Addressing difficult situations**

- Prevent problems through clear expectations and open communication.
- Be aware, proactive, and err on the side of safety.
- If you sense that there is a problem, there likely is.
- See the following pages for more specific ideas for addressing problems.

Making Communication Manageable

Sometimes the communication necessary for your job is more than you are prepared for. There may be too many people to communicate with, or individuals who need too much of your time. You also might be faced with people who have issues that you are not prepared to address. Below are some ideas for making this part of your job manageable.

- ❖ **Be upfront about your availability:** You may have a very limited schedule that others do not understand.
 - Let volunteers and staff know what your schedule is and how it is best to communicate with you.
 - Some people might assume that you work at the school all day every day, which is not true for most volunteer coordinators.

- ❖ **Offer options:** Let people know how to communicate with you when you are not available.
 - Use some of the techniques listed in the section above and make a policy of returning messages within 2 days.
 - Let people know whom else they can communicate with if you are not available.

- ❖ **Allow for some flexibility:** Unexpected situations will arise when you want to or need to communicate with a volunteer or a staff member. If you plan your schedule with some flexibility, there will be fewer negative consequences for attending to communication needs.
 - Adjust your schedule to incorporate this piece of your job responsibilities. It is an integral part of your job.

- ❖ **Set boundaries when necessary:** When faced with a volunteer or a staff member who takes too much of your time, or involves you in situation that is not within your responsibilities, it may be necessary to clarify your abilities attend to their needs.
 - Find a constructive way to let them know that you can schedule time to meet with them if necessary.
 - Let them know you are right in the middle of another task and ask them to send you a note. Be apologetic if helpful.
 - Make a point of checking in with them when you do have time.
 - Do not become involved in situations that do not involve you. Both volunteers and staff members should address problem situations with those directly involved, unless it is your role to mediate between a volunteer and another person.

Addressing Problems with Volunteers

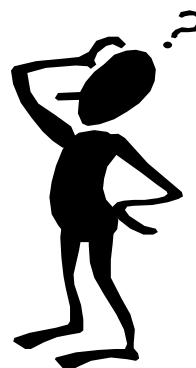
When faced with a difficult situation, it is always important to try and be objective, fair and strong. Dealing with a difficult person or addressing problem behavior can be an intimidating job for some. For others, the challenge is to be compassionate and constructive. We have to weigh the good intentions of the volunteer with the need for safety and effectiveness for our school.

We all have first-hand experience that problems rarely just go away by themselves. Someone has to address them at some point and when it comes to volunteers, it is likely your responsibility.

Note: *Sometimes it is actually the school or a particular staff member that is creating barriers for the work the volunteers are trying to do. Again, this is likely your responsibility to address, at least as far as informing the school leader about the need for change, or changing the structure of your programs to work around the problem.*

That said, here are some questions to ask yourself when confronted with poor volunteer performance:

- ❖ Am I giving this volunteer adequate recognition?
- ❖ Does this volunteer have the skills to do the job?
- ❖ Does this volunteer have interests and personality to do this job well?
- ❖ Is the volunteer having personal, non-job related problems?
- ❖ Have I involved this volunteer in decision-making that affects his/her job?
- ❖ Is the job meeting this volunteer's personal goals and needs?
- ❖ Is this a staff-volunteer conflict?
- ❖ Am I making this volunteer feel part of the team?
- ❖ Am I involving this volunteer in social events related to the organization?
- ❖ When was the last time I gave this volunteer a sincere compliment, or said "Thank You"?
- ❖ Does the volunteer have adequate support to get the job done?



(Adapted from the Institute for Fundraising as used by NAPE)

Productively Confronting a Volunteer

*(Adapted from Audrey Richards, *Managing Volunteers for Results as used by NAPE*)*

When you have a problem with a volunteer, you should follow this ten-step procedure for arriving at a productive solution.

Step 1. Set a time and place to talk, “I want to discuss with you an issue that concerns both of us. When and where would be a good place to do this?” (Agree on a time and place. Be sure to provide enough time and insure complete privacy).

Step 2. (When you have arrived at the appropriate spot), state your intentions and expectations for the outcome of this meeting. “ I want to discuss an issue about a certain way we are working together. I hope we can create a solution together that will be agreeable to you as well as me.”

Step 3. State the event—“Remember when...” (Wait for acknowledgement).

Step 4. State your feelings about the event using “I statements” and end your statement with a question—“When this happened...I felt that way because I wanted..., How were you feeling?”

Step 5. Explore all relevant information concerning the event—“I’d like to tell you my view of what happened and I want to hear your side also.” **DO NOT GO FOR SOLUTIONS YET.**

Step 6. Repeat the volunteer’s view of the event—“OK, let me see if I understand your statements. What you’re saying is...”

Step 7. Explore solutions that would satisfy both of you—“Maybe now that I understand what you were thinking about and you understand what I was thinking about, we can explore some ways to solve this kind of problem in the future.”

- What can I do to be helpful to you in such a situation?
- Here’s what you can do to help me.

Step 8. Offer a fair exchange—“OK, I’ll perform this service for you in the future, if you perform this service for me in exchange.”

Step 9. Test for agreement and commitment— “Is it realistic to think we can carry out this bargain? What will we do if one of us finds it impossible to keep our half of the agreement?”

Step 10. Sum up—I think we have agreed that...

Volunteer Discipline and Discharge Policy

Note: The policy framework below is not an official school district policy. While Seattle Public Schools does not have an official Discipline and Discharge policy for volunteers, this model corresponds with standard practice for educational and service-oriented organizations. All legal issues should be referred to the SPS General Counsel's Office through the school principal.

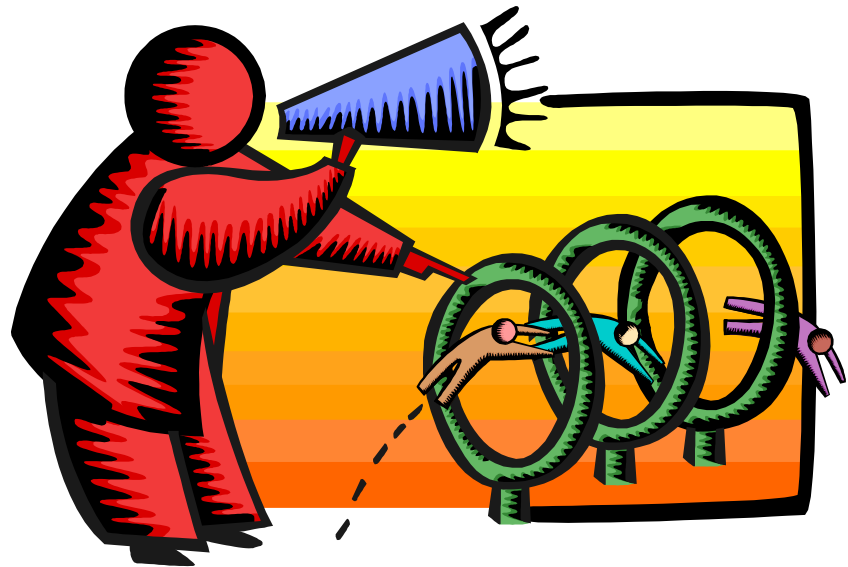
Recognizing that individuals may not respond appropriately to policies, procedures, and directives, written step-by-step procedures are established regarding appropriate disciplinary measures. The supervisor has the responsibility to evaluate thoroughly the circumstances and facts surrounding any purported infraction and to determine if disciplinary action should be taken. The following are forms of disciplinary action that may be taken for infractions of school rules and regulations.

- I. Oral Reprimand**
 - a. This type of discipline should be applied for infractions of a relatively minor degree.
 - b. A notation that an oral warning was given will be made in the volunteer's personnel file.
- II. Written Reprimand**
 - a. This notice will be issued in the event the volunteer has disregarded previous oral written warnings, or if the infraction itself is severe enough to warrant a written record in the volunteer's personnel file.
 - b. A copy of the reprimand will be provided to the volunteer. The original copy is to be placed in the volunteer's personnel file.
- III. Suspension**
 - a. This is administered as a result of a severe infraction of rules, standards, or for excessive violations after the volunteer has received a written warning and has not shown sufficient improvement in performance.
 - b. The supervisor will set forth the facts leading to the reason for the disciplinary suspension and the duration of the suspension and shall so inform the volunteer prior to action being initiated. The original copy of the disciplinary action letter is to be placed in the volunteer's personnel file with a copy given to the volunteer.
 - c. Suspension must be approved by the Principal before taking effect.
- IV. Discharge**
 - a. Only the Principal can discharge a volunteer.
 - b. If it is felt that the infraction is so severe as to recommend immediate termination, the supervisor has the authority to place the volunteer in immediate suspension.
 - c. In cases where discharge is necessary as a result of a service of infractions which have been documented, the Principal will be contacted and approve of that action prior to the actual termination.

The Art and Science of Supervision

A Good Supervisor Should:

- ❖ Know that leading is hard work.
- ❖ Be interested in people.
- ❖ Have patience.
- ❖ Have sympathy and tolerance.
- ❖ Be loyal.
- ❖ Be accepting of constructive criticism.
- ❖ Be tactful.
- ❖ Be objective and impartial.
- ❖ Be dependable.
- ❖ Be cooperative.
- ❖ Be democratic.
- ❖ Keep a sense of humor.
- ❖ Be enthusiastic.
- ❖ Use imagination.
- ❖ Apply common sense.
- ❖ Have Integrity.

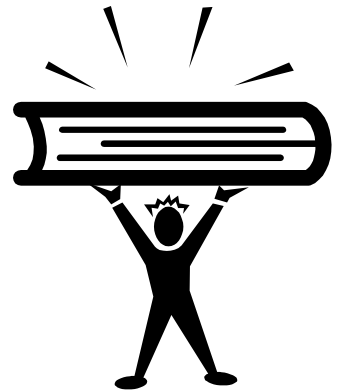


Creating a Sustainability Binder

It will be helpful for you and others to keep track of the progress you've made, tasks you are responsible for, and the things you learn about how to do your work. Creating a sustainability binder is a method some programs use to create consistency and address the transitions in volunteer program staff. Here are some suggestions about what to include in your sustainability binder:

❖ Give an Overview of the School

- Include the school's mission, population served, surrounding community and school culture.
- Description of the volunteer program at our school- is there a pre-existing program, or is the school in the process of creating a program?
- How does tutoring fit into the program? Are students pulled out of class, group reading etc.
- Can you relate your activities to the programs already established at the school- volunteer programs, family support program, etc?



❖ Volunteers

- Vision/ Goal: What does a successful and sustainable program look like at your school? How many volunteers were you aiming to recruit?
- How many volunteers did you recruit? How many hours of service were reported?
- Provide information about recruitment of volunteers- where did they hear about your program, what tools materials did you use for recruitment?
- Provide contacts for future recruitment efforts.
- Provide volunteer position description
- How were your volunteers trained?
- What was the process for scheduling volunteers? (It may help if you leave a copy of this year's schedule).
- How were volunteers supervised?
- How were volunteers incorporated as valuable members of the school culture? How are volunteers supported?

- What is the daily routine for volunteers? (Signing in, recording time spent with students, etc.)
- Provide list of volunteers and their status (e.g., resigned, current, will start. etc.)
- What recognition did the volunteers receive?

❖ **Programs**

- What programs do you have at your school- before/ after school, lunchtime, and/ or recess programs in addition to in-school tutoring?
- Give details about the different programs- what is the schedule, how many tutors are available; what are the lesson plans for the programs, etc.?
- How many staff members, Para pros, etc. are involved with the programs?
- How effective were the programs- suggestions for next year?

❖ **Community Involvement**

- What community involvement activities took place this year? (Read-aloud days etc.)
- Does your school have any established partnerships with community organizations or businesses?
- List any current and potential community contacts.
- Leave sample materials used this year including letters, posters, flyers, Public Service Announcements, etc.

❖ **Logistics**

- Identify where materials can be found.
- Identify who is responsible for what projects and who can provide helpful information.

*Include any other special projects or programs from this year.
Another helpful step would be to include information about how the school could sustain its program.*