IMPLEMENTING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM FOCUSED ON LITERACY

The Issue: When used wisely, volunteers can make an impact on children’s literacy skills (Memo 12). However, many educational settings lack attention to recruiting, managing and monitoring volunteers in a way that would create sustained and effective volunteer programs.

What Are Some Common Pitfalls That Impede Impact?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Pitfalls</th>
<th>What We’re Learning</th>
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<td>1. Drawing on the same small group of school community members as volunteers.</td>
<td>1. Effective volunteer programs recruit widely from all members of the school community (Memo 11).</td>
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<td>2. When volunteers arrive, busy practitioners decide on the spot how to use them.</td>
<td>2. Effective volunteer programs waste no one’s time; a person (or team) delegates volunteers’ responsibilities in advance.</td>
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<td>3. Program impact – if monitored – is gauged solely by counting the number of volunteers and their hours at the site.</td>
<td>3. Effective volunteer programs are regularly monitored using indicators of program quality and children’s achievement (Memos 1 &amp; 5-7).</td>
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What Are Key Decisions and Strategies for Impact?

The person (or team) delegated to lead and sustain the effort should take responsibility for:

1. **Wide Recruitment**
   - Bolstering School-Community Partnerships
   - Invite all families to partner with the site through volunteering
   - Create flexible schedules for volunteers
   - Value a wide range of contributions (Memo 11)

2. **Ongoing Support**
   - Ensuring the Program Is Carried out as Planned
   - Train volunteers
   - Hold regular meetings
   - Check in with staff and volunteers on an ongoing basis regarding participation and commitment
   - Keep volunteers invested by showing them how they help advance children’s learning

3. **Strategic Monitoring**
   - Using Multiple Indicators of Effectiveness
   - Gather and analyze information that reflects:
     - Child learning
     - Patterns of volunteer involvement (e.g., who participates and what are their roles)
     - Feedback from program participants (e.g., staff, volunteers) (Memos 1 & 5-7)

Self-study for Impact: Lead the Conversation!

These self-study questions will help steer your decisions and strategies for impact.

- Are we communicating with all members of the school community, inviting them into our volunteer program?
- Is a diverse group of families involved?
- Is the program being carried out as planned?
- Are we using multiple indicators of program effectiveness?

For More on This...


You can also find guidance from Epstein and her group at the National Network of Partnership Schools website.

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