

What a Parent Volunteer Program Does for a School

Parent volunteers and an effective school volunteer program can enhance the performance of students, enrich the curriculum, enhance a school's image, improve teacher relationships and provide an array of job skills. Learn about the benefits of creating a school volunteer program and why recruiting and training parent volunteers is a must for effective parent involvement.

A Parent Volunteer Program Enriches the Curriculum

A teacher's job can be overwhelming. Yet many of a classroom's daily activities can be handled efficiently by others, notably, parent or school volunteers. When teachers are freed from the routine and ordinary responsibilities of duplicating, preparing materials, clerical tasks, filing, and the like, they have more time to explore and develop ideas that will enhance, support, and reinforce the curriculum and student learning.

Student Achievement Is Increased

In addition to the benefit of extra help, studies continue to show the positive effects of parent involvement on student achievement. Active parental participation has been shown to raise student test scores and grades, increase student achievement, cultivating positive attitudes about school by both parents and students, enhance students motivation and self esteem as well as overall satisfaction with their teachers.

Another advantage to an effective volunteer program is the additional individualized attention students might receive. Most classrooms consist of 20-34 students with only one instructor. It is literally impossible for classroom teachers to spend sufficient time with struggling students. Unfortunately, this can result in some students falling through the cracks and/or not receiving the extra help needed for their success. Teachers can train and utilize volunteers to assist with individualized and small group instruction to enhance student learning for everyone.

School Image Is Enhanced

With all the negative publicity associated with schools around the country, a successful parent volunteer program is one way to gain some commendations for your school. Happy and empowered school volunteers will be your greatest mouth-piece and ally for the school. The parent grapevine is a strong and vital source that transmits information throughout the school body and community at large. Volunteering projects to the community just how much the school values parents and their input into their child's success.

Do you know that many parents are just as intimidated by teachers as teachers are by parents? Many parents, especially those of diverse backgrounds, have had negative school experiences. They have experienced negative teacher attitudes and unwelcoming school atmospheres and may feel uncomfortable even being on a school campus. A school's willingness to make parents a crucial part of their school programs helps to bridge these gaps and elevate the appreciation for both teachers and the school in general.

When a school recruits and trains parents to volunteer, it increases the parent's work skills for future employment. Whether parents assist with your reading program, use the copy or laminating machines, or edit written communications, they are learning valuable skills that will benefit themselves, their children, and the school for years to come.

Having parents around can greatly reduce discipline problems within the classroom and at the school. When parents volunteer, they send the message to their children that education is important. This translates into high expectations for learning to take place. In addition, students tend to be on their best behavior when their parents are present.

Teacher Morale Is Improved

Teachers have one of the highest attrition rates in the workforce. Long hours, high stress, little reward and recognition, lower pay, and increasing work loads contribute to the high burnout rates. The average teacher stays in the profession approximately 5 years before seeking greener pastures. Teachers must make balancing their life a priority, otherwise burnout and stress will creep in and dampen their spirits. Balanced teachers are happier teachers and happy teachers create the most effective learning environments for student success.

Student Morale Is Improved

Research indicates that students of involved parents have a more favorable attitude toward school. A positive attitude will result in more engaged students, increased learning, less absenteeism, and better grades.

Rhonda Jones is the author of *Turning Parents Into Volunteers*, a new comprehensive book on how to recruit, train, and maintain school and classroom volunteers. Visit <http://www.parent-volunteers.com> for additional information.