School Library Staffing: Library Volunteers a Winning Team in the Modern School Library & Information Services Programme

Волонтери — команда переможців в програмі «Сучасна шкільна бібліотека та інформаційні послуги»

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Каждая преуспевающая команда состоит из отдельных игроков, играющих свою уникальную и важную роль. Каждый игрок отдает команде свой особый талант и знания и выступает во взаимодействии с каждым другим игроком. Добровольные сотрудники школьной библиотеки могут помочь вам, как единая команда, созданная учителем-библиотекарем.

В данном докладе рассматриваются: выгоды для добровольных помощников, распределение обязанностей в команде, осознание и оценка вклада различных участников команды. Даются практические примеры.

Every successful team is made up of individual players, each with a unique and important role to play. Each player brings specific talents or skills to the team, and performs in a relationship with every other individual player. Volunteers in your school library can help you, as Teacher-librarian put together a winning team.

This presentation will address: Benefits of Volunteers; Assigning Responsibilities to the Team; Recognizing and Acknowledging the Contribution of the Various Team Members. Practical examples will be shared.

Будь-яка успішна команда складається з окремих гравців, кожен з яких має грати свою унікальну і важливу роль. Кожен гравець несе в команду власні здібності та знання і демонструє їх у взаємодії з членами команди. Волонтери шкільної бібліотеки можуть допомогти вам як єдина команда, яку створив вчитель-библиотекар.

В цій доповіді розглядаються: вигоди для волонтерів; розподіл обов’язків у команді; усвідомлення та оцінка внеску різних учасників команди. Наводитимуться практичні приклади.

Introduction

As you well know, the role of the modern teacher-librarian is very extensive. You can’t expect to do it all by yourself. The key is in delegating, establishing systems that will ‘appear to run themselves’, and organizing the work so that others can help. We don’t need to be experts in everything; but we do need to be good leaders.

Staffing in schools varies greatly from district to district, region to region, and country to country. The best programs have support staff, who make it possible for the teacher-librarian to met, plan, and work with the teachers and more directly with kids in an instructional role. The clerical and technical support team look after the details that make the library a strong resource service.

The ‘winning combination’ happens the close working relations between the teacher-librarian, classroom teachers, administrative leaders, curriculum consultants, school support staff, library secretary / clerical / and technical staff, the library volunteers, and the school community. All come together to
provide a learning environment that encourage students to become independent learners and creative thinkers.

The Benefits

Volunteers on the school library team (both in the library and in other sectors of the school) can benefit us all.

1. They benefit themselves by
   - Gaining a sense of personal accomplishment and self-worth
   - Becoming more comfortable with staff, and knowledgeable about the school programme and its functions
   - Utilizing and developing their own talents and interests
   - Enhancing their own personal work skills and acquiring new ones.

2. They benefit the school library programme by
   - Providing assistance in performing clerical functions
   - Allowing the Teacher-Librarian to spend more time planning and performing teaching / instructional related activities

3. They benefit the school by
   - Being a model of community service
   - Providing awareness, understanding and support within the community

Scouting and Recruiting the Team

Before you embark on a volunteer services programme, it is important to have discussed the whole concept with the Administration in your school. It is critical that they understand why you need volunteers, the role they can play in the library, and the benefits to the school.

Once the Principal is on side, the next step is to present the idea as a team with the Administration to the teaching staff. Clarifying the purpose of the volunteer and the benefits to both teachers and students will help to 'sell' the scope of services you can undertake through the library programme.

There are many people who can be helpful in the school. It is your obligation to seek them out, to identify their talents, and to recruit them to the time. Some of the possible sources are:

1. Retired teachers are aware of the school system. They can slide easily into roles that allow them to be supportive of teacher colleagues. This is also a way for them to keep in touch with the changing pedagogy in schools. Do you have a Retired Teachers' Association or Club in your area?

2. In some communities there are organizations called The Volunteer Bureau or the Volunteer Action Centre. These groups are able to help in many different ways in the community. While the groups may be mostly retired people, there are others in the community who wish to volunteer to fulfill their personal need to work.

3. Parents, Relatives, Others using the school, and even Lunch Room Supervisors can provide a wonderful source of school library volunteers.
   - Frequently moms who still have one or two children at home can be recruited when they bring the first one to nursery or kindergarten classes. They can bring a baby with them for a few hours before they take the first child home from school.
   - The School Newsletter will reach all parents who have children currently in school. Sometimes moms or dads are willing to offer a few hours a week in their spare time.
   - Grandparents are wonderful sources. They are new-found resource in many schools. 'Grey Power' can be a wonderful source for you. They have a unique interest in what is happening with their children. They have a wealth of history about the community, and many other skills to offer. Flexibility is important in working out their schedule.
   - A Volunteers Information brochure can tell people what the expectations are, and something about the various jobs that could be undertaken.
Chatting with the community at Meet The Teacher Night or other Open House Events will get the word spread in the community too.

- If you have a list of people whom you would like to recruit, develop a phoning committee who can be part of your 'staff' to contact new people.
- Parent Organizations in connection with other activities can be a way to let people know that you need assistance.
- Posters and bulletin boards are also ways to spread the word both in the school, and at other community sites.

4. Government Funded Programs that address the futures for young & unemployed people as well as «retirees» can be a valuable source. They can learn marketable skills working in your setting too.

5. Contact the Principal of the Adult Education Training Centres in your neighbourhood, and at your Teachers' Colleges. They may be able to suggest individuals in their classes who would welcome an opportunity to 'test their wings' with you.

6. Community organizations including churches and seniors groups can be contacted through flyers, posters, invitations, personal contacts, community media, and announcements.

7. Students from within your school community can also be recruited as volunteers in their own libraries, or for some 'co-op' in neighbouring primary schools. Here personal requests, contacting the Co-op Teacher, and using contacts at the local universities will be helpful.

Orientation and Basic Training

Think of this as investing in success. The better you do the orientation and the basic training, the more likely your volunteers are going to understand their role, and appreciate their contribution they can make to education in their community.

1. Develop an Official Orientation Guide. It doesn't have to be elaborate, but it should contain a copy of all the material that the volunteer may need to review as a new task is being undertaken. You need to address each of the following items in your orientation.

2. Learn about ... each other: Take time to get to know your volunteers

- Organize an informal orientation session over coffee. This is a chance for volunteers to meet, greet and interact with all staff: administration, teaching, secretarial and custodial staff.
- Follow up with more formal sessions to learn the rules of the game. Ideally, all library volunteers and the library secretary or clerk should be present for the sessions.

3. Player Try-outs: Have your volunteers test their compatibility.

- Contract for a short-term assignment (e.g. 6—8 sessions)
- Assign a special 'project' near term-end (e.g. overdues)
- Team a new player with a veteran
- Talk to others who have worked with the volunteer.

4. Give the Team a Cheer! Your volunteers are important and valuable.

- Share the benefits of volunteering.
- Let the volunteers know they are welcomed and appreciated by the Board of Education
- Give the volunteers and identification badge or other symbol of the school

5. Learn about ... the Library: Volunteers need to be a part of the big picture.

- Tour the library to familiarize the volunteers with the physical organization
- Instruct your volunteers in library routines and procedures
- Introduce your library secretary or clerk
- Reinforce your presentation with your own Library Volunteer Handbook

6. Learn about ... the Volunteer Role: Volunteers are 'professionals' too!

- Remind volunteers of responsibility and confidentiality
- Establish a schedule of duties
- Clarify the volunteer's role with students, pupil contact and discipline
- Timetable the volunteers — whether working alone or in a team
7. Learn about …. The School
- Ensure that the volunteers are welcomed members of the school team.
- Personally introduce the volunteers to all staff members.
- Make your volunteers aware of school routines — hours, bells, rules and regulations.

8. Learn about … The Volunteer
- New recruits can complete an information sheet that tells you about themselves.
- Record important information for your files including:
  - Full name; address; phone number; special skills; experience; birthday; emergency information
- Update the files regularly.

The Players' Roster

After training, players may be assigned to any duties. The Teacher-Librarian may wish to have certain players specialize according to their strengths.
1. Circulation routines such as filing borrower cards; carding returns, shelving items, tidying shelves, giving sign-out assistance with pre-primary grades
2. Maintenance functions including reading shelves; assisting with inventory; generating overdue lists; clipping and weeding picture and pamphlet files
3. Clerical Assistance might include typing new cards; repairing books; covering new books; stamping new books
4. Teacher-Librarian Assistance could include pulling items for themes or projects; supervising a group of students at work; preparing decorative and teaching materials; answering routine question at the desk
5. Does your volunteer have a Handbook or Chart … or even a brief note … to outline the duties or routines for the day? It is up to you to decide what needs to be done, and to determine the priority for the activity.

Recognition and Rewards

It is important to recognize and acknowledge your volunteers' efforts every day … but sometimes there are opportunities to do something special. Some examples are:
1. MVP: Most Valuable Partner
   - Gifts; Thank you cards; Teas, luncheons; Board of Education certificates and pins;
   - Volunteer Bureau Awards
2. Certificates of Merit
   - Volunteer of the Week display; Newsletter accolades; Assembly recognition;
   - Photos on Display of Work in Progress; Bulletin Boards; Community Newspaper articles
3. Warm fuzzies
   - Personal and individual praise for your volunteers on a regular (even daily) basis
   - Welcome over the Public Address System so the students will know why there is another adult in the library
   - Welcome to the staff room for tea, coffee or goodies. Alternatively in the library staff work area if you wish
   - Provide volunteer buttons or T-Shirts
   - Develop a personal camaraderie

Sources of Funding for Recognition and Rewards Activities

Some of the following activities might be ways to have some funds available to cover the costs of the recognition activities. Consider
- asking for a Board of Education Volunteer Coffee Fund. (or ask the Principal to support these times.)
- holding a book fair, where both new and used books can be sold, and the profit goes into this fun, as well as being used to buy more new books for the school
- inviting the staff to participate in a fund raiser to provide some sponsorship
- ask about community or area funds from the community council for such promotional activities
- inquire about a public relations budget item

Bibliography