

Volunteer Management Collective Intelligence Session

Summer Institute 2009

Questions #1, 2, 3:

Do you use volunteers in your program?

If not, why?

How (what roles do they play)?

Notes:

All participants use volunteers in their programs.

The number of volunteers range from 4 – 200.

Roles volunteers play:

- Teachers
 - ESL, GED, Basic Reading
- Classroom assistants (both pullout and within the classroom)
 - GED, ESL, Adult Diploma
- Conversation circle leaders
- 1:1 tutoring and in small groups
- Computer lab assistants
- Reading lab assistants
- Homework lab assistants
- Special projects
- Focus group leaders (Metro North's "The Learner's Voice")
 - Twice a year. Vol's ask S's questions about various topics including computer literacy and debrief afterward.
- Co-teachers
- Intake support
- Administrative/clerical support (this is rare)
- Event organization
- Fundraising
- Training other volunteers
- Newsletter writers/editors
- Board of Directors
- Job skills teachers
- Library maintenance
- Analyzing CASAS test info
- 1:1 tutors for blind students
- Outreach and student recruitment
- Peer mentoring other volunteers
- Outreach and recruitment of new volunteers

- Program support
- Data entry
- Tracking volunteer training online
- Testing new online volunteer training programs

Question #4:

Who is responsible for them? (coordination, support, recruitment)

Notes:

- Teachers
- Program managers
- Full-time volunteer coordinator
- Program assistant
- Executive director (1/2 time)
- Office admin (1/2 time)
- Long term volunteers
- MLC Trainers
- MLC volunteer outreach staff (recruitment)
- Assistant volunteer coordinator
- Outreach worker (1/2 time)
- Coordinator (support for both learners and volunteers)

Question #5:

What are some challenges you face with working with volunteers?

Notes:

- Overcommitment on part of the volunteer
- Lack of buy-in to the organization/Lack of commitment
- Scheduling issues
- Prioritizing time for mentoring/training when volunteer management is not the only aspect of my job
- Motivation of volunteer is self-fulfillment and not necessarily to help the learners
- Short term volunteers: difficulty balancing the time invested with outcomes
- Finding enough quality, committed volunteers
- Finding appropriate placements
- Tracking data, contact info and paperwork
- Not enough time to make personal connections and give recognition
- Difficulty in gathering hours reports from volunteers
- Recording volunteer hours – explaining why this is important to volunteers

- Communicating with volunteers who don't have or don't use computers/internet
- Increasing diversity of volunteers
 - Younger
 - People from different areas, etc
 - Using technology for training volunteers from other areas
- Spending too much time talking about how to manage difficult volunteers
- Volunteers that aren't mentorable
- Volunteers motivated to be involved out of a social need
- Ways to approach volunteers about how they want feedback (1:1? Newsletter? Notes? Banquets? Email?)
- Desire for feedback depends on the goals/motivations of the volunteer
- Teachers may not receive info to use with their volunteers to give constructive feedback
- Having a question about feedback on volunteer intake form might set up some minimums for check in and offer options for feedback

Question #6:

What are some benefits?

Notes:

- 1:1 help for students
- Majority of volunteers are great
- Great community link
 - Brings in new volunteers
 - Helps with outside partnerships
- Free
- Frees up teachers to focus on assessment and individual learning issues
- Good to have students interact with different members of the community
- Fundraising and organization
- VISTA
- We couldn't run or exist without them!
- Could serve only ¼ the number of students
- They each bring their own sets of expertise
- Gives learners self-esteem that volunteers spend time with and care about them
- Exposure to many English speakers other than the teachers
- Community building
- Volunteers serve as examples for students
- Job resources for students
- Networking
- They bring credibility to the program
- Volunteers serve as advocates for the program

- Realia brought in by volunteers
- Knowledge they share about community resources
- The benefits of using volunteers far outweigh the challenges
- Help with building maintenance – making shelves, etc.
- Donations (paper products, coffee, etc.)

Question #7:

What resources do you need to better (or begin to) work with volunteers?

Notes:

- How to use volunteers in other capacities (i.e. conversation circles)
- Opportunities for students to learn and logistics – how does this work?
 - Learner Circles
 - Storytime
 - Mentorship
 - Transition to employment/higher ed
- Training from MLC is helpful
- Ways volunteers can navigate books/resources and find appropriate ones
- Lesson plans designed for new CASAS tests (updated “Reading for Life” lessons)
- Exact lesson plans ready-to-go for volunteers to use
- Tutor blog
- Statewide organizational support in Wisconsin
- Connection with other literacy programs
- Finding funding