

Classroom Volunteers

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2001 has been designated by the United Nations as the year of the Volunteer. I think that it is appropriate to take a few moments to reflect on what volunteers mean to our school system. A small school, which many of our Seventh-day Adventist programs are, would be unsustainable in most education systems. In addition, few teacher education programs prepare the young teacher for the daunting reality of a rural multi-grade classroom situation. It is mostly because of the dedicated time and effort of local church and parent volunteers that our schools survive. Membership on local school boards and committees are volunteer positions available for those with administrative competency. Classroom teacher aides, lunchroom and recess supervisors, field trip chaperones and drivers, and janitorial staff comprise the vast majority of volunteer positions in most SDA schools.



The following guidelines taken from the Home and School Association Handbook published by the NAD Office of Education may prove helpful for schools seeking to establish or administer a classroom volunteer program:

1. All volunteers must undergo Conference mandated screening procedures.
2. Volunteers must be introduced into the school through a conference with the principal and the teacher.
3. The teacher is the authority in the classroom. Volunteers do not discipline students or countermand any teacher decision or request to a student.
4. Volunteers must not "side" with a student in case of confrontation, at the time of the incident, in secret with the student, or with parents.
5. Assignment of tasks should be appropriate to the skill of the volunteer. Volunteers must never be pressed to do a job they feel uncomfortable performing.
6. Teachers should not be asked to work with a volunteer with whom they are uncomfortable or vice versa.
7. Since a positive attitude is so important, volunteers who have a negative effect on children, teachers, the school's operations, or other volunteers will be asked to leave the program.
8. Volunteers are not to evaluate school staff, pupils, or programs.
9. Volunteers are not to make decisions regarding diagnosis of pupil difficulties, prescription of learning experiences, or evaluation of pupil progress.
10. Volunteers work under the direction and supervision of the teacher or program coordinator.
11. Volunteers must keep to the regular schedule so that teachers can expect them at established times.
12. Teachers must give volunteers specific directions for completing their tasks.
13. Only when the teacher must briefly be out of the room will volunteers be asked to take charge of the class. A volunteer is not a substitute teacher.
14. Volunteers are not allowed to show favouritism to students, their own or others.
15. Volunteers must be safety conscious at all times and not request children to engage in activities

that would endanger them.

16. Volunteers should ask for information when they do not know how to do a task or help a child.
17. Volunteers must be able to keep confidences.

Despite the difficulties (legal and insurance restrictions) inherent in volunteer programs, the potential for positive contributions to the school are worth the effort required to initiate and sustain them.