Volunteer Workshops

Sometimes parents or other community members are willing to volunteer, but they need more in-depth information about a curriculum area so the approaches they take in assisting students are consistent with your learning goals for students. After finding out when volunteers are available for one or more sessions (after school, evenings, weekends), you are ready to plan the event so that volunteers: (a) feel comfortable with you and each other; (b) engage in meaningful tasks that help them experience the types of learning that typically take place in your classroom; and (c) debrief and ask questions.

Guide for Planning the Workshop(s)

**How will I help volunteers feel comfortable?** Suggestions:
- Show/discuss brief slide show of students interacting in the classroom
- Ask parents to share something about their students
- Provide a walking tour of the classroom that shows different materials and resources
- Use ice-breaker activity to help people relax

**What format will help volunteers understand how they can assist?** Suggestions:
- Engage in tasks students will complete with volunteer assistance (e.g., math problems, writing workshop, Book Club, Literature Circles, science experiments, use of primary sources)
- Videotapes of classroom approaches followed by discussion
- Examine classroom materials (e.g., science kits, manipulatives, children’s literature)
- Examine assessments used in a subject matter area
- Discuss student work samples

**How will I communicate about the curriculum and volunteer responsibilities?** Suggestions:
- Provide brief handout (translate if necessary)
- Include drawings/graphics to illustrate main ideas and key connections
- Use Power Point slides or video to illustrate your curriculum in action

**How will I elicit and respond to parent questions?** Suggestions:
- Ask volunteers to write questions on 3 x 5 cards
- Ask volunteers to meet in small groups and list key questions on poster board

**How will I know what parents are learning?** Suggestions:
- Volunteers talk about their response to the workshop
- Volunteers ask questions
- Volunteers talk about what they will be doing to provide assistance

**How will each workshop (and the workshop series) come to a close?** Suggestions:
- Ask volunteers what they would find useful as next steps
- Ask volunteers to fill out a written evaluation