

Facilitators and Teachers Handbook

WELCOME TEACHERS AND FACILITATORS

You have taken the first step towards making a significant impact on the excellent education programs in the ACT region. Volunteers provide enrichment opportunities that enhance the education experience for students, while supporting teachers and staff.

As a former teacher, I, like many of you, know that as teachers we could always use an extra pair of hands. The School Volunteer Program ACT Incorporated (SVPACT) gives students that one-to-one experience that we cannot always provide. I know that in every community there are people doing extraordinary things. What they have in common is not just dedication, inspiration or sheer hard work; it is what they give to others that is most precious to all of us - time. While the gesture of the participating schools and volunteers is certainly extraordinary, it is by no means surprising. With guidance from you (SVPACT teacher facilitator), your volunteer will support what the students are learning in the classroom. Besides individual mentoring, the SVPACT volunteers help out in schools doing everything from assisting in reading, to Meccano building, and mentoring students in gifted and talented programs.

This handbook will help you make the smooth transition of volunteering in your school, providing you with an overview of the SVPACT and the variety of opportunities that you may wish the volunteers to pursue. I congratulate you on your role in this worthwhile and rewarding program. The SVPACT continues to make a tremendous difference not just to our community, but most importantly, to the individual students in the program.

Pam Nicolson
President

ABOUT THE ACT SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The SVPACT was formally launched in Canberra at North Ainslie Primary School in October 2005 by His Excellency, Major General Michael Jeffery, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. All members of the SVPACT contribute their services on a voluntary basis. The SVPACT was established in partnership with the ACT Department of Education and Training and is supported by the ACT Branch of the Australian Education Union, and Rotary.

The main aims of this program are to provide one-to-one mentoring between volunteers and students in ACT schools for a minimum of one hour per week and to enhance community involvement in our local schools. Volunteers visit the school during school hours on a weekly basis, committing initially one hour a week for a full ten-week term. Individual volunteers work one-to-one with individual students, under the guidance and supervision of a teacher.

AWARDS

Since the SVPACT commenced, the Committee and individual volunteers have received community recognition including Children's Week awards for excellence. The Committee and participating

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members pride themselves on their dedication to excellence in their service delivery of one-on-one mentoring to students in the ACT and surrounding region.

VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING

All volunteer mentors complete a comprehensive workshop training session conducted by SVPACT Committee members in partnership with the ACT Department of Education and Training. Once assigned to a school, volunteers are expected to liaise closely with the nominated SVPACT facilitator and/or class teacher. Volunteers operate under the direction of school staff at all times.

Your volunteer may want to know specific details about your school.

Some suggestions to think about prior to meeting your volunteer include:

- School sign-in procedures;
- The layout of the school and parking;
- School evacuation procedures and safety rules;
- Relevant school policies;
- Expectations of the volunteer;
- Procedures for when you are absent;
- Procedures for when the student is absent; and
- How the volunteer will work with a relief teacher.

SELECTION OF STUDENTS

Students are selected for participation in the program through a referral process by a classroom teacher, Learning Assistance teacher, or ESL teacher.

In consultation with the classroom teacher, the SVPACT facilitator selects appropriate tasks for each student and monitors his/her progress via a communication book. The SVPACT facilitator provides feedback and advice to the volunteer as needed. Effective communication between the student, volunteer and SVPACT facilitator is essential for the success of the program.

A parent/carer must give permission for the student to participate in the program. The student is expected to welcome the involvement of the volunteer.

How the SVPACT operates in schools

The SVPACT Committee consists of:

- President;
- Secretary;
- DET Liaison Officer;
- AEU ACT Representative; and
- Executive Members

THE SVPACT FACILITATOR'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This is a pivotal role that ensures the student and volunteer have a productive relationship. Your role is to ensure that:

- Work tasks, materials and games are ready for the volunteer and student when it is time to commence the session;
- There is a work area available with adequate supervision, but quiet and separate enough to allow activity without disturbance;
- The communication book is being used and read by the teacher, volunteer, and yourself;
- You establish a method of communication with your SVPACT volunteer and with the SVPACT Committee either written or verbal. If you need to change your volunteering arrangements or if you have more students interested in participating in our program for volunteers please let your SVPACT Committee contact person know. Your SVPACT Committee member details are listed in the contact details section.

THE SVPACT FACILITATOR'S DUTIES

- Contacting the volunteer, as soon as practicable, if the student is absent or unavailable;
- Ensuring that tasks are appropriate to the time available, and that the tasks are meeting the needs of the volunteer-student relationship. For example, the teacher may expect homework to be completed during the session, but the volunteer feels that he/she needs to develop rapport with the student, perhaps through games, or other shared interests;
- Ensuring volunteers feel valued and respected;
- providing relevant advice to the volunteer and communicating with the school principal, teachers and other school staff about the various roles of volunteers and their responsibilities;
- Introducing the volunteers to school administration staff, the facilities (toilets, sick bay, principal's office, staff room, and library).

THE CLASSROOM TEACHER'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Volunteers have widely differing formal and informal qualifications and backgrounds.

To promote a positive structure, your role is to:

- **WELCOME THE SVPACT VOLUNTEER.**

Introduce your volunteer to relevant school personnel e.g. office manager, principal etc.

- **SELECT WORK TASKS FOR EACH SESSION.**

Bear in mind that the volunteer may need to allocate some time for talking with the student and undertaking other activities such as board games, drawing etc.

- **INFORM THE SVPACT FACILITATOR IF THE STUDENT IS ABSENT, ON AN EXCURSION, OR UNAVAILABLE FOR OTHER REASONS. ENSURE THAT THE VOLUNTEER IS CONTACTED PRIOR TO ARRIVING FOR THE SVPACT SESSION.**

The SVPACT facilitator will then contact the volunteer to advise that the student will not be available.

- **CONSULT THE COMMUNICATION BOOK REGULARLY.**

The volunteer will provide feedback about tasks undertaken, additional activities, or other information as it arises.

- **MEET WITH THE SVPACT FACILITATOR TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THE PROCESS.**

- What's working?
- What might work better?
- And then discuss your ideas for enhancing the volunteer-student experience. On rare occasions it may be necessary to terminate the volunteer-student relationship, and a new pairing should then be initiated.

GETTING STARTED

New volunteers will be introduced to the principal, class teacher and the SVPACT facilitator by a member of the SVPACT Committee. At this meeting the needs of the student will be discussed and a mentoring strategy agreed.

The first meeting of the volunteer with the student will generally be used as a 'getting-to-know-one-another' session. Subsequent sessions will focus on tasks assigned by the classroom teacher. The program is designed to benefit students in both their social and academic development.

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The SVPACT is fortunate to have volunteers with a variety of professional qualifications, including science, engineering, economics, literature and those with trade and craft skills. Several volunteers are using Meccano building as a means of engaging with students, and this program is proving very successful.

WHAT VOLUNTEERS CAN OFFER

Volunteers bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from both their professional and family lives and provide the opportunity for intergenerational learning. They have an appreciation for, and make a commitment to, mentoring children and young people. The SVPACT links students with the wider community and provides them with mature role models, demonstrating what it is to be a caring member of society.

THE EXPERIENCE SO FAR

The SVPACT commenced in October 2005 with 16 volunteers at ten schools. By December 2007, over 80 volunteers were mentoring students at 28 ACT public schools (25 primary and 3 secondary). Students have responded positively to their mentors, and mutual respect has developed between the volunteers and students. Students tend to work well with their volunteer mentors, and look forward to the weekly visits. We have found that other students ask if they too can have a volunteer mentor, and we now have a waiting list of eager would-be participants. We actively continue to build our volunteer base to give as many students as possible the opportunity to join the program.

Volunteers are not required or expected to have specialty skills or teaching experience. The SVPACT strives to match the specific skills of volunteers with the needs of individual students. They successfully provide mentoring in a variety of subject areas such as literacy and numeracy, helping with class work and/or homework, and conversation for children from non-English speaking backgrounds.

ACT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY

For current Departmental policy please refer to:

- Working with Children and Young People – Volunteering:
http://www.det.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/19519/pol_WwChYP1.pdf
- Code of Conduct for Volunteers:
http://www.det.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/19520/pol_WwChYP-VolConduct.pdf, and
- Consult with your principal.

FURTHER INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE

The SVPACT Committee members are available to answer queries or assist in the implementation of the SVPACT delivery. The Committee consists of current and former principals, teachers, and volunteers with many years experience in community groups.

THANKS

Always remember that you are appreciated! Sometimes we get caught up in the day-to-day operations of the SVPACT and we may forget to say *thank you*. You are certainly appreciated and we value the time that you give.

**The Committee welcomes your ideas and feedback on all
aspects of the program.**

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER PRIOR TO BECOMING AN SVPACT TEACHER FACILITATOR

To help you with the implementation of this program, please consider the following questions:

- What days and/or how many hours should the SVPACT volunteer attend the school for their session?
- Have you consulted with your principal and members of staff regarding the SVPACT? E.g. notify the office manager of procedures to contact the SVPACT volunteer if the student is away.
- What are you and your student looking for from your SVPACT experience?
- What types of activities would you like your SVPACT volunteer to do?

Check List

Find out for your volunteer the following:

- School sign-in procedures
- The layout of the school and parking
- School evacuation procedures and safety rules
- Relevant school policies
- Expectations of the volunteer
- Procedures for when you are absent
- Procedures for when the student is absent
- How the volunteer will work with a relief teacher.

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