



## School Coordinator Handbook

### SVPACT Aims:

- To provide one to one mentoring of students, by volunteers in ACT schools;
- To add value and purpose to the lives of participating mentors;
- To enhance community involvement in schools.

*"It takes a village to raise a child"*

Major Sponsor:  **Teachers Mutual Bank**  
We put you first

## **Welcome SVPACT School Coordinators**

Volunteer mentors provide enrichment opportunities that enhance the education experience for students, while supporting teachers and staff.

The School Volunteer Program ACT (SVPACT) Incorporated gives students that one to one experience that teachers cannot always provide.

With your guidance, volunteer mentors will support what the students are learning in the classroom.

SVPACT mentors help their students in many ways including assisting in reading, general literacy, and numeracy, Meccano building, craft and working with students in gifted and talented programs.

This handbook will help you gain maximum benefit from your SVPACT mentors. It provides you with an overview of SVPACT, and the variety of activities that you may wish the mentors to pursue with their students.

I congratulate you on your role in this worthwhile and rewarding program.

SVPACT continues to make an important difference to individual students, and indirectly, to the wider community.

Your role is pivotal to the success of the program!

President  
SVPACT Inc.  
September 2015

## Quick Facts

The School Volunteer Program ACT (SVPACT) currently has more than 120 mentors, volunteering in over 30 ACT schools.

All SVPACT mentors hold a Working with Vulnerable People card, and two references are obtained for each mentor prior to commencement.

SVPACT mentors include people from all walks of life including; former teachers, engineers, economists, tradesmen, homemakers, lawyers, bureaucrats, and business managers.

## Awards

Since SVPACT commenced over 10 years ago, the Program, the Committee, and individual volunteers have received community recognition, through several Children's Week awards for excellence.

In 2015, the School Volunteer Program ACT was named the ***Volunteer Team of the Year*** in the category Education, Science and Technology.

## About the School Volunteer Program ACT

SVPACT is based on the successful Western Australian program, and was first introduced by the Rotary Club of Canberra Weston Creek, in 1997.

This program was subsequently combined with a trial activity at Charnwood Primary School, and the "STYLE" program to cover the whole of the ACT.

SVPACT was formally launched by the Governor General, Major General Michael Jeffery, at North Ainslie Primary School, in October 2005. General Jeffery is now the Patron of SVPACT.

All SVPACT mentors and Committee Members contribute their services on a voluntary basis.

SVPACT works in partnership with the ACT Education and Training Directorate, and is supported by Teachers Mutual Bank (major financial supporter), the ACT branch of the Australian Teachers Union, Rotary, and other community organisations.

Individual mentors work one to one with students, under the guidance of teachers, and within their line of sight.

It is expected that schools will seek parents' approval for their child to participate in the program.

## Prior to commencement

All volunteer mentors are briefed by an SVPACT Committee Member with direct mentoring experience, prior to his/her attendance at a mentor Orientation/Training Seminar.

A Committee Member will then contact the Principal of the preferred school to arrange a meeting to introduce the mentor.

When appropriate, schools will consider the experience and expertise of the mentor, and his/her preference regarding age and gender in selecting a student.

Once assigned to a school, a mentor is expected to liaise closely with the nominated SVPACT School Coordinator, and/or the Classroom Teacher. Mentors operate under the direction of school staff at all times.

Your mentor may want to know specific details about your school. Some issues to cover in your initial meeting with your volunteer mentor include:

- School sign-in procedures;
- A plan of the school showing location of toilets and available car parking spaces;
- School evacuation procedures and safety rules;
- Relevant school policies including the Code of Conduct for Volunteers in Schools;
- Expectations of the mentor;
- Procedures for when you and/or the Classroom Teacher are absent;
- Procedures for when the student is absent; and
- Opportunities for liaison between the mentor, SVPACT School Coordinator, Classroom Teacher and Parents.

The SVPACT Committee arranges regular meetings and professional learning events for mentors, which cover the development of mentoring skills, and their responsibilities as mentors of students on a one to one basis in schools.

Specific workshops are also directed at familiarising mentors with techniques for assisting students with basic reading and numeracy tasks, and interacting with disadvantaged children.

## **Mentoring using Meccano**

Mentoring through Meccano building is a significant part of SVPACT.

Participating mentors work in teams of four or more, and meet together at the school to work one to one with students, (but in a group environment).

The involvement of an individual student is generally for a 10 week period, which matches the time usually taken to complete a model.

This activity has proved very successful in enhancing the self esteem and confidence of participating students.

## **Getting started**

The SVPACT Mentor Coordinator will introduce new mentors to the SSC and/or Principal, and/or Classroom Teacher.

A meeting at the school between the mentor and the SVPACT School Coordinator will enable the needs of the student to be discussed, and a mentoring strategy agreed.

The first meeting of the mentor with the student will generally be used as a 'getting-to-know-you' session. Subsequent sessions will focus on tasks assigned by the Classroom Teacher, or the SVPACT School Coordinator.

The program is designed to benefit students in both their social and academic development.

## **SVPACT Committee**

A committee of 12 volunteers recruits, trains and manages the team of over 120 mentors.

Members include former school principals and teachers, business managers and service club members.

Details of SVPACT committee members can be found at the SVPACT website: [www.svpact.org.au](http://www.svpact.org.au)

## **Selection of students**

The selection of students for participation in the program is the responsibility of the school. Students can be selected through a referral process, which may differ from school to school.

A Classroom Teacher, Learning Assistance Teacher, ESL Teacher or a parent may recommend a student for participation in the program.

Once a student has been selected, the SVPACT School Coordinator should contact the SVPACT Mentor Coordinator, through the SVPACT website at [www.svpact.org.au](http://www.svpact.org.au).

In consultation with the Classroom Teacher, the SVPACT School Coordinator will select appropriate tasks for each student, and monitor his/her progress via the communication strategy that was agreed at the initial school briefing session.

This may involve the use of feedback forms, communication books, regular emails, face-to-face meetings and/or telephone conversations.

The SVPACT School Coordinator provides feedback and advice to the volunteer mentor as needed.

**Effective communication between the student, the mentor and SVPACT School Coordinator is essential for the success of the program.**

It is expected that schools will seek parents' approval for their child to participate in the program.

It is important that the whole school community welcomes the involvement of SVPACT mentors. Recognition such as entries in school newsletters is very welcome.

## **The SVPACT School Coordinator's Role & Responsibilities**

**This is a pivotal role that ensures the student and mentor have a productive relationship.**

Your role is to ensure that:

- Work tasks, materials and games are ready for the mentor and student when it is time to commence the session.
- There is a work area available within line of sight of a staff member, but quiet and separate enough to allow activity without disturbance.
- Regular, effective communication is maintained throughout the program.

If you need to change your mentoring arrangements, or if you identify more students interested in participating in our program, please contact the SVPACT Mentor Coordinator.

## **The SVPACT School Coordinator's Duties**

1. Introduce the mentors to school administration staff, the facilities (toilets, sick bay), Principal's office, staff room, and library.
2. Contact the mentor, as soon as practicable, if the student is absent or unavailable. (*The form at [Appendix 2](#) may assist with this process*).
3. Ensure that tasks are appropriate to the time available, and are appropriate for the mentor-student relationship. (For example, the teacher may expect homework to be completed during the session, but the mentor may feel that he/she needs to develop rapport with the student first, perhaps through games, or other shared interests).
4. Provide relevant advice to the mentor, and communicate with the School Principal, Teachers, and the school community about the various roles and responsibilities of SVPACT mentors.
5. Ensure volunteer mentors feel valued and respected.

## **The Classroom Teacher's Role & Responsibilities**

Classroom Teachers should be aware that SVPACT mentors have widely differing formal and informal qualifications and backgrounds.

To promote a positive structure, your role is to:

1. **Welcome the SVPACT mentor**  
Introduce your mentor to relevant school personnel e.g. Principal, Office Manager, etc.
2. **Select work tasks for each session**  
Bear in mind that the mentor generally will need to allocate some time for chatting with the student, and undertaking "fun" activities such as board games, drawing, etc. as a way of building a rapport with the student.
3. **Inform the SVPACT mentor if the student is absent prior to his/her arrival**  
(*The form at [Appendix 2](#) may be useful for this purpose*).
4. **Communicate regularly**  
The mentor will provide feedback about tasks undertaken, additional activities, or other information as it arises.
5. The Classroom Teacher can also communicate with the mentor to provide feedback. On rare occasions it may be necessary to terminate the mentor-student relationship, and a new pairing initiated.

## **What volunteer mentors can offer**

Mentors bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from both their professional, and family lives. They provide opportunity for inter-generational learning.

They have an appreciation for, and make a commitment to, mentoring children and young people.

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 volunteer mentors at 10 schools.

In 2015, there are more than 120 mentors, volunteering in over 30 ACT schools.

Students generally respond positively to their mentors as mutual respect develops. Students tend to work well on a one to one basis with their mentors, and look forward to the weekly visits.

Mentors are not required, or expected to have special skills or teaching experience.

SVPACT strives to match the specific skills of mentors with the needs of individual students. They successfully provide mentoring in a variety of areas such as literacy and numeracy, helping with class work and/or homework, and conversation for children from non-English speaking backgrounds.

## **Policy of the ACT Directorate of Education & Training**

The school should ensure that each mentor has completed a *'Working With Children and Young People Nomination'* in which he/she undertakes to comply with the Code of Conduct which inter-alia, states, for... volunteers you must " *observe confidentiality in respect to all information gained through your participation as a volunteer.*"

The complete Code of Conduct can be viewed at [Appendix 1](#).

## **Further information & assistance**

The SVPACT Mentor Coordinator can answer queries or assist in the implementation of the mentoring program. Please refer to the SVPACT website for contact details.

Always remember that you are appreciated! At times 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.

Your ideas and feedback on all aspects of the program is welcomed.

## **SVPACT Contact Details**

Mal Ferguson

Phone: 0405 732 837

Email: [secretary@svpact.org.au](mailto:secretary@svpact.org.au)

Web: [www.svpact.org.au](http://www.svpact.org.au)

## **Working with Children & Young People Code of Conduct for Volunteers and Visitors**

Volunteers and visitors provide a range of services and support to schools. This may include interaction with individuals and small groups of students in a range of different activities.

**To assist schools in providing a safe environment and a positive educational climate, volunteers and visitors are asked to comply with this Code of Conduct.**

**This Code of Conduct has been formulated to clarify the type of conduct that is expected of volunteers and visitors participating in programs and activities supporting students in ACT public schools.**

- Observe similar standards of behaviour and ethical conduct to those required of staff. For example, you are expected to act within the law, be honest and fair, respect other people (including students), and work to the best standard of your ability.
- Appreciate that teachers have a special duty of care for students that cannot be delegated or transferred to others. Appreciate also that the principal is the spokesperson for the school.
- Appreciate that students have rights and aspirations. Treat students with dignity and respect.
- Observe confidentiality in respect of all information gained through your participation as a volunteer or visitor. All information held by schools should be handled with care. Some information is especially sensitive.
- Sensitive and/or personal information requires additional caution in the way it is treated. For example, volunteers and visitors should not discuss nor disclose personal information about students, staff or students' parents or carers.
- Accept and follow directions from the principal/supervisor and seek guidance through clarification where you may be uncertain of tasks or requirements. You may need to familiarise yourself with the Directorate's policies and guidelines on particular issues.
- Observe safe work practices, which avoid unnecessary risks, apply reasonable instructions given by supervisors, and report to the supervising staff and school administration any hazard or hazardous practice in the workplace.
- Report any problems as they arise to your supervisor/contact person, including incidents, injury or property damage.

## Mentor contact details & class arrangements

<b>Mentor name:</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<i>Contact details are optional for privacy reasons, as this information will be on “display” in the classroom. However, please note your School Co-ordinator, or Principal, or front office will need these details should contact be necessary.</i>	
<b>Student:</b>	<b>Year:</b>
<b>Day:</b>	<b>Time:</b>
<b>Teacher:</b>	
<b>Mentoring location:</b>	
<p>Wherever possible, please let me know if the program will not run (e.g. school camp, excursion or student absence).</p> <p>Perhaps have another student as back up, or some general tasks for me should I arrive and the student is unavailable.</p>	

*(Mentor to complete this form and hand to Classroom Teacher)*