

# Charter School Libraries Maximizing Volunteer Help

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## What can volunteers do for you

- Free labor.
- Free up librarian for other things.
- Expand collection by accepting donations.
- Broader base of knowledge.
- Broader base of support for your library.
- Boost morale.
- Sense of community.
- Gets the volunteer's children invested.

## What we accomplished

- For the first two years we had \$0 operating budget and no staff.
- After 2 years we had space and furniture.
- After 4 years, we had full library services and integrated curriculum. Over 10,000 volumes--mostly donated.

## How we did it

- Year 1~Solicit donations of furniture and books. Made minor purchases of software, printer, piece-meal processing materials.
- Year 2~Secured a room, more furniture donations, PTO backing, more books. Limited student access. Grant writing.
- Year 3~Expansion.
- Year 4~One part time staff member. Full library services. 2 part time volunteers, approx. 12 other regular volunteers, approx. 40 volunteer hours a week.

## How to set up a volunteer friendly library

### Establish your needs.

- What is it that you want to accomplish through your volunteer program.
- Set certain times that volunteers are welcome.
- Make it a win/win situation. How will your volunteers benefit?
- Put your plan into action.

### Create the Physical Environment

- Have a place set aside for volunteers to bring younger children. Become the parent community center.
  - Places for parents to leave toys, videos, diapers, treats.
  - Ask for donations of toddler toys, tables, coloring books.
  - A little Video/TV will get you everywhere.
- Volunteers want to be able to walk in and get to work.
  - Post a to do list
    - Shelve
    - Cover books
    - Catalog

- Repair Books
- Refresh Bulletin Boards.
- Motivational programs (Reading Olympics)
- Check donations for duplicates.
- Read questionable donations.
- Things to clean (scissors, treasure box, dusting, etc.)
- Organize to do shelves
  - To cover softbound
  - To cover hardbound
  - To tape
  - To repair (with materials and how to booklet
  - Cataloging Problems
  - Duplicates to catalog
  - Questionable content donations to review.

### **How to invite volunteers**

- Use your school's communications channels--PTO, newsletters, e-mails.
- Set certain open house times. For example, "You are always welcome Monday mornings until 11"
- Work with teachers to invite parents to come in with their child's class.
- Kick off with an evening work party (parties) to become friends. FOOD.
- Some people will find that it isn't their cup of tea. Don't take it personally.
- Passionate, Amazing, Volunteer Leaders will emerge and become a great help that you can trust.
- The chemistry will start to work and parents and the librarian will look forward to being with friends, not just working in the library.

### **Volunteering from home**

- Have a volunteer friendly cataloging system.
  - We found ResourceMate to be a life saver.
  - Cut and copy out of Library of Congress.
  - Bring in a volunteer disk.
  - Look over the files before import into Main computer.
  - Can be transferred to other programs with MARC records.
- Covering.

### **Volunteering during classtime**

- Give the Volunteer Choices
  - Free up the librarian to do other things.
    - Story time
    - Book recommendations
    - Check out
  - Helps the librarian feel like something is getting done for the library.
    - Covering
    - Cataloging
    - Behind the scenes
- Has to be organized so they can come help while the librarian is busy.

**Attitude, Attitude, Attitude**

**“Whatever I didn’t have to do is GREAT!”**

- Give up the perfection. The benefits outweigh the disadvantages.
- Everyone is going to make mistakes at first.
- If you have to fix a little behind their backs it is worth it in the long run.
- Gently instruct and you will have skillful volunteers in no time.
- Be willing to work side by side with your volunteers.
- Make it fun and social so they will want to come back. Parents want to know each other.
- Focus on what benefits they get out of it.
- Make sure you thank them over and over and over. Thank you notes, thank yous in parent newsletters, Let them know how much you need them. (Put a volunteer in charge of donations for gifts to great volunteers.)

**Create a community for the whole school**

- What are the benefits for the volunteer?
  - Comradarie amongst parents
  - Sense of accomplishment
  - Ownership
  - Free and regular library access/better ability to suggest good books to their kids. (Be sure to encourage checking out books.)

**You can do this**

- The benefits are huge.
  - You can get more accomplished.
  - You can build the collection.
  - You can establish support for your library.
  - You can enjoy yourself and make friends.
  - You can create greater unity in your school.
  - You can encourage the love of reading in the whole family.

Good Luck! Let us know how it goes  
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