

PEI Volunteers for Literacy  
(formerly Project L.O.V.E.)

# The Manual for Contact Teachers

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# Table of Contents

1. Contact Teacher Job Description
2. Calling Volunteers
3. Recruiting New Volunteers
4. Troubleshooting
5. Keeping in Touch with the PEI Volunteers for Literacy Board
6. Things to Think About...
7. Comments from students
8. PEI Volunteers for Literacy Board members
9. Sample notices and posters for recruitment.

## The Manual for Contact Teachers

### 1. Contact Teacher: Job Description

The Contact Teacher is the most important person in ensuring the success of a PEI Volunteers for Literacy program in a school, according to the 2004-5 research study report “It Takes a Village to Raise a Reader”.

The principal usually decides who will take on this role, and allows the teacher the necessary time to undertake the duties required. Contact Teachers survey the other teachers for students who may benefit from being involved in the program; holds a meeting with volunteers to set up the schedule; finds locations within the school where the volunteers may work, and ensures that the program is running smoothly. He or she is often the person who is called by the volunteer who can’t make it in on their usual day. He or she is also responsible for keeping in contact with the PEI Volunteers for Literacy Coordinator, keeping the list of volunteers up-to-date and requesting volunteer orientation folders, stickers, or whatever is needed for the program.

The Contact Teacher will sometimes have the help of a School Captain, one of the volunteers who takes on the role of being the organizer of the volunteers. This person can be a great help to the Contact Teacher, especially in recruiting more volunteers to the program and in keeping in contact with the volunteers, telephoning them to notify them of meetings or changes in the school schedule, for example.

### 2. Calling Volunteers

The Contact Teacher will call the Captain or the volunteers when the new school year

begins, to decide on a meeting date and to start setting up the schedule. He/She will have received a letter and a list of the previous year's volunteers from the PEI Volunteers for Literacy Coordinator.

**When is the best time to call the volunteers?**

Early in September, once teachers have decided how many students they wish to have participate, is a good time. Volunteers want to get their fall schedules organized, and are aware of the new season starting in September. We don't want to lost them to another good cause! The meeting may be the last of September or first week of October - at a time which is most convenient for the volunteers and the teachers. The principal often attends or drops in to the meeting to welcome the volunteers into the school and thank them for committing their time to helping the students.

**How will you know what kind of things the volunteers will need to know about when they start back at school?**

The most important thing to know is about scheduling. It is helpful if you can provide copies of the school calendar at the meeting. Volunteers are asked to come to the meeting knowing when they will be able to volunteer, and for some, they have busy schedules and may only be available for one certain morning or afternoon each week. Most volunteers are prepared to come in once per week, although some can come more than once. However, it is almost impossible for volunteers to come in on a certain day of the **school** week (ie., Day 6) as their other activities interfere with this schedule. This is the most difficult part for the school of scheduling volunteers, as it is important to be sure that the students with whom they work are not missing every second week due to specialist classes, for instance.

**How many volunteers are enough for each school?**

Some schools have only a few volunteers, while in others, ten to twelve volunteers - one to cover every morning and afternoon of the school week, plus one or two substitutes, is ideal. In schools which have more space, there are sometimes more. This will be determined by the needs of the school and by how many volunteers are available.

**How will the volunteers know what the goals are for each student with which they work?**

The teacher of the students in the program is very important in letting the volunteer know what the goals will be. The students usually take materials chosen by the teacher when they go out to the volunteer. Ideally there should be a list of each volunteer's students with teachers' goals outlined for each one, established by the teacher. This may not be available from the start, but might be developed over the first month or two of the project.

**To whom should a volunteer speak if they are concerned about confidential information told them by a student?**

Volunteers are told to talk to the contact teacher about anything which concerns them about what the students tell them. They are told not to try to solve problems themselves, and are reminded that their time and empathy are what they are there to provide. However, we are aware that students do sometimes confide in their volunteers, and we want them to have a channel for communication should they need it. If there is another person on staff who should be the one with whom the volunteer speaks, this information may be passed on at the initial meeting in the fall.

**How much time should be given to each student?**

Anything from 10 - 25 minutes is average though some volunteers work with a student for a whole afternoon. Most volunteers agree that 20 minutes is the OPTIMUM time - enough time to get work done, not so long that the student becomes bored, and is not missing from the classroom for a long time.

### **3. Recruiting New Volunteers.**

School Captains should be able to help find more volunteers for the school if more are required. This manual includes sample notices for church and media and posters for putting up in public. The most successful recruitment is by personal contact.

**Where will you find new volunteers for your school?**

1. Seniors apartments
2. Church bulletins
3. Through the parents of the school - through word-of-mouth
4. School bulletins
5. Service groups - contact with the Lions' Club would be a good way to reach men. Women's Institute or Home and School could help too.
6. Person-to-person contact is an ideal way to increase numbers. Try asking your returning volunteers to bring a friend to the first meeting of the school year.

**How can you put promotional materials in church bulletins or newspapers?**

1. Call churches
2. CBC & media Bulletin Boards
3. Guardian/Journal Pioneer Social Events column.
4. See sample notices at the end of the manual.

**What should promotional materials say?**

1. Give children one-on-one attention that's needed
2. Bridge the generation gap

3. Fill a gap where grandparents or older family are missing in the child's life
4. It's a **flexible** program - pick your own time
5. Be a **spare** for volunteers who may not be able to come on their scheduled day.
6. Do you like to read? Some children may never learn to love to read without your individual help.

**Who should answer questions of the potential recruits?**

In each individual school, the teacher who is the contact person; the School Captain if there is one, or the PEI Volunteers for Literacy Coordinator.

**Would you ask a volunteer to let a new volunteer observe them with a student?**

- Good idea - if they are comfortable with this. Most volunteers are accustomed to being observed by the teachers at the school.

#### **4. Troubleshooting**

The Contact Teacher is the main contact for the volunteers in the program. If you can set aside a time to be available for them, or suggest a good time to call if you are busy when they are in at the school, that would be great. The PEI Volunteers for Literacy Coordinator will help with any problems which can't be resolved at the school level.

i) What would you do to help a volunteer who was having difficulty with a) discipline; b) incompatibility with a student; c) understanding the language arts program; d) wondering if they were doing any good; e) other questions?

a) discipline: Most teachers wish to take care of discipline themselves. If a volunteer is having problems with discipline, tell him/her that it is best to send the child back to the class, and let the teacher deal with it.

b) Incompatibility: It happens, and volunteers must not blame themselves. Most schools have plenty of other students to take the place of one with whom you just can't get along. Let the contact teacher know.

c) Understanding the language arts program: Some schools are having the classroom teachers present mini-workshops on their language arts program for the volunteers. In other schools, teachers believe that volunteers bring a different perspective to reading, which might just work with a particular student.

d) Wondering if they're doing any good: The PEI Volunteers for Literacy program has been recently evaluated by a team of researchers from UPEI's Faculty of Education, and their report ("It Takes a Village to Raise a Reader") is full of positive comments from teachers, administrators and students - as well as your fellow volunteers. Ask about getting a copy to read if you wish to learn more.

It has been suggested that volunteers would like to meet teachers before they start with children, and then again a few months later to determine how much progress has been made and share suggestions for improving the progress. This is a good idea, but it can only work if the teachers can spare the time and the volunteers are willing.

ii) Should you meet at your school as a group? How often?

It is important for the group to meet at the beginning of the year to establish the schedule, orient new volunteers, etc. Meetings every few months will give volunteers a chance to share ideas and should provide feedback too. A wrap-up at the end of the year, where volunteers can say if they wish to continue, is good as well.

iii) How can we have more communication between volunteers and teachers concerning matters relating to a child or children?

If meetings are impossible, some schools have other lines of communication. One of the best is the notebook on student progress, kept by the volunteer and reviewed by the student's teacher before the next visit. Any questions can be asked and answered in the notebook.

#### **5. Keep in touch with PEI Volunteers for Literacy.**

Contact Teachers can call the office on the Centrex system (4695 plus your Charlottetown access code) or toll-free 1-866-741-5683. E-mail is also great. Board members are all volunteers from schools across PEI, and their contact information is included in this manual.

#### **6. Things to Think About....**

i) What sorts of information about the school system would benefit your volunteers?

ii) What would be the best way of getting this information to the volunteers...

A. Articles to read on various topics; B. Short workshops with teachers; C. Workshops with other volunteers; D. Newsletter for volunteers; E. Other methods?

#### **7. Comments**

A grade five class at Southern Kings Consolidated each wrote a note about what it was like to work with LOVE volunteers, and whether their image of seniors had changed through the project. Here are some responses (original spelling and construction):

"Yes, I like going with them because I get to get my homework done and their nice. I like them because I always get my homework done. They make it easier to get stuff done. When I get my work done I don't have to stay in all the time. My image changed about seniors I thought their just old people now I think of them as helpful and smart people."

"It didn't matter to me if I got to go with someone or not. I think it was really nice for the

volunteers to come to the school and help people from every grade. The volunteers that came to our class is Mrs. MacLeod and Mrs. Johnston. Mrs MacLeod helped people with Language Arts and sometimes Math and Mrs. Johnston helped people with Math. I think that it was really nice that the volunteers came to school almost everyday just to help people with their work. This has changed my image [of seniors] by thinking that people are really nice and really, really helpful."

"Yes I really liked going to get help in the little room because I needed some help in my work. I seemed to like the way that I got my work done in the time. Then I would not be behind and I would be caught up with the rest of the children. I liked being with the volunteer it was a lot of fun getting help. Now I am getting better in math and in my *Underground to Canada* book. Thank you for spending your time with us for a while."

"I only went 2 [times] with the volunteer. I liked it alot. I went for a spelling test to study. I got 100%. I would like to go again. I also went to work on language. I was going to Newfoundland for hockey so I had to get ahead in The Key. That was also fun. I wish I would went for Math or spelling. I wish I would have went when I was going to Nova Scotia. I needed alot of help getting ahead. I also wish I could go to study more because it is very fun."

"I like going with the volunteer because they helped me catch up on me work. I liked going to get help with my math. I don't like to go for help with L.A. I like going with the volunteer because they got a lot of paychons."

"When I worked with a volunteer helper, I enjoyed it she was nice and helped me understand the math. I wouldn't mind going with another volunteer! I know people that went with volunteers and enjoyed it as well. I only had to go with a helper once this year! In my other school I never went with a helper. Now I know how much fun it is. I went with Mrs. MacLeod and I would like to thank her for her help. Even though I haven't went with another helper I would have liked to. And I and sure I would have enjoyed it."

"I liked when they helped me with my work. Like when Mrs. MacLeod helped me with my math. I liked it because then where nice and they where janous to help people in the school. All the volunteers where always happy and nice all the time. They are very helpful and caring. I wished I would of went more like right before I went to Florida but it helped me more."

## **The PEI Volunteers for Literacy Board, 2005-06**

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Generic Notice for Church Bulletins or Media Notice Boards

There will be an PEI Volunteers for Literacy Information Session at \_\_\_\_\_ School on \_\_\_\_\_ day, \_\_\_\_\_ at 3:00 PM. PEI Volunteers for Literacy will be helping students with reading in one-on-one sessions at the school. For further information, please call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Generic Poster:

# **PEI Volunteers for Literacy Orientation Session School**

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PEI Volunteers for Literacy needs older volunteers to help students at \_\_\_\_\_ School with their reading. If you have a half-day (usually 9:00 - 11:45 AM or 12:30 - 2:30 PM) to spend helping students one-on-one, or if you would like to know more about PEI Volunteers for Literacy, please come to our orientation session:

**When:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Why:** **To introduce new volunteers to PEI Volunteers for Literacy at \_\_\_\_\_ School**

**Older Volunteers welcome!!  
Parents and Grandparents too!!**

For more information, please call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ School, \_\_\_\_\_, or Mary Burke at PEI Volunteers for Literacy, 368-4695.