

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

# The Manual for School Captains

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## The Manual for School Captains

### 1. School Captain Job Description

The School Captain is one of the PEI Volunteers for Literacy. He or she will help to keep the project operating in the school by: communicating with the contact teacher, calling the other volunteers, helping to recruit new volunteers, assisting volunteers with any problems, keeping in touch with the PEI Volunteers for Literacy Coordinator, and planning meetings and/or social events in the school with the help of the coordinating teacher.

### 2. School Contact

The School Captain will be in charge of calling or talking to the contact teacher about the school schedule and other things the volunteers need to know. The first time the Captain and the contact teacher will speak will be just when the new school year begins. If you are a returning Captain, you may have discussed this with your contact teacher before the end of the last school year.

#### i) When is the best time to call the contact teacher?

During the first week of September call to **plan** a meeting of the volunteers and teachers who use the project. It can be a reorientation, to meet new teachers, or simply to schedule volunteer times. It is **ESSENTIAL** that a meeting be held, to ensure that the project starts off on the right foot. The first meeting may be the last of September or first week of

October - or at a time which is most convenient for the volunteers and the teachers. Remember that it takes time for the teachers to get to know their new students and decide who is going to need your volunteers' help this year.

ii) Whom do you call if the contact teacher from last year is not at the school this year?

Changes occur in schools over the summer break. Even if your contact teacher was planning to return in the fall, this may not turn out to be the case. The school principal will have to become involved in choosing a contact teacher, and may be the person with whom to talk. Or call the PEI Volunteers for Literacy coordinator at the number on the cover of this Manual

iii) 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, and the contact teacher has a lot of the knowledge you need to know. At the first meeting there should be a calendar or schedule so volunteers can sign up right away. A good Captain makes the volunteer feel at home in the school.

iv) Who will be able to provide what the volunteers need?

The contact teacher will be your main source of information in the school.

v. How many volunteers are enough for each school?

In some schools, 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 have to be decided by the staff of the school.

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

The teacher's opinion is very important in letting the volunteer know what the goals will be. 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.

viii. What should we do about confidential information from a student that needs passing on?

Let the coordinating teacher know about anything that concerns you. She or he will report it to the proper channels. Remember that you may hear heartbreaking or worrying things from the students - but teachers have received training in how to deal with these things. Remember too that it is required by law that situations of abuse be reported to the authorities.

ix. How much time should be given to each student?

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 or the volunteer is bored.

### **3. Volunteer Contact**

The School Captain is in charge of calling volunteers to tell them about start dates and school holidays, and inviting them to meetings with the school teachers. If there is a large group, the Captain may wish to appoint telephone chairs to help with this task, or organize a telephone tree system, where volunteers help by calling other volunteers.

i) Where will you get the list of volunteers from your school from last year?

The Captain should get a list from the school principal or secretary at the end of the school year. It is essential that the list be as up-to-date as possible, as volunteers may have changed over the school year. Be sure to call everyone on the list from the start of the school year, however - in some cases, volunteers may not finish out the year because of travel or illness, etc., may not be on the current list but may want to come back in the fall. Call and give them a chance to participate again.

ii) How will you arrange for the meeting with the school staff?

It is really important that the volunteers meet with the teachers of the students with whom he/she will be working. If volunteers are not able to meet with the teachers, it is difficult to get the feedback they need to do the job - to discover the teacher's goals for each student. The Contact teacher or the principal could be asked to set up a meeting with teachers involved.

iii) What will you do if you can't reach some of the volunteers?

The contact teacher or the school secretary should have the current telephone numbers, but ideally the School Captain will be able to keep a list as well, and pass it on to the succeeding Captain at the end of the school year. The PEI Volunteers for Literacy coordinator tries to keep a list of volunteers for each school, but it may not be as up-to-date as the one kept at the school.

iv) What will you do if the volunteer says she or he doesn't want to return?

It would be really useful for the project if you could find out why. Most people who do not return cite health reasons, but if there are problems at the school which can be fixed by modifying the project in some way then the PEI Volunteers for Literacy would like to hear about it. Ask if the person would mind a call from the coordinator to see what is wrong, and then let the coordinator know if she or he agrees to be interviewed. Don't try to pressure anyone to return against her/his will.

### **4. 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.

i) 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.

ii) 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.

iii) 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.

iv) Who should answer questions of the potential recruits? (teacher or captain?)

In each individual school, the teacher who is the contact person; the PEI Volunteers for Literacy volunteer who is the School Captain, and the PEI Volunteers for Literacy Coordinator.

v) Who would be good to talk about the project to community groups?

The PEI Volunteers for Literacy Coordinator, or members of the PEI Volunteers for Literacy Board can speak about the project to community groups. It is a good idea to have local contact, however - a volunteer who suggests that the group might like to hear about the project. It is also a good idea to have a local volunteer to come along to an external presentation, to answer questions. People tend to trust a local person more, and can learn from them that it is possible to help children without special training or experience.

vi) What would you say to someone who wasn't sure if he or she wanted to volunteer in a school?

Come along and watch what I do  
It's easy, the children will love you.

- viii) 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.

## 5. Troubleshooting

The School Captain should be available to help other volunteers with any problems they may be having. Remember, the teachers have a big job to do, and may be thinking about PEI Volunteers for Literacy from the school's point of view exclusively. The Captain is there to think about the **volunteers** first. And the Project Coordinator will help with any problems which can't be resolved at the school level.

- i) How would you make yourself available to the other volunteers?

You must have an up-to-date list of your school's volunteers' names and telephone numbers - keep it in your Captain's Manual. Get the school to make copies for all the volunteers. This will help with finding substitutes or exchanging days as well.

It would help to have a copy of the school schedule, and which volunteers are scheduled for which days. The Contact teacher should be able to provide these. If possible, it is a good idea to have a list of the teachers (and room numbers) with whom the volunteer is working. In some schools, volunteers work with students from a number of classes, and may not know the name of the teacher of the student s/he's having problems with.

- ii) 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 new perspective to teaching, which might just work when a newer method has been failing. Refer a request from a volunteer to the contact teacher, who will know which method is being used at your school.

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 school is willing. Talk to the Contact teacher about this, or have the Coordinator do so.

iii) 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, as well as a fund of good stories. (Always remember to refer to the students anonymously in your stories. They'll be just as good!) A wrap-up at the end of the year, where volunteers can say if they wish to continue, is good as well.

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

See 5 ii d above.

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

School Captains are welcome to attend the PEI Volunteers for Literacy meetings, held monthly during the school year. They should call the coordinator if they have questions or problems. Committee members' names and addresses are contained in the Manual.

i) When and where does the PEI Volunteers for Literacy Committee meet?

The PEI Volunteers for Literacy Committee meets usually on the first Wednesday of the month during the school year. The meeting place changes, so get in touch with the coordinator if you want to attend.

ii) Do you know who is on the Board?

There is a list of the ten official members of the Board, the ex-officio members, and the coordinator, in the Manual.

iii) Should each school's captain attend meetings of the Committee?

If you can come, you would be welcome.

iv) If so, how should this be done?

You can take a taxi to the meeting and will be reimbursed for the expense, or you can take your own car and receive mileage costs.

v) What should the PEI Volunteers for Literacy Committee to do to help your project continue?  
Let us know!

vi) Should the PEI Volunteers for Literacy group in each school attend meetings of Home and School or School Council (If your school has them). If so, what would you want from them? Financial support? Recruitment? Information?

vii) Other questions?

## **7. Meetings**

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?

iii) For what benefit would your group meet socially at the school?

iv) How often (if at all) should your group meet socially?

v) For what other reasons might the volunteers at your school meet, in addition to attending workshops or socially?

## **8. Comments Section**

### Teacher's Comments from Evaluation Forms:

"This is a wonderful program. It not only enhances the academic growth of students, but fosters self-esteem and feelings of belonging as well. Many students thrive through the extra attention which this program affords."

"My PEI Volunteers for Literacy volunteer has played a significant role in helping one of my reluctant readers achieve success."

"I feel the presence of PEI Volunteers for Literacy Volunteers in the school makes it easier to impress upon the students that others care for them and that learning is important. It goes beyond the walls of the school. These volunteers are witnesses to this especially for the students."

"Student work, attitudes, and self-esteem have all improved. Volunteers also have gained confidence and a better understanding of young people."

"I can't say enough about the positive aspect of our program. I am thrilled with the beaming faces of seniors coming through the door and the beaming faces of students as they work together."

"I teach grade one and have seen great improvements in children's interest in reading. They love the opportunity to read one on one with someone who really cares."

"I noticed the children feeling more at ease with the older volunteers as the project went on. I love the idea of bridging the gap! This works! I love to see a 65+ lady or gent heading down the hall with a book in hand."

"The children have really enjoyed reading to an adult. This has added to their confidence and oral reading skills. A really worthwhile project."

"I think it is a wonderful program and I sincerely wish to thank the seniors for volunteering to participate in this program."

"I believe that my students have developed very positive rapport with their volunteers and several of them refer to them often."

"They [the students] see the volunteers as caring individuals and did not comment on their age, except that they were very understanding when a volunteer was sick!"

"Very good relationships between student and volunteer...Very helpful to students experiencing difficulty."

"One of the students, who is a PEI Volunteers for Literacy student, had a poor opinion of seniors (bad and rude comments). After the program started and his grades went up he though seniors were great."

"The extra help provided by these volunteers was extremely valuable. Many students need this type of one on one assistance and it is not provided in the larger class setting."

"Volunteers have said that they feel useful in a school environment. My own students enjoyed the one on one attention, and most felt more confident when they returned to class. They had some successes every day with their volunteer. Great for self-esteem!"

"They [students] see seniors as people who are valuable resources, able to share and help them with their own unique experience and patience."

"I highly endorse the program and would freely participate any year."

"Some of our young people are crying for individual attention. This program was a wonderful opportunity for them. It also helped the teachers a great deal."

"They have a lot of patience, and are very kind and warm with the children."

"The program was a wonderful support for this sometimes "frazzled" classroom teacher. Thank you very much."

"The children really enjoyed the extra attention given to them by the volunteers. Some volunteers wore earrings or clothing they knew the children would enjoy."

"I believe that the students have a greater appreciation for seniors and how much knowledge seniors possess."

"I believe this to be one of the most worthwhile volunteer projects to come into our schools. With many families not living near their grandparents, it's nice to have children have a chance to meet people their grandparents' age and have a chance to chat with them."

"It has been going for only a short time but you could see a relationship developing even in that time. Students enjoyed going for extra help and conversation even in the upper elementary grade levels."

"I think it's very worthwhile and has great potential to be very fulfilling for both parties."

"This project is the most incredible program I have ever seen. The benefits to both the students and their volunteers is extraordinary."

"The children are very anxious to make sure they get their turn to go with "Grandmother". They are glad of help in reading . It gives extra help to the ESL children."

### **Volunteers' Comments from Evaluation Forms:**

"It has given me an opportunity to be with young children. I love to read and am interested in helping others to read and to develop a love for reading."

"The children are interesting! It is very satisfying to me to encourage and help with their reading - also my grandchildren live too far away for me to enjoy the privilege of reading with them!!"

"Gets me out, reading great stories with great kids. We have fun."

"It gives me contact with young people. I feel reading is very important and if I can help someone who is having problems with reading I am more than happy to do it."

"Keep the project going."

"I enjoyed contact with students and staff - I helped a bit as well!"

"I love to take the time to listen to the children read. I read a lot myself and enjoy all the aspects of what reading brings. This sharing of reading is an extension of that."

"I enjoy helping children because you know, they are not getting that extra help at home. And most of the children love to have you there, if it is just to talk to them."

"I enjoy helping the students and socializing with the teachers and other volunteers."

"The experience makes me feel appreciated. The children provide a "calm" in a sometimes hectic schedule. It enables me to keep in touch with the "child within". Thanks."

"It makes me feel I'm doing something to help. I like meeting and getting to know the children."

"Keeps me in touch with young people, and gives me a positive feeling of self-worth!"

"I enjoy working with young children - they inspire me and make me happy! So hopefully I have been beneficial to them. I also enjoy working with the teachers."

"I enjoy being with the children. These children replace my grandchildren who live in Nova Scotia and [whom] I only see occasionally."

"It makes me happy and gives my heart a big lift to see the many (not all) smiling faces of both students and teachers. It gives me joy to see the many displays of projects and artwork that line the halls at Glen Stewart - they are truly remarkable."

"A feeling of being needed and appreciated and helping such innocent faces in their formative years."

"A great way to meet all the students and teachers. To learn about the changes since I was a student."

"I enjoy working with the students and keeping in touch with teachers, and if I can help in some small way for at least one student I would be glad to have assisted in helping someone out."

"Satisfaction in helping students who need a little extra help."

"Pupils improved over the few months but continue to need one to one supervision. I tried to encourage them to read more on their own."

"Enjoy interaction with the children/exposure to a variety of children's literature/learning more about how children learn to read."

"I have really enjoyed the children and participating in the way things are taught."

"Has familiarized me with children's books - will help me to relate to my grandchildren's reading!"

"I've always enjoyed reading to and with my own children, so hearing other little children read and gain confidence at it feels just as good. It's great to see them start enjoying a story once the words come easier."

"I liked that there was no strict structure to the program. I think the students I worked with felt it was a relaxing, enjoyable time to simply read and be read to. I always discussed new words, comprehension, etc. but I don't think they felt it was 'testing' them."

"I like to go to school and work, read, talk etc. with a single child. It's fun and it's so easy to work with only one or two pupils!"

### Students' Comments about PEI Volunteers for Literacy:

A grade 3 class at Southern Kings Consolidated School made a thank-you card for their PEI Volunteers for Literacy volunteer, Mrs. MacLeod. They described her in this way:

She respects us.	She is super.
She makes the class cheerful.	She is a good singer.
Nice poems written.	She makes us feel smart.
She is my grammy.	I see her as a mom.
She is very awesome.	She's excellent.
She writes nice poems.	She makes you feel good.
She feels different.	They help us because they know a lot.
We all respect her very much.	She has been here for a long time.
She always is honest.	She is pretty inside and out.
She is really smart for her age.	She likes fishing.
She's a PEI Volunteers for Literacy volunteer.	She is cool.
She is a good guitar player.	She's a smart friend.
She helps our class a lot.	She helps people get ahead in their work.
She's helpful with work.	She has faith in us.
She's nice and sweet.	She plays at concerts.
She treats us good.	She is smart and funny (jokes).
She was our teacher's teacher.	She is good at answering.
She stands up for other people.	She gives us ideas.
She is special.	

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:

"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."

## 9. 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 \_\_\_\_\_.

# PEI Volunteers for Literacy Orientation Session \_\_\_\_\_ School

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**

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

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