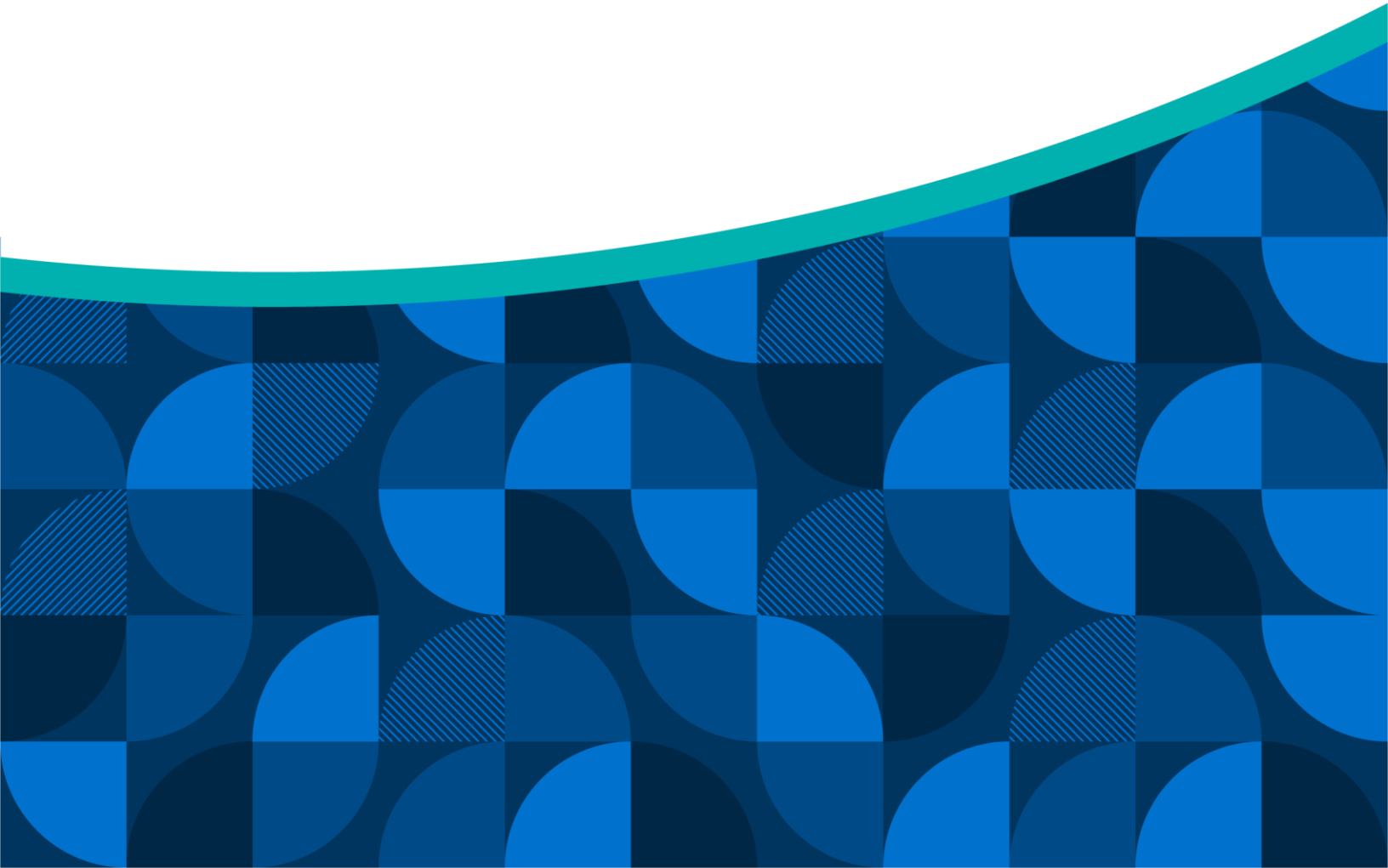




Student-Adult Relationships

Connected Resource Toolkit



District Leadership Forum

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Table of Contents

The Importance of Student-Adult Connections	4
Guide to Welcoming and Connecting with Students.	5
Guide to Tracking Student-Adult Relationships	9
Improving Volunteer Opportunities.	20

Tools in This Resource Address the Following Diagnostic Activities:

- Teachers and/or staff at my school interact with each of their students individually to intentionally gain insight on their personalities, strengths, and goals.
- Teachers and/or staff at my school welcome students into the classroom by greeting them at the door before class begins.
- Our school formally tracks that students have at least one positive relationship with a trusted adult in the building.
- Our school provides volunteer and/or mentoring opportunities for parents/guardians and community members to work directly with students.

The Importance of Student-Adult Connections

Students lacking a meaningful connection to school can lead to chronic absenteeism, behavior difficulties, and ultimately, dropping out of school. Fortunately, establishing this connection can be as straightforward as having a caring adult who knows and values a student's well-being. Research has demonstrated many benefits of students having a trusted relationship with an adult outside of home.

Cultivating Student-Adult Relationships Ignites Positive Behavior

Controlling for all background characteristics, children with a caring adult outside of the home are:



10%

more likely to **show interest in learning**



21%

less likely to **bully another student** in the past month



28%

less likely to **feel sad or depressed**

Connections with Trusted Adults Keep Kids in School

“Two big reasons students leave school: they have no meaningful connection to an adult in the building, and no one knows their name or how to pronounce it. This work isn’t just feel-good: **We know through research that relationships and connections keep kids in school.**”

Administrator, Washoe County Public Schools



Guide to Welcoming and Connecting with Students

Share this guide with teachers and consider planning your next PD session to focus on the importance of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment that fosters meaningful connections with students.

Greeting Students Leads to Greatness

Greeting students as they enter your classroom is a simple yet effective way to create a welcoming classroom and build positive relationships. Being greeted by an adult who is happy to see them can start a student's school day on a positive note.

Print and share this page with teachers in your building to inspire them to adopt the practice of welcoming students at the door as a daily routine.

Research Emphasizes the Positive Impact of Greeting Students

After implementing daily door greeting in classrooms, teachers observed:



Meet and Greet Checklist

- 1. Stand near the door
Position yourself near the classroom door a few minutes before the class starts.
- 2. Greet each student by name as they enter the classroom
Learn how to pronounce each student's name correctly and use their preferred nickname if applicable.
- 3. Smile and make eye contact
This non-verbal communication signals that you are approachable and happy to see your students.
- 4. Let students choose a friendly non-verbal greeting
E.g., handshake, high five, fist bump, hug, wave, dance, etc. [See this article](#) for an example of a sign you can place outside of your classroom door with greeting options.
- 5. Ask about their day
Show genuine interest in your students' well-being by asking how their day is going.
- 6. Be inclusive
Make sure to greet every student, not just a select few. This inclusivity ensures that all students feel valued and welcome.
- 7. Maintain consistency
Greet students at the door consistently (i.e., daily) if possible. This creates a routine that students can count on and helps set a positive atmosphere from the moment they enter the classroom.

Source: Edutopia, "Welcoming Students With a Smile", 2018; News Center Maine, "Fist bump, high-five or hug? 2nd graders get to choose greeting at Maine school", 2019; EAB interviews and analysis.

Four Ways to Facilitate More Genuine Connections

Forming solid relationships with students is one of the most important things you can do to be an effective teacher. Use this guide with teachers to encourage them to follow these four steps to go beyond the surface level and get to know their students in a more meaningful way.



Break the Ice

Classroom icebreakers are a reliable tried-and-true strategy for fostering a comfortable and engaging classroom atmosphere. However, it's essential to choose icebreakers thoughtfully, to ensure they facilitate meaningful student-teacher interactions while avoiding any potential discomfort or embarrassment.

- ▶ Check out [these examples](#) of three popular classroom icebreakers for inspiration.



Take Inventory

At the beginning of each school year or semester, distribute a 'getting-to-know-you' questionnaire to your students. This valuable practice allows you to collect and store essential, personalized information about each student.

- ▶ Download these ["Student Inventory Forms"](#), available for a variety of age groups.



Store Your Data

To effectively utilize the gathered student information, centralize it in a single spreadsheet. This consolidation allows you to effortlessly review the chart before a lesson, identify students' personal interests, and cultivate deeper connections.

- ▶ View [this example of a spreadsheet](#) that keeps track of students' passions, skills, etc. or see the next page for an example chart.



Conduct Regular Check-Ups

Regularly check in with students, not just at the beginning of the school year but multiple times throughout the year. Use surveys to gather feedback on things such as class procedures, assignment fairness, and their sense of challenge.

- ▶ See these examples of "How's it Going?" forms for [elementary](#) and [secondary](#) grades that you can adapt for your own classroom.

Documenting Student Interests

Use the below template to track student interests. Consider encouraging teachers to track their students' personal interests, involvement, and passion.

Documenting this helps ensure teachers can reference them when a deeper connection is needed with a student throughout the year. While not exhaustive, the areas outlined in the tracker could be helpful starting points to get to know your students.

Student Name	Passions	Family	Activities	Academic	Skills
Doe, John	Baltimore Ravens, Fortnite	Lives with mom, dad brothers and their pet cat	Plays football	Enjoys reading fantasy books, hates math class	Knows how to code
Doe, Jane	Martial arts, anime	Lives with dad and sister	Tae Kwan Do after school, she is a blue belt	Loves math and art class.	Can draw very well, but does not like to share her drawings with peers



Guide to Tracking Student-Adult Relationships

Use this guide to identify students who be lacking a strong connection to school staff and learn how to implement a range of strategies to interact with them and provide them the support they need.

Relationship Mapping 101

Relationship Mapping Enhances Student Success

- ▶ Student-adult relationship mapping is the process of identifying and analyzing the connections between students and adults in educational settings to improve support, intervention, and overall student success.
- ▶ Relationship mapping serves as a powerful strategy to identify and engage students who may otherwise pass through school unnoticed, helping educators and school leaders create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that nurtures individual growth and achievement.

How To Use This Toolkit

This resource provides a step-by-step guide with templates to help schools conduct a relationship mapping exercise and identify students who may be disconnected and disengaged from school. The toolkit also suggests a range of strategies for adults at school to better engage with students who may be at risk.

Key Steps to Conducting a Structured Relationship Mapping Exercise

1



Organize Schoolwide Discussion

Convene staff to discuss each student and their connection to adults at school

2



Map Student-Staff Relationships

Reflect on and map out the adult relationships with each student

3



Discuss and Plan Follow-Up

Develop a range of interventions depending on student risk level



Step 1: Convene School Staff

Description

The best way to conduct a relationship mapping exercise is via a schoolwide meeting (or series of meetings for larger schools) where all staff come together to discuss how well they know the students. The discussion should include the entire range of adults at school: teachers, administrators, bus drivers, custodians, and anyone else who regularly interacts with students. Attendees should go through the entire student roster while answering a short series of questions to determine how much they know about each student.

Resources

Time: 90 minutes to 3 hours, depending on size of school

Recommended Owner: School principal

Materials: Whiteboard or large projection screen; attendee checklist; invitation letter

Overview

- 1 Gather all school staff together once a year to discuss each student.** Do not limit the discussion to teaching/instructional staff only. Any adult at the school can and should be encouraged to develop supportive relationships with students, not just the teachers.
- 2 Manage the size of the discussion according to your needs.** In smaller schools, the activity may be more easily conducted for all students at once. Larger schools might consider conducting relationship mapping in grade-level teams or breakout groups, and then include input from non-teaching personnel as much as possible.
- 3 Map out responses in real-time to provide helpful visualization of the student population.** Staff can be given the reflection prompts in advance to help them better prepare for the meeting, but visually mapping out responses in the moment as a group allows attendees to immediately see students who may be disconnected from school. This provides a great foundation for discussion among staff and for follow-up action.

1 | Attendee Checklist

Ensure broad representation from all adults at school by inviting as many individuals as is practical from each of the following groups:

INVITEE	✓
 Principal (school leadership representative)	
 Teachers	
 Counselors	
 Medical and Support Staff	
 Food Services	
 Bus Drivers	
 School Administrators	
A+ Instructional Coaches and Aides	
 Custodial Staff	
 Security	
 Sports Coaches	
 Librarians	
 Other	

2 | Sample Outreach Letter to School Staff

[Insert
institution
logo here]

Dear [**Name of Staff Member**],

I hope this message finds you well. As you know, at [**Name of School**] we are committed to creating an environment where all students feel connected to our school, and to the adults who work here and play an important part in their young lives.

As part of our efforts to create strong relationships between students and adults in our community, we are gathering all educators, administrators, and support staff at a schoolwide meeting to discuss how well we know, and how connected we are to our students. We strongly encourage you to attend, as we know that every single individual at the school has forged a relationship with one or more students and we want to hear about those relationships.

Our meeting will take place on [**insert meeting date, time, and location**] and we're hoping you would be available for about [**1.5–3**] hours to join the rest of your colleagues and discuss how we can better connect with our students.

You do not need to prepare anything in advance for the meeting, but as we discuss each student at our school, we will ask all of our staff whether they can answer in the affirmative to the following prompts:

- *I know this student by name and face*
- *I know this student's academic standing*
- *I often provide positive feedback to this student*
- *I know 2 non-academic facts about this student (e.g., likes, dislikes, hobbies)*
- *I know this student's family story*
- *I believe this student trusts me*
- *I believe this student is at risk of being disconnected from school*

We realize that you are busy and would greatly appreciate you taking the time to attend.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions about the meeting. I look forward to seeing you there!

Sincerely,

[**School Principal**]



Step 2: Map Student-Staff Relationships

Description

Staff should begin by reflecting on questions that indicate how much they know about students (the quality/depth of their relationship) and by placing checkmarks when they can answer with a “Yes” to the prompts. This creates a visual representation of relationships that allows attendees to quickly identify students in need of support.

Resources

Materials: Relationship mapping grid

Owner/Facilitator: School principal or assistant principal

Overview

- 1 Keep focus on relationships, not on complaints about students.** Relationship mapping is not a form of behavior intervention, but a way to ensure all students are connected to the school. Discussion should not escalate into complaints about particular incidents. School leadership should keep focus on the prompts and seek to identify students who may be disengaged and disconnected.
- 2 Look for students with few checks marks.** This indicates that adults at school may not know much about that student and may not have forged any personal connections with them. Students who have a majority of checkmarks in only one area (name/face; academic standing, etc.) may also need to be discussed further.
- 3 Keep meeting focused on overall observations.** Leave detailed discussion or intervention planning about any individual student to smaller, more suitable follow-up forums (such as intervention teams, counselor meetings, etc.).
- 4 Use the exercise as an opportunity for adults to change their own behavior.** Look for patterns in adults’ knowledge (few who know students’ family histories, few who give positive feedback, etc.) and make sure to educate them on how to more effectively connect with students.

1 | Sample Relationship Mapping Grid

Use this grid as a guide to conducting a relationship mapping exercise at your school. Downloadable Excel file available at eab.com.

Student Name	<i>Name/ Face</i>	<i>Academic Standing</i>	<i>Regular Positive Feedback</i>	<i>Two Non-Academic Facts</i>	<i>Family Story</i>	Trusted Adult	At Risk

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

2 | Relationship Mapping Prompts and Red Flags

Prompt	What to Look For?
<p>Name/Face</p> <p><i>I know this student by name and face</i></p>	<p>Avoid bias towards specific student personalities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shy students may have few existing relationships with adults at school. The goal of relationship mapping is to strengthen those relationships, not to try and change students’ personalities. ○ In contrast, outgoing students may be well-known, but have few or no trusted adults. The discussion should focus on which adults truly believe they know the student.
<p>Academic Standing</p> <p><i>I know this student’s academic standing</i></p>	<p>Academic excellence can easily mask other issues a student may have. “Straight A” students can still be disconnected from their school, socially isolated, bullied, or relatively unknown to adults. Educators should treat academic standing as one among multiple risk factors and avoid the temptation to dismiss a great student as “connected” to school.</p>
<p>Regular Positive Feedback</p> <p><i>I often provide positive feedback to this student</i></p>	<p>Consistently low numbers of students who get regular positive feedback may indicate a problem with adults (who aren’t taught to reinforce positive behavior consistently) rather than with the students.</p>
<p>Two Non-Academic Facts</p> <p><i>I know 2 non-academic facts about this student (e.g., likes, dislikes, hobbies)</i></p>	<p>Encourage contributions of non-academic staff to this prompt. Bus drivers, security guards, custodial staff, etc. are able to see and interact with students in an environment where students may be more relaxed and open about speaking with adults.</p>
<p>Family Story</p> <p><i>I know this student’s family story</i></p>	<p>Avoid devoting too much time during the meeting to discussing difficult family backgrounds. Specific details of trauma, concerns about risk, socio-economic status, etc. should be discussed at smaller meetings more suited to a targeted discussion.</p>
<p>Trusted Adult</p> <p><i>I believe this student trusts me</i></p>	<p>Adults should indicate if they believe the student would come to them with a personal problem or concern. Keep separate note of each student’s trusted adults.</p>
<p>At Risk</p> <p><i>I believe this student is at risk of being disconnected from school</i></p>	<p>Adults should indicate if they believe the student is at risk academically, personally, and/or socially (e.g., homelessness, family instability, peer rejection, withdrawal, anger issues).</p>



Step 3: Discuss and Plan Follow-up

Description

Match follow-up interventions to each student's needs. The exercise is not a behavioral or mental health screener – it simply identifies students with no strong connection to school staff. Therefore, not every identified student needs a formal intervention afterwards. Simply paying more attention to that student and making sure they are noticed and included by adults can be sufficient for most.

Resources

Time: Variable, depending on chosen intervention.

Recommended Owners: Grade-level teams, cross-functional behavioral teams

Overview

- 1 Keep note of who the trusted adults are for each student.** Make sure they are among the first people to call in case of a behavioral incident, or even simply when a student's academic performance drops significantly. Having the trusted adult speak to the child when there's a problem can often be more effective than what even trained counselors can achieve.
- 2 Do not underestimate the importance of small, everyday interactions.** At the most informal level, existing routines (both academic and non-academic) can be leveraged to begin developing closer relationships with students. This includes welcome greetings, morning circles, discussion times, etc.
- 3 Engage in formal mentorship efforts when necessary.** Students identified as most at-risk by the mapping exercise (i.e., who have multiple red flag categories) should receive additional attention and are the best candidates for a formal mentorship plan. Discuss appropriate follow-up steps for each at-risk student with the counseling and support staff.

1 | Relationship-Building Strategy Guide

Formal



Develop a Mentorship Plan

Resources for Developing Mentorship Plans

- [The ABCs of School-Based Mentoring](#) (National Mentoring Resource Center)
- [Mentoring Program Policy and Procedure Manual](#) (National Mentoring Resource Center)
- [Elementary Success Mentor Action Planning Tool](#) (Attendance Works)



Call Trusted Adults When Necessary

Make sure to create a contact list of trusted adults for at-risk students at your school and ensure staff have quick access to the list in the event the student needs help during a crisis.

Student Name	Trusted Adult Name(s)	Trusted Adult Position	Trusted Adult Phone Number
Sally B.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Dohner • Patricia Connor • Chris Holmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security officer • 1st grade teacher • Custodian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (555) 234-6791 • (555) 676-9902 • (555) 446-7667
Pete T.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jennifer Lowe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School nurse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (555) 561-8681
Maria W.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Muller 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus driver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (555) 569-9043



Leverage Existing Relationship-Building Routines

Examples:

- Greet each student individually every day
- Organize morning circles or weekly class meetings to foster sense of community
- Initiate conversations about a student’s favorite activities, objects they bring to school, etc.

Informal



Source: Attendance Works, “[Elementary Success Mentor Action Planning Tool](#)”; National Mentoring Resource Center, “[The ABCs of School-Based Mentoring](#)”, 2007; Northwest Regional Educational Library, “[Policy and Procedure Manual](#)”, 2007; EAB interviews and analysis.

2 | Schoolwide Trusted Adult List

Fill out this table with basic information about the trusted adult(s) for each student at your school. Downloadable Excel file available at eab.com.

Student Name	Trusted Adult Name(s)	Trusted Adult Position	Trusted Adult Phone Number

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.



Improving Volunteer Opportunities

Use this section to help understand the benefits of parent/guardian volunteers, improve existing programming, and view examples of successful in-school parent programming.

Benefits of Non-School Adult Involvement Programs

Use this section to help communicate to teachers, students, and parents the benefits of having a successful volunteer program in your school.

In-School Volunteers Benefit All Members of School Community

Student Benefit

- Student are exposed to a range of life experience or have access to other trusted adults which adds to a positive learning environment.
 - Student receive more individualized attention, helping them overcome obstacles, increase motivation, and develop self confidence.
 - Students benefit from effective non-classroom activities such as library time, labs, and recess time that volunteers often support.
-

Teacher Benefit

- Teachers can delegate tasks with the extra help awarded from having volunteers
 - Teachers can expand programs and interventions to meet the changing need of their students
 - New experiences, interests, and skills are brought to the classroom by welcoming volunteers.
-

Volunteer Benefit

- Volunteers receive satisfaction in community engagement from contributing to their school community.
- Volunteers develop new skills, opportunities, networking, and friendships through their involvement.
- College student volunteers can apply classroom experiences towards future career aspirations.

Expands Your Pool of Potential Trusted Adults for Students

“The more children know you and trust you, the more they’re willing to engage in what you’re trying to teach them...Community members are untapped pools of talent in the effort to improve student achievement”

Literacy Educator, [The Oakland Reach](#)

Four Ways to Involve Non-School Adults

Share this guide with teachers and encourage them to find innovative ways to promote productive parent contributions and engagement with their classroom. As students get older, parent volunteerism is known to decline, consider implementing these five examples to improve engagement in middle and high school grades.



Define Volunteer Roles with Policies

Implement a school-wide policy outlining the role of adult volunteers within the system. This policy helps ensure administrators, teachers, parents, and students have a mutual understanding about the areas volunteers can contribute in the classroom. Clear role definition prevents misunderstandings and tension while also helping parents make meaningful contributions to the school community.



Employ Volunteers in School Libraries

Today, many librarians often provide computer lab and media center support, leaving smaller tasks to stack up. Employing volunteers inside school libraries helps library staff with time consuming tasks such as like cataloging, stacking and monitoring shelves, and basic paperwork.



Target Parents' Skillsets to Improve Learning

Many parents may hold unique skillsets that can help enhance learning and professional development. For example, parents skilled in technology can help run "tech camps", lessons, or tech training to school staff. Taking advantage of parent volunteers' special talents can offer meaningful experiences for students and the school community at large.



Use Parents' Professional Backgrounds to Inspire

Encouraging parents to share the nature of their employment and professional backgrounds may be of particular interest to older students. Sharing can be initiated by teachers or grade-levels. Implementing these types of programs can help inspire students to explore new careers they may not have considered otherwise.

Structuring Volunteer Opportunities

Use this page to consider how frequent volunteer opportunities should occur in your school, how much commitment is needed in different roles, and ways to incentivize volunteering.

Volunteers May Want Different Amounts of Commitment

Offer a Variety of Volunteer Options

Weekly Volunteering

½ - 1 Hour Commitments

- Classroom Aide
- Lunch/Playground Aids
- Classroom Tutors

Monthly Volunteering

1 – 2 Hour Commitments

- Guest classroom reader
- Classroom Aide
- Room Parent

Seasonal Volunteering

2+ Hour, One-Time Commitment

- Back-to-School Picnics
- Classroom Holiday Party
- Teacher Appreciation Week
- College Fairs

Encouraging Volunteering Through Paid Opportunities

Many parents do not engage in volunteering during the school day due to their own job responsibilities. Taking time off work to engage with their child's school may be enticing but is not always financially feasible. Consider these examples to compensate adults for their commitment to the school.



Guilford County Schools (NC)

Parent Liaisons serve as delegated between their schools and the district to help relay information and set up programs for their campuses. Parents have been able to launch ESL classes for parents and childcare programs due to their advocacy.

Compensation: Up to \$150 per month

Commitment: Attendance at monthly meetings



SALEM-KEIZER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Salem-Keizer Public Schools (OR)

Parent Assistants help serve in the classroom and assist teachers with day-to-day and ride the school bus with students to help monitor behavior on the commute to or from school. Parents can also apply for funding to complete formal education coursework.

Selection: Principal interviews interested parents

Commitment: Part-Time, at least 16 hours per week

Source: Tully, [Parent Volunteers Receive Financial Incentives to Serve as School Liaisons](#), 2016; Salem-Keizer PS, ["Pre-School Programs 2023"](#)

Communicating Volunteer Opportunities To Parents

Use the template below to notify staff of your school expanding or implementing parents/guardians volunteer opportunities.

Email from Principal

SUBJECT: Exciting Classroom Volunteer Opportunities!

EMAIL TEXT:

Dear [School Name] Parents and Guardians,

I hope this email finds you well. As we continue to foster a collaborative and supportive learning environment at [School Name], we are delighted to announce an exciting opportunity for parents and guardians to actively engage in their child's education through our Classroom Volunteer Program.

We believe that involving parents and guardians in the classroom enhances the overall educational experience for our students. Your participation can make a significant impact on their learning journey and contribute to building a strong sense of community within our school.

Volunteer Opportunities:

We are seeking enthusiastic parents and guardians to join our Classroom Volunteer Program. As a volunteer, you may assist teachers with various tasks such as reading support, classroom organization, special projects, and more. Your involvement can be tailored to your schedule and interests, ensuring a flexible and rewarding experience.

We think there are many benefits not only for our school community but also for our volunteers. By getting involved you can:

- Gain insight into your child's educational experience and classroom dynamics.
- Connect with fellow parents, teachers, and students to strengthen the sense of community within [School Name].
- Make a positive impact on the learning environment and contribute to the academic success of all students.

How to Get Involved:

If you are interested in becoming a Classroom Volunteer, please [provide details on the registration process, including any forms or meetings]. We welcome and appreciate your commitment to supporting our students and teachers.

We sincerely hope that many of you will seize this opportunity to get involved and contribute to the success of our students and the [School Name] community. Together, we can make a significant difference in the educational journey of our children.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to [School Name]. We look forward to working collaboratively to create a positive and enriching learning experience for all.

Best regards,

[Principal's Full Name]



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