

Ongoing Support and Feedback for Citizenship Volunteers:

Ideas for Volunteer Coordinators and Staff

Relationships are key.

Many volunteers begin their involvement in a citizenship program because they want to be an active member in their community and they want to connect in a meaningful way with the people around them. For many, their relationships with staff and other volunteers are equally as valuable as their interactions with learners.

Ideas for developing relationships:

- When they begin, introduce volunteers to all staff. This could be done when giving the person a tour, or at another time.
- Make a habit of stopping to say hello and greeting volunteers by name. If you have a large program with several staff and volunteers, nametags are often helpful.
- If the volunteer is assisting in your classroom, take a few minutes before class to say hello talk about the plan for the day and what they'll be doing. After class, follow up to say thank you and ask how it went. Volunteers often have valuable insights into learner progress. If you're not able to check-in verbally that day, email also works well.

Resource: Read additional ideas on this topic at [Building the Volunteer Relationship](http://www.oursharedresources.com/Resource/ViewResource/339)
<http://www.oursharedresources.com/Resource/ViewResource/339>.

Everyone likes to be appreciated.

Whether or not they admit it, most people like to hear "thank you." The important part is knowing how and when to say it. While some volunteers enjoy formal banquets and awards, there are many small gestures that can help keep a volunteer coming back week after week.

Ideas for ongoing recognition:

- Have students write thank-you cards for the volunteer as a writing activity.
- Say "thanks" as the volunteer is leaving for the day.
- Give positive feedback about what he or she does well.
- Take photos of volunteers and post them on a bulletin board.
- Have snacks or coffee available to volunteers during break.

Resource: See the [Literacy Volunteers of Ontario](http://www.nald.ca/literacyvolunteers/retention.htm) <http://www.nald.ca/literacyvolunteers/retention.htm> for helpful resources, including an explanation of volunteer motivation and how it relates to recognition.

Constructive feedback can be used as a tool for strengthening volunteer involvement.

At times, there may be issues related to a volunteer's interactions with students or other behavior such as attendance or follow-through that need to be addressed. While these situations can be challenging to discuss, it's best to talk openly with the volunteer about them. Most volunteers want to do a good job and appreciate knowing whether or not their performance is meeting expectations. When they're aware of what's not working well, volunteers are usually quick to change. Hearing constructive suggestions for improvement can then increase the person's involvement in the program.

Ideas for giving constructive feedback:

- Discuss both what the volunteer does well and what could be improved or needs to be changed. Be specific.
- Use language that is clear and direct, yet respectful.
- Identify the next step or best alternative for the situation.
- Provide resources for the volunteer to build his or her skills. This may include informational articles, hand-outs, allowing him or her to observe another teacher or volunteer, or additional training.

Resource: For tips on giving constructive feedback or addressing difficult issues, read [Steve McCurley's process-oriented approach](http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/practices/21439) <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/practices/21439>.