

Guidelines for Teachers in the Use of Volunteers in MCPS Science Classes

General

The objective of the MCPS Science Volunteer Project is to strengthen the science learning of all students by providing retired scientists and engineers to assist the teachers in their classrooms. The volunteers have committed to this school year to provide assistance.

The teachers and principals are expected to meet with volunteers and the volunteer coordinators before the first visit to the classroom. The purpose of this meeting is for each teacher to become aware of the volunteer's scientific credentials and background and for the volunteer to become familiar with the curriculum and the teacher's needs. This will inform both parties about what the volunteer can offer to the joint effort and suggest how best to utilize the volunteer. It may require more than one meeting to devise a plan that meets the needs of both partners.

Introduce the volunteer to the class on the first visit. Encourage him/her to tell the class something about his/her experiences in science. This is an opportunity to convey enthusiasm for the scientific endeavor. Students are naturally curious about persons with whom they are expected to interact, and they deserve to know something about the volunteer's qualifications and limitations.

Introduce the volunteer to your principal, other building administrators, and members of the staff. You may want to include the principal in discussions about the best match between the volunteer's background and the needs of the school.

This is a team effort. Teachers must be present and engaged at all times when a volunteer is in the classroom. Teachers must make it clear to their class that the volunteer is a valued member of the teaching team. It is necessary for each member of the team to support the other in the teaching process.

Classroom order and discipline are solely the teacher's responsibility.

Because the volunteers have other commitments, e.g., travel, there will be times when they are unable to come to the classroom for 2-3 weeks. However, in order to establish a rapport with their teachers, they are being advised that these gaps not occur in the first few weeks.

For maximum effectiveness, it is very desirable to synchronize the volunteer's attendance with the classroom activities. For example, attendance for an investigations class can be productive, but is a waste of time if the students are only reading. Synchronization between the teacher and volunteer can be readily achieved via email or telephone.