



School Coordinator Handbook

Our Purpose

To connect volunteers who want to make a difference, with young people who would benefit from having an adult mentor

To harness the wisdom and skills of mature adults to enrich the learning experiences of students.

Our Vision

Our community helping young people to succeed.

Our Mission

To prepare and connect volunteers with students who have been identified by their school, as likely to benefit from engagement with a mature role model.

Welcome School Coordinators

Volunteer Mentors provide enrichment opportunities that enhance the education experience for students, while supporting teachers and staff.

The School Volunteer Program ACT (SVPACT) Inc gives students that one to one experience with an adult mentor that teachers cannot always provide.

With your guidance, volunteer mentors will support what the students are learning in the classroom.

SVPACT Mentors help their students in many ways including assisting with:

- reading, literacy, and numeracy,
- Meccano building,
- Craft and school projects
- extending students in gifted and talented programs.

This handbook will help you gain maximum benefit from your SVPACT Mentors. It provides you with an overview of SVPACT, and the variety of activities that you may wish the Mentors to pursue with their students.

Thank you for taking on this important role!

Volunteers can, and do make a significant contribution to the education program, but it is vital that they feel valued and included as part of your school community.

Your role is pivotal to the success of the program!

President
SVPACT Inc.
February 2020

Prior to commencement

All volunteer Mentors are briefed by an SVPACT Committee Member with direct mentoring experience, prior to his/her attendance at a Mentor Orientation Seminar. They must hold a current Working with Vulnerable People Card and their suitability for the role will have been discussed with at least two referees.

Mentors are invited to nominate the schools in which they would like to work and the age of the student(s) that they would prefer to work with.

A Committee Member will then contact the Principal of the preferred school to arrange a meeting to introduce the Mentor.

When appropriate, schools will consider the experience and expertise of the Mentor, and his/her preference regarding age and gender in selecting a student.

Once assigned to a school, a Mentor is expected to liaise closely with the nominated School Coordinator, and/or the Classroom Teacher.

Mentors operate under the direction of school staff at all times.

Your Mentor will want to know specific details about your school.

Some issues to cover in your initial meeting with your volunteer Mentor include:

- ❖ School sign-in and out procedures;
- ❖ A plan of the school showing location of toilets, the library, your office/staffroom
- ❖ Car parking spaces;
- ❖ School evacuation procedures and safety rules;
 - ❖ Relevant school policies including the Code of Conduct for Volunteers in Schools
 - ❖ Expectations of the Mentor;
 - ❖ Procedures for when you and/or the Classroom Teacher are absent;
 - ❖ and procedures for when the student is absent.

Getting started

The School Coordinator will introduce new Mentors to the Principal, Front Office staff and Classroom Teacher.

A meeting at the school between the Mentor and the School Coordinator will enable the needs of the student to be discussed, and a mentoring strategy agreed.

For the first few meetings the student and the Mentor will be getting to know one another. They will discuss the needs of the student and decide on a plan of action for their time together. The Classroom Teacher may also have input to the planned program, identifying skills and tasks that the student may need assistance with.

The mentoring sessions are aimed at improving student self confidence as well as supporting their academic development.

Mentor Training

The SVPACT Committee arranges regular meetings and professional learning events for mentors, which cover the development of mentoring skills, and their responsibilities as mentors of students on a one to one basis in schools.

Specific workshops are also directed at familiarising Mentors with techniques for assisting students with basic reading and numeracy tasks, and interacting with disadvantaged children.

Mentoring using Meccano

Mentoring through Meccano building is a significant part of SVPACT.

Participating mentors work in teams of four or more, and meet together at the school to work one to one with students, (but in a group environment).

The involvement of an individual student is generally for a 10 week period, which matches the time usually taken to complete a model.

This activity has proved very successful in enhancing the self esteem and confidence of participating students.

Communication Strategies

School Newsletters are important tools for keeping students and parents informed about activities within a school. It is very useful if the Mentor can also receive a copy of the newsletter, so that they are aware of events which could impact on their mentoring timetable.

What Volunteer Mentors can offer

Mentors bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from both their professional, and family lives. They provide opportunities for inter-generational learning.

They have an appreciation for, and make a commitment to, mentoring children and young people.

SVPACT links students with the wider community and provides them with mature role models, demonstrating what it is to be a caring member of society.

Selection of students

The selection of students for participation in the program is the responsibility of the school.

A Classroom Teacher, or other staff member or a parent may recommend a student for participation in the program.

Once a student has been selected, the School Coordinator should contact the relevant SVPACT Mentor Coordinator. Contact details can be found on the SVPACT website at www.svpact.org.au.

In consultation with the Classroom Teacher, the School Coordinator will select appropriate tasks for each student, and monitor his/her progress via the communication strategy that was agreed at the initial school briefing session.

This may involve the use of feedback forms, communication books, regular emails, face-to-face meetings and/or telephone conversations.

The School Coordinator provides feedback and advice to the volunteer Mentor as needed.

Effective communication between the student, the Mentor, School Coordinator and Classroom Teacher is essential for the success of the program.

It is expected that schools will seek parents' approval for their child to participate in the program.

It is important that the whole school community welcomes the involvement of SVPACT Mentors.

The Role and Responsibilities of the School Coordinator

This is an essential role to ensure that the Mentor and the student have a positive experience!

1. As first point of contact within the school it is your responsibility to ensure that the Mentor feels welcome and valued. Please introduce them to the key people in your school – the Principal, the Front Office staff and teachers. Make sure that they know where they can park, where the toilets are and what they should do in the case of an emergency. Show them where you can be found and where they can make themselves a cup of tea. Explain how the timetable works and when the classroom breaks occur.
2. For the mentoring relationship to be effective the student and their Mentor need a quiet, pleasant location to work together. This could be in the library, in a common area between classrooms or other quiet, open space. Ideally the area will be in line of sight of a member of staff. Take the Mentor for a walk around the area and discuss the location and its suitability for purpose.
3. In collaboration with the Classroom Teacher you will identify the student who is to be mentored. You will need to brief the Mentor about the student and the areas in which they need support. You will need to introduce the Mentor to the Classroom Teacher and discuss with them when the mentoring sessions will take place.
4. In consultation with the Classroom Teacher identify the tasks that are to be undertaken during the mentoring sessions and where resources can be found to be used in the

sessions. Ensure that the tasks are appropriate to the time available. The Classroom teacher may expect homework to be completed but, at least for the first few weeks, the Mentor will want to spend time getting to know the student and developing rapport with them, so games and other activities may be undertaken.

5. **Regular Communication is important.** School programs vary from day to day and there are many events that interrupt the normal school timetable. Keep the Mentor informed of upcoming events such as Swimming or other Sport Days, excursions and other events. If possible, add the Mentor to the distribution list for the school e-newsletter so that they know what is taking place.
6. **If you need to change the mentoring arrangements please notify the Mentor as soon as possible.**
7. **Ensure the volunteer Mentor feels valued and respected.**
8. If you would like to have more mentors operating in your school please contact the SVPACT Mentor Coordinator.

The Role of the Classroom Teacher

Classroom Teachers should be aware that SVPACT Mentors have widely differing formal and informal qualifications and backgrounds.

To promote a positive volunteering experience for the Mentor, your role is to:

1. **Welcome the SVPACT Mentor to your class**
Introduce the Mentor to the student and show them where they sit in your classroom.
2. **Select work tasks for each session**
Bear in mind that the Mentor generally will need to allocate some time for getting to know the student, and undertaking “fun” activities such as board games, drawing, etc. as a way of building rapport.

However, they would appreciate advice about areas in which the student has room for improvement and tasks that the student is currently working on.

3. **Notify the Mentor if the student is going to be absent**
Mentors travel to the school to work with the student. It is frustrating to arrive only to find that the student is absent. Sometimes this is unavoidable. Keeping the Mentor informed about activities such as school assemblies, excursions and other activities, which will impact on the mentoring session, is greatly appreciated.
4. **Communicate regularly**
The Mentor will provide feedback about tasks undertaken, additional activities, or other information as it arises. The Classroom Teacher can also communicate with the Mentor to provide feedback.

Code of Conduct for SVPACT Volunteer Mentors

All our volunteers are asked to sign this Code of Conduct:

By becoming a member of SVPACT Inc, you are joining a caring community of mutual respect and trust. To ensure our community can remain the safe and respectful place that we are so proud of, we ask that you familiarise yourself with our mission and ethos set out in this pledge and live these values throughout your volunteering experience.

As a volunteer with SVPACT Inc I will:

1. Know and understand all my responsibilities in my role working with students.
2. Always represent SVPACT with professionalism, dignity, pride and courtesy.
3. Treat all people respectfully, with honesty and integrity and not influence students on matters of a religious, political or personal nature.

4. Be alert and focussed when undertaking my volunteer role and not be under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs or prescribed medication that affect my perception or mobility.
5. Advise SVPACT if I experience significant changes in my physical or mental wellbeing that may adversely affect my volunteering role.
6. Respect the privacy of students and staff and hold in confidence any private and personal information I may come across during my role as an SVPACT volunteer.
7. Always be circumspect and professional and refrain from making and sharing judgements about the school in which I am volunteering.
8. During each school visit at my allocated school, sign in and out, wear my SVPACT name badge and carry my Working with Vulnerable People Card.
9. Undertake my volunteer role with my allocated student(s) in a public area of the school such as a corridor, staff room, library or within eyesight of at least one member of staff.
10. Never email or engage with my allocated student(s) via telephone, text messaging, and social networking and other technologies such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter.
11. Never transport students as part of my SVPACT role.
12. Never photograph students without written permission of the school and the student's parent/guardian.
13. Accept that all SVPACT volunteering activities are school based, during regular school hours and occur within the confines of the school premises.
14. Agree that I will not continue in any way the in-school relationship I have developed with my student(s) outside the school premises, out of school hours or attend the student's home.
15. Consult with the School Coordinator if I have any concerns about my volunteering role or the tasks allocated. If unable to resolve the matter at the school level, I will contact the

SVPACT Mentor Coordinator for advice and assistance.

About the School Volunteer Program ACT Inc

SVPACT is based on the successful Western Australian program, and was first introduced by the Rotary Club of Canberra Weston Creek, in 1997.

This program was subsequently combined with a trial activity at Charnwood Primary School, and the "STYLE" program to cover the whole of the ACT.

SVPACT was formally launched by the Governor General, Major General Michael Jeffery, at North Ainslie Primary School, in October 2005.

General Jeffery is now the Patron of SVPACT.

All SVPACT Mentors and Committee Members contribute their services on a voluntary basis.

SVPACT has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ACT Education Directorate. Through our partnership with the Education Directorate we are able to hold training events and meetings at the Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning and have our handbooks printed, at no cost. One member of the SVPACT Management Committee is a representative from the Education Directorate.

The other eleven members come from a variety of backgrounds and include current school principals, ex teachers, and other volunteers who are convinced that of the value of the program.

Current sponsors who provide financial support for SVPACT are :

- ❖ Teachers Mutual Bank
- ❖ Rotary Club of Weston Creek
- ❖ Rotary Club of Belconnen
- ❖ Ainslie Football and Social Club

Awards

Since SVPACT commenced over 15 years ago, the Program, the Committee, and individual volunteers have received community recognition, through several Children's Week Awards for excellence.

In 2015, the School Volunteer Program ACT was named the ***Volunteer Team of the Year*** in the Volunteer of the Year Awards in the category of Education, Science and Technology.

SVPACT Contact Details

If you desire further information about any aspect of the School Volunteer Program of the ACT Inc please contact the Secretary, Melissa Sykes

Phone: 0432 842 550

Email: svpact2018@gmail.com

Web: www.svpact.org.au