

Case study | Working with Volunteers

The Volunteer Journey

Learn more about Community Hubs with these real-life examples. In this case study, Maureen Leahy, Coordinator of Meadows Primary Hub, and a Volunteer tell of their journey.

What was the challenge?

Supporting and motivating volunteers and staff to take up the vision – passing on the success factors of a dynamic Hub that builds the capacity of the community and the school. So to me, the volunteer pathway is a natural progression from a community development approach developed over a number of years. – of saying, ‘Okay, how do I reach each of these people? And how do I build their capacity so that they influence others within their own community?’

What worked? What didn’t?

For some volunteers, their participation in the school, and the broadening of skills across different areas, has helped to significantly boost their self-confidence and social connectedness.

For others, they have gained external training and qualifications, and taken up paid positions in the early learning centre. The volunteer pathway has provided them with valued learning, experience, and personal growth which also allowed them to mentor other volunteers. The volunteers completed certificates, diplomas and courses while undertaking their training placements at the school. They have been involved in the establishment of programs available at Meadows Primary School, such as multicultural and bilingual playgroups and a 3 year old activity group, which continues to service and engage families from a variety of backgrounds. With their experience, they have been able to engage other parents and assist in growing their knowledge of parenting and child development and who then often move on to paid positions outside the school.

*“Maureen said look, there’s opportunities, why don’t you take the opportunity of doing a course? Then after that, I did my Cert 3 ... and I liked it, then I came back and I was employed by VICSEG, interviewed and I got the job then I started running the playgroup at school ... Then I started running the Arabic multicultural playgroup ... I did my course then I did my placement, then I got a job ... After that pathway, I decided to do my diploma. I did some work at a childcare centre ... then I went for an interview for a 3 year old playgroup, and got the job.”
(Volunteer now in a paid position)*

Your advice?

Ensure all policies and processes are in place and legislature requirements are met, e.g. Working with Children Check. Invite volunteers to consider their strengths and interests and then consider the training that they will need for their placement. Plant the seed for future training that can support their personal aspirations. Encourage the volunteer to indicate the role they are interested in, match this with their time commitments and then negotiate responsibilities that they are able to fulfil and feel comfortable being assigned. Match new volunteers with an appropriate on-site mentor, either a staff member or another volunteer. Provide regular opportunities to receive feedback and to ensure there is a review process in place. Link with other organisations that can support a wider pathway or offer additional opportunities for training.

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