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THE SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM.

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A NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM HAS BEEN IN OPERATION SINCE 1956 TO RECRUIT, TRAIN, AND SUPERVISE LAY CITIZENS IN ASSISTING TEACHERS AND TUTORING STUDENTS ON A REGULAR WEEKLY OR BIWEEKLY BASIS DURING THE 9-MONTH SCHOOL YEAR. THE DOCUMENT DESCRIBES (1) THE STRUCTURE AND SERVICES OF THAT PROGRAM, (2) THE SELECTION OF SCHOOLS, (3) THE INTERVIEWING, TRAINING, PLACEMENT, AND SUPERVISION OF THE APPLICANTS, AND (4) A DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT OFFERINGS, DISCUSSED WITH RESPECT TO THEIR HISTORY, VOLUNTEER TRAINING NEEDED, PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY, AND WORK OF THE VOLUNTEERS. THOSE OFFERINGS WHICH ARE DISCUSSED INCLUDE "THE READING HELP PROGRAM," "THE CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH PROGRAM," AND "THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM." A NEW "SUMMER PROGRAM" IS BRIEFLY PRESENTED. THE SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM PROVIDES SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN PREKINDERGARTEN THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL. (RB)

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THE SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

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Mrs. Shalen reports on the structure and services offered by the  
ten-year-old program

For the last decade the School Volunteer program has been recruiting, training and supervising lay citizens to assist teachers and tutor pupils on a regular weekly or bi-weekly basis during the nine-month school year. Last summer, for the first time, the Program undertook to supervise volunteers in the Board of Education's Summer Program. The new assignment, which came in a directive from Dr. Bernard Donovan last April, was an unusual departure from the highly structured methods SV administrators have formulated through the years and proved how flexible the concept of volunteer assistance in the schools can be.

Over 700 School Volunteers worked on a regular basis in 37 elementary, junior and senior high schools from last September until June. In contrast to this number, 92 elementary and 14 junior high schools and 261 Child Development Centers participated in the Board's six and eight-week summer programs in which, responding to a call for help on radio, television and in the newspapers by Dr. Donovan, Mrs. John V. Lindsay and Mrs. Rose Shapiro, over a thousand citizens -- many of them students themselves -- gave their time. Of necessity, screening of applicants was stream-

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lined, training was trimmed to a single orientation session and on-the-job supervision of volunteers was undertaken by school principals and teachers.

The reports of the Program's achievements are not in and it is too early for a fair evaluation of the methods used. Meetings with participants and administrators have been planned and a review of last summer's experiences will smooth the way for the 1967 summer program. For, in effect, this has been another pilot project for the School Volunteer Program.

The SVP was a pilot project itself in 1956 when the Public Education Association initiated it at P.S. 191M where District Five's Assistant Superintendent Dr. Nathan Jacobson was then principal. Twenty volunteers worked in that first program and soon proved the value of their contribution.\* Their number has expanded rapidly ever since, but there are never enough. The recruitment drive for volunteers who can give a minimum of three hours a week during the regular school year will begin again this fall with the combined efforts of the Board's Office of Information and

\* The Ford Foundation, which helped finance the first six years of the School Volunteer Program before it was incorporated into the structure of the Board of Education in 1962, has deemed the SV's contribution so valuable that in 1964 it gave \$353,000 to start School Volunteer Programs in the 20 next largest cities in the country.

Education and the SV Program's Committee on Recruitment and Publicity together with Mrs. Lindsay, who will continue to serve as Honorary Chairman.

### HOW THE SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM OPERATES

#### FROM SEPTEMBER THROUGH JUNE

##### Selection of Schools

Only schools whose principals have sent a formal request to the Central Office are considered for new programs. Subsequent priority is based on the school's needs and its ability to provide adequate work space for a unit of volunteers. In addition, the SV Administrators must be able to fit the school into the Program's overall growth pattern in order to provide efficient use of the School Volunteer's supervisory staff. New schools are then included in the Program as quickly as volunteers can be recruited and trained to staff them.

##### INTERVIEWING OF APPLICANTS

Skilled volunteer interviewers screen every applicant for the Program in order to:

Identify those applicants who will be able to fulfill satisfactorily the school assignments for which the SVP is responsible, and

Protect the children and teachers from any who may be emotionally unstable, unduly aggressive or negative in attitude.

Although the greatest variety of backgrounds is desirable in the corps of volunteers, there are certain requirements which must be met by all candidates. Volunteers must be in good health, have enough time for regular dependable service when the schools are in session and be able to get along well with co-workers as well as children. A high school diploma is the minimum educational requirement, but a volunteer must also have the ability to widen her pupils' horizons because of college education, work experience, travel interests or special talents. For tutorial work, clear grammatical English speech is required. However, easily understood foreign accents do not bar service in such special areas as art, music, crafts and sciences.

The SVP also requires personal character and medical references, including the city-required Chest X-Ray report before an applicant may be scheduled for training.

#### TRAINING

A series of five training sessions are conducted monthly throughout the year at the SV Central office. Before receiving a work assignment, every recruit must complete a basic course which includes orientation to school procedures and student population, and which covers the educational problems of the disadvantaged child and the background of the Puerto Rican in-migrant. The training also includes fundamental approaches to helping children with reading

and teaching English as a second language. A wide variety of in-service workshops are held regularly, many of which are especially set up at the request of the volunteers themselves.

#### PLACEMENT

Assignment to an SV unit is made by the Program's Administrative Assistant. A volunteer's preference is given consideration whenever possible, but the needs of the schools take precedence. Like many school personnel, volunteers often commute substantial distances to work where they are most needed.

#### SUPERVISION

Volunteers serve in schools not as individuals but as members of an SV unit which works under an experienced volunteer chairman, who is in charge of their day-to-day activities. The chairman reports to an SV staff coordinator who supervises all the programs in her district and who is the liaison between the schools and the SV Central Office. Regular evaluations from chairmen, coordinators and principals are important factors in modifying and diversifying the Program.

#### THE TWO MAJOR SV SERVICES

The scope of the School Volunteer Program has expanded in many directions as school and SVP staff members have pioneered new ways of using volunteers and discovered new areas of possible

service.

The first service envisioned by the founders of the SVP was to provide teachers who requested help with reliable assistants who could come into their classrooms on a regular weekly basis to help correct papers, drill or test children, help them in groups or as individuals with language or arithmetic prepare materials, assist with a science fair project or with costumes and scenery for the class play, go on trips -- in short, literally to do whatever the teacher needed doing.

While many volunteers still give this service today, the growing two-fold emphasis of the program is to provide tutorial help to individual students in reading and in English as a second language and to share volunteers' backgrounds and talents with groups of children through special services developed to fill particular needs.

#### The Reading Help Program

The School Volunteer Program was well into its second year of general classroom help when it became apparent that volunteers could offer additional and more specific service to the schools. A group explored the possibility of a Reading Help Program in a West Side elementary school and began working there in November 1957 with a small number of children. From this rather modest trial beginning the Reading Help Program has grown so that by last spring groups of

volunteers were working exclusively with children on reading problems in seventeen schools and virtually all the schools served by the SVP had several volunteers working in this area.

The philosophy behind the Reading Help Program is a very uncomplicated one. Volunteers work individually with children in the second through eleventh grades who are not reading on grade level, who find it hard to function in a large group, who are anxious to improve, and who show evidence of benefitting from close contact with an interested adult. They are chosen for this Program by their teachers or the Corrective Reading teacher. The idea is to give them a new look at themselves and their school work, to teach them self-respect and confidence, to help them develop a curiosity and love of learning. Success in raising reading grade levels usually varies anywhere from a month to a year or two -- though not in all cases. Success is almost always attained in introducing a new point of view and outlook toward school which is of value for the future.

Since individual reading help calls for resourcefulness, flexibility and patience, the selection of Reading Help volunteers is based on these qualities. Beside the basic orientation training sessions, Reading Help volunteers must attend four additional special reading training sessions and serve as apprentices before receiving a school assignment. Throughout their service they must

continue to attend periodic in-service sessions led by reading experts. The volunteer meets each of his students for a forty-five minute period twice a week and keeps in close contact with his teacher.

The materials used are obtained through the Board of Education but vary as much as possible from those used in class. A great variety of games and books are used in the elementary programs while the emphasis in the older grades is on building vocabulary and comprehension and giving practise in test taking. Over the years Reading Help volunteers have built up a core of particularly helpful material and have recorded most of their suggestions in lists which have been made available to other interested individuals and groups.

To quote Mrs. William Eike, Volunteer Supervisor RHP, "We do our best to take a child -- by himself -- and help him so that when he returns to class he will be ready to accept and utilize what is being taught. We try to increase understanding, speed and the ability to tackle a new word and make it part of his every-day vocabulary. We read and tell stories, we encourage attempts at authorship, we ask questions and challenge answers. We try in every way we can to break through the shell of discouragement which has formed around children to whom reading is a chimera. Occasionally we fail, and once in a while we perform a small miracle."

### The Conversational English Program

In response to the needs of the thousands of non-English speaking children who enter the city's schools each year, the Conversational English Program was started in 1961 to help teach English as a second language. The aim of this program is to help these pupils understand and speak enough English to function comfortably in the classroom.

Conversational English volunteers attend a five-session SV training course which emphasizes the concept that English as a second language has two important meanings. One meaning is that these children already have a first language which is natural and important to them. Their culture, their heritage and their language are all intimately related, and respect for their first language by the volunteer implies respect for the children as individuals. English constitutes no improvement over the children's native language. It is merely a tool they must have if they are to be educated in our schools.

The other meaning of learning English as a second language is that it is an imitative process with ease of communication through oral comprehension and expression as the goal. Therefore, the volunteers are specifically trained in a series of lectures and workshops to teach English the way all children learn their first language, by hearing, seeing and recognizing and by saying. They

do not teach reading and they never teach by translation from a foreign language since this interferes with automatic response.

As with the other services, training continues in-service with chairmen and visiting instructors observing and assisting the volunteer as she teaches. New teaching aids and reviews of methods are discussed regularly in conferences.

Each Conversational English Program unit, which usually includes eight trained volunteers, works in a room set aside for the purpose. The volunteers each work with eight or ten children, meeting them in groups of two for half an hour on the same two days every week.

Volunteers teach their pupils basic vocabulary by using picture games and familiar physical objects, which are collected in an intriguing Object Box. Since non-English speaking children, who spend their days in an English speaking classroom, are subject to many failures, all the teaching devices and methods of using them are chosen to insure success for the child. If he can repeat, after the volunteer, a sentence such as "This is a car," while handling a toy car, he has succeeded. This is a telescoped and accelerated version of the way he learned his first language, through the association of object and word. The child hears himself speak his new language and this is the most important step of all.

Soon the children graduate to a series of instructional pictures, and they learn to associate the English nouns, verbs and descriptive words with the objects and actions they see in the pictures. Since the majority of the pupils in the Conversational English Program are from a disadvantaged background and are therefore very limited in their experiences, a considerable number of the instructional pictures illustrate scenes and situations which are unfamiliar to them. These pictures are especially useful in enlarging the general knowledge and widening the horizons of these pupils. In many instances, the volunteers teach words in English for which the child knows no counterpart in his native language.

Pupils recommended for Conversational English have been uprooted and are often as confused and traumatized by the strange culture into which they have been moved as they are by the strange language. Therefore, the CE Program will accept any Puerto Rican or foreign-born child with an English language barrier, regardless of any other problems he may have.

Conversational English volunteers set no limit on the length of time they will continue to work with a child. Since learning a new language is a personal experience and not a scholastic discipline, the CE Program uses no test to evaluate the child's progress. Twice yearly the classroom teacher and the volunteer complete separate Evaluation of Progress questionnaires for each child included in the Program. These questionnaires focus on comparing the achievement

of each pupil with his own past performance in the use of English and not with an objective standard. These subjective impressions, covering the various areas in which the child demonstrates his facility in English, are tabulated to form the Conversational English Program's annual report. Eventually an analysis of these evaluations may help us understand more about how children learn a second language. At the present time, we only know how we teach English on an individual basis.

The Conversational English Program is also searching for ways to help children whose native language is English, but who come from a severely disadvantaged background, for the deficits in general knowledge, experience, vocabulary and ease of verbalization, which are common to the culture of poverty, constitute a language barrier of monumental proportions.

The Conversational English Program, which now has 130 volunteers, has been in active operation for over five years, and more than 3000 children have been included in the Program. It has proven extremely beneficial for these pupils and the vast majority of them have shown substantial gains in their ability to understand and speak English, and in reading as well.

#### OTHER SERVICES

In addition to the Reading Help and Conversational English Programs, the School Volunteer Program provides many individualized

services which have and continue to be created to meet special needs. A random sampling of these services includes help by an ex-editor in putting out a school magazine; plays and drama workshops conducted by a one-time Broadway producer; a college drama professor and several former actresses; a group of retired math teachers who have not only helped the slow learners but have worked out special projects for advanced students and successfully coached superior ninth graders trying to enter special high schools; and science clubs which are run by ex-science teachers and a part-time lab technician.

Craft skills, hobby interests of every sort, books, community activities all become real to children working with volunteers with broad interests. An enthusiastic stamp collector gives each child in a class a packet of stamps to keep and incidentally along with it a great deal of geography as he leads the discussion about each stamp. Travel talks and pictures come alive when a child's own questions are answered face to face by someone who has been there and brings his personal souvenirs to class. A retired architect, a trained social worker, an active political campaign worker all make civic studies meaningful.

#### Museum on wheels

Last winter two imaginative School Volunteers launched still another SV project when they got together a forty-minute program on Japan and toured fifth and sixth grades in several Manhattan

schools. This presentation is an adaptation of the Brooklyn Museum's own "Museum on Wheels" which is available only to Brooklyn schools. With the help of the Museum, a portable exhibit -- including a record player, a large portfolio of pictures and a hamper full of Japanese objects -- was arranged to augment the Museum's ready-made script which tells about modern Japan and explains some of the traditions and festivals in which Japanese children play a special part. Preparation for a program about another country will be underway as soon as two more volunteers can be trained to take over the current show.

#### Music and Art

Many performing musicians and professional artists as well as talented amateurs share their gifts with children by regularly supplementing classroom teachers' lessons and school music and art programs. Two professional dancers have worked most successfully not only with regular elementary school classes, but also with CRMD children and a group of girls recommended by the guidance counselor.

Since music and art volunteers work in widely scattered schools they meet periodically as groups to pool their ideas and materials, and to plan special workshops. Last fall 25 art volunteers attended a five-session course given for them at the Museum of Modern Art's People's Art Center which, under the direction of Victor D'Amico,

has for many years been a significant force in art education. Their teacher was Mrs. Jane Bland, an outstanding authority on children's art and art education at the Museum who is also on the faculties of New York University and Bank Street College.

Last February, concert pianist, Miss Constance Keene, conducted a workshop for music volunteers on methods of teaching ear training and sight singing.

Both the music and art groups are exploring ways to help develop language and learning skills through their special media. All emphasize the joy of the children in participating, responding and creating -- performance is secondary.

### Library

The Roving Library Committee was established in 1959 as a task force trained to set up a school library or to up-date an existing one and then to move on to the next request for help.

The tremendously increased allotment for school libraries in recent years has created an enormous problem, for the schools often lack sufficient personnel to keep abreast of the book processing and card cataloguing necessary for a library to function. Most elementary schools now have library teachers, but they are often swamped because their teaching schedules allow little time for accessioning -- it takes approximately 25 minutes per book -- or for rejuvenating an out-of-date card file. Last year volunteer

librarians serviced three elementary school libraries and for the first time undertook a job in a junior high school, J.H.S. 13M, which had inherited a library without a shelf list from another school. There, while the library remained open to students, the Roving Library Committee inventoried and made a new shelf list so that the old books could be incorporated with the new.

In an effort to enable the whole school to make the fullest possible use of the library at I.S. 109M, the School Library Committee help extend the range of the library teacher's activities by doing routine chores, working on special projects and providing individual services to children and teachers.

Also, in several schools, volunteers have assembled small collections of books in their SVP rooms for children who are not able to borrow books elsewhere.

#### Early Childhood Program

Early Childhood volunteer units, which are attached to Child Development Centers, are the most recent addition to the School Volunteer Program. Volunteers recruited for this work are especially selected and trained for classroom assistance in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and first and second grades. Training includes the use of the special equipment and materials developed for young children and instruction in techniques for preparing children for the more structured learning in the later grades.

As a teacher's extra-pair-of-hands, Early Childhood volunteers help carry out routines and assist in the broadening experiences designed to help each child feel secure with adults and other children.

One of the most important functions of these volunteers is to get to know individual children by listening and talking to them separately, and thereby to encourage their expression through language and to improve their self-image by providing some exclusive attention from an interested adult.

\* \* \* \*

So far, School Volunteers have given over a quarter of a million hours to New York City school children. In the Program's experience several significant conclusions have emerged. There can be no question about the value of the one-to-one relationship which the volunteer can supply to a student needing help. Beyond this, the program has also demonstrated that teamwork between a professional and a carefully screened and well-trained lay citizen is not only viable but can lead to dynamic new approaches to student needs. Its flexibility has provided a way to carry out experimentation and pilot programs under professional guidance much more easily than might otherwise be possible. And finally, it has proved that through contact with volunteers and the lay resources which can be mobilized through informal channels, the community can, in part, be opened up to the disadvantaged child.

Throughout the Program's ten years of operation, responsibility for public relations, publicity and volunteer morale has been shared with the fourteen member School Volunteer Executive Advisory Committee, now chaired by Mrs. Robert H. Knapp.

In evaluating the needs of the coming year, the Committee is giving priority to developing more effective recruiting techniques to reach the untapped volunteer resources, especially in the districts where SV services are in most demand. School Community Coordinators and school staff members can play a major role in helping to identify interested citizen groups who wish to cooperate with the School Volunteer services.

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\*Central Office Relocation  
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to

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