Collective Wisdom: Classroom Activities for Volunteers

At the 2014 Volunteer Management Conference, we asked participants to share an activity that volunteers have done in their classrooms. We also asked, “Do your volunteers have a favorite classroom activity that they like to do with your students?” Here’s what they said!

An activity volunteers have done in my classroom/program:

- We had cultural sharing days. One day the students developed stations where they were teaching something about the country they are from or about their culture. The next day, volunteers did the same. Examples included cooking, facts about their country, music, dress, etc.

- Teach adverbs of frequency using graphic organizers

- We have “bus mentors” to help new refugees learn to ride the city bus

- Use ipad apps for phonics and skills

- Assist teachers to do benchmark testing in classes

- Take notes while a learner explains a recipe, then help the learner edit it

- Gate keeper – teachers barricade the door to the classroom at the end of the session and students must answer a question they practiced in class that day, or recently, in order to leave. For example, “How many children do you have? I have two children.”

- One of our beginning level volunteer teachers uses a flyswatter game to build vocabulary or comparisons. For example, she will post two photos or words and then students race to hit the term called out.

- A volunteer took her student to a local apple orchard for vocabulary work and conversation
Search for images to accompany vocabulary words in the beginning literacy class.

Discussing stress management and incorporating leisure activities into their daily lives — teaching exercises to the students (e.g. Chi Gong) to do during breaks in the classroom and at home.

Create simple stories with pictures based on curriculum for low level or pre-lit learners.

Work one-to-one with learners to help them practice a particular skill.

Lead small groups in a math class.

Walk someone through their first day when they’re new to the country/school (procedures, locations, support).

Tutor students one-to-one in GED subjects.

Homeschool Explore.

GED prep: math, echo and shared reading.

Office assistant/admin volunteer who helps with billing, making copies, folders, and taking new students to class.

English language lessons.

Journeys reading practice.

I have a volunteer who loves to write and she wrote (a few times) all new dialogues or plays using the week’s grammar topic.

Teach citizenship.

Small group intensive practice.

Research specific topics/curriculum, e.g. citizenship, to share and use with our adult learners.

Reading.

Bingo.

TBR.

Ipadio.

Participate in mingle activities.

Computer support.

Resume writing.

ESL Tutor – having students choose a book that they will read throughout their time together.

Helping students with their writing assignments.
Conversation skills focusing on a wide variety of topics – clothing labels, holidays, foods, etc. – or using Cathy’s Cards one-to-one

Use technology as a teaching tool (Smart Board) or as a supplement

Enter attendance into our database

Keep classroom routines going

A favorite activity that volunteers like to do:

Working with our students!

Bingo!

Conversation group or conversation activities such as role play, learning and sharing stories, or using picture dictionaries or google image search

Field trips!!

Teach students a new skill

Game night

Fly swatter game – I always recommend this and volunteers say they love to see students laugh!

One-to-one help after class

Reading and listening activities to teach/learn about volunteers’ and learners’ cultures

Reading – small group, shared and echo

Using News for You newspaper to discuss articles and do vocab crosswords and word finds. This also helps online skills.

Holiday activities when teaching ESL learners about holidays/traditions in the US (dying eggs, making Valentine’s Day cards, Christmas ornaments, etc.)

Teach citizenship

Reading a book with students

Interacting with our learners during break time to learn more about them (we have diverse populations at our site)

Mingles at the beginning of class

Floating while monitoring structured activities

Using graphic organizers for writing
Cutting a story up into sentence strips and scrambling them. Then having students order them to practice sequencing.

One-to-one experiences, e.g. going out into the community to build vocabulary and everyday life skills

Parallel lines – practicing small talk or questions/answers/conversation by having students form parallel lines facing each other. Students switch partners every few minutes.

Bring in a world map and ask students where they were born or lived before moving to Minnesota. Determine how many miles each student travelled to Minnesota.

Accessing online science activities and videos to supplement skills or experiments done in class (this is true for all areas – writing, math and social studies)

Learning languages from the students

Listening to students as they read

Memory games

Charades

New student introductory conversation activity