EARLY YEARS
PARENT VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

2014-2015
Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism,  
He learns to condemn.  
If a child lives with hostility,  
He learns to fight.  
If a child lives with ridicule,  
He learns to be shy.  
If a child lives with shame,  
He learns to feel guilty.  
If a child lives with tolerance,  
He learns to be patient.  
If a child lives with encouragement,  
He learns with confidence.  
If a child lives with praise,  
He learns to appreciate.  
If a child lives with fairness,  
He learns justice.  
If a child lives with security,  
He learns to have faith.  
If a child lives with approval,  
He learns to like himself.  
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,  
He learns to find love in the world  

Dorothy Law Holt
ACS has in operation an active volunteer program. As a volunteer, you’re considered part of the school staff. The resulting friendly relations with the teachers and students are highly valued!

As a volunteer you are in a unique position to act as liaison between the classroom, the school and the community.

You can help the community to understand the role of the school and thus encourage their much appreciated support.

Although the “job” is a volunteer one, the commitment and responsibility which accompany it are professional. Part of that commitment is dependability and confidentiality. It is important never to divulge confidential information which you obtain as a result of your presence in the classroom.
Volunteers assist in:

1. Helping students through activities which
   a. Enhance their self-concept
   b. Provide successful experiences in learning
   c. Motivate them to learn

2. Helping teachers by enabling them to
   a. Provide effective reinforcement activities
   b. Enrich the curriculum
   c. Perform other tasks
   d.

3. Strengthening school-community relations by
   a. Increasing opportunity for communication
   b. Learning more about school programs and initiatives
   c. Sharing time and talent with the school
What might a volunteer be asked to do?

Depending on the needs of the school at any particular time volunteers could expect to be involved in any of the following activities.

1. Library
   a. Sorting, shelving, filing
   b. Processing new materials
   c. Repairing books
   d. Collecting and preparing reference materials
   e. Making and maintaining display
   f. Set up A.V. equipment

2. Office
   a. Typing, duplicating and stapling
   b. Newsletter
   c. Photocopy and collate
   d. Record keeping
   e. Preparing posters, charts, booklets, displays
   f. Helping prepare materials for special events.

3. Classroom assistants
   a. Listening to children read
   b. Assisting with educational activities
   c. Assisting with educational fieldtrips
   d. Classroom parent coordinator
   e. Working with small groups or individuals
   f. Making materials at home
   g. Preparing materials
   h. Assisting with special projects (i.e. Club sports activities, concerts)
   i. Sharing any special talents you may have (i.e. Music, art, etc.)
   j. Cooking
   k. Sharing a talent/ interest
Words to Use When Working With Students

1. I see that you know how to clean up all by yourself. You know how to write a story – you are an author. You have used red circles in your painting. Can you tell me about them? Focused reflections on what students are doing give them feedback about specific things – independence, skills, creative ability. When we say good job, beautiful, that’s great it becomes meaningless. So, pretend to be a mirror and reflect what you are seeing.

2. Ping Pong Questioning – if a student asks a question try to turn the question back to him or to a friend so that adults are not always giving answers. This helps students to learn to think and problem solve. For example, “where do I put this?” Answer: “Where do you think it goes?” or “try asking Johnny?”

3. “You can help me (us, the others, etc. by…)” these words help students feel useful and helpful which is important to everyone. Children want to be helpful.

4. “Keep trying. Try again. Don’t give up.” These words will help a student to persevere when things are not going smoothly. If things continue in this way it would also be useful to suggest that the student ask a classmate to help.

5. “I’m sure that you can solve this problem but if you need any help, you know where to find me.” Adults need to express confidence that children are able to resolve conflicts but that they are there if they cannot after trying.

6. Ask students questions about their work. It makes them verbalize and helps them to organize their thinking. They also like talking about their work. (i.e. What is this part of your building? How did you get this color of paint? – How and What questions are better than Why questions since the answers will be more expansive.

7. Substitutes are not expected to deal with behavior problems. Please refer these to the teachers.
Early Years Policies on Classroom and Hallway Decoration and Activities

1. Never do for a child what a child can do for themselves. 
   -If a child can write their name do not do it for them even if it doesn’t look as nice – they need the practice not the adults. The same applies to cutting things out for children.

2. When we put images made by adults up on our bulletin boards and cut out crafts activities and direct children where and how to glue things in the image we are teaching them that they are not competent. We believe that they are competent and can make things by themselves at their level not at an adult level.

3. Most adults and older students will tell you that they cannot draw. That is because they have learned this. When we give children an adult image of a horse and let them color it in and then ask them to draw a horse they realize that cannot possibly draw a horse like the adult image. When this is repeated over and over they will quit drawing and we remove one of their languages of expression.

4. Adults sometimes have a need to see 22 products that all look the same after doing an activity with children. That is because that is the way we were taught. No two children in class are the same and if Picasso, Renoir, Monet, Van Gogh followed this line of thinking then our art galleries would be pretty boring and in fact probably wouldn’t exist as creativity would have been squashed. Children are more involved in the process and that is as it should be.
Tips for volunteers in the classroom

1. Do let children try things for themselves before helping.

2. Do let children tell you what they want even though you can anticipate their needs, as this develops language.

3. Do encourage independence.

4. Do encourage children to seek assistance from peers rather than adults whenever possible. (i.e. Buttons on smocks, laces, etc..)

5. Do remind students to use inside voices and to walk.

6. Do ask children to share their stories, writings, and creations.

7. Do offer to write words on paintings, pictures, etc.

8. Do verbalize and ask questions:
   a. Which is longer?
   b. Do you know that letter?
   c. What color is it?
   d. What shape is it?
   e. How many are there?
   f. Which pile has more/less?
   g. How do you cook spaghetti?

9. Do encourage children to write at all centers on their own. It’s great if they put letters or squiggles that mean little to us as this is a first step. We can also help by writing for them, writing for them to copy, telling them letters and discussing sounds.

10. Do ask the teacher if you are unsure of something

11. Do have fun and enjoy the children as they grow and develop.
Thank you for volunteering!
Constructivist Classrooms

(..) Piaget's later works showed his constructivist belief in stating that "the current state of knowledge is a moment in history, changing just as rapidly as knowledge in the past has changed, and in many instances, more rapidly." (Piaget, pp. 1-2) In both authors' view, Piaget's later work justifies the constructivist view that knowledge grows as a direct result of individual construction. Behaviorist viewpoints cannot justify constructivism because behaviorists do not consider the "existence of internal mental processes." (Wadsworth, p. 6) The authors' inclusion of other psychological viewpoints strengthens their stance that constructivism is an active part of the person's mental processes.

This leads to the authors claim that constructivist principles can guide students in helping them construct meaning. Part 2 addresses these principles in terms of how the teachers pose questions and structure lessons. Examples show how teachers ask students to look at other questions rather than just questions asked by the teacher. Students are given the opportunity to ask questions that make the lesson more applicable to their knowledge base. Brooks and Brooks emphasize the importance of not having time constraints for teaching students. However, teachers often have little choice when it comes to time.

Maybe the strategies in Part 3 can enable teachers to focus on important parts of the lesson without worrying about the right answers. Twelve strategies suggest ways for teachers to become constructivists. The twelve strategies in chapter 9 are as follows:

1. Constructivist teachers encourage and accept student autonomy and initiative.

2. Constructivist teachers use raw data and primary sources, along with manipulative, interactive, and physical materials.

3. When framing tasks, constructivist teachers use cognitive terminology such as "classify," "analyze," "predict," and "create."
4. Constructivist teachers allow student responses to drive lessons, shift instructional strategies, and alter content.

5. Constructivist teachers inquire about students' understanding of concepts before sharing their own understandings of those concepts.

6. Constructivist teachers encourage students to engage in dialogue, both with the teacher and with one another.

7. Constructivist teachers encourage student inquiry by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions and encouraging students to ask questions of each other.

8. Constructivist teachers seek elaboration of students' initial responses.

9. Constructivist teachers engage students in experiences that might engender contradictions to their initial hypotheses and then encourage discussion.

10. Constructivist teachers allow wait time after posing questions.

11. Constructivist teachers provide time for students to construct relationships and create metaphors.

12. Constructivist teachers nurture students' natural curiosity through frequent use of the learning cycle model. (The learning cycle model consists of discovery, concept introduction, and concept application.)

The incorporation of all these strategies to create a constructivist teacher seems undaunting. Yet, Brooks and Brooks provide examples that are clear and concise in using these strategies in the classroom. Teachers will need to develop skills to become constructivist teachers.

Again, the authors give the answer to what teachers will need to make them constructivist teachers.
Difference between a Thematic Approach and a Project Approach:

These notes I have taken during one of Dr. Chard’s presentations. Please note that sentences that are in bold represent Project approach.

If your theme is “Bread” for example

- In a thematic approach, you look at last year’s plan (activities you have done before...)
- **In PA, planning is emergent, you are not sure how the planning will unfold.**
- You will begin by bringing different kinds of bread, read stories, and bring books about bread making.
- **Tell a personal story, invite students to tell their stories and choose to represent them in any form they like.**
- You do a KWL Discussion.
- **Learn first about students’ relevant experiences, help students explain their experiences. The questions are both child and adult generated.**
- Teachers plan activities either in centers, small groups. Teachers tend to be more directives.
- **Teachers plan field work, invite experts that will address the questions. Teachers take a guidance role.**
- Children’s role is perhaps to enjoy the activities planned by the teachers.
- **Children will participate in planning some of their learning and are intrinsically motivated in help designing centers to further explore their questions.**
- Children produce similar products; learning is convergent, similar coverage for everyone.
- **Children choose different investigations or representations. It is jigsaw approach to learning**
- Students are not required to teach each others about their experiences. The work looks mostly similar.
- **Students learn that teaching their classmates help develop expertise.**
The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education

Hailed as an exemplary model of early childhood education (Newsweek, 1991), the Reggio Emilia approach to education seeks to enhance a child’s “own powers of thinking through the synthesis of all the expressive, communicative and cognitive languages” (Edwards and Forman, 1993). The infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, are run by the municipality and designed for children from 3 months through six years of age. The Reggio experience can be viewed as a resource and inspiration to help educators, parents, and children as they work together to further develop their own educational programs. Key aspects of the Reggio Emilia approach are based upon the following principles:

Emergent Curriculum: An emergent curriculum is one that builds upon the children’s and teacher’s ideas. Topics for study can emerge from a deep action of listening to children’s experiences, as well as through different kinds of experiences with the family and the community. The organization of the work is an essential component of an emergent curriculum. Teachers work together with the children to formulate hypotheses about the possible directions of a project, the materials needed. Parents can also be part of this process.

Project Work: Projects, also emergent, are in-depth studies of concepts, ideas, and interests that arise within the group. Considered as a continued exploration, projects may last one week or could continue throughout the school year. Throughout a project, teachers help children make decisions about the direction of study, the ways in which the group will research the topic, the representational medium that will demonstrate and showcase the topic, and the selection of materials needed to represent the work.

Representational Development: Consistent with Howard Gardner's notion of schooling for multiple intelligences, the Reggio Emilia approach calls for the integration of the “Hundred Languages of Children” graphic representation as a tool. Presentation of concepts and hypotheses in multiple forms of representation, for example: print, art, construction, drama, music, puppetry, and shadow play are considered essential to children's understanding of experience.
Collaboration: Collaborative group work, large medium and small, is seen as valuable and necessary to support cognitive and social development. Children, along with the teacher, are encouraged to dialogue, critique, compare, negotiate, hypothesize, and problem-solve through group work. Within the Reggio Emilia approach multiple perspectives promote both a sense of belonging to a group and the uniqueness of self.

Teachers as Researchers: The teacher's role within the Reggio Emilia approach is complex. Working as co-teachers, the role of the teacher is first and foremost to be that of a learner alongside the children. Within such a teacher-researcher role, educators carefully listen, observe, and document children's work, provoke, co-construct, and stimulate thinking and children’s collaboration with peers. The children’s work together builds community. Teachers are committed to reflection about their own teaching and learning.

Documentation: Visibility of children’s work in progress is viewed as an important tool in the learning process for children, teachers, and parents. Their engagement in experiences gives greater understanding to their thinking. The elements of observation and interpretation of ongoing experiences create a context of a deep learning process that supports both the teacher and child as researcher and investigator.

Environment: Within the Reggio Emilia schools, great attention is given to the look and feel of the classroom. Environment is considered the "third teacher." Teachers and parents carefully organize the school environment and this organization takes inspiration from the children’s “way of living” in the environment. Visibility of all the experiences that take place in the school seen as a system of interactions and relationships support a strong communication with all those who enter he school.
Some features of The Reggio Emilia Approach

The Role of the Teacher:

- To be simultaneously a teacher and a learner
- To co-explore and co-construct the learning experience with the children
- To listen to children’s ideas and re-visit them for further exploration
- To provoke ideas, to problem solving, and to negotiate agreement
- To organize the classroom to facilitate the children’s ongoing experiences.
- To make visible the children’s learning processes and the ways in which they build knowledge
- To make connections within learning experiences
- To collaborate with teachers and parents
- To foster the connection between home, school and community

Experiences and Projects:

- Can emerge from children’s ideas, thoughts, curiosities, and interests.
- Can be provoked by teachers
- Can be provoked by parents
- Time is valued as an essential element to discuss, negotiate possibilities, and respect different points of view.
Social Networking Policy

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:

- Blogs
- Online discussion forums
- Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook
- Media sharing services, such as YouTube
- ‘Micro-blogging’ applications, such as Twitter

Everyone at ACS (including faculty, staff, students, administration, substitute teachers, and student teachers) has a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school, and to treat colleagues and members of the community with professionalism and respect.

You will not engage in personal attacks, including prejudicial or discriminatory attacks, post false or defamatory information about a person or organization, or repost a message that was sent to you privately without permission of the person who sent you the message.

Photographs containing colleagues, pupils, and/or work related events may not be posted without the permission of all people in the picture.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary actions.
"BUTTERFLY IN THE WIND"

A child is........

A butterfly in the wind,
Some can fly higher than others;

But each one flies the best it can.

Why compare one against the other?

Each one is different!
Each one is special!
Each one is beautiful!