



From school mentors to school volunteers

School mentoring & peer learning: An approach on how to introduce volunteering awareness in schools

A view from France Bénévolat (France Volunteers)

France is just starting to think about spreading mentoring in schools as a win-win process.

The threefold objective

Since the beginning of 2017, France Bénévolat has been making numerous contacts in the field of private and public education with **three objectives**:

- to introduce and spread school mentoring at a national level
- to raise awareness amongst young school mentors and their schools that by becoming volunteer mentors they are also contributing to introducing and spreading volunteering by helping their mentees whom in turn might also become volunteers. (**Most of the time they are unaware of behaving as volunteers in their own schools**).
- to participate in the development of active citizenship which is a major objective of France Bénévolat and France.

The two stages

Therefore, as a **first stage**, France Bénévolat has given itself the task (that is until school mentoring becomes well-established in the French school system), to contribute with an appropriate team and with determination, to the training of heads of schools and of teachers in school mentoring, in peer learning, thus making it possible, as a **second stage**, to raise awareness and to contribute to give a new dimension to volunteering in the education field.

To do so, France Bénévolat has concentrated its task on an approach to school mentoring which has proved, throughout the world, to be a particularly positive and beneficial one. Based on the concept of an older pupil helping a younger pupil or an older student helping a younger pupil or of an older class supporting a younger one (there are varieties of forms of this concept). Such

school mentoring has shown that it is an undisputable tool for rendering solidarity and harmony between pupils and within the school.

Experience shows that school mentoring and peer learning has contributed to increased literacy, confidence, responsibility, well-being, fundamental human values, and by using mediation and help to prevent bullying and early school leaving.

This is made possible through the training of coordinating teachers or equivalent who in turn train pupil/student mentors who in turn become responsible for younger mentees. The training is most likely to be different according to the age of the young mentors and mentees.

The volunteer approach

At all levels of training volunteering dimension. Indeed from kindergarten and primary school up to upper secondary, the mentors involved are all acting as volunteers.

In order to have the mentors realise that they are behaving as such,

- a) The coordinating teachers (or equivalent) should, within the mentors' training, explain their role as volunteers (document provided by France Bénévolat)
- b) The volunteer associations, even if they are not responsible for the training in school mentoring, should contact the heads of schools where such an approach has been taken, to present, as a reward to these mentors, a volunteer passport such as the one created by France Bénévolat and which should be given in a suitably prestigious way (in presence of the head of school and the other staff for instance) to the young mentors by the end of the school year.

Conclusion

Thanks to the support of heads of schools and members of staff as well as of associations, such volunteering at school may blossom easily and allow young people from kindergarten to upper secondary to be active citizens volunteering and expressing solidarity.

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