

Teacher's Guide to SMART

This guide provides teachers with additional information about the SMART reading program. For general information about our program, visit www.getSMARToregon.org.

Volunteers

SMART Site Coordinator

SMART trains and manages one or more volunteers to oversee the program at each site during the school year. Key duties of this Site Coordinator position include: partnering with the principal and teachers to establish a reading schedule; recruiting, scheduling, training, recognizing and coordinating volunteer Readers; acting as a liaison between Readers and teachers; providing site staff with updates on program status; and being on-site when SMART is in session, observing all reading pairs and monitoring safety. Regular communication with Site Coordinators and/or SMART staff is necessary to ensure smooth program delivery and implementation. Teachers contact the Site Coordinator with questions, changes to classroom schedules, student progress, concerns, etc.

Volunteer Readers

Volunteer Readers are recruited and trained by SMART to read with the PreK through third-grade children who are selected by their teachers. They give their time and share their enthusiasm for books and reading in order to promote children's literacy. SMART actively recruits Readers within local and school communities. Volunteers are recruited and trained throughout the program year. School staff members are encouraged to help to spread the word about the need for volunteers and let the Site Coordinator know of any potential volunteer sources.

Volunteer Screening

Each potential volunteer must pass a nationwide criminal background check as part of SMART's application process, and background checks are repeated every three years. Applicants under the age of 18 submit two letters of recommendation from people who are not relatives. If a concern arises about a volunteer's suitability at any point during the program year, the SMART manager will address the situation.

Volunteer Absences

Only substitutes who have been trained and have cleared criminal background checks may cover during a Site Coordinator absence; the substitute is often a volunteer Reader at the site. Only Readers who have cleared criminal background checks can substitute for scheduled Readers. In some schools, the principal approves fifth- through eighth- grade students to occasionally substitute when SMART Readers are absent. These Junior Readers are selected by their teachers.

Books

SMART provides books to be read during the program, and for participating students to take home and keep. Each regularly scheduled student takes home up to two books per month, and substitute students receive books to take home if they attend SMART on book giveaway days. All books read in the program are screened by SMART; holiday, religious and "issue-oriented" books are not read in the program.

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Selecting Students

SMART is not intended to be a teaching or tutoring program, but rather a fun and positive environment for children to practice reading. The Site Coordinator provides teachers with selection criteria and asks them to select students to participate in SMART, prioritizing their lists according to who could benefit the most from the program. Students are scheduled as volunteers become available; selected students who are not initially paired with Readers can participate as substitute students until more Readers join the program.

Student Permission Slips

The Site Coordinator provides teachers with permission slips for all selected students. Each regularly scheduled and substitute student needs to have a permission slip, signed by a parent or guardian, on file. The Site Coordinator depends on teachers to assist in distributing and obtaining signed permission slips. In some cases, several permission slips may need to be sent home before a signed permission slip is received.

Student Information

The Site Coordinator also asks teachers to complete a *Student Information* form for each selected student. These forms provide volunteers with helpful information about students and their stages of literacy development.

Scheduling

Scheduling is crucial to the success of the SMART program. The Site Coordinator has the challenging task of balancing the needs and requirements of the students, teachers, school and Readers. Ideally, each SMART student is available to leave the classroom for 30 minutes, two days per week from mid-October (or when the student is paired with a volunteer) through mid-May. Whenever possible, students should be scheduled during the same 30-minute reading session on both program days (ex: 10-10:30am on Mondays and Wednesdays). Usually, students are not available to come to SMART during portions of the literacy or math blocks, specials, recess, lunch, core instruction time, etc. These restricted times vary by school.

The Site Coordinator distributes forms with potential reading times to teachers and asks that they indicate their first, second and third preferences, as well as any times that won't work for their classrooms. The Site Coordinator gives teachers their first reading time preferences whenever possible. The Site Coordinator, teachers and designated school staff member work together until a schedule is finalized.

Student Milestones

In late-March/early-April, the Site Coordinator distributes *Student Milestones* forms to teachers for all participating students. Any information teachers can provide regarding student progress will be very helpful to SMART. Teacher participation in this effort is voluntary and very much appreciated!