



## **The role of the RE-SEED volunteer**

The RE-SEED volunteer is an assistant to the science teacher. As such, the volunteer is not the teacher, even though the teacher may request that the volunteer deliver some or all of a lesson, often in the form of a demonstration. When the teacher is using inquiry based learning with lots of hands on activity a knowledgeable volunteer can be of immense help in fielding the questions of the students and showing them how to do things they may not be familiar with. There is a lot of this going on in hands on classrooms and teachers often times need all the help he/she can get.

The reluctance on the part of some good teachers for working with a volunteer is usually based on the fear that the volunteer will not understand what the teacher is trying to do and will interfere with the process. If in doubt, don't, is a good rule. The biggest mistake is to answer the student's questions with a factual answer. The goal is to develop critical thinking, so getting the student to come up with an answer themselves is the preferred result. This can be helped along by pointing out evidence leading to the facts "didn't we discover yesterday that...?", or by suggesting an experiment that will reveal evidence, "what if you...?" and so forth. Until you are comfortable with the process, tread softly and ask questions of the teacher and students.

Discipline, behavioral issues, conflicts, permission to use the bathroom, etc – are all issues for the teacher to maintain control over. At no time should any volunteer feel pressured to intervene in a student conflict – each school has trained professionals and methods for dealing with unruly students or conflicts. It is important that the volunteer and teacher clarify at the onset what the role is of the volunteer, and the need for teachers to play their role as managers of the classroom and students, such that volunteers do not become involved in any classroom management issues that are beyond their scope of support.

Besides helping the teacher develop good learners, for that is the real goal, the volunteer can also be a role model and tell the students about their career and what it is like to be a scientist, engineer whatever. Some volunteers tutor students outside the regular class hours or mentor students who need encouragement to develop their potential. We can also help with science clubs, helping prepare science fair projects and judging science fairs. However you find yourself useful, you'll surely develop a feeling of satisfaction and a job well done.