

# What To Do in the First Eight Weeks of Your VISTA Term

		Accomplished? Notes?
<b>WEEK'S ONE AND TWO: GETTING STARTED</b>		
At your school(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Locate main office and introduce yourself to the secretary/office staff</li> <li>2. Set up a time to meet with the principal to learn about your new school and discuss VISTA responsibilities</li> <li>3. Find your office/desk/space               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may need a key to access your office (seek out your custodian – he/she is somebody you'll definitely want to be on good terms with!)</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Where is your mailbox?</li> <li>5. Take time to explore your schools               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find LMC, adult restrooms, supply closets/rooms, the infamous teachers' lounge</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Prepare a little blurb to introduce yourself at the 1st staff meeting               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This does not have to be something fancy, just a simple, "Hello, I'm the new VISTA" and let them know where you can be found</li> <li>• This is a very good time to let everyone know that you'll be splitting your time between two sites</li> <li>• Feel free to work on this in the weeks before school starts!</li> <li>• LET THEM KNOW WHO YOU ARE!</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	
In your office	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find VISTA check-out binder/form               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review this information carefully, it is indispensable</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Look through your VISTA Schools of Hope binder again . . . and again . . .</li> <li>3. Set up your MMSD phone, voicemail message and e-mail               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do this as soon as possible; it makes life much easier</li> <li>• If you're having problems, let someone know!</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Familiarize yourself with your surroundings               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you see the makings of a functional space?</li> <li>• Are there supplies you desperately need?</li> <li>• Start digging through files, folders, other binders, etc. . . . EXPLORE!</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	
Now you're ready	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Draft a letter introducing yourself as a SOH VISTA to both staff and volunteers               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An example should be in your binder</li> <li>• If not, don't worry – another VISTA will be able to provide one</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Make contact with your returning volunteers               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send out your introductory letter, give them a call or for those that have email, send them a message</li> <li>• Because of postage for mail and lack of reliable email addresses, a phone call usually works best</li> <li>• LET THEM KNOW WHO YOU ARE!</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	

On the side . . .	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Get your photo ID from Human Resources</li> <li>2. Make sure you have a copy of the teachers' schedules                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You'll find that this may be the easiest way to corner that elusive 1st grade teacher</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Look for literacy allies                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your checkout binder should mention staff members who work in SOH related fields – seek them out!</li> <li>• Inquire about after-school programs and see if you're expected to take part in their running</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Complete and submit your 1st bi-monthly report to your VISTA Leader . . . on time!</li> <li>5. Try your best to post a weekly schedule with all your contact information listed – your co-workers will appreciate it</li> <li>6. Take time to put it all together                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to your other team members</li> <li>• There really are no dumb questions</li> <li>• You will get the hang of it, it does make sense</li> <li>• The coordinators possess a wealth of knowledge and love to hear from you!</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	Accomplished? Notes?
<b>WEEK'S THREE AND FOUR: FEEL THE GROOVE</b>		
Organize, Organize, Organize	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Send out a "volunteer request" form                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Though your site(s) needs may be met, this is another good way to let staff know you're there to serve their literacy needs</li> </ul> </li> <li>2 You're going to start receiving a lot of information                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sooner you have a system set up to organize everything that's coming in (notes from teachers, volunteers, etc. . . . ) the more effective and calm you'll be</li> <li>• Use binders, piles, folders, notebooks, bins.... anything, but make sure you use it. All that matters is that it works for you and doesn't leave volunteers, teachers, or students hanging</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Establish a system of communication between you and your volunteers.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes paper clipped to sign-in log</li> <li>• Volunteer mailboxes, folders, anything . . . JUST HAVE A SYSTEM!</li> <li>• Try to get volunteers to keep good records of their efforts – this makes everyone's life a little easier</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	
Leave a paper trail	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have you cleared all volunteers with MMSD?</li> <li>2. Does RSVP have copies of all applications and disclosures?</li> <li>3. Use the online database to maintain accurate records</li> </ol>	
On the side . . .	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project-wide responsibilities, including committee work</li> <li>2. Monthly Student Tracking is due!</li> <li>3. Keep in contact with team members</li> <li>4. Ask questions!</li> </ol>	

		Accomplished? Notes?
<b>WEEK'S FIVE AND SIX: YOU'RE DOING IT!</b>		
Get Involved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is there anything at your site(s) that is in need of VISTA energy/attention?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After-school literacy program short-staffed?</li> <li>• Teacher with special circumstances that you may be able to help</li> <li>• Would your principal like to use your creativity for something literacy related?</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Consider tutoring or mentoring 1-2 hours a week</li> <li>3. BE VISIBLE AT YOUR SITE(S)!</li> <li>4. Do you see a possibility for a project-wide undertaking?</li> </ol>	
Checking In	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are tutoring needs still being met?</li> <li>2. Have tutors been timely and consistent?</li> <li>3. Does the student seem to like his/her tutor?</li> <li>4. Are your volunteers happy?</li> <li>5. Are teachers pleased with their volunteers?</li> <li>6. Is everyone signing in and tracking hours?</li> <li>7. Keep in mind the timing of this step is relative to when each volunteer starts! Check in with teachers and their new volunteers no later than 2 weeks after the volunteer begins!</li> </ol>	
Catch up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Any projects you're behind on?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacted that community center yet?</li> <li>• Who mentioned they could use some additional help?</li> <li>• Do I have a master list of all my volunteers?</li> <li>• Is there more info I could get from the coordinators?</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. By now, things should be making a good deal of sense to you</li> </ol>	
<b>WEEK'S SEVEN AND EIGHT: UNDER CONTROL, RIGHT?</b>		
You are comfortable with this project and your service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You've been resolving issues for weeks now</li> <li>2. Any and all of your volunteers can be accounted for at any given moment of any given day</li> <li>3. You've been asking questions since week one and it's paid off, you now are the proud director of your very own volunteer corps!</li> </ol>	