MATH ADVENTURE KIT

Volunteer Recruitment & Coordinator

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

A Math Night Adventure takes three kinds of volunteers.

One small group is recruited well in advance, and asked to lead the puzzle solving and theatric stations. Another group coaches or chaperones the teams, as they solve their math puzzles and move about the school. The third group runs the various stations, as actors, crowd control, or math mentors.

The Volunteer Recruitment role helps gather all the people who will fill those roles.

1. STATION LEADS

The most important roles to fill are the people to lead each of the four theatric stations, and one more to oversee the puzzle solving area. These jobs can in theory be done by a last-minute assignee, but that's a more chaotic and stressful way to run things. Ideally, these 5 jobs would be recruited well in advance, and those leads will be partners in planning the rest of the volunteer needs.

For very small events (9 or fewer teams), these leads can be combined into fewer than 5 people. In fact, two people could do it: one managing the puzzle solving area, and the other roving between the four theatric stations.

However, for medium or large sized events, you will sleep better knowing that someone at each station has read the script, and thought about how all the pieces fit together.

2. ESTIMATE A HEADCOUNT

Before you start recruiting event-day volunteers, you'll need an estimate for how many total helpers are required.

First, plan to have at least one parent coach (chaperone) for each team. Most coaches enjoy a partner if they can get one, and younger teams in particular benefit from a 2nd coach. However, it is optional.

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Then, reviewing the script, consider the traffic volume of teams you expect. Consult the station leads, to determine how many actors and helpers you will need to recruit.

Here are some general guidelines:

SMALL EVENT (9 OR FEWER TEAMS)

4 stations with 2 actors each, and a third non-acting helper, plus 1 volunteer in the cafeteria
Total: 13 volunteers

MEDIUM EVENT (10-18 TEAMS)

Add another non-acting helper to each station, including the cafeteria
Total: 18 volunteers

LARGE EVENT (19-35 TEAMS)

Add a 2nd extra room at each station, with 2 more actors each
Total: 26 volunteers

VERY LARGE EVENT (36-50 TEAMS)

Add a 3rd extra room at each station, and a 3rd non-actor helper everywhere
Total: 39 volunteers

The reason we add more non-acting helpers as the event gets larger is to help with crowd control, and otherwise keep the stations moving smoothly.

Notice how the combined number of actors and helpers tends to stay in the same ballpark as the total number of teams.

3. RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

Given that you'll need roughly one coach and one volunteer (actor or helper) per participating team, one approach that may work well is to ask each team to provide one of each. You can make this part of the registration process.

Some schools are fortunate to have a community of parent volunteers, ready to jump into activities like this. If that's the case, you may find that you don't need to specifically require each team to provide their share. The benefit here is that teams whose parents may otherwise be too busy to come, can still attend themselves.

Some communities have a hard time fielding 2 parents per team, all on the same night. In that case, you should look for other sources of volunteers. The local high school may have a drama club, or a math club, or an honor society or key club, whose members would enjoy giving back to the community.

One other option is to reciprocate volunteer duties with another school. Your team's coaches could volunteer at the other school, and vice versa.

4. ASSIGN VOLUNTEERS TO ROLES

TEAM CHAPERONES (COACHES)

Parents that are deathly afraid of acting may want to focus their volunteer energy here.

ACTORS AND HELPERS

Note that even the "non-acting" helpers still need to get in the spirit of their station, and take on a character role if they can. The more gregarious parents will often step up to be the actors, but if it comes to drafting reluctant parents, you can help them feel more comfortable by placing them either with their friends, or with a more prepared parent who can inspire them.

MATH MENTORS

If you have a teacher, or an older high school math enthusiast, they make wonderful mentors, who work as helpers in the cafeteria. This is a bonus volunteer role that you should probably fill last, when you're sure you have enough people coaching and at the theatric stations.

OTHER DAY-OF-EVENT TASKS, SUCH AS SETUP/CLEANUP, OR HALL MONITOR

Some parents are not available to stay for the several hours of the adventure. However, they may still be able to help at the beginning or the end, setting up or cleaning up.

If you have other spare volunteers, consider having one or two wander the hallways, keeping the peace, and helping make sure the school needs as little clean-up at the end as possible.

TEENS

If you have more than a few teenagers volunteering, you may want to spread them around, so that each one is working with adults. If you choose to group them together, you'll likely want to assign one parent to keep tabs on each such group. This can be an important part of keeping the trust of the teachers whose rooms you may be borrowing.

5. MAKE SURE PARENTS DON'T SIGN UP TWICE

If you require two parents from each team, some teams will not fully understand what is being asked of them. One common mistake is when two teams (usually with siblings) list the same parent as their coach or volunteer. First, help those parents understand why they shouldn't sign up to be in two places at the same time. That either job will keep them busy for the duration of the event. Then ask the teams to nominate another volunteer.

6. SUPPORT SCHOOL-AGE VOLUNTEERS

If you have any teenage volunteers, there's a good chance that they'll want to track their volunteer hours for a high school requirement. That usually means filling out some paperwork or a web site. If you're lucky, the high school will have a standardized form that you can have copies of on hand. But more commonly, it'll be up to the students to bring the paperwork, or submit something to an online tool. When counting hours, figure 2 hours if they only helped during the adventure. 3 hours if they came early (like they should) to prepare. 4 hours if they came extra early to setup, or stayed extra late to help cleanup. And 5 hours if they also attended the prep night (below).

7. COMMUNICATION

The station leads have their own chapters in this kit to help them prepare for their roles. There are general-purpose guidelines, independent of which story you are presenting. There are also adventure-specific scripts, which are much more detailed. For everyone else, it is probably enough to send out an email the week prior to the event, with details on when to come, what to wear (varies by station), and what to do when they arrive. If station leads know who their staff will be, they may want to email those people directly to coordinate. A sample communication email is included in the online resources.

8. CONSIDER HOLDING A PREP NIGHT

If you have the bandwidth, we recommend holding a prep night a few days prior to the event. If the adventure is on a Friday, consider holding the prep night the Monday evening of that week. A prep night is intended for the volunteers to come and learn their roles. Coaches can come too, if they're curious, but they don't need to, because we have online training resources for them. Students should not come, so the surprise of the adventure isn't spoiled. An agenda for the prep night is in the online resources.

9. HAVE A POINT PERSON AVAILABLE THE NIGHT OF THE EVENT

Some fraction of parent volunteers won't know anything in advance. They may be last-minute recruits, or their spouse signed them up, or what have you. They will need guidance.

Set up a volunteer check-in table in the puzzle solving area, visible to teams as they arrive. Bring a list of all the roles, and who is assigned to each. If a volunteer with an assignment shows up, you can send them straight to wherever their station is.

If most volunteers don't have assignments in advance, it is easier to hold them near the registration table, and then have the station leads come pick up as many staff as they need. The leads will appreciate only having to go over their station's instructions once, instead of repeating it each time a new volunteer shows up.

If volunteer numbers are tight, send the minimum number to each station first, and then make a second pass with extra staff if and when they arrive.

Every now and then, a team's parents will resist contributing an actor volunteer, if all the parents would rather be with their children. If you are critically low on acting staff, and notice such a team, you will need to gently recruit a parent or two from their group. On the other hand, if you have more than enough volunteers, send the extras back to their teams to help coach.

Once the event is underway, this coordinator role should be done.

10. EVENT MILESTONE CHECKLIST

Following is a recap of the various tasks of the Volunteer recruitment role, and when they need to happen…

Task	Timeline	Completed?
Set a goal for actor and helper headcount. Decide whether each team must provide an actor volunteer, in addition to their coach.	2 months before	
Reach out to dramatic parents in the community to be theatric station leads	1-2 months before	
Reach out to the local high school for volunteers, either individually, or from a club	1-2 months before	
Registration will forward a list of volunteers. Depending on their system, this may not yet differentiate coaches from actors.	2 weeks before	
Invite all volunteers to attend prep night. Depending on your approach, coach attendance may be optional.	2 weeks before	
Hold prep night.	3-7 days before	
Finalize volunteer assignments	3 days before	
Print out assignment list	1 day before	
Staff the volunteer check-in station	Day of event	

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