

HILLS SHIRE Times

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Helping kids on learning journey

A NEW volunteer-based literacy program introduced at Winston Hills Public School three years ago has proved so successful it is now being extended.

The program relies on volunteers, who work alongside teachers in the classroom and assist in a variety of ways, such as listening to individual

children reading to helping small groups with writing, worksheets or art and craft related to literacy or numeracy topics.

If the volunteers are skilled in a particular area or have a preference for a certain type of work, teachers try to accommodate that.

Assistant principal Elizabeth Edgar said all

that's required to be a volunteer is a genuine appreciation of children and a willingness to turn up.

Parents, care-givers, grandparents, retirees and other community members made excellent volunteers, she said.

Principal Brian Power said everyone benefited from the program.

"It's lovely to work with children," he said.

"There is an energy that comes from them that is good for everybody.

"Children often develop relationships with volunteers that are very positive and supportive. A lot of children gain a confidence through that which helps with their literacy."

The skills learnt by the volunteers can also be used to assist others who might need help, either in their own family or in the broader community.

Pat Davenport, a volunteer whose grandchildren attend the school, is one of the volunteers.

"I was surprised when they wanted grandmas to help, but the children don't think you're too old," she said.

"I really enjoy this morning each week. It's a

break from every other part of my life and I enjoy helping."

Margaret Wignall, a retired long day car worker, also assists at the school.

"When I retired I missed, naturally, working with the children," she said.

"I just love every moment (of her work at the school). It's just a joy to watch the children developing over time and I think they get a real buzz out of someone different being there."

Both volunteers agree the work helps them in relating to their own grandchildren, by putting them in touch with the interests and crazes of children of similar ages.

Being a volunteer requires very little time. Sessions start at an hour a week but, if time permits, volunteers can do more than one session.

If you would like to become a volunteer at the school and want more information, call Elizabeth Edgar on 9639 8518 during school hours.

— by Briar Jensen



Winston Hills Public School volunteer Pat Davenport assists Year 1 students in the classroom