

HOW TO EARN VOLUNTEER HOURS AT ELA: 2017-18

HelpCounter

As you should know from reading the school charter, we ask every ELA family to contribute 35 volunteer hours per school year as part of their enrollment agreement with the school. This request is per family, not per student. Parents, step-parents, grandparents, adult siblings, and other extended family members may volunteer as part of your family quota group to help your family reach the 35 hours.

PEAK, ELA's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), manages the school wide volunteer opportunities and tracks volunteer hours through a software tool called HelpCounter. You will use HelpCounter to sign up for school wide volunteer opportunities and to record your completed volunteer hours.

If you are volunteering at the school during the school day, you will sign in as a volunteer on the laptop computer sitting on the counter in the office and HelpCounter will record those volunteer hours and even create an account for you if you don't already have one.

The label printer will print a badge you need to wear while volunteering. It may take up to 30 seconds for the badge printer to start printing so please be patient. Please remember to stop in the office and sign out when you're done volunteering on campus for the day.

For any volunteer time you do that doesn't involve signing into the office laptop computer first, you will need to login to your HelpCounter account from your personal device and record those hours yourself. If you've only ever signed in at the school on the sign-in computer, you'll need to use the same email address you used for your first sign in to register a username and password you'll use for home access.

If you've used HelpCounter at another school, you can use your same account and add Early Light Academy as a new school.

If you're new to HelpCounter, please create your free account here:

www.helpcounterweb.com/welcome/?en=118325447

Once you've created your account, please go into your account profile and do three things:

- 1) Make sure your correct email is listed.
- 2) Make sure your correct phone is listed.
- 3) Please also list your students, as well as their grade and homeroom teacher.

When you register with our school in HelpCounter, please let us know who all the adults are from your family coming in to volunteer so we can make sure they all get grouped into your family quota group.

Currently, only HelpCounter admins can create quota groups. If there are step-parents, adult siblings, grandparents, or other extended family coming in to volunteer as part of your family group, please let us know so we can make sure your family gets appropriate volunteer hours credit.

Everyone who is registered in HelpCounter can access it through the following link (please bookmark it):

<http://www.helpcounterweb.com/ci/volunteer>

You will use the username and password you create to access Helpcounter outside of your onsite school login in the school office.

Any questions you have about HelpCounter or volunteering at ELA, as well as family quota group information, should be sent to: elavolunteers@earlylightacademy.org

Classroom Help

Your student's teacher(s) will have various classroom volunteer opportunities throughout the school year. **You will find out about classroom specific volunteer opportunities from your students' teachers.** These will include things like:

- 1) Being a room parent (coordinating class parties, classroom specific activities for Teacher Appreciation Week, recognition of the teacher's birthday)
- 2) Chaperoning field trips
- 3) Opportunities to work with students in the classroom.
- 4) Donating food or other items for class parties.
- 5) Occasionally, there may also be opportunities to grade papers or prep craft/art projects or class work at home.

Pizza and Book Fair Shifts

This year, ELA is asking every family to either do one book fair OR one pizza shift during the school year. You'll hear more about this from Mrs. Young at Back To School Night. All pizza shifts and book fair shifts for the entire school year are currently listed in HelpCounter.

We know a lot of parents have paid jobs or preschool aged children at home. By listing all the shifts for the entire school year up front, every family can choose a shift well in advance and have time to arrange for time off work or for childcare. A shift is two hours out of your day and we're only asking one person from your family group to do this one time.

If **every** family does their one shift, all the pizza and book fair shifts for the year will be covered, and each family only had to have one person from their family group do one shift, one time. We don't think this is asking too much, especially since every family has agreed to do volunteer work for the school by choosing to enroll their students at ELA.

Of course, every family doing only one pizza or book fair shift only works if everyone cooperates. If everyone doesn't cooperate, that will mean that some families will end up doing multiple shifts.

Pizza lunch on Thursdays is PEAK's biggest fundraiser and helps fund things such as:

- 1) grade level fine arts programs every student gets to participate in during the school year
- 2) Splore
- 3) 9th grade promotion decorations and refreshments
- 4) popsicles and first aid for Field Day
- 5) funds to help pay for 8th and 9th grade Lagoon day
- 6) the 9th grade La Caille social etiquette program
- 7) Inspirations Art contest fees and prizes
- 8) Science Fair prizes
- 9) We also offer a grant of \$100 to each teacher every school year to help them improve their classrooms. Teachers provide most of the contents of their classrooms beyond the desks and chairs, so \$100 can be very helpful to them.

Every student benefits from Pizza Thursdays in some way, even if they don't get pizza for lunch. This is why we're asking for much wider volunteer participation for this ongoing fundraiser.

Pizza Lunch Fundraiser

The ongoing Thursday Pizza Lunch fundraiser volunteer shifts are from 10:45 – 12:45 every Thursday there's a full day of school. Volunteers meet in the cafeteria to help serve the pizza to students whose parents made the online lunch orders

Book Fairs

We will have three book fairs throughout the school year. Shifts run throughout the day and some evenings for one school week. Book fairs are held in the elementary school library. 2017-18 Book fair dates are as follows: October 2-5, 2017, February 19-22, 2018, and April 23-26, 2018

Help Distribute Dress Down Wristbands (Last Friday of each month)

PEAK has an ongoing once a month fundraiser called Dress Down Friday. The last regular Friday there is school each month, students may purchase a "dress down" wristband for \$2 or 20 box tops (from the Box Tops for Education program). The wristband allows a student to wear regular clothes instead of the school uniform or normal Friday spirit dress.

There are volunteer opportunities to help collect money/box tops and pass out the wristbands on that Friday morning from 8:00 until about 8:40 AM by the cafeteria. These opportunities are listed in HelpCounter.

Childcare for Other Volunteers – Childcare Swaps

One of the ways you can earn volunteer hours is to tend another parent's non-school age children so they can come in and volunteer at the school during the day. We encourage parents with small children at home to set up childcare swaps with other ELA parents so every family is able to come in and volunteer regularly.

To help facilitate this, we have a childcare swap spreadsheet you can fill out. This is provided as a courtesy to parents, you are responsible for arranging and managing your own childcare swaps. You can see if there are other families with children close to the same ages as yours that are interested in doing childcare swaps so that it can hopefully be more of a fun playdate type of activity for the kids. Link to the spreadsheet:

<http://tinyurl.com/y94fuodx>

A side benefit from childcare swapping with other ELA parents is that your preschoolers will be able to get to know other children their age who will eventually be their classmates. They can start Kindergarten already having some friends at school. When you do childcare for another volunteer, log this in HelpCounter under "Childcare 4 Another Volunteer".

Food Donations

PEAK organizes staff meals several times a year for parent/teacher conferences, Teacher Appreciation Week, and other times as they arise. Your students will also have a few class parties every year where food donations may be requested. There are also occasionally opportunities for donating food related to sports teams and clubs. Donating food, when requested, counts toward your family's yearly volunteer quota. In addition to counting the time you spent acquiring, preparing, and delivering the food items, you can count one volunteer hour for every \$10 you spend.

Log donations for PEAK sponsored events under "Food Donations (Hospitality)" or the event category - like Teacher Appreciation Week, Teacher Meal (Conferences), and food donated to class parties under the "Class Party" option in HelpCounter.

Food Donation requests for school wide activities will be listed in HelpCounter. Food donations for class parties will be handled by room parents and/or the individual teacher. Food donations for sports will be handled by coaches and food donations for clubs will be handled by the club sponsors.

Teacher Wish List / Book Fair Wish List Donations

Most of the teachers have wish lists of both supplies and things they would like for their classes and/or classrooms. Donating items from teacher wish lists can count as volunteer hours. You can record 1 volunteer hour for every \$10 spent.

Please note that this excludes the standard required school supply list for each grade on the school website – except for any listed wish list items. For example, if a teacher requests the Time For Kids magazine for the class, a family could donate a classroom subscription for the school year so that each student in the class would get their own copy. If it cost \$75, that would enable a parent to record 7.5 volunteer hours under Teacher/Staff Wish Lists.

Sometimes the non-teacher support staff have wish lists too - especially the front office - and the same thing applies if you get something for them.

Another great thing to do is to **donate books to your students' classrooms**. You can ask teachers any time if there are books they'd like for their classrooms. The teachers also usually have wish bins set up at each of the three school book fairs during the school year. At least 2 of the book fairs always coincide with parent/teacher conference week so it's easy to stop by the book fair since you'll already be at the school for conferences. You can just look through each teacher's bin and select books they've chosen for their wish bins. Once you buy them for the teacher(s), you can sign and deliver them as well as count 1 volunteer hour for every \$10 spent.

Sports, Clubs, Events, Special Projects

Throughout the year there are opportunities to help with sports, school clubs, events, and special projects. Your students' coaches will let you know of sports volunteer opportunities. You can ask the sponsors of school clubs you and/or your students are interested in about opportunities to volunteer there. Volunteer help needed for events and special projects will be promoted through email and social media and most of those volunteer opportunities will be listed in Helpcounter.

Monetary Donation in lieu of Volunteer Hours

You can also donate funds straight to PEAK in lieu of doing volunteer hours. PEAK is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, so any monetary donation you make that isn't part of a purchase in a fundraiser is tax deductible. Again, you get 1 volunteer hour for every \$10 donated.

All funds raised by PEAK are used to fund things for the school. Some of the things we pay for:

- 1) the grade level fine arts programs that every student gets to participate in each school year
- 2) SPLORE
- 3) 9th grade promotion refreshments and decorations
- 4) Popsicles and First Aid station for Field Day
- 5) Inspirations Art contest fees
- 6) Junior High Lagoon days and the 9th grade La Caille social etiquette training.
- 7) We give each teacher at ELA a \$100 grant each year that they can use to improve their classrooms. The teachers provide the majority of the contents of their classrooms beyond the desks and chairs so the \$100 they're offered from PEAK can be very helpful to them.

Join the PTO (We're called PEAK – Parents and Educators Advancing Knowledge)

We have a variety of needs on our school PTO. We are looking for:

- (1) **Grant Writers** (already trained)
- (2) **Fundraising & Donations.** People who can help contact local businesses about possible fundraising opportunities and donations of goods, services, or funds for our volunteer appreciation drawings, school science fair prizes, art show prizes, Daybreak math tournament prizes, etc. Much of this could be done from home using the internet and making phone calls.
- (3) **On Site Pizza Supervisors.** Because we're hoping to rotate each family through either a pizza or book fair shift, we'll need a regular onsite pizza supervisor each week to manage everything. We're looking for 4 parents who can trade off with each other, each covering 8-9 pizza shifts over the course of the school year. This will give each pizza supervisor 16-18 volunteer hours of the 35 hour family quota. We will provide a 20-30 minute group training for the 4 on site pizza supervisors.

- (4) **Back End Pizza Coordinator:** This position entails running the purchase reports from Hotlunchonline.com to determine how many pizzas need to be ordered. This person is also the liaison with the pizza vendor. They order the pizza and deal with any issues that might come up with the vendor. This person also creates the custom lunch list that the onsite pizza volunteers use to distribute pizza to students and emails this list to the onsite pizza supervisors.
- (5) **Inspirations Art Contest Chairperson.** This position entails organizing and managing all the arrangements ELA needs to make for the yearly Inspirations Art Contest (charter schools version of the Reflections Art contest). The chairperson may also want to have committee members to help with various aspects of the job.
- (6) **Hospitality Committee.** The hospitality committee organizes the meals for Parent Teacher conferences, treats and meals for Teacher Appreciation Week, refreshments for 9th Grade Promotion, and other things that come up throughout the year involving food. The hospitality committee decides meal themes, determines what amounts of food are needed, creates sign-ups in HelpCounter, and setup and cleanup of these events.
- (7) **Communications/Publicity Committee.** The Communications committee is responsible for publicity for all events sponsored by PEAK. They're in charge of the production and distribution of reminders for PEAK events and meetings. This may include the bulletin board in the elementary building, posters, banners, fliers distributed in teacher's mailboxes, text for emails, social media posts, and a PEAK website. Communications/Publicity is also responsible for the production of the PEAK newsletter.
- (8) **Events and Programs Committee.** The Events and Programs committee helps coordinate, but not necessarily chairs, events and programs sponsored by PEAK, except for the Inspirations Art Contest. The Events and Programs committee may also coordinate, but not necessarily chair, aspects of school events and programs as requested by the school. These events and programs may include, but are not limited to: Field Day, 9th Grade Graduation, Family Fun Nights. The Events and Programs Committee works with the Volunteer Coordinator to determine volunteer need, Hospitality for any food needs, Communications to determine publicity needs, and so forth. The Events and Programs Committee may also work with the Fundraising Committee to help coordinate fundraising events.