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Literacy Program Toolkit, 3rd Edition

Libraries are often the entry point for persons seeking literacy services and assistance. We have developed this toolkit to help libraries develop literacy programs to meet this need. We hope this toolkit will address the questions you may have and will help your adult literacy programs succeed.

Many libraries find it helpful to do a study to determine the need for a literacy program in their community. This information is especially relevant to any request for funding. Information and statistics may be found in published or online census tracts. Local community colleges and workforce offices may also provide statistical information. Additionally, libraries may choose to do their own surveys, which may not only help determine a need for a literacy program but can also provide specific areas of interest. For example: GED, CDL or drivers' license, read to their children, or be able to apply for a job or seek a better job.

Starting a literacy program is a major undertaking. It requires a strong commitment, operational planning, community support, and resources. If a library does not have a literacy program it would be beneficial to the community for the library to maintain a list of local agencies to provide as referrals.

Document Purpose

The purpose of this toolkit is to increase literacy by assisting in the development of adult literacy programs. The four main sections of the kit cover literacy as a whole, program management, recruiting and training tutors, and attracting students.

Recommended Resources

Texas LEARNS, the Texas Adult Education and Family Literacy Collaboration. <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/texaslearns/> ^[1]

The Adult Learner : The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, 6th Edition (2005), by Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III, and Richard A. Swanson. ISBN: 9780750678377

Part I. Literacy Programs

Part I A. What to Expect from a Literacy Program

Understanding what to expect from a literacy program is important for both program support and evaluation. This subject is detailed later, in [Part 2, Program Administration](#) [2], but it helps to have an overview when first considering the implications of establishing a program. The two most common stumbling blocks for new programs in libraries are the apparently low success rates and the behavior of students.

Success Rates

Research on what would constitute a reasonable success rate for a literacy program is scarce. This is not due to a lack of interest but rather the difficulty of acquiring the information. The goals of literacy programs are long term and the students often transfer from program to program and experience extended disruptions in their ability to attend classes at the scheduled times. Accurate measurement requires a level of continuity that is simply unavailable.

One program, however, has met with some success in this effort. The Consolidated Adult Education Performance Measures for Even Start Grantees in Texas has found a target measure that is both achievable and meaningful to attain. Roughly stated, they strive for 66% student retention and for 50% of their students to improve by one grade level each year. These success rates are for their established programs. New programs should anticipate lesser results.

It is important to understand that literacy is not easy to teach or learn. A new literacy program can, in a way, be like a new business. It takes most new businesses owners five years to see their first profit, but most get discouraged in the second or third year and give up. Similarly, a new literacy program takes about five years to mature. Success during this time can be scarce and may be unsatisfying until the third or fourth year.

Students

Literacy students do not focus on written information. This sounds obvious, but the implications are easily overlooked.

Signage for literacy students should not be just a bunch of words. Directional arrows and similarly meaningful pictures are needed. Similarly, advertise through television news stories, radio announcements, and online videos. Do not rely on written announcements and word of mouth. People commonly hide illiteracy, so their friends may not know to tell them about your program.

When literacy students are in the library, they will instinctively congregate and talk. Speech is how they communicate and behaving any other way is alien to them. They will need a place to talk to each other while they wait for each class to begin, during breaks, and after each class.

Students who are functionally illiterate may browse the DVD collection, but they only understand the titles, not the descriptions on the backs of the cases. They often read the words and feel like they are reading. But they do not understand complete sentences, only most of the individual words. If you ask them, they will say they can read, but may admit they would like to be better at it. Although they have some reading ability, they still depend on speech for communication and will discuss what they look at while browsing. This will take the form of speculating with others or asking about the content of a video when reading the cover would have answered their question. They similarly engage other people while surfing the Internet and will frequent media rich sites, like YouTube, that do not require extensive reading

comprehension.

Part I B. Key Features of a Successful Program

Cristine Smith, Wendy Wheaton, and Jacqueline Mosselson have summarized, in "[Literacy for Adults in Fragile States](#) [3]," the basic needs of literacy programs for students in unstable social conditions. These needs can be further summarized and generalized into four interrelated key features: time, materials, supervision, and relevance.

Time

Literacy is not easy and takes time. For a program to succeed, sufficient time must be set aside for both the students and the program itself. A good target for the students is three 2-hour classes per week, at a predictable place and time. Stability encourages the students, who often expect to be let down.

The program itself needs at least an initial five year commitment. This is often not possible with a single funder due to the operational rules or simple reticence. Multiple funding sources are usually necessary.

Long term evaluation is also an issue. Fast results with only a year or less of effort are scarce. Literacy takes years to develop and both the students and the funders need to accept this for the program to succeed.

Materials

Instructional materials need to be available and immediately relevant to the student's lives. The class must have instructional material on hand that directly supports each student's current learning level. The library must also have supporting material for the learning levels. In both the classroom and the library, the content must be kept up to date to address the immediate needs of the students outside the classroom.

Supervision

The teachers need training, compensation, and supervision. Initial training and regular continuing education gives the teachers confidence and promotes teacher retention. It also creates a consistency within the program that promotes student retention. Lastly, a training program is necessary for program accreditation and ensures that the educational standards required by some funding sources are met.

Teacher compensation is a significant component of teacher retention. Compensation does not have to be monetary, but it is appropriate to pay people whose duties come with significant time demands. Gestures of gratitude, public recognition, and assistance with the tedious aspects of the job are sometimes worth more than money. A good compensation strategy will stave off burnout while promoting dedication.

Supervision protects the program from getting mired in details or flying off in a misguided direction. Periodic evaluation of the students gives both the students and the funders a sense of accomplishment. There should also be short term goals, distinct from the periodic evaluations, to keep the teachers and students motivated and focused. Basic monitoring is needed to track class attendance. Basic monitoring is also used make sure the teachers are showing up and are earning their compensation. This combination of evaluations, goals, and monitoring gives the program a simple form of quality control.

Relevance

The subject mater within the classes must be applicable within the students' lives. They need reasons to use what they learn outside the classroom. This goes beyond reading to include writing and mathematics. A home finance component will promote the use of reading and mathematics at home. Similarly, writing movie reviews for the class or producing topically focused newsletters will encourage students to write outside the classroom.

Part I C. Literacy Terminology

Literacy

The National Literacy Act of 1991 defines literacy as "an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute and solve problems at a level of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential."

Functional Illiteracy

A person is functionally illiterate when that person can read individual words and understand many of them individually, but has trouble with complete sentences. Such a person cannot understand complex sentence structures and cannot relate the sentences within a paragraph. Functionally illiterate people can read simple signs and price tags, but cannot follow written instructions or calculate change. They believe they can read, but may admit they would like to be better at it.

NIFL : National Institute for Literacy

The NIFL was established by the federal government in 1991 as part of the National Literacy Act. They are tasked with monitoring literacy programs at the state and national levels. They also provide non-monetary support to literacy programs at all levels.

EFF : Equipped for the Future

EFF is the result of the NIFL's mandate to establish accountability for literacy programs. It identifies 16 skills for adult life, each of which defines a standard. These standards are designed to be easy for students to understand and for teachers/tutors to measure.

English Literacy

The U.S. Department of Education explains English Literacy with:

English Literacy programs are designed to help individuals of limited English proficiency achieve competence in the English language. Individuals of limited English proficiency are those who have a limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language; whose native language is a language other than English; or who live in a family or community where a language other than English is the dominant language.

Primary and Secondary Languages

A primary language is any language someone initially learns as a young child through environmental exposure. A bilingual 8 year old child has two primary languages. Fluency in any language obtained after age 10-12 is learned as a secondary language.

There is a noteworthy myth that learning a secondary language is more difficult than learning a primary language. Actually, it is only native sounding pronunciation that is harder to learn. Aside from pronunciation, secondary languages are actually easier to learn up to the level that the primary language is mastered. It takes us about 9 years to learn our primary language to the 4th grade level. We learn secondary languages considerably faster, but also with considerably less patience. For this reason, it is important for a secondary language learner to be literate in his primary language. A lack of literacy in his primary language severely impedes his ability to acquire literacy in a secondary language.

BEST : Basic English Skills Test

There are two BEST exams: BEST Literacy and BEST Plus. Both tests are published by the Center for Applied Linguistics.

BEST Literacy assesses how well the student can use written communication skills to operate in society. The BEST Literacy exam has instructions for administrators that explain the administration and scoring process.

BEST Plus assesses oral language proficiency. It is administered in a one-on-one session, and the administrator must be certified for the results to be valid.

ELL : English Language Learner

Someone who is learning English when English is not a primary language for the student.

ESL : English as a Second Language

The word 'Second' in this acronym is often misunderstood, which can lead to unnecessary arguing. This is 'second' in the sense of secondary, not a literal count of languages. Disputes over the value of ESL to the student usually revolve around whether a bilingual child will benefit from ESL when she already knows a second language. It is important to explain the actual meaning as soon as the objection is raised.

ESOL : English for Speakers of Other Languages

ESOL is a new name for ESL that should avoid some misunderstandings.

TESOL : Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages is an international association based in the United States. TESOL's mission is to develop and maintain professional expertise in English language teaching and learning for speakers of other languages worldwide. TESOL is sometimes used to identify people who teach ESL regardless of whether they are members of the association.

The Texas Adult Education Content Standards and Benchmarks for ESL

The Texas Adult Education Content Standards and Benchmarks for ESL were developed by the Texas Adult Education Standards Project over the course of 2004-2007. They adopted the content standards of Equipped for the Future and developed their own benchmarks based on them. These standards and benchmarks help literacy providers develop curricula based on uniformly described levels of attainment. For students, benchmarks provide clear goals to strive for and the ability to easily transfer to a new program when life circumstances require relocation.

TISESL : Texas Industry Specific English as a Second Language

TISESL is a set of ESOL curricula focusing on three industry sectors: healthcare, sales & service, and manufacturing. The materials follow the The Texas Adult Education Content Standards and Benchmarks for ESL.

Fluency

Fluency is a frequently misunderstood word. In *Exploring Reading Fluency: A Paradigmatic Overview*, Hudson, Mercer, and Lane define reading fluency as "accurate reading at a minimal rate with appropriate prosodic features and deep understanding." Fluency is not a high standard. It just means operating well enough to understand and to be understood.

Adult Literacy

The U.S. Department of Education defines Adult Literacy as:

Ensuring that adults have the literacy skills needed to survive and succeed in the 21st Century requires a comprehensive and preventive approach. First, to serve current needs, adult education programs must be research-based and accountable for results; second, to reduce the future need, accountability and high standards must be brought to schools at every grade level, including high school.

GLE : Grade Level Equivalent

A GLE, or Grade Level Equivalent, is a measure of how well a student has mastered the content of a grade level.

ABE : Adult Basic Education

A program designed to teach primary school (elementary and middle school) level material, specifically at grade level equivalent (GLE) K-8.

ASE : Adult Secondary Education

A program designed to teach secondary school (high school) level material, specifically at grade level equivalent (GLE) 9-12.

NRS : National Reporting Service

The National Reporting Service for Adult Education was designed by the U.S. Department of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy for reporting adult learner outcomes. The NRS defines 6 functioning levels for ABE/ASE and 6 functioning levels for ESOL. Each NRS functioning level combines two GLE levels beginning at 0, except the NRS High Intermediate Basic Education level which combines GLE 6-8.

TABE : the Test of Adult Basic Education

The Test of Adult Basic Education has been used in Texas for adult basic education (ABE) and adult secondary education (ASE) level assessment since 1998. It is published by CTB/McGraw Hill. The TABE is given at the beginning of a course to determine what each student needs to work on and at the end to show what the student has accomplished. It may also be given during a course to monitor progress.

The test results are given as grade level equivalents. This GLE score is not the same as the grade level at which the student is currently operating. For example, a GLE 7 score on a 5th grade test shows the student has a 7th grade understanding of 5th grade material, but does not reveal how well the student would understand 7th grade material.

GAIN : General Assessment of Instructional Needs

The General Assessment of Instructional Needs is an alternative to TABE that has been around awhile, and was added to the Texas list of approved assessments in 2009. It is published by Wonderlic and is used similarly to TABE. The results are given as NRS functioning levels and represent the student's actual level of performance.

GED : General Educational Development

Generally refers to the test verifying an education equivalent to graduation from high school. GED is often used as a synonym for ASE when the program is specifically designed to prepare the student for the GED test.

The Texas Adult Education Content Standards and Benchmarks for ABE/ASE

The Texas Adult Education Content Standards and Benchmarks for ABE/ASE were developed by the Texas Adult Education Standards Project over the course of 2004-2007. They adopted the content standards of Equipped for the Future and developed their own benchmarks based on them. These standards and benchmarks help literacy providers develop curricula based on uniformly described levels of attainment. For students, benchmarks provide clear goals to strive for and the ability to easily transfer to a new program when life circumstances require relocation.

Family Literacy

The U.S. Department of Education defines Family Literacy as:

Family literacy services as defined under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 means "services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following activities: (1) interactive literacy activities between parents and their children; (2) training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; (3) parent literacy training that leads to economic self sufficiency; and (4) an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences." The essence of family literacy is that parents are supported as the first teachers of their children. Programs work with individuals as well as with the family unit combining the four components to create a comprehensive program.

The Even Start Family Literacy Program

According to the Texas Education Agency,

The objectives of the program are to help parents become full partners in their children's education, help children to reach their full potential as learners, and provide literacy training for their parents by integrating adult education and early childhood education in a unified family-centered program. The program serves poor families with parents who are eligible for adult education and their children below eight years of age.

ILA : Interactive Literacy Activities

According to the Texas State University - San Marcos,

The Interactive Literacy Activities (ILA) component of Even Start is unique. Although most education programs for children acknowledge the value of parental involvement in their children's acquisition of literacy, few actually bring parents and children together for interactive literacy activities.

PACT : Parent and Child Together

Parent and Child Together is often a component of child care services where an opportunity is created for the parent to interact with the child during the day. Some of the newer literacy programs are integrating the concept into the curriculum by creating activities for the parent and child to complete together.

Information Literacy

The University of Idaho defines information literacy as:

Information Literacy is the ability to identify what information is needed, understand

how the information is organized, identify the best sources of information for a given need, locate those sources, evaluate the sources critically, and share that information. It is the knowledge of commonly used research techniques.

Applying the definition from the University of Idaho to the Texas Adult Education Standards and Benchmarks for ABE ASE and ESL Learners reveals that information literacy employs the skills of a Level 3 Low Intermediate Basic Education (GLE 6) and is a component of all further education (GLE 8+).

Workforce Education (Workforce Literacy)

The National Institute for Literacy defines Workforce Education as,

Workforce Education is defined as work-related learning experiences which:

- can include foundation skills, technical knowledge and computer skills;
- serve either employed or unemployed workers;
- are provided either inside or outside the workplace;
- focus on the skills and knowledge workers need to:
 - get and keep good jobs and
 - meet demands for productivity, safety, and advancement

Workplace Education (Workplace Literacy)

Workforce education for current employees in their workplace.

Part II. Program Administration

Part II A. Program Coordinator Responsibilities

The program coordinator is at the core of any adult literacy program. Under the coordinator's guidance, the program can blossom or crumble. It is essential for the coordinator to be dedicated to adult learning. There are significant advantages to the coordinator having a Masters degree in Education or Library Science, but these degrees in themselves are not what make a good coordinator. The candidate needs a history of being both an adult learner and a teacher/tutor.

The functions of a Program Coordinator:

- Lead meetings
- Schedule tutor training
- Perform intake testing on students
- Raise/seek funding
- Write/manage grants
- Act as liaison with community leaders to garner support and involvement

Part II A 1. Sample Coordinator Job Description

Adult Literacy Coordinator Job Description

Position Description:

The coordinator will implement and improve the adult literacy program. Tutors and students will need to be recruited and monitored. Materials and meeting places will need to be provided.

Qualifications:

1. High school diploma (or equivalent); prior experience in teaching or tutoring required
2. A strong desire to help others achieve success
3. A strong respect for volunteers
4. Be dependable and prompt
5. Be able to relate well to a variety of people
6. Be able to form collaborative partnerships
7. Be optimistic, patient, and adaptive
8. Have a good sense of humor

Required Education:

1. 40 hours of literacy training
2. 16 hours of continuing education each year
3. Continued participation in adult literacy associations

Areas of Responsibility:

1. Respect and maintain the confidentiality of adult learners
2. Recruit both tutors and students
3. Insure the tutors and students have appropriate training materials and meeting places
4. Encourage and support tutors by:
 1. conducting the Annual Tutor Orientation
 2. insuring tutors are well trained,
 3. keeping tutors informed of changes in the field,
 4. respecting the tutors and involving them in decisions about the program,
 5. checking that tutors and students are well matched,
 6. monitoring the progress of students and asking tutors about possible problems, and
 7. being prompt for meeting with tutors
5. Encourage and support students by:
 1. insuring tutors are well trained,
 2. keeping students informed of changes in the program,

3. checking that tutors and students are well matched,
4. monitoring the progress of students and letting them know you care,
5. making sure the accomplishments of students are recognized according to the individual's need, and
6. being prompt for meeting with students
6. Develop collaborative partnerships with other institutions
7. Conduct literacy awareness campaigns
8. Meet regularly with the advisory council
9. File all reports in a timely manor
10. Develop and implement fund raising strategies
11. Manage the program's budget
12. Evaluate the program annually

Part II B. Program Outreach

Outreach will benefit the literacy program in many ways. It provides information to the community, calls attention to the program for individuals who may not be aware of the services provided by the library, and it can contribute to funding.

- Write articles for local newspapers – or invite the local paper to cover the program and events
- Create a newsletter to keep tutors, Friends of the Library, Board members, and other interested parties informed.
- Volunteer to speak at local clubs and organizations

Part II C. Community Partnerships

Partner with organizations or individuals in the neighborhood to help provide literacy services. Some organizations, like businesses and social clubs, may provide financial support for the program. Others, like social service agencies or churches, can provide support services for the students. Be prepared to hold classes wherever the support services are provided. Also partner with other literacy agencies for mutual support and to create staff training opportunities.

Part II D. Program Funding

Funding is an integral part of any successful literacy program. There are many organizations that will provide funding for literacy programs, but it takes a committed and articulate individual or group of individuals to seek out and obtain the funding. Begin with local businesses, foundations, or individuals who have an interest in local education.

Some potential funding sources:

- Friends of the Library
- Local businesses
- Civic organizations
- Literacy organizations
- Private donors

- Grants:
 - Thinkfinity, <http://www.thinkfinity.org/> [4] (formerly the Verizon Foundation)
 - Dollar General Literacy Foundation, <http://www.dgliteracy.com/> [5]
 - The Wallace Foundation, <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/> [6]
- Sponsorships:
 - Barnes & Noble, http://www.barnesandnobleinc.com/our_company/sponsorship/sponsorship_loc... [7]

Part II E. Communication with Stakeholders

Deliver a formal annual report to the Library Board, the Literacy Advisory Board, and the library's governing body, such as the City Council or City Manager or both. Also be sure to deliver the required reports to any funding agencies on time.

In addition, give informal reports to the library's Friends group and local civic groups. When you have news to get out, tell a reporter at the local paper who regularly reports on literacy or educational issues.

Remember that stakeholders are not only the people who pay for the service. They are also the students, potential students, and people who know students. Anyone who has a reason to care about the program's success or failure is a stakeholder.

Part II F. Program Evaluation

Periodically evaluate the program to assess the effectiveness of the program and to correct any deficiencies in the program. Evaluation can also be used to bring public awareness to the successes of the program. Successes should be celebrated with the volunteers, students, and staff.

The program evaluation is composed of inputs and outputs. The program inputs include:

- Finances
 - Cost of materials
 - Cost of continuing education
 - Program contributions
- Tutors
 - Number of tutors
 - Minimum and average continuing education per tutor
 - Levels of tutor qualifications
- Contact Hours
 - Class hours per week
 - Class hours per tutor
- Record Keeping
 - Hours spent on reports
 - Timeliness of reports

The program outputs include:

- Student Retention

- Class hours per student
- Starting and ending class sizes
- Returning students
- Student Performance
 - Level gains
 - Life goal attainments
 - Program completions
- Tutor Retention
 - Returning tutors

Part II G. Policy and Procedure Manuals

A librarian should consider creating Policy and Procedure Manuals for the literacy program. The policy manual will give the program consistent goals from year to year. The policy manual will also ensure that the program stays within the goals outlined in the library's policy manual. Like the library's policy manual, the literacy program's policy manual should rarely need revision.

Typical sections for a policy manual are:

- Mission
- About us
- Board of Directors or Advisory Group
- Services offered
- Privacy policy

The procedure manual provides standards, procedures, and continuity of performance. It should contain the information that a standing coordinator will need to keep the program running if the coordinator goes on vacation or medical leave or changes jobs. It should be reviewed and updated annually. Typical sections for a procedure manual are:

- Volunteer guidelines
- Resources
- Contacts
- Sponsors and Partnerships
- Workshops
- Tutor tips
- Long range planning
- Evaluation checklist
- Copies of forms

Part II H. The Advisory Board

Develop an Advisory Board to assist with planning of the program. They should represent multiple programs and community interests. The board can conduct community surveys when deemed necessary. Volunteer administrative positions can be added to the Advisory Board to assist the Program Coordinator with fundraising, newsletters, writing newspaper articles, and hosting tutor training and other program meetings.

Part III. Tutors and Staff

Part III A. Recruiting Tutors and Staff

Literacy programs thrive on volunteers. It is vital to establish a firm foundation at the beginning of a literacy program and then increase your volunteer base as the program grows. Tutors come from many walks of life with different backgrounds and experiences. This diversity is one of the strengths of the literacy program.

There are many ways to find tutors, including:

- Friends of the Library
- Place article in paper asking for interested people
- Local schools – school teachers
- Retired school teacher organization
- Colleges
- Businesses in the community
- Board members and their contacts
- Friends and relatives
- Local clubs and churches
- Residents of the neighborhood
- Senior citizen groups
- Library users

This is not an exhaustive list, and each community may have some unique organizations to draw from.

Libraries should establish requirements for tutors, which may be developed by the library, or if the library is working in concert with an established literacy agency then their requirements should mirror those of the agency.

Part III A 1. Sample Tutor Job Description

Adult Literacy Tutor Volunteer Job Description

Position Description:

The volunteer will tutor 1 to 3 individual adults in reading and writing using the methods and strategies presented during the tutor training. Since most of the adult learners are functional (not total) illiterates, improving their skills will make functioning in our society easier and will help them realize self-identified goals. The library will provide materials and a place for the tutor and adult learner to meet. The tutor will arrange a time with the adult learner that is convenient for both.

Qualifications:

1. High school diploma (or equivalent); no prior experience in teaching required
2. Interest and/or experience in working with adult learners
3. Ability to be flexible and patient with adult learner
4. Desire to learn by teaching
5. Be dependable and prompt
6. Be able to relate well to a variety of people
7. Be optimistic, patient, and adaptive
8. Have a good sense of humor

Required Training:

1. Annual Tutor Orientation
2. 36 hours of library-provided literacy tutor training
3. 8 hours of library-provided continuing education each year after the first

Areas of Responsibility:

1. Contact adult learner within one week of assignment and arrange for a mutually convenient tutoring schedule
2. Respect and maintain the confidentiality of adult learners
3. Encourage and support the adult learner by:
 1. maintaining and encouraging a positive attitude about learning,
 2. respecting the learner and involving him or her in decisions about the learning process,
 3. supporting the learner's efforts, and
 4. being prompt for tutoring sessions
4. Follow and support the adult learner's self-identified goals
5. Design the lessons based on the needs and interests of the adult learner
6. Be prepared for each lesson
7. Meet regularly with the adult learner
8. Report hours (tutoring, preparation and "other") and progress monthly to the program coordinator
9. Report any change in learner's or tutor's contact information
10. Report promptly if the tutor and learner stop working together

Time Commitment:

1. Recommended: meet with adult learner 2 times each week for 1 to 1-1/2 hours each time
2. With preparation time and travel/meetings/etc. commitment is about 5 hours per week
3. Tutor a student (or students) for a minimum of six months

Benefits:

1. Increased understanding and appreciation of different values, cultures, and lifestyles
2. Increased skill in creative problem solving
3. Sense of belonging to a group focused on a common goal
4. Sense of accomplishment

Part III A 2. Sample Staff Job Description

Adult Literacy Staff Volunteer Job Description

Position Description:

The volunteer will assist the Adult Literacy Program Coordinator in record keeping and reporting.

Qualifications:

1. High school diploma (or equivalent)
2. Interest and/or experience in working with adult learners
3. Be dependable and prompt
4. Be able to relate well to a variety of people
5. Be optimistic, patient, and adaptive
6. Have a good sense of humor

Required Training:

1. 16 hours of library-provided literacy program administration training
2. 8 hours of library-provided continuing education each year after the first

Areas of Responsibility:

1. Contact the adult learners every 6 months to check that everything is going well
2. Respect and maintain the confidentiality of the adult learner
3. Ask the tutors every month whether everything is going well
4. Encourage and support the tutors by:
 1. maintaining and encouraging a positive attitude about learning,
 2. respecting the tutors and their decisions about the learning process,
 3. making sure the project coordinator knows about anyone who is experiencing trouble, and
 4. making time for tutors who need to talk
5. Record the monthly reports from the tutors
6. Record any change in a learner's or tutor's contact information
7. Report promptly if a tutor or learner cannot be contacted
8. Help the program coordinator prepare quarterly and annual reports
9. Meet regularly with the program coordinator

Time Commitment:

1. Commitment is about 32 hours per month
2. A minimum commitment of six months is required

Benefits:

1. Increased understanding and appreciation of different values, cultures, and lifestyles
2. Increased skill in creative problem solving
3. Sense of belonging to a group focused on a common goal
4. Sense of accomplishment

Part III B. Training Tutors

Benefits of Training

Training for tutors is crucial to a literacy program. No matter what the background or educational level of the tutor, literacy programs require specific training be provided. Usually a minimum of 16 hours training is required and must be provided by certified literacy trainers who gear the training to the adult population and tailor the training to meet the needs of the tutors. 32 hours as a 4 day workshop yealds better results, but this can be difficult to arrange.

Training for volunteer tutors includes all or some of the following topics depending on the focus of the literacy program:

- Introduction to the problem of literacy and orientation to the literacy efforts at the local, state, and national levels.
- Literacy volunteers rights, responsibilities, and role in the literacy program.
- Literacy student/client needs, possible goals, uniqueness. Methods to establish and build rapport; goal setting, learning barriers, and self-esteem building.
- Assessment techniques – ways to detect learning difficulties, possible hearing or vision difficulties.
- Frameworks and standards –ways to help students transition across programs and prepare for certifications.
- Instructional techniques – how to use the training manuals at all levels: beginning, middle and advanced.
- Materials and resources – introduction to materials available to tutors. How to incorporate use of newspapers, driving manuals, or other “real world” items in the training.

Continuing education through refresher courses and professional development opportunities are also important to maintaining and encouraging literacy tutors after the initial training. Find or create opportunities to provide special training meetings with the volunteers to build a cohesive, committed group.

Sources for Training

- The North Region GREAT (Getting Results Educating Adults in Texas) Center, <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/projectGreat/north/> [8], provides training throughout the year. The New Teacher Academy in August is particularly noteworthy.
- The Tarrant Literacy Coalition, <http://tarrantliteracycoalition.org/> [9], provides continuing education for tutors.
- Texas LEARNS, <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/texaslearns/> [1], does not provide training directly, but does maintain a calendar of state-wide training opportunities.

- Proliteracy, <http://www.proliteracy.org/> [10], offers extensive online instruction for programs who become members. They also provide free online classes through the Thinkfinity Literacy Network, <http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/TLN/> [11].
- Literacy Texas, <http://www.literacytexas.org/> [12], provides training for program directors and coordinators as well as tutors.
- The National Institute for Literacy, <http://www.nifl.gov/pd/> [13], offers educational material for tutors.

Part III C. Supporting Tutors

Tutors are at their best when they are not isolated. Encourage them to join literacy associations and attend meetings. These associations often become a source of continuing education in addition to networking and support.

Another way to keep tutors out of isolation is to listen to them. Ask them how they are doing and pay attention to their concerns. If several tutors express the same problem, examine it. Resolving problems will help them stay effective. Keeping the tutors supplied with needed resources is a part of this effort. If you can address problems before they ask, that is even better.

A third way to engage tutors is to recognize their efforts. This can be done with staff-only thank you gatherings, features in local newspapers or newsletters, class parties for the tutors and students, and other forms of public and private recognition.

Part IV. Finding and Keeping Students

Part IV A. Recruiting Students

Although statistics will show the need for literacy programs, recruiting students can sometimes be quite challenging. The ways to reach literacy students differs greatly depending on the student's literacy skills. Students can be divided into three basic groups: those who are illiterate or barely literate, those who are literate in another language, and those who are literate but would like to improve.

Below Basic Students

The first group, students at basic or below basic levels, do not respond well to written advertisements. At the most obvious level, they will have trouble reading the advertisement. They are also likely to be hiding their difficulty so that even their friends will not know to tell them about the posted advertisements. People at this level are best reached through radio or television broadcasts, public meetings, and other verbal announcements.

These levels of illiteracy and functional illiteracy also come with feelings of shame and fear. They sometimes feel like they will not be able to learn or are cowed by memories of past difficulty. Feelings of lost opportunity and fear that it is too late to learn something new are also common. These students hear the word 'illiterate' as 'stupid' and are turned away by it. It is no wonder that people do not show up for "Stupid People" classes.

These adults can have difficulty believing in long range goals and will respond better to task oriented learning. Classes that teach "Better Reading" attract people who would otherwise stay away. Treating people with respect and consideration is the key. For some people, asking for help with reading will be the most difficult thing they do in their lives.

Once someone asks for help, it is very important the process is thoroughly explained and they are given the assistance needed to sign up for the program. This may include helping to fill out the application. Don't write lengthy notes explaining the program. It is usually best to give a student a card with the phone number and a name of the person to contact. Additionally, read the card to the student as you hand it over. Most non-readers are masters at memorization. This is how they have "fooled" others for most of their lives.

Keep in mind that students may be slow to come forward due to embarrassment or intimidation. The Library can be a very intimidating place for an individual who cannot read. Have patience! Also, bear in mind that some potential students will sabotage themselves several times before they actually commit to the program, so allow for that.

There is a special subgroup of below basic literacy students to consider, those who do not speak English. Do not expect these students to jump into an English literacy program. Learning literacy in a new language is so difficult, it is actually faster to learn literacy in a native language first and then become literate in English as part of a comprehensive ESOL program. If at all possible, it is best to develop primary language literacy programs for the most common foreign languages as a stepping stone to English literacy. Reaching these students is a challenge, but the process is essentially the same as for English language below basic students. The main difference is the communication must be in the target language. Communities large enough to support a non-English literacy class will usually have local organizations and radio stations in that language where help may be found. One way to boost class sizes is to open non-English literacy classes to English speakers who want to learn the language.

Some ways to find below basic students include:

- Giving presentations at
 - Churches
 - Special Interest Groups
 - Social Clubs
 - Civic Events
 - Rotary Clubs
 - Kiwanis Clubs
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - City Council Meetings
 - Other local organizations
- Asking local radio or tv stations to do community service interviews

Literate ESOL Students

Literate ESOL students respond well to written advertisements in their own language. They typically want English literacy explicitly and respond to direct advertisement for the service.

Some ways to find literate ESOL students include:

- Giving presentations at

- Churches
- Special Interest Groups
- Social Clubs
- Civic Events
- Rotary Clubs
- Kiwanis Clubs
- Chamber of Commerce
- City Council Meetings
- Other local organizations
- Asking local radio or tv stations to do community service interviews
- Placing posters and/or fliers at:
 - Libraries
 - Community colleges
 - Local businesses
 - Schools
 - Local social services organizations
 - Churches – request to be mentioned in the church bulletin
 - Texas Workforce offices
 - Local grocery stores
 - Chamber of Commerce office
 - Neighborhood events
- Placing articles and advertisements in local newspapers

Literate English Students

Literate students who just want to improve respond well to activities that engage literacy rather than focusing on it directly. This includes GED classes, book clubs, and writing competitions.

Some ways to find literate students include:

- Giving presentations at:
 - Churches
 - Special Interest Groups
 - Social Clubs
 - Civic Events
 - Rotary Clubs
 - Kiwanis Clubs
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - City Council Meetings
 - Other local organizations
- Asking local radio or tv stations to do community service interviews
- Placing posters and/or fliers at:
 - Libraries
 - Community colleges
 - Local businesses
 - Schools
 - Local social services organizations
 - Churches – request to be mentioned in the church bulletin
 - Texas Workforce offices
 - Local grocery stores

- Chamber of Commerce office
- Neighborhood events
- Placing articles and advertisements in local newspapers

Part IV B. Matching Students and Tutors

Care must be taken when matching students with tutors. A successful match can produce wonderful results, but if there is conflict or if either person is uncomfortable then the results may be damaging to both persons. Reassignment is the best resolution so that each person will have the opportunity for success.

Matching Tutors and Students:

- Use information provided by both tutors and students to determine the best match.
- Discuss the intake evaluation results with the tutor so they know where to start and how to progress with the student.
- Arrange the first meeting between tutor and student and be present to introduce the two.
- Tutor and student should then determine meeting dates, times, and place.

Part IV C. Retaining Students

Students need to remain in the program long enough to benefit, but encounter many barriers. They encounter family or personal problems, often the same ones that interfered with literacy in the first place. They may be impatient or defeatist and give up too quickly. This is where collaborative partnerships are the most important. Working with social services can give students the extra boost they need to become successful. Sometimes, the classes must be held at the location of the service instead of at the library.

There are also some steps that can be taken within the program to keep students involved.

- The program must be predictable and dependable.
- Regular assessments can prove improvements when they feel absent.
- Tutors should work with the students to keep goals attainable with effort in the near future.
- The tutors and program coordinator should recognize student achievements.
- The students need to have a say in what will keep them going.
- Student retention must be part of the tutors' training.
- When possible, engaging a whole family is more effective than engaging just part of a family.
- Students need to learn things that are relevant to daily life.

Without support, dropout rates of 75% are common. But with support, this rate can be reduced to 50% or less.

Part IV D. Record Keeping

What to Keep

As with any successful program, records must be maintained. Individual records help students continue after interruptions and maintain continuity. Statistical information is necessary for program certification and funding endeavors.

- Applications – basic applications for students and for volunteers provide contact information, background about the individuals, and additional information which may be used to match the tutors with students.
- Attendance and instructional hours – records of attendance should be maintained. This includes time spent tutoring as well as instructional time in training or skill development.
- Pre and Post Tests – Copies of all tests given should be kept in the students file. Individual tests demonstrate improvement to the student. The combined results demonstrate improvement to the other stakeholders.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a critical factor of this program. Records should be maintained in a secure location and handled carefully. Although a lawyer's opinion is advisable about whether a particular literacy programs student records are included in state or federal student confidentiality laws, literacy programs as a library service do appear to be included in the library confidentiality laws for Texas. Under Texas law, any record maintained for the operation of the library is confidential and must be handled accordingly.

Retention

A Schedule of Retention needs to be included in the policy manual. Each type of record is listed in the schedule, along with how long that record is kept. These records must be kept for the specified duration and then destroyed, not just thrown away but physically destroyed. The details of the schedule vary depending on the needs of the program and applicable legal requirements.

Source URL (retrieved on 10/13/2013 - 13:50): <http://libraries4literacy.org/content/literacy-program-toolkit-3rd-edition>

Links:

- [1] <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/texaslearns/>
- [2] <http://libraries4literacy.org/?q=node/145>
- [3] <http://www.equip123.net/jeid/articles/8/Smith-LiteracyforAdultsinFragileStates.pdf>
- [4] <http://www.thinkfinity.org/>
- [5] <http://www.dgliteracy.com/>
- [6] <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/>
- [7] http://www.barnesandnobleinc.com/our_company/sponsorship/sponsorship_local/donations_local.html
- [8] <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/projectGreat/north/>
- [9] <http://tarrantliteracycoalition.org/>
- [10] <http://www.proliteracy.org/>
- [11] <http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/TLN/>
- [12] <http://www.literacytexas.org/>
- [13] <http://www.nifl.gov/pd/>