



**Adult Basic Skills**

**Volunteer Literacy Tutor**

**HANDBOOK**



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### **CCC Volunteer Literacy Program Contacts**

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#### **Website:**

<http://www.clatsopcc.edu/academics/academic-departments/foundation-skills-institute/volunteer-literacy>

## **Tutor Coordinator Role and Responsibilities**

The coordinator's role is to recruit, train and assist tutors. The coordinator also tests and assesses students, and strives to coordinate the best match between tutor and student. The coordinator provides appropriate instruction materials and on-going support to both students and tutors. The coordinator also refers students to appropriate agencies when issues arise that are outside the scope of tutoring.

## **Volunteer Tutor Role and Qualifications**

### **Purpose:**

- Help an adult, age 16 and older, improve his/her basic literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening, math and/or computer skills)
- Help the student use newly-learned skills to meet identified goals

### **Training:**

- Interview with and receive an overview of the tutor program with the coordinator
- Participate in at least two in-service training sessions each year
- It is recommended that the tutor ask the coordinator for advice/additional training when needed

### **Qualifications:**

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Be able to speak and understand English well enough to communicate with ease
- Read at a 12<sup>th</sup> grade level or above
- Be dependable, prompt, interested in helping others, sensitive to different backgrounds and cultures, patient and optimistic
- Maintain rules of confidentiality
- Commit to the program for at least 6 months to allow for the tutor/student team to build trust and make progress

### **Hours:**

Ideally, the tutor and student should try to meet twice a week for 1- 1.5 hours each time. Many tutors meet once a week for 1-2 hours each. We expect volunteers to take vacations and breaks. The coordinator realizes volunteers are busy and tries to minimize the time spent preparing for the study session.



### **Who is a Volunteer Literacy Tutor?**

You don't need a teaching background to be a successful literacy tutor, or speak a foreign language to help a non-English-speaking person learn English. You will need, however, to commit time and energy to the student and program trainings. You believe that good literacy skills improve lives, break down isolation and help people make better decisions.

### **A successful literacy tutor has the following characteristics:**

- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Ability to encourage and inspire trust
- Awareness of cultural differences
- Respect for the student as an adult peer
- Ability to deal with ambiguity
- An understanding that there is no one way to learn or that all students learn alike
- Willingness to abandon traditional methods of teaching
- Sense of humor
- Patience and flexibility
- Enthusiasm for learning
- Ability to keep confidentiality
- A basic understanding of the barriers to literacy and the complexity of our students' lives and schedules

### **Is the role of literacy tutor right for you?**

Many times you will see measurable success with your student, but sometimes the barriers that our students face prevent them from reaching their goals. The tutor must understand that his/her expectations/experience with a traditional instructional path may not be appropriate for the adult literacy student. Sometimes your role as a tutor is more coach than instructor, offering encouragement and hope that a student can make progress. Sometimes the tutor may not see the results of his/her work; "the true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit." Barriers to literacy and techniques to overcome them are discussed in tutor trainings. Benefits accrue to volunteer tutors:

- Opportunities to learn from a peer
- Making a difference in someone's life that will have an impact on their and their children's future
- Gaining professional experience and continuing education opportunities
- Meeting and working with friendly, action-minded people; belonging to a group of dedicated volunteers
- Personal growth
- Cultural exchange
- Satisfaction gained from helping others
- Work experience and a reference for your résumé

## **Tutor Policies**

- Maintain confidentiality. Any discussion pertaining to a student **should be held privately** only with the CCC literacy coordinator.
- Tutor should report any concerns to the coordinator.
- If your student has personal problems or needs a referral for other services, notify the literacy coordinator rather than getting involved yourself.
- Notify your student or the coordinator at least an hour in advance if you need to cancel class.
- Do not bring children or guests to the tutoring sessions. Students have been given the same instructions; however, sometimes there is an exception when both tutor and student agree.
- CCC does not endorse any political or religious group. Proselytizing or endorsing political candidates is prohibited.

## **Tutor Dismissal Policy**

A tutor may be dismissed for misrepresenting his/her qualifications and/or not completing training, not complying with stated responsibilities, or disregarding tutor policies.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Clatsop Community College is an affirmative action, equal opportunity institution.

## **Tutor Guidelines**

- Complete tutor training workshops.
- The literacy coordinator will assign you a student, set up your first meeting and attend at least the first session with you.
- The coordinator will meet with you and your student periodically to assess progress, help overcome difficulties and give advice on plans for further tutoring.
- Exchange phone numbers/email with your student as soon as you feel comfortable doing so.
- Encourage your student to participate in other CCC Adult Basic Education classes (ESL, GED)
- If your student doesn't speak English, the coordinator will relay messages for you.



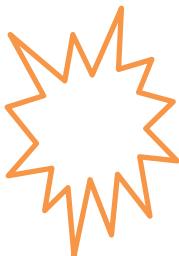
## Paperwork

*This is undoubtedly one of the least exciting tasks that tutors experience, but one of the most important. Our funding is contingent on the collection of certain documentation and assessments.*

### The tutors are responsible for:

1. **obtaining a student signature** every time you meet. Duration of the lesson is also recorded. Turn in sheets to the coordinator at the end of every term.
2. **signing and turning in a Volunteer Services Agreement** form every year. Completion of this form ensures that the volunteer is covered by the college for injuries occurring while volunteering.

In order to receive continued funding, federal regulations require that each student obtain a minimum of **40 hours of instruction per year** and take a pre- and post-assessment test. The coordinator administers the pre-assessment prior to meeting the tutor; however, the post-test is often difficult to obtain. The tutor can help by alerting the coordinator to changes in the student's schedule, address or other circumstances that may preclude administering the follow-up assessment, which is usually given in April or May. If your student has earned 40 hours of instruction prior to these months, alert the coordinator and a post-test will be administered as soon as possible.



**New rules** now allow us to **count homework hours** performed by the student, assigned by the tutor and recorded by the student and tutor. Please help us track of these hours. Worksheets to do so are available in the literacy office.

### How do we define literacy today?

The **Oregon State Board of Education** has adopted an adult literacy definition that states:

*"Literacy is defined as the combination of foundation skills (reading, math, writing, and communication) and workplace skills (teamwork, resource allocation, decision-making, problem solving, critical thinking, personal self-management, and technology competence) necessary to adequately function as workers, family members, and members of the community in an information society."*

*It's not just reading, writing and arithmetic anymore . . .*

### **"How Literacy Programs Help Produce Positive Outcomes"**

*Excerpted from ProLiteracy America @ [www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org)*

- There is a direct correlation between parents' educational levels and how a child performs in school.
- The single greatest predictor of a child's literacy is his/her mother's literacy level.
- The best way to ensure that children find success in school is to address the literacy needs of the adults in their lives.
- Linguistically-rich home environments contribute powerfully to the early development of a child's literacy skills. Adult and family literacy programs help to create these "linguistically-rich" environments.

### **When parents engage in adult literacy programs:**

- They pass on the idea to their children that education is valuable.
- They become more involved in the schools.
- They become more involved in the children's learning in the home.
- There are long-term gains for their children- fewer nutrition and health problems, lower drop-out rates, fewer teen pregnancies, less joblessness, and less social alienation.
- There is a direct correlation between improved literacy skills and child survival rates.
- More literate mothers/fathers become better advocates for their families.

***Adult education programs aren't just remedial instruction to fix adult problems; They "prevent [future] educational problems in children."***

***Of the 781 million adults over the age of 15 estimated to be illiterate, 496 million were women, the World's Women 2015 report found. Women made up more than half the illiterate population in all regions of the world.***

***Literacy programs make a profound impact on the lives of our most vulnerable citizens, and poor, undereducated women and their children are the prime beneficiaries.***



**"Making It Visible: An Exploration of How Adult Education Participation Informs Parent Involvement in Education for School-Age Children"** by Catherine Shiffman  
*Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 3, Fall 2011, pp. 161-170

While improving literacy/language skills to help their children with homework is an important reason our students come to us, there are other benefits derived from participating in adult education classes. Parents also have access to "conditions and experiences that provide parents with access to resources . . . and supports from instructors and fellow students."

- Parents become more effective advocates for their children.
- They communicate better with school staff and teachers.
- They participate more as volunteers in the classroom and extracurricular activities.
- Adult students increase their "social capital," connections that "facilitate information channels, social norms, reciprocity and trust." Remember that individuals with poor literacy skills are often isolated from the larger society.
- Parents develop a belief that they can have a positive impact on their children's educational success. They set higher goals and commit to achieving them.
- In adult education classes, parents learn how the educational system works, and what the norms and expectations are.
- They make new friends and allies and garner support and knowledge from them.



Tutors need to aware of and prepare to alleviate/respond to the following issues.

- Adult literacy students tend to be threatened by formal tests. In our program students are “assessed,” which means they are given assessments that indicate a level of expertise. There are no pass/fail tests in the program, only indications of the basic levels they begin at and if they have progressed or not.
- Our students are often apprehensive and nervous, fearing they will be considered stupid.
- Adult students resent being treated as children and learn best in a peer relationship.
- Many of our students have had unpleasant experiences with the education system.
- Many of our immigrant students have had little formal instruction in their home countries and lack knowledge of learning conventions; e.g. how to use a dictionary.
- Adult learners often have chaotic work/family schedules, have to respond to pressing childcare/budgetary concerns and sometimes lack reliable transportation.
- Adult learners may have undiagnosed learning disabilities.
- Our students often make slow progress due to frequent disruptions and little time to study.
- Monitor your expectations about what progress a student should be making; our students tend not to make progress in a traditional trajectory.
- Our students often have other issues in their lives that a literacy program cannot address. Please let the coordinator know if these problems are detracting from the realistic goals of literacy improvement.

### **Adult Learners are Different from Child Learners**

- Adults are more realistic and have learning needs that are concrete and immediate.
- Adults have more life experience that can be utilized to aid literacy instruction.
- Adults enjoy having their talents and experience made use of in a teaching situation.
- Adults are not a captive audience.
- Adults learn best when treated as a peer.
- Adult groups of learners are more heterogeneous than youth groups.
- Adults aged 50+ can learn as well as youths.
- Adults are often fatigued when they attend class.
- Adults attend classes with a mixed set of motives.

### **Characteristics of Adult Learners:**

#### **Adults are autonomous and self-directed.**

Adult learners need to be free to direct themselves. Tutors must actively involve adult students in the learning process. It is necessary to get learners' perspectives about what topics to cover and let them work on projects that reflect their interests. It is important that the learner understand how the tutoring sessions will help them reach their goals.

#### **Adults have accumulated a foundation of life experiences.**

Successful tutors tap into the knowledge and experience that adult learners bring to the program, just as successful readers connect background knowledge to the new material they are reading. English language learners progress more quickly if we teach and tie new vocabulary to past and present experiences.

#### **Adults are goal-oriented.**

Learners enroll in literacy programs for a reason. They appreciate an organized program that has clearly defined elements. Identifying goals should be one of the first things established between student and teacher. It is important to remember that goals can and do change.

#### **Adult learners are focused on relevant and practical tasks.**

Learning must be applicable to work and other responsibilities. Adults have busy schedules and limited study time.

#### **Adults need to be shown respect.**

Adults should be treated as equals in experience and knowledge.

## **20 TIPS for EFFECTIVE TUTORS**



- Relax and be yourself.
- Establish rapport.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Alleviate student embarrassment and shyness.
- Have patience.
- Bring a positive attitude to the session.
- Share your knowledge and experience.
- Be on time.
- Be creative and imaginative; vary lesson activities.
- Be flexible; have a Plan B. (And maybe Plan C!)
- Avoid a patronizing tone and attitude.
- Spend more time listening, rather than talking. Tutoring is almost never a lecture course.
- Celebrate big and small skill gains.
- Learn from your student.
- Allow learners to discover the answer on their own.
- Keep accurate records.
- Make corrections gently and don't belabor any one point.
- Remember that you don't have to have all the answers.
- Have fun!
- When all else fails, call the coordinator!

## **TIPS WHEN WORKING WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

**LISTEN.** Remember that your student, rather than you, needs to practice speaking. Your job is to extract language from the student, not to lecture.

**PERSONALIZE.** Talk about topics that relate to the student's personal world and background. Find common ground.

**KEEP IT LIGHT.** Learning a new language is hard and tiring work, especially after finishing your "day" job. Remember that we learned our native language through family interactions.

**ENCOURAGE.** You'll find that your student doesn't like to make errors; however, learning a new language is nothing if not a process of making mistakes. It is a daunting and frustrating procedure and your student needs every bit of encouragement s/he can get.

**REVIEW.** Once, twice, thrice . . . it's never enough when learning a new language! Make sure your student has plenty of opportunity to practice. Keep a record of what you and your student have covered so you can start each lesson with a short review. Think of ways to present the lesson in a different format. It's preferable to do a little bit well, rather than a lot superficially.

**DON'T OVERCORRECT.** Don't belabor any one point or pronunciation topic. Sometimes we never learn how to say it like a "native." Communication and comprehension are what's important.

