



Tutor Training Handbook

Hello Tutors!

I'm always amazed and humbled by the quantity and quality of people that come to Kern Literacy Council Volunteer Tutor Trainings. Without a doubt, our volunteer tutors are extraordinary and are the foundation of Kern Literacy Council. We are grateful, to say the least, for your service to our students and we look forward to working with you this year and in the years to come.

Kern Literacy Council has worked hard since 1966 to teach literacy skills to struggling readers in the Kern County area. We believe in acknowledging and advocating for the significant role adults play in fostering their children's basic literacy skills and attitudes toward learning. Kern Literacy Council provides a crucial service that benefits the entire community.

I am so THANKFUL for YOU! I'm thankful for the generosity of hundreds of people, like YOU, who provide support at all levels to keep Kern Literacy Council open and serving those who need us.

Those who are interested in donating to Kern Literacy Council can do so at www.kernliteracy.org or send a donation by mail to:

Kern Literacy Council
331 18th St.
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Thank you again! YOU are the champions of Literacy in our community.

Sincerely,
Ian J. Anderson
Executive Director

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ADULT LEARNERS

Characteristics, Needs & Goals of Adult Learners

INTRODUCTION

A. Pro Literacy™ Worldwide

(www.proliteracy.org)

The Beginning

Literacy pioneer and missionary Frank C. Laubach discovered that literacy empowers people to improve and enrich their lives. His work began in the Philippines in 1930 and continued for more than 40 years, touching illiterate and impoverished peoples in 103 countries. Literacy materials developed in the local languages used charts with picture, word, and sound association. They also incorporated vocabulary development and comprehension exercises. Limited resources were overcome as literate adults accepted Dr. Laubach's "Each One Teach One" challenge and took on the responsibility of teaching an illiterate friend or neighbor.

An International Organization

In 1955, Dr. Laubach founded Laubach Literacy International (LLI), which later amalgamated with Literacy Volunteers of America in 2001 to form Pro Literacy Worldwide. Pro Literacy Worldwide specializes in the organization, development and management of educational resources, and the development and delivery of training programs for adult literacy.

Pro Literacy's International programs operate in more than 54 countries. These programs combine literacy with economic self-reliance, health, education, peace, human rights, and environmental sustainability projects.

New Readers Press, the U.S. publishing division of Pro Literacy Worldwide, distributes more than 250 English language literacy curriculum publications. It provides many of the materials used by tutors, including the *Laubach Way to Reading* series for basic literacy students, and the *Laubach Way to English* series for students who are learning to speak and read the English language.

Pro Literacy America

Formerly known as Laubach Literacy Action, Pro Literacy America is the U.S. arm of Pro Literacy Worldwide and is devoted to providing literacy services throughout the United States. Pro Literacy America has 1450 affiliates with a presence in all 50 states. It provides accreditation, advocacy, and technical assistance as well as program and professional development services. Affiliates also benefit from an annual conference and regional training.

B. United States Facts on Literacy (From Pro Literacy)

The Numbers Don't Lie

Low literacy is a global crisis that affects all of us. That is why it is so important to understand the issues and confront the facts head on. Only then we stand together to fight for change.

U.S. Facts:

Adults Over 16

Corrections Health

Workforce

English for Speakers of Other Languages

SOURCES: THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF ADULT LITERACY (DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION); THE BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS SPECIAL REPORT; BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS (DEPARTMENT OF LABOR); THE UNITED NATIONS; USAID 2012; UNESCO.

C. The Literacy Problem

According to the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, the United States is falling dramatically behind other countries in literacy skills. One in four American adults cannot read above a 5th grade level. Research shows that the greatest single indicator of a child's future success is the literacy level of his or her parents.

Unbelievably, **36 million adults in America cannot read or write at the most basic level.** A recent study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development concluded that the United States was "very weak in literacy." The group surveyed 24 countries and compared levels of adults' literacy. The results were alarming, revealing this challenge – a larger proportion of American adults have poor literacy skills when compared to other countries.

Illiteracy is one of America's biggest challenges. Low literacy skills are directly linked to greater inequality, higher unemployment, less earned income, and poor health. Sadly, the education and social mobility gap in America continues to grow. This growing education inequality creates less financial opportunity and social mobility for low-income families, resulting in a stagnant U.S. economy. **Investing in literacy is critical to the success of our families and nation.**

With 36 million adults in the U.S. who are illiterate or possess the lowest literacy skills, access to quality literacy programs is essential to achieve an America where every person can read and achieve.

The Literacy Gap in California

Total population 18 and over: 2,206,988

17% have less than a high school diploma
7% are enrolled in literacy programs

California enrollment in literacy programs by age:

16-18: **2,945**
19-24: **5,686**
25-44: **9,504**
45-59: **3,520**
60 and older: **807**

Percent of children under age 6 whose parents have less than a high school diploma and are economically poor: **61%**

Population of 4th grade students with a below proficient reading level: **68%**

Children of parents with low literacy skills can be 18 months behind by the start of kindergarten.

If a child is not reading proficiently by 3rd grade, they are **four times** more likely to drop out of high school.

D. Causes & Effects of Low Literacy

Causes of Low Literacy

- ❑ Illness or absence from school during a critical period in the early years. Skills missed were never made up and compounded later problems.
- ❑ The high mobility of many families and constant change of school for the children.
- ❑ Poor quality of schools or instructors, or inadequate materials.
- ❑ Physical or mental disabilities (poor eyesight, dyslexia, and brain damage.)
- ❑ Maturation lag – lack of reading readiness.
- ❑ Foreign birth – lack of English education.
- ❑ Lack of personal encouragement to read.
- ❑ Heavy reliance on television and visual media.
- ❑ Lack of personal motivation. Education may have seemed irrelevant to personal goals.
- ❑ Generational poverty. Education is important, but a dream, not a realistic goal.

Effects of Low Literacy on Individual & Society

- ❑ Development of coping skills (memory, dependence on others, cover-up.)
- ❑ Lack of self-esteem or self-worth.
- ❑ Tremendous frustration and anger, which may result in criminal behavior. The average reading level of people in correctional facilities is about 3rd grade.
- ❑ Increased unemployment and the need for public assistance.
- ❑ Loss of people's talents in the workforce and in the community.
- ❑ Accidents and injury on the job, resulting in increased costs to individuals, businesses, and society.
- ❑ High number of school dropouts.
- ❑ Inability of parents to reinforce the skills their children are learning in school. This creates a cycle of illiteracy.
- ❑ Loss of human rights, (the right to vote, the right of informed consent.)
- ❑ Poor health and resulting in high health care costs.
- ❑ Is a factor that supports individuals living in poverty to stay in poverty. Education is one of the few ways to really help an individual break the generational cycle of poverty

Living in Poverty (*Adapted from Bridges out of Poverty*)

There are two kinds of poverty: situational and generational.

- ❑ Situational means the individual has not always lived in poverty and it is only because of certain circumstances (layoff from long-term job with no future job prospects or a health issue) that they find themselves in this situation.
- ❑ Generational poverty is the situation we deal with most in tutoring, defined by *Bridges out of Poverty* as having lived in poverty for at least 2 generations.

E. Your Role as a Tutor

Role: To help adults acquire basic reading, writing, English speaking, and/or other life skills needed to function successfully in society. This is usually done through a one-on-one or small group relationship that emphasizes personal attention.

Qualifications: A tutor should be dependable, interested in people, sensitive to others, a good listener, literate (professional training not necessary), flexible, patient, optimistic, friendly, non-judgmental, open-minded, and have a sense of humor.

Benefits:

1. Personal satisfaction in helping someone grow intellectually and emotionally.
2. Deepened understanding of values and lifestyles different from your own.
3. Broadened imagination for creative problem-solving.

Basic Training: Minimum four-hour adult basic literacy tutor training workshop (willingness to keep learning is a plus).

Location of Lessons: Any safe, neutral public location such as the Kern Literacy Council office, a library, or a church may be used. Meeting in private homes is not advised.

Hours: Once or twice weekly, one to two hours for each lesson, plus preparation time, which varies depending on the student.

Duration: A minimum one-year commitment is preferred, but not strictly required.

Responsibilities:

- ☒ After being matched, contact the student to arrange the time and place of lessons.
- ☒ Notify the Program Director when the first tutoring session has taken place.
- ☒ Meet regularly and punctually with the student.
- ☒ Maintain the student's confidentiality.
- ☒ Provide encouragement and support, helping the student to develop a positive self-image and an enthusiasm for learning.
- ☒ Set goals *with* the student and frequently evaluate progress towards them.
- ☒ Prepare lessons to meet the individual needs and interests of the student.
- ☒ Inform the Program Director at Kern Literacy Council if any problems arise with the match, such as personality conflicts or absenteeism.
- ☒ Keep accurate records of hours tutored and student progress and report those hours to Kern Literacy Council weekly.
- ☒ Notify Kern Literacy Council if tutoring terminates, even for a short time period.
- ☒ Contact the Program Director when new books or materials are completed and let us know about your student's successes!

F. Literacy Action's Responsibility

Responsibility to the Student

Students contact Kern Literacy Council with a desire to improve their reading, writing, and speaking skills to become more self-sufficient. They are expecting our best effort to help them help themselves.

As a nonprofit organization that provides literacy and language instruction, Literacy Action's responsibilities to the student include the following:

- ☑ Providing the student with a trained volunteer tutor dedicated to helping them reach goals.
- ☑ Making available instructional materials appropriate for the student's goals.
- ☑ Maintaining a lending library designed to supplement the basic materials with additional reading and other instructional material.
- ☑ Providing a positive atmosphere that will encourage the student.
- ☑ Maintaining the confidentiality of the student's learning activities.

Responsibility to the Volunteer Tutor

Volunteers become part of Kern Literacy Council to help another person improve their literacy and language skills. As your organization, we have a responsibility to:

- ☑ Provide adequate pre-service training to familiarize you with instructional materials and appropriate teaching methods and techniques.
- ☑ Screen/test prospective students and provide you with information about the student.
- ☑ Assist you in finding a suitable meeting location.
- ☑ Make available appropriate materials for your student.
- ☑ Provide information about changes and innovations in instructional materials.

G. Basic Philosophy for Tutors

Commitment

The most important part of the volunteer program is your genuine commitment to and concern for your student. Your primary goal as a tutor is to help your student acquire basic literacy skills. To do this, you will need to build a ladder of successful learning experiences. Success helps to build the self-confidence needed by the student to tackle more difficult material, to be willing to try something new, to risk failure, and to understand that mistakes are part of the learning process. Before getting started, think carefully - Are you prepared to follow through on this program? Your respect for and commitment to your student are essential ingredients in that success-building process. When a volunteer tutor leaves it can be a tremendous disappointment to the new reader. - 7 -

Rapport

How you relate to your student as you build this success can be summarized in two words: *rapport* and *patience*.

No learning of any kind can take place unless you interact with your student. To create a climate for learning, tutoring must be a relaxed, friendly experience.

☑ Be honest and sincere.

☑ Take the time to be both friendly and warm.

These qualities provide the basis for a good student-tutor rapport.

Keep in mind that your student is influenced:

7% by your **words**

37% by your **tone of voice**

56% by your **body language**

Patience

Recognize that learning will be difficult at times. It is easy to feel discouraged if you do not seem to be making progress. Students have left literacy programs because they sensed the tutor's frustration at their lack of advancement.

Help the student recognize the gains in skills, however small, that are the evidence of growth.

These gains will also be important to you as you progress through the tutoring experience.

Be patient and praise your students for what they have learned. Help them to feel that this is a learning partnership and when things get difficult, you will both be there looking for ways to make it easier.

And remember, each session should be a rewarding experience for both of you!

H. Meeting Your Student for the First Time

After Kern Literacy Council Matches you with a student, you will want to learn about them before you begin tutoring. The first time you meet, you will want to put your student at ease immediately. In order to avoid long, embarrassing silences, you will want to have some ideas and interview questions prepared. Plan how you will begin and end the session and think about essential information you need to give to your student. Here are some ideas to help you have a successful first meeting:

Try to ask open-ended questions to encourage your students to talk about themselves, such as:

What made you decide to get in touch with the literacy council? What are some things you would like to learn?

Bring and share pictures of your family or other things about yourself that you want to share. Invite your student to do the same at your second meeting.

- ☐ Get to know each other. Discuss hobbies and interests, family, jobs, and daily life.
- ☐ Establish a meeting place, day and time, and expectations regarding scheduling and cancellation.
- ☐ Exchange contact information and make sure your student has transportation.
- ☐ Discuss current reading and writing practices and challenges (*Example: What kinds of things do you read/write during a normal day at home, at work and when you are out? What are some things about reading and writing that are challenging for you?*)
- ☐ Ask your student about reading and writing goals (*Example: What would you like to be able to read/write better now/in the future?*). Write down your learner's goals so you can check on progress later.
- ☐ Look at your curriculum together and get familiar with what you will be doing together. You may want to try out the first page of the first lesson or have your student practice writing.
- ☐ Take turns reflecting on how the session went. (*Example: What did you learn today? Is there anything that needs clarifying? Is there anything that we should do differently next time?*)
- ☐ Discuss plans for your second meeting, confirm meeting time and place, and make sure you have the correct phone numbers for each other.
- ☐ Most importantly, LISTEN to your student. You need to learn about your learner's difficulties, interests, motivations, self-image, confidence, and learning style to provide a good foundation for a successful tutoring experience.
- ☐ Some ESL students will experience difficulty with this level of dialog; in such instances, information may be approached incrementally over several sessions.

Your First Contact with your student will usually be by telephone to make arrangements for your weekly tutoring session. Introduce yourself by stating your name and identify yourself as someone "from the library," ask if this is a suitable time to talk, select days and times convenient to both of you, suggest a location, give directions on how to get there, and leave your telephone number and/or email.

Your First Meeting with your student has both a primary and a secondary objective. The primary one is to encourage and reassure your student about the decision to improve reading or English. The secondary one is to learn as much as you can about your student. Although you cannot learn everything at the first meeting, the more you do know about your student's goals, needs, interests, and abilities, the more effective a tutor you will be. In the references and resources section, there is a sample of valuable information to record at the first meeting.

Materials for your first meeting include whatever programmed course books that have been chosen (Laubach, Ventures, etc.) including teacher's manual and student book, a notebook, pencils, pens, highlighters, etc., and if you are tutoring ESL, then perhaps the *Oxford Picture Dictionary* too.

Introductions and Names - After introducing yourself, make sure you are pronouncing and spelling the student's name correctly. Ask the student what they wish to be called. Be sure they know your name and contact information. - 9 -

Purpose - After introductions, explain your purpose, discuss the student's needs, and answer any questions. That is, chat with your student (if this is possible); be interested in your student's life and goals, but do not pry. Do not promise anything that you cannot deliver; you may be joining a long line of others who have broken promises. You must make every effort to show your students that they can have confidence in you, and that your promises mean something.

Before You Leave the first meeting, confirm the time, date, and place for your next meeting. Also discuss what you will be doing in the next meeting. For example, starting on the workbook or deciding on vocabulary words to discuss.

The Second Meeting you should be prepared to use almost the whole time on instructional materials. Remember we cannot always predict which materials will work best for you and your student. The best selection may be a combination of materials. Encourage your students to bring mail or other reading material they need to work on.

Problems - if you experience any problems, contact your Kern Literacy Council office as soon as possible.

I. Setting Goals

Students entering our program are likely to describe goals that are very vague: "I just want to be able to read better" or "I'd like to get a better job" or "I want to improve my English" or "I want to be able to help my kids with schoolwork." Others identify goals that will take a long time to reach: "I want to get my GED" or "I want to get U.S. citizenship."

Do not discourage a student who expresses goals like these but do understand that students need to be able to see concrete progress toward a goal. One of the most common reasons for students dropping out of the program is discouragement over not seeing any improvement or progress. Because immediate progress toward a long-term goal will be hard to perceive if the goal is vague or requires skills that are far above the student's current reading and writing level, you will need to demonstrate that there are many short-term goals that the two of you can work on that will help move them closer to the long-range goal. There are many ways to break up a long-term goal into manageable chunks.

You need to be sure that the activities you choose are realistic for the learner's skill level. In addition, be sure the activities are concrete enough to allow the learner to see progress. For example, a student who wants to get a good job will need to know how to read a want ad or how to fill out a job application. Both of these skills, in turn, can be subdivided. In order to read a want ad, a student needs to learn how to locate the employment ads in the classified section of the newspaper. They need to learn alphabetical order and whatever other system the paper uses to categorize jobs and understand any special vocabulary or abbreviations used in these ads.

Work with your student to list the activities you want to work on together. Involve the student in making decisions about what you will do with your time together. But be sure that the choices are realistic, and never promise more than you can deliver. Also remember that the more concrete and specific the activities are, the easier it will be for the student to judge how much progress is being made.

After you have identified some short-term, concrete, and realistic goals, make sure you set aside some time in each tutoring session to work on them. At the same time, you need to remind your student that the time spent studying in the programmed course books will also help them progress toward their goals. Together, you are developing a foundation of basic skills used in all the activities you have discussed.

Finally, take the time periodically to discuss and evaluate with the student what progress is being made. You may decide to modify your short-term goals or to set new ones but make that decision together.

J. Cultural Diversity

Many of our students come from diverse backgrounds and cultures that may be different from our own. They may have lived in the U.S. for some time, or they may be recent immigrants. Often it is these differences between cultures that result in miscommunication and even embarrassment at times.

Culture learning is selective. Eventually, your student will decide which elements of their native culture to retain and which elements of their new culture to adopt. The student's cultural identity will usually represent a mixture of both.

What do we mean by culture?

Culture represents the ways and means by which human beings deal with universal human situations and problems. These situations may involve social relationships, child rearing, family, education, entertainment, housing, work, food, clothing, beliefs, etc. It is these common "rules" that keep us from having to make certain fundamental decisions anew every day. The behaviors are already mapped out for us in our culture.

Examples of Cultural Differences, which may affect teaching/learning:

- Attitudes toward time and punctuality.
- Attitudes about personal hygiene, frequency of bathing, etc.
- Attitudes toward teachers (may be revered in some cultures) & the role of students.
- Eye contact.

Tips on Being an Effective Culture Guide:

- Beware of accepting stereotypes about people or assuming that all people within a country share the same culture.
- Learn as much as you can about the student's culture.
- Be aware of your own cultural orientation in order to help students see contrasts.
- Examine similarities between cultures as well as differences.
- Explore cultural meanings found in words, phrases, and gestures.
- Train yourself and the student to be prepared for expressions that are not meant to be taken literally, or that have culture-specific meanings.
- Avoid being judgmental of the student, especially of values and beliefs which differ from your own.
- Realize that forming a new identity in a new cultural setting is a matter of choice.
- Be aware that new Americans often experience major adjustment problems. Tutors need to be sensitive to these adjustments.
- Promote discussion about behavior in made-up situations (role plays) to avoid embarrassment.
- There is no "best" or "only" way to do something. Others' ways are just as valid as yours.
- Learn from each other! (This takes time because you must first work to gain the student's trust.)

(ADAPTED FROM NEW READERS PRESS, TRAINING BY DESIGN, ESL WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS)

ADULT LEARNERS

A. Characteristics, Needs & Goals of Adult Learners

Adult learners:

- ☐ Want to be treated as adults even if they are learning basic skills.
- ☐ Are often self-directed and are used to making decisions for themselves or together with peers and family members.
- ☐ Have specific and immediate learning needs and goals.
- ☐ Are generally very busy and may only have little time to participate in programs or do homework; they may have many barriers to regular attendance.
- ☐ Have a wealth of experiences that should be used as a resource in learning.
- ☐ May feel insecure about their literacy skills, learning new things, and coming to a program; this may make it difficult for them to ask questions or express opinions about instruction.
- ☐ Have values and beliefs based on their cultural and ethnic backgrounds that may be very different from their tutor's.
- ☐ Learn best when learning relates to their day-to-day lives.
- ☐ Are not a captive audience; they can vote with their feet.

Example Goals for Adult Learners:

Community/Citizen/Family Goals:

- ☐ Register to vote
- ☐ Apply for citizenship
- ☐ Communicate with schoolteachers
- ☐ Increase involvement in child's education
- ☐ Help with child's homework

Life-long Learner Goals:

- ☐ Learn to read
- ☐ Improve reading skills
- ☐ Improve writing skills
- ☐ Improve speaking skills
- ☐ Improve computer skills

Economic Goals:

- ☐ Gain employment
- ☐ Retain employment
- ☐ Get a promotion or better job

Educational Goals:

- ☐ Enter post-secondary education
- ☐ Obtain a GED or high school diploma
- ☐ Enter adult career education or training
- ☐ Obtain a license or certificate

General Goals:

- ☐ Fill out a form
- ☐ Obtain a driver's license

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Characteristics of Adults with Low Literacy Skills & Implications for Tutors Possible Characteristic

Lack of self-confidence

Implications for Tutors

- ☐ Help them to gain confidence by building on small successes.
- ☐ Assure your students that they can learn.
- ☐ Help your student to see how much they have achieved.
- ☐ Let your student know the choice of what to learn is theirs.

Fear of school - past unpleasant experience

- ☐ Avoid sarcasm and never ridicule.
- ☐ Accept the student warmly and uncritically.

Unaccustomed to long, quiet concentration

- ☐ Ensure a variety in your methods.
- ☐ Make use of games - Have fun!

May have limited experiences in a different culture

- ☐ Be willing to get to know your student's culture.
- ☐ Help to introduce your student to your culture by suggesting and/or providing experiences, which may include trips to the Arts Center or a museum.

May have attitudes, values and goals which differ from yours

- ☐ Make an honest attempt to see through your student's eyes.
- ☐ If your student is living in poverty, understand the difference between middle class and poverty and the hidden rules that both classes have.

May be weak motivation which is basic to learning

- ☒ Early in your time together, discuss and establish learning goals with your student. Do not do this FOR them but rather help them to articulate their own goals.
- ☒ Help to establish sub-goals, which are reachable in the not-too-distant future.
- ☒ Let there be plenty of success and opportunities for positive experiences that will boost your student's confidence!
- ☒ Your goal is to find that student's motivation.

Exceedingly sensitive to non-verbal forms of communication

- ☒ Watch yourself! Be very sensitive and aware of what you are revealing about your own inner attitudes, not only by your words, but by your manner, expressions, or body language.

May have feelings of powerlessness

- ☒ Be a mentor rather than an authority figure.
- ☒ Give them choices in learning - let them know that they have the power to choose in their learning.

May have hearing problems

- ☒ Speak clearly and look at your student when you speak.
- ☒ Ask the student to repeat instructions so you can check understanding.

May have vision problems

- ☒ Work in well-lit areas.
- ☒ Ask the student to tell you if the print is too small.

May have learning disabilities

- ☒ Present information in small, manageable steps.
- ☒ Teach new material in concrete ways and give examples.
- ☒ Relate material to the student's everyday life.
- ☒ Have lessons away from distractions.

