

# GETTING STARTED IN ADULT LITERACY



FLORIDA LITERACY COALITION, INC.



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## Introduction

Thank you for showing interest in an important emphasis of lifelong learning: adult literacy. The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with a "guide" to help you answer questions that will enable you to make an impact on literacy in your community:

- **What exactly is "literacy"?**
- **How do we get started?**
- **How do we keep going?**

The Florida Literacy Coalition (FLC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to promoting adult and family literacy in each of Florida's 67 counties, and connecting people with resources and knowledge to "make literacy happen".

The Florida Literacy Coalition serves as the State Adult and Family Literacy Resource Center. We strive to keep Florida's literacy providers up to date with the latest literacy education methods and techniques, news, materials, and resources. We are a "hub" for communication and collaboration for Florida's literacy effort, and we work to not only increase awareness of literacy programs, but to take the "next step" by getting more people involved in programs.

This publication was produced through our 2000-2001 State Literacy Resource Center grant awarded from the Florida Department of Education, Division of Workforce Development and was updated in 2004 and again in 2009. We thank the Florida Department of Education for their support of the work of the Florida Literacy Coalition and for supporting the production of this booklet.

While this book focuses on providing you with an introduction to key concepts and program components to consider when starting or building a literacy initiative, it only touches on many areas that you may wish to research further. For additional technical support please feel free to contact FLC.

The Resource Center web site, located at [www.floridaliteracy.org](http://www.floridaliteracy.org), provides access to quality, easy to search resources from throughout Florida and the United States. We highly recommend that you visit this site to locate additional information on most of the topics covered in this publication.

This site will also provide you with access to LINCS –the Literacy Information and Communications System, an extensive on-line information network of adult education and literacy resources hosted by the National Institute for literacy.

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## What Exactly is “Literacy”?

In the past, literacy was considered the ability to read and use printed materials at an extremely basic level. Today, adults need higher levels of basic skills to function effectively in many areas of their lives, and literacy is defined more broadly to include problem-solving and higher level reasoning skills.

The lack of basic reading, writing, information and computing skills holds people back from reaching their personal and career goals. It can also make financial self-sufficiency nearly impossible.

In the 1991 National Literacy Act, Congress defined literacy as: "An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential."

## The Statistics: a Call for Action

In 2003, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) was conducted to measure English literacy among American adults over the age of 16. Over 19,000 adults participated in the national and state-level assessments.

NAAL provides the first indicator in a decade of the nation's progress in adult literacy. NAAL also provides information on adults' literacy performance and related background characteristics to researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and the general public.

NAAL includes a number of components that capture the breadth of adult literacy in the United States:

Background Questionnaire—helps identify the relationships between adult literacy and select demographic and background characteristics;

Prison Component—assesses the literacy skills of adults in federal and state prisons;

State Assessment of Adult Literacy (SAAL)—gives statewide estimates of literacy for states participating in the state-level assessment;

Health Literacy Component—introduces the first-ever national assessment of adults' ability to use their literacy skills in understanding health-related materials and forms;

Fluency Addition to NAAL (FAN)—measures basic reading skills by assessing adults' ability to decode, recognize words, and read with fluency; and

Adult Literacy Supplemental Assessment (ALSA)—provides information on the ability of the least-literate adults to identify letters and numbers and to comprehend simple prose and documents.

NAAL is designed to measure functional English literacy. The assessment measures how adults use printed and written information to adequately function at home, in the workplace, and in the community.

NAAL measures three types of literacy—**prose, document, and quantitative**—and reports a separate scale score for each of these three areas. By measuring literacy along three scales NAAL can provide more comprehensive data on literacy tasks and literacy skills associated with the broad range of printed and written materials adults use.

**Prose Literacy**- the knowledge and skills needed to perform prose tasks, (i.e., to search, comprehend, and use continuous texts). Examples include editorials, new stories, brochures, and instructional materials.

**Document Literacy**- the knowledge and skills needed to perform document tasks, (i.e., to search, comprehend, and use non-continuous texts in various formats). Examples include job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and drug/food labels.

**Quantitative Literacy**- the knowledge and skill required to perform quantitative tasks, (i.e., to identify and perform computations, either alone or sequentially, using numbers embedded in printed materials). Examples include balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form, or determining the amount.

## Scoring & Performance Levels

The NAAL assessment questions were open-ended and so required scoring by trained scorers. In order to make NAAL scores meaningful, the scores were grouped into performance levels to provide information that could more easily be understood and used by the public and policy makers.

The performance levels were developed to characterize the status of English language literacy of American adults and include:

- Non-literate: Non-literate in English
- Below Basic: no more than the most *simple* and *concrete* literacy skills
- Basic: can perform simple and everyday literacy activities
- Intermediate: can perform moderately challenging literacy activities
- Proficient: can perform complex and challenging literacy activities

The conclusions of the assessment showed that more than 11 million American adults are non-literate in English, 7 million could not answer simple test questions and 4 million could not take the test because of language barriers.

## Percent Lacking Basic Prose Literacy Skills

National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003

County		Margin Of Error	
		Lower bound	Upper bound
Florida	20	17.0	22.9
Alachua County	11	5.0	20.8
Baker County	15	7.2	25.7
Bay County	11	5.6	19.9
Bradford County	17	8.4	28.1
Brevard County	10	4.8	17.5
Broward County	22	16.0	30.4
Calhoun County	18	9.3	30.6
Charlotte County	12	5.8	20.7
Citrus County	13	6.1	21.9
Clay County	9	4.2	16.3

Collier County	17	8.7	28.6
Columbia County	15	7.4	25.5
DeSoto County	34	19.1	51.1
Dixie County	18	9.2	30.6
Duval County	12	5.9	21.3
Escambia County	12	5.9	20.9
Flagler County	11	5.2	18.7
Franklin County	17	8.8	29.3
Gadsden County	25	13.1	40.9
Gilchrist County	14	7.1	24.9
Glades County	21	10.9	33.9
Gulf County	16	8.0	27.2
Hamilton County	24	12.7	38.7
Hardee County	35	20.4	52.9
Hendry County	42	25.6	60.9
Hernando County	12	5.6	20.8
Highlands County	18	9.0	29.4
Hillsborough County	15	9.5	23.3
Holmes County	17	8.6	28.8
Indian River County	12	5.8	20.6
Jackson County	17	8.5	28.5
Jefferson County	17	8.6	28.6
Lafayette County	22	11.7	36.2
Lake County	12	5.6	20.5
Lee County	13	6.6	22.9
Leon County	10	4.6	18.5
Levy County	16	7.9	26.8
Liberty County	20	10.4	33.7
Madison County	21	11.0	35.1
Manatee County	13	6.7	23.1
Marion County	14	7.1	23.9
Martin County	11	5.2	18.6
Miami-Dade	52	41.5	64.2
Monroe County	14	7.3	24.6
Nassau County	10	4.9	18.1
Okaloosa County	9	4.4	16.3
Okeechobee County	24	13.2	39.4
Orange County	20	14.0	29.3
Osceola County	19	9.5	31.7
Palm Beach County	14	7.1	24.8
Pasco County	12	5.9	21.5
Pinellas County	11	6.6	18.9
Polk County	16	8.3	27.6
Putnam County	18	9.2	30.4
Santa Rosa County	9	4.5	16.5
Sarasota County	10	5.0	18.3
Seminole County	11	7.0	18.1
St. Johns County	7	3.5	13.6
St. Lucie County	16	8.2	27.1
Sumter County	16	8.0	26.6

Suwannee County	18	9.1	30.0
Taylor County	18	9.5	30.8
Union County	17	8.8	29.3
Volusia County	12	6.0	21.1
Wakulla County	12	6.1	21.6
Walton County	13	6.3	21.9
Washington County	17	8.6	28.4

The state and county Federal Information processing Standards (FIPS) codes are standardized unique state and county identifiers. The first two positions identify the state, and the last three positions identify the county. For more information, see <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/fips/fips.html>

Estimates of population of persons 16 years and older in households in 2003 indicates that those lacking *Basic* prose literacy skill includes those who scored *Below Basic* in prose and those who could not be tested due to language barriers.

The estimated percent lacking *Basic* prose literacy skill has a margin of error as measured by the associated credible interval. There is a 95% chance that the value of the percent lacking *Basic* prose literacy skill is contained between the lower and upper bound.

Source: US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

## ***How Do We Get Started?***

### **Do your Homework!**

Adult literacy programs in Florida are designed around the needs of the learner and offered based on community demand. Your interest in starting a literacy program is most likely because community demand has surfaced. Thank you for being willing to explore how to best serve this demand!

It is your responsibility to the community to establish a program that will enhance or add needed services, not create unnecessary duplication.

“Do your homework” early to 1) confirm that there is demand in your community for the type of program you are considering; and 2) learn about the current literacy efforts in your community. A little effort beforehand will better serve your community in the long run.

With this information in hand, you can then work to tailor your program to address unmet needs. Further, by cooperating and collaborating with existing programs, existing resources can be leveraged to “do more with less.”

To find out about existing programs in your community, visit the [Find a Program in Your Area](#) section of the Florida Literacy Coalition’s website.

## Confirm Demand in Your Community

Something spurred you to read this booklet. Was it a discussion at a social group or club? Was it a news article you read? A TV show?

Was it a personal experience with someone who couldn't read?

Based on the results from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, there is evidence that every county in the state has demand for adult literacy services. Since your program will most likely be operating on a community level, it's important that you determine need in the specific area that you are planning to serve.

Readily-available data and statistics from a variety of sources, when compared with research-based "literacy indicators," can help you to piece together a "literacy profile" of your community.

Your local **Workforce Development Board** can provide data on employment rates and other employment-related information for your community, [www.workforceflorida.com](http://www.workforceflorida.com).

The ***Florida Literacy Data and Statistics Reference Guide*** provides a wide range of adult education and literacy related research and statistics. This online guide will give you the reference points needed to educate yourself and others about literacy. It also provides information showing the correlations that exist between literacy achievement and a whole range of social service and economic issues.

Contact the ***U.S. Census Bureau*** for information about the demographic distribution of your community. The Census Bureau offers a user-friendly website where you can retrieve information at a detailed level—helpful especially to identify "pocket (geographical) areas" of potential need.

If you are considering beginning a localized effort, such as starting an English Literacy program at your church, you probably won't need to gather this level of information to confirm demand. Perhaps you have noticed that some of your parishioners have difficulty reading along during services, don't speak English or have simply approached you for help.

Before you start your program, it is a good idea to collect some minimum data about your potential adult learners before "kicking off" your program. By doing so, you not only will have a better idea of the number of volunteers you will need for your program, and how those volunteers will need to be trained, but you will also have a starting "baseline" of demand that you can follow over the years to use in decision-making.

## Learn about the Different Types of Adult Literacy programs

Chances are that you are interested in starting a volunteer-based Adult Literacy, Family Literacy, or English Literacy program, or a combination of program offerings. Note that some of the programs described below are typically run by government agencies, such as the public school districts or community colleges. It is still very important to understand

these agencies, because they are an integral part of Florida's adult and family literacy system, and may prove to be a valuable partner for your effort.

You may be unaware of a literacy program in your community just because of an acronym used in place of the program name.

***One in five Florida adults lack basic literacy skills.***

Below is a list of the literacy programs that are offered by various providers across our state, including a description, and the commonly-used acronym:

### **Beginning Literacy**

Beginning Literacy, or "Learn to Read," programs typically use one-to-one instruction. Beginning Literacy is delivered most often by community-based organizations (also known as "CBOs"), including literacy councils, faith-based literacy programs, and libraries; and is also delivered by some programs in the public schools and community colleges (many times on a contracted or cooperative basis with a local literacy council). Volunteers are trained in reading methods as well as in techniques for teaching reading to adults. After being trained, a literacy volunteer is matched with a learner and the pair works together to improve the reading level of the adult learner. As a note, the "grade level" normally associated with beginning literacy is grade 0-4.

### **Adult Basic Education (ABE)**

Adult Basic Education courses are typically offered at or above a fifth-grade educational level in the language arts, including English for Speakers of Other Languages, mathematics, natural and social sciences, consumer education, and other courses that enable an adult to attain basic or functional literacy. While some community based organizations also offer Adult Basic Education, the largest providers of ABE are publicly-funded Local Educational Agencies (also known as "LEAs").

In Florida, the decision of which LEA entity provides adult education is county-based. Thus, in one county, adult education may be provided through the Adult Education Department of the local public school system. In another, the community college may provide this service. Still, in other counties, both the public school system and the community college offer adult education.

A number of providers of Adult Basic Education have cooperative agreements with the local, volunteer-based one-to-one literacy program in which the volunteer-based organization provides tutoring, or small group instruction, for those learners who are not achieving success in the traditional classroom or classroom learning environment. Conversely, volunteer-based literacy organizations refer adults whose reading level is appropriate for the classroom environment to the Adult Basic Education provider in their community.

### **Adult General Education for Adults with Learning Disabilities**

Not everyone who has problems learning to read has learning disabilities. However, research suggests that between 30% and 80% of adults in literacy programs display characteristics typical of individuals with learning disabilities.

There are literacy programs in Florida that focus on learning disabled adults so that adults with learning disabilities will experience greater success in meeting their educational and life goals. Many of these programs are offered through the Department of Education.

Training is available to teachers and tutors of adult literacy, to provide the skills for identifying a potential learning disability, and also how to teach in a manner that is effective for the learning disability.

Please see [A Practitioner's Guide to Adults with Learning Disabilities](#) for more information on this important topic.

***26% of adults 65 and older have below basic literacy skills compared to 15% in the general population***

## Citizenship

Sometimes offered in conjunction with English Literacy programs, Citizenship programs provide instruction that is designed to help adults become citizens of the United States. For more information please visit [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#).

## Corrections-Based Literacy Programs

Corrections-based literacy programs provide literacy instruction in any prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, detention center, halfway house, community-based rehabilitation center, or any other similar institution designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders.

The Florida Department of Corrections offers Adult Education programs to the incarcerated. Additionally, throughout the state, volunteers from community-based organizations provide tutoring and inmate-tutor training to offenders.

***75% of America's state prison inmates are high school dropouts.***

## General Educational Development (GED) Preparation and Testing

Offered through a variety of adult education providers, GED Preparation and Testing is designed to enable adults who have not graduated from high school to demonstrate attainment of skills and concepts generally associated with four years of regular high school instruction.

Two good resources to find out more about the GED are: The Florida Department of Education's official [GED website](#) and FLC'S [Get your GED](#) online directory.

***43% of learning disabled are living at or below the poverty level.  
48% of those with learning disabilities are out of the workforce  
or unemployed.***

## English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

(Literacy Lingo: This acronym is many times used as a word, pronounced "ee-saul".) Also known as English as a Second Language (ESL), and increasingly known as English Literacy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). These programs provide English language and literacy instruction to limited English speaking individuals. Many ESOL/ESL programs also offer Citizenship education.

***Florida is projected to rank 3<sup>rd</sup> among all states in the number of arriving immigrants during the next quarter century.***

## Family Literacy

"Family Literacy" programs are a very effective approach to addressing literacy issues, and are becoming increasingly popular as a way to address the literacy issues of both parent and child.

***In Florida, 73% of children whose parents do not have a high school degree live in low-income families and 53% of children of immigrant parents live in low-income families.***

Documented success is based on those family literacy programs that have integrated a four-component system into instructional delivery:

1. Literacy instruction for the parent(s), which can range from beginning literacy to GED preparation.
2. Age-appropriate literacy instruction for the child. It is important to note that age-appropriate instruction should not be confused with "child care" while the parent is learning. Effective literacy instruction can be developed for any age child, no matter how young.
3. Interactive time between parents and children, for learning activities such as reading together, constructive help with homework, or other learning activities. This component is also referred to as "PACT". (Parent And Child Together Time)

4. Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children. This training should be an “active” approach, such as seminars, demonstrations, etc. as opposed to “passive” activities, such as a “resource library”.

It’s worth noting that in addition to the documented success being based on the four-component model, the Federal Government also defines family literacy programs as having four components— so if you may be considering this source of funding you would need to be able to demonstrate this type of model.

The [Family Literacy Resource Guide](#) is an excellent resource for those interested in learning more about starting a family literacy program.

## Workplace Literacy

Workplace Literacy programs provide additional training and retraining for adults who are out of school and already in the workforce. Classes using job related materials are offered at the work site to provide training ranging from basic literacy to General Education Development (GED) preparation. Classes are scheduled to be convenient for both workers and their employers and skills learned can be put to immediate use. Both Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) offer workplace literacy programs in conjunction with employers, and some employers offer the programs independent of outside organizations. The type of a work-place literacy program depends on the employer. Offerings vary from an on-site library of instructional videos and workbooks or study guides to literacy instruction offered on-site during company time.

For more information visit [Planning a Workplace Literacy Program](#).

***Limited literacy skills cost business and taxpayers \$20 billion in lost wages, profits, and productivity annually. 50% of the chronically unemployed are not functionally literate.***

## How to Locate Programs in Your Area

As you can see, there are a variety of adult education and literacy efforts and types of programs. Public agencies and community-based organizations both play extremely important roles in meeting the literacy needs of adults and families in our state.

The Florida Literacy Coalition can help you find the different literacy programs that currently operate in your area. Call the Florida Literacy “Hotline” at (800) 237-5113 or visit the [Florida Literacy Coalition - Online Lookup Directory](#) to find programs in your area.

## The 3 C’s: Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration

The rewards of orchestrated services can be tremendous. After locating the other programs offered in your community make an effort to find out how you can work together to address literacy through cooperation. Once you discover common goals, services, or constituents, coordination or collaboration may make sense.

““*Courage happens when people unite.*”  
-Anonymous

**Cooperation** – The act of working together to produce an effect. Example: Agreement with regard to referrals from one provider organization to another as appropriate based on the needs of the learner and the capabilities of the organization.

**Coordination** – Working to the same end with harmonious adjustment or functioning. Example: Scheduling independent events such as fund-raisers or recruiting campaigns in conjunction with each other to avoid confusion or inefficiency.

**Collaboration** – A mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve results they are more likely to achieve together than alone. This is the most intense way of working together while still retaining the separate identities of the organizations involved. Example: A joint public relations campaign with two or more provider organizations in which each contributes funding/resources, and all plans are made jointly.

The Florida Literacy Coalition offers free training and facilitation for literacy providers in Collaboration and Coalition-Building, customized to meet the needs of the provider at whatever stage of cooperation, coordination, or collaboration. Training is offered on a “by request” basis. Call (800) 237-5113 for more information.

## Building the Literacy Program

Since this is a “Getting Started” publication, or “manual”, and there is much involved with program management, this will only highlight some areas of program management which you will want to explore and implement into your program.

A variety of literacy program management manuals and books are available from publishers nationwide. A recent publication we like is called, “Beyond Duct Tape and Bailing Wire: Building an Effective Literacy Program”, New Readers Press. Another that contains helpful tips is “A Manual for Volunteer Literacy Programs”, Volume 1 and Volume 2, developed by the Volunteers and Literacy Committee of the Florida Department of Education, Division of Workforce Development.

Hopefully you have decided what type of program you’re going to offer and you’ve confirmed need— but before you start recruiting students and volunteers, you need to have a management plan in place that includes the following key areas:

### Find a HOME BASE

Your home base will be determined by the type of instruction you offer, and the size of your program.

A one-to-one tutoring program requires the smallest investment in permanent space— some programs actually operate with no permanent space— this is how:

- Record-keeping and coordination is conducted out of someone’s home or out of the primary organization’s space.
- Tutor training is held at a “donated” meeting room.
- New learner interviews and assessments are held at a “donated” meeting facility or at a public place, such as the public library.
- Tutoring takes place in a location agreed upon by the tutor and learner, such as a library, coffee shop, or the workplace.
- All other meetings, awards ceremonies, etc. are held at loaned facilities.

Of course, this set up works best for “Getting Started and Keeping it Small”. Your program’s space needs will change based on the number of students and volunteers you have once your program is up and running.

A small office in an accessible area would be the first recommended expansion in space.

Consider the following when selecting space:

- Is it accessible to persons with disabilities?
- Is it easy to find?
- Is it on a public transportation route?
- Is the location safe?
- Is it clean?
- Is there enough space to accommodate -
  - office tasks?
  - a private intake session?
  - tutoring/teaching?
  - resources or storage?

A “group” literacy program can get by with the same amount of space as the one-to-one program for everything except instructional delivery. A location will need to be “borrowed” or arranged for on a more permanent basis. This would require a cooperative arrangement with another organization or business to ensure that the space is consistently available.

A technology-based program is space and resource-intensive. A permanent location is required, as is a substantial investment in equipment, software, furniture, and support.

*A last note: While décor is sometimes an afterthought and could be considered frivolous, simple décor in a clean office space creates an inviting and pleasant environment. Pay attention to the way your space appears in terms of comfort, professionalism, and cultural diversity.*

*Once you have students, ask them for feedback on what they think of the space. After all, the space is there to serve them. You can accomplish a lot by listening and acting on their suggestions.*

## ***Instructional Approaches***

The needs of your learners should guide your decision on how to deliver instruction. Options to consider are one-to-one, group instruction, and technology-based instruction.

### **One-to-one Instruction**

One-to-one instruction offers the most individual attention and provides the most learner

confidentiality. This method is very effective for the new reader. The decision to enroll in a reading program is a major one, and this trust is well-nurtured by a person to person learning relationship.

One-to-one literacy programs often ask for a minimum one year commitment from their tutors after training, and a 9-12 month commitment from their learners. Once matched as a tutor pair, the tutor and learner meet preferably for two hours twice a week. The meeting place is a mutually-defined, public location, such as a community center, library, church, or school.

## **Group Instruction**

Group instruction is typically most effective for learners at levels beyond beginning literacy, and can also be very effective for English literacy programs. This method offers learners the opportunity to interact with other adult learners and to participate in group learning activities.

## **Technology-based Instruction**

Technology-based instruction uses the computer or other technologies as tools for instructional delivery. Technology-based instruction is most effective when there is a person available to answer questions or address technology needs. Simply offering computers with literacy software installed on them will not produce the same results as offering the technology-based instruction in conjunction with a tutoring session, group lesson, or other support.

Note: If considering offering technology-based instruction at any level, you must ensure that the type of technology in which the instruction is delivered is understood by the learner. For example, Internet-based instruction won't be effective if the learner doesn't understand the basics of navigating a website. A compact disc containing a lesson will not be valuable if the learner is not sure how a CD tray opens, or if the lesson doesn't run automatically.

## **Instructional Materials**

There are many options when selecting materials, and at tutor training you will be exposed to several of them. Another effective way to view materials is at literacy conferences or on the Internet. If interested in a specific type of instructional material that you can't find, contact the [Florida Literacy Coalition](#) for information on free or low cost materials.

For the purpose of introduction, you may wish to look at the websites of [New Readers Press](#), a division of ProLiteracy International.

FLC's [Tutor Help Center](#) provides easy to navigate access to some of the best instructional resources for adult literacy tutors and teachers in one location.

You may also search for other instructional materials via the LINCS national literacy resources database.

## **Types of materials**

1. Published teaching materials
2. Real-world reading matter, such as the newspaper
3. Teacher/Tutor-produced materials

## Evaluating Materials

Some questions to answer when evaluating materials:

- What outcome are you expecting from the material? Phonemic Awareness? Reading Comprehension? Developing the enjoyment of reading?
- How will the material be used? Independently by the learner? In a classroom setting? With a tutor's assistance?
- What are the learner's interests? Let your learner "go shopping" for a couple of books at their reading level from a catalog or the library.
- Is your learner interested in current events? Try reading the local newspaper or "News for You", a newspaper written specifically for new readers. (New Readers Press)

Remember, if your learner has a specific goal, select materials based on that goal.

## Literacy Instruction on the Web

There are a growing number of free instructional websites available on the internet. For the purpose of an introduction, check out several technology-based instructional websites listed below:

### **USA Learns**

This free site developed for the U.S. Department of Education includes multi level English courses as well as activities to help improve reading, writing, and life skills for adult learners.

### **Activities for ESL Students**

This site has over 1,000 quizzes, exercises and puzzles to help you study English as a Second Language.

### **Cable News Network- for Adult Learners**

Current news written at an appropriate level of understanding for adult learners.

### **Dave's ESL Café**

A wide selection of resources for ESOL teachers and students.

### **Learning Edge**

The Learning Edge is an online interactive newspaper for adult literacy students. It has articles and quizzes for students at various levels.

### **ThinkFinity**

This website, funded by the Verizon Foundation, offers a wide range of lesson plans, interactive activities and other online resources.

### **The Beehive**

The Beehive includes basic information regarding current events, schools, family, money, health care and jobs.

### **TV 411**

Strengthens literacy skills with new game-like interactivity in on-line lessons.

For a more extensive listing of instructional web sites visit the [Student Section](#) of the Florida Literacy Coalition's website.

## Software Reviews

If you want to offer technology-based instruction, here are some good resources. These websites offer reviews on literacy software performed by literacy teachers, tutors, students, and administrators.

**Adult Literacy Resource Institute** has compiled web sites that review software.

**Northwest Regional Literacy Resource Center**

More technology-based instruction resources and websites are available— just search!

## Literacy Volunteers

### Recruit Volunteers

Becoming a volunteer literacy tutor is a commitment of time and energy, both of which are in high demand in our society. Therefore, it's important that you are thoughtful in your efforts to recruit volunteers.

Think about it. Ask yourself what kind of person you would want volunteering for your organization. What are the characteristics or habits of that kind of person? What kind of publications do they read? What kind of clubs do they belong to?

Use Free Advertising. Place a few ads in the community service section of your local newspaper (usually a free service).

Go Grassroots. Pass out flyers at professional or social club meetings, at religious gatherings, or anywhere else you think may be effective in reaching potential volunteers.

Talk it up! Bring up your ideas in conversation wherever you go. If public speaking opportunities arise, for whatever purpose, try to use them as a way to get the word out.

Find a champion. Is there someone important or popular whom you personally know (or could get to know) to champion your cause to add visibility? Be sure to provide the champion with all of the information he or she needs to fully communicate the effort and the need for volunteers.

Tap into existing volunteer corps. In many communities there are groups organized just to provide volunteers for good causes. They help match volunteers to your organization. If you have one of these organizations in your community, get to know their requirements and use their resources!

Find volunteer-friendly companies. Giving back to the community is good for a company's image, and is just the right thing to do. Many companies have organized programs to allow

their employees time off from work to volunteer. Others will donate funds to the organization for which an employee volunteers in addition to providing the time. Check with the prominent companies in your area to determine if they offer such a program.

Use the Literacy Hotline. The Florida Literacy Coalition can assist you in your volunteer recruitment efforts by referring interested adults who call the Florida Literacy Hotline to your program. For more information, call (800) 237-5113.

Free Volunteer Recruitment Posters are available to Florida literacy providers through Florida Literacy Coalition's clearinghouse.

Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers. Word of mouth is the leading method of recruitment, according to the National Survey of Volunteer programs, with 71% of participants feeling it was the most effective way to find volunteers.

For additional information on this topic and others, such as what motivates volunteers, trends in volunteerism, how to utilize seasonal volunteers, volunteer retention, and more, view the FLC publication: Effective Practices in Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers: An Adult Literacy Perspective.

Free On-Line Volunteer Recruitment Websites

Idealist.org

volunteermatch.org

SERVEnet.org

Networkforgood.org

1-800-volunteer.org

Craigslist.com

Florida Literacy Coalition

## **Volunteer Intake**

Initially getting to know each volunteer's needs and skills is crucial. When you first meet with your new volunteer (either in person or on the phone):

- Explain the time commitment required for volunteering as a literacy tutor, and answer any questions the volunteer may have regarding the tutoring process.
- If the individual realizes that becoming a tutor is too much of a commitment at the time, suggest other volunteering opportunities, such as with intake of students and volunteers, fund-raising, publicity, or even a leadership position. There are many "hands" that make the work of literacy happen.
- Always communicate "next steps" and welcome the volunteer to your effort!

## **Volunteer Training**

Volunteering as a literacy tutor takes not only the desire and the time commitment, but also training in how to teach reading and life skills to adults.

Typically, 8 to 12 hours of training is required to become certified as a volunteer literacy tutor. The training is typically conducted by a volunteer who has tutored and has completed additional courses in how to train literacy volunteers. Recognizing that most volunteers

have busy lives, trainings are split into two sessions or may also be split among a Saturday and a couple of evening sessions.

Materials and trainer expenses for training a volunteer tutor can cost up to \$40.00 per person. The Florida Literacy Coalition, in its' capacity as the State Literacy Resource Center, has a limited number of training materials grants available to community based organizations.

FLC also has: 1) information about tutor trainers in your area, 2) provides free tutor training workshops, and 3) sponsors an annual three-part Train the Tutor Trainer course in conjunction with the Florida Literacy Conference. For more information, contact the Education and Training Coordinator at (800) 237-5113.

The primary national organization that provides volunteer tutor trainer certification is ProLiteracy America which can be reached at (888) 528-2224 or on the web at [www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org).

The importance of providing good volunteer instructor training can not be over emphasized. There are key components that should be included in any quality tutor training program. These components can be revised and customized to meet the needs of individual programs and their students.

For information on these components as well as on training methods, materials, sample workshop agendas, and other training resources please visit the [tutor trainer](#) section of the Florida Literacy Coalition website.

## **New Volunteer Tutor Orientation**

A crucial part of training new volunteers, and part of your volunteer retention strategy, should be to provide a thorough volunteer orientation. At the minimum, this orientation should include an overview of your literacy effort, your expectations of volunteers, explanation of forms that need to be completed and related deadlines, contact information for questions they may have after orientation, and explanation of the matching process. Orientation is also a chance to make your volunteers feel like “family” and realize that the choice they made to volunteer with your program was a good one.

Once your program is established, adult learners can play a very important role in your volunteer orientation. Those adult learners who emerge as leaders can provide the new volunteers with valuable insights and suggestions regarding effective tutoring, materials selection tips, or how to build an effective relationship with their learner.

## **Don't Stop Now— Provide Ongoing Support!**

Ongoing training must be offered to your volunteer literacy tutors. They will want to learn more about specific areas, such as teaching ESL, addressing learning disabilities, or learning styles.

Examples of other support that can be offered to tutors are:

- Resource materials
- In-service training opportunities

- Formal Suggestions Process
- Formal Recognition Process
- Monitoring tutor activity and intervening to help when necessary
- Attendance at literacy conferences

## **Recruit Learners**

Even if you've identified needs, adults and families who can benefit from your program still need to hear about your program. Before long, you'll be worrying about your "waiting list"! Speaking of waiting lists, don't advertise so heavily that you have too many learners waiting for tutors. Try to match your recruiting effort for learners in the same proportion as you have tutors available.

Good news travels fast. Positive word-of-mouth resulting from a program that met and expanded learners' goals proved to be by far the most effective recruitment strategy.

Take it home. Adults may be somewhat fearful about enrolling in any new program, so home visits by peers or staff allows them to learn about the kinds of activities offered. Referrals by friends lessen the fear of the unknown and raise the comfort level of potential participants.

Let other organizations help. Provide information about your program to other community agencies that serve your constituents; ask your local elementary schools to send bookmarks home; organize a faith-based campaign.

Use events. Manned tables at grocery stores, the local department store, community fairs, job fairs, and other community events are a great way to increase visibility and let adults know what's available to them.

Air time. Radio or television announcements are also effective ways to recruit students. Many stations offer time slots for public service announcements for no charge. The Florida Literacy Coalition can help you access pre-recorded PSA's, or you can ask a local station to help.

Printed materials DO work. IF, you use very simple language and graphics that are associated with reading, like a book. Bookmarks work "double duty", since a bookmark itself represents reading; and if you add a reading graphic, you can get your point across with few words.

The Florida Literacy Coalition can assist you in your student recruitment efforts by referring interested adults who call the Florida Literacy Hotline to your program. The Coalition also has recruitment materials that can be used by local programs. For more information, call (800) 237-5113.

## **Why Do Adults Enroll in Literacy Programs?**

Each adult learner has his or her own reason why s/he is pursuing education as an adult. Interviews with adult learners revealed that the reasons fall into three categories: Work, Family, or Community. Examples:

### **Work**

- To get a better job
- To get promoted on the job
- To develop job skills

### **Family**

- To read bedtime stories
- To help with homework
- To be able to communicate better with a child's teacher or school

### **Community**

- To become a U.S. Citizen
- To understand driving rules to be able to drive and pass a driver's test
- To be able to vote

Adult learners bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the learning process. Each adult is a unique individual with his or her own needs and interests. This idea is at the core of teaching adults.

## **New Learner “Intake”**

Here's what should be covered during your “first interview” or “intake” with your new learner:

- Basic contact information and time availability
- Discussions about the learner's specific goals
- Formal or informal assessment to arrive at a “baseline” from which accomplishments will be measured
- If the learner has an identified learning disability
- The last time the learner had vision and hearing tests

## **Assessment**

Assessment is a necessary component of the learning process. While “testing” is uncomfortable for many learners, it is an important tool for placing students at the right level and documenting their progress.

Remember the goals of each learner— they always focus on a real life accomplishment (such as getting a drivers license or reading a book), not to score high on a test. Therefore, these assessments should be used for diagnostic purposes to help the tutor or teacher plan learning strategies.

The following are some of the assessment tools currently available for purchase:

### **TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education)**

CTB/McGraw-Hill (800) 682-9222  
Popular assessment. Takes 1.5—3.5 hours.

### **Florida Adult Education Standards and Curriculum Frameworks**

### **CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System)**

(800) 255-1036

Another popular assessment, particularly for ESL learners.  
Takes 15 minutes for oral, 1 hour for written assessment.

**BEST PLUS: Oral English Proficiency Test**

1-866-845-BEST

Face-to-face adaptive oral interview

**ESLOA (English as a Second Language Oral Assessment)**

New Readers Press, a publishing division of ProLiteracy, has an inexpensive assessment designed to help meet the tutoring needs of entry level English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Takes 30-45 minutes.

**SORT (Slosson Oral Reading Test)**

Quick estimate to target word recognition levels for children and adults

Whichever assessment the learner first takes, it is preferable to use that same assessment to assess periodic progress, and to document “final” results at the point when the learner leaves your program.

No matter where we are on the road, some people are ahead of us and some people are behind us.”

Lael Winer-Cyr, learner

Other forms of periodic assessment can help your learner see progress:

- a portfolio of writings
- worksheet pages completed
- progress reports generated by instructional software programs
- Checklists (personal goals)
- Reading Logs

**Another very important type of assessment that also affects learner progress is how the learner is feeling about his or her progress in the program.**

**Ask four simple questions periodically to gather this information:**

- **Why are you here?**
- **What do you want to learn?**
- **Are you learning it?**
- **What could be done to make the program better?**

**Use this feedback to increase your program’s value and effectiveness for each learner!**

In order to ensure success, the tutor or teacher must work with the learner to tailor the program to the learner’s long-term goals or short-term objectives. Instruction must be based on real life skills. For example, when teaching an adult to read, instead of working through a fiction story, why not learn about health issues, the law, or parenting tips?

***Individual learning styles***

A learning style is the way a person takes in, stores, and retrieves information. People differ in which of the five physical senses (hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell) they depend on

when learning and what kind of environment helps them learn best. Each of these senses provides a different pathway for information to reach a person's brain.

To enhance the adult learners' learning process, consideration should be given to the most effective learning style for the individual.

Barsch Inventories is one website that focuses on individual learning styles. They offer a quick test to determine your best learning style, as well as explanation and examples of learning styles.

## **Other Needs to Consider**

Learners may have other needs that require support from social services. Be prepared by knowing what social service agencies serve your community. Your local United Way can be a good "first stop" for contact and program information. Many communities have a "social service" directory, which is extremely helpful.

Many times, in addressing life skills, or just because of life itself, the learner may need assistance in addressing non-literacy issues. While the tutor should take care to not encourage a "dependency" relationship, he or she can be an invaluable source of information and assistance to the learner in a way that enhances learning.

## **Get Organized!**

### **Establish a Board**

The purpose of a Board of Directors or Advisory Board is to keep the program on track by agreeing on a mission, vision and goals as part of setting strategy, creating by-laws and policies, planning, overseeing finances, and monitoring program results. The Board of Directors is also primarily responsible for fund-raising for the organization, and should play an integral part in increasing community awareness about your program.

When selecting a Board, ensure that you include a group of individuals that not only represents the constituents of your program, but that also have a variety of skills.

Make sure to keep records of all board meetings, particularly ensuring that any decisions made that affect operations are recorded and distributed appropriately.

### **Establish a Management Information System**

#### **Tracking Program Outcomes**

The key for a sustainable effort is to be able to show, both qualitatively AND quantitatively, the accomplishments of your organization. To do so, effective records must be kept on both your learners and your volunteers.

While the term "Management Information System" may sound intimidating, it doesn't have to be. Using a computer program to maintain records is considered the most efficient method, because time can be saved when it comes time to prepare reports of accomplishments. However, there are literacy programs who use manual systems effectively.

When getting started, use what resources you have to record the information— just make sure it gets recorded!

Here are examples of some basic information to record and make available for reports:

**For each volunteer:**

- Beginning Date of Service
- Contact Information
- Preferred method of communication (phone, mail, email)
- Training completed (dates)
- Tutoring preference/skills (ie. ESL, Beginning Reading)
- Availability (days of week/time of day)
- Tutoring status (active available, active matched, inactive)
- Name of learner, if matched.
- Total number of hours, by month and year
- Awards Received
- Contribution Information
- Ending Date of Service

**For each learner:**

- Enrollment Date
- Contact information
- Preferred method of communication (phone, mail, email)
- Availability (days of week/time of day)
- Match Status (date)
- Name of Tutor
- Number of Hours in tutoring– running total(date)
- Materials Used
- Baseline Assessment Results (date)
- Periodic Assessment Results (dates)
- Final Assessment Results (date)
- Personal Goals to be Achieved (date)
- Personal Goals Achieved (dates)
- Periodic Behaviour Review (interview or survey)
- If left program, why?
- Involvement in Student Group
- Speaker's Bureau

## **Tracking Finances**

The program's Management Information System also must include a system for financial recording and reporting. Again, while manual systems work for very small programs, a computerized ("automated") system is recommended. Tip: when getting started, if you have a board member in the financial industry, perhaps that board member or one of his or her staff would be able to provide record-keeping services for the program during its infancy.

## **Keep It Going**

To keep adding volunteers and learners to your program, targeted awareness efforts and

ongoing development of your program is a must.

Refer to the sections on learner and volunteer recruitment for awareness ideas. You can use these outlets and methods of communication to publicize your program as a whole.

Take advantage of your board of directors' connections within the community! There's an old saying that goes, "people don't give to organizations, they give to people." Never underestimate the value of relationships that your Board members and that your program develops in the community.

## **A Public Relations Basic: The Press Release**

Don't be intimidated how to get the word out. A press release is a structured form that includes all of the pertinent information about your program, event, or other "newsworthy" accomplishment.

### **Steps to Creating a Press Release**

The Press Release heading should contain the following information:

- Contact name, phone number, fax number and email address for additional information.
- Date of the release.
- Specification as either "For Immediate Release" or "For Release on (date)" to coincide with other publicity.

Provide a headline that defines the news in the release.

Write a lead paragraph (or two) that summarizes the entire release. The lead paragraph should answer the five W's: Who, What, Where and Why and When.

Important: Put the most important information first!!! News agencies have space requirements— they may "cut" information you have provided if they don't have enough space for all of the information in the release. It is extremely important to review your release to confirm that each word is necessary and that the most important news is stated first.

The news release should be typewritten and double-spaced.

- Type "-more-" at the bottom center of the page if the release continues to another page.
- Close your news release with "###" or "-30-" typed at the bottom center of the page to signal the end of the release.

There are many websites on the Internet to help you with writing and distributing a press release. One website is [www.press-release-writing.com](http://www.press-release-writing.com) but browse the Internet for more options.

## ***Money is Important***

From what you've read so far, building a literacy program takes not only commitment and effort, but resources. Tutor training costs, reading materials, recruiting materials— the list of needs goes on and on.

The good news is that there are a variety of funding options for your literacy program. Some of them will be easier than others.

The Florida Literacy Coalition offers workshops on fund-raising and grant-writing and also has a list of [funding resources](#).

## ***Non-Profit Status***

Many individuals and companies will be hesitant to donate funds or “in-kind” gifts to your program if their donation is not tax deductible. The only way to make their donation tax deductible is to apply for non-profit status with the [Internal Revenue Service](#).

Once your program gets off the ground, you will need to consider this process. The Florida Literacy Coalition can help guide you to resources available for this purpose.

## ***Long-Term Program Development***

Preferably once your board is in place, you can make plans for long-term development of your program. Some issues to address:

- Annual strategic and tactical planning
- Resource Development Planning
- Public Relations Planning
- Volunteer Development and Retention
- Learner Development and Retention
- Learner Leadership and Involvement Activities
- Learner Feedback to address continual quality

Through the support of the Florida Department of Education, the Florida Literacy Coalition offers an annual Leadership Institute for directors and coordinators of community based literacy programs. This institute focuses on issues of common interest to CBO's such as board development, strategic planning, student assessment, and marketing and recruitment. For more information please contact the Training and Education Coordinator at 1-800-237-5113.

## ***Staying Connected***

Sign up for the Florida Literacy Coalition's free newsletter and Literacy in Florida e-mail discussion lists. Please send your name, mailing address, and e-mail address to [info@floridaliteracy.org](mailto:info@floridaliteracy.org).

## ***Florida Organizations Providing Valuable Resources***

Florida Department of Education, Division of Workforce Education

ACE of Florida

Florida TechNet

Regional Training Councils:

Region 1

Region 2

Region 3

Region 4

Region 5

Workforce Florida

## **Literacy is Worth the Effort**

Getting a literacy program started takes time, effort, commitment, and resources. A word of advice— Keep the Passion! Don't forget why you started, and don't stop until you get there. Good luck!

A special thanks to the Florida Department of Education, Division of Workforce Education for the support of the Florida Literacy Coalition and Florida's Adult and Family Literacy Resource Center.



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