



**Integrating
Volunteer Tutors
into your
Literacy Agency**

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Introduction

As we break into the third millennium, people of the United States have a growing access to a wealth of information and knowledge. These benefits, unfortunately, do not extend to our entire population. There is an increasing divide between those who are functionally literate and those who are not. Without a strong reading background, it is easy to fall further and further behind and not reap the benefits that our improved access to information provides. This disparity negatively impacts those individuals and our society as a whole.

Many organizations across the country provide assistance to undereducated adults or at-risk youth. Bolstering this effort are the many Americans who offer their time and talent as volunteer tutors in these programs. Their contributions are invaluable. However, while many literacy organizations rely heavily upon their tutors, it takes planning, time commitment, and an internal structure within the agency to recruit and retain good tutors.

This manual was designed to give agencies that offer literacy services a structure and a process to efficiently coordinate their tutors and avoid some of the common problems that plague tutoring programs. The benefits this provides will more than justify the planning involved to integrate, manage, and retain volunteer tutors. Well-planned tutor integration will empower literacy agencies by strengthening and enhancing their programs and thereby their position in the community.

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Erika Rios, *Esperanza, Inc.*
Judy Sack, *Strongsville ABLE*
Cathy Saegel, *St. Malachi Center*

We wish you every success in your literacy programs, including acquiring and retaining many wonderful, dedicated volunteers. We also welcome your comments and experience working with volunteers and in using this manual.

Catherine Thomas
Director

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Five Steps for Tutor Integration

Tutor Recruitment

- Tutor calls Literacy Hotline
- Tutor e-mails Cleveland Reads
- Tutor signs up at a fair/convention to receive information

Training Referral

- Cleveland Reads refers tutor to a training session
- Cleveland Reads sends tutor a reminder postcard

Training

- Tutor attends a Tutoring Basics training session (or skips to next step)
- Tutor attends a Building Literacy Skills training for children, adults or both

Tutor Placement

- Tutor fills out an Information Form
- Tutor receives a list of agencies that have requested tutors
- Cleveland Reads sends lists of trained tutors via e-mail to literacy agencies
 - Tutor may call agency
 - Agency may contact tutor

Tutor Intake

- Tutor meets with agency
- Tutor receives agency orientation
- Tutor is matched with learner

Italicized text indicates potential moments of delay in tutor placement

Tutor Job Description

Before engaging a tutor, consider the kind of tutor your agency needs. Create a Tutor Job Description for your agency. It can go a long way in assuring that you receive the kind of tutor your agency wants.

Elements of a tutor job description

Position title: Volunteer Tutor

Learner description: Provide a short profile of the people you serve. Who are your learners? What do they need assistance with? What kinds of materials do they use?

Agency description: Where will tutoring take place? When will the sessions be held? How will the sessions be conducted? What is the source of materials to be used?

Time commitment: Detail your short-term and long-term expectations. How many hours per week do you require? What length of time should the tutor commit to?

Qualifications: Tutor must have a minimum skill level to adequately assist a learner. What skills do you require? What should the tutor's reading level be? Does your agency assess these abilities?

Desirable qualities: Qualities such as patience and compassion are expected. Your agency may look for additional qualities, such as the personality to work with children or an adult with a learning disability.

Responsibilities: Do you want the tutor to receive training prior to tutoring? What kind of training?

Support provided: These may include monthly meetings with staff, additional training, etc.

Assessment: Do you want your tutors to keep a log of each session? This provides the opportunity to document progress.

Reports to or partners with: To whom will the tutor report each time the tutor comes to your agency?

Tutor Training

Cleveland Reads trains tutors to work with literacy providers in Northeast Ohio. Your agency may provide a tutor training or you may recommend that your tutors sign up to attend one of the following trainings (by either calling our hotline or e-mailing clevelandreads.org.)

Tutoring Basics is held on a Wednesday evening once every month.

- Introduction to tutoring
- Literacy statistics-both local and national
- Overview of the tutoring process
- Differences between adult and child learners
- Skills needed to be an effective tutor

Building Literacy Skills in Children is held monthly on Saturday mornings at alternating westside and eastside locations.

- Introduction to techniques that support both school curriculum and literacy standards
- Choosing an appropriate book
- Measuring reading accuracy
- Strategies for reading together
- Planning a tutoring session
- Measuring progress

Building Literacy Skills in Adults is held monthly on Saturday mornings at alternating westside and eastside locations.

- Discussion of barriers faced by adult learners and techniques to meet their needs
- Motivation of adult learners
- Reading strategies and techniques
- How to chart learner progress
- Techniques for effective tutoring

Tutor Expectations

Be prepared to answer some questions that prospective tutors may ask:

- How many learners will I tutor?
- How often or how many hours per week will the agency ask me to tutor?
- How long will the agency ask me to commit to tutoring?
- Will I need to bring my own materials or will they be provided?
- Will the tutoring session be structured for me, or will I provide the activities for the learner?

New tutors should know

- How to structure a tutoring session, including reading aloud, skill focused instruction, and how to focus on complex vocabulary.
- How to choose an appropriate book to use during a session.
- How to discreetly determine the reading level of their learner.
- How to help people with learning disabilities.
- How to provide a variety of materials to help either adults or children learn.
- How to identify literacy terms.

Tutor Intake

Agencies have the most success obtaining new tutors when they follow a systematic response routine.

- Provide a tutor application. (See sample in appendix.)
- Interview the tutor.
 - Make the tutor feel comfortable and welcome.
 - Explain agency profile.
 - Ask the volunteer about relevant experience.
 - Ask the volunteer about his or her expectations.
 - Determine suitability for tutor role.
- Request reference checks.
- Explain reporting system.
- Clarify entry and exit procedure.
- Introduce Code of Ethics. (See appendix.)
- If possible, assign one staff member to coordinate volunteer tutors. If tutors are able to have their questions answered immediately by the same person and continue a discussion where the last one ended, they are more likely to feel valued and integral to the agency.

Background Checks

Let prospective tutors know if your agency conducts background checks. If you do, you will need to ask them for some additional information.

Tip: If the volunteer's employer required an employment background check, that may meet your needs.

If you decide to decline a tutor, send a letter that simply states that your agency does not need their services.

Some questions to consider

- Do you need a local, statewide or national search?
- What period of time will the search cover?
- What types of crimes are and are not documented in the search?
- How long will it take for results to return?
- How much will it cost?

Where to go for criminal history checks

- **Intellicorp** - An online national criminal history resource. Nonprofits pay \$5.95 per record search. Searches are conducted online, and results are instantly printable.

(888) 946-8355

<http://www.intellicorp.net>

- **Identification Division Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation**
The free online offender search includes all offenders currently incarcerated or under some type of Department supervision. Information on offenders previously under the Department's supervision is available at 614-752-1159.

Identification Division Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation

P.O. Box 365

London, OH 43140

(614) 466-8204

<http://www.drc.state.oh.us/cfdocs/inmate/search.htm>

- **eSORN-Electronic Sex Offender Registration and Notification** - A statewide database used to track sex offenders throughout Ohio. Check their website for free information on offenders.

<http://www.esorn.ag.state.oh.us/Secured/pl.aspx>

- **Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office** - Records are available to non-law enforcement agencies for a fee of \$6.00 per record.

Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office

1215 W. 3rd St

Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Attn: Records Div.

(216) 443-6098

<http://www.cuyahoga.oh.us/sheriff/criminal.htm>

Tutor Orientation

Giving your new tutors an orientation to your agency helps them get acquainted. The more comfortable they feel with the first impression, the more likely they are to make a commitment to the organization.

- Introduce the volunteer with the agency's mission. You may want to post it in a high-visibility spot. This could keep tutors on target when they're having a particularly trying day.
- Acquaint the volunteer with key personnel. If possible, introduce tutor to all agency staff.
- Make sure the tutor understands the chain of command so that he or she knows whom to go to with questions.
- Share information about the learners you serve. You might post the Student Bill of Rights (see the appendix) in a highly visible spot for tutors and learners.
- Show the tutor where materials are kept. Give the tutor lessons and materials or tell tutor to bring his or her own.
- Identify key areas in the building.
 - Emergency exits
 - Fire extinguishers
 - Bathrooms
 - Areas of the building which are unauthorized

Matching Tutors and Learners

Successful matching will create a healthy environment where learning can flourish, so be sure your agency spends a few extra minutes making a good match. It will pay off!

Consider these tutor qualities when matching tutors and learners

- **Knowledge**—should be acquired through tutor training sessions and your own orientation
- **Skills**—important ones include language, math and science skills
- **Suitability**—confidence and a positive attitude about tutoring
- **Cultural sensitivity**—encourage diversity and cultural sensitivity in the agency

Criteria for Successful Matches

- Determine whether or not your students will have a say in the matching process. You may want to ask them beforehand about their preferences for a tutor.
- Determine the success of the match. Do both parties seem to benefit and are they at ease with one another? Are their personalities complementary? Have a back-up plan if the match doesn't seem to be working.

Managing Tutors

Good communication with your tutors will reveal any challenges and triumphs they might experience in their tutoring role. Seek input from tutors concerning your agency, its services and materials. If tutors have a stake in the program, they may become more committed to your agency.

Setting the standard of performance

- Be very clear about your expectations. What do you hope to see accomplished?
- Be organized. Set a good example for your tutors and learners.
- Be on time. Demonstrate that punctuality is a priority for your agency so that it will be a priority for them.
- Be enthusiastic in your role. Learners and tutors won't show interest in the agency or its mission if staff doesn't.
- Recognize tutor efforts and encourage tutors to recognize their learners' successes.
- Seek input from tutors concerning your operations.

Assessment

Your tutors should evaluate learner progress informally and discreetly. It is important that both the tutor and learner recognize progress.

Informal methods for a tutor to evaluate successes of learners

- **Interviewing the learner** helps the tutor and learner get acquainted while allowing the tutor to assess the learner's speaking skills through listening.
- **Asking the learner to write a description** of a personal interest or of a recently read book allows the tutor to assess the learner's ability to convert thoughts to writing, comprehend text, write legibly, spell words correctly, and use words correctly.
- **Reading aloud** allows the tutor to assess a learner's ability to pronounce words correctly, determine their reading level, sound out more difficult words, determine their meaning based on context, and comprehend the text.

Record Keeping

You may want to keep track of learner attendance and progress for several purposes. First, if your agency is evaluated, it helps to have kept good records along the way rather than scramble at the last minute. Records also track learner progress and growth.

Consider asking each of your tutors to keep a log. Two tutoring log forms are provided in the appendix. The log can also be as simple as several sheets of paper in a folder. Each page should have an appropriate heading on it. This tracking method saves the tutor supervisor time. Remember, if you keep it simple, tutors will be more likely to use it.

Developing your tutoring log

Logs are easy to use, informal, and less intimidating than most other assessment forms. Have pages or sections devoted to recording:

- Attendance
- Activities completed
- Notes and observations
- Successes and challenges

Retaining Tutors

Good tutors are hard to find. To keep the best ones around, consider these factors that have a bearing on good tutor retention.

- Having a clear, detailed job description.
- Conducting an interview.
- Keeping a volunteer recruitment log in order to keep track of everyone who has been interviewed or has expressed interest in tutoring.
 - Keep all records, files and information on tutors up-to-date.
 - Go back quarterly to contact anyone who was previously unavailable.
- Offering an orientation to your program and facility.
- Making a good placement the first time. This lets a tutor know that you are paying attention to them as an individual.
- Confirming that your tutors' services are valued.

Some simple ways to communicate respect for your tutors

- Be considerate. Call your tutor when his or her learner won't be attending the session.
- Let tutors know about vacation and snow days.
- Keep tutors up-to-date on agency events.
- Provide an occasional in-service training.
- Ask your tutors for feedback. Let them have a stake in the agency.

Some additional points to consider

- Keep your tutors posted. If your agency distributes a newsletter, include them on the mailing list. Making your tutors integral to your agency and keeping them well informed lets them have a stake in the agency. Invest in them and they'll stay invested.
- Consider developing an in-service training that is specific to your agency. You can also recommend that your tutors attend a Cleveland Reads tutor training as a refresher. Keep them on top of their game.
- Put together a binder of tutor success stories and challenges and encourage them to add to it. Your tutors can gain knowledge and perspective and share their experiences with others. (Another advantage—this project requires no maintenance on the part of agency staff.)

Recognition Suggestions

You may want to ask your tutors how they prefer to be recognized. Personalizing the recognition lets your tutors know they are unique and integral to the organization.

Acknowledging your tutors

- Give a simple certificate. (See appendix for a sample.)
- Invite them to volunteer recognition events. A recognition ceremony is held by Cleveland Reads every April.
- Send or give them thank you cards, made by either their supervisor or learners.
- Remember their birthdays.
- Give them written or verbal acknowledgement for a specific accomplishment (from staff, learner, other tutors, etc.)
- Feature them in an article in agency newsletter or community newspaper.
- Ask how they are doing and show interest in their well-being.
- Arrange for discounts or coupons from local businesses.
- Involve them in meetings.
- Refer to the websites listed on Resources page for other excellent ideas.

Appendix

Volunteer Tutor Application Form

Code of Ethics for Volunteers

Student Bill of Rights

Daily Tutoring Log for working with youth

Daily Tutoring Log for working with adults

Certificate of Appreciation

Volunteer Tutor Application Form

(please print or type)

Name _____
(last) (first) (middle initial)

Address _____
(number and street) (city) (state) (zip code)

Phone _____ Social Security Number _____
(home) (cell) (for background check)

Organization _____
(your place of employment or affiliation, if any)

_____ (number and street) (city) (state) (zip code)

Business Phone _____ E-mail _____

Personal Interests _____

Desired Learner Population

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Kindergarten | <input type="radio"/> Grades 7-8 |
| <input type="radio"/> Grades 1-3 | <input type="radio"/> Grades 9-12 |
| <input type="radio"/> Grades 4-6 | <input type="radio"/> Adult Learner |

Academic Areas of Strength/Interest _____

Highest Degree of Education

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> High School Diploma | <input type="radio"/> Associates Degree |
| <input type="radio"/> High School Equivalency | <input type="radio"/> Bachelor of Arts/Science |
| <input type="radio"/> Some College | <input type="radio"/> Graduate Degree _____ (specify) |

Last School/University Attended _____ Dates _____

Availability _____
(list days and hours)

References (3)

Name _____ Phone _____

Organization _____
(if any)

Name _____ Phone _____

Organization _____
(if any)

Name _____ Phone _____

Organization _____
(if any)

Signature _____ Date _____

Code of Ethics for Volunteers

The teacher must be recognized as the person in charge and the one to whom the learner owes his or her primary attention.

Keep confidences. Conduct yourself in a professional manner and please, do not discuss a learner with anyone other than the teacher.

Be reliable and prompt.

The staff and learners depend on you.

Be a good example for the learners.

Be patient with learners and realize that you are there to help.

Help widen the horizons of the students by being concerned, helpful and friendly.

Student Bill of Rights

I have the right to learn at my own pace
and not feel stupid.

I have the right to ask whatever questions I have.

I have the right to need extra help.

I have the right to ask a teacher for help.

I have the right not to understand.

I have the right to say, "I don't understand."

I have the right to feel good about myself.

I have the right to be treated as
a competent person.

Daily Tutoring Log for Youth

Student's name: _____

Tutor's name: _____

Date: _____

1. **What did you read today?** (Please indicate the title.)

2. **What genre did you read today?** (Please check all that apply.)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Folktale, Fable, Myth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Poetry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mystery | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

3. **What skills did you work on today?** (Please check all that apply.)

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Predicting | <input type="checkbox"/> Retelling | <input type="checkbox"/> Categorizing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comparing/Contrasting | <input type="checkbox"/> Cause & Effect | <input type="checkbox"/> Sequencing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inferring | <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluating | <input type="checkbox"/> Summarizing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | |

4. **What was the student's general attitude toward today's session?**

- Interested in the session; much interaction
- Somewhat interested in the session; average interaction
- Little interest in the session; minimal interaction

Comments: _____

5. **Summary of session.**

Student did this well:

Things that concern me:

We will continue to work on:

Ideas for future sessions:

Daily Tutoring Log for Adults

Student's name: _____

Tutor's name: _____

Date: _____

1. How did you address the student's goals today? What skills did you work on?

2. What materials did you use today?

3. What was the student's general attitude toward today's session?

- Interested in the session; much interaction
- Somewhat interested in the session; average interaction
- Little interest in the session; minimal interaction

Comments: _____

4. Summary of session.

Student did this well:

Things that concern me:

We will continue to work on:

Ideas for future sessions:

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

Awarded to

for commitment to the literacy of learners through volunteer service at

Coordinator

Date

Resources

Literacy and Tutoring

<http://clevelandreads.org/>

Greater Cleveland's literacy coalition provides research and development, advocacy, and collaboration to literacy agencies throughout Cuyahoga County.

<http://literacy.kent.edu/>

The Ohio Literacy Resource Center.

<http://www.literacyvolunteers.org/>

ProLiteracy Worldwide sponsors educational programs for all ages to help develop literacy skills.

<http://www.nifl.gov/>

The National Institute for Literacy.

<http://www.rif.org/>

Reading Is Fundamental, a national nonprofit children's literacy organization. Online and other resources for coordinators, educators, parents and learners. (Many available in Spanish.)

<http://www.serviceleader.org/>

Provides information on all aspects of volunteerism.

Volunteer Management Resources

<http://www.avaintl.org/>

The Association for Volunteer Administration.

<http://www.foundationcenter.org>

Information on every foundation in the United States.

<http://www.managementhelp.org/>

The Free Management Library(SM), a complete library for nonprofits and for-profits.

Help America Read: Coordinator's Guide

By Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas

To order, phone Heinemann: (800) 793-2154; fax: (800) 847-0938; e-mail: custserv@heinemann.com

A Legal Handbook for Nonprofit Corporation Volunteers

By James D. Dewitt

Download the full text version from: www.ptialaska.net/~jdewitt/vlh

Tutor Recognition

<http://www.energizeinc.com/ideas.html>

Volunteer recognition ideas.

<http://www.thankscompany.com/pages-volunteer/cards-thankyou.html>

Customizable cards for volunteers.

<http://www.voluncheer.com>

An assortment of volunteer appreciation gifts.

Beyond Banquets, Plaques and Pins: Creative Ways to Recognize Volunteers

By Sue Vineyard (Heritage Arts Publishing, 1998.) More than 300 ideas.

Notes



Cleveland Reads
1331 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115

Phone: 216-436-2222

Fax: 216-436-2261

Website: clevelandreads.org