



OUR MISSION

Literacy New York supports community efforts to enable adults to gain the literacy skills needed to reach their full potential as individuals, parents, workers, and citizens.

Trainer News • October, 2004

Literacy New York Announces Trainer Listserv

One thing trainers across the state tell us about our workshops is how much they enjoy the contact with others who tutor and train tutors. We learn so much from our collective experience and we want to broaden this learning as much as possible. To this end, we are introducing a trainer listserv. By signing on, you will receive messages from your colleagues across the state who want to discuss tutor training issues. If you are interested, simply send an email to: mbartlett@literacynewyork.org with LiteracyNYTrainers in the subject line. We'll sign you up!!

Literacy New York Trainer Corps Welcomes New Members – Brenda Alui and Debbie Fagans

Brenda Alui is currently the Program Coordinator at LVA – Nassau County. She holds a BS degree from Adelphi University in Garden City, New Jersey. In the past year she has conducted Tutor Training, staff development sessions for Even Start programs, and a training of trainers at the local level.

Brenda attended the Best PLUS training of trainers this past spring and summer and is currently awaiting her credentialing from CAL. (Center for Applied Linguistics) We plan to take full advantage of her expertise in presenting Best PLUS (and other) workshops in the downstate area. Welcome Brenda!!

Debbie Fagans came to Literacy Volunteers over five years ago when she began tutoring ESOL adults. She has been the Program Coordinator for LV Greater Rensselaer County in the Capital District Region for the past four years.

Debbie is a veteran educator with more than 30 years in the field. As an elementary school teacher, she taught reading to children who had difficulties in that area.

In her present capacity, Debbie helps teach the Combined Tutor Training Workshop in her affiliate and has been certified to train administrators of the new BEST Plus test.

Debbie's expertise in ESOL and her geographic position in the Capital District will prove invaluable to our Trainer Corps!

Literacy New York Training Projects

Best PLUS

BEST Plus is an individually administered face-to-face oral interview designed to assess the English language proficiency of adult English language learners. It assesses interpersonal conversational communication using everyday language.

BEST Plus allows programs to assess the everyday listening and speaking skills of their learners for a variety of purposes:

- Determine placement in a program
- Track progress
- Provide feedback to learners and teacher/tutors to improve instruction
- Evaluate program effectiveness
- Report outcomes (e.g., pre and post-testing to meet NRS requirements)

NYS Adult Education programs are mandated to begin using the test July 1, 2004. This is important to us for several reasons:

While Literacy New York affiliates are not mandated to use the BEST Plus test yet, Literacy New York, Inc. strongly encourages affiliates to transition to the BEST Plus assessment. This way, we will be prepared when this eventually happens. Also, we need to maintain consistency across programs to provide our learners a smooth transition from the volunteer tutoring program to the Adult Basic Education ABE/GED programs. (when applicable)

We have been able to access training for key Literacy New York trainers in order to provide necessary support to our network.

SED has negotiated a BEST Plus testing materials bulk rate. We are working with the NY State Education department to access BEST Plus materials for bulk rate. Those affiliates who buy in now will save considerable monies over the long haul. Literacy New York will be offering training for affiliate staff and volunteers to administer the BEST Plus test to prospective ESOL students. In order to become a BEST Plus test administrator staff and volunteers are required to attend a six-hour BEST Plus test administrator training. Literacy New York, Inc. will offer these trainings on a regional basis. Training announcements will be posted on the Literacy New York list serve and sent to affiliate leadership as soon as we get the schedule finalized.

Wilson Project

In the past few years, Literacy New York (LNY) has heard a number of consistent messages directly from the network. One message consistently raised is that the student population is increasingly difficult to serve, often demonstrating minimal gain. That message led LNY to begin discussions with a number of adult educators, literacy practitioners, reading professionals and learning disabilities researchers and experts. Those discussions led us to look at programs using the Wilson Reading System – and ultimately to look at the Wilson Reading System itself.

Throughout this process, our question was simple: Could adding an additional curriculum help affiliates to serve those students deemed difficult to serve, difficult to show gain?

Based on research, conversation and recommendations from those in the field, we decided that question was important to explore. Thus in June 2004, LNY sponsored a Wilson Language Training two-day Overview. Two dozen affiliate directors, trainers and board members participated from the local and state levels. Five in attendance began the process of becoming Wilson Language Training trainers.

What is the Wilson Reading System? It is a research-based reading and writing program. It is a complete curriculum for teaching decoding and encoding (spelling). It provides an organized sequential system with extensive controlled text to help teachers and tutors implement a multi-sensory structured language program.

LNY will pilot the Wilson Language Training at five affiliates starting in the spring of 2005. Wilson-trained tutors will then be matched with students identified as good Wilson candidates. At the completion of the pilot we will know what percentage of students who already walk through our doors are good Wilson candidates and we will follow their gains.

If our educated hunch proves correct, LNY will have a process and resources to provide Wilson Training for those affiliates meeting certain criteria. An important message is that we are NOT looking to replace any current tutor training. We are looking to identify a percentage of students that could potentially benefit from an additional training curriculum. It's exciting. And there are no guarantees – but we believe this is vitally important.

Trainer Resources

OnLine Learning

Verizon Literacy Campus www.literacycampus.org <<http://www.literacycampus.org/>> , is a free, national online training resource for adult literacy and family literacy practitioners and prospective volunteers. Launched in 2002 and funded by Verizon Communications, VLC was designed to be a useful tool to help recruit, orient and train literacy volunteers. Visitors to the VLC site can learn about adult and family literacy, find out about the many volunteer opportunities in the literacy field, and take online courses in literacy and related subjects. Here is a sampling of currently available self-paced courses, 30 – 60 minutes in length:

- Citizenship: What Volunteers Need to Know
- Culture and English Language Learners
- Orientation to Volunteering in Literacy
- Parents and Children: Natural Learning Partners
- Writing Without Fear
- Working With Adult Literacy Learners

(Adapted from Literacy Practitioner, Educational Technology Issue, June, 2004)

Trainer Tip: Human Bingo

Try this icebreaker in your next tutor training. We've found it great fun to give prizes for the first few 'Bingo's'.

Directions: Find someone who can answer “yes” to the following questions and then write his/her name in the corresponding box. Yell ‘Bingo’ when you have filled vertical, diagonal or horizontal rows.

- has lived in another country for six months or more
- was born at home
- doesn’t eat meat
- has gone bungee jumping
- Can whistle the tune to “Jeopardy!”
- Was home-schooled
- knows the capital of the Ukraine
- has eaten a “tamale”
- knows how to say “goodbye” in Russian
- has traveled to Mexico
- can hum the ABBA song “Fernando”
- does not watch TV
- sleeps on the right side of his/her bed
- has seen the movie “Italian for Beginners”
- has had dreams that have come true
- Plays a musical instrument
- can impersonate a famous actor/actress
- Know what a green card is
- can say “hello” in Chinese
- knows the capital of South Korea
- can sing our national anthem
- can dance the salsa
- knows what the longest river in the world is
- can tap dance

(Thanks goes to Kristen Lambertin, ESL Coordinator, Literacy Council of Buncombe County, Asheville, NC for sharing this icebreaker.)

Glad You Asked !!

One question we can count on in nearly every Training of Trainers Workshop, is “How do I handle difficult participants in a workshop?” So, here is a list of five common problems trainers run into and some suggestions on how you might handle these situations.

Problem: Member won’t participate. **What to do:** Use pairs and small group activities to help shy or introverted members feel comfortable. Devote some time to this person on breaks, show your interest when s/he does participate... “Thank you, we appreciate your contribution.”

Problem: Member monopolizes discussion. **What to do:** Listen with respect, then throw discussion ball to the group... “Thanks Sally, now let’s hear what others have to say about this.”

Problem: Member is argumentative. **What to do:** Control your own temper. Understand the person most likely has a strong personal conviction on the topic. Honor their experience and find merit in it if possible... “Given what you’ve told us, it makes sense that you would feel strongly about this.” If necessary have a private conversation outside the training to deal with the situation... “You seem really hot whenever we discuss _____, what’s going on with that?”

Problem: Training group is tired, apathetic, dull. **What to do:** Use humor, energizers. Display as much enthusiasm and energy as you can. Explain subjects vividly, use open questions to encourage dialogue.

Problem: Group is lost, confused, wants to work, but can’t seem to get to it. **What to do:** Use specific learning tasks. Ask the question, “Is the task clear?” before setting the group to work. If not, explain and demonstrate until you are sure the group understands the work at hand. Let the group know the amount of time they have to complete a task and give notice at halfway point. Often this encourages the group to focus.

(Adapted from Effective Small Group Communication by Earnest and Nancy Bormann. C 1972 and LVA’s Training of Trainers Workshop, Updated 2000.)

Food for Thought...

“Aoccdrnig to rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn’t mttar in what oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoentn tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer are in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a toal

mSES and you can still read it without a problem. This is because the human mind does not read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole.”

Trainer News is an online informational newsletter for tutor trainers in the Literacy New York affiliate network. If you have questions or comments about this newsletter, please contact Mary Bartlett, Training Coordinator, Literacy New York.
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