



Fieldnotes for ABLE Staff

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ABSTRACT

TLC for volunteer tutors

By Kim Rossman

The ABLE-funded organization known as Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth (TLC) provides cost-free volunteer tutor training and other valuable support services to adult education and family literacy agencies in Pennsylvania. This article outlines these services and how to access them.

Kim Rossman is training coordinator for Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth.

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TLC for volunteer tutors

By *Kim Rossman*

Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth (TLC) provides volunteer tutor training to Bureau of Adult and Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) and non-ABLE funded adult education and family literacy programs in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Association for Adult and Continuing Education (PAAACE) established TLC in 1981, as a special-interest division. TLC's services are available to over 140 programs in Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

TLC consists of three part-time staff: Kim Rossman, training coordinator; Colleen Serencsits, family literacy training coordinator; and Jill Blonski, office extraordinaire. The board consists of eight volunteer members, all professionals in the literacy field. TLC trainers are located throughout Pennsylvania.

Supporting providers

Adult education and family literacy providers are an invaluable resource for their targeted learner populations, yet these programs often struggle with low budgets. Many providers rely on volunteer tutors to provide much-needed support to their learners, and, depending on the program, offer initial tutor training to these tutors, sometimes followed by ongoing in-services. TLC supports Pennsylvania adult education and family literacy programs by providing initial and/or ongoing trainings for the programs at no cost. Several other services are available to program staff, tutors, and learners as well.

Providing training

Many Pennsylvania programs rely on TLC to provide their basic tutor training (BTT) and/or supplemental workshops after the basic training. TLC provides an extensive 12-hour BTT for tutors, which, with an additional three hours, can include training in working with English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Supplemental topics may also be presented in two- or four-hour sessions, and include those that focus on teaching strategies, student characteristics, working with students with learning differences, health literacy, and job search strategies, among others.

TLC also provides a variety of two-hour family literacy workshops, which we can offer to groups of staff, parents, parents, and staff, or *parents and children together* (called a PACT activity or Interactive Literacy Activity). These topics focus on, for example, health, safety, and learning activities for parents, or information supporting children's education or working in early childhood education classrooms for volunteers.

The full slate of TLC's training offerings is located at www.tlcliteracy.org.

Agencies choose where and when the trainings occur to serve their audience. Custom-designed workshops can meet the training needs of a specific organization with up-to-date, research-based trainings. We continually design new research-based trainings and will develop new topics upon request by contacting literacy@tlcliteracy.org.

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Supplemental services

Family literacy programs that are considering adding volunteer tutors to their services or that are struggling with their current tutor program can receive a consultation from TLC regarding the use of volunteer tutors. A consultation can cover various topics, such as reasons to include volunteers in a program; defining roles for volunteers; recruiting, selecting, and retaining volunteers; and training, supervising, evaluating, supporting, and recognizing volunteers.

As a further service to the literacy field, TLC develops and distributes six newsletters throughout the year: three for adult literacy programs and three for family literacy. The newsletters include information relevant to agencies, coordinators, tutors, and teachers and are available to any literacy agency or individual who wishes to be added to TLC's mailing list.

TLC maintains a Web site at www.tlcliteracy.org which has numerous features of interest to adult and family literacy providers: a list of available trainings; TLC's training calendar; links to relevant Web sites for tutors, parents, and administrators; information about the ABLÉ Honor Roll and the Student Group Project (both facilitated by TLC); and past issues of TLC newsletters.

Working for tutors

Tutors are a special type of person—willing to donate time, knowledge, patience, experience, and caring to help others. They deserve access to all the training and resources possible in order to best support their learners. Services provided by TLC make providing tutors with research-based information as effortless and cost efficient for agencies as possible. For more information or to request services, contact TLC staff at literacy@tlcliteracy.org.