



THE FAMILY LITERACY CONNECTION

TLC and Family Literacy

Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth's Family Literacy Services are undergoing a re-evaluation and refocusing.

Tutors of Literacy's mission is "to provide training, support services, and leadership to adult and family literacy programs throughout the Commonwealth. Our guiding principles are to promote literacy education, provide quality training for volunteer tutors and practitioners, strengthen student involvement, and increase public awareness of literacy issues." The goal of our family literacy services specifically is to train family literacy volunteers to provide assistance to the program by tutoring, mentoring, assisting in classrooms, recruiting other tutors and families, and performing other supporting duties.

When originally established, TLC's family literacy trainings supported volunteers. But lots of research, and common sense, indicate that children do better in school if their parents become very involved in the children's learning, such as by doing activities with children at home and volunteering in their schools, including the family literacy program. So as programs scheduled the trainings for their volunteers, staff realized that many of the trainings would also benefit all the parents in their program. Over the years the attendance at the trainings became skewed toward parents in the program, rather than volunteers, and trainings were often scheduled during parents' regular class hours. To model activities for the parents, TLC presented activity-based trainings for both parents and children. As an extension of the trainings for families, TLC conducted workshops during the summer supplementing the theme of the summer reading program. Eventually attendance at the trainings consisted



Winter Issue 2008

Table of Contents

TLC and Family Literacy	1-3
So You Don't Use Volunteers	3-4
Activities with One Children's Book	5-6
TLC at PAACE.....	7
TLC Family Literacy Workshops.....	7

Board of Directors 2007-08

Lee Stork	(724) 773-7810
<i>Chair</i>	
Deb McAllister	(724) 287-8711
<i>1st Vice Chair</i>	
Peggy Stroupe.....	(814) 677-7707
<i>Treasurer</i>	
Greta Boffemmyer.....	(412) 373-5727
<i>Secretary</i>	
Sue Snider.....	(412) 661-0811
<i>Past Chair</i>	

TLC Staff

Kim Rossmankim@tlcliteracy.org
Colleen Serencsits.colleen@tlcliteracy.org
Jill Blonskijill@tlcliteracy.org

Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth

925 West College Avenue
State College, PA 16801
Email: literacy@tlcliteracy.org
Phone: 814-867-0203
Fax: 814-867-0483
Website: www.tlcliteracy.org

Funded by ABLE

*Committed to Excellence in Tutor
Training and Literacy Instruction*

almost entirely of parents, supplemented by program staff and a few volunteers. Some of the trainings themselves very much targeted parents, such as Helping Your Child Succeed in School and the under-construction Preparing Your Child for Kindergarten. Bureau staff in Harrisburg noticed this trend, and have helped to guide TLC in its return to its mission.



In light of this re-evaluation, TLC's family literacy trainings will again target community members and parents who are actively volunteering or are committed to volunteering within the program. The same training and workshops will be offered, with content modified when appropriate. The hope is that volunteers will attend the trainings, then share the information and activities they learn with parents and children in the four components of the family literacy programs. The emphasis on training volunteers from outside the program will bring TLC's family literacy trainings parallel with the rest of TLC's trainings: TLC trains the volunteers, then volunteers work with the students, who in family literacy might be adults or children.

What's Different?

- The target audience for most trainings includes community members and family literacy parents who are volunteering or preparing to volunteer within the family literacy program. Once the training has been scheduled for the appropriate audience, others may attend, including staff that will be working with the volunteers, other parents, and volunteers from other programs.
- TLC will no longer offer trainings targeting all parents, such as during Parenting Ed.
- TLC will no longer offer all-activity trainings for parents and children, such as fun nights or supplementing the summer reading program.
- With one exception (Volunteers Make a Difference – Take Advantage), TLC Family Literacy will no longer schedule trainings for staff.

What's the Same?

- Trainings are a mix of background information, discussion and activities.
- TLC programs are free to your program; we are grant funded by PA's Bureau of ABLE.
- With TLC, you choose a date, time and location convenient to your volunteers. Workshops can be offered mornings, afternoons, evenings, weekdays and weekends.
- You advertise the training to your volunteers. (TLC will provide a flyer with details specific to the training.)
- TLC comes to your location.
- TLC brings handouts for all participants, which include background information and directions for activities.
- TLC brings all materials for activities done at the workshop.
- TLC provides each participant with a book related to the workshop.
- Most workshops are designed to be about two hours long, but can be adapted for your needs.
- The workshop topics and activities can be adapted for your needs.
- The workshops offer Act 48 credit or professional development credit; the proper paperwork must be completed.
- All TLC workshops, including Basic Tutor Training, Basic English as a Second Language Tutor Training, and Tutor In-Services, are also available to Family Literacy Programs.



What Do We Mean by Volunteer?



- A volunteer is not paid by your family literacy program.
- A volunteer is working to help others (not just his/her own family).
- A volunteer's hours are not counted toward any of your four component hours.
- A volunteer might be working in any of the four components of family literacy.
- A volunteer might be doing fundraising, accounting, office work, yard work, construction work, or anything else that benefits your program.

What's the Exception?

The training **Volunteers Make a Difference – Take Advantage** targets administrators, volunteer coordinators, and anyone on the staff interested in promoting the use of volunteers. The purpose of this workshop is to assist programs in utilizing volunteers by providing information related to volunteer incorporation, recruitment, management and retention. The presentation involves discussion related to the needs of the particular program, for example, by asking each participant to think of a specific task a volunteer might perform, practicing writing a recruitment ad and job description for that volunteer, and discussing where to advertise.



How Does All of This Help You?

In times of funding cuts, these services will offer family literacy programs a means to utilize the "free" resource of volunteers in their programs. TLC will help you figure out how to fit volunteers into your program, help you figure out how to find them, then train them for you.

So You Don't Use Volunteers - Why Not?

There are many valid reasons for not incorporating volunteers into your program. Here are a few of the reasons frequently mentioned, and some possible suggestions for overcoming them.

We don't have room for classroom assistants.



Maybe your classrooms, either Adult Ed or ECC, are too small to fit extra bodies, but consider one-on-one or small group tutoring in a nearby room that's vacant part of the time. One-on-one tutors for adults might meet at another time and place, such as the library, at the convenience of the tutor and the student. Think of jobs that volunteers can do from home, such as designing brochures or searching internet for activities. Volunteers might have better computer equipment and faster internet connections than your program to accomplish tasks more efficiently.

We're so busy we don't have time to get organized.

Consider the search for a volunteer coordinator your first investment. There might be potential volunteers who are great organizers, who are persuasive for a cause they admire, and enjoy talking on the phone, who then would do much of the organization for you. Not all of your volunteers need to work directly with students.

Every time you sit down to do a part of your job, think what might be delegated.



We can't find volunteers who will make a consistent time commitment.

Get them involved in the planning and/or operation for special events, such as fun nights, PACT/ILA activities, and summer reading. A few volunteers might even bring friends to help them, which increases the participation.

Everyone is so busy in this area, no one has time to volunteer.



Some companies support local non-profits by allowing employees to spend a few hours a month of company time volunteering. That might not seem like much, but on a rolling basis, a few hours from several different employees add to a considerable amount of assistance. You might also find people willing to work from home, such as doing accounting, putting together take home literacy bags, preparing materials for activities, or making phone calls for fundraising.

Our parents are not consistent in their attendance; we don't want volunteers here with no students.

More volunteers and fewer students means more direct attention to those who do come, and maybe the promise of extra attention will be attractive enough to increase attendance. But you do need to be concerned about the volunteer not feeling that time is wasted. Are there standing jobs that need to be done, such as writing or tracking down lesson plans for particular topics? Keep a file of odd jobs that it would be nice to have done when someone has the time.



Our families all speak Spanish, or a variety of languages; our volunteer pool does not.
TLC offers training in ESL for volunteers. Or look to the graduates of your program.

We had a previous bad experience with volunteers.

Learn from that experience. Consider possibilities for why it didn't work out. Did the volunteer need more guidance? Did you provide an accurate job description? Was the volunteer considered a part of the team and kept up-to-date? Or did you happen to get someone who took on more than he/she could comfortably handle? Whatever the cause, try again, but watch carefully for potential problems, and try to deal with them quickly.

We provide excellent service already; we don't need volunteers.

Service can always improve. Volunteers might provide new insight, or provide some free time for staff to re-evaluate services and areas for improvement. They might allow your program to provide services not previously offered. Ask parents for suggestions of services they'd appreciate, then look for volunteers to help provide that service.

The clearances to work with children are expensive.

Many local stores, supermarket chains, and other organizations offer small grants to local programs. Ask at the customer service counter; better yet, put a volunteer in charge of asking for donations. Sometimes all it takes is a letter on your letterhead explaining the occasion.



We're worried about confidentiality.

Talk with volunteers about the necessity of keeping information confidential and include specific examples of what is not acceptable conversation. Share with volunteers what they need to know to be effective, but no more.

Activities with One Children's Book

A children's book that lends itself to many activities is *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. We've included a few activities here to whet your appetite, and encourage you to schedule **Activities with Children's Books** to find more activities for this and other children's books.

Make a Monster Puppet

Start with a paper lunch bag, so that the unfolded bottom of the bag will be the head and mouth when you put your hand inside the bag. Draw a monster face, or paste foam shapes or other materials to make the face. Add crazy hair, ears, or whatever says "monster" to you.

Tell the Story

Have the child tell a story to go with the pictures. Let the puppet do the talking.

Discuss the Monsters

Which monster seems the ugliest? Why do you think so? Which looks the meanest? Describe monsters you have made, or some of those in the book. How many descriptive words can you use? Take turns with the child, and repeat the words that have already been used: hairy, hairy and green, hairy green and big-eyed, ...

Make Monstercide

Do you know a child who is afraid of the monsters hiding under the bed or in the closet? Make a monstercide to scare them away. Find an empty, cleaned spray bottle, and fill it partway with water. Add a few drops of a scent the child likes, and announce that this is the most feared and hated smell to monsters. You might try vanilla or almond extract, or some of an old perfume you received as a gift. Add a few drops of food coloring in the child's favorite color; again, emphasize that monster eyes can detect even the tiniest amount of that color, and it chases them away. Let the child give a special name to the monstercide, such as Monster-Be-Gone. Use the spray in whatever place the monster has been known to hide, and no monster will be seen ever again.

Blakey, Nancy. *Lotions, Potions, and Slime Mudpies and More*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press, 1996.



Have a Staring Contest

Have a straightforward staring contest to start. The winner gets to decide tonight's vegetable for dinner. Then get tricky. Tell jokes, make tickling sounds or motions, ask who just came in the door, or roar and gnash your teeth to distract your opponent.

Eat a Monster

For lunch start with a piece of bread or rice cake. Create a monster face of spreadable cheese or peanut butter, raisins, celery sticks, noodles, egg or apple wedges. For a dessert monster face start with a cookie, and create the monster of icing, string licorice, spearmint leaves, candies.



Acting Like a Monster, Feeling Like a Monster

Encourage the child to act like a monster, temporarily of course; this is best done outside to allow lots of stomping, jumping, and maybe tree climbing. When a child misbehaves, talk about the appropriate behavior, and model it if possible. Talk about the consequences of what happens when the rules are not obeyed.



Talk with the child about what makes him feel wild, and what he wants to do at that time. If those actions would not be appropriate behavior, think of things to do instead.

What Animals Really Live in the Forest or Jungle

Get books from the library that describe real animals that live in the forest or jungle.

Can You Grow a Jungle?

You can't turn the classroom or the child's bedroom into a real jungle or forest, but you can grow plants in the room. Give the child a potted plant to nurture. Wet a sponge and spread grass seed on it; keep the sponge wet and see how high the grass grows.

Grow a Monster

Put potting soil or dirt in a Styrofoam cup. Cover the soil with grass seed, and cover it with a thin layer of soil. Keep the soil moist, and watch the grass grow. Draw a monster face on the cup. When the grass is high enough, cut it into strange monster hair.

Sing Monster Songs

Sing *Monster Mash* by Bobby Picket. Get the lyrics at Lyrics on Demand www.lyricsondemand.com/

Adapt *If You're Happy and You Know It* (Preschool Education www.preschooleducation.com/)

If you're a monster and you know it wave your arms
If you're a monster and you know it wave your arms
If you're a monster and you know then your arms will surely show it
If you're a monster and you know it wave your arms.

Show your claws, gnash your teeth, stomp our feet, growl out loud

Adapt *You Are My Sunshine*. (Preschool Education www.preschooleducation.com/)

You are my monster, my only monster.
You make me happy, when I am sad.
You never know dear, how much I love you.
Please don't take my monster away!

Adapt *Ten Little Indians*.



Take Home Activities

Several of these activities would work in take-home bags. It would be relatively easy to supply the materials for paper bag puppets and grass seed hairy monsters. Ask staff and parents to save empty spray bottles. Provide the words for songs to sing, or a recording of the songs. Include a non-fiction book about jungles or strange animals that really do exist. Include the instructions for one or more of the other activities.

TLC at PAACE

TLC will present or be involved with several workshops at the PAACE Midwinter Conference February 6 to 8. Please come visit us at our table in the Marketplace or at a session. Be sure to complete a chance for TLC's basket of goodies.



- Pearls of Wisdom Facilitator Training at 7:15 pm Wednesday
- TLC Opens Windows for Fresh Ideas at 10:15 am Thursday
- Opening Windows: the Literacy Administrator's View at 2:15 Thursday
- ITS Networking Time at 4:15 Thursday
- Opening Windows for Diversity at 8 am Friday
- More Activities with Children's Books at 9:30 am Friday
- Fresh Air Just in Time: Rethinking Tutor Training at 11:00 am Friday



Family Literacy Workshops Offered by Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth

Goalsetting for Volunteers
Activities with Children's Books
Science Activities for Family Literacy
Math Activities for Family Literacy
Geography Activities for Family Literacy
Food Activities for Family Literacy
Volunteers in the Early Childhood Classroom
Supporting Children's Education for Volunteers
Helping Children Succeed in School
Volunteers Make a Difference - Take Advantage

For the most up-to-date listing of TLC activities check e-campus at <https://www.ecampus.ed.state.pa.us/> or call TLC at 814-867-0203.

To schedule or receive information about any of TLC's free trainings, please contact Kim Rossman or Colleen Serencsits by phone at (814) 867-0203 or by email at literacy@tlcliteracy.org, kim@tlcliteracy.org, or colleen@tlcliteracy.org

Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth
925 West College Avenue
State College, PA 16801