

Welcome to
Literacy Volunteers of Washington County
(LVWC)

Tutor Handbook
2023-2024



7 Elm Street (Christ Church)
P.O. Box 245
Westerly, RI 02891

www.literacywashingtoncounty.org

Welcome

Welcome and thank you for tutoring at LVWC. This handbook is a helpful source of information, tutoring tips, and best practices. It is a work in progress. (Aren't we all?) Please suggest improvements and additions.



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About Us

Literacy Volunteers of Washington County assists adults interested in improving their literacy skills through free programs based on a participant's individual goals. Our services include adult basic literacy (reading, writing and conversational English), English for speakers of other languages, citizenship preparation, financial literacy, career advancement, and GED support.

Important Contact Information

Phone Number

401-596-9411

Executive Director

Mary Carol Kendzia

LVWCExeDir@gmail.com

Literacy Specialists

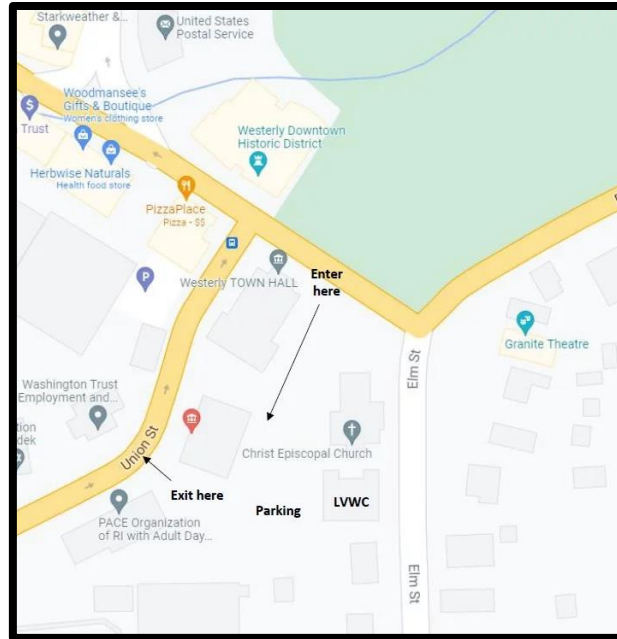
Theresa Gregal

lvwctgstaff@gmail.com

Barbara Heuer

lvwcbhstaff@gmail.com

About Us



Park in the Christ Church parking lot and go through the glass door.



After you walk through the glass door, turn left.



Walk through the red door.



Follow the hallway to LVWC.

Schedules

Office and Staff Hours

LVWC Office Hours:
M-F, 9:00 to 2:00 pm

Literacy Specialists Hours:
Theresa: M-Th, 9:00 to 1:00 pm
Barbara: M-T, 9:30 to 12:30 pm



Tutor Gatherings

Tutor gatherings are usually held on the last Monday of every month at 11:30. These are informal meetings where tutors can swap stories and share ideas. To better serve all of Washington County, locations alternate each month between LVWC and Kingston Free Library. You will be notified each month through email, our social media, and on our website.

Click here for a list of dates: <https://www.literacywashingtoncounty.org/connect-with-tutors>



Schedules

Conversation Classes

These classes and groups are subject to change. Please refer to our website for the latest information or call us at 401-596-9411.

LVWC Conversation Classes (Not available during summer hours)

When: Tuesdays from 11:00am-12:00pm

Where: 7 Elm Street (Christ Church), Westerly, RI

All levels welcome

When: Wednesdays from 11:00am-12:00pm

Where: 7 Elm Street (Christ Church), Westerly, RI

All levels welcome

Graduate Village (URI) Conversation Class

When: Mondays 5:30-7:00pm

Type: Hybrid

Email Barbara Oberle to register at oberlejj@verizon.net

Please check our website periodically for new offerings and changes throughout the year.

Click here: <https://www.literacywashingtoncounty.org/classes-gatherings>

Reporting Tutor Hours

Please sign in/out when you come to LVWC. If tutoring off-site, please report hours to Theresa using the form on our website, <https://www.literacywashingtoncounty.org/tutors> or email lvwctgstaff@gmail.com. This is important for several reasons:

1. To ensure that students (and tutors) are recognized for the time they dedicate to learning when we give out certificates at the end of the year.
2. Reporting hours is also an integral part of writing grants to support LVWC.
3. When determining scholarship opportunities, we look at hours/effort invested by students.
4. General reporting to our Board of Directors, with which we monitor organization needs and growth.

Off-Site Tutor Reporting

Please report your hours with this online form if you do not meet at the literacy center in Westeryly or do not use the LVWC Zoom account. This information is very important.
Thank you!
*required information

Tutor Name: *

Tutor E-mail: *

Date of Meeting: *

Meeting Length (1 hr, 2 hr...)*

Student Name: *

Notes:

Send



Left to right: Kathy Busse, Manar Alakad, Yamila N. Garcia (Richins Scholarship Winner 2021), and Mary Carol Kendzia.



Maggie Zeng (Student of the Year 2019-2020) with Mary Carol Kendzia

Our Approach

LVWC serves adults and is student-centered.

Adults: We define adults as being over age 18 and having adult responsibilities at home and at work. We treat our students (and tutors) with respect and acknowledge their individual backgrounds and fully formed attitudes. Our goal is to meet the practical literacy needs of adults. We strive to create a safe atmosphere where students are comfortable learning this difficult language. Heck, we even offer a coffee machine!

Student-centered: We tailor tutoring sessions to fit the needs and goals as expressed by our students. We aim to make our sessions relevant and meaningful to the individual. An advantage of one-on-one tutoring is that student and tutor can work together on material at a level right for them. We are collaborative. We expect our students to participate fully in their language learning. We work to equip students with practical linguistic skills they need to operate in an English-speaking community.

We are here to help adults improve their communication skills. We are NOT a social service agency, although we can help adult students with the language they may need to navigate social services. We can refer students to appropriate support organizations and help them master the language needed to interact with these.



Maureen Logan and Kevin Romero

Your Role as a Tutor

Your role as a tutor is to help adults acquire the literacy skills they will need to successfully function in society. This is done through working one-to-one or in a small group that focuses on student-centered learning.

Qualifications: The best tutors are dependable, interested in people, good listeners, flexible, patient, optimistic, friendly, and open-minded. A sense of humor is a plus.

Benefits: As a tutor, you will be helping someone learn and grow. You get to learn about other lifestyles and cultures different from your own. You can also feel good about being a positive force in a student's life, our organization, and our community.

Training: Here at LVWC we found that “it may be more useful to completely rethink the training model by investing less up front and shifting these resources to more intensive on-the-job support and development. We owe both the adult learners and the volunteers a new effort to support their work in the best way possible” (Belzer, 2006). This is what is known as “just in time” training. Since learning here is student-centered, it makes sense to spend more time helping the tutor help the student as they go. After you are matched with a student, one of our literacy specialists will contact you to offer help, direction, and ideas on how to work with your individual student. It is also important to ask for help as needed, too.

Location of Lessons: We encourage tutors and students to meet either here at LVWC or at any safe, neutral, public location. Meeting in private homes is not advised.

Time Commitment: We recommend meeting once a week for an hour to start. You can always add extra time and extra days after you get started.

Belzer, A. (2006) Less May Be More: Rethinking Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Training. *Journal of Educational Research*, 38(2), 111–140.

Our Approach

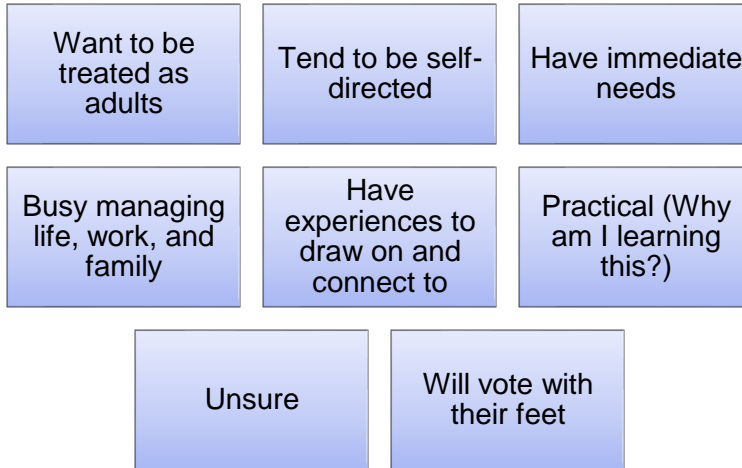
Responsibilities:

- Meet regularly with your student.
- Maintain the student's confidentiality.
- Provide encouragement.
- Help the student set goals, and with the student, evaluate those goals periodically.
- Prepare for your meetings with student-centered activities.
- Inform a LVWC staff member of any problems or concerns you may have with your match (such as personality conflicts or absenteeism).
- Let LVWC if you and your student stop meeting, whether the break is permanent or temporary.
- If you and your student meet at LVWC, please make sure both you and your student sign in and out on the sheet provided.
- If you are meeting elsewhere or online, it is important to fill out our Off-Site Tutor Reporting form from our website (on the Tutor page) on a regular basis. These hours are collected and recorded.



Our Approach

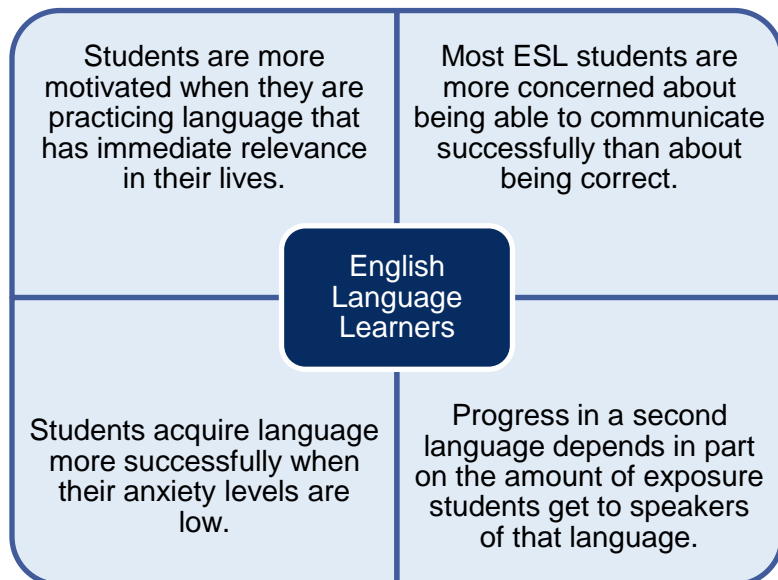
Traits of Adult Students



Barbara Heuer and Kevin LaBombard



Grace Surdyka and Xiufang Li



Tutoring Adults: 10 Commandments

- 1. Speak as clearly as you can at a moderate pace.** With beginning students, you may have to slow your pace even more.
- 2. Use simple sentences and simple or familiar words.**
- 3. Pause frequently to check for comprehension.** If a student does not understand, use repetition, rephrasing or a demonstration, example, or visual.
- 4. Encourage students to talk as much as possible.**
- 5. Praise students for their practice.**
- 6. Repeat, repeat, repeat – lesson material, that is.** Whenever possible, find ways to incorporate material that are teaching into subsequent sessions and activities. Repetition is the true key to learning.
- 7. Work with students** on ways to figure out definitions on their own. (e.g., look at surrounding words for context, prefixes, similar words, etc.)
- 8. Remember you're teaching adults.** It's not the same as teaching language to children. Adults bring a wealth of life experience and often, work and family experience to the table. Although some material geared toward children may be adapted for adults, you don't want students to feel insulted or talked down to.
- 9. Connect what you teach to students' lives.**
- 10. Take your time.** It's common for new ESL tutors to whiz through material. With experience, you'll find that slowing down and repeating material give students more time to process what they are learning.

From *Teaching Adults, An ESL Resource Book*, New Readers Press

General Guidelines



Focus on sessions that end with successes. No success is too small.



Repeat meaningful material so that it "sticks."



Model correct language/usage for students to emulate.



Practice active listening skills.



Account for different learning styles (auditory, visual, tactile).



Encourage mistakes, as they are vital to learning.

Meeting Your Student for the First Time

When we match you with a student, the first thing you want to do is to get to know them. It is best to put the student at ease. In order to avoid awkward silences, it is best to be prepared with some ideas and interview questions. Think about how you will start and end the session, and think about the essential information they may need.

Here are some ideas for a successful first meeting:

1. Ask open-ended questions to encourage the student to talk about herself/himself, e.g., Why did you come to Literacy Volunteers of Washington County? What are some things you want to work on? Where do you use English in your daily life? Write down this information because it will help inform instruction. Smile.
2. If you are comfortable, show a picture or two of your family or other things about yourself you would like to share, and then invite the student to do the same. Listen.
3. Get to know each other by discussing hobbies, interests, families, and jobs. Listen.
4. Agree on a day, a time, and a place to meet (for example, Thursdays at 10:00 at the LVWC Center). Exchange contact information in the event one of you needs to reschedule or is running late. Be clear with expectations, for example, “Call me or text me as soon as possible if you cannot make our meeting.”
5. Together, reflect on how the session went. What did you learn today? Is there something you do not understand? What should we do differently next time?
6. Discuss your second meeting by confirming meeting time and place, make sure you have correct contact information.
7. It is very important to LISTEN to your student. Learn about their difficulties, interests, and motivations to also inform instruction. Take notice of their body language and facial expressions.
8. Take notes. Let your student know you may be writing things down to help with future instruction.

Some students will experience difficulty with this level of dialogue. In those cases, much of this information may be gathered over many sessions. That is okay!

Session Ideas and Techniques

Suggested Session Sequence

Warm Up Activity

- small talk about the weather, family, last weekend, etc.

Focus for the Session

- introduce focus of the day's session based on student's needs
- agree why it is important

Present & Practice

- present the vocabulary, pronunciation, reading material, or writing activity (limit new material, one thing at a time) that ties in the focus
- practice using repetition, role playing, hands on activity

Wrap Up

- repeat what was learned (success!)

Afterwards

- homework is rarely done, but it reinforces
- encourage the practice anyway.

Need help with this?
Talk with a literacy specialist.
We are here to help.

Session Ideas and Techniques

Theresa's Pronunciation Activity



Warm Up Activity: How was your weekend? Hear any English recently that confused you? Where have you used English this week?

Focus for the Session: To evaluate and target student's pronunciation problems using a simple paragraph the student can read.

Present and Practice: Make two copies of the paragraph. Give the student a copy to read. Model the correct pronunciation by reading the paragraph first while the student follows along. Then invite the student to read it to you.

On your copy, circle where the student has pronunciation errors. Do not correct the student yet. It may be beneficial to have the student repeat the reading a second time while circling errors again.

Look at what you have circled, especially if it was circled twice. Practice correct pronunciation of these words. Consult pronunciation videos from the LVWC website if necessary.

Sometimes the student may want definitions for the words they may not know. Though that is not the point of this activity, it is perfectly fine to do that. Invite your student to make a list of these new vocabulary words with you.

Have the student read the paragraph again. Circle errors on your copy. Let your student know where they improved in their pronunciation since the start of the session no matter how small.

Wrap Up: Ask your student, what did you learn today? (Hopefully, how to pronounce some words and new vocabulary.)

Afterwards: Invite your student to practice reading aloud this paragraph to work on their pronunciation. They can consult LVWC online resources for pronunciation videos if they get stuck and forget how to make certain sounds.

Try a different paragraph for four sessions. Then repeat the first one you used. It would one way to measure improvement with pronunciation that both you and your student can measure and see.

Resources

You do not have to reinvent the wheel! There are all sorts of resources available to you for any tutoring situation you may encounter. We've put many of them on our website.

We are continually adding resources under the tutor tab on our website. These address all aspects of understanding, listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. We also have print materials and visuals.

We are long time members of ProLiteracy, the nationwide organization supporting adult literacy. Useful and ready-to-apply tutoring tips are available from them on our website.

Theresa and Barbara are here to support you. Feel free, always, to ask for our help. Please suggest resources you've discovered anytime.

