

New Mexico Coalition for Literacy

# PREPARING TO TRAIN TUTORS

HOW TO HAVE ALL THE NECESSARY ELEMENTS IN  
PLACE BEFORE TRAINING BEGINS.



NMCL

The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy

Literacy resources  
for adult students,  
tutors, and program  
administrators

## a simple guide:

Recruit them

Orient them

Train and Match them

Support them

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## TRAINING CALENDAR SUGGESTIONS

Weeks 1 & 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
<p>Determine whether you need a Basic Literacy training or an ESL training.</p> <p>Recruit 12-15 volunteers: Distribute fliers, get media attention, public speaking, and interviews.</p> <p>Make sure there are at least the same number of students waiting to be matched as there are tutors.</p>	<p>Continue recruitment and initiate training arrangements with the NMCL.</p> <p>Determine a training location.</p> <p>Set a date in week 4 for Orientation.</p>	<p>Confirm volunteer numbers with the NMCL to be sure training can be scheduled.</p> <p>Conduct a 2-hour pre-training Orientation and pass out a copy of TUTOR or I SPEAK ENGLISH to volunteers, to be read before training.</p>	<p>While waiting for training, involve new volunteers in other areas of the program. Invite them to attend meetings, social events, and in-service activities as observers. You should be in touch with the NMCL trainer by now.</p>	<p>Arrange for refreshments and training logistics. How will the volunteers be seated, what do you need for the trainer, who from your program will attend the trainings with the volunteers? Do you have access to a VCR/monitor, and flip chart?</p>

*Training volunteers requires advanced planning and preparation that can be performed by the program director, an administrative volunteer, or by a board committee.*

*Lack of conscientious planning and preparation will impact your volunteers as well as your reputation in the community. Word gets out quickly when a program appears to be unable to control its resources. Training is an integral part of the infrastructure and success of an adult literacy program.*

## **VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT:**

Who can help?

Board members

Friends

Church notices

Libraries

Other tutors

Private clubs

Corporations who want employees to volunteer

Local radio and cable TV

## **STUDENT RECRUITMENT:**

Put announcements (in Spanish for ESL) at:

Laundromats

Restaurants

Human services organizations

Health clinics

Local radio and cable TV

TIP: Most people can read a little and are insulted by the concept that they are illiterate. Always approach people with a concept that they can improve their skills. Most of your students will be able to read at between a 2<sup>nd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> grade level, but need vocabulary and comprehension improvement in order to improve their work and personal experiences. Many have problems understanding what they read because they can't decode what they see on a page.

## Step 1

### **RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS**

The NMCL requires a minimum of 10 volunteers for the standard certified tutor training. That means you should have at least 12-15 volunteers recruited for training, as usually they aren't all able to attend when training comes around. That also means that there should be at least 10 or more students waiting to be matched with a tutor. Ideally, the students should already be waiting for a tutor at the point you decide to train. A yearly strategic plan can be very helpful in planning your tutor and student recruitment activities. Depending on your community profile, you are probably reaching less than 10% of adults who need your help.

Through outreach to the media, private clubs, churches, public speaking engagements, fliers, etc., you should be able to bring in volunteers for training. It's hard work, but never time wasted.

Programs don't want to keep students waiting for services for too long, and have resources in the office that will keep them involved until they can be matched with a tutor. Good software, workbooks, audio books, videos and "floating volunteers" who will help small groups and individuals working on computers, can make the difference and keep students involved. Volunteers waiting for training can help out with a briefing as to how the software works, how to set students up with self-paced materials, and how to be generally supportive in the program. They can be trained to administer the ESLOA (for ESL students) and the READ (for literacy students) tests so that every student has a profile before they are matched.

New program directors should consider joining the *Professional Program Directors Association* (PPDA), where New Mexico directors meet and share ideas for student retention as well as other issues that pop up during the year.

## ORIENTATION AGENDA SAMPLE:

### A G E N D A

- Sign in and refreshments
- Introductions, greetings, program overview (Invite a board member to help greet volunteers). Briefly state statistics and student characteristics. You can ask them what they think makes a good tutor. You may want to read about these issues by reading I SPEAK ENGLISH or TUTOR before the Orientation. The trainer will go into more detail on the subject at the workshop.
- Ask attendees to briefly introduce themselves and state why they are interested in becoming a tutor.
- Experienced tutor(s) can discuss their work with a student.
- Discuss program requirements: turning in hours every month, etc. (you may want to emphasize that the monthly reporting may be the only documentation a student has that recognizes his or her efforts to improve their skills. We owe them and donors information on student accomplishments).
- Explain your relationship with the NMCL.
- Invite questions.
- Ask for a show of hands as to who will continue with their commitment. Hand out the training book so that volunteers can familiarize themselves with the material after they leave, remind them to bring the books to the training, and give details about training logistics.

## *Step 2*

### ORIENTATION

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A two-hour orientation for volunteers should be required one or two weeks before the training. This is your best opportunity to clarify your program requirements such as reporting hours, goals met, and student progress so that time is not taken up by program related questions during training. Volunteers will have an opportunity to meet one another before training begins. Have plenty of refreshments.

If you include a seasoned tutor or two in the Orientation to discuss tutoring with the group, volunteers will benefit from the information. They will have a better idea as to time and energy commitment, and what tutoring sessions look like. Some programs take advantage of the gathering to sign volunteers up for refreshments for the two-day training. This is also a great time to introduce students waiting to be matched.

At the end of Orientation, one or two volunteers may decide not to become tutors. Have other ways available for them to serve. Hand out the training books (I SPEAK ENGLISH or TUTOR) to those who have committed to be trained so that they can pre-read the material and be well prepared for the workshop.

## Training

Your trainer will discuss at some depth the characteristics of a good tutor, as well as the characteristics of students in general. Adults learn differently, and tutors will understand the difference between teaching adults as opposed to teaching children. Trainees will learn about specific techniques in working with students (ESL or Basic Literacy), and they will have an opportunity to do group work and role-playing. The trainer will give information on what students need at every level of proficiency. One of the advantages of matching tutors and students during the training is that they will see their student's level and techniques will be more meaningful during training.

The trainer will probably offer a morning and afternoon break each day, and there will be a lunch break, of course. The timing in training is very carefully monitored by the trainer, as there is so much information and practice that must be presented in a limited time frame.

Tutors should receive a certificate after training. The program creates the certificate and the trainer can sign it while there. Some programs give the certificate right away; others prefer to wait until the Follow-Up meeting, about a month after tutors have been matched. Other programs wait until the tutor has been working with a student for a certain length of time. Many programs like to re-certify their tutors yearly, as the NMCL re-certifies trainers every year.

## Matching

A trainer may mention a problem with a volunteer and recommend that they not be matched with a student for one reason or another. This is rare, but it does happen, and it's a good idea to have alternative forms of service for those who may be problematic. Some options might be to work a telephone tree, checking in on tutors to make sure they are still seeing their students, or managing your library, working on the newsletter or help in collecting data. There is always something to do, and having taken the training can only enhance their expertise in other areas of work with your program. They can still be certified; just don't match them. You can say privately, "I wondered if you would be willing to help us in another way. We are strapped for help and I think you would be very good at...." We can't afford to make enemies in the community, and everyone can help in one way or another.

The perfect arrangement is one where the tutor meets with the student twice a week for an hour and a half at whatever hour works best. Having said that, many tutors find they can only meet once a week. That can work if the material and lessons are planned in such a way that the student does a little practicing during the week.

In terms of character considerations when matching, keep in mind your first impression of the person as you interviewed them. Do they seem patient and able to work with a shy, limited individual, or are they high-energy, easily frustrated, and may be better with a more advanced student? Whatever your decision, make it clear to both the student and the tutor that they can call and change the match at any time.

### *Step 3*

#### **TRAIN AND MATCH**

A program director can make no greater mistake than by not having students for new tutors immediately after training. It is an abuse of their time, of donor funding, and of your reputation in the community. It is a signal to the community that your services may not be needed. This is why it is important not to train until you have a student waiting list. Tutor/student recruitment is a balancing act.

Someone from your program should be at the training site at least 45 minutes before the training begins to help set up refreshments and seating, make sure the VCR or other equipment is working, welcome the volunteers and introduce the trainer. Someone should also return at the end of the training day to help close up. The best way to handle things is to have someone there through the entire training in case something goes wrong, photocopying is needed, or the trainer needs support. It needn't be the same person; people can take turns quietly checking in at the training, just to make sure everything is running smoothly.

As you can readily see, there is much to do and to arrange for in advance of training.

You should have informational enrollment forms from your students telling about time availability for tutoring, interests, and skill levels. You should also have similar information from new volunteers reflecting background and availability information. These forms will assist you in determining tutor/student matches. Another way of matching-and it's more fun-is to tape a brief one-page bio for each student around the training room. Tutors can pick a student themselves while they are being trained. It makes everything real and the training more relevant.

Invite previously trained tutors to attend for a brush-up (you can re-certify them), and invite board members who may be interested in all or part of the training; these numbers count towards the 10 required attendees.

## CHECKLIST

### Training:

- Recruitment (help lined up)
- NMCL contacted re date and type of training (ESL or Basic Literacy)
- Location secured
- Training volunteer “monitors” secured (from your program)
- All equipment and seating arranged for (tables, chairs, Flip chart, VCR or DVD player)
- Date for Orientation set

### Orientation:

- Location secured
- I SPEAK ENGLISH or TUTOR books\*
- Speakers (seasoned tutors, board member) confirmed
- Agenda prepared
- Sign in list
- Refreshment sign up for volunteers for both training days (or other arrangements)

\* You can purchase the books from New Readers Press, [www.newreaderspress.com](http://www.newreaderspress.com) or call 1-800-448-8878. Don't forget to check the NMCL Materials Grant application for financial assistance.

## *Step 4*

### **SUPPORT**

**Plan:** Map out details as to when and how you will perform outreach and recruitment, and determine who can be of help. Be aware of students waiting for help, how many tutors you need, and recruit more students if you don't have 10 waiting. Have materials at your center that untrained tutors and students can work with while waiting for training date.

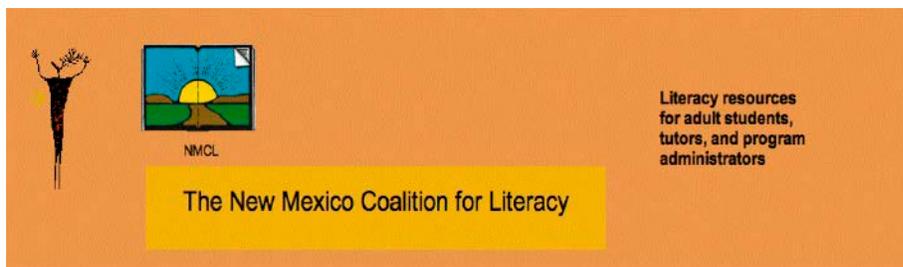
**Orientation:** Have books for volunteers. I SPEAK ENGLISH, for ESL tutors and TUTOR, for Basic Literacy tutors. Invite one or two seasoned tutors to talk to them about the experience. Have an agenda to hand out, and have them sign in as they enter. Have refreshments.

**Training:** Have a program representative available at the training, and be sure all equipment is operating. Begin tutor/student matches right away.

**Follow-Up:** On the last training day, plan a date for a follow-up meeting so that tutors can discuss their students and their experiences and do some problem solving together. Provide refreshments.

The NMCL will train your volunteer tutors. We certify and contract our professional trainers. Our tutor training is nationally certified, and your volunteers will be prepared to confidently work with a student. You can apply for a \$500 Materials Grant to help you pay for the tutors' books. You can either lend the books to the tutors from your program library, charge for them (only what you paid), or give them away. We recommend that you lend them if you have limited funding. There is no charge for any of our services to you.

If you would like to join the Professional Program Directors Association (PPDA), contact the NMCL office. There is no membership fee, and the NMCL will cover your expenses in order to attend meetings.



[www.nmcl.org](http://www.nmcl.org)

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