

## A Training Session (Tips for Tutors)

When someone contacts Tri-County Life Learners and expresses an interest in becoming a tutor, I want to get him/her started as soon as possible. I don't want to ask the candidate to wait until we have enough volunteers to hold a training class. Instead, I use the coordinators in order to find an appropriate adult student, and then I screen the student to see just where he/she is and choose appropriate materials that are neither too hard nor too easy for that student. In other words, I find an instructional level and pick materials that match that level. I then write out a lesson plan or two and invite the prospective tutor in for a training session.

I spend an hour or two with each new tutor preparing him/her to work with a specific student. There are general topics to discuss that pertain to all adult students. I talk about the people in our lives that we learn from as well as the knowledge an adult learner has accumulated in his/her lifetime. We talk about sight words and families of words. There are errors to attend to: which ones we bring to the student's attention and which ones we ignore. There are editing issues versus the getting down of words on paper just to create meaning. There are lesson plan forms to discuss as well as student progress reports. Yet each student will have a specific program (materials), and it is important that I show each tutor how to use those very specific materials.

The materials we use become our curriculum. We have chosen materials for the beginning reader, the high beginning reader, low intermediate, and high intermediate reader. Those materials look quite different and serve different purposes. In *The New Teacher Training Handbook* (Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, 2005), we learn that there are four indicators that show what teaching in adult education looks like. Curriculum is number one on that list.

A student at the beginning level, will be learning sight words, vowel sounds, and how to problem solve a word. At the intermediate level, the focus becomes comprehension and higher level writing skills. I show each tutor just how to use those materials that match a student's need. I cannot do that in a large group setting. I find that by working one-on-one with a tutor, I don't overwhelm them with too much information. I simply show them a plan to start with and let them begin. As questions or concerns arise, I am ready to observe the student and see if a change in strategy is needed.

I encourage new tutors to go beyond the lesson plans that I introduce. There are many lesson ideas on the internet: biographies, stories, grammar and math examples and exercises. The materials that I provide are a core from which new spokes will emerge. I believe in the power of one-on-one training sessions. I have seen the fine results our tutors are getting so I know the model works. I will close with a quote by E.C. Lindeman that I believe in, "None but the humble become good teachers of adults...Indeed, in some of the best adult classes it is sometimes

difficult to discover who is learning the most, the teacher or the students.”

Works Cited:

1. Holt, Susan T. *New Teacher Training Handbook*. Richmond: Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, 2005.

Glenn G. Coats