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AUTHOR   Imel, Susan
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ABSTRACT
        Although volunteer tutors traditionally have formed
the basis of the programs of Laubach Literacy Action and Literacy
Volunteers of America, volunteers have begun to play a greater role
in adult literacy instruction provided through community-based
organizations, correctional institutions, churches, and federally
funded adult basic education. Ilsley has identified five elements
common to all literacy volunteer programs: purpose, scope,
organizational control, professionalism, and finance. No single
combination of these variables is appropriate for every station;
instead, programs should be tailored to the needs of the group or
community to be served. Likewise, selecting an appropriate
administrative approach is important. Criteria for selecting
volunteers, clarification of the assumptions about volunteers that
are held by the organization developing the literacy program, and
specification of the relationship between organizational setting and
the establishment of a climate for volunteer participation are some
of the many considerations that must be addressed. Administrators
deciding to incorporate volunteers into adult literacy programs must
also consider the myths, advantages, and disadvantages associated
with literacy volunteerism. There is no shortage of resources
available for those wishing to develop administrative guidelines and
procedures for adult literacy volunteer programs, with as much as
three-fourths of the literature base being devoted to administrative
aspects of program development. (MN)

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ADULT LITERACY VOLUNTEERS

Since the early 1980s, a number of efforts have focused atten-
tion on adult illiteracy and point to its growing recognition as a
national problem These include the Adult Literacy Initiative
and the National Adult Literacy Project, carried cut by the U S
Department of Education; and the Business Council for Effec-
tive Literacy, formed by Howard McGraw as a vehicle to
involve businesses in adult literacy programs at the local level
As a result of these recent efforts, a number of aspects of adult
literacy education have been highlighted Chief among these is
adult literacy volunteerism This ERIC Digest examines such
aspects of adult literacy volunteerism as recent developments,
program characteristics, and advantages and disadvantages of
using volunteers and suggests resources for use in developing
volunteer programs

Recent Developments in Adult Literacy Volunteerism

Volunteers have become an increasingly important component
of adult literacy programs Although volunteer tutors have
formed the basis of the programs of Laubach Literacy Action
(LLA) and Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) for many
years, in the past 15 years the use of volunteers in adult liter-
acy programs has spread to a number of other settings Volun-
teers currently contribute to programs in such settings as
federally funded adult basic education, community-based
organizations, libraries, correctional institutions, and churches
As a result of increased use of volunteers in expanded settings,
a new era of volunteerism is evolving. It is characterized by the
following four trends professionalization of volunteerism,
changes in the makeup of the volunteer pool and a more varied
use of volunteers, emergence of corporate-sponsored volun-
teers, and greater cooperation in the field (Kangisser 1985)

A number of recent developments have served to increase the
visibility of the literacy volunteer movement Chief among
these has been the development of a national advertising cam-
paign designed to attract volunteers into literacy settings
through public service television and print announcements
The campaign, which was developed through the efforts of the
Coalition for Literacy and the American Association of Adver-
tising Agencies, prompted more than 50,000 individuals to offer
their services in its first 5 months of operation (Ilsley 1985)

As a result of increased visibility and use, volunteers are per-
ceived as a valuable resource for adult literacy programs
However, their role must be considered and planned for within
the comprehensive framework or structure of a program If it is
not, volunteers are likely to be a liability rather than an asset to
an adult literacy program

Characteristics of Literacy Volunteer Programs

Through an analysis of the literature, Ilsley (1985) identifies
five elements common to all literacy volunteer programs, pur-
pose, scope, organizational control, professionalism, and
*e. Although each literacy program possesses all five of

these elements, variation within each of the elements leads to
the great diversity that exists among programs A brief descrip-
tion of each element demonstrates how this diversity occurs

- **Purpose** refers to the goals of the program, its mission, and
  objectives Literacy programs usually have one of the follow-
  ing as their major purpose: teaching reading and numeracy
  skills; problem solving through the acquisition of coping
  skills; or political action
- **Scope** means population and area served. Programs may
  restrict their services either to a geographic area or to a spe-
  cific subgroup of the population
- **Organizational setting** refers to the organizational arrange-
  ment of the program Programs may be independent or they
  may be affiliated with larger organizations such as LVA or
  LLA. Independent programs may be attached to a larger
  organization or may receive funds from multiple sponsors A
  few literacy programs are both private and independent, that
  is, they stand alone with no direct financial or organizational
  association with another organization.
- **Professionalism** refers to the practice of training and using
  the skills of volunteers. Among literacy programs there is
  great variation in the selection and preparation of volunteers
  as well as in the roles assigned and expected standards of
  performance. In some programs volunteers receive extensive
  amounts of training and are expected to assume an extraor-
  dinary amount of responsibility Training and role assign-
  ments do not always correspond, however, as sometimes
  volunteers receive little or no training while being expected
  to carry out a variety of duties.
- **Finance** means amount and source of revenue used to
  finance a program Again, there is great variation in how
  programs are financed Some receive funding from a single
  source, while others rely on multisource funding A few pro-
  grams use only grass roots fund-raising techniques

The variations within each of the five variables mean that many
options exist for literacy programming No single model of
literacy volunteerism is appropriate for every situation, instead
a program should be developed based upon the needs of the
group or community to be served

Administrative Considerations

Since no single administrative approach satisfactorily serves all
types of literacy volunteer programs, deciding upon which
model to follow is an important administrative consideration
However, before managerial strategies are established, the
educational philosophy upon which they will be based needs
to be articulated and agreed upon by those responsible for
program development A program's philosophy forms the basis
for policy decisions about the five variables of purpose, scope,
organizational setting, professionalism, and finance At the pol-
icy level Ilsley (1985) lists some key questions that need to be
addressed regarding volunteers and that are related to the five
variables including the following

- Should volunteers be selected according to program purposes?
- Should anyone be allowed to volunteer? If not. by what criteria ought volunteers to be selected?
- Are assumptions about volunteers similar at all levels of the organization?
- What is the relationship between organizational setting and the establishment of a climate for volunteer participation?
- Do volunteers, particularily those with high levels of expertise, pose a threat to paid staff?
- Should volunteer training be planned jointly by volunteers and paid administrative personnel?

The Myths, Advantages, and Disadvantages of Literacy Volunteerism

In making a decision to incorporate volunteers into its program structure. administrators need to be aware of the myths. advantages, and disadvantages associated with literacy volunteerism Kangisser (1985) points out two prevailing myths about literacy volunteers: volunteerism is a panacea and the use of volunteers is low-cost or cost-free The illiteracy problem in this country is simply too large to be solved solely through the use of volunteers Also. although the use of volunteers can be cost-effective. it still demands an investment of program resources and staff time.

Administrators should also consider the advantages and disadvantages of literacy volunteerism Kangisser (1985) mentions the following advantages: it allows for private or small group instruction thus allowing adult illiterates to "save face". it is flexible. for example individuals can be served in many locations at mutually convenient times; because literacy volunteerism is characterized by a one-to-one relationship. volunteers can develop trust and inspire confidence in those they tutor. it focuses community attention on the illiteracy problem. and since many volunteers develop materials. it can result in increased instructional resources

Disadvantages cited by Kangisser (1985) include the following instruction is rarely intensive. resulting in slow student progress and thus. many become discouraged and dropout. since volunteer programs must serve two groups—students and volunteers—paid staff may be distracted and program purposes diluted. and unless effective managerial procedures are established. it is difficult to maintain quality control and adequate record keeping and to administer evaluation procedures In order for literacy volunteerism to be an effective component its advantages must outweigh these kinds of limitations

Resources for Program Development

There is no shortage of resources for those wishing to develop administrative guidelines and procedures for adult literacy volunteer programs In reviewing the related literature. Ilsley (1985) notes that as much as three-fourths of the literature base is devoted to materials describing the administrative aspects of program development The following publications will serve as helpful resources for those seeking more information on this aspect of adult literacy volunteerism

- Organizing a Successful Adult Literacy Program (Darling. Puckett, and Paull 1983) describes procedures used by the Jefferson County Adult Reading Program. a program that was approved for the National Diffusion Network Organized in five sections. the publication covers organization, staff development and training, student retention and recruitment, instructional design. and accountability and evaluation

- Guidebook for Effective Literacy Practice (Crandall, Lerche. and Marchilonis 1985). a publication developed by the National Adult Literacy Project staff. is designed to provide current, detailed information on effective literacy practices It reports on the results of a mail survey in which 225 programs responded to questions about the following program aspects recruitment. orientation, counseling, diagnostic testing. instructional methods and materials. assessment of learners, follow-up. and program evaluation Although this publication covers all types of literacy programs. and not just those that incorporate volunteers. it provides information that is helpful to the latter
- Guidelines for Effective Adult Literacy Programs (Mayer 1984) is intended to assist individuals involved in the development. administration. and delivery of volunteer-based community adult literacy programs It includes information on community, adult learners. staff resources, instruction and support. governance. management. evaluation. program records. and resources Although the guide does not provide step-by-step instructions for program development it does describe the components of a successful program through a collection of statements on what a program should do to be effective

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THE NATIONAL CENTER
FOR RESEARCH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1960 KENNY ROAD · COLUMBUS OHIO 43210