DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 225   CE 079 972

AUTHOR   Kline, Judy
TITLE   Using Communication To Retain Tutors. Action Research
                Monograph.
PUB DATE   1999-00-00
NOTE   9p.; In: Action Research Monographs. Complete Set.
                Pennsylvania Action Research Network, 1998-99. Pennsylvania
                Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy
                Education. A Learning from Practice Project; see CE 079 962.
PUB TYPE   Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   Action Research; Adult Basic Education; Adult Educators;
                Adult Literacy; Attitudes; Comparative Analysis; Dropout
                Research; *Dropouts; Intervention; *Labor Turnover;
                *Literacy Education; *Outreach Programs; Postsecondary
                Education; Program Development; Program Effectiveness;
                Questionnaires; *Staff Development; Teacher Persistence;
                Teacher Researchers; Trend Analysis; *Tutors; Volunteers
IDENTIFIERS   Pennsylvania; 353 Project

ABSTRACT
                Many volunteer literacy tutors in Franklin County,
Pennsylvania, have not completed their 1-year tutoring commitment.
Consequently, an action research project was undertaken to determine the
causes of the high tutor turnover and to identify ways of improving the tutor
retention rate. All tutors involved in the program from 1998 onward were
asked to complete a questionnaire listing 21 reasons that might make tutors
quit tutoring. The project goal was to boost the retention of tutors trained
in 1999 to 70%. All 37 tutors asked to complete questionnaires did so. Eighty
percent of tutors who completed the questionnaire responded positively to the
seven questionnaire items related to the need for further communication
between tutors and members of the literacy council's staff. As a result, the
tutor training program was revised and office staff worked to adopt the
approach of active listening when dealing with tutors and to increase
communication with tutors. Although the retention rate of tutors trained in
1998 was only about 40-60 percent, 100% of the tutors trained in January 1999
were still tutoring in May 1999 (the end of the action research project).
(The tutor questionnaire is appended.) (MN)

ED 440 225

CE 079972

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Using Communication to Retain Tutors

Action Researcher's Name:

Judy Kline

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited
to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today
it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of
action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph
series claims to have generalizable application beyond the
specific project described. However, each monograph report can
serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential
for replication in other locations. For a level of
generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common
patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider
literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance
in this.

I. ABSTRACT

Franklin County Literacy Council has had an ongoing problem of the retention of tutors. Many tutors have not been able to complete their one-year commitment. This study compared retention rates for tutors from 1998 to the present time. A question and response form was developed to determine the reasons for tutor dropout. Results were collected by phone or personal visit. The tutors that responded felt that in the past there had been a lack of contact and communication between the tutor and the program itself. With increased communication tutor retention could improve.

II. PROBLEM

Volunteer tutors are difficult to retain. Therefore, as learning sessions continue, the students are deprived of continuing contact with the same tutor.

Students range in age from seventeen and older, with most of the students being female. Varied socio-economical levels are noted. ABE students range in ability from pre-literate through beginning, intermediate, and those requiring specific ABE training. ESL students range through pre-beginning, beginning and intermediate.

The 13-year-old literacy council has had difficulties in the past, which include funding, adequate staffing, and continuity in support staff

Retention of tutors could positively effect student outcomes because of instructional continuity.

III. PLANNING

The intervention plan was to compare tutors trained in 1998 and those trained in 1999 when tutor communication was increased.

A questionnaire (attached) was utilized to interview tutors from 1998. The tutors were given a list of 21 different responses to the question of "What is/or would be a reason that you did/or would stop tutoring." The responses to the question were obtained by telephone contact and in person by the researcher.

The baseline or criteria for success was set at a high of 70% tutor retention rate, for tutors trained in January/February, 1999.

1

Constraints against using work-time for this project were more than overcome by volunteer hours to the agency.

Approval for this project was obtained by Barbara Noel, Program Coordinator and also Henry Wardrop, Special Projects Coordinator.

In reviewing the literature it appears that recruitment and retention are used interchangeably. These are clearly related issues, although retention becomes the outcome of recruitment.

In this literacy office it has become evident that retention is affected by communication and contact with the literacy staff

Will the implementation of past tutors suggestions received by survey results increase tutor retention to 70% for the first six weeks of 1999?
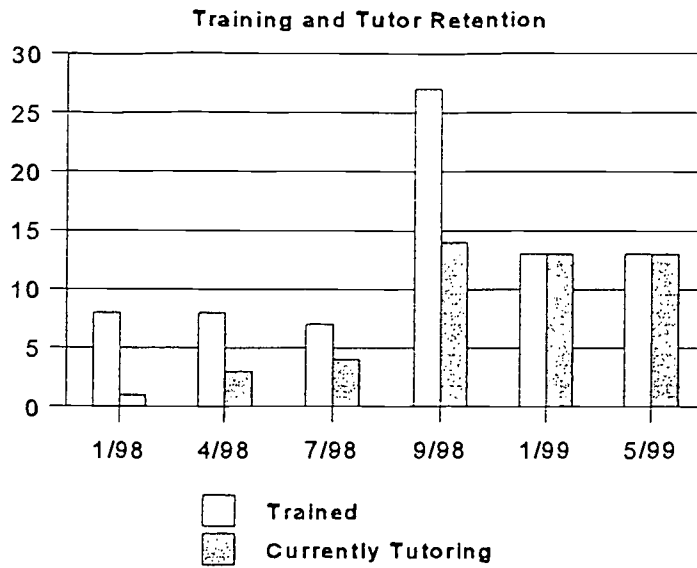
IV. ACTION

Implementing the intervention was easier than anticipated. As tutors came to the literacy council office or were contacted by phone, the tutors were receptive to responding to the question.

The researcher would verbalize the 21 responses to the tutor, therefore making this instrument user-friendly for the tutor.

Thirty-seven tutors responded to the questionnaire. There were no refusals or constraints, due in part to the familiarity of the tutor with the researcher.

V. RESULTS

Of the thirty-seven tutors that responded, 80% of the tutors responded in a positive way to questions #5,7,9,13,15, 17, and 18. These responses were all related to the need for further communication between tutor and a staff member of the literacy council. As demonstrated by the graph, this project improved retention when contact and communication were instituted in January 1999.

2

Training and Tutor Retention

| | Trained |
| | Currently Tutoring |

VI. REFLECTION

This approach of active listening and caring by the office staff to the tutors, certainly supports tutor retention. In our literacy council we will continue this approach in hopes of retaining tutors. Tutor contacts will be made on an ongoing basis.

3

QUESTION and RESPONSES

What is/or would be a reason that you did/or would stop tutoring?

1. Schedule conflict and lack of time to commit to to at least two to three hours per week.

2. Needed faster and more communication by staff member after tutor training, then realized that they did not have that much time to commitment .

3. Lack of student commitment and failure to call when unable to meet sessions. I get discouraged when this happens for it is a waste of my time.

4. Lack of time.

5. Lack of feedback and communication with staff of the agency. More local workshops to keep us abreast to new and more effective way of helping the students.

6. After tutoring for a number of years there was a lack of communication with the staff members.

7. Lack of correspondences with staff and no future updated training.

8. Someone to be used as a mentor to sit in on first one or two tutor sessions.

9. Lack of communication with staff and trainers.

10. Just not ready to tutor at this time.

11. More of a time commitment than I thought when I decided to take the training.

12. Students that are not dedicated to learning .

13. Lack of communication and help from staff members.

14. The thing that would help in keeping tutors would be more training whether it be more as an advanced tutor training classes or regular workshops dealing with new methods of teaching the adult learner.

15. The one thing that would cause me to quit tutoring would be the lack of feedback and support from the staff.

16. Having past tutors speak at a gathering designed to encourage people to become tutors.

17.   Regular feedback from staff members

18.   Monthly feedback from staff members and more tutor training or, if feasible a workshop

19.   One of the most important reasons why I would quit tutoring would be a lack of support and information from the staff at FCLC . Tutor training refresher sessions would be useful if possible.

20.   Two to three months after training have a session with tutors, staff, and trainer to discuss questions, problems, and needs that tutors may be experiencing after they start tutoring.

21.   Family commitments.

ERIC®

NOTICE

REPRODUCTION BASIS

☐ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket) form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☑ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").

EFF-089 (9/97)