

Communication with Learners and Volunteers

Communication with Learners

Once classes or one-to-one tutoring have begun, tutors should submit information to you on a regular basis, usually monthly or quarterly. This communication should include information on learner progress, hours tutored, materials used, and challenges that have arisen. Log sheets can be kept onsite for the tutors to fill out each time they come in, or they can report progress online or by email as well. It is important to keep a cumulative record of the number of active learners, the total number of tutoring hours, and learner progress for your own records and reports.

It is important for coordinators to have contact with learners on a regular basis in order to gauge learner satisfaction with the program, to record accomplishments, and to offer encouragement. Ways to keep in touch with learners include:

- Telephone calls at regular intervals (3 and 6 months)
- Asking select learners to be “learner advocates” who keep in touch with other learners and offer support and encouragement
- Recognition events for learners and tutors
- Learner forums or focus groups
- Social Media tools i.e. Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.

For specific examples, the Minnesota Literacy Council staff would be happy to put you in touch with other programs that conduct these types of activities.

Communication with Volunteers

In addition to the paperwork that you ask volunteer tutors to submit during the application process, it is important to have regular communication with them in order to offer ongoing resources and encouragement, keep track of learner successes, and work through challenging learner situations.

Similar to the ways you keep in touch with learners, you might consider:

- Distributing a tutor newsletter on a regular basis. Such a newsletter could include changes in the program itself, tutor tips, upcoming trainings, and/or a tutor profile.
- Meeting with tutors periodically as a group (2-4 times a year). The meeting could be part of a training session or include information on a particular resource. Tutors could talk about teaching situations and strategies and there could be time for questions and answers.
- Organizing a recognition or end-of-the year event.
- Using email or an online social networking site to pass along information on upcoming training events, tutor tips, online resources, quarterly reports, etc.

Regardless of the methods you use to communicate with your learners and volunteers, they will appreciate your interest and support.

Exit Interviews

At some point, a volunteer may feel the need to stop tutoring or may no longer be available due to scheduling changes. The end of a volunteer's involvement is an opportunity to find out more about his or her experience and gather suggestions for program improvement. A volunteer exit interview can be a great way to gather this kind of information. You can conduct an exit interview in person, over the phone, online, by email or even by mail. Taking the time to conduct an exit interview with tutors as they leave is another way to show them that their input matters. When tutors leave with a positive feeling about your program, it will leave the door open for them to return, as well as help recruit volunteers through their positive conversations with others. Volunteers who have been satisfied with their experience will probably be a good source of referrals, too.