

PART 1: AN OVERVIEW

WHY SHOULD OUR ORGANIZATION START A SMALL GROUP?

Laubach programs have traditionally provided one-to-one tutoring. One-to-one tutoring is extremely effective because the curriculum is individualized to the student, the learning is self-paced and there is privacy for the student. The introduction of small group instruction can widen the student's learning environment and opportunities by adding a whole new learning dimension without undermining the fundamental premise of "Each One Teach One".

"At the core of small group instruction is the acknowledgement that no learner is as alone as he or she might think. Knowing that one is not alone in this situation is powerful encouragement and motivation for an adult engaged in struggle and growth.

Learning becomes a social experience in a small group. While some learning occurs in solitude, some of our most effective and important learning occurs in the company of others, or as a result of our interactions with others. This is in part because a group is a stimulating, fun environment, and learning that is more pleasurable is more likely to last. In addition, people provide a variety of information an experience that can challenge our assumptions and bring unexpected insights...Sharing and reading with others can expand our understanding by forcing us to defend a position and reflect on others' responses. "Reading comprehension," then, is not something to be checked by a series of questions...Instead; comprehension is deepened by continuing involvement in discussion and an exchange of opinions that the instructor observes and participates in.

Oral communication skills can be developed in a non-threatening, open-ended situation where learners can experiment.... In a group environment, the pressure on a student to always "perform" for a tutor is removed. The learner has an opportunity to sit back and listen to others who may also be struggling with oral skills.

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Each person, not only the instructor, brings a wealth of knowledge to the small group. In the active small group environment, the learner is not merely a learner, but also an instructor. Among people who are peers, who are working at the same “level”, learners can share their own knowledge on reading and writing and the relevance of a lesson. Students hear each other’s strategies for learning and progressing.

Student confidence, interaction, and input all serve to relieve some of the burden an instructor may feel in having to plan and run a small group. The instructor should always be well prepared, as in any teaching setting, but a session will not rise or fall only through his or her contribution, as it would with one-to-one instruction.

A student in a small group develops relationships with not just the instructor, but also several peers. All group members have a role in encouraging each other’s participation and success. Other students notice absences. Students may help each other if a class is missed or if an assignment needs explaining.”

Source: [Exploring Small Group Instruction](#), Laubach Literacy Action, Program Management Information Series, 1991 New Readers Press, pages 4-7.

Top five Learner benefits of participating in a Small Group

1. Reduced feeling of isolation
2. Access to a peer based support system and opportunities for positive reinforcement from peers
3. Increased sense of belonging to a community
4. Growing feeling of ownership of the learning process
5. Greater enthusiasm for learning

Source: “When Two or More are Gathered: Tutoring in Small Groups” By Jane M. Hugo & Tom Mueller Laubach Literacy Action, Laubach Biennial Conference, Orlando, FL June 10, 2000

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The introduction of small group instruction may also produce the administrative benefits of higher recruitment rates due to a diversified program, increased retention, and increased contact hours.

“While the potential for learning is great in a small group setting, the effect on the successful learner goes beyond improved reading and writing skills. If the instructor has managed the class well, students who may have been filled with self-doubt can emerge confident of their ability to participate in and contribute to a learning group.

The literacy program itself benefits at the administrative level from small group instruction: What goes on in a one-to-one tutoring session can be a mystery for program coordinators, but a small group provides an opportunity for greater quality control. With the permission of the group members, an observer may visit a class.

Additionally, instructors may observe and assist in a small group as part of their pre-service training. Even people who will go on to tutor one-to-one will benefit from hands-on experience in a small group. This experience may be integrated into pre-service training that enables tutors to consider the differing needs of students and the many instructional tools they can use to address those needs.

The small group also provides the perfect environment for current program leaders to discover future program leaders. Students who take the lead in peer instruction and who are excited by the learning experience can take on other instructional roles if they wish or may later move into other leadership roles within the literacy program.

Increased student involvement should translate into increased control by the target population of the program. The results of this control may be greater student retention and a program more attuned to the variety of learner needs.”

Source: [Exploring Small Group Instruction](#), Laubach Literacy Action, Program Management Information Series, 1991 New Readers Press, page 7.

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Questions an organization needs to ask before starting a small group:

1. What are the benefits of small group instruction for:
 - Students
 - Program
 - Tutors and Trainers

2. Does our mission statement need to be amended to allow for small group instruction?

3. Who needs to be consulted in order to ensure buy-in and acceptance?
 - Students
 - Tutors
 - Trainers
 - Staff
 - Board members
 - Other programs in the community

Also consider whether starting a small group will present any public relation problems in the community. Since Laubach programs have traditionally provided one-to-one tutoring, the addition of small group could call into question the uniqueness of the programming. It is important to consult with all of the actual and potential stakeholders.

On the following page, a worksheet is provided to guide your organization through the process of identifying the pros and cons when adding small group instruction to program offerings.

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**Starting a small group
Preliminary Consideration Worksheet**

List the benefits of small group instruction for each category	Students	
	Our Agency	
	Tutors	
	Trainers	
	The Community	

List the potential drawbacks of small group instruction for each category	Students	
	Our Agency	
	Tutors	
	Trainers	
	The Community	

We have reviewed the mission statement. / Yes

The mission statement needs to be amended: / Yes / No

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Once you have determined the pros and cons of starting a small group you need to determine whether there is student interest in small group instruction. One approach is to survey your current students to determine interest in small group. It may be advisable to ask new learners at the point of intake if they would be interested in small group instruction.



"In our program, we always ask if the student would feel comfortable spending some time individually and some time in a group. This has never been a problem for the students."

Included below is an adaptation of a survey that was distributed with a tutor newsletter. Tutors were asked to complete the survey with learners and return it with their time sheets. Therefore, learners who had difficulty understanding the survey had help with it and did not feel threatened by the process.



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LEARNER SURVEY-SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION

Name: _____

Current Books being used (e.g. Challenger 4, LWR Skillbook 1):

1. Would you like to learn with others in a small group? (You would still be able to have your tutor as well.)

/ YES / NO

If you answered no, can you explain why you would not like to learn in a small group? Don't answer this if you feel uncomfortable giving your reason.

If you answered "no" to question #1, you do not have to answer the rest of the survey.

2. If you would like to learn in a small group, check off the times and days that you would be available:

- Mornings (Between 9 a.m. and 11 -30 a.m.)
- Afternoons (Between 1 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.)
- Evenings (Between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.)

- Mondays
- Tuesdays
- Wednesdays
- Thursdays
- Fridays

3. Would you be able to come to a class that is located at our office?

/ YES / NO

If you answered no, could you tell us a location that would be good for you? (This doesn't mean that we will have a small group in that location but it might give us some ideas for some other places to have a small group).

4. Do you require transportation or daycare assistance to be able to attend a class?

/ YES / NO

Please describe: _____

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Once you have determined actual interest you must ensure support from staff and board. If you have determined that the mission statement needs to be changed the process for accomplishing this should be discussed with the board and staff before proceeding.

A good next step to consider is talking to other programs that are already running small groups. This is the best resource for pointers and tips. A quick phone call to Laubach Literacy Ontario will provide you with contacts from the closest programs that could mentor you. Appendix A also provides you with a summary of small groups run Laubach affiliated programs as of Fall 2000.

Remember that starting small groups does not need to affect or replace the one-to-one program. It may in fact enhance it by allowing students to pursue learning in more than one environment. The learning a student does with a tutor may be supported by the learning in a small group and vice versa.

Best Advice for Moving Forward

“Important steps you can take when considering changes to instructional offerings include: conducting focus groups of students, volunteers, and board members; reviewing your mission statement; and talking with – or better yet, visiting, - a program with experience in areas you’re considering.

As with any new effort, it helps to start small. Begin with the area that seems the most natural fit for your program. Evaluate as you move ahead, and don’t be afraid to make changes if things aren’t going well. Keeping in contact with someone who has experience with small-group instruction can be very helpful as well.”

Laubach Literacy Action: “Thinking About Small Group Instruction: A Starting Point”, Laubach LitScape, Fall 1997

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Now that your organization has decided to start a small group you still need to consider and decide many more things such as:

- How do we define a small group in our organization?
- What type(s) of small groups will we offer?
- How long will the small group last – 4 weeks, 6 weeks, quarter-year, year-round?
- Who will teach the group(s)? – Paid or volunteer instructors?
- What will the entry exit policy be? – Closed or Open?
- Will our instructors require training in group processes and/or facilitation skills?
- Where will the small group(s) be held?
- What materials best suit the type(s) of group(s) that we will be running?
- How much time will be necessary to adapt the materials selected?
- Will students need orientation before learning in a small group situation?
- How do we place students in a small group?- Skills level, location, interest?
- Who will schedule the small group?
- If the group is held off-site, who will be responsible for ensuring the availability of equipment and materials?
- How will we deal with specific one-on-one needs? –e.g. arrange for concurrent one-to-one sessions
- How will students be assessed? Who will be responsible for assessment?
- What methods will be used for the administrations of the group(s)? e.g. attendance

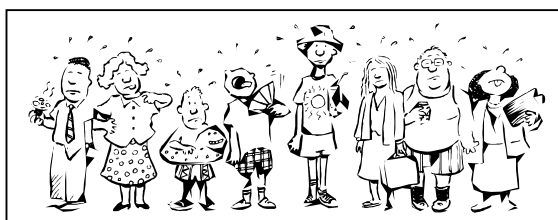
This purpose of this manual is to help you answer many of the questions above and hopefully others that you have as you begin the process of starting and running small groups.

DEFINING A SMALL GROUP

A small group is a group of learners who see themselves as part of a group, share a common purpose and make decisions together about the groups goals. A small group ideally consists of two to five learners and one or two tutors. Depending on the type of small group, small group instruction may be described in various ways: collaborative learning, cooperative learning, participatory learning or project-based learning.

Types of Small Groups:

1. Primary Literacy Instruction
2. Supplemental Groups
3. Special Topic Groups
4. Project Based Groups



The Primary Literacy Group

The goal of this group is the acquisition or improvement of basic literacy or numeracy skills. This group ideally has members that are around the same literacy level. However, multi-level groups can be accommodated by modification of materials. Multi-level groups also allow for peer tutoring. Students participating in this group may or may not also have a one-to-one tutor.

This type of group may focus on a particular series and work through it as a group. Suggested New Readers Press series to use as the foundation for a group include:

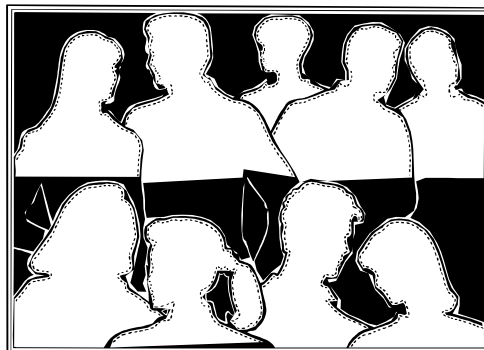
- Challenger
- Voyager
- Breakthrough to Math

The Supplemental Literacy Group

The goal of this group is a particular skill that needs improvement such as spelling or communication skills. Members of this group will likely also have a one-to-one tutor. Some suggested supplemental groups:

- **Spelling** - The New Readers Press Series, Patterns in Spelling, could be used to work on particular spelling areas such as short vowels, long vowels etc.
- **Writing Workshops** - Use the whole language approach (Branching Out as a resource)
- **Conversational Classes** - the newspaper could be used a source of current topics
- **Math Skills** - Particular math skills such as addition or subtraction could be the focus of a supplemental group

My ideas for supplemental groups:



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The Special Topic Group

This group deals with a particular topic that is of interest to all of the members.

Suggested Topic	Description and/or Resources
Support Group	A group where students have an opportunity to discover and talk about similar goals and concerns.
Stress reduction	New Readers Press Information for Better Living Series: "Managing Stress"
Health and Fitness	New Readers Press Information for Better Living Series: "Getting Good Healthcare" "Staying Well" "Getting Fit" "Eating Right"
Disease Information	New Readers Press Information for Better Living Series: "About Cancer" "About Aids"
Local Government and Elections	"I Can Vote! A user-friendly guide to voting in Canada" Exploring Canada's Electoral System (CD-ROM) Both of these resources are available free of charge. Call 1-800- INFO VOTE or order from the website: http://www.elections.ca The Ontario Reader, which is published yearly, always has relevant news articles dealing with government.
Getting a License	"Official Driver's Handbook" for Ontario. This can be purchased at any Ministry of Transport office. "Wheels Workbook" by Stephen J. Steurer. Published by New Readers Press. Although this book is American and dated some of the exercises are relevant and can be easily adapted.

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Suggested Topic	Description and/or Resources
Using a Telephone Book	Yellow Pages module contained in this manual.
Job Search Skills	"Get That Job: A quick and easy guide" by Jurg Oppliger. Published by New Readers Press. A workbook accompanies this resource.
Money Management Skills	"Managing Money: A quick and easy guide". Published by New Readers Press. A workbook accompanies this resource.
Volunteering in the Community	Start with introductory sessions on the concept of volunteering and the benefits. Invite local organizations discuss their volunteer needs and expectations. Try these sites for more information on volunteering in Canada: http://www.volunteer.ca/volunteer/index.html http://www.nsgvp.org/
"Speaking Out/Speaking Up"	Use the basic ideas from "Toastmasters". Recruit toastmaster volunteers to help out. http://www.toastmasters.org/index.htm
Women's Issues Group	"Women's Health" New Readers Press 1997 Syracuse New York
Canadian history	"Voices From Canada's Past Book 1" Edited by Gladys E. Neale, LLC 1990 "Voices From Canada's Past Book 2" Edited by Gladys E. Neale, LLC 1990 "Voices 3 Canadians Who Made a Difference" Edited by Gladys E. Neale, LLC 1993

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Suggested Topic	Description and/or Resources
SOS – Student Oriented Success	Basic instruction and orientation to the program. Can be used to reduce a waiting list or simply to allow students to get comfortable with small group learning. Adapted from Project Learn: Cleveland Ohio
PRE-Pre-GED	Prepare students for the pre-GED course. These sites have information about writing the GED: http://www.nald.ca/gedblue/ontario.htm http://ilc.edu.gov.on.ca/05/02.htm
Health and Safety	"Health and Safety in the Workplace Tutor's Guide" By Ricki Goldstein LLC 1989
Workplace Issues	Groups for people who are currently employed but struggling with some aspect of their job. The group may work on WHMIS, ISO Quality, understanding benefits, etc. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ehp/ehd/psb/whmis.htm
Current News	The "Ontario Reader" is published on a yearly basis. It can be used as the basis for a "current news" discussion group. All of the news articles are adapted and rated by difficulty level. Each article is followed by a series of activities to improve the reader's literacy skills.
Career Requirements	Create a small group that learns about skills necessary for an occupation they would like to pursue. Human Resources Development Canada lists essential skills 180 occupational profiles on this site: http://www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/english/default.asp 150 of these profiles refer to occupations that can be entered with a high school diploma or less.

The topics that a small group could potentially deal with are limitless. A quick perusal of the New Readers Press Bookstore catalogue will give you a description of many available topical resources. The important thing is that all group members have the same goal and that they are benefiting from the process in a meaningful way. The special topic group can be held as a separate group or integrated as a unit or module in a primary instruction group.

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The Special Project Group

The special project group can be a great way to accomplish something for your agency while allowing students to develop and improve their skills. Special projects could include:

- Fundraising projects
- Forming a book club (e.g. the National Connections Book Club in U.S. – the student reads a book with their tutor and then comes to the club to discuss with others.)
- Organizing a student conference
- Maintaining a student bulletin board or program information
- Organizing a student group (e.g. T.R.E.E.)
- Publishing a book of student writing
- Developing a website
- Dealing with a local social issue
- Organizing a celebration around International Woman’s Day (March 8), International Literacy Day (September 8) or any other international or national holiday. Celebrations may include participating in parades, creating displays, etc.
- A conference committee representing student interests
- Creating a yearly planner
- Publishing a classroom or neighbourhood newspaper
- Publishing a newsletter

My ideas for special topic and special project groups:

THE ROLE OF THE SMALL GROUP TUTOR

When we think of a small group tutor we may have the tendency to focus on the “instruction” role. However, there are many different roles that a good tutor will play. No role is more important than any other. In fact, each role should be considered equally important.

Model: The tutor demonstrates what is expected from the students before starting an activity.

Facilitator: The tutor creates an atmosphere where everyone has a chance to participate and work together. “More student talk/less teacher talk”.

Instructor: The tutor provides new information and takes the lead in setting up activities to reinforce or apply new skills.

Resource: The tutor provides help on an “as- needed” basis.

Observer: The tutor watches and listens. The information gathered is later used to ensure individual progress as well as growth within the group.

Housekeeper: The tutor will have certain administrative duties that must be performed. This may include duties such as keeping attendance and ensuring that the site is properly equipped.

Group Member: Remember that the tutor is an equal member of the group. This is extremely important!

“When it comes to the discussion of issues generated by readings, the experience and views of the student are as important as those of the teacher. In this community of equals, each person has something to share. The teacher is a resource on the practices and skills of reading and writing, but both the teacher and students may be resources in other areas of interest.”

Exploring Small Group Instruction, Laubach Literacy Action, Program Management Information Series 1991 New Readers Press, page 6

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR FACILITATING SMALL GROUPS

Do

- include all learners who are members of the group
- make comments that show you value the contributions of each learner
- demonstrate sincere interest in what is being said and implied by assuming an attitude of active listening and integrating appropriate comments
- be alert to nonverbal communication messages and interpret them to other learners as appropriate
- encourage all learners to contribute their own ideas and knowledge
encourage support for one another in the group by asking for suggestions to help in individual problem solving

Don't

- allow one or two learners to monopolize the group
- overlook an unpleasant look, comment, or physical response because it is difficult for you to respond to negative behaviour
- allow your attention to be diverted from the group goals and the underlying agents I do by personal concerns or by focusing too much on individual (rather than group) issues
- give your opinion or personal examples to illustrate a point unless learners have been encouraged to do so first push a learner to contribute; instead, offer the opportunity in a non-threatening way
- allow learners to respond in non-constructive ways to each other; instead confront by asking the group to address negative behaviours

Adapted from Rutland and Guglielmino, 1987, pp. 6-8

The Small-Group Tutor's Job

Small-group instruction is different from traditional classroom instruction. In a small group, students have more control and interaction. The small-group format accommodates and supports a variety of learning paces, needs, and styles. So the small-group tutor has a different job description than the traditional classroom instructor.

Sometimes the small-group tutor acts as an instructor for literacy skills. Sometimes the small-group tutor is more a facilitator of learning. And sometimes the tutor enables students to be teachers, and becomes a recipient of their teaching.

The small-group tutor's activities include the following:

Establish an environment for learning that is encouraging and challenging.

Activities in the small group should challenge each person at his or her level while providing some personally meaningful measure of success. Students should understand that they are not competing against each other, as in the traditional classroom, but are cooperating to raise the ability of the entire group. In addition, learners should always be affirmed for what they already know and are capable of. The tutor should encourage students to identify situations-at home, in the classroom, and in the community-that involve literacy skills, demonstrating their current ability to analyze, sort, and reflect on information.

Promote interdependence within the group.

Although the students are ultimately responsible for how they interact with one another, the tutor needs to see how various subgroups work together, or who may have difficulty in general working with others. Creating opportunities for cooperation, for checking each other's work, and for student-directed activities will help establish this interdependence.

Encourage students to provide their own answers.

Students will retain best the information that they come up with themselves. Therefore the small-group tutor should ask questions and pose problems, not simply provide answers. This "discovery" approach to instruction enables students to create their own learning.

Listen to topics that arise in class.

The small-group tutor should pay careful attention to topics that generate interest among the students. These topics often present possibilities for reading, writing, and discussion activities. Sometimes the best topics are controversial or challenging ones. Students are apt to respond to these with excitement.

Allow instructional goals to change in response to group needs and wishes.

Although the small-group tutor must help student's meet specific learning objectives, the format and content of the literacy curriculum must remain open to change. Reading and writing skills can be applied to any subject, and students should exercise control over the choice of subjects. The tutor may find a particular theme especially interesting-but if the class doesn't share that interest, it's time to move on.

Encourage and identify student leadership.

Within the small group, certain people will take the initiative to assist with the smooth running of the class. While a student who seeks to "take charge" of the class may need to be reined in, the small-group tutor must be aware of people who show leadership potential for the class and the program. Which students are best able to draw others into a conversation? Which students try to help where they can? These people may at some point be ready to take on more formal responsibilities within the program.

Invite the learners into the issues of the world.

Mike Rose, author of *Lives on the Boundary**, speaks of "entering the conversation." Students with minimal literacy skills have been excluded from the huge history of written dialogue on everything from freedom to faith. The tutor

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should be prepared to direct students to sources where they can get information (through print, audiotape, videotape, or other media appropriate to their skill levels) about their current needs and interests. That will invite students to think about and comment on a body of knowledge from which they were once barred. Besides material in which students may have immediate interest, the tutor should also look for opportunities to expand student horizons-as well as the tutor's own-and fill information gaps.

See to the needs of students requiring remediation or additional assistance.

The small-group tutor cannot spend an entire session working individually with each student. If students seem to require additional assistance, instructors should seek one or more co-instructors or assistants to provide remediation in the class. Or the class can be structured to complement one-to-one tutoring that students receive. Either way, the tutor should always use the valuable resource present in every classroom: other students. Both helped and helper benefit when students help each other.

Review each group session after its conclusion.

The small-group tutor should keep detailed records that note both the tutor's own role in a session and the progress of group members: "What good things happened today? What should I try again? What should I do differently? Did we cover what we wanted to cover? Who didn't talk today? Who talked too much? Did I talk too much? Who needs special help? Who seems ready for more challenge? Did I assign enough homework?" This process can be especially effective for tutor development if a team teaches the small group with more than one tutor. Then co-instructors, or an instructor and assistant, can reflect together and compare perceptions and ideas. Students can also provide formal evaluations of the class. Only through continuing evaluation by all parties can instruction improve and remain relevant.

*Mike Rose, *Lives on the Boundary. A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America's Educational Underclass* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 39. Adapted from William E. Preston, "The Role of the Instructor" in *Exploring Small Group Instruction*, Laubach Literacy Action Program Management Information Series. Syracuse: New Readers Press, 1991.

The Importance of Engaging the Group in Dialogue

The term “dialogue”, taken from the Greek, means “words between”. The concept embodies more than mere discussion. The purpose of dialogue is to gain a greater mutual understanding and therefore requires active listening, asking questions, reflection, and feedback. The content of the lessons must be carefully crafted to ensure that the interactions and learning that take place are the result of “words between” all members.

Finally remember that a small group tutor should also be “quick-change master” because...



- Group dynamics can change suddenly when a member enters or leaves
- Poor attendance may mean a quick lesson plan change
- Student needs or wishes may dictate a sudden change in focus
- An important local issue or event may preempt a planned lesson
- A tutor may be called upon to play a variety of roles in a small group setting

FLEXIBILITY is the *key* to successfully tutoring a small group!

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Job Description: LBS Instructor - Math and Computers

Reports to Program Coordinator

Purpose of Position: To provide effective math and computer programs that address the individual training plan goal of each learner in the small group program

Duties and Responsibilities

1. To deliver an effective learning program:

- 6 Assess the on-going literacy needs of the student
- 6 Work with each student to establish learning goals/demonstrations
- 6 Develop and regularly update the training plans for the area of teaching responsibility
- 6 Plan and deliver programs that meet the needs of each individual in the group
- 6 Participate in the development of innovative and effective learning activities
- 6 Identify or create resources that motivate the student and help him/her attain his/her goals
- 6 Assist the student to track progress towards his/her goals
- 6 Maintain records required by MTCU and the Literacy Program
- 6 Inform the program coordinator of any issues or problems arising within the group

2. To assist in the development and delivery of other services of the Literacy Program:

- 6 Participate in the evaluation of our services and projects
- 6 Assist with community outreach
- 6 Attend staff meeting as required

3. To fulfill other duties as assigned.

Source: <http://alphacom.alphaplus.ca/alphacom>
Author: **Joanne Kaattari**
Date: 08/10/2000 04:36 PM

Job Description: LBS Instructor - Communications

Reports to Program Coordinator

Purpose of Position: To provide an effective communications program that addresses the individual training plan goal of each learners in the small group program

Duties and Responsibilities

1. To deliver an effective learning program:

- 6 Assess the on-going literacy needs of the student
- 6 Work with each student to establish learning goals/demonstrations
- 6 Develop and regularly update the training plans for the area of teaching responsibility
- 6 Plan and deliver programs that meet the needs of each individual in the group
- 6 Participate in the development of innovative and effective learning activities
- 6 Identify or create resources that motivate the student and help him/her attain his/her goals
- 6 Assist the student to track progress towards his/her goals
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2. To assist in the development and delivery of other services of the Literacy Program:

- 6 Participate in the evaluation of our services and projects
- 6 Assist with community outreach
- 6 Attend staff meeting as required

3. To fulfill other duties as assigned.

Source: <http://alphacom.alphaplus.ca/alphacom>

Author: **Joanne Kaattari**
Date: 08/10/2000 04:38 PM

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Small-Group Tutor Self-Assessment Tool

After a small group meeting, take, a few minutes to think about your teaching.

Did I:	Yes	No	Not Sure	N/A
1. Make the participants feel welcome?				
2. Encourage participation by asking the class for information or opinions and making sure everyone had a turn to speak?				
3. Explain and clarify by giving examples to make something more understandable or by repeating something in a different way to make it clearer?				
4. Summarize (sum up what -has happened or state the main points at the end of an exercise)?				
5. Give direction by outlining task step, making helpful suggestions, focus-the group on an activity or task and make sure that it did not move away from the topic?				
6. Check, that everyone, especially quiet participants agreed with group decisions?				
7. Encourage participation by treating everyone in a responsive and respectful way?				
8. Use techniques to work with the different learning styles of participants?				
9. Use a variety of techniques and methods to facilitate learning in the group?				
10. Share leadership & responsibility with learners?				
11. Maintain an environment that led to success and was good for risk taking?				
12. Help people in conflict to understand each other's viewpoints and use the group's ground rules to resolve conflict or tension?				

Ask Yourself:

- Which techniques and methods did I use?
- Were they effective? How do I know?
- What do I want to try doing differently?
- What do I want to continue doing?



Source: "When Two or More are Gathered: Tutoring in Small Groups" By Jane M. Hugo & Tom Mueller Laubach Literacy Action, Laubach Biennial Conference, Orlando, FL June 10, 2000

More than One Tutor?

A small group may have more than one tutor or instructor. This can be very beneficial, especially if individuals need some one-on-one attention for certain activities. It also allows for consistency even if one tutor is absent. However, if there is more than one tutor in a small group, it is important that they are compatible. Disagreements on teaching styles, sensitivity issues and even logistics can be disastrous to a small group. Co-tutors should have regular meetings outside of scheduled class times to discuss issues and ideas.



"Tutors do not have to be the same with regard to all issues, but they should compliment each other. Encourage feedback from each tutor and deal with trouble spots immediately."

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES

There are several principles that underlay any successful small group. Regardless of what type of group it is, learners and tutors must adhere to these principles.

1. A safe and comfortable environment

Emotional Safety: Learners need to feel that they can trust other members of the group. Group members need to understand that others may wish the fact that they are attending to be kept confidential. An effective way to create a safe environment is to start with a set of ground rules. The rules should be developed by the group and understood by all members of the group. If the group has an "open-entry policy" there should be a process in place where new members are made aware of the ground rules. Instructions and expectations should always be clear to the students in the group so that there are no surprises!

Sample ground rules

1. Always take turns talking.
2. Everyone gets equal "air time."
3. If you are angry tell the group why you are angry and then leave until you feel better.
4. Help each other when you can.
5. Don't be afraid to make a mistake.
6. Listen to the ideas of others and think about them.
7. Try to be on time and prepared for each session. If you know you are going to be late or tell the instructor ahead of time.
8. If you don't understand something, ASK! There is no such thing as a stupid question!

PART 1: AN OVERVIEW

Group members could be asked to sign a form indicating that they understand and agree to abide by the rules. Ground rules should also be reviewed periodically. The review allows for affirmation and revision, if necessary. In an “open entry” group a review would also allow learner who joined later to feel that they had a voice.

Physical Safety and Comfort: The environment where the small group takes place needs to be physically safe. It should also be comfortable for the students and the instructor. Adequate lighting, controlled climate (no extremes), proper seating and work surfaces are often taken for granted. Facilities permitting, allowing beverages and snacks may help to make group members feel more comfortable.

2. Respect

The contributions of all group members should be valued. It is important for the instructor to demonstrate respect for all group members and encourage others to do the same. The instructor and students should be informed about other group members’ cultures and communities and respect and celebrated the differences. Respect between group members will raise the comfort level and will support more risk taking.



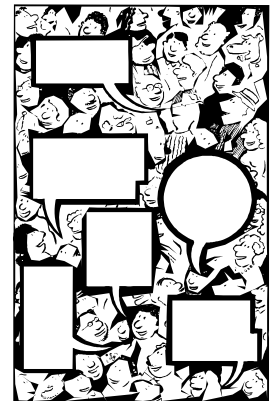
“If a student is comfortable, we ask them to share a tradition, etc. by bringing in a photo or an artefact. This stimulates discussion and often introduces many new words into the students vocabulary”

3. Shared responsibility and leadership

Redirect questions to other students that may be able to answer them. Some activities should be designed to allow the instructor to “step out” and have the group choose the direction(s). One of the greatest resources in the adult classroom can often be the student themselves. Many adults tend to learn better when they can engage in the new material on a personal level. Students should be encouraged to “step in” to different roles such as group leader, recorder, and facilitator. Taking on these different roles in a “safe” environment will help students determine their comfort level. Students should be encouraged to “take care” of others when they miss a session (e.g. sharing notes, explaining the activities the group did at the missed session). Learners can be given decision-making power by giving them choices of instruction.

Support students can offer each other:

- Prompt each other when reading aloud.
- Help explain concepts to one another.
- Independent writers can be paired with non-writers- they can brainstorm in a pair and the independent writer can write the results.
- Problem solving discussions can be more realistic between students as opposed to those done between a student and tutor who already know the answer.
- Combined experience of group members provides more sources for ideas that can stimulate discussion.



All of these supports take the onus off of the instructor being the “sole instructor” and allows them to participate in other roles.

PART 1: AN OVERVIEW

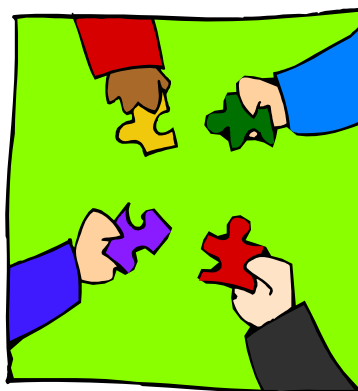
4. Individual development within the group is encouraged.

Activities should be inclusive of all group members. Students should be encouraged to take risks to as they work towards their goals but they should experience meaningful success as they do this. Some goal setting should take place with each learner individually. Individual goals may be shared with the group, where appropriate. There should be a process in place to provide additional help and support to a learner when needed. The instructor should be aware of learning styles, skill level and particular interests of each student. Students should have an opportunity to build self-esteem and confidence in the group setting.

The four principles adapted from: "When Two or More are Gathered: Tutoring in Small Groups" By Jane M. Hugo & Tom Mueller; Laubach Literacy Action, Laubach Biennial Conference, Orlando, FL June 10, 2000

GROUP IDENTITY

Consider having the group choose a name and/or create a logo once they have developed a rapport. Brainstorming ideas and selecting a name can be a fun process that will encourage group cohesiveness.



PART 1: AN OVERVIEW

CELEBRATING SUCCESSES

Part of being in a group is having others to celebrate success with. When an individual or the group reaches a goal, should be a system or process in place to recognize this. It may take the form of a party; it may simply be a presentation of a certificate during group time. Whatever the group decides on as the mechanism for recognizing and celebrating success, it is just as important to do as a lesson. Seeing others being recognized is a powerful motivator.



WRAPPING UP

As with everything in life, all good things must come to an end. Eventually a group will run its course. The group may reach its goals, may be of limited duration, or may just come to a logical conclusion based on changing dynamics. It is important to recognize when a group should end.

A follow-up from a small group that is wrapping up can provide very valuable information. Find out if the group was useful, how it was useful, what worked best, what could be changed, etc. The wrap-up of a group is a great occasion to gather all of these facts in order to revise, refine and reorganize for an even better group next time.