VOLUNTEER LITERACY PRINCIPLES:
Comprehensive Program Quality Standards

developed by and for
Volunteer Adult Literacy Programs
in Washington State

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
Basic Education for Adults
Elements of Quality
Volunteer Adult Literacy Programs

Introduction
The purpose of this document is to promote quality standards for volunteer adult literacy programs. The document was designed with three uses in mind:

- as a set of written standards for quality adult literacy programs;
- as a self-assessment tool for program coordinators and boards/advisory committees; and
- will provide guidance to state staff when technical assistance & program reviews are conducted at volunteer literacy providers.

First and foremost, the following standards do not specify any mandates, but rather articulate a framework of suggested standards for literacy programs to employ voluntarily in order to strengthen and enhance their services. It is likely that no volunteer adult literacy program in Washington has implemented all the elements outlined in this document. However, elements included here do reflect highly attainable practices.

Common Definitions
1. "The members of the work group intend the standards included here to apply to volunteer adult and family literacy programs which are...
   - Local education agencies;
   - Community-based organizations;
   - Institutions of higher education;
   - Public or private nonprofit agencies;
   - Libraries;
   - Public housing authorities;
   - Consortia of organizations listed above, and
   - Other nonprofits that have the ability to provide literacy services.

2. Literacy
The term “literacy” means an individual's ability to speak, read, and write in the English language, compute, use technology, solve problems, and relate effectively with others in order to exercise the rights and responsibilities of a family member, worker, and community member.

3. College and Career Pathways
WIOA definition of career pathway means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that:
   a) Align with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved,
   b) Prepare an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships,
   c) Includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals,
d) Includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training,

e) Organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in an accelerated manner,

f) Enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and at least one recognized postsecondary credential, and

g) Helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

4. Instructional Volunteer
This term refers to volunteers who teach ESL and literacy as one-to-one tutors, small group and classroom instructors, teacher aides.

5. Volunteer
Throughout the document, volunteer usually refers to instructional volunteers. People who volunteer to perform program management duties are regarded as non-paid staff

Development

In 1992, the Volunteer Literacy Program of the Office of Adult Literacy of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges initiated and supported the development of the original program standards. In 2002, the Volunteer Literacy Program convened another group of literacy program managers and consultants to revise the standards. The following people contributed their time and experience to make this document possible:

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In the fall of 2014 and with the passage of WIOA, State Board staff recognized the need to revise these principles. Again a group of literacy providers volunteered to review and revise the work. The following group contributed their time and experience to this newly revised document:

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PHILOSOPHY

A quality volunteer literacy program has purposeful, interconnected management practices driven by a purpose statement. The result is a team of carefully selected, well-trained and supported volunteers that implements the instructional philosophy.

STATEMENT OF PROGRAM PURPOSE

The program has a current written program purpose statement that:

1. states why the program exists
2. is officially adopted by the Board of Directors/Advisory Committee
3. specifies what services the program provides, for whom, and how the students will benefit from the services
4. is based on community needs
5. is collectively developed/written
6. is achievable and within the program’s capacity
7. is periodically reaffirmed and evaluated

STATEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Every program articulates in writing a student-centered instructional philosophy statement that includes:

1. Flexible and strategic teaching activities that address learning differences,
2. Sufficient frequency, duration, and intensity of instructional time to facilitate learning and improve chances for student progress toward college and career readiness
3. A variety of instructional modes (i.e. one-to-one, small and large group instruction and/or lab),
4. A definition of substantive gain programs must track gains according to those defined by the state/national reporting system,
5. Flexibility of service provision (i.e. place, time, etc.),
6. Effective methods, activities, and learning materials geared to student levels and goals,
7. Regular review and reflection utilizing student and volunteer input on student progress toward goals,
8. Relevant real life needs and goals of students in their roles as worker, family, community members and seekers of personal fulfillment,
9. The role of the volunteer as facilitator of learning and creator of a stimulating, safe and participatory environment.
STUDENT OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

The program uses a variety of effective methods for recruiting students.

a. The program can describe its service priorities
b. The program can identify whom it's targeting in outreach and recruitment efforts
c. The program evaluates the effectiveness of recruitment efforts

STUDENT INTAKE

Initial contact with the program assists students in making educational choices.

a. The program determines with the prospective participant whether there is a good match between student and program services and structure
b. The program refers the student to other services, based on student’s educational and support needs

each student actively participates in the development of an individual education plan.

a. The program determines the student’s ESL or basic literacy levels and abilities based on state and program determined assessments
b. The student sets both personal goals and learning objectives
c. The program identifies factors in student’s life which will hinder and/or help learning process
d. Program will make appropriate ADA accommodations for students with documented disabilities

STUDENT ORIENTATION

The program conducts services/program/staff orientation for new students.

a. Program opportunities that match student goals are explained
b. Student is introduced to staff, materials, and resources
c. Program explains all expectations and policies related to participation and checks for student comprehension
d. Orientation introduces student to physical location where instruction will take place
e. Students will be introduced to career and college pathway options and begin the process of setting goals upon entry into the program

MATCHING

The program ensures a successful match by:

a. Having program staff person present at first meeting between the volunteer and student
b. Facilitating the establishment of a mutually agreeable time, place and procedures for instruction

c. Sharing the student’s educational and personal goals and initial assessment information with his/her volunteer match

d. Clearly communicating goals and expectations (e.g. contracts)

e. Providing the student and volunteer with an opportunity to get to know the others’, motivation, goals, and interests.

f. Giving the student and volunteer initial supplies and instructional materials

g. Ensuring that both the student and volunteer have an opportunity to privately express any concerns about the match

**ONGOING STUDENT SUPPORT**

The program provides student support services.

a. The program monitors changes in student’s life that affect learning, and attempts interventions as needed

b. Periodically during the program year, update and revise goals to ensure progression along college and career pathways

c. The program maintains contact with the student and solicits student feedback in order to ensure continued effectiveness of educational experience

d. Program continues to offer appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities

e. Program provides learning strategies for all students that best suit their individual learning needs

f. The program recognizes and celebrates student progress

g. The student is re-matched as needed

**STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

The program monitors, supports and evaluates student progress.

a. The program evaluates the student’s progress using state and program determined assessments that are in alignment with applicable CCR standards.

b. The student, volunteer and program staff actively participate in ongoing assessment of student progress

c. Valid and reliable assessment procedures and tools give the student an opportunity to demonstrate learning and impact

b. Assessment is congruent with student goals

e. The program periodically reviews and revises the education plan with the student

f. The program has a process for ensuring alignment of instruction with student goals

g. The program uses an evaluation process that involves contact with the student, volunteer, and staff
STUDENT RECORDS

The program maintains records on individual program participants.

- a. Student intake information is documented
- b. Attendance and instructional hours are documented
- c. An individual education plan is on file
- d. Evaluations, progress reports and/or other assessments are documented

A record-keeping system is maintained with aggregate reports based on this data
VOLUNTEERS*

* For the purpose of this section, “volunteers” is used to refer to instructional volunteers.

VOLUNTEER OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

The program uses a variety of appropriate methods for recruiting basic literacy and/or ESL volunteers.

a. Volunteer recruitment methods target specific groups to meet specific student and program needs
b. Program and volunteer opportunities and expectations are clearly described
c. The program uses a variety of effective methods and materials in recruitment efforts
d. The program evaluates the effectiveness of recruitment efforts

The program has written volunteer job descriptions.

a. Job descriptions include rationale, time commitment, responsibilities, reporting, qualifications and eligibility requirements, accountability, training and benefits
b. The program has different job descriptions for each instructional volunteer position (ESL tutor, literacy small group instructor, etc.)

VOLUNTEER INTAKE AND SCREENING

The program exchanges information when volunteer makes initial contact.

a. Clear information about the program is provided (e.g., information packet sent; program orientation session scheduled)
b. Personal contact is made; initial screening of volunteers takes place
c. The program describes types of volunteer opportunities available (instructional and non-instructional)

The program conducts an interview with every prospective volunteer.

a. Individual, personal, and face to face interviews are conducted with every volunteer prior to training
b. Motivation, expectations, attitudes, background experiences and preferences are identified
c. An exchange of information leading to mutual decision making takes place; program makes assessment; volunteer is given time to make decision
d. The program has a plan for dealing with inappropriate applicants
e. The program has an articulated plan for screening volunteers for appropriate skills
f. As appropriate, conduct background checks (as per the written program policy)
A high percentage of volunteers who attend training become active tutors.

a. The program tracks the number of volunteers who attend pre-service training to determine the percentage who become active volunteers
b. Provide adequate, effective screening and intake to ensure that volunteers go on to complete training and become active tutors

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

The program conducts an orientation for prospective volunteers.

a. Orientation is regular and required
b. The program uses a variety of activities to convey comprehensive program information (philosophy, services, site, staff, materials, students, etc.)
c. Orientation is separate from the interview
d. The program clearly defines and communicates volunteer’s role and boundaries in meeting student support needs

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

The program provides and requires training for all new volunteers.

a. Initial/pre-service tutor training is regularly scheduled and required

The program provides quality training for basic literacy/ESL volunteers.

a. The program uses trainers with appropriate professional preparation and relevant teaching experience in adult education
b. The training utilizes contextualized instruction methods, quality curricula, including methods and content in alignment with current College and Career Readiness Standards. For example:
   i. strategy instruction
   ii. goal setting
   iii. lesson planning
   iv. student-centered instruction
c. Training includes guiding students into/onto pathways that lead to employment and/or additional education and training
d. The program provides a handbook/training manual for reference

A high percentage of volunteers who attend training become active tutors.

c. The program tracks the number of volunteers who attend pre-service training to determine the percentage who become active volunteers
d. Provide adequate, effective screening and intake to ensure that volunteers go on to complete training and become active tutors
The program offers volunteers in-service training opportunities.

- The program provides in-service workshops/volunteer share sessions
- The program provides information on other training opportunities
- In-service offerings are based on student and volunteer needs

ONGOING VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

The program maintains current ESL/basic literacy materials for volunteer and student use.

- The program has appropriate, sufficient, and varied learning materials for volunteer and student use in printed, visual, and electronic formats
- Materials are relevant to CCRS, pathways and student goals
- Materials are pertinent to preparing adult students for success in higher education and training
- The program has a system for students and volunteers to access materials
- Staff assistance in identifying and obtaining materials is available

The program maintains a system of regular and supportive contact with volunteers.

- Volunteer contact is personal and regular (at least monthly)
- The program maintains a record of contact
- Contact encourages feedback and offers support
- Program information is provided to volunteers (e.g., newsletter, notices)
- The program provides opportunities for volunteer group interaction

The program provides a variety of volunteer recognition events and activities.

- Recognition events are public and volunteer efforts are publicly promoted (e.g., news articles)
- Recognition activities are designed to address individual volunteers’ motivations

VOLUNTEER EVALUATION

The program evaluates volunteers’ effectiveness.

- The program uses a regular volunteer evaluation process
- A mutual exchange of information takes place
- Training and development needs are identified
- The program assesses volunteer’s instructional methods and skills
- Volunteer evaluation is documented in writing
MANAGEMENT

PROGRAM PLANNING AND EVALUATION

The program has current written goals and objectives.

a. Needs assessment and other information is gathered regularly
b. The program solicits information from students, staff, volunteers, and board
c. The program incorporates information from external community needs assessments into its goals and objectives

The program develops an annual plan that:

a. Is based on the previous year’s annual performance
b. Incorporates a community assessment
c. Has stated goals/objectives addressing community linkages, resource development, and program issues
d. Has goals and objectives that are measurable, with corresponding activities and timelines

A variety of methods is used for program evaluation.

a. The program has an overall program evaluation plan
b. Program evaluation utilizes input from students, staff, volunteers, and others (e.g., social service agencies)
c. There is a describable relationship between evaluation design/methods and the program's purpose statement/goals and objectives

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The program has methods for promoting its mission and service in the community.

a. The program implements a formal or informal community relations plan that promotes community linkages and targets potential volunteers and students, decision makers, funders, social service agencies, and the general community
b. The program employs a variety of public relations/community awareness methods and activities
c. The program involves volunteers, students, and others (e.g., staff) in community relations activities
d. Students’ achievements are publicly recognized through news articles, certificates, social events, bulletin boards, etc.
RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The program has resources (cash, in-kind).

a. The program seeks to develop diversified resources
b. Time and effort are devoted to fundraising by the staff and others
c. The program seeks partnerships to enhance services

FISCAL, LEGAL AND RECORD-KEEPING

The program maintains appropriate and adequate financial policies, procedures and checks and balances.

a. The program has a detailed, realistic, written annual budget
b. The program addresses its legal responsibilities: (e.g., liability, non-profit status, employer and employee taxes)
c. The program has a demonstrable system of financial checks and balances (e.g., books, checks, audits/review)
d. The program tracks and documents the use of funds in compliance with funding requirements
e. Records are maintained for required periods of time

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

The program has a staffing plan adequate to support program goals and objectives.

a. The ratio of staff time to volunteers and students enables the program to provide the spectrum of activities necessary to sustain a quality volunteer program
b. The program continuously evaluates and modifies the staffing plan in response to program needs
c. There is a plan for involving students in program operations (e.g. newsletters, recruitment and outreach, recognition events, program planning, volunteer orientation and training, student support groups, etc.)

The program has policies and procedures for managing, supervising, and supporting staff (volunteers and students).

a. The program has published personnel qualifications, job descriptions, and hiring and termination procedures
b. New staff take part in a formal training/orientation process
c. The program communicates and supports a plan for volunteer and staff development
d. Staff evaluation procedures are regularly conducted, communicated and implemented.
e. The program has a personnel policy manual (including, but not limited to, grievance policy, employee rights and responsibilities, benefits, etc.)
f. The program has safety procedures for personnel, including volunteers and students
FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

The program has adequate office facilities.

a. The program has an identifiable office space with furnishings, computers and appropriate communication linkages (e.g. message phones, e-mail)
b. The program has access to learning materials and training and meeting space
c. Services are delivered in approved and safe locations

The program has made provisions for tutoring and classroom space.

a. Tutoring and classroom spaces are defined, safe and adequate
b. Tutoring and classroom spaces are easily accessible to students
c. Off-site tutoring spaces have been arranged by the program, if necessary