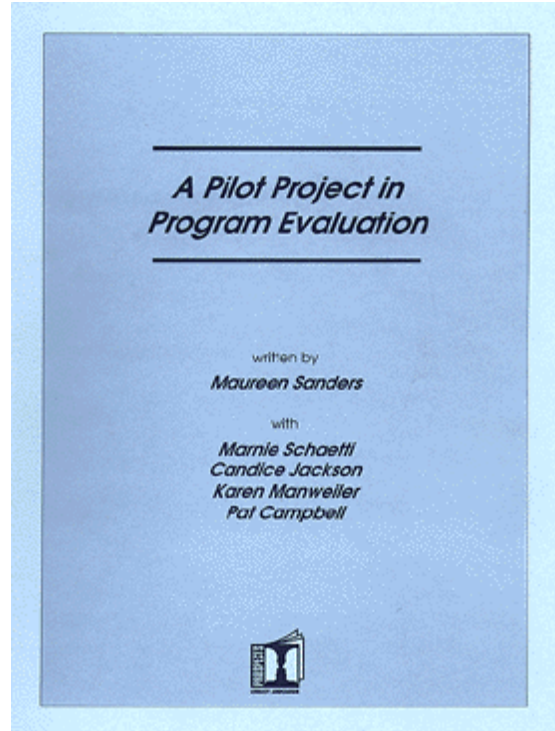# A Pilot Project in Program Evaluation

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Acknowledgements

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Background to the Project

Introduction

Adult literacy programs which are community-based and work with volunteer tutors, have existed in Alberta since 1979. The number of programs has grown from just a few programs in the early 1980's to around 85 today. The majority of these programs receive annual grants from Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development in amounts ranging from $11,000 to $72,000. Programs also range in size, from those in small rural communities providing service to 10 or 20 pairs, to those in large urban areas providing service to more than 100 pairs.

The issues confronting the programs' coordinators and communities have shifted and changed over the past fifteen years, but one programming concern remains constant: the need to find an effective, relevant and applicable means of program evaluation.

Issues in Program Evaluation

In a 1992 study, Candice Jackson pointed out that program evaluation has been one of the least emphasized areas of adult literacy programming. She named several reasons for this, including lack of coordinator training and expertise in this area, lack of time to conduct thorough program evaluation, and lack of requirement for such activity by the primary funder. The reasons are compounded by the voluntary nature of enrolment in literacy programs and the often transient lifestyle of the participants.

A further difficulty in implementing evaluation is that most models of evaluation were developed to meet the needs of programs in institutional settings. Institutional philosophies and goals frequently differ from those of more informal community-based programs. For example, in institutional settings there is an emphasis on set programs with definite starting and finishing points. Literacy programs, on the other hand, tend to have open entry and exit policies, with goals and programs that are individually decided by the students, tutors and staff. Traditional evaluation models may thus have little validity in community-based volunteer literacy programs.

The lack of an easy-to-use and accepted evaluation tool, when added to the above obstacles, means that literacy coordinators remain frustrated in their attempts to evaluate their programs. They may be unsure about the reasons for evaluation and about how to implement it.

Why We Did the Project

Those of us involved in the *Pilot Project To Analyze Two Adult Literacy Program Evaluation Tools* are, or were at the time, coordinators of community-based literacy programs. We understand the barriers facing literacy coordinators as we consider implementing program evaluation. Nevertheless, in an era when accountability and responsiveness have become the watchwords, we feel it critically important to have a recognized means of evaluating our programs. Equally strongly, we know that the means of evaluation *must* be applicable, user-friendly and cost-effective.

We were each motivated also by our individual interests in program evaluation. Candice Jackson had completed graduate work on this topic and wanted to pursue her interest further; Maureen Sanders had done evaluation on a small scale and, like Karen Manweiler, had a Board/ Advisory Committee that was keen to explore the idea of program evaluation. Marnie Schaetti, in her role as President of the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta, was also interested in the applicability of program evaluation to all programs in the province

We initiated this project to investigate the viability of two program evaluation tools that were said to be appropriate to community-based literacy programs. We wanted to examine how effectively these tools overcame the current barriers to evaluation and then make some recommendations for their future use. Our ultimate goal was to be able to recommend a suitable evaluation tool for general use by literacy coordinators in Alberta

Project Set-Up

The Project Participants

The community-based volunteer adult literacy programs of Alberta have much in common and, at the same time, are as varied as they are numerous. Our goals and methodologies are similar no matter what our differences. Yet, being community-based, each program reflects its community's individuality and uniqueness. We therefore wanted the programs involved in this project to reflect not only our commonalities but also our differences as much as possible. The programs that participated were:

- *Prospects Literacy Association in Edmonton:*

  Prospects coordinator Maureen Sanders agreed to work with up to 100 tutoring pairs for this project. Prospects was the largest program in the Evaluation Project, and the only urban one.

- *The Write Soon Literacy Project in Whitecourt:*

  Karen Manweiler was the Write Soon coordinator at the time and agreed to work with up to 65 pairs. This project covers a large geographical area in northern Alberta, incorporating several communities, and requiring a lot of traveling by the coordinator.

- *Parkland Adult Literacy Project in Stony Plain:*

  Located in a rural area not far from Edmonton, the project in Stony Plain is medium-sized. Candice Jackson, who coordinated the program at the time, planned to work with up to 30 pairs.

- *Project Read in Claresholm:*

  Marnie Schaetti's program was the smallest one involved, bringing 15 pairs to the project. Project Read, located 100 kilometres south of Calgary, serves several rural communities, the largest of which has a population of about 3,000.

In selecting programs to be involved, we looked for programs of different sizes in different geographic regions of the province which mirrored our differing demographic realities. We were successful in finding this range of programs to participate in the project.

Choosing the Evaluation Tools

As we considered evaluating our programs we realized that each program could be evaluated at two different levels. On the one hand, our projects needed to be evaluated as a whole. We needed to look at: fiscal, volunteer and resource management; training; community involvement and linkage; learner assessment and instructional strategies; and all that we do as literacy coordinators. For this purpose, the first tool we chose to use was the *Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit (1989),* by Audrey Thomas of British Columbia. Some of us had already used parts of this kit and felt that it was philosophically sound and offered good possibilities for examining all elements of our programs.

On the other hand, as literacy coordinators, we must offer our tutors and students an effective method of measuring the progress of their work together as individual pairs. We realized that for many programs this is an area of weakness; our current ways of measuring progress are piecemeal and tend to reside within the control of the program coordinator (for example, assessment through informal reading inventories, and/or reports from tutors which may only indicate numbers of hours spent working together). However, we often receive requests from tutors and students for ways that they themselves can determine how they are doing in their work together.

Some members of our group had already examined and tried out the *Progress Profile* kit published by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) in London, England. We felt it offered potential in the area of joint student/tutor evaluation and we were keen to pilot it on a larger scale. This was the second of the tools we decided to evaluate as part of this study.

The Two Evaluation Tools

Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit

Audrey Thomas' evaluation tool is described as a "process" which will "help programs to examine their practice, reflect upon it and try to see how things could be done differently in the hope that this reflection would lead to action and improved programs" (Thomas,1).

The tool consists of three questionnaires built around a set of seventeen Good Practice Statements (see Appendix A). Each statement was written for one element identified as integral to volunteer tutor programs. These elements are:

- Philosophy
- Planning
- Community Involvement
- Awareness Activities
- Access
- Facilities and Equipment
- Administration
- Participation
- Staff Training

- Tutor Training
- Volunteer Tutor Support Services
- Learner Assessment
- Learner Support Services
- Instructional Strategies
- Materials
- Program Evaluation
- Funding

1. The Program Questionnaire
The main evaluation instrument is the Program Questionnaire. It is designed to be used as part of a group process involving paid and volunteer staff, tutors, learners and Board or Advisory Council members. Audrey Thomas recommends use of this questionnaire and a group process whenever possible.

2. The Tutor and Learner Questionnaires
In designing her evaluation kit, Thomas recognized that for some literacy programs the logistics of arranging an effective group process to use the Program Questionnaire would be daunting, for reasons such as the size of the program or the area it covered. She therefore included two other instruments, a Tutor Questionnaire and a Learner Questionnaire. Each of these asks questions about the Good Practice Statements which are most relevant to the tutor and learner respectively.

3. The Program Profile
In addition to the questionnaires there is a Program Profile. This provides quantitative information about a program's staffing, funding and so on. It is designed to be completed mainly by paid staff members because it consists primarily of statistical data.

The Progress Profile

The Progress Profile "provides a framework for deciding aims, planning programmes of work and reviewing progress" (*Progress Profile* Guidelines, 3). It involves students, tutors and staff in setting realistic goals based on student needs, and in monitoring the achievement of those goals at set times during the tutoring period.

The kit consists of a set of Prompt Cards, a set of Five Questions (see chart on following page) and a Progress Review.

1. The Prompt Cards
A set of Prompt Cards with both graphic and written information is used to help students articulate and define their goals. The kit also contains blank cards so that students can create more prompt cards to meet their needs. With the support of these Prompt Cards students can thus identify an aim such as "get a job promotion." They can then break it down into smaller elements such as filling in time sheets, completing order forms, reading staff bulletins and writing memos. The Five Questions work with the Prompt Cards to help students plan their program of work.

2. The Five Questions
The first three questions (see chart below) set the goals for the tutor and student's work and are answered by the student in consultation with the tutor and perhaps the coordinator. The fourth question should be answered after a few sessions of working together. It's a way of providing continuous feedback on a student's progress. And the fifth question is answered when the Progress Review is completed -- after about forty hours of tutoring. This question provides the starting point for continuation of tutoring.

1. Where do I want to go? I would like to be able to...

2. What do I need to learn? What am I already confident about?

3. a) *How am I going to get there?* I will begin with... Later I will work on... These activities may be useful... What resources will I need?

b) *How will I know when I've got there?* I will know I've got there when I can..., when I feel...

Lesson plans are based on the goals set here. After a few sessions of working together, the tutor and student answer the fourth and fifth questions:

4. How far have I got? I feel more confident about... I am still unsure of... The tutor is also asked to comment on the student's progress.

5. Where to next? The student and tutor decide what goals to continue working on. They may then use the first three questions again to help put the goals in writing.

3. The Progress Review
After a designated period of time (ALBSU recommends after forty hours of tutoring), the student and tutor complete the Progress Review by shading in sections of a bar graph that relates to their goals and elements. The Progress Review (see Table 1 for an example of a Progress Review) is an assessment grid that is "a see-at-a-glance summative record of progress made over time, supported by the formative assessment of the 5 Questions" (*Progress Profile,* Handbook, 16). It attempts to express the student's progress towards personal negotiated goals. It also recognizes that the application of new skills is an important measure of progress. Students are therefore asked where and how they have used their improved literacy skills. This review provides both a look back at what has been accomplished and a look forward to the next set of goals.

Evaluation of the Program

The developers of this tool also point out that if all program members use the *Progress Profile* it will "contribute to the evaluation of a programme's provision and effectiveness " (*Progress Profile* Handbook, 10). The handbook further describes ways in which the data from the progress review can be collated and aggregated to demonstrate the effectiveness of a program. In our project, we did not use the tool for this purpose, but focused on its usefulness only for individual tutoring pairs.

Table 1

Sample of a Progress Review

Aims	Elements		
Help my children	Read bedtime stories	Do paired reading every day	Teach the spelling strategies I've learned
shade in the amount you have achieved	▓▓▓▢	▓▓▢▢	▓▢▢▢
Improve my writing	Keep a journal and do some writing every day	Write something for the newsletter	Write a story for my kids about growing up
shade in the amount you have achieved	▓▢▢▢	▓▓▓	▓▓▢

Piloting the Evaluation Tools

The First Stage: Program Evaluation Kit

Program Questionnaire
Each program began by implementing Audrey Thomas' program evaluation tool. The coordinators invited a cross section of tutors, students, and Board/Advisory Committee members for an informal pizza dinner or coffee and snacks, in order to have a discussion based on the Program Questionnaire and its Good Practice statements.
A total of 94 people from the four programs attended these sessions and completed the Questionnaires over a 2½ to 3 hour period.

Tutor Questionnaire
The individual tutor questionnaires were mailed to a total of 180 tutors in the four programs and 116 tutors returned them. The average return rate for programs was 64.5% (see Table 2 for summary of the results).

Learner Questionnaire
A total of 48 students completed the questionnaires through face-to-face interviews with the coordinators. An additional 102 students received the learner questionnaires in the mail and 56 completed them, some with assistance from their tutors. Thus a total of 105 students, or 67%, provided feedback through the individual questionnaires.

Altogether, 314 program members participated in the piloting of this tool. There was some overlap between program members who completed individual questionnaires and who participated in the group process. However, we estimate an overall participation rate of approximately 70%. We were satisfied with the overall rate of return and the level of participation which is considered high for this type of survey.

Table 2

Response to *Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit*

Questionnaire Type	Number Distributed	Number Completed	Percentage Completed
Learner • mailed • face to face	102 <u>48</u> 150	56 <u>48</u> 100	67%
Tutor	180	116	64.5%

The Second Stage: The Progress Profile

Once the Program Evaluations were complete, coordinators began training tutors in the use of the *Progress Profile.* Training varied among programs, with some programs providing group training and others doing more one-on-one training. Some programs also provided review sessions as appropriate. The students and tutors used the *Progress Profile* over the next few weeks and months in planning and evaluating their work and progress. As a part of this project the pairs then completed questionnaires designed to enable tutoring pairs to respond to their use of the *Progress Profile.*

A total of 86 pairs used the *Progress Profile* during this project and 62 pairs followed through on completion of the tutor and student questionnaires. Because the Prospects program introduced pairs to the *Progress Profile* before the program officially began, only the Prospects pairs worked together for the *recommended* period of time before evaluating their progress. However, all pairs did some evaluation of progress even when they had been working together for a shorter period.

This reduced period of tutoring before review of progress did not appear to affect the overall results of the project. The vast majority of tutoring pairs obtained enough experience with the tool to be able to say they liked it and found it useful in their work.

Table 3

Response to *Progress Profile*

Number of pairs trained	Number of pairs completed	Percentage completed
86	62	72.5%

Data Analysis

The Project hired Pat Campbell as consultant to create the questionnaires to enable pairs to respond to their use of the *Progress Profile.* She also developed a questionnaire to help structure our analysis of these two tools. Each coordinator then compiled the responses from her own program into one document from each program. Using the questionnaires thus enabled the coordinators to report on the use of both the *Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit* and the *Progress Profile.*

In addition, two pairs from each participating program completed a more in-depth questionnaire on the *Progress Profile.* Each coordinator then chose one of these two for a case study as an example of her program's use of the *Progress Profile* (see Appendix B for the case studies).

Pat compiled the responses to the questionnaires and wrote a summary report of the Evaluation Project. The four coordinators then met as a group with Pat and with Liz Karra who was hired as the project's external evaluator. We spent a day discussing our findings about the two tools and a second day discussing where we would like to go from here.

The remainder of this report is a summary of our findings, our recommendations about the two tools, and our thoughts on future directions for program evaluation.

All of the program coordinators agreed that the process of evaluating our programs had been extremely worthwhile. As individuals we were able to reflect both on the process of the evaluation in our programs and on the product - the tools we used and the results we obtained.

Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit

Advantages

These were the most frequently cited positive comments about the *Program Evaluation Kit* (see Table 4 for a summary).

The Process

1. Raised Awareness of the Need for Evaluation
While we all had some sense that the concept of evaluation was "a good thing," participating in this project raised our awareness considerably about the *need* for evaluation. In other words, the very fact of doing program evaluation sensitized us more fully to the benefits and advantages to our programs of doing regular evaluation.

2. Provided a Structure
We all agreed that the kit, especially the program questionnaire, provided structure for discussion. One coordinator suggested that it "created the space to allow other things to happen"; another said that it "put the pause button on and allowed us to look at the program".

As coordinators, we all felt that the group meetings held to work on the program questionnaires were an excellent way of bringing members of the organization together for a valuable self-inspection. Students, tutors, staff and Board or Advisory Committee members were able to learn about the scope of the program and were better able to understand the many factors that contribute to the success of a program.

The interaction between the various participants generated information and ideas that did not necessarily occur in response to the individual questionnaires. Also, it brought forth ideas from students and tutors that might not otherwise have emerged.

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3. Provided Positive Feedback
Some of the coordinators had initially viewed evaluation as a process of finding out everything that was "wrong" with their work. However, we all found that the Evaluation Kit provided positive feedback to program staff about the many good things that were happening in programs.

4. Confirmed/Suggested Areas for Development
Where areas for improvement were suggested, these were now accepted more positively because they were seen as constructive criticism. In some instances the program evaluation results only confirmed what program staff already knew: the need, for example, to improve goal-setting and lesson planning for students and tutors, or the need to diversify fund-raising. In other instances new suggestions for improvement were made, but often with the recognition that more financial or material resources would be needed in order to implement them.

5. Raised Awareness of the Volume of Program Work
Some coordinators stated that the evaluation process gave tutors and students a greater realization of the wide range and variety of work to be done in a program. Some program participants subsequently made a commitment to help coordinators get things done.

The Kit

1. The Good Practice Statements are Theoretically Sound
We felt that the Good Practice statements were generally well researched and theoretically sound. We also agreed that they provided an excellent basis for discussion and that they covered most elements of the program that should be evaluated. We felt that even when used on their own without the supporting statements (some of which we found troublesome -- see next section) they provided a valuable starting point for discussion.

Disadvantages

These were the most frequently cited negative comments about the *Program Evaluation Kit* (see Table 4 for a summary).

The Process

1. High Material Costs
Because this was a pilot project we were able to factor in all costs for items such as photocopying of questionnaires, postage, telephone and fax. Since we tested all elements of the kit, the paper and photocopying costs were particularly high. In the largest program, for example, photocopying costs were in the region of $100. We were only too aware that if evaluation of programs becomes standard, there is currently no funding available to cover such costs.

2. High Cost in Time
Related to the first point is the time that program staff, board, students and volunteers spent doing the evaluation. Much of this was given as volunteer time, which means that we placed considerable additional demands on our volunteers. Fairly extensive time was also spent by program coordinators in planning, organizing and implementing the evaluation process and in analyzing the results. These costs were also covered through the grant we received, but once again we were aware that program evaluation does take time and that most programs are not presently funded at sufficient levels to provide this additional time to coordinators.

The Kit

1. Underlying Assumptions Need to be Re-examined
There are underlying assumptions in this evaluation kit with which we did not always agree. For example, because of the detail and wording of the supporting statements accompanying the Good Practice statements, there is an assumption that all those involved in the program need to be aware of all aspects of the program. But as one tutor said "just because we don't know, doesn't mean we need to know." In addition, sometimes participants would say that a condition was not met, when in fact it was met and they just didn't *know* it was met. This would then skew the rating system of the kit making the program seem less effective than it was.

Another assumption is that more participation in more areas by more people makes a better program. Many program participants felt that this assumption is inappropriate. They said that they do not have the time or are not interested in participating in the program beyond their tutoring sessions. Thus, as coordinators, we sometimes had difficulty reconciling what the kit tells us is good practice with what program participants tell us is their idea of good practice.

The coordinators of the rural programs involved felt that the kit also makes assumptions based on an urban paradigm. Few allowances, therefore, were made in the concept of good practice with respect to restraining or limiting factors such as: the wide geographic base of rural programs, the lack of transportation in these areas, the insularity of programs, and the lack of other community resources.

2. Kit May Raise False Expectations
Another difficulty some of us faced was that the evaluation kit raised false expectations among the participants. For example, because it focuses on programs administered in ideal conditions it asks questions about provision of funds for childcare and transportation for tutors. For the programs that participated in this project such budget items are out of the question. However, merely by asking the question it piques interest among tutors and students and raises expectations that perhaps the program should be meeting these costs. This could then place a heavier burden on coordinators to search out funding for yet one more expense.

3. Kit is Too Academic and Too Linear
Some other general criticisms of the kit were that it is too highly structured, too linear with its dosed response format, and too academic. One comment was that it was too much "a paper and pencil exercise", although it is described in the introduction as "multi-faceted. " We also felt that it is more complicated than it needs to be.

4. Program Questionnaire is Too Long
While the process of group discussion of the program questionnaire was valuable, we felt that the questionnaire was too long to be completed comfortably in one session. On the other hand it would be difficult to get people back for more than one session.

5. Problems with Program Questionnaire
Some of the specific problems we found with the program questionnaire were:

- it uses complex language that many participants found difficult.
- it was intimidating because of the language, and the fact that it began by asking for input on the philosophical aspects of the program, rather than on more practical elements.
- the supporting statements are thorough but some felt they may not be realistic for small programs.
- the format of the questionnaire -- good practice statement, followed by supporting statements, followed by a scoring and rating system--was too complex and people found it confusing.
- the rating system itself seemed to place undue pressure on programs. As one coordinator said: "How can I get a 3.3 this time and decide to aim for a 3.9 next time when all of the material conditions that limited me before still limit me now?"

6. Problems with Tutor Questionnaire
Tutors in some programs, though not all, found the tutor questionnaire difficult to complete. All coordinators commented on the large amount of paper needed both for this and for the learner questionnaire. Again, we recognized that the intention of the developer of the kit was *not* to administer all questionnaires to all participants.

7. Problems with Learner Questionnaire
We were unanimous in feeling that this questionnaire needs to be redesigned to be more user-friendly since it is not written in plain language. Also the questions were worded for a closed response format rather than being open-ended. As well, there was too little range in the possible types of responses.

There was also confusion with respect to the use of the word "program" in the questionnaire. Students were not clear whether the word referred to their own particular program of work or to the program in general. Usually, in their responses, they tended to focus on their individual needs rather than the program needs. For example, one student said "I'm happy with the program we're working on," while another said "Does it mean the organization, or does it mean what we're doing together?"

Finally, coordinators expressed reservations about students completing questions that discussed issues pertaining to tutors, especially when tutors were often helping them to complete the questionnaire.

Table 4

Summary of the Advantages and Disadvantages of the
Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit

Advantages

- Raised awareness of the need for evaluation
- Provided a structure for discussion
- Provided positive feedback on programs
- Confirmed/suggested areas for improvement
- Raised awareness of volume of program work
- Good practice statements theoretically sound

Disadvantages

- Adds further financial costs to programs
- Places additional demands on staff and volunteer time
- Assumptions need to be re-examined
- May raise false expectations about everything programs "should" provide
- Too academic and too linear; closed response format
- Too long and organization overly complex
- Language too complex; clarification of some terms needed
- Rating system places undue pressure on programs

The Progress Profile

The response to this tool was an overwhelmingly positive one with 98% of student-tutor pairs recommending the tool for use by others. While there was some variation in the perception of such aspects as the user-friendliness of the tool and its effectiveness in helping pairs to plan lessons, the majority of students and tutors found the *Progress Profile* beneficial to their program of work.

Advantages

These were the most frequently cited positive comments about the *Progress Profile* (see Table 5 for a summary).

1. Integrates Evaluation with Teaching and Learning
The Progress Profile was seen to be a very holistic tool: goal setting at the beginning of the process and evaluation at the end of the process became part of the *whole* program so that evaluation was seen as integral to, and not separate from, the entire teaching and learning process.

2. Provides Structure and Focus
Tutoring pairs found that it provided a useful structure to enable them to set goals and plan learning sessions. It also helped them to focus more clearly on the why, what and how of teaching and learning.

3. Is Easy to Use
With the exception of the Progress Review section, the majority of pairs found the tool easy to administer and use.

4. Helps Students Identify Learning Needs
Many students at the start of their programs have rather general ideas about what they need or want to learn. For example, they may just say they want "to write better." This tool helped them to move beyond generalities and to get more specific about their individual learning needs.

5. Helps Tutors Feel Less Anxious
One area of anxiety for tutors is determining whether students are progressing. This tool helped them to feel more confident about monitoring and assessing student progress. It also helped them evaluate the effectiveness of their tutoring.

6. Fills a Gap in Tutor Training
Both tutors and coordinators felt that this tool provided training in an area where more support is needed.

7. Gives a New Lease on Life
For pairs who had been working together for a while, this tool gave them fresh motivation and renewed interest in setting new goals.

8. Provides for a Range of Learning Styles
The use of prompt cards acknowledged and allowed for the learning styles of kinesthetic learners. Moreover, the tool integrates the affective component with the cognitive component of learning, i.e. how students *feel* about their learning.

Disadvantages

These were the most frequently cited negative comments about the *Progress Profile* (see Table 5 for a summary).

1 Uses Too Much Paper
All coordinators and many tutoring pairs felt that the *Progress Profile* requires too much paper i.e. handouts to explain the process, and sheets to respond to the questions.

2. Progress Review was Difficult to Understand
Most of the negatives comments about this kit were received on the Progress Review part of the process. Some found the shading in of "goals achieved" difficult to do. Others were somewhat confused about how to proceed at this point.

3. Increases Tutor Training Time
There was a recognition that while this was a valuable addition to tutor training it does increase the overall length of time required for basic training. Coordinators grappled with how to add this component without making training too demanding on volunteers.

4. Increases Amount of Material to Learn
A related comment was that some tutors found it difficult to absorb the extra information about the *Progress Profile* during their regular tutor training.

5. Process is Time-Consuming
Some pairs felt that it took a lot of time and effort to complete the first questions. This can be viewed either positively or negatively depending on whether the *Progress Profile* is seen as integral to the learning process.

6. Cost of the Tool is High
Although individual kits are relatively inexpensive, the cost of providing enough kits for use in programs is very high, especially for larger programs.

7. Needs of Aboriginal and ESL Students Not Addressed
Some programs commented that the culture and needs of aboriginal and English as a Second Language students are not reflected in this tool. This is a concern for Alberta programs which enrol substantial numbers of both aboriginal and ESL students.

Table 5

Summary of Advantages and Disadvantages of *Progress Profile*

Advantages

- A holistic tool integrating all elements of tutoring
- Provides structure and focus
- Easy to use
- Helped students identify learning needs
- Helped tutors feel less anxious
- Fills a gap in tutor training
- Gives pairs a new lease on life
- Provides for a range of learning styles

Disadvantages

- Requires too much paper
- Progress Review was difficult to understand
- Increases tutor training time
- Increases amount of material to be absorbed in tutor training
- Process is time-consuming
- Cost of kit for use by many pairs is high
- Needs of aboriginal and ESL students not addressed

Adult literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit

This kit provides a comprehensive examination of all aspects of a volunteer tutor literacy program and, as such, is a useful starting point for any program that has never done program evaluation. We recommend use of the kit in its present form, with some suggestions for adaptation.

Recommendations for Current Use

1. Use the Group Process
If possible, the program questionnaire should be completed in a group process, as Audrey Thomas recommends, rather than using the individual tutor and learner questionnaires. The interaction within the groups provides the most valuable information and is most effective from the participants' point of view. We also recommend the use of an external facilitator to make the process more objective and to give participants an opportunity to speak more freely.

2. Use Good Practice Statements Without Supporting Conditions
When using the program questionnaire in a group process, we suggest that the good practice statements are first presented *without* the supporting conditions. The intention would be to open up discussion on what makes a "good" literacy program, and to allow it to range a little more freely and in a less linear fashion. The supporting conditions could then be contributed by the facilitator, if they are needed, to stimulate further ideas or thought. Programs might also choose to use only the statements that they feel are most relevant to their programs.

3. Begin With Concrete, Move to Abstract
We also recommend that groups begin with the most concrete good practice statements such as those relating to facilities, materials, tutor training and learner assessment. Once the group is confident about their knowledge in these areas it should then be easier to move into more esoteric topics such as philosophy, community involvement and administration.

4. Small Groups Can Complete Parts of the Whole
In order to shorten the time needed to complete the whole questionnaire, smaller groups within the larger group could focus on specific topics rather than all groups covering every topic. Each small group could then report back to the whole group. This would also allow tutors and students to respond in a more focused way to elements of a program that they know most about, for example, training for tutors and student assessment for learners.

5. Use Telephone Survey
Another suggestion is that, particularly in large programs, regular telephone surveys can be conducted by program staff on a smaller random sample of tutors and students.

6. Spread the Process Over Two Years
As recommended by Audrey Thomas, the entire process need not be completed at one time. The group process could be held one year and the individual questionnaires administered the next; or the tutor questionnaires could be sent out one year and the student questionnaires the next.

Recommendations for Future Use

1. Create an evaluation kit appropriate to Alberta Literacy Programs
An evaluation kit could be developed for use in the Alberta context, and for use in the variety of rural as well as urban programs.

2. Make Underlying Assumption Explicit
The underlying assumptions need to be examined and then clearly stated.

3. Make Format Less Linear
The format needs to be made less linear and less structured to allow for a variety of learning styles and presentation forms.

4. Write In Plain Language
Any questionnaires in such a kit need to be rewritten in plain language.

5. A Collective Process
The emphasis should be on a collective process with less emphasis on questionnaires.

The Progress Profile

Recommendations for Current Use

In general, this tool was received very positively and we recommend use of the kit in its present form. While it does have some limitations, these are outweighed by the many advantages suggested by tutors, students and coordinators. Some slight modifications that could be made to the kit to make it more user-friendly for immediate use are as follows:

1. Change Some of the Wording
Adapt the wording to more appropriate Canadian usage. For example the question that asks "Where do I want to go?" could be verbally re-worded to say "What is my goal?"

2. Add More Prompt Cards
Additional prompt cards could be added to fit the Canadian or Alberta context. For instance, add something on the GED or on local apprenticeship programs.

3. Laminate and Ring-Bind Prompt Cards
To cut down on costs, the prompt cards could also be laminated and put on a ring for borrowing purposes.

4. Show How Strategies are Used with the Tool
The *Progress Profile* might be introduced in conjunction with lesson planning during tutor training. Some one-on-one help could also be given to tutoring pairs as they begin to work together. It is especially important to help tutors see how the strategies they learned during training might apply to the *Progress Profile.*

5. Use in Conjunction With Informal Reading Inventories
The tool should also be used in conjunction with an informal reading inventory to provide more information about students' strengths weaknesses and needs.

6. Integrate Into the Entire Tutor Training Session
Another suggestion is that the *Progress Profile* could be introduced at the beginning of tutor training and referred to throughout training. Tutors would thus use the tool to plan and assess their own learning during the workshops and to review their progress at the end of training. This would give them hands-on experience with the tool before using it with students.

Recommendations for Future Use

Each of the coordinators participating in the project considered that in the longer term it would be worthwhile to develop a version of the *Progress Profile* appropriate for use in Alberta literacy programs. We felt that the tool would not require substantive changes but mostly changes in wording and formatting.

1. Canadianize Vocabulary and Concepts
British vocabulary and concepts should be changed to Canadian vocabulary and concepts.

2. Modify Progress Review
The Progress Review element needs to be modified to make it easier to understand and use.

3. Reduce Number of Handouts
A format that cuts down on the number of handouts should be developed.

4. Make Further Recommendations for Review
Recommendations should be included to have pairs complete the Progress Review at other appropriate times such as before they take a summer break.

5. Provide Training for Coordinators
Training in use of the *Progress Profile* should also be provided to literacy coordinators

6. Connect Progress Profile to Tutor Training
The adapted *Progress Profile* needs to be viewed in the context of the entire tutor training package. For example, it should be connected to sections on lesson planning; clear examples need to be developed to show how strategies tutors learn during training apply to the *Progress Profile.*

7. Consider Progress Profile for STAPLE
Consideration also needs to be given as to whether and how this tool fits into the STAPLE (Standardized Training for Alberta Practitioners in Literacy Education) project.

8. Develop a Training Video
A further suggestion was to develop a video that would explain the use of the *Progress Profile* for both tutors and students. This would also assist in training program coordinators as suggested in #5 above.

Where to Next?

Since we began this project a year and a half ago, the issue of Evaluation has become even more central to Alberta community-based literacy programs. A recent policy document from Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development (AE&CD), *New Directions for Adult Learning,* issues a clear call for assessment and increased accountability in all adult learning programs.

In response to this call, the Adult Development Branch of AE&CD recently contracted Murray Lindman to address the issues of accountability and performance measurement for all programs managed under the Adult Development Branch mandate. A draft document, *Measure for Measure: Accountability and Performance Measurement of Adult Development Programs in Alberta,* states that "through a consultative process, this project will develop, pilot and operationalize an accountability framework, performance indicators and reporting and feedback structures."

The Board of Directors of the Association of Literacy Coordinators of Alberta (LCA) intends to work closely with Murray Lindman and the Adult Development Branch to ensure that any accountability and performance measurements developed are appropriate to the work of community-based adult literacy programs.

The LCA will soon apply to the National Literacy Secretariat for funding for a two-phased project. First, in conjunction with all LCA members, we will develop Standards of Good Practice which are applicable to literacy programs in Alberta in the mid-1990's. Second, based on those standards, we will write an evaluation tool appropriate for our programs.

Again, throughout this process we will work with the Adult Development Branch. First, we will ensure that the tool(s) we create will provide them with the information they need to meet the Department's requirements. Second, we will do all we can to ensure that the information they want from us provides an accurate reflection of the multi-faceted work we do in the field of adult literacy, and that it reflects not only quantitative but also qualitative success.

The process of developing an effective and collaborative system of evaluation for community-based literacy programs in Alberta will require changes on all sides. Literacy coordinators and Board or Advisory Councils must understand the value of evaluation, must "own" the purpose and the process involved. From there, they must be willing to contribute their fiscal and personnel resources toward the on-going evaluation of their programs.

Funders, on the other hand, must recognize that not all accurate measurements are quantitative, that positive changes in a person's quality of life or self-perception are sometimes most valuable to society. Also, funders who expect literacy programs to conduct effective evaluations must be willing to contribute financially toward the process.

In the years to come, we will see how well we have managed to integrate evaluation into the community-based volunteer literacy programs of Alberta. Whatever the outcome, those of us involved in this Pilot Evaluation Project believe it to have been a valuable first step, and we were pleased to have been a part of it.

Good Practice Statements from Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit*

A. Philosophy

A quality adult literacy program has a dearly written philosophy or mission statement which is communicated to the people involved with the program and is reviewed regularly.

B. Planning

A quality adult literacy program regularly plans and sets goals and objectives consistent with its philosophy. It carries out these activities in a participatory manner.

C. Community Involvement and Linkages

A quality adult literacy program is aware of the resources and needs of the community in which it is located. It establishes and maintains links with various referral sources and community agencies as well as other relevant educational programs and organizations. It regularly reviews its community and organizational relationships.

D. Awareness Activities

A quality adult literacy program initiates a community awareness program to attract potential learners and volunteers and to gain support for the program and literacy issues from other sectors of the community.

E. Access

A quality adult literacy program operates from an identifiable and accessible location. It provides flexible time and place arrangements for instruction and facilitates access to other learning opportunities.

F. Facilities and Equipment

A quality adult literacy program operates in facilities which are comfortable, adequately serviced and equipped to meet administrative, instructional and program support needs.

G. Administration

A quality adult literacy program uses paid professional staff and is consistently well-managed and run.

H. Participation

A quality adult literacy program encourages the participation of learners and volunteers in as many different aspects of the program as possible consistent with its philosophy.

I. Staff Training and Development

A quality adult literacy program uses well-trained professional staff who keep up-to-date with developments in the field.

J. Tutor Training

A quality adult literacy program offers tutors a comprehensive training program which is presented using a variety of instructional techniques and group formats.

K. Volunteer Tutor Support Services

A quality adult literacy program provides a broad range of support services for its volunteer tutors.

L. Learner Assessment

A quality adult literacy program uses a variety of flexible, learner-centred assessment procedures when learners enter the program, while they are being tutored and when they leave the program.

M. Learner Support Services

A quality adult literacy program provides a broad range of support services for its learners.

N. Instructional Strategies

A quality adult literacy program uses instructional strategies which help adult learners progress towards their learning goals.

O. Materials

A quality adult literacy program uses a wide variety of instructional materials appropriate for adults and consistent with the program's philosophy, as well as a wide variety of supplementary support and resource materials

P. Program Evaluation

A quality adult literacy program engages in ongoing evaluation to assure program effectiveness and involves learners, tutors, staff and other interested parties in the process.

O. Funding

A quality adult literacy program has adequate, ongoing funding to provide the necessary resources for staffing, facilities, materials and other support services the program needs to fulfill its mission.

Four Case Studies of the Progress Profile

Prospects Literacy Association
by Maureen Sanders

Prospects Literacy Association was established as a community-based volunteer tutoring program in 1980, in the city of Edmonton. Core funding for the program is received from Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. Prospects became a charitable organization with a governing board of directors in 1991. The program is largely a one-on-one volunteer tutor program (75-130 tutoring pairs at any given time during the year), but it has also broadened its range of services to include small group work, using paid instructors, in the areas of writing, reading, math and family literacy. In 1994, the Association served about three hundred students.

Catherine and Sean

Catherine and Sean had been working together for 20 months before being introduced to the *Progress Profile.* Sean was the first student that Catherine had worked with since training as a tutor, but Sean had had two previous tutors and had been in the program for three years. Sean is a twenty-seven year old student who had been through special education programs throughout his school career. Catherine has teacher education training and is a keen and motivated tutor.

Background Information

Catherine and Sean worked with the *Progress Profile* for approximately 38 hours during the course of this study; They were in the first group to participate in piloting the tool and Catherine was particularly keen to try using it. She came to an in-service training session which was about 90 minutes in length, and she was enthusiastic about the potential of the tool. We chose this pair as one of two possible case studies because of their early involvement and interest in the pilot project and their willingness to monitor their use of the tool. They also expressed a willingness to complete the questionnaires used for data collection

Prior Experiences with Assessment and Goal Setting

Before using the *Progress Profile,* Catherine's view of assessment was that of "standardized tests" and "tutor-made tests." She wrote that "tests would be given by me tutor, written by the student and graded and/or evaluated by me tutor." After using the *Progress Profile,* Catherine stated that her view of assessment had changed. She said that "the biggest change comes into play when the student is also involved in the assessment. This assessment allows me tutor/student pair to have a graphic representation of the progress (or lack of it) rather than a numeric value." She also stated that the *Progress Profile* "allows for an on-going dialogue between teacher and learner about his/her goals, materials used, his/her confidence level, and me usefulness of the goals we are striving to attain."

Sean wrote briefly that before the *Progress Profile* the thoughts that came to his mind when someone mentioned the word "assessment" or "test" were "boring" and "nervous." After using the *Progress Profile* he said that his ideas about assessment had changed "quite a bit, this is more private."

This pair stated that they were "not really" working towards a goal before they began using the *Progress Profile,* nor did they have a way of keeping track of progress. Catherine expressed verbally that they tried to set specific goals but that she found it difficult to get Sean to be explicit about the things he wanted to work on, so she often set the agenda and was not sure that they were working on the things that were most important to him. Sean was also quite passive in the tutoring situation and Catherine wanted to get him more involved in his learning.

Progress Profile: Learning How to Use It

Approximately one hour was set aside towards the end of basic tutor training to introduce new tutors to the tool and to give them a brief amount of time to practice using it. In addition, four 90 minute in-service sessions were provided for on-going tutors to receive training in the use of the *Progress Profile.* Catherine attended one of the in-service training sessions and also returned for a second session as they began to approach the Progress Review part of the Profile. She felt that this was beneficial.

Catherine found the training to be generally sufficient, and experienced no real glitches or trouble spots in using the *Progress Profile:* the prompt cards were "straight-forward and very helpful." Catherine's need for a repeat experience with the training as she approached the Progress Review was borne out by a number of other tutors using the *Progress Profile.* Catherine also stated that they were quite easily able to measure progress by shading in the boxes and that it was a "worthwhile activity because it tells us where we're at." Another comment was that she could benefit from staff input on "how to delicately handle a wide variance between the student's assessment of progress made and the tutor's." This pair rated the level of user-friendliness at a 4 out of a possible 5.

Feedback from Catherine and Sean

Catherine stated that her first impressions of the *Progress Profile* had "become a reality." She said that the tool "provided us with the guidelines we needed to establish the students' goals, to determine how we would meet them, and to keen us focussed on our journey."

Sean focussed on "shading in the squares" as being helpful to him but he was unable to really explain how it helped him. He gave examples of two things he is now doing more consistently: "reading every day" and "watching the vowels." This pair did not experience any great differences of opinion about how to reach the student's goals.

Catherine stated that "the *Progress Profile* helped me to decide on the effectiveness of my teaching when I was able to listen to my student evaluate his own progress. Without this tool he didn't have a clue (it seemed) if any learning was taking place."

They felt that the use of the *Progress Profile* did change their lessons. "It changed the planning because Sean was able to verbalize what he wanted to learn through the structured format and through the use of the practical prompt cards." They did not feel that it had really changed their relationship in any way.

Recommendations

Both Catherine and Sean recommended use of the *Progress Profile* for other tutoring pairs. They had no suggestions for changing it.

The Write Soon Literacy Project is a community-based volunteer tutor program that exists to provide confidential one-to-one tutoring for any adult who wishes or needs to improve his/her reading, writing and/or math skills. ESL students are also accepted. The project extends over a large geographical area comprising some 10,000 sq. km. and includes a population of 18,000. There are 12 towns and villages plus a large rural/farming area. According to the 1994 statistics the total number of students accessing our project was 89.

Jane and Sally

Jane (the student) is of Spanish descent and applied to our project to learn "English as a Second Language." She initially joined in July 1993 and was subsequently matched with a tutor. Her first tutor had to give up tutoring because of family health problems. She was then rematched in March 1994 to her present tutor.

The student is in her forties and has a young son who is integrating very well into the public school system. Although she has not worked since coming to Canada, she is currently looking for work. Her education in Mexico included high school plus business school. She worked as a private accountant in insurance sales. When she started with her first tutor she had very little facility with spoken English, although she could understand quite a lot. Although she had been without a tutor for a few months she had improved somewhat.

Sally (the tutor) joined the program and received training in January and February 1994. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and works as an addictions counsellor. She had not tutored previously. She is single and has a fair amount of time to devote to tutoring.

Background Information

Jane and Sally started using this profile as soon as they were matched and had worked with it for twenty hours by the cut-off date.

One reason I chose this pair for a case study was plain and simple logistics. The tutor works in the office next to mine and I was fairly certain I could rely on her to use it diligently, fill out all the required questionnaires and get them back to me in a timely manner. I also wanted, if possible, to have one ESL pair and one literacy pair for this study.

Prior Experiences with Assessment and Goal Setting

The tutor's initial view when I talked about this was "forty-five pages of questions!" However, she found it very easy to use. The student's first thoughts on assessment were that it was too soon for a test. On seeing the *Progress Profile* she thought it would be too complicated for her, but she said her tutor explained everything until she understood. She said she then knew what to expect from the program and from herself.

Since this couple started out using the *Progress Profile* as soon as they were matched, they didn't have any former experiences to comment on. They did state that they spent a lot of time initially just talking and getting to know one another.

Progress Profile: Learning How to Use It

The training consisted of one-to-one instruction with the tutor, walking her through the concept, and then going through a sample profile. Use of the prompt cards was explained. There was also a three page instruction sheet, which together with the sample profile, prompt cards and blank copy of their profile, formed a package all put together in a blue folder. (We will continue with "blue folders" as this readily identifies the ALBSU *Progress Profile).*

The tutor felt absolutely no need for further training. She did feel that perhaps the wording of the first question was a little difficult to understand and that a simple "what are my goals and aims" would be better. That might lead to some simple word changes to the other questions also.

Both tutor and student considered the profile user-friendly, the tutor giving it a score of 4 and the student giving it a score of 3, out of a possible 5.

Feedback from Jane

Generally, other than some slight concern on the wording of the questions, they could not think of another thing they did not like about this tool. The two things they die like were:

(1) simple but effective way to outline goals and steps.
(2) allowed the tutor/student feedback to take a more formalized role.

They felt that twenty hours did not allow them time to completely answer questions four and five, but they did not feel there were any unmeasurable goals.

Since the tutor and student had spent quite a lot of time getting to know one another before starting lessons, they had a good rapport. They respected and liked each other. The student had quite a lot of trouble with tenses, word endings and pronunciation but she was not embarrassed by her mistakes. The tutor quickly identified that as a strength, which in turn built the student's confidence.

The student felt that together they had figured out what she needs and that made her feel in control of her learning. They both felt using the *Progress Profile* made the lessons more directed and action oriented. The tutor stated she had her own ideas on how to measure progress, but having this tool handed to her, and the fact that it was dear and easy to use, just made her job as tutor a little easier.

Recommendations

This tutor/student pair recommended the use of the *Progress Profile* by other tutor/student pairs. They felt it made the goals clear and the steps to achieve the goals easier to understand.

The only minor concern, as mentioned previously, might be some slight word changes.

Parkland Adult Literacy
by Candice Jackson

The literacy program from which this case study is taken is a medium-sized rural program drawing from a large area which includes two fairly large towns and a larger number of smaller towns and villages. The eastern edge of this area is a twenty minute drive from Edmonton. The literacy program is 5 years old. Adult learners in the program include ESL learners and learners with a physical or mental challenge as well as able-bodied native English speakers.

Betty and Jane

Betty (the student) has been in the literacy program for 9 months. She has had the same tutor during that time. Her first language is English. She is single and works part-time. She has Down's Syndrome and lives in a group home.

She was enrolled in a vocational program in school and does not have a formal grade level of schooling. Her strengths include some knowledge of the alphabet, good reading and comprehension at stage one levels, and an outgoing, friendly personality. She needs to work on increasing her vocabulary, pronunciation of some words, reading at her level and improving her spelling.

Jane (the tutor) has also been in the literacy program for 9 months. She works part-time as a circulation clerk at the local library and has seen tutors and learners who meet at the library. This has encouraged her to take tutor training. Jane has a high school diploma.

Background Information

Betty and Jane were chosen to participate in this case study because they had met on a regular basis for a good length of time, they had developed a good working relationship, and they were willing to be part of a case study.

Prior Experiences with Assessment and Goal Setting

Initially, Jane the tutor described assessment as being "an evaluation or rating of level one is at." Her view of assessment did not change after using the *Progress Profile.* Betty, the student, described herself as being comfortable with tests before working with this tool. The *Progress Profile* did not alter her view of assessment.

Betty and Jane had been using goal-setting as part of their lessons prior to using the *Progress Profile.* The process they followed was one of discussing together what their goals were and how they could be reached. They also wrote down their goals and plans for reaching them. They did indicate that, although they had a plan in place to help them reach their goal they did not have a way to keep track of their progress.

Progress Profile: Learning How to Use It

The literacy coordinator provided 2 hours of training to tutors before they began using the Progress Profile. The training consisted of an overview and explanation of the tool, allowing tutors time to envision how they would use the tool with their student and time to discuss the process and ask questions.

Feedback from Betty and Jane

Jane liked the way that the *Progress Profile* helped her to break goals down into smaller parts with plans that would help to accomplish each part. She said, "It gets you thinking about what you want to accomplish." However, Jane contended that the *Progress Profile* did not allow for flexibility, that it was "too cut and dried."

Jane felt that the *Progress Profile* could not meet a stated goal such as "being able to spell." She stated. "when has this goal been reached?"

Although the *Progress Profile is* intended to be an indicator of tutor effectiveness, Jane did not feel that she gained any information of this kind from the tool. She not only felt ill-equipped to use the progress review section she felt that she could not effectively break down Betty's goals in a way that would coincide with the guidelines of the progress review. Jane gave the *Progress Profile* a rating of 3 out of 5 in terms of user-friendliness, while Betty rated it 5 out of 5.

Betty believed that the *Progress Profile* had helped her with word recognition. She stated, "I know lots of words by sight." She also felt that she had been helped to improve her learning saying, "I feel good saying words in the lesson." In terms of identifying strengths and weaknesses, it is not dear from Betty's response whether or not the *Progress Profile* was helpful.

Betty and Jane didn't seem to have differences to resolve regarding the way they approached reaching goals.

Jane felt that as a tutor, the *Progress Profile* changed her lessons by helping her to keep her aims in mind. She planned her lessons with "how to get there" as a focus.

Recommendations

Jane definitely recommends the *Progress Profile* and says it is "useful for setting and defining steps to achieve goals." Betty's impression of the *Progress Profile* was "good" and she said it was "fun to learn."

The progress review section was the one aspect of the *Progress Profile* which was somewhat confusing to Jane. She stated, "Using this part didn't make much sense to me."

Project Read
by Marnie Schaetti

Project Read opened its doors in 1987, as the community-based volunteer adult literacy program for the Willow Creek Further Education Council district. Because of the size of the geographical area to be covered, smaller projects were established in Nanton and Fort Macleod. They work in conjunction with the central program in Claresholm, but have their own coordinators and Advisory Councils. In this case study, "Project Read "refers to the program in Claresholm. Project Read is considered to be a "small" literacy program with an average of ten to fifteen student-tutor pairs working at any one time.

Venita and Grace

Venita, the student, registered with the program and has been working with the same tutor since May 1993. She was referred to the program by Social Services and from the beginning has been committed and involved both in the project and her own studies. She is currently vice-chairperson of the Project Read Advisory Council. She is the single mother of a five year old boy. Although she was pushed along further, the last grade she felt she succeeded in was grade three. When she came into the program she was reading at approximately a grade 4 level. Within that restriction, she read well, using both print and context to get meaning from the text. A tactual/kinesthetic learner, Venita and her tutor used lots of games and hands-on activities for spelling, numeracy and reading instruction.

Grace has been a tutor with Project Read since 1988. Venita is the fourth student she has worked with. A retired nurse, Grace has proven herself to be an exceptionally dedicated and compassionate tutor. Her commitment to her students has led her to be innovative and effective in helping students achieve their goals. She has served on Project Read's Advisory Council.

Background Information

Grace and Venita were fairly dear about what Venita's goals were before using the *Progress Profile,* but less dear about how to check whether goals were being achieved. One problem they had with being involved in the case study is that they felt they had not used the tool long enough to be able to evaluate it as thoroughly as they might have wanted. I nevertheless chose them for this case study for two reasons. First, they are committed to Project Read and were happy to participate in a study that might improve it. Second, they understood the *Progress Profile* and how it worked, and even though they had only used it for a few lessons, they had articulate impressions of its usefulness.

Prior Experiences: Assessment and Goal Setting

Before using the *Progress Profile,* Grace thought that assessment would mean that her tutoring skills and methods were being evaluated by an external authority. The *Progress Profile* did change her views. After using it, she states that rather than being assessed externally, a tool could help her be more aware of her student's goals and requirements on a regular basis. Venita related assessment to her devastation at finding that she read at grade 3 or 4 level. Having come to terms with that fact and with her need to improve, she sees the *Progress Profile* as helping her define her goals.

When they were first matched, well before using the *Progress Profile,* Grace and Venita discussed Venita's goals and Venita wrote them down. To develop plans for reaching these goals, they used lesson-by-lesson Individual Program Plans (IPP's). Venita would assess the materials and methods used, as well as her perception of their progress, and Grace would develop lessons based on Venita's assessment and her goals.

Progress Profile: Learning How To Use It

As the coordinator, I went over the *Progress Profile* in a two-hour session with the participating tutors. However, I did not include any actual practice, say via a case study, and the tutors ended up with lots of unanswered questions which they later had to ask me. Special concern surrounded how to fill out the Progress Review.

Grace and Venita used the prompt cards and found them to be particularly useful because they challenged them to make the goals very specific. With the second question. "What do I need to learn?", they were able to refine those goals further. Venita found it "useful to list her goals in order of importance." The tutor found that the *Progress Profile* was quite user-friendly, giving it a 4 out of 5. The student found it a bit confusing and rated it a 2.5 to 3 out of 5.

Feedback from Grace and Venita

Both members of this pair had the same initial impression of the *Progress Profile:* "More paperwork!" They found it to be time-consuming but were happy to be introduced to it. "We like the fact that the aims and goals of the student are written down and can be referred to often." Venita appreciated the step-by-step approach to setting goals. Knowing that one step was completed, that one goal had been achieved, and moving on to the next gave her a sense of progress which was gratifying. Grace stated: "My student in particular liked the idea that things are written down and the fact that she could see her progress charted in black and white."

Both this pair and others found that the *Progress Profile* allowed them to outline all the goals the students had. In fact, a common consensus seems to tee that the prompt cards and questions helped the pairs to focus on particular goals far more effectively than ever before.

Our program is strongly student-centered already. The *Progress Profile* did not change or improve this. Venita and Grace report no previous or on-going disagreement about how to achieve Venita's goals. Grace continued to make suggestions and try methods whose effectiveness Venita assessed regularly.

Grace felt that with so little time to work with the *Progress Profile,* it was too early to tell whether or not the *Progress Profile* specifically helped her understand the effectiveness of her tutoring.

The *Progress Profile* changed Grace and Venita's lessons in that it helped them be very conscious of Venita's goals and work toward them very concertedly, even in the short time available to them. It did not significantly alter an already respectful and effective tutoring relationship.

Recommendations

Both Grace and Venita agreed that the *Progress Profile* "could be a very useful tool for most student-tutor pairs." Another student commented that the *Progress Profile* would help most students do "the things that we want to do." All the pairs using the *Progress Profile* recommended its use.

Grace and Venita had no recommendations for changing the *Progress Profile*.

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