



Student Services in Adult Literacy

*50/50 Management
and
Literacy Delivery*

*A Project in Two Literacy Volunteer Groups
by*

Monique Ouellette
Adult Education Consultant
December 1999



Literacy Partners of Quebec

This project was made possible with the support of the **National Literacy Secretariat**.

Published by Literacy Partners of Quebec,
Montreal, Quebec

Design & Layout by The Fraser-Hickson Library Computer Centre

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Copies of this report are available from:

Literacy Partners of Quebec
4855 Kensington Avenue
Montreal, Quebec
H3X 2S6

Dépot légal - 1999
ISBN: ISBN 0-9696581-2-5

The findings and opinions expressed in this project are those of the
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Foreword

When LPQ responded to the request to help its member groups to improve on the management of their volunteers, we were fortunate to have the benefit of Maureen Sanders and her experience at *Prospects Literacy* in Alberta to begin the process. Maureen helped us see that although the journey could be a long one, it would ultimately be worth the bumps along the way.

We cannot stress enough the insight and courage it required for these two groups to undertake the assignment. Not only would it be a great deal of work, it would also require that both groups carefully reassess their practices and procedures and perhaps make some changes. This is often a difficult task and their willingness to do it underscores their true commitment to literacy. Both groups were hopeful that a management model based on 50/50 Management would be helpful to them in maximizing their efficiency and retention rates which, in turn, would help their students and tutors in achieving their respective goals.

The need for such a project in student literacy organizations is particularly heightened by the fact that unlike other volunteer groups, infrastructures of university groups change as students complete their studies--usually within three years.

The groups that participated in this project are to be commended for their willingness to improve their organizations and their readiness to share their experiences with other literacy groups across Canada. These groups can learn from their experience thanks to their participation in this project.

As their final commitment to the project, the groups are to present a follow-up report in six months showing what they have implemented and/or learned, improved, etc. However, both groups have been able to show concrete results in different ways even at this early stage. Members of one of the groups spent the past summer authoring a new Literacy Tutor's Handbook for their organization. Although this had been something the group had been planning to do for a long time, they had not previously found the time to do it. It is the feeling of those involved in the organization that the 50/50 Management Project gave them the impetus to act. The new manual will be ready for the next tutor training session that is planned for Fall 1999. The other group carried out a successful campaign to recruit new tutors and are pleased to have more than doubled their numbers. They held a successful tutor-training session recently and will attempt to build on this new beginning.

We are pleased to see such immediate results and anticipate many more successes for these two groups. We hope, too, that this report will help other volunteer literacy organizations who will benefit from the experiences of the two groups who participated in our project.

Judy Brandeis
Literacy Partners of Quebec
December, 1999

Acknowledgements

LPQ would like to thank:

- The students who took part in the project. They showed courage in accepting to be so closely observed for a whole school year. They are to be commended for their openness, their dedication and their spirit of co-operation.
- Maureen Sanders of *Prospects Literacy* in Alberta who presented the 50/50 Management training session at the beginning of the project. This session provided a model that helped identify more specifically where the problems were, thus helping also to point to possible solutions.
- Marie-Marthe Hébert of Frontier College who attended regular meetings and participated in the discussion and exchanges. Her involvement helped both the groups and the project.
- Rae Shepp, the Project Co-ordinator who proved to be a sensitive and efficient resource for members of the two literacy groups. She was a great asset to them in assisting their efforts to reach their goals. The research analysis and report would not have been possible without her extraordinary notes and her generous contribution in the form of comments and discussion of her findings. She played a pivotal role in this research, and we are most grateful for her contribution.
- Monique Ouellette for her conscientiousness and commitment to the research. Using her previous knowledge and experience in Adult Education, she was able to bring an important sensitivity and awareness to the final report.
- The National Literacy Secretariat for funding the project. We are most grateful for this support.

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Introduction

The Need

This project was initiated by Literacy Partners of Quebec (LPQ) on the basis of the results of its research into the LEARN Line, *Increasing awareness for successful outcomes -Referral Systems in Quebec* (LPQ 1997). One finding of this research was that "many volunteer organizations are not always able to address the needs of their students and tutors." The research states that:

"...this is often due to volunteer groups having too little time and too few resources to analyze their systems and evaluate how they can better function by changing some elements of their operation. A management model based on 50/50 Management would be very effective in helping them maximize their efficiency and retention rates which, in turn, would help their students and tutors in achieving their respective goals." (LPQ 1998).

50/50 Management

To explain the 50/50 Management concept, we refer directly to *Prospect Literacy's* document: *Testing the Balance: 50/50 Management in a Volunteer Tutor Program*. (Sanders et al. 1996)

The basic premise of 50/50 Management is that the key to effective volunteer management of literacy programs is maintaining a 50/50 balance between the *intake* and *support* focuses of a program (DuPrey, 1992). A 50/50 balance means that fifty per cent of the organization's energy and resources will be directed towards recruitment and training of volunteers and towards recruitment and assessment of students, while the other fifty per cent will be directed towards support and retention of existing tutors and students.

Finding this 50/50 balance helps to ensure that retention of participants will be increased, so that there will be less need to continually recruit and train or assess new people. The organization thus becomes more efficient and costeffective. The 50/50 concept provides a framework for examining the organization's current situation and helping it to achieve this balance while continuing to operate the program.

The project was undertaken with the assumption that this model could answer the needs of the volunteer literacy groups participating in the project as well as other literacy groups across Canada who encounter similar problems.

Chapter 1

The Background of the Project

The Objectives

The project addressed the following objectives:

- To reduce barriers to access of literacy services.
- To respond to two community volunteer literacy groups who had expressed to LPQ the need and desire to evaluate and improve their management systems.
- To help these groups implement a system based on 50/50 Management as adapted by *Prospects Literacy*, Alberta.
- To carry out a formative evaluation of the process as it evolved.
- To chronicle the progress of this project in each group and to document outcomes. These outcomes were to be published as a resource to be used as a guide for other volunteer literacy groups in Quebec as well as in other provinces.

The Process and Criteria for Participation

In response to an expressed need from members of the literacy community in Quebec, LPQ developed a number of criteria for participation in the project. It was required that participants:

- Be Regular Members of LPQ.
- Have now or previously had a structured volunteer literacy programme providing English literacy tutoring.
- Provide service in English to adult students or families whose mother tongue is English.
- Be willing to adapt the 50/50 Management model to their literacy programme structure.
- Send members of their organizations to participate in a training session with a facilitator.
- Participate in a process of formative evaluation.

The Selection

LPQ sent a call to all its Regular Members inviting them to apply for participation in the project. Five members responded. Two did not qualify. Of the three others, two carried out the project, and the third group ultimately was unable to avail themselves of the opportunity for lack of human resources.

The Project Design - Phase I

The partners were given copies of the original 50/50 Management model and the *Prospects Literacy* adaptation to help them produce some thoughtful ideas concerning their own group's needs and to consider how their current structures compared to their perceptions of their proposed structures, this was meant to enable each group to have a clear picture of what it hoped to accomplish from the 50/50 Management Program.

Members of each group participated in a oneday training session with Maureen Sanders, from *Prospects Literacy*. She introduced and discussed the 50/50 Management model and the use of Lit Link, the administrative data base software designed specifically for literacy volunteer groups. The Volunteer Coordinator (who would work with each group as they went through the process, and the Researcher in charge of preparing the report also took part in this seminar.) In all, participants numbered 12, including four members of Group A, two of Group B, the Coordinator, the Researcher, the LPQ Executive Director and the facilitator and several interested parties from other literacy volunteer organizations.

The Process - Phase II

The Project Coordinator worked with the two groups to implement the programme. She and organizational team members met with a committee of LPQ on four occasions from November 1998 - April 1999 to share problems and successes. Halfway through the project, each group was required to submit a progress report to LPQ. This was done through the Project Coordinator's report at each of the meetings and the result was that her reports proved to provide more comprehensive information than was even anticipated at the beginning of the project.

The Process - Phase III

The Researcher prepared her findings which serve as a final report of the project. This was to be printed in multiples, with complimentary copies to be mailed out to selected literacy organizations across the country. The remaining copies are to be available for groups who will be asked to pay the cost of mailing.

Expected Outcomes

The two groups participating in the project expected to realize their goals and operate from a position of increased strength and efficiency. By understanding the 50/50 Management strategy, they would better understand how to increase retention rates of tutors and learners as well as how to apply 50/50 Management to funding and administration.

The most important and direct expected result would be that services to potential students would be more accessible than they are at present. The project would help the two groups ensure that they have more time and human resources to devote to followup so that many more students and tutors would be served. The last expected concrete result was that the Researcher's Report would highlight the unique situation of volunteer groups whose tutors' and administrators' time commitments are unavoidably limited.

The Partners in the Project

Following the selection process, the result was that LPQ would carry out the project in partnership with two organizations, both student groups (represented in this report as Group A and Group B.)

Group A

With nearly 150 tutors, this group offers three programs, a one-on-one tutoring programme with adults, a programme of reading circles and another with youth at risk. They also produce a newsletter twice yearly. One Coordinator is responsible for the organization and does the administrative tasks. The Organization Team (OT) is made up of the Group Coordinator, the three Programme Coordinators, a member responsible for finance and another for fundraising and public relations. Each member of this structure works on average three hours per week. One person is normally in charge of the office, but this position was not filled when that person left at Christmas, 1998.

The group made a commitment to improving their volunteer screening and training processes, their support systems and their office organization. They wanted to focus on improving communication between volunteers and the OT in order that they may be more accountable to those they serve.

Group B

Group B aims at providing literacy services and promoting awareness of literacy in various communities throughout Montreal. They see themselves at a stage when an emphasis on their managerial skills is crucial to the survival of their organization. They went from a high of 25 tutors working with different community organizations to three tutors in their one-on-one programme. This is the programme on which they decided to focus.

Recruiting new and serious members for their OT was crucial to their strength and to the efficiency of their programme. They wanted to improve their general organization and their time management, encourage volunteers to be more realistic about the program's operation, maximize the organizational team's ability to devote time and energy to support services and to promote greater student and tutor participation.

The Report

The project was carried out during the 1998-1999 school year with the help of the Project Coordinator who worked with both groups for a total of 25 hours per week over a six-month period. She also took part in the four group Coordinators' meetings with LPQ, which served as an opportunity for participants to share ideas and problems and as a process of formative evaluation.

The Project Coordinator kept a comprehensive and very detailed journal of meetings, events and documents, adding her comments where necessary. This report is based on her journal and on the exchanges between the Project Researcher, the Project Coordinator and the Executive Director of LPQ.

Chapter 2

Identifying Goals

Assessing Strengths and Weaknesses

The initial training workshop with Maureen Sanders of *Prospect Literacy* allowed the participants to assess their present situations. The following table illustrates the two groups' present situations.

*Opportunities and threats fall into the same categories. The following are presented in [Tables I](#) and [II](#) respectively. Each applies to both groups unless otherwise indicated.

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Personnel Commitment of staff Volunteers with few outside commitments (Group A only)	Lack of human resources (Group B) Commitment of tutors Reality of workload Volunteers with many outside commitments (Group B)
2. Training and Support Training Resource network in place Outreach	Lack of flexibility in training On-going support - volunteers (Training & Communication)
3. Learner/Tutors Flexibility in meeting individual needs (location, programming, time)	Lack of learner agreement Follow-up for learners (Group A) Tutoring space
4. Organization Lack of bureaucracy Screening of volunteers job descriptions Tutoring agreement for tutors Funding source (university)	Lack of continuity Communication between programmes (Group A) Difficulty in linking closely with other groups during the year.

Table I - Present Strengths and Weaknesses

Opportunities	Threats
1. Personnel	No potential for paid staff
2. Training and Support Workshops (training) Resource networking Academic staff	
3. Learner/Tutors	Safety for tutors/learners
4. Organization Outside funding Support from outside agencies Promotion, advocacy for literacy	Strings attached to outside funding. Losing control to outside agencies.

Table II - Opportunities and Threats

Intake and Support Functions

The participants evaluated the *intake* and *support* functions of their groups, listing the positive aspects as well as the difficulties they faced. The 50/50 Management definition of *intake* is related to the process of *bringing in* tutors and learners, while *support* refers to the function of *keeping* the same people involved in giving and receiving literacy instruction (DuPrey 1992).

The following suggestions for improvement resulted from the initial workshop discussions and applied to both groups:

- Have tutors with teaching background do small group workshops with groups of learners.
- Have workshops for tutors to develop material.
- Develop a progress profile with tutors to assist in seeing/ assessing learners' progress.
- Make personal contacts instead of relying solely on newsletters.
- Use LitLink software to produce thank you cards.
- Have training done all year for several student literacy groups together.

Group A	Group B
Intake - Positive Aspects	
<p>Using radio for advertisement LPQ Media kit.</p> <p>Training done by the group themselves which gives them more control.</p> <p>Having fewer tutors so as to focus energy on other areas.</p>	<p>Five new tutors to be trained.</p> <p>One-on-one programme.</p> <p>Advertisement in student newspaper.</p> <p>Advertisement in Academic Calendar.</p> <p>Preventive programme with community group.</p>
Intake - Difficulties	
<p>Need for References as so many students have international backgrounds.</p> <p>Need for assessment tool for student recruitment.</p> <p>No criminal record check.</p>	<p>Outside training done only in November.</p> <p>Short of office personnel.</p>
Support - Positive Aspects	
<p>Two shelves of resource materials.</p> <p>Learner-Tutor Appreciation Night (all receive a certificate).</p> <p>Tools for tutors to support learners without letting personal issues overwhelm the literacy goals.</p>	<p>Tutor toolbox.</p> <p>Tutor handbook.</p> <p>Christmas cards sent to the 3 tutors,</p> <p>Newsletter sent in December.</p>
Support - Difficulties	
<p>Some resources out of date.</p> <p>A women's literacy group did not work out.</p>	<p>Currently short on personnel and having difficulty in recruiting for office work.</p> <p>Outside training done only in November and not in January.</p>

Table III - Assessment of Intake and Support

Goals for the Year

The initial workshop was also used to set goals to improve on the productivity of both groups.

Goals - Group A	Goals - Group B
Group A set the following goals for the coming year:	Group B set the following goals for the coming year:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Increase awareness by becoming better known in their university and in the local media2. Organize their office and catalog their books3. Improve learner assessment and offer tutor workshops and support (one-on-one programme).4. Create stability for its reading circles and approach schools.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Create an Organizational Team (OT) for now and for the future.2. Get help to enter the data and do the newsletter.3. Raise awareness and promote the organization in their university and beyond.

Table IV - Goals for the Year

Participants felt that creating awareness and promoting the organization within their institution as well as outside the community would also foster the other goals.

The goals for each group are consistent with those they had set themselves at the initial stage of the project (See page 1.) The training seminar helped them focus on more specific situations that they felt needed improvement.

The Results

The object of this report is not to compare the two groups' performance in the attainment of their goals, but rather to present the outcomes of the project so that they may be used as a guide by other volunteer literacy groups in Quebec and across Canada. Any comparison would be futile, as the objective conditions in which each group had to operate were considerably different. We believe it can be much more useful to show the methods used in attempting to reach the goals with their usefulness and shortcomings and to try and analyze the underlying problems these two literacy groups, and undoubtedly countless others, face in their efforts to offer volunteer literacy services.

The above information provides the context for the following chapter which describes the process undertaken by each group to attain their respective goals. We have chosen to do this without distinguishing one group from the other, but rather by indicating what works and what does not. Some of the goals are specific to one group, others are common to both.

Chapter 3

Attaining the Goals

Awareness and Promotion

Both groups felt that people within their institutions had little awareness of their existence. They wanted to raise this awareness, promote their literacy work and extend this information to their surrounding communities as well as in the local media.

Within the University

In the university itself, both groups held various activities. A Read-a-thon and a Spelling Bee helped bring attention not only to the organization, but also to the issue of literacy. Originally, the Spelling Bee was to be a joint event with both groups participating, however this plan did not materialize. As a result, only one group held a Spelling Bee on their campus. The intended purpose of these activities was that both faculty and students would become more aware. A secondary - albeit limited - purpose was to help raise funds. Information to publicize these activities was sent to the head of the institution, to all deans and to department heads in every faculty as well as to the Student Union Executive. A raffle was also planned, but it had to be dropped due to lack of time.

Information about the literacy organization was sent to student clubs on one campus, and the group took part in other clubs' activities where they could promote literacy. One group had an information table and a speaker during the Sexual Assault Awareness Week and a literacy booth during International Women's Day.

One group received a grant to produce two fliers—one for learners and the other for recruiting tutors. The fliers have not yet been printed but are expected to be ready in December 1999. If

there is money remaining after printing these fliers the group will consider having a banner made. A literacy kiosk was set up on the campus with volunteers available to answer questions and hand out pamphlets. This kiosk was used to promote Literacy Action Day. A lesson learnt on this occasion was related to the importance of planning ahead and knowing the technical details involved in setting up a kiosk, e.g. fire regulations regarding the material; where the kiosk can be placed; security requirements concerning electrical cords, reservations for audio-visual equipment and extension cords, etc. Having to deal with these details on the day of the activity is extremely difficult and takes time away from the purpose of the activity.

All these activities proved useful in raising awareness within the institution. Both groups also made an effort to reach the faculty. One approach involved sending a letter to several department heads and included a long form letter which recipients were asked to post. Copies were also sent to the Graduate Students Association and to the Alumni Association. The aim was two-fold. First to raise awareness and second to recruit volunteers. The result, however, was disappointing for it brought no reaction.

In one situation, personal contact with the Literacy Studies Department of the university proved, on the other hand, to be quite productive. In this case, the Project Coordinator made the approach, as she knew several of the professors in the department personally. They responded with great interest and enthusiasm. We shall see later, under the heading *Support*, the potential usefulness of these contacts.

In the community

The second goal of the awareness campaign identified by one of the groups was to make good contacts with the local media. One step toward establishing this goal was thought to be the development of a media kit, which could be available for any future events or for publicity. Such a kit could be updated and/or revised as necessary.

The Project Coordinator was asked to submit ideas for this effort. She consulted the Literacy Awareness Media Kit from ABC CANADA, which Literacy Partners of Quebec had made available to the group. It offered some good ideas for the promotion of literacy in general as well as a systematic approach to the media.

Of course, this kit could provide little information regarding the group's own work. The Coordinator suggested that such a kit should include business cards, a brochure, a fact sheet on the organization, key facts about literacy photos, visuals, information about their web page (if they planned to develop one.) It should also contain information about the most current media contacts - name, title, address, phone number, fax and e-mail - and the deadlines for each organization. She suggested contacts in the local media - radio, television and newspapers (major and local) as well as those of the institution itself.

She listed other promotional opportunities:

- listings of community events
- magazine articles
- letters to the editor
- learners telling their stories on the radio
- articles about learners in the newspaper
- learners reading their writing on the radio
- learners writing for the newspaper
- OT members and/or learner/tutor teams interviewed on radio
- bookstores who would include brochures in their bags and in their mailings.

The Project Coordinator presented a template to the fundraising committee who produced the kit.

One group contacted their university's Web Club for help in setting up their own website. This was still in the planning stage at the end of the project. Following completion of the research it was reported that this group successfully set up their website. They are eager to keep it updated.

Recruitment, however, proved to be very slow. Nothing came of the contact with the heads of departments, and only two people expressed an interest on Literacy Action Day. The next step for one group after this project ended, was to focus on students in residence and international students. These two student groups were suggested as it was thought they may have more time to do volunteer work- the former because they were not busy with family life and the latter because having no work permits, they are unable to work.

An annual Christmas Gift Wrapping activity at a major local bookstore by volunteers of one group helps them to raise awareness of literacy at the community level. This activity also helps raise funds for the group and the work they do.

Office Organization

Resource Centre

One group had previously approached the Library Science Department of their university to ask for help in organizing its Resource Centre. The reply was favourable. It was agreed that a student could do this work and get credit for it in one of her courses. The amount of work involved, however, proved to be far beyond this student's expectations and the professor decided to withdraw his offer to credit it. The Project Coordinator offered to help with this assignment, as she thought some of the documents could be of use to tutors and the Learner/Tutor Coordinators (LTC). Others which were too specialized for the group could be useful for literacy professors. This task was not granted a high priority and remains to be done.

The Project Coordinator contributed by exploring what resources are available and by drawing up a *wish-list* of resources that could be useful when seeking funding. Literacy Partners of Quebec, the Internet and The Centre for Literacy all offer such resources. The Coordinator also listed several titles she had encountered in her work with the groups and presented the list to both.

Sharing Information

Keeping the data in order proved to be difficult for one of the groups who was planning to replace their computer. They had approached the Apple Corporation for a donation and were still awaiting a reply when this project ended. Their files, particularly the Tutor/Learner files, need to be organized in a more comprehensive manner, as a new OT coming in must have easy access to them. This person must also be able to easily access assessment and interview forms, LTC contact sheets, police check forms (for security for both tutors and learners), past budgets, etc. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of students who demonstrate an interest in volunteering must also be accessible. This group had some difficulty on this question, as they lacked sufficient staff and did not have an adequate computer to enter the data.

The fact that there were so few volunteers involved, in this group's OT made their coordinator hesitant to take up their precious time by giving them information that did not seem directly relevant to their tasks for fear of overloading them yet more. After a discussion on this issue, the group concluded that information sharing is most important in terms of the democratic functioning of the team. It was also crucial to making the volunteers be, and feel involved. They felt it was also vital for the continuity of their group, as incoming coordinators and volunteers should be able to rely on past experience and systems instead of starting from scratch each time.

Access

In one group the coordinator and one other person had office hours, but the coordinator was the only person who had a key to the premises. Tutors could access the office at any time; however they must follow a procedure to get the key from the institution's security officer. It was decided that OT members would have available hours in the afternoon or evening and inform the tutors of their schedules so that they could be more accessible. In addition, it was subsequently confirmed that for the coming year, the provincial coordinator was to have more time to devote to this group. As a result, she would be able to provide support and regular office hours at that campus. This promises to be most helpful to the group.

One group made its computer available to tutor/learner teams who are able to use it for sessions with their students. They must sign in on arrival as well as on leaving and either use the group's diskettes or leave their own diskette in the office in order to avoid viruses.

Time

At the start of the project, neither group identified the question of time as one that they wanted to address. Yet, the limited time available to students for their volunteer activities, the different individual schedules they must coordinate and the particular calendars of universities were an ever-present concern. Meeting times are difficult to set because of this. Office hours for LTC's, team work, etc. are all dependent on different time constraints. Time was seen as a problem that the groups had to cope with rather than a problem which would be eradicated.

Creating Stability for the Programs

Although the goal of creating stability was identified by one group in one programme only, it proved to be an imperative for other programs as well. Both groups received requests from community organizations wishing to have literacy tutors to help in their own programmes with different categories of learners such as the hearing impaired, children, women in prison or parents wanting to be tutored in a second language with their children. The groups decided not to accommodate these requests as they were outside of their mandate. They decided instead to refer them to other groups that could offer appropriate services.

Both groups had developed relationships with various other sites as well. However, one of these sites presented problems for one group, as they were slow in returning the group's calls concerning matches. Tutors had been waiting almost two months to be matched. The group decided not to approach this site next year and based on this and other experiences, they decided to seek out new sites. They also decided that LTC's would have to take a more active role in making the contacts and following up until a meeting between tutors and sites could be arranged. The director of one school where the group has a reading circle meets all tutors together to discuss their roles and to set schedules and this works well. It was felt that LTC's could move the process to this point in the group's One-On-One programme.

Creating an OT

One group experienced difficulty in recruiting members for its OT and had set this as a goal for the project. Several avenues were explored. Activities aimed at raising awareness, such as Literacy Action Day and Information Night, were also used for recruitment purposes. In all, four students expressed interest either as tutors or as OT members, but hesitated to commit themselves. One of them had felt overwhelmed by the amount of work expected of him. The idea of recruiting directly for specific roles in the OT was first adopted, then rejected as it proved more difficult than recruiting volunteers in general and working with them to identify where they would be most effective and comfortable.

In one group, the attempt to contact department heads had proven unsuccessful and the OT was still to be created at the end of this project. As indicated earlier in this report, other attempts were to be made to target students in residence and International students. The new Group Coordinator was to shadow the One-On-One Programme Coordinator and LTC's of the other group to observe their tutor/learner support and to keep closer contacts next year for support. She also asked the out-going coordinator about the running of the group.

Training and Support

Tutor Training

The initial training of tutors for both groups was done by an organization to which one of the groups belonged. Previously, it had been done in the Fall by the group itself over two consecutive days; this year it took place one day in the Fall when the organization sent its trainers to Montreal. Another full day session took place in the Winter. One weakness at this training session identified by one group concerned the period when tutors posed questions. An OT trainer was needed in the room to answer these questions, but none was present as they were all in another room doing the tutor/learner matches which they wanted to complete by the end of the day. It was suggested that at least one resource person be available to answer questions at this point in future training sessions.

Tutor training was carried out only once during the year in the first semester as tutors are required to make a six-month commitment. A second session did not seem feasible in January, as the school semester is too short. It was suggested that the six-month commitment be interpreted as extending over two school years instead of one, thus making it possible for the training organization to offer a January session.

Both groups would like to have training twice a year, and in the Winter the independent group trained three new tutors who were eager to get started. The group felt that their training was shorter but as effective as the one done in the Fall. With the help of the Project Coordinator, they also started brainstorming to create their own training manual and completed it over the Summer.

The training organization held one focus group to have tutors assess their workshops and another for learners. Few tutors participated in these sessions as one group had only three matches. The other decided to remain independent and not to attend, although they had participated in the Fall training session. The training organization also provided the groups with three handouts on past workshops they had offered; one on Functions of Management, one on Choosing Volunteers and one on Managing Volunteers. It was felt these could be used as a resource. The second group did their own evaluation with forms from the training organization. The OT also held an evaluation meeting with the organization's representative. The training organization held two evaluation sessions with the other group OT.

Both groups asked their tutors to forward their evaluation comments in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their training sessions. This would help them to identify the needs of their tutors and enable them to establish better forms of support. They also asked that the training organization provide a summary of the tutors' evaluation comments following their Fall training session. At the end of this project this information had not been provided.

The learners' comments were very positive, as they almost invariably are in such situations. When asked for suggestions concerning changes they would like to see, they offered none.

OT Training

There was little mention of OT member training during the project. OT members were, or still are, tutors. The training organization offers an OT Manual which tutors are expected to read. Both groups posted notices of the Centre for Literacy workshops. They asked their OT members to be available to attend these workshops in turn so that they would not all attend the same session. A report to other team members was to be made. Some did attend, but it is not known whether a report was made.

Resources

A list of resources drawn up by the Project Coordinator is available for tutors in the groups' offices and tutors were informed of this. One group also visited the Centre for Literacy and were very impressed with the resources they found there. They came back with a trunk of material on loan and propose to use the Centre again in the future. There was a suggestion made at the *Prospects Literacy* workshop at the beginning of this project that tutor workshops be held to create materials. This has not yet been implemented, but tutors in one group showed interest in such workshops.

Support

One group in particular discussed at length the problem of supporting their tutors. The fact that many of the tutors did not feel accountable to the group was seen as the main source of the problem. Tutors do not contact LTCs or return their calls to tell them how their work is progressing or what they would need in terms of support. They are not motivated to attend workshops or other training sessions after their initial training. Most of them did not show up for the second part of the organization's training.

One group addressed the issue of accountability by determining that its policies should be written down. Job descriptions as well as the contracts with both tutors and OT clearly indicate what is expected of them, such as mandatory attendance at workshops, reporting back, assessing learners' progress, etc.

Both groups also re-wrote their constitutions in an attempt to clarify these issues. It was suggested that LTCs have office hours so that tutors could talk to them in person. It was believed that if LTCs themselves modeled motivation and participation, it would also motivate tutors.

One OT planned a pot-luck dinner with wine paid for by the group (not out of fund-raising money) so that tutors and OT members could get to know each other. Some tutors had never met the OT. This dinner was scheduled to take place at the end of the school year) and the OT felt that this event would be an important one to provide support for tutors.

In one group, a frustrated tutor who had tried to reach his LTC finally left a message for the group coordinator demanding that the LTC "do his duty" and evaluate his tutoring. Such evaluation was not done systematically. In fact, feedback comes easily from learners to LTCs who sometimes pass on relevant information to the tutors. A more formal evaluation procedure had been deemed unnecessary.

Assessment of learners' progress was also an issue in one group. Could journals be useful in keeping track of their progress? A portfolio would be better, it was thought, with anecdotal notes added if deemed appropriate. Another suggestion made was the use of *progress profiles* to pass on to the next tutor and small reports to LTCs twice annually to be kept in the learners' files. LTCs could suggest protocols for portfolios and reports. These would enable the latter to assess whether specific training workshops could be useful or if they could suggest resources to the tutors.

One group determined that it was important to do a needs assessment with tutors. Could workshops be organized, or perhaps could there be opportunities for LTCs to meet tutors and offer resources? These meetings could be planned and announced at the Annual General Meeting. The difficulty is in ensuring that tutors attend these annual meetings. Another possibility was that these meetings are organized as needs arise, when LTCs see an interest in a particular topic. These questions were not resolved by the end of the project.

In fact, tutors in this group often do not see LTCs as resourceful and LTCs seem to feel their own capacities are limited. They would like to know about current studies concerning literacy and tutoring and to get feedback, ideas, support from others in the field such as professors in their own institution so that they can be more resourceful for tutors. They would like to distribute handouts on topics related to literacy and consider it important for LTCs to be knowledgeable.

Establishing a link with faculty

One group thought of getting professors to volunteer to take part in tutor training or to help in the planning of the training. When the group met with the Literacy Studies Department of their university, the Project Coordinator reported that faculty members seemed more than eager to help. They expressed a readiness to help with workshops or meet with LTCs to help with their manual or training. In fact, the professors who attended this meeting were contacted when the training manual was being prepared. All reviewed it adding valuable comments which were included in the manual.

A get-together for interested members of the faculty and OT of this same group was suggested for the Fall so that three or four professors may speak about their particular areas of literacy. At the same time, OT members would speak of their literacy experience. It was later suggested that instead of a meeting between the group and the Literacy Studies Department, the one-on-one programme coordinator could meet with one of the professors to discuss the training manual.

The faculty of the Literacy Studies Department also suggested that the group contact the department's Literacy Resource Library, which the group did not know existed. They were advised to speak with the librarian to establish what the curriculum lab had to offer. The group was referred to the Office for Students with Learning Disabilities which offers workshops on this subject. Tutors and LTC's of the literacy group could attend these sessions. It was also suggested that professors suggest tutoring to first year students, or that they become involved in other ways in the literacy group to get some impressions of teaching. Students were given the names of three other professors who work in English as a Second Language and who could be helpful. Members of the faculty were encouraged to inform their students about the literacy group, in case they could be helpful or in the event that a student wrote an interesting paper which could serve as a resource for the literacy group.

Another important topic which was discussed was how best to keep the communication within as well as beyond the group flowing and whether there should be a liaison person for this purpose. It was decided for now to use e-mail and the group's web page.

Some OT members in the group were resistant to link up with the faculty for fear of losing their autonomy. After the meeting, they were enthusiastic about the faculty's attitude for the professors were obviously interested in cooperating with the group and not in swallowing them up as, these members said, is often the case with larger groups. Initially, perhaps a greater concern for members of this OT was that the faculty members did not have any real contact with adult learners and as a result, may not have been able to empathize with tutors' needs.

Chapter 4

Discussion And Conclusion

Some of the goals these literacy groups set for themselves at the beginning of this project have been reached; others still require more effort. It is not our purpose here to assess the measure in which goals were reached. The project lasted only six months, which is a very short time. During that period, many avenues were explored, many ideas discussed and implemented, and many more will be explored over the next few months in a continuing effort to improve the systems in each group.

What is important here is to draw the lessons from the project for these groups as well as for others across the country. Some lessons are specific to each goal, and readers can find those relevant to their own groups in the main text of this report. We would like to deal here with larger issues.

Volunteers

The commitment and seriousness shown by the volunteer students who directly took part in this research is most impressive. These young people are genuinely concerned with the cause of literacy and committed to making it accessible to learners. Their preoccupation with efficiency points to their desire to offer the best literacy service they can to learners with whom they empathize and wish to help. They devote an enormous amount of time and energy to their volunteer work; time and energy which they could give to more frivolous pursuits. They should be highly commended for doing so.

The suggestions for change and the observations we present in this report should in no way be construed as a criticism of their work. On the contrary. These observations are expressed in support of members of both groups and with the learners, with a view to improving what needs to be improved so as to illustrate our concern and the fact that we share their main goal, which is to offer the best literacy service possible.

Time

One theme which was repeated often in the Project Coordinator's notes was the difficulty students in both groups had in setting up meetings between tutor and LTC, between OT members, between members of a committee, etc. While it is obvious that students' schedules complicate matters considerably, what is surprising and disconcerting is the fact that these students did not search for alternatives to in-person meetings.

There is no doubt that such meetings are imperative in some cases; however there are ways of preparing them, of discussing ideas and of reporting that do not require actual physical presence. Setting up a discussion group on the Internet, for instance, would allow the groups to keep the number of in-person meetings to a minimum while allowing for the information to flow and for the debates to take place. A good balance between in-person and virtual meetings could help minimize the time constraints.

Time should not be seen as a problem which cannot be overcome for not only is it part of life in general, but the intricacies of student schedules are a fact of university life. It is a *given* that cannot be changed, at least in the present setting of universities. Using the Internet for a discussion group - and possibly for other purposes as well - could be a way of *working with time* rather than constantly struggling with the limitations it imposes.

Being part of the University

Universities have specialized resources that can be useful to groups doing volunteer community work. It is vital for these groups to be aware of this wealth of resources and to develop ways to tap them while maintaining their autonomy.

Faculties of Education in universities are obvious allies for literacy work. The enthusiasm demonstrated by the faculty of one such department and their willingness to work with one of the groups taking part in this project shows that the help is there - if the groups are willing to make an effort to avail themselves of it. The same could probably be said of other departments and faculties within the university. Departments of Journalism and Marketing may be very eager to help the groups with their awareness campaigns. Faculties of Management could be extremely helpful with the groups' management questions and suggest some creative solutions to problems that seem insurmountable.

What is necessary is that the groups use a systematic approach to their organization. They need to begin by defining their needs, as they see them at present, and to establish a rapport with members of the faculty or with the Graduate Students Association of these departments in order to explore the kind of co-operation that could be useful to both. The groups can offer their expertise in exchange for the help of the faculty. The faculty and graduate students (or even undergraduates) can offer their expertise and go to the literacy groups for field work opportunities.

By approaching those professors with whom they share common interests, student literacy groups can progressively develop a working relationship that could be mutually suitable and useful. Various avenues could be explored. The Project Coordinator suggested that one of these was the possibility of opening tutoring to students as an

elective course for credit.

Respect for the specialty and the autonomy of each group is of the utmost importance, as is continuity for all volunteer organizations. There would be little to gain from having to start the process at the very beginning with every change within a group. Continuity could be ensured by a written protocol identifying briefly the fields of action, the roles and responsibilities of each person, as well as the expectations of all parties involved. The protocols could be effective for a set time and be renewable. To ensure autonomy when working with departments within the university, it might be advisable to have a person in the group act as liaison with an individual in the department. These two people could interact to resolve difficulties along the way. Many universities have this kind of protocol with outside organizations, be they community groups or large corporations.

Accountability

Tutors and LTC's

The Project Coordinator noted that there were many discussions on the issue of tutor/learner or tutor/LTC relationship, tutor/learner support, learner assessment etc. A lack of accountability on the part of the tutors was seen as the main cause of the difficulties and often explained their lack of participation in workshops or their *de facto* refusal to give LTCs feedback on their tutoring. The solution to this problem was thought to be an improved method of communicating information to tutors and a clear description of their responsibilities and tasks. Outlining these more clearly in the tutors' contracts, in the groups' constitutions and in policy statements would make tutors more aware of their obligations.

Obviously, telling people what to do does not necessarily ensure that they will do it. However, it is also true that organizations and procedures are in place to serve a purpose and if the purpose is not clear, or if the usefulness of these procedures is doubtful, people will be less likely to comply. This may well be the case with tutors who do not seem to have benefited from past exchanges with their LTC's and do not seem to find them more competent than themselves.

Instead of telling tutors what to do, it is important for the groups to identify the problems in the relationship and to determine how to go about solving these problems. They must also identify the tutors' needs and look for creative ways of responding to them in order for those tutors to feel confident about the relationship. LTCs should provide tutors not only methodological tools to do their work, but also food for thought in order to prompt tutors to make their own discoveries about their students. Telling tutors to report to LTCs or to fill out evaluation forms may create the impression that the relationship is one of control only. It is important to make all exchanges relevant to the work and to give it substantial pedagogical substance.

To address the problem of compliance, one group has decided to arrange tutor dinners as an opportunity for them to freely share their experiences so that participants may benefit from one another. This is to replace the practice of reporting back to LTCs on the progress of their learners. It is hoped that this may help to establish more links and connections within the organization.

Groups

Another point not raised by the groups is that of accountability of the OT. Members of the OT are accountable to their members through the Annual General Meeting. Yet one of the groups seems to not have had an AGM, and in the other group the AGM seems to have been a mere formality due to the lack of time and energy.

This is unfortunate as the OTs are thus cutting themselves off from the very sources of such energy. The AGM could offer the opportunity for dynamic discussion on the groups' programme, its methods of evaluation, the orientation they wish to give it and the resources they need. Involving the members could also bring in more volunteers. When people have been involved in the discussions and decisions, they are often inspired to contribute more. Without this feedback, any OT runs the risk of becoming a protective in-group afraid of being challenged in its ways.

Training and Support

Having identified accountability as the issue and established that written documents and procedures are the solution, one group found itself with the undesirable result of giving literacy a very technocratic and negative perspective. If tutors are given the opportunity to participate in the entire the process, their literacy services will be more accessible and more successful. However, it is important to note that good procedures are no guarantee of greater access to services or, above all, to the improved quality of that literacy service. Two quotes by John R. Saul about the health system can help literacy groups adopt a broader view.

Major public policies work when they are driven by ideas. As long as they are idea-driven, the most complex and almost impossible to imagine projects can work. ... If, and so long as, policies are idea driven, they are on the offensive, and can work. The moment that a Public policy is administration driven, which is to say form-driven as opposed to content-driven, it doesn't work, no matter how hard you try to apply all of the administrative solutions being proposed. (Saul, 99,9-10)

More than anything, we need to reconnect knowledge, thought and action as three steps which are both integrated and integral to one another (Id., 14)

The real issue is not so much accountability as what should be accounted for; in this case, that is quality literacy services. Literacy is education and one has to know about education in order to educate. This suggests that training and support are fundamental and management should be a tool to organize these elements. Literacy groups will not develop their training and support by simply insisting to their tutors that these are important or even mandatory. Tutors' and learners' needs must be systematically researched, and creative training and support activities must be offered to answer those needs. In her research on literacy referral systems in Quebec, Aaron (1997) also noted this need for tutor support.

During the six months that this project lasted, neither group seems to have devoted any discussion to matters of pedagogy. No critical questions seem to have been raised regarding the tutoring methods used or the nature of the support that could or should be offered. Actions were considered but the knowledge and thoughts on literacy and pedagogy were not, i.e. about the content, about the very substance of their work. This brings us back to Saul's comments above.

However, during the time following the end of the project when one group worked on their tutors' manual they did return to this issue. The training manual tries to address the matter of pedagogy and attempts to give concrete strategies for tutors to use.

Catherine Hambly (1998) noted in her research on *Behaviour and beliefs of volunteer literacy tutors* that tutors demonstrate a "general lack of awareness of the field of adult literacy education" and "a limited exposure to other practices of literacy education."

"Tutors," she added, "seemed unable to extend their understanding of literacy beyond a functional, work-oriented definition." She also states that "tutors are not aware of theories or even a guiding definition of literacy." This is especially true in the case of critical literacy.

A Broader Perspective

We believe that by far, the most exciting step taken during this project was the link initiated by one group with their university's Faculty of Literacy Studies. This step was initiated with a view to cooperating on training and support issues. When this project began, on-going training and support within the groups was practically non-existent. Had they continued without the help of people in this Faculty and without the help of other specialists in the field, the situation would amount to the blind leading the blind, as none of the volunteers seem to have a strong theoretical knowledge of education and literacy. Such knowledge is vital if volunteers are going to be encouraged to reflect on their practices in a critical and constructive way. It is also needed in order to ensure that their tutoring leads to real learning for their students.

The objective which drives these groups is literacy. It is important that their perspectives encompass the whole of literacy and not only the mechanics of literacy tutoring which is form, not content. With the help of interested parties and willing faculty members, the groups can develop a continuing literacy education plan to enable their tutors, volunteers and OT to have a better grasp of the values their work is promoting. All those involved in the organization should have the opportunity to learn about different approaches, and make an informed decision concerning their needs and the appropriate steps needed to lead to improvement.

Student literacy groups are committed to the learners, but commitment and good will are not always enough. Literacy tutoring is a specialized task and learners' confidence is often very fragile. One more bad experience can turn them away from trying to learn. The responsibility of tutors and of their literacy groups is considerable and they must make sure they continually improve their competence and abilities to do this work. Management here is not the only issue to consider. In assessing this project, it has become clear that the real issue is improved, more substantial ongoing training and support as a condition of access to quality literacy. The recognition of this reality will lead to the cause of literacy being better served.

Summary of Recommendations

- *Time*

We recommend that student literacy groups explore different means, such as the Internet, to exchange information and make decisions. Such measures will reduce the amount of time devoted to in-person meetings while ensuring a maximum of exchange and discussion among their OTs. Another result will be that the effectiveness of in-person meetings will be maximized.

- *The University*

We recommend that student literacy groups look at the specialized resources of their institutions for help in their work. After having established a personal rapport with those who are interested in cooperating, they should work together to develop protocols defining the field of action, the roles and responsibilities of each party and their mutual expectations. These protocols should have a set time frame and be renewable.

- *Training and Support*

We recommend that tutor and LTC training and support include theoretical elements of literacy and education as well as discussions related to different pedagogical approaches to literacy. It is recommended that this work be devised as a reflection of present practices in the light of these theories with a view to improving the practices.

To this end, we further recommend that specialists in their universities be asked to co-operate in establishing the training needs of tutors and in planning the training. University Education Departments might entertain the possibility of creating a credited course on tutoring to which the groups could themselves contribute.

- *Accountability*

We recommend that the groups consider their Annual General Meeting as resources for inspiration and support rather than as a mere technical obligation. Groups could explore ways of transmitting information about their work to their members and report on their activities so as to create opportunities for fruitful reflection and discussion and actively involve their members in determining their philosophy and their programmes

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