

Leadership Handbook for Adult Learners



Prepared by Paul Jurmo
for
the Grassroots Literacy Coalition Leadership Institute

*April 9, 2005
New York University
New York, New York*

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Introduction

This handbook was written for adult learners who are interested in becoming more effective leaders. It was distributed at a Leadership Institute run by the Grassroots Literacy Coalition on April 9, 2005. This event was held at New York University.

The Grassroots Literacy Coalition was an all-volunteer group which promoted leadership and advocacy by adult educators and adult learners in New York City.

This handbook builds on work done around the U.S. to develop adult learner leadership. This work has been done by many individuals and organizations, including VALUE, the national organization for adult learners.

Readers are encouraged to adapt this handbook to build adult learner leadership in their communities and states.

Paul Jurmo

For more information, contact Paul Jurmo at 14 Griffin Street, East Brunswick, NJ 08816-4806, pjurmo@comcast.net.

Section 1



What is
an “adult learner leader”?



What is “an adult learner”?

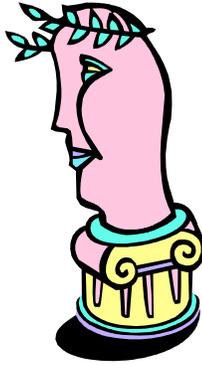
All adults are “learners” in one way or another. In this handbook, however, we are using “adult learner” to refer to an adult who is now – or was in the past – a student in an adult basic education program. These adult learners try to improve their reading, writing, or speaking and listening skills. Or they might be trying to earn a high school diploma. Many of these people are immigrants who are trying to improve their English language skills.

An adult’s lack of basic skills in English might be due to several factors. The learner might have:

- *Not had access to good schooling as a child;*
- *Learning disabilities;*
- *Dropped out of school due to health, family, or economic factors;*
- *Grown up in a family which didn’t support learning;*
- *Grown up in a place where English wasn’t spoken.*

Adult learners come from many different backgrounds. They have different strengths and limitations. Good adult education programs try to understand and respond to the unique needs, abilities, interests, and situations of learners.

What is an
"adult learner
leader"?



An adult learner leader is an adult learner who has taken the step of going beyond the traditional role of "student." Learner leaders get actively involved in a variety of leadership roles, either within their education programs or in other places like their families, workplaces, and communities.

Within their adult education programs, learner leaders take on roles traditionally reserved for adult education professionals or volunteers. Learner leaders, for example, can:

- Recruit and retain other learners;
- Educate funders, government officials, and the public;
- Run fundraisers;
- Serve on advisory committees or boards;
- Run adult learner organizations;
- Run conferences;
- Publish learner writing;
- Help in the adult education classroom;
- Help with office work;
- Help their local schools.

By taking on these leadership roles, adult learners not only help other people but they help themselves. Adult learner leaders

learn skills they can then use in their jobs, in their families, and in their communities.

This handbook is an introduction to the “why’s” and “how’s” of being an adult learner leader. Read this handbook on your own -- or with the help of a teacher or mentor. You might pick out some pages to talk about in a class, a tutoring session, or a special leadership workshop.

Think through which leadership role you might want to take on. Consider what skills you need to perform that role. Then work with others to prepare yourself to take on that role.

To become a good leader takes time, practice, thinking, courage, and the support of fellow learners, teachers, and family.



Section 2



**What are leadership roles
for adult learners?**

Leadership Role #1: Recruiting and Retaining Other Learners



Why this is important

Adult education programs sometimes have trouble attracting students or preventing their learners from dropping out.

Some potential adult learners don't sign up because:

- they don't know anything about the program;
- they have had bad experiences in education; or
- they feel they might not "fit in" in the program.

Some adult learners drop out of their programs because:

- they aren't confident they can succeed;
- their family members or friends don't support their involvement in adult education;
- their jobs, family duties, or other responsibilities make it hard for them to attend.

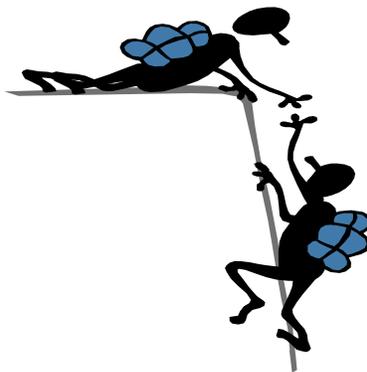
Learners who already have had success with adult education can help their programs by:

- Recruiting people to sign up for adult education programs;
- Helping to keep (retain) those learners in the program.

How to help your program recruit and retain learners

To recruit others to join an adult education program, you can:

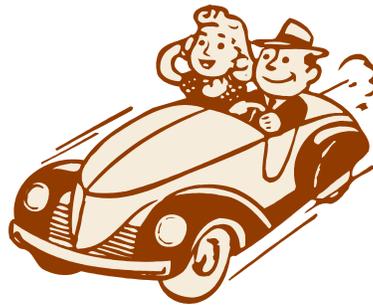
- Talk one-to-one with your neighbors, friends, family members, and co-workers. Explain how adult education helped you. And then urge them to come in and talk to your program's staff about how to sign up.
- Speak in public (in a newspaper or TV interview or at a public meeting) about your experience in adult education.



To help retain learners who are already in your program (so they don't drop out), you can:

- Talk with new students during student orientation. Tell them about your experience in the program and explain how the program works.

- Organize a student support group and invite new learners to participate.
- Organize social events (parties, etc.) to help learners to feel comfortable.
- Help with carpooling or childcare, to make it easier for learners to attend regularly.
- Serve as a "mentor" ("buddy") for a new student.



Skills and knowledge you will need

To help your program recruit and retain learners, it will be helpful if you can:

- State why adult education is useful and how a program works;
- Speak clearly in public;
- Give guidance;
- Organize a group;
- Organize a social activity;
- Drive;
- Provide childcare.

Leadership Role #2:

Educating
Funders,
Government
Officials,
and the
Public



Why this is important

Adult education programs often have very little money to operate on. Adult learners can help their programs to raise funds and other resources.

This is because adult learners who have benefited from adult education can speak as "satisfied customers." They can speak from their own experience and educate others about the good things that adult education can do.

Who your “audiences” might be

Adult learners can speak to a number of audiences. These audiences have resources (money and other things) which adult education programs need. These audiences include:

- Public officials . . . 

At the local level: the mayor, the town council, the school board, the workforce development board

At the state level: the governor, legislators, officials in the education, labor, and human resources departments

At the national level: the President, Congressional representatives, officials in the education, labor, and other departments

- Private funders, including:



Foundations which give money to nonprofit organizations

Corporations' contributions offices and community affairs offices

Individuals who make donations to good causes

Community service groups (like the Rotary Club) which provide volunteers or funds to local charities

Professional organizations (such as associations for lawyers or accountants) which might provide volunteers or funds



■ **The general public**

The general public includes individuals who might like to help your program on their own. Sometimes these people are also part of a company or organization which might be able to help your program.



What you might say

There are many things to say to these audiences. This will be up to you and the people you work with.

However, adult learners are often asked to deliver the following two-part message:

Message #1: How adult education helped you personally

- What was your experience with education and basic skills?
- How did you decide to join an adult education program?
- How has adult education helped you?
- What are you now doing as a leader in your program?

Message #2: What your audience can do to support adult education

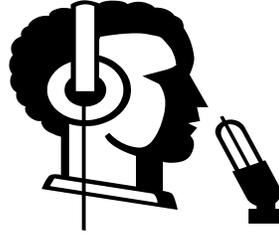
- What supports (funds, volunteers, other resources) does your program now need?
- How can the audience you are talking to help your program get the supports it needs?

How to communicate with these audiences



Prepare a script.

Regardless of your audience, your message needs to be well-organized, clear, and concise. You should prepare a “script” of what you want to say (perhaps with the help of a mentor) and then prepare yourself to deliver the message.



Decide how you will communicate.

There are several ways you can communicate, including:

- Interviews in the media (newspaper, TV, radio)
- Public speaking (at meetings or conferences)
- Visits to the offices of the funders and officials
- Inviting those funders and officials to visit your program, attend a graduation ceremony or fundraiser
- Writing letters
- Petitions
- Marches, rallies, and demonstrations
- Receptions, breakfasts, lunches, dinners



When delivering your message in person . . .

- . . . Be on time.
- . . . Dress appropriately.
- . . . Speak loudly and clearly.
- . . . "KISS" ("Keep It Short and Simple").
- . . . Speak with confidence and from your heart.

After meeting with your audience . . .

- Follow up with a thank-you note or phone call.

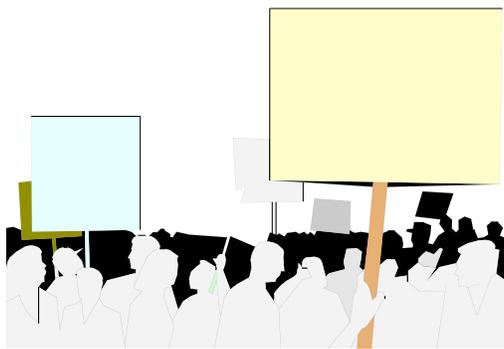
- Keep the funder or official informed (by mailing your newsletter).



Skills and knowledge you will need

To educate funders, public officials, and the public, it will be helpful if you can . . .

- State why adult education is useful and how a program works;
- Speak clearly to others;
- Write clearly;
- Organize a group activity (e.g., a meeting with public officials or funders).





Leadership Role #3: Running a Fundraiser

Why this is important

Adult learners sometimes want to raise funds for their own learner organization or for a special project (like a trip or a student newsletter). Fundraisers are fun ways to get some money and learn some useful skills. A fundraiser can also be a way to advertise your program and build a team spirit in your program.



Type\$ of fundrai\$er\$

There are many types of fundraisers, including:

- A dinner, lunch, breakfast, reception, or party which people pay to attend. Part of the payment is set aside for use by adult learners.
- A raffle or auction of
- Selling donated items in a raffle, auction, or rummage sale.

- A "50-50" raffle in which half of the proceeds from ticket sales is set aside for the adult learners and the other half goes to the winner of the raffle.
- A car wash.
- A sale of specialty items (t-shirts, pencils, coffee mugs, etc.) containing a special slogan or logo.
- Sale of food items (snacks, coffee, sodas) in the education program building or at a special event (e.g., community fair, baseball game).
- A book sale (which could include sale of donated computer programs, videotapes, records, etc.)
- A walk-a-thon or a "read-a-thon" (or "read-in").
- A bus trip to a fun event (e.g., show, concert, movie, casino).
- A spelling bee.
- A reading by authors at a local bookstore or library.



How to plan and run a fundraiser

Good planning is necessary for a successful fundraiser:

1. Form a fundraising team. This team should be composed of learners and possibly practitioners or others experienced with fundraising. The team will be in charge of planning and carrying out the fundraiser.
2. Decide why you want to raise funds and how much you want to raise. When doing fundraising for the first time, you might want to "start small" and focus on raising funds for a smaller project. For example, you might want to raise a few

hundred dollars to rent a van to go to a conference, or to print and mail your learner newsletter, or pay for a disc jockey at your holiday party. By identifying a simple "target," you can develop a clear budget and you will also be able to tell people what you want the funds for. (People like to know how their donations are going to be used.)

3. Select which fundraiser you want to try. Look at the above list of possible fundraisers and choose one. Has this been tried before by anyone on your team? Which fundraiser do you feel comfortable with? Which one seems like it would be fun to try out?
4. Decide when and where you will hold the fundraiser. Do you need to reserve a room or location? Will you be allowed to use that location for fundraising purposes?
5. Decide what supplies and other resources you might need. Will you need a table? Transportation to get supplies and people to and from the fundraiser? Flyers and signs to advertise the event? A locked box to store your funds? Handouts to pass out at the table? Special T-shirts or caps for the fundraisers to wear?



6. Decide how you will handle funds. Who will be in charge of collecting and keeping track of the funds? How will you store the money so it is safe? How much change do you want to bring with you to the event? Will you accept checks or credit cards? Will you prepare a summary of what was collected? To whom will you turn over the money afterward?
7. Advertise the event. Use several ways to tell people about the fundraiser. You can:



- mail out a flyer;
 - post flyers in the neighborhood;
 - mention the fundraiser in the program newsletter, web site, local newspaper, radio or TV shows, public meetings;
 - post signs on your program office, along busy roadways ...
 - make phone calls or send e-mails to friends (to spread the word).
8. Assign other tasks and timelines. Make sure other team members know what they need to do before, during, and after the event. This depends on what the event is. Will some people need to cook? Set up tables? Welcome people? Collect funds? Make sure all know when they need to get their tasks done. For each task, you might match more-experienced people with a less-experienced partner.

9. Assign one or more people to be in charge of handling emergencies. Depending on the event, you might want to have one or more people in charge of handling medical or other emergencies that might come up. For example, have a first aid kit and a cell phone on hand. You might tell the police ahead of time, so they know about your event. If someone gets hurt, feels sick, etc., you should have someone on hand to deal with the emergency.
10. Have fun. Members of your team should make people feel welcomed. You might have a clown, someone telling jokes, a disk jockey, or other entertainer on hand at your event. Use bright decorations (balloons are easy). Give out refreshments (ice cream, coffee, cookies, popcorn . . .) donated by local businesses.
11. Clean up afterward. Make sure the space is cleaner than how you found it. Return tables and supplies to those who provided them.



12. Report your results and thank those who helped. Use the program newsletter, meetings, and other means to tell people what you accomplished (money, fun, publicity . . .) in your fundraiser.
13. Begin planning your next fundraiser. Your fundraising team might evaluate what you accomplished, problems you

had, and what you might do differently next time. Then start to plan your next fundraiser!!!!

Skills and knowledge you will need

To run a fundraiser, it will be helpful if you can . . .

- State what you need money for;
- Lay out the steps needed to carry out a special activity (like baking cookies, washing cars, running a raffle);
- Organize a group to carry out that activity
- Do basic bookkeeping;
- Write clearly (for flyers, etc.)





Leadership Role #4: **Serving on an Advisory Committee** **or Board**

Why this is important

Adult education programs need to be “customer-oriented.” When they listen to what adult learners need, programs can provide services which help learners succeed.

Adult learners can give input to their programs by serving on advisory committees or program boards. As members of a committee or board, adult learners can:

- explain what learners hope to achieve in the program;
- clarify the obstacles that make it hard to attend the program;
- say what they like and don't like about the program;
- suggest ways to improve the program;
- identify how adult learners can help the program to succeed.

How learners and programs can prepare



For many adult learners, serving on an advisory committee or board can be foreign and scary. For adult learners to succeed in this new role, the following people need to do some special preparations:

- the learners who will serve on the committee or board,
- others (e.g., adult educators . . .) who serve on the committee or board, and
- staff of the learners' adult education program.

Adult learners who are to serve on the committee or board need to “do their homework” about the committee or board. They should find out:

- What is the purpose of the committee or board?
- What does it do?
- Who are the other members?
- How often does it meet?
- Have other adult learners been members in the past?

..... If so, what was their experience?

Other members of the committee or board need to:

..... Be clear how an adult learner might help the committee or board.

..... Understand what might make it difficult for an adult learner to participate fully.

..... Be prepared to help the adult learner overcome those obstacles

Staff of the learners' adult education program can do several things to help adult learners successfully serve on a committee or board:



Activity #1: Make "Serving on a Committee or Board" part of your curriculum.

An adult education program can provide lessons on the topic of "Serving on a Committee or Board." Learners could read special handouts and hear from other members of the committee or board to learn about:

..... What is the purpose of the committee or board?

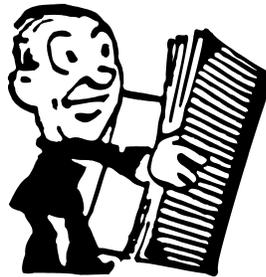
..... What does it do?

..... Who are the other members?

..... How often does it meet?

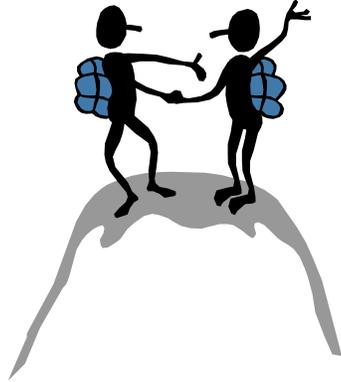
- Have other adult learners been members in the past?
- If so, what was their experience?
- What are some obstacles that might make it difficult for a learner to participate?
- What can be done to overcome those obstacles?
- Is anyone available to serve as a "mentor" to a new member of the committee or board?

Activity #2: Prepare a "handbook" for new members of the committee or board.



The program can prepare a simple "handbook" which summarizes the information developed in Activity #1. This handbook can be provided to new members of the committee or board. The handbook should be written clearly, with adult learners in mind.

Activity #3: Hold an orientation for new members.
The committee or board should hold an "orientation" for new members, to (a) help them understand the information in the handbook and (b) introduce them to other members so they will feel comfortable.



Activity #4: Create a "mentor" system.

New members of the committee or board might be matched with one or more people who can serve as "mentors." These mentors know about the committee or board and can help adult learner members deal with questions that might come up.

Once you join the committee or board, you'll need to . . .

- **Be on time** for meetings.
- **Be prepared for discussions.** (Know what will be discussed. Come with information the committee or board might need.)
- **Listen carefully,** so you understand the issues being discussed and others' point of view.
- **Speak clearly,** concisely, and on the topic.
- **Be patient.** Understand that you might not always be familiar with - or be interested in -- the topic being discussed.
- **Dress appropriately.** Is this a very "formal" group or a less-formal one?

- Keep a record of what is discussed: Take notes or use a tape recorder (if the group permits this).



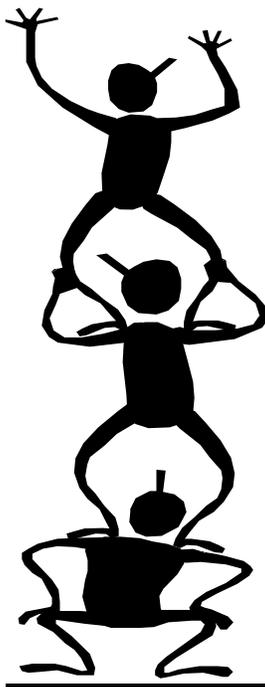
Skills and knowledge you will need

To serve on an advisory committee or board, it will be important for you to be able to . . .

- Learn about the issues discussed by the group;
- Listen carefully;
- Take notes;
- Prepare ideas to discuss in advance;
- Speak clearly to express your ideas;
- Evaluate different sides of an issue;
- Work with a group to solve problems and make decisions;
- Use math to understand budgets and other numerical information;
- Keep information organized (in files, etc.)

Leadership Role #5:

Running an Adult Learner Organization



Why this is important

Around the country, adult learners have set up their own adult learner organizations. These groups operate at:

- The program level.
- The community level.
- The state level.

Learners set up these groups for one or more reasons:

- To encourage each other.
- To have fun.

- To share useful information.
- To get support for adult education programs.
- To learn useful leadership skills.

How to set up a learner organization

Setting up a learner organization and keeping it running is a lot of work. This work requires certain skills, preparation, resources, and patience. Here are some steps you can take:

1. Form an organizing committee. You and other learners who might want to form a group need to get together and form an organizing committee. You might want to include some adult education practitioners or others on the committee, too. You want people who:
 - have an open mind about whether and how to form a learner organization.
 - have had some experience working in groups.
 - have the time to do some planning.
 - like working with others.

You might start with a few people and then expand this committee after you get more clear about what kind of organization you want and the work you will need to do.



2. Do your homework. Talk with others and read reports about how other learner groups were

organized. Ohio, Delaware, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Massachusetts, California, and Washington have set up state-level adult learner organizations. (VALUE is another example you can learn from.) Ask them what the goals or purposes of their groups are, what activities they carry out, how decisions are made, what resources they use, who does the work, and where they get funds and other supports. You might attend their conferences to see first-hand how they operate.

3. Prepare a first draft of a plan. Your planning committee might now prepare a draft plan for a learner organization. You might have a facilitator lead you through a discussion of the following questions and record your committee's responses on flipcharts:



- What would be the purposes of the organization?
What would you hope to accomplish? Why would anyone want to join? What would they personally get out of it?
- Who might participate in the learner organization?
Who can be members? Only learners? Can practitioners and others be members, too?
- What kinds of activities or services will the organization carry out? Leadership training?
Other educational activities (e.g., special workshops)

for learners, field trips, a learner newsletter or web site)? Social activities? Advocacy activities (to educate policy makers and others)?

- How will decisions be made? By a board and committees? Who can participate in making decisions (only learners? others, too?)
- Will there be elections for the board? If so, how will those elections be carried out? Who can vote?



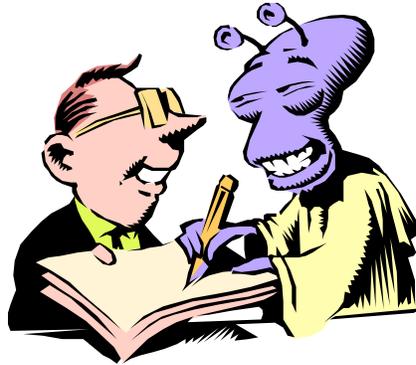
- Who will do the work of running the organization and providing its services? Will you have one or more paid people to manage the office, do mailings, raise and manage funds, organize meetings, pay bills, etc.?
- What activities will the organization carry out in its first year? Who will be responsible? When will tasks have to be completed?
- What resources will you need? What funds, space, equipment, supplies, etc. do you need to run the organization? Where will you get those resources?

4. Get input from others. Hold a meeting with a larger group of adult learners (and possibly a few practitioners). Show

them the draft plan your committee has prepared and get their input. Revise the plan.

In this same meeting, you might ask people to sign up to serve on the organizing committee.

5. Recruit members. Spread the word about your plan and seek members.



6. Train your leaders. If necessary, hold workshops or provide mentors for members of the organizing committee. Help them understand how to carry out their duties.
7. Decide how you will get resources. Develop a fundraising plan to get funds for your organization. You might need to show your plan (with a budget) to funders, so you have the funds and other resources you will need.

Running the organization in Year 1

Once you have a plan and committee members know what they need to do, the organizing committee will need to:

1. Have a central office (or at least a desk with a phone, computer, etc.) to allow one or more people (paid or volunteer) to organize meetings, answer calls from the

public, keep track of membership information, handle funds, pay bills, do mailings, etc.

2. Carry out one or more activities. What are your priorities for the first year? Will you be holding a conference or workshops for learners? Will your members be meeting with local or state officials?
3. Evaluate and improve your activities over time. The committee will need to regularly evaluate how your office is doing and the activities you are carrying out. The purpose of evaluation is to figure out how to improve your organization.
4. Continue to seek resources. Even if you are able to get some funds to start with, you will likely have to always be seeking funds. You might get funds from several sources: membership fees, sales of items (See "Running a Fundraiser."), and grants from donors (See "Funders, Government Officials, and the Public.")



Skills and knowledge you will need

To run an adult learner organization, it will be important for you to be able to . . .

- Understand and state the issues which are important to adult learners;
- Speak clearly;
- Write (notes, flyers, etc.);
- Use the telephone;
- Do basic bookkeeping;
- Organize meetings;
- Work with others to solve problems and make decisions;
- Prepare objectives and a work plan;
- Give feedback to others.



Leadership Role #6: **Running a Conference**

Why this is important

Around the U.S., adult learners are organizing, running, and participating in their own conferences. In these conferences, learners:

- Learn skills and knowledge they can use as leaders, family members, workers, and citizens.
- Encourage each other.
- Have fun.
- Make contacts with people they might work with in the future.
- Get practice organizing conferences and running workshops.
- Get publicity for adult education and adult learners.
- Build adult learner organizations.

Examples of learner conferences

Learner conferences can take two forms:

- "Stand-alone" conferences for adult learners only.
- "Joint" conferences in which learners and practitioners participate in the same conference, although the learners might have separate activities for learners only.

Here are some examples:



Washington State: In early summer 2000, adult learners in Washington State held a two-day meeting to (a) plan a new state organization for adult learners and (b) prepare for a statewide adult learner conference. Later that summer, those learners and others returned for a two-day "joint" adult learner conference held at the same time and location as a conference for adult education practitioners. Sometimes learners had workshops just for themselves. Sometimes they participated in sessions with practitioners.

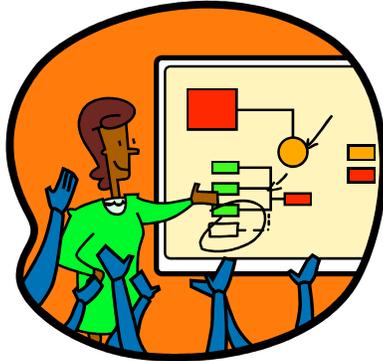
VALUE has held four national Adult Learner Leadership Institutes, beginning in June 1999. Learners from around the U.S. come to develop leadership skills to use back home in their programs and states.

In California, adult learner leaders from library literacy programs around the state have come together for leadership training.

Adult learners in Pennsylvania have a network of adult learner delegates who serve as links to adult learners around the state. They hold an annual legislative conference in which they meet with their legislators and other state officials in the state capital.

ProLiteracy USA encourages learners to attend the organization's national conferences. Learners have their own workshops and other activities, while also interacting with practitioners in other sessions. Learners learn about issues important to them and also develop useful leadership skills and contacts.

Be prepared! How to plan a learner conference



Organizing a conference for adult learners, even if it's a small one at a program level, is a lot of work. As with other learner activities, this work requires certain skills, preparation, resources, and patience. Here are some steps you can take:

1. Form a conference committee. You and other learners who might want to hold a conference need to get together and form a conference committee. You might want to include some adult education practitioners or others on the committee, too. You want people who:
 - have had some experience working in groups.
 - have the time to do some planning.
 - like working with others.
 - have attended or organized conferences in the past.

You might start with a few people and then expand this committee after you get more clear about what kind of conference you want and the work you will need to do.



2. Do your homework. Talk with others and read reports about how other learner conferences were organized. Find out:

- what the goals or purposes of the conferences were;
- what activities were included;
- how the conferences were planned
- what resources (funds, helpers) they used;
- where the conferences were held (e.g., hotel, college);
- who did the work; and
- where they got funds and other supports.

You might attend another conference or two to see first-hand how they operate.

3. Prepare a first draft of a plan. Your conference committee might now prepare a draft plan for a conference. You might have a facilitator lead you through a discussion of the following questions and record your committee's responses on flipcharts:

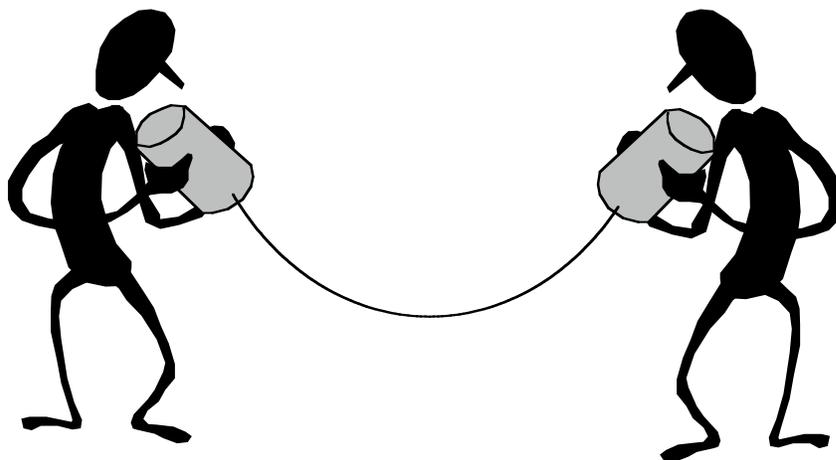
- What would be the purposes of the conference? What would you hope to accomplish? Why would anyone want to come? What would they personally get out of it?
- Who might participate in the conference? Only learners? Can practitioners and others come, too? If so, what would be their roles in the conference?

- What kinds of activities will the conference include? Leadership training? Other educational activities (e.g., special workshops for learners, field trips, planning a learner newsletter or web site)? Social activities? Advocacy activities (to meet and educate policy makers and others)?
- How will the conference be planned? By the conference committee? Who can participate in making decisions (only learners? others, too?)
- Who will do the work of planning and running the conference? Who will decide on topics and speakers, get the facility, advertise the event, keep track of applications and registration fees, etc.?
- What resources will you need? What funds, space, equipment, supplies, etc. do you need to run the conference? Where will you get those resources?



4. Get input from others. Hold a meeting with a larger group of adult learners (and possibly a few practitioners). Show them the draft conference plan your committee has prepared and get their input. Revise the plan.

In this same meeting, you might ask people to sign up to serve on the conference committee.



5. Recruit presenters. Find presenters who will run the workshops and panels you want. Get one or more speakers for the keynote addresses.
6. Recruit participants. Spread the word about the conference and seek participants. Provide them with a registration form and keep track of registrants and (if any, fees).
7. Train your presenters. If necessary, hold workshops or provide mentors for those who will be running sessions at

the conference. Help them understand how to make good presentations.

8. Decide how you will get resources. Develop a fundraising plan to get funds to cover conference costs. You might need to show your plan (with a budget) to funders, so you have the funds and other resources you will need.
9. Get a conference site. Make sure that you have a meeting space that is comfortable, is large enough, and has the equipment (e.g., flipcharts, projectors) you need. Arrange to have the right kinds and amounts of meals served. Tell participants how to get to the conference site by car, from the airport, etc.
10. Prepare a conference schedule and handouts. Work with the presenters to decide what happens during the conference. Agree on who will make their presentations when, and get that information back to the presenters. Prepare a conference booklet with a schedule, thank you's to the conference committee and other helpers, and other handouts.



11. Include "fun" on the agenda. Most people going to conferences want to have some fun and not just WORK! If your conference schedule permits, include

time for people to meet and have fun - coffee breaks, lunches and dinners, an evening party, a group trip to a ball game or museum, etc. These events build communication and relationships among adult learners and help them feel like they "belong" to something valuable.

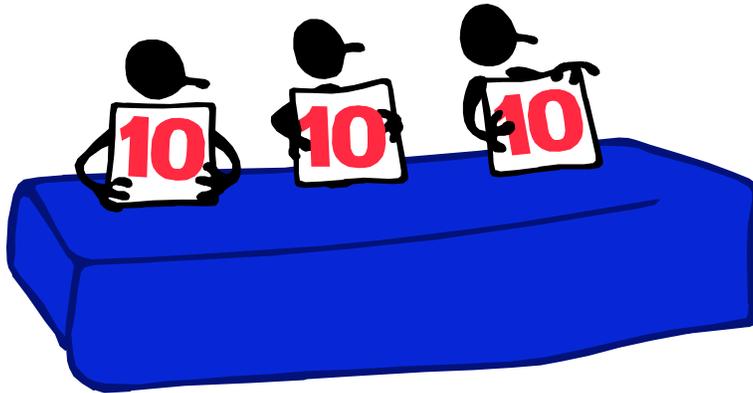


12. Invite the media. If you want news coverage, invite some reporters to cover your conference.

What to have in place during the conference

1. Have a registration desk where participants can sign in and get information about the conference. One or more people should be on hand to welcome participants, sign them in, collect fees, give handouts, and answer questions.
2. Have a display area where participants can view books, videos, and other materials for adult learners.
3. Prepare signs. Prepare and hang signs which explain where particular rooms and sessions are.
4. Have a "help desk." One or more people should be on hand to help if a participant gets sick, loses something, is confused or angry about something, or has another problem.

5. Have an evaluation sheet. Include a simple questionnaire to allow participants to give you feedback about the conference overall and about individual workshops.



6. Have your committee meet during the conference to make sure everything is working all right. All or part of your committee should meet several times before, during, and after the conference to be sure everything is working smoothly. You might sit at the same table during meals or meet near the registration desk.

After the conference

You might be exhausted after the conference, but your work is not done. Your committee needs to:

1. Clean up. Clean up the meeting rooms, collect unused materials and store them, return borrowed equipment.
2. Collect the evaluation sheets and learn from what they say. This will help you plan future events.

3. Report to your supporters what was achieved at the conference.
4. Prepare a record of numbers of participants, fees paid, etc. You can include information about this conference in future funding proposals.
5. Store equipment and supplies. If you have banners, name tags, projectors, flipcharts, etc. you will use again later, store them properly.
6. Follow up on actions agreed on at the conference. If participants promised to do something after the conference, make sure necessary follow through actions are taken.
7. Send out a press release. Send a press release to literacy newsletters, local newspapers, and other news media. Tell people about what happened at your conference. Stress the role of adult learners in running the event.



Skills and knowledge you will need

To run an adult learner conference, it will be important for you to be able to . . .

- State issues which adult learners might want to talk about;
- Speak in planning meetings and before larger audiences;
- Write notes, flyers, plans, conference materials, etc.;
- Use telephone skills;
- Do basic bookkeeping;
- Organize planning meetings and workshops;
- Work with others to solve problems and make decisions;
- Prepare objectives and a work plan.

Leadership Role #7: Publishing Learner Writing



Why this is important

Most adult learners have lots to say - about their lives, about issues that impact them, and about adult education. Other people -- including their fellow learners, the public, funders -- are likely to want to read well-written learner writings.

Adult education programs can help learners write lively, interesting stories, essays, and poems. By publishing these writings, a program can . . .

- encourage other learners to continue their studies, write, and improve their lives.
- educate funders and the public about the value of adult learning.
- encourage the writers to continue writing and learning.

Adult learner leaders can create student publications such as newsletters and collections of stories, essays, and poems. This is a way for the learners to develop writing and publishing skills

while providing the program with a product to give to funders and others.

How to create a learner publication

1. **Form a publications committee.** With some other learners who are interested in writing, form a "publications committee." This committee will plan and create one or more publications containing writings by adult learners. You might have some teachers or writers join this committee, too, but make it clear what everybody's roles will be on the committee.
2. **Decide what kind of publication you want, who your audience(s) will be, and other details.** Look at some samples of learner writings from around the U.S. and world. Decide what kind of publication you would like to create and who its audience would be. Also decide how often the publication will come out, who will edit it and print it, and how you will publicize it and disseminate it. Also decide whether you will charge for the publication and how funds will be managed.
3. **Invite learners to write for you, or collect existing writings.**



Announce to learners in your program or elsewhere that you want them to send in their writings. Make it clear what type and length of writings you want. Tell them

what the writing will be used for and how it will be edited. Give them a deadline and tell them how they should submit the writing (e.g., on paper, on a computer disk, etc.) You might have learners write for your publication in their writing classes. (This would give them a purpose and audience for writing.)

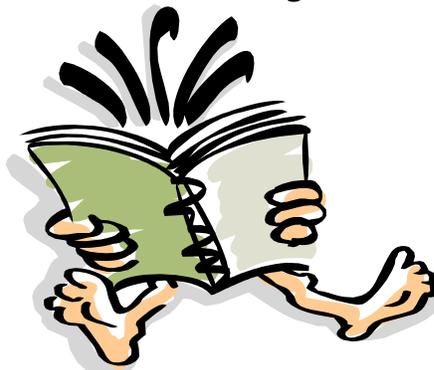
4. Edit the writings and create a publication.



Members of your committee can edit the writings that are sent in, to be sure the writings meet your publication's guidelines. Use a word processor to create a publication. Add pictures and other graphics to make the publication look nice. Make enough copies for your audience.

5. Distribute the publication to your audience.

Depending on who your audience is, you can now mail out copies of the publication, pass them out at meetings and in classes, put them in the library, or sell them at conferences. If you sell them, keep track of the funds. (See "Running a Fundraiser.")



Skills and knowledge you will need

To publish adult learner writings, it will be important for you to be able to . . .

- Know the issues and information adult learners might like to write and read about;
- Listen carefully and speak clearly in meetings with the publications committee and with your writers;
- Write articles for your publication;
- Use telephone skills;
- Do basic bookkeeping (to keep track of expenses, etc.);
- Take photos;
- Operate office equipment (copy machine, fax, etc.);
- Organize meetings;
- Work with others to solve problems, make decisions, prepare objectives and a work plan for a project;



Leadership Role #8: Helping in the Adult Education Classroom

Why this is important

Many adult learners are serving as tutors, guest speakers, or teacher's aides in their adult education classrooms. By doing so, adult learners help:

- other learners (by providing them guidance and encouragement);
- the adult education program (by helping sessions to run smoothly);
- themselves (by getting some useful skills through helping others).

How to help in your program's classroom

Here are some steps you can take:

Clarify why and how you might get involved. If you want to get involved in helping out in tutoring or classroom sessions in your program, you should first answer for yourself:

1. What do you hope to accomplish (for yourself, for other learners, for the program) by getting involved?
2. In what ways would you like to get involved? (Do you want to be a tutor, a guest speaker, or a teacher's aide?)

You might discuss these questions with other learners in your program, to get their feedback.

Offer your services. Talk with the director or a teacher in your program. Explain how you would like to get involved in the "instructional" side of what goes on in your program. (Ask how you might be of help rather than say "I'm going to do such-and-such for you.") Come to an agreement about what you might do to help. Don't take it personally if the program can't use you right away in the way you hoped. Be flexible and try to find a way for you to be involved that fits into how things are done in the program.



Prepare for your role.

Work with your adult education teacher or another mentor to prepare for your

new role in the program. If you are to work as a tutor or as a teacher's aide, you might need to go through a special training program. If you are going to be a guest speaker to other learners, you need to prepare what you will say and practice your speaking skills. (See "Educating Funders, Public Officials, and the Public" for more ideas about public speaking.)

Don't overstep your role. Remember that adult education programs have rules and procedures which all staff must follow. You will need to understand and observe those rules.

Bring what you learn back to your adult education program. When you have had some experience as a tutor, speaker, or teacher's aide in your program, tell others in your program what you did. Tell them what you learned and urge other adult learners to consider getting involved, too. Your adult education teachers might want to set up some special workshops or other activities to help adult learners get involved in these ways.



Skills and knowledge you will need

To help in your program's classroom and tutoring activities, it will be important for you to be able to . . .

- Know what is being taught in the program;
- Know how your program works and how things are taught;
- Listen and observe carefully in the classroom;
- Write (on flipcharts or the blackboard);
- Speak clearly to others;
- Give feedback;
- Work with others to solve problems and make decisions;

Leadership Role #9: Helping with Office Work



Why this is important

Adult learners can help their programs by doing work around the office. This includes:

- answering phones;
- making copies;
- doing mailings;
- making trips to the store to buy supplies;
- greeting people at the door;
- tidying classrooms and meeting rooms;
- typing;
- entering data;
- filing;
- keeping store rooms or closets organized;
- helping in the library or resource room;

Learners can volunteer to do these tasks, or they can get paid.

By doing these tasks, adult learners:

- help their programs;
- learn useful job skills;
- show other learners and the public what adult learners can do;
- earn money (if it's a paid job).

How to help your program with office work



Here are some steps you can take:

Clarify why and how you might get involved. If you want to get involved in helping with office work in your program, you should first answer for yourself:

1. What do you hope to accomplish (for yourself and for the program) by getting involved?
2. In what ways would you like to get involved? (See the above list.)

You might discuss these questions with other learners in your program, to get their feedback.

Offer your services. Talk with the director or a teacher in your program. Explain how and why you would like to help with office work in your program. (Ask how you might be of help rather than say “I’m going to do such-and-such for you.”) Come to an agreement about what you might do to help.

Prepare for your role. Work with your adult education teacher or another mentor to prepare for the office tasks you will take on. You might need to go through a special training program, so you know how to do the tasks properly.



Don't overstep your role. Remember that adult education programs have rules and procedures which all staff must follow. You will need to understand and observe those rules.

Bring what you learn back to your adult education program. When you have had some experience helping around the program office, tell others in your program what you did. Tell them what you learned and urge other adult learners to consider getting involved, too. Your adult education teachers might want to set up some special workshops or other activities to help adult learners get involved in these ways.

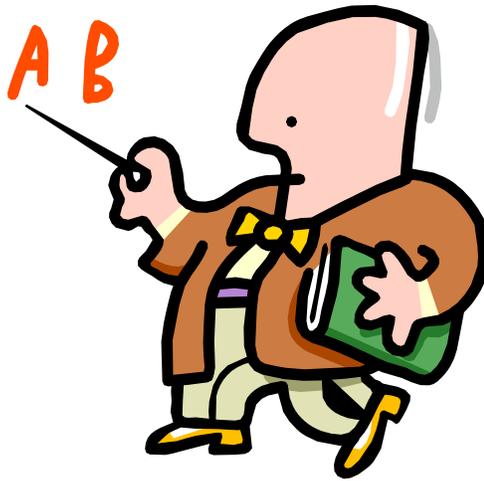
Skills and knowledge you will need

To help in your program's office, it will be important if you can . . .

- Understand what work is done in your program's office, how that work is carried, and who is responsible;
- Work with others to solve problems, make decisions, prepare a work plan;
- Speak clearly;
- Use office equipment (copy machine, computer, fax);
- Use telephone skills;
- Do basic record-keeping (e.g., sign-in sheets, supply lists, etc.) and bookkeeping (e.g., purchases).



Leadership Role #10: Helping Your Local Schools



Why this is important

Adult learners want to be sure that their children or grandchildren -- and other children in their community - succeed in school. Many learners have become active in their local schools:

- as PTA members (helping with fundraisers and class trips, recruiting other parents to join the PTA),
- as speakers at meetings of children, parents, or teachers,
- as helpers in the classroom,
- in family literacy activities, and
- in other roles.

By becoming involved in these ways, adult learners:

- Help children succeed in their education.
- Feel they are “giving something back” to the community.

How to get involved in your local schools



Here are some steps you can take:

Clarify why and how you might get involved. If you want to get involved in your local schools, you should first answer for yourself:

1. What do you hope to accomplish (for yourself, for your children or grandchildren, for other children in the community) by getting involved?
2. In what ways would you like to get involved? (Review the list on the previous page.)

You might discuss these questions with your own adult education teacher or other learners in your program.

Introduce yourself to the local school. Talk with the principal or a teacher at your local school. (Your adult education program

might “introduce” you to the local school.) Explain who you are and how you would like to get involved in the school. (Ask how you might be of help rather than say “I’m going to do such-and-such for you.”) Come to an agreement about what you might do to help.

Get to know the school. Get to know more about the school by (a) getting a tour, (b) going to PTA meetings, (c) observing classes.

Prepare for your role at the school. Work with your adult education teacher or another mentor to prepare for your new role in the school. Figure out what you need to know to serve on the PTA or participate in family literacy activities. If you are going to make a speech, you need to prepare what you will say and practice your speaking skills. (See “Educating Funders, Public Officials, and the Public” for more ideas about public speaking.)



Don't overstep your role. Remember that schools have rules and procedures to keep the kids safe and maintain order. You will need to understand and observe those rules.

Bring what you learn back to your adult education program. When you have had some experience in your local school, tell others in your adult education program what you did. Tell them

what you learned and urge other adult learners to also get involved in their local schools. Your adult education teachers might want to set up some special workshops or other activities to help adult learners get involved in improving education for children.

Skills and knowledge you will need

To help in your local schools, it will be important if you can . .

- Understand what is being taught in the school;
- Understand special concerns (overcrowding, lack of funding, security, lack of equipment) in the school;
- Understand how the school works and who is responsible for what;
- Listen carefully;
- Write (on the blackboard);
- Use math skills;
- Speak clearly;
- Give feedback;
- Work with others to solve problems and make decisions;
- Use school equipment (overhead projectors, VCRs . . .)

Leadership Role #10: **Improving Your Community**



Why this is important

Adult learners often want to get involved in their communities to make them better places to live. Learners can use leadership skills . . .

- in voter education drives;
- in political campaigns;
- in neighborhood clean-up or safety projects;
- in campaigns to get better transportation or health services for the community;
- as spokespersons for their ethnic group;
- in efforts to attract more jobs to the town;
- as coaches or helpers in recreational programs;
- as volunteers at the local community center or senior center;
- as members of their religious group.

By becoming involved in these ways, adult learners:

- Help to improve their communities;
- Further develop leadership and other useful skills;
- Feel connected to their neighbors;
- Feel they are "giving something back" to the community.

How to help improve your community



Here are some steps you can take:

Clarify why and how you might get involved. If you want to get involved in your local community, you should first answer for yourself:

1. What do you hope to accomplish (for yourself, for your family, for you neighbors) by getting involved?
2. In what ways would you like to get involved? (Review the list on the previous page.)

You might discuss these questions with your own adult education teacher or other learners in your program.

Introduce yourself to the local community organization. Talk with members or leaders of the community organization you might like to get involved in. (Your adult education program might “introduce” you to one of these groups by inviting them to send a representative to talk to students in your program. Or your class might make a field trip to that local organization.)

Get to know more about the organization by (a) getting a tour, (b) going to meetings, (c) observing activities. Find out what the organization does and explain who you are and how you might like to get involved. (Ask how you might be of help rather than say “I’m going to do such-and-such for you.”) Come to an agreement about what you might do to help.



Prepare for your role at the organization. Work with your adult education teacher or another mentor to prepare for your new role in the organization. Figure out what you need to know to participate in one or more of the organization’s activities. If you are going to go door-to-door to pass out information, you need to prepare what you will say and practice your speaking skills.



Don't overstep your role. Remember that organizations have rules and procedures to keep everyone safe and maintain order. You will need to understand and observe those rules.

Bring what you learn back to your adult education program. When you have had some experience in your local organization, tell others in your adult education program what you did. Tell them what you learned and urge other adult learners to also get involved in their local organizations. Your adult education teachers might want to set up some special workshops or other activities to help adult learners get involved in community improvement projects.

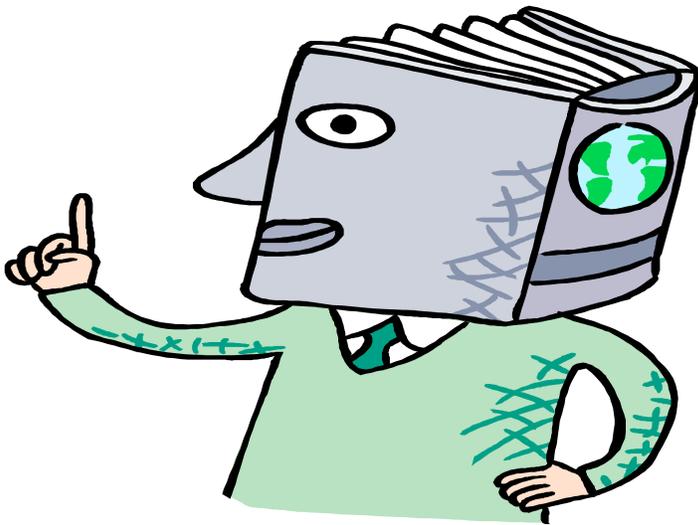
Skills and knowledge you will need

To participate in local community improvement activities, it will be important if you can . .

- Understand the purposes and activities of the organization(s) you want to work with;
- Understand special issues that that group deals with;
- Listen carefully;
- Write (notes, etc.);
- Speak clearly;
- Give feedback;
- Work with others to solve problems and make decisions.

Section 3

Skills and Knowledge You Will Need



Know what skills and knowledge you will need.



To be a good leader, you will need some special skills and knowledge. Depending on the leadership role, you might need to be able to speak in public, make decision with a group, research information, and use a computer to send e-mails or write a letter. You might also need to learn about community issues or how to get in touch with a funder or public official. No matter what leadership role you take on, you will also need to be able to manage your time and other responsibilities, so you don't take on too much work.

See the end of each of the leadership roles in Section 2 for a list of "Skills and Knowledge You Will Need" for that role.

Take the time to strengthen your leadership skills.



Before you take on any leadership role, you should talk with a teacher or other mentor or someone else who has been involved in

the same kind of leadership activity. These people can help you decide whether you need to improve the skills and knowledge you will need for that role. You might then have to go through some special training, so you are sure you have the skills and knowledge you need.

You might practice these skills and develop this knowledge as part of your studies. Or you might hook up with a "mentor" who has already had some experience in the role you are interested in. Once you get involved in the leadership role, you will then get a chance to practice and further develop the necessary skills and knowledge.

Remember the value of leadership.

You will need to have patience, commitment, and determination to go through all the work required to learn how to be a leader and then BE an effective leader. These are valuable qualities that you can use in many aspects of your life.

Don't forget that, by taking on leadership roles, you will not only be helping others. You will also be helping yourself, because you will be developing skills and qualities you can use in your job, in your family, and in your role as community member and citizen.

