Idea Book

for English Literacy Facilitators

Peace Corps/Tonga
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Contents

Introduction

The root of the English word "idea" comes from the Greek word for "to see." An idea is thus akin to a "vision," seeing something that is not yet fully formed but which has the potential for being turned into reality.

This Idea Book is written for Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) who are serving as English Literacy Facilitators (ELFs) in our post's English Literacy Project.   It contains ideas generated by PCVs, PC staff, and PCVs' Tongan counterparts since the project began in 2012. Our project has grown from an idea to a living, breathing collaboration which is creating new ways of helping children and other community members develop English and other skills in Tonga.

It is organized around the kinds of tasks that ELFs need to carry out to meet our project goals and objectives.   We hope that this will guidebook will:

- help ELFs understand the objectives of the English Literacy Project;
- help ELFs understand the many creative ways that they and counterparts can achieve those objectives;
- inspire ELFs to be creative and generate additional ideas on their own and in collaboration with their Tongan co-workers, fellow PCVs, and PC staff members;
- clarify for new incoming Trainees some resources they might bring to Tonga.

Thanks to the 47 PCVs, Peace Corps staff (here in Tonga and elsewhere), and our partner organizations and communities for the tremendous efforts which have brought us to this point. Let's continue to work together to help this project succeed and grow further.

Paul Jurmo, Ed.D.
Director Programming and Training/Country Representative

Our Project Framework

All Peace Corps posts worldwide are required to have a "Project Framework" for each of the projects in which the post's PCVs work. PC/Tonga is one of the smallest posts in the world, with an average number of 30 PCVs at any one time. As a small post, PC/Tonga has just one project, titled the "English Literacy Project." This allows all of our Volunteers, staff, and partners to focus on the same set of goals and objectives. This "focused" approach allows us to work as a team, train together, and share ideas and other resources for a common good.

It is important for our Volunteers to have a good understanding of the goals and objectives of our Project Framework. We organize training to prepare our English Literacy Facilitators (ELFs) to carry out activities to achieve those objectives, and ELFs refer to project objectives when filling out the Volunteer Report Forms (VRFs) they submit three times a year. What ELFs report on their VRFs also is the basis for the Description of Service (an official statement of what they did as a PCV) that they are given at the end of their two years. The objectives – and the framework as a whole – also give us all a language and reference points to use when talking about our work.

This Idea Book is likewise organized around our project goals and objectives. It contains examples of the types of activities that our PCVs have developed so far to achieve those goals and objectives. Here, in an abbreviated form, are the Tonga English Literacy Project's purpose, goals, and objectives.

> **Overall purpose of the English Literacy Project**: The English literacy capacities of primary and middle school students, teachers, parents, and communities will be strengthened through community-based literacy development initiatives driven by teachers and community members.
>
> **GOAL 1: Improve Teachers' Skills.** Tongan educators will improve their abilities to use effective, student-centered methods for English literacy education.
>
> - Objective 1.1.: Class 3-8 teachers will increase their use of student-centered methods.

- Objective 1.2.: Class 3-8 teachers will increase their use of student-centered materials.
- Objective 1.3.: Class 3-8 teachers will increase their use of library and ICT (information and communication technology) resources.

GOAL 2: Improve Literacy Skills of Class 3-8 Students. PCVs will work with Tongan counterparts during and outside normal classroom hours to improve students' English literacy and related skills.

- Objective 2.1: Improve Class 3-8 students' English literacy through classroom learning.
- Objective 2.2.: Improve Class 3-8 students' English literacy in a club, camp, or other extra-curricular literacy activity.

GOAL 3: Increase Community Involvement in Literacy Activities. Community members will increase their support for literacy opportunities in the community and/or strengthen their own literacy skills through participation in non-formal education.

- Objective 3.1: Parents and other community members will increase their support for literacy development of children, youth, and adults in the community.
- Objective 3.2: Youth and adults will participate in learning activities that will strengthen their English literacy.

Project Goal 1: Improve Teachers' Skills

Goal 1 of our Project Framework is **Improve Teachers' Skills.** *Tongan educators will improve their abilities to use effective, student-centered methods for English literacy education.*

In effect, this goal focuses on helping our Volunteers' Tongan counterparts (especially at the level of the schools where ELFs work but also at the level of the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) and other stakeholders that ELFs work with outside their schools) to build their capacities to use modern practices for facilitating the development of English literacy and related skills. We refer to these educational practices as the "student-centered approach." (The Tongan curriculum uses the term "child-centered," to distinguish this new approach from the more familiar, traditional "teacher-centered" approach.)

What do we mean by a "student-centered approach"?

Here is a working definition for "student-centered approach" that we will use in this Idea Book:

> *In a student-centered approach to English literacy teaching and learning, the English Literacy Facilitator should try to . . .*

- *focus activities on the strengths and needs of each student;*
- *structure activities in ways that encourage and enable the student to be actively engaged in the learning process, thinking (generating his/her own thoughts) and doing (learning through application and reflection and adjusting) rather than passively memorizing and repeating information provided by someone else.*

This is not an easy task, because (a) many of our ELFs are new to this kind of work and (b) Tongan schools tend not to be structured in ways that promote such a view of teaching and learning.

Nonetheless, it is our job to work with our Tongan partners to try to figure out how to create a Tongan version of student-centered English literacy education. We are happy to say that, in the relatively short time we've been at it, we – by working as a team, learning from each other, and documenting and building on what we are learning – have made some significant progress.

Under Goal 1 are three more-specific objectives:

Objective 1.1.: Class 3-8 teachers will increase their use of student-centered methods.

Objective 1.2.: Class 3-8 teachers will increase their use of student-centered materials.

Objective 1.3.: Class 3-8 teachers will increase their use of library and ICT (information and communication technology) resources.

Who are ELF "counterparts"?

The term "counterparts" has evolved over the life of the project so far, as our ELFs have – through trial and error, reflection and dialogue – figured out the various categories of individuals and institutions they can work with.   Here is our current list of counterparts with whom ELFs can work:

- At the school level: ELFs will work with:
    - The school principal: The school principal typically serves as the ELF's supervisor. As in the U.S., the principal is the chief administrator of the school. She/he is the highest level leader of the school, setting work schedules, supervising teachers, and representing the school to parents and the community and in interactions with the Ministry of Education and Training (or the Free Wesleyan Church School system, if a church school). The principal is in charge of school facilities and supplies, and security and discipline within the school. He/she also needs to report key information (e.g., student attendance and performance) to school officials at district and national levels. In smaller schools, the principal often also serves as a teacher. Principals can vary in the numbers of years in this position, their training, and their familiarity and comfort with the student-centered approach. Two-thirds of principals are women.

o One or more other teachers in the school: An ELF is typically assigned to work with at least one teacher in her/his school. Historically, this "teacher" is what we normally think of as the ELF's counterpart. As our project has evolved, however, it has become clear that an ELF can be a resource and partner to a number of teachers in the school, even if those other teachers are not "English teachers." (For example, an ELF can observe the science teacher's class, learn how English is used in that class, then teach that science-related vocabulary in the English class.) To maximize the ELF's impact in the school, we thus don't want to be too narrow in how we define "counterpart." Which teacher(s) the ELF works with, what their relationship should be, and how that relationship originates and grows can take a number of forms. Key to figuring this out and making these relationships work is for all involved to take a "collaborative capacity building approach," in which the ELF and others at the school level agree to work together to help the ELF respond to particular English-related needs and opportunities in the school. Strategies for collaborative capacity building will be discussed in more detail below.

- Beyond the school level
    o While the ELF's primary work should be done at the school where she/he is assigned, ELFs can also work with other educational partners beyond the school level. For example, an ELF might conduct mini-workshops at meetings of principals or teachers from a number of schools in the school district. Or an ELF might carry out Saturday morning reading activities at a public library in the district capital when she/he is also in town to do Saturday shopping. Or an ELF might do a special project (e.g., developing reading or assessment materials for use in all Tongan schools) with curriculum development staff of the Ministry of Education and Training's central office.
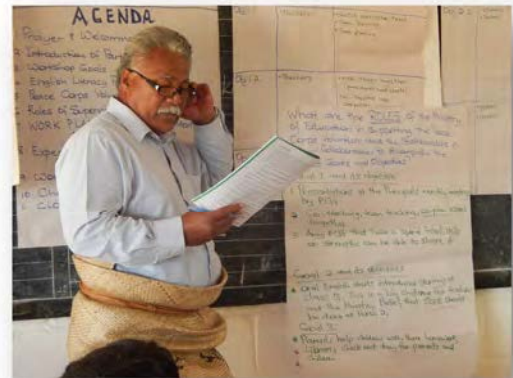
Creating productive relationships through "collaborative capacity building"

Learning how to work with people from a different culture is not easy. Both PCVs and the Tongans they are to live and work with have many different perspectives and ways of doing things. ELFs need to be patient, flexible, and willing to make mistakes and try again as they feel their way into their new schools and communities. ELFs also should go about this process of role clarification in smart ways, adapting strategies developed by previous and current PCVs. (Appendix A, titled "Collaborative Capacity Building," describes such strategies in some detail.)

In a collaborative relationship, partners share responsibility, control, resources, work, and reward in a joint effort. This is done to:

- optimize efficiency by focusing efforts on agreed-upon goals and activities, using human and material resources in smart, coordinated ways;
- maximize partner buy-in for the immediate effort and partner interest in using and sustain it over the longer term;
- build positive relations among partners;
- build the capacities of partners to carry out similar work in the future.

Shared roles include goal setting, planning, implementing, monitoring, reporting, and decision making (continuous improvement) to ensure goals are achieved.

An ELF and counterparts can use the following steps to establish an initial relationship, define the roles that the ELF can play (both initially and over time), and carry out a variety of activities to meet our project objectives:

- Establish positive relations with principals and teachers.
- Review our project objectives and various ways that ELFs can work with counterparts to meet those objectives.

- Agree on an initial set of activities that the ELF can carry out in the first several months at the school. Also agree on the supports that the supervisor and teachers will provide to the ELF (e.g., spending time with the ELF to plan and implement activities rather than expecting the ELF to work on her/his own.)
- Assess needs and plan curricula.
  - Define "student-centered teaching."
  - Get to know counterparts' teaching styles and school culture.
  - Review existing curricula.
  - Use the school library to identify in-school literacy resources.
  - Co-plan classes.
- Co-teach in various ways (during and outside regular school hours).
- Monitor progress and share feedback with counterparts.
- Conduct professional development activities with partners.
- Develop financial and in-kind resources with counterparts.

ELFs need to be sensitive to the nuances of Tongan culture that can impact their ability to work with counterparts. In particular, the genders and ages of the PCV and counterpart can make it easier or harder for the PCV and counterpart to work together.

How ELFs can help counterparts to understand and use student-centered methods and materials

Newly-arrived Peace Corps Trainees will be given training and resource materials to equip them to be resource persons in their respective schools. ELFs will find that some teachers they work with (especially more recent graduates of the Tongan Institute of Education or teachers who spent their childhoods in places like New Zealand) have been exposed to similar methods and materials, while other might have limited understanding of what "student-centered teaching

and assessment" look like. Some teachers might intentionally or unconsciously resist the idea of adopting such practices either because they have not been trained in such methods, seen them in practice, or experienced them as a student. Such practices might also be seen as a threat to the familiar order of top-down, teacher-centric teaching and classroom management.

Nonetheless, an ELF can help expose counterparts to student-centered methods and materials by:

- <u>modeling such practices in the classroom</u>. Counterparts can observe the ELF and/or try out some of the activities with the ELF, then de-brief with the PCV afterward (discussing what happened, what worked, what didn't work so well, how it might be improved in the future . . .)
- <u>making sample materials</u> (e.g., simple reading materials, worksheets, assessment materials, lesson plans) <u>available to other teachers</u> in a folder, on a flash drive, or on the school computer.
- <u>co-planning lessons</u>.
- <u>conducting mini-workshops</u> for counterparts on Friday teacher professional development days.
- <u>sharing results of assessments</u> with counterparts, to clarify student strengths and needs and thereby inform what to focus teaching on.

How ELFs can help counterparts to more effectively use books, libraries, and technologies

Tongan schools have comparatively far fewer resources than American schools. Few primary schools have working libraries, the book collections that they do have in classrooms are typically full of books that are not very relevant to Tongan schoolchildren (i.e., they are at too high a level in terms of content and language, from a different culture, and/or not tied to what is taught in the Tongan curriculum), and there are few "ICT" (Information and Communication Technologies) for use by students or teachers.

Under our Project Objective 1.3, ELFs are to explore how they might help Tongan counterparts develop such library and ICT resources for their students. (We encourage incoming Volunteers to bring relevant resources with them when they come to Tonga.)

ELFs have learned that school libraries can be great places to do innovative literacy-related activities with kids and, in some cases, with parents. Because Tongan secondary students are expected to know how to use libraries, ELFs can help their primary school students develop library behaviors (e.g., taking care of books, handling them properly) and strategies for using books and libraries that will give them a jump start when they hit secondary school.

Here are some ways that ELFs have developed libraries (which could take the form of a room dedicated as a library and/or smaller book collections in individual classrooms):

- <u>With the Principal, counterparts, and PTA, create a "Library (or Literacy) Committee"</u> which can work with the ELF to enhance literacy-related opportunities in the school and community.
- <u>Conduct an inventory with counterparts of the book and ICT resources in the school</u>. What resources already exist? What condition are they in? How are they used? By whom? How are they stored and maintained?
- <u>Create book collections by</u>:
  - <u>organizing existing print materials into meaningful categories</u>. Our post's Library Committee has developed a cataloguing system that is tied to the Tongan English curriculum and adapts the systems used in libraries in secondary and post-secondary schools.

- o getting additional books through donations of used or new print materials. Our Library Committee has received donations of books from the Rotary Club, then sorted them into meaningful levels and distributed them to PCVs who then use them to strengthen the use of books in their schools.
- o creating new materials. In recognition that Tongan schools typically have few if any relevant reading materials for students, our Sight Word Book Project Sub-Committee has created new basic reading materials that contain words, illustrations, and themes more directly suited to Tongan primary school students. These texts include illustrations hand-drawn by ELFs and Tongan artists as well as photographs by ELFs. ELFs have been given copies of these materials and trained in their use, and the Ministry's Curriculum Development Unit will be printing these materials for distribution to Tongan schools.

- Make the library user friendly. ELFs typically decorate their libraries with pictures, posters, maps, the alphabet and sight words, and student work. Seating is arranged to make it comfortable for students to use the books and engage in learning.
- Use the library as a place for active learning. Rather than allow the library to be a sterile place where students are not allowed to touch the books, ELFs use their libraries to engage students in reading and other literacy activities. In some

cases,   the libraries also are home to computers (equipped with phonics or typing software) and other learning resources managed by ELFs.

- <u>Involve teachers, parents, and students in managing the library</u>. To increase the likelihood that the library will be sustained, ELFs can do these activities with counterparts and possibly parents, to build interest and expertise of both of these important stakeholder groups in using reading materials with primary school students.

How ELFs have been developing appropriate technologies for Tongan schools

As stated previously, Tongan schools have far fewer technology-related resources than

American schools. In addition, the physical conditions of Tongan schools make use of American-style technology very challenging: heat, humidity, dust, insects, and even lizards can make computers and other electronic technologies (e.g., copy machines, scanners) hard to maintain and use. Fluctuating power currents and computer viruses also can damage computerized equipment. Limited access to Internet limits use of search engines and email.

Despite these challenges, our ELFs and staff have developed a number of ways to use technology to meet our English Literacy Project objectives and to support our PCVs.   We are doing this because we recognize that Tongan students will need to both have a good grasp of English and also be tech-savvy as they move forward with their education and to enable them to fulfill work, family, and civic roles of the future. Our school and community partners have also expressed an interest in having ELFs help schools in this area, in recognition that Americans tend to come equipped with technology-related expertise.

Summarized below are the technology-related activities we've developed over the past two years. We anticipate that we will continue to work in this area and look forward to more ideas from the new PCVs coming to Tonga.

<u>Over the past two years, ELFs created a Drop Box file sharing system</u> through which they've been sharing curricula and other resources with each other. Our partner Ministry of Education and Training has expressed interest in making this collection available to MET

staff, and the PCV managers of the Dropbox collection have given access to representatives of the MET Curriculum Development Unit and Professional Development Unit.   In April 2015, when the Dropbox collection began to exceed its capacity, the resources (e.g., lesson plans, teaching materials, assessment materials, Sight Word Books and other scanned books; our Library News newsletter; resources created by the Library Support Sub-Committee; and other items) on Dropbox were downloaded onto flash drives, which in turn were distributed to all 26 of our PCVs.

At the school level, ELFs have been experimenting with using various kinds of technologies to meet several of our project objectives:

- Computer labs: Some ELFs have scrounged together used and/or donated computers to create working computer labs in their schools. In some cases, these are integrated with more traditional school libraries.
- Using computers to integrate the teaching of English skills and computer skills to students and teachers: Several ELFs are using phonics software in their school's computers to teach phonics and computer skills simultaneously. Some use "Mavis Beacon"-type typing instruction software, which also reinforces English language skills through games and other activities. A PCV teaching at a secondary school in 'Eua uses project-based learning to help students learn Word and other basic software by using this software to carry out a common task (e.g., write a letter to someone).
- Using movies to teach English and as a classroom management tool: Several ELFs use movies (on DVDs or in files on their computers) to reinforce English skills (e.g., "Schoolhouse Rock," "Matilda," "The Sound of Music," "Sister Act.") In one example, an ELF showed the Disney film, "The Jungle Book," to her older students and then had them discuss and write about what they saw in the movie. One ELF uses movies as a reward for good behavior; if the class behaves well, they get to see a movie on "Fun Fridays."

- Using CDs and MP3 players to teach English, channel student energy, and/or engage kids in physical movement: Two PCVs (a married couple) made a music CD containing simple English songs that our other PCVs are now using in their English classes. Some ELFs play music (e.g., the

soundtrack from "Frozen") in their classes using small, inexpensive speakers connected to their MP3 players or phones. (The music is often used to get students up and dancing or otherwise moving, as a class management tool or a physical exercise activity, or to reinforce English skills.) One ELF uses music to accompany her "Brush Teeth and Dance" sessions, in which kids practice brushing their teeth and learning relevant English words, while dancing along to music. One PCV uses Bluetooth to share audio files among school staff (and a few parents). These files contain various English songs which teachers and parents   can use with their children.   (The Volunteer's Principal uses "The Alphabet Song" as his ring tone. This ties in with Tongans' love of music.)

- Using computers to help teachers participate in on-line courses: Some ELFs have tutored counterparts who are taking on-line professional development courses through the University of the South Pacific. The Volunteers discuss course content, help the counterparts write papers, and otherwise help the teachers use this technology to earn credits toward a bachelor's degree in education. This is potentially a great way for PCVs to build the capacity of Tongan teachers.

- Using Skype to communicate with U.S. schools: PCVs have used Skype to communicate with U.S. schools. The Tongan and U.S. students send messages and photos back and forth to each other, do joint assignments (e.g., about using maps), and sing a song to their fellow students in the other country. One PCV has used Skype to communicate with the teacher and a few students in the middle school of the ELF's younger sister. The Tongan kids got to see U.S. children in a natural setting and gave them exposure to fluent English-speaking students. (Learn about Peace Corps' World Wise Schools program at http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/ .)

- Making videos: Our Volunteers have used video technology to enable students to make presentations to their parents on a "parents' day" at school and to send videos to students in a U.S. school.

- Using spreadsheets to record and share class records: Some PCVs are using Excel spreadsheets to record the results of literacy assessments they are doing with their students. They then share the results with supervisors and teachers, who find the resulting data informative. This "electronic grade book" also helps schools meet reporting requirements set by the Ministry of Education and Training.

Project Goal 2: Improve Student Literacy Skills

Goal 2 of our Project Framework is *Improve Literacy Skills of Class 3-8 Students. PCVs will work with Tongan counterparts during and outside normal classroom hours to improve students' English literacy and related skills.*

Under Goal 2 there are two objectives:

- Objective 2.1: Improve Class 3-8 students' English literacy through classroom learning.
- Objective 2.2.: Improve Class 3-8 students' English literacy in a club, camp, or other extra-curricular literacy activity.

In effect, these are the objectives in which ELFs work with counterparts to directly provide student-centered English literacy instructional and assessment services to the children in their schools. These services can be provided both through in-school activities (done during normal school hours) and in extra-curricular activities (done outside normal school hours, such as after school, on weekends, or during school breaks). In so doing, ELFs can not only help their students develop English literacy skills but related skills and knowledge from other subject areas (e.g., skills related to healthy lifestyles and environmental sustainability). These objectives overlap with the counterpart capacity building Objectives 1.1 and 1.2, as well, in that, by using student-centered practices, ELFs also are modeling practices that their counterparts can adapt.

Understanding the children we are trying to serve

In keeping with a "student-centered" approach, it is important for ELFs to understand who their students are and the strengths and challenges they bring with them. Outline below is information that ELFs should consider:

<u>Numbers of students and teachers in Tongan primary schools</u>

- 16,719 students
- 680 primary school teachers

Grade/class levels, ages, and genders PCVs work with

- Grades/classes: 3 through 8 (in small to large schools, most in rural villages)
- Ages: 7 up to 12-13 years old
- Genders: Both girls and boys are proportionately represented in schools.

Students' abilities vis-à-vis learning English

- Mixed abilities within any classroom.
- Students come with positive energy, rich cultural and community environments which provide opportunities for learning, some foundational skills to build on.
- But in general: significantly lower oral fluency and literacy in English than children in American schools.

Supports students can build on

- Educational opportunities: local schools attempting to adopt modern educational content and methods; other agencies (e.g., Ministry of Health) providing supports to schools and children.
- Supports for education in the home and community: Families often support idea of education and emphasize study and attendance . . . PTAs provide supports to schools . . . Community organizations (especially churches) can provide venues for ongoing learning.
- A rich physical and social environment for learning.

Challenges students face

- Limited daily exposure to English,
- Limited quality and quantity of educational opportunities,
- Home environments with mixed ability to support students' success in English literacy and education more broadly,
- Limited expectations and economic incentives for children to learn English and continue their education,
- Health challenges (e.g., nutrition, sleep, communicable and non-communicable diseases),
- Learning disabilities,

- Gender roles which can influence the types of activities that are considered appropriate for boys and girls.

"Harder-to-serve" students

As is true in U.S. schools, Tongan schools have children who, for various reasons, struggle in school. It is important for ELFs to understand how to serve these "harder-to-serve" students.

Worldwide, an estimated 10% of children have one or more special needs which can make learning and teaching difficult. In Tonga, "harder-to-serve" students can include children who demonstrate one or more of these behaviors:

- Consistently don't pay attention.
- Don't seem to absorb or remember what is taught.
- Are disorganized.
- Are withdrawn.
- Are over-active.
- Write letters incorrectly.
- Don't follow instructions.
- Have problems with:
  - pronunciation
  - rhyming
  - learning alphabet, colors, shapes, numbers, days of week
  - manipulating school tools(pencils, crayons) and clothing (buttons, zippers)

These challenges can be caused by a number of factors, including:

- "organic" limitations/differences . . .
  - in how the child processes information and communicates it;
  - due to auditory, visual, oral "wiring;"
  - can fluctuate (improve, worsen) over time …
- "environmental" factors including. . .
  - home/community environments where literacy/language/learning related skills aren't modelled or reinforced;
  - neglect of physical, emotional, cognitive, linguistic needs of the child.

"Learning disabilities" (or "learning differences") might be one of a number of challenges for some children and can include:

- dyslexia (reading)

- dyscalculia (math)
- dysgraphia (writing)
- dyspraxia (motor skills)
- aphasia/dyspasia (language)
- auditory processing disorder
- visual processing disorder
- ADHD (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)
- autism

These terms will probably be unfamiliar to most new PCVs. However, it will be helpful to have a basic understanding of these learning challenges as well as simple strategies for dealing with them. This will help you in your interactions with your students and in helping your counterparts build their capacities as well.

How "harder-to-serve" children are currently served (or not served)

The teacher's training college currently has just one course to introduce Tongan teachers to the concept of learning disabilities, so ELF counterparts' understanding of learning disabilities may be limited. There is a MET unit that focuses on children with disabilities but it centers primarily on a single special classroom in the capital that serves children with severe disabilities. There are also a handful of government and non-government institutions on Tongatapu that are dedicated to serving students with more severe disabilities, including:

- a special day classroom at GPS (Government Primary School) Ngele'ia that was developed in 2009 by the Ministry and a PCV;
- a classroom run by the Red Cross for children and adults in Nuku'alofa;
- a non-governmental organization called Mango Tree that provides speech, physical, and occupational therapy assistance to adults and children.

Apart from the above services, "harder-to-serve" children are generally served (or not served) as follows:

In schools, these children are . . .
- sometimes supported via . . .
  - personal attention to "slower" students;
  - mainstreaming and allowing them to participate in the school community;
  - support from their peers.
- sometimes not supported by being . . .
  - not assessed for special needs;
  - ignored or pigeonholed as "slow;"
  - improperly taught.

In homes and communities, these children are . . .
- sometimes supported via . . .
  - "doing things" for them (i.e., given lower expectations);
  - empathy;
  - assigning to special roles.
- sometimes not supported by being . . .
  - shunned or made fun of;
  - neglected.

Strategies ELFs and counterparts might use to better serve these students

- Normal assessments to clarify the child's challenges and strengths by . . .
  - recording assessment results to identify students with consistently low performance;
  - trying to identify for those children what literacy elements and classroom behaviors are most problematic.

  (Specialized assessments can help but require expertise and other resources.)
- Customized help ("adaptations and modifications") which could include:
  - targeting activities to a child's particular needs and strengths through individualized attention;
  - using alternative learning modes (multiple modalities) (e.g., songs, pictures, or games);
  - using Tongan to explain class activities;
  - using routines and tools like a visual schedule to help students know what is expected of them in each class and/or from session to session;
  - slowing down the pace of activities or reducing the amount of work given to the child;
  - more practice time via:
    - extra-curricular activities at school and home;
    - using computer or other technologies (e.g., listening to CDs, watching videos . . .)
  - assistive devices (like a PCV-made language chart);
  - simplified versions of worksheets.
- Involving others in support of the child including:
  - parents and other family members
  - principal and teachers.
- "TLC" ("Tender Loving Care," including encouraging words and celebrations of success).

<u>How we are building our expertise in this area</u>

Our Volunteers and staff have been:

- tapping into the expertise of ELFs who've studied or worked in this area of special needs education.
- circulating useful resources (including from PC HQ) that PCVs can read as background.
- supporting ELFs to informally assess/identify the needs of "harder to serve" students and try some strategies described in articles.
- talking with MET and possibly other organizations (such as those described above) about how ELFs might work with counterparts on this issue.

Knowing what to teach

Two central challenges of our English Literacy Project so far have been to figure out (1) what to teach and (b) how best to teach it. While the MET curriculum identifies particular English literacy and language skills and other content for teachers to focus on, we have found that ELFs cannot reasonably cover all of that content. Similarly, the curriculum suggests various kinds of activities, but our ELFs need to use activities that are particularly well organized and usable within constraints of time, student abilities, resources, and other contextual limitations ELFs face.

Briefly stated, the Ministry's primary school English literacy curriculum has a number of positive features, including:

- <u>attempting to shift away from teaching pieces of English and literacy out of context</u> and, instead, focus on common applications of English to prepare learners for future academic and real-world uses of English;
- <u>being organized around ten themes</u> (e.g., personal introductions, finding and presenting information) which are practiced at increasing levels of complexity from year to year;
- <u>giving teachers freedom</u> to select from various suggested activities, to customize them to the particular strengths and needs of students;
- <u>using group work, research projects, and other strategies to encourage active learning</u> rather than passive memorization and other meaningless rituals.

But the curriculum also presents a number of major challenges. It tends to . . .

- cover too many skills in too short a time;
- be set at a level that is too high for most students (who are normally exposed to little English outside their English classes, have not been taught effectively, and have limited practical support from families and communities for learning English);
- stress "passing the Class 6 exam" over "learning authentic English;"
- not sufficiently integrate English learning with other subjects;
- be difficult for teachers to understand and use.

Through trial and error in their schools, discussions among PCVs and PC staff, and thoughtful curriculum and assessment planning in PCV committees, our ELFs have begun to identify priority content areas that ELFs should cover in each curriculum unit. This "priority content" includes particular English language and literacy skills and other content that:

- are found in the MET English curriculum units;
- are relevant for various sub-groups of students (e.g., more advanced learners as well as learners with particular needs);
- teach component skills (e.g., decoding and comprehension as defined on the Peace Corps "Literacy Wheel in Appendix A) and applications of those skills to authentic language and literacy tasks.

Developing effective student-centered methods

In addition to figuring out the priority content of the Tongan curriculum they should focus on in their teaching, ELFs have been identifying effective student-centered instructional and assessment activities for that content. In this work, they have relied on ideas borrowed from past PCVs, teacher-education programs that some of our ELFs have participated in, other sources found on literacy educator web sites, relatives and friends who have teaching expertise, and Peace Corps literacy and TEFL specialists at PC headquarters.

Summarized below are some of the student-centered activities that ELFs have been using to help students practice and master that content. ELFs do this with their students in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities such as after-school homework clubs. ELFs are using on-line sharing tools and flashdrives to share these activities among each other and, in some cases, with Tongan counterparts.

- **Assessment and planning activities**
  - Customized assessments geared to each curriculum unit: ELFs on our post's M&E (Monitoring and Evaluation) Committee are developing easy-to-use assessments – either from scratch or by adapting existing sample materials -- to use to assess student abilities for each of the MET curriculum's ten units. The Committee is creating such assessments for four class levels (Classes 3, 4, 5, and 6). All ELFs are sent copies of these assessments to try out, with the hope that such piloting will – over the 2015 school year – help us generate a collection of assessments that can be used by PCVs and counterparts in the next school year. The assessments can also generate data about student achievement and needs that ELFs can share with their Principals and counterpart teachers and refer to when completing their Volunteer Report Forms three times each year.
  - Use of existing assessments: Some ELFs are also using assessments they've gotten from a variety of other sources. We are emphasizing that ELFs can play an important role in their schools as "literacy assessment specialists," working with counterparts to pilot various kinds of assessments and then review data with their principals and counterparts to clarify what to teach and how to teach it.
  - Student portfolios: This is a relatively new feature that Tongan teachers are being asked to implement. PCVs are creating their own versions of student portfolios, which are collections of carefully selected student work (sample written work, tests, and other documents) that teachers can use to monitor and report student progress
  - Running records: Running records are a strategy for assessing a student's reading abilities as he/she reads from a book that is estimated to be at his/her reading level. The ELF observes and rates the student's performance using a scoring sheet.
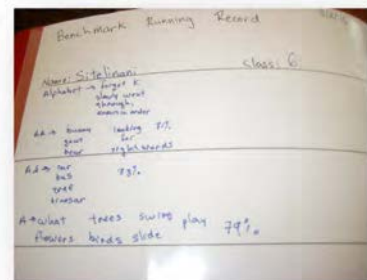
  - Scope and sequence: Scope and sequence is a planning technique with which the teacher maps out teaching activities for the school term or school year. It succinctly and clearly shows what to teach and when to teach it.

- **Instructional activities**
  - o <u>Routines and structures</u>: ELFs use various strategies to organize classroom activities in consistent ways that make it easy for students to understand what they need to do. For example, at the start of each class, the facilitator might do a familiar warm-up activity. Classroom activities (e.g., reading activities or tests) might be structured in the same way, with just some details (of vocabulary, etc.) changed. This reduces the need for the teacher/facilitator to have to continually explain every activity, something that is time consuming and potentially leads to confusion and frustration for both students and teachers.

  - o <u>Guided reading</u>: As stated in Wikipedia: Guided reading is "small-group reading instruction designed to provide differentiated teaching that supports students in developing reading proficiency. The small group model allows children to be taught in a way that is intended to be more focused on their specific needs, accelerating their progress." Our ELFs have been trained in guided reading methods by fellow ELFs who have professional training in this area.
  - o <u>Read aloud activities</u>: In "read aloud" activities, ELFs read carefully-selected reading materials to students in ways that:
    - keep students focused on a common reading activity;
    - are fun and engaging;
    - expose students to different types of reading materials (especially stories about a topic of interest);
    - allow the teacher to teach particular literacy and language related skills (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, and strategies for finding meaning imbedded in the story);

- model fluent reading for students;
- provide an opportunity to discuss themes and content covered in the text.

o Sight word books: These are simple little reading books for beginning readers containing short (e.g., dog, cat, hat) words that children should be able to recognize "on sight" (without much effort to de-code specific sounds). Our PCVs have made a major contribution by developing (i.e., writing and illustrating with photos or drawings, in some cases with Tongan counterpart artists) a series of sight word books which deal with Tongan themes (e.g., going to the beach, types of people found in a typical village). These are now being printed and disseminated nationwide by the Ministry's Curriculum Development Unit.

o Games: An educational game . . .
  ▪ uses creative, challenging tasks to help learners:

- develop/practice relevant skills (both literacy/language skills and others such as teamwork, creativity, problem-solving . . .) through application to a task;
- be motivated (energized physically and socially) to see learning as rewarding and something they enjoy.
  ▪ can include such elements as:
    - mental challenge;
    - competition;
    - physical activity (e.g., sport...);
    - a performing art or visual art.
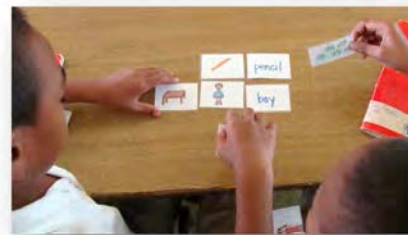
Educational games can include:

- Hangman
- Flash card games (such as Go Fish, Concentration, Uno-type games)
- Bingo
- Simon Says
- Board games (e.g., Snakes and Ladders)
- Blackboard games (e.g., "run and touch" the correct word on the board)
- Charades and other role playing games
- Tic Tac Know

o <u>Performing and visual arts</u>: PCVs are incorporating performing arts and visual arts as teaching/learning tools. Such activities can . . .

- <u>provide additional opportunities for learners to practice</u> and reinforce particular communication skills (e.g., vocabulary, listening, pronunciation, speaking), creativity, collaboration skills, and content knowledge (about various academic and "real-world" topics . . .)
- <u>respond to various kinds of learning styles</u> (visual, auditory, verbal, kinesthetic, logical/mathematical, social, solitary . . .)
- <u>motivate students</u> to see learning as fun (e.g., positive, social, stimulating) and something they can use outside the classroom.
- <u>build on students' prior knowledge</u> (e.g., singing) and help them relate to the new learning activity.

In these art-related activities, students can be (a) the audience and/or (b) the authors and performers. Examples of these activities include:

- <u>Performing arts</u>: ELFs are using a number of "performing arts" as teaching tools, including:
  - music (songs, instrumental music, jazz chants . . .) (Two Group 77 PCVs created a CD of English songs for kids titled *"Hiva 'a e Fanau."*)
  - movement (e.g., dance, mime, Total Physical Response)
  - acting (role playing such as "Shopping at the *Maketi*" . . .)

- public speaking and other oral presentations (e.g., presentations of information collected for a research project, "Show and Tell," reading of written work about a movie)
- Readers' Theater
- juggling, acrobatics, cheerleading . . . .

- Visual arts: ELFs are incorporating a number of "visual arts" into their instructional activities, including:
  - drawing/painting (cartoons, stick men, greeting cards, posters . . . of words and stories taken from the MET curriculum or elsewhere)
  - graphic presentations (maps, charts, calendars)
  - clothing/costumes . . .)

- calligraphy, handwriting, hand-lettering
- sculpting, origami . . .
- photography (individual photos, slide shows . . .)
- video presentations
- collages (of photos, clippings, or objects representing a theme)
- computer presentations (clip art, PowerPoints)
- decorating
- handicrafts (weaving, carving, flower arranging . . .)

- o Technology tools: Our PCVs have been using "appropriate technologies" (i.e., forms of Information and Communication Technologies that are customized to local needs and conditions) to serve their students, counterparts, and community members, as well as for their own professional growth. See the examples under "Project Goal #1" above.
- o Test prep activities: As stated earlier in this document, ELFs typically work in schools where a great emphasis is placed on preparing students for the Class 6 exam. This nationwide exam is given to all Class 6 students at the end of the school year. As students get closer to that exam (beginning in Class 5), much time is given to preparing the students for that exam, which

determines the scholastic future of the test-takers. (That is, high scores are required for admission to "better" secondary schools, and students with low scores might be prevented or discouraged from pursuing further education.) While this emphasis on preparing for this test is a challenge for most ELFs (because it tends to compete with the need to teach the regular English curriculum that PCVs are also expected to teach), many ELFs do spend time doing some type of "test prep" activities during regular school time or in after-school ("po ako") activities. Given that the Class 6 exam will likely be a reality for the foreseeable future, this is a question that ELFs might focus on as a group: Should ELFs focus on test preparation for the Class 6 exam? If so, what are productive ways of doing so, given that they also need to help students move forward with the development of English skills found in the MET curriculum and English that they need for academic success and other areas of their life?

Integrating English with other subjects

The MET English syllabus states that, among other things, English instruction should be integrated with and support other primary school subject areas. ELFs do this in a number of ways. Many start by first becoming familiar with what other teachers are teaching and doing in health, science, math, and other subjects.

"English for Health"

At the request of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Training, our project puts a special emphasis on integrating English education with "healthy lifestyle" topics such as nutrition, exercise, hygiene, and safety. This is to help in the national struggle against "NCDs" (non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease which are caused by poor diet, smoking, and lack of exercise). Here are some examples of how ELFs and their counterparts have been implementing what we call "English for Health" activities:

- Incorporating physical movement into English classes, to keep kids fresh and active and get them into the habit of physical exercise;

- Leading physical education activities while using English vocabulary as the mode of communication;

- Creating eco-friendly school gardens where children and parents develop knowledge about nutrition and environmentally-friendly farming practices;

- Carrying out daily tooth-brushing activities;

- Helping improve school water tanks, toilets, and hand-washing stations;

- Teaching safety and first aid practices;

- Teaching about good nutrition (e.g., through discussion of vocabulary related to "junk food vs. healthy food," cooking classes conducted in English . . .)

<u>"English for Earth"</u>

In recognition of the importance of environmental sustainability, we revised our Project Framework in early 2015 to explicitly call for PCVs to integrate English instruction with environmental activities, which we call "English for Earth." Though this is formally a new focus of our current project, it is not a new area for Peace Corps/Tonga. PCVs have been in Tonga nearly 50 years and in that time they – through fisheries, agriculture, education, business, and youth projects – have worked directly or indirectly to support environmental sustainability efforts.

In April 2015, our Group 79 "first year" Volunteers and village counterparts were trained in Project Design and Management and are considering doing the following environment-related activities. Some of these are new ideas and some are continuation of projects begun by Group 77 and Group 78 Volunteers:

- <u>Integrating environmental education with English literacy education</u>

When doing student teaching in a "summer school" in January 2015, PCVs divided their students into teams which then competed to collect rubbish and then organize it into various categories of recyclable materials. Volunteers have also shared ideas about how to do environmental art projects made from recycled materials.

PCVs are also now creating a series of simple English-language reading books for Tongan children, organized around various themes. We are discussing how to focus some of those materials on environmental themes.

- Eco-friendly school/community gardens

During Pre-Service training in September-October, 2014, our 15 new Group 79 Volunteers visited a model vegetable garden being piloted by a visiting horticulturist and a company that exports vegetables. Two PCVs have now begun similar gardens at their schools, using environmentally-friendly practices (e.g., composting, irrigation, bio-diversity, natural pest control) to help children and parents learn new gardening methods and learn about nutritional and environmental benefits of such gardens. Students will also learn gardening-related English vocabulary and other related skills (e.g., math, science) through their work in the gardens.

- Youth camps and clubs

On Vava'u and Tongatapu, PCVs and partner agencies and individuals are planning week-long Camp GLOWs (leadership camps for teen girls) to run in September, 2015. These camps will likely include environmental awareness and possibly other "green" activities (e.g., community clean-ups). The Vava'u Volunteers will also host a similar camp (Camp GROW) for boys during that same week.

Volunteers on 'Eua have created an "'Eua Girls' Outdoor Club" which conducts monthly hikes and other activities (including environmental awareness and clean-ups) for teen girls who otherwise are not normally encouraged to explore the beautiful ecology of that mountainous island.

- Water-related projects

Many Volunteers have shown an interest in how to improve their schools' and communities' water supplies. This has become particularly important because Tonga has been experiencing on and off

drought conditions since late 2014. Here are water projects being considered:

- Water projects for schools
    - Three PCV schools have been talking with the Rotary Club of Nuku'alofa about getting help to repair their water tanks and the pipes and gutters that feed water into those tanks from the school roofs. PCVs and counterparts would also do education for children and parents around water usage (e.g., saving water, using it for hygiene, proper use of water tanks) and would work with Town Officers and youth organizations to ensure that tanks are properly maintained.
- Water projects for communities
    - One Group 79 Volunteer and her counterpart have been exploring repairing a large, old water tank used as a community water supply. This would be connected to the roof of a community building where women do crafts projects. The women would be in charge of ensuring the proper use and maintenance of the tank.
    - Some Volunteers and counterparts are looking into purchasing and installing solar water pumps to replace the diesel- or gasoline-powered pumps now being used in their communities. These existing pumps are expensive (due to cost of fuel), tend to break down, and are noisy and smelly. Villages in general are challenged to find economical ways to supply water to community members. Existing systems are likely to have leaks in

piping systems (which result in water loss and decreased sanitation of water supplies) and lack water meters (to track water use by families).

- <u>Seawall to reduce beach erosion</u>

One Group 79 Volunteer in Vava'u said he and his village hope to get funds to build a seawall along the beach of their small island community. (This is a continuation of an idea first discussed by a previous PCV from Group 77.) The beach is a stone's throw from the village school, and it has been eroding in recent years. Whether this is due to changing climate conditions or over-use of the beach by school kids and community members is not clear. Nonetheless, the PCV has done research with a local non-governmental organization to identify a suitable design for a seawall and has gotten estimates of the costs of transporting rock and doing the labor required to create a suitable structure.

- <u>Community clean-up activities</u>

- One PCV village has proposed a project to enable unemployed or under-employed youth to use donated lawnmowers to keep public spaces, recreational spaces, and private properties trimmed and clean. Private property owners would pay for this service, with some of the proceeds going to maintenance of the lawn mowers. The "public spaces" would include athletic fields where local children, youth, and adults could engage in healthy lifestyle activities (e.g., rugby, netball, soccer, exercise classes, running contests, and a school garden.) This grass cutting would be an ongoing thing, rather than a special occasion or "campaign." It would also involve youth in taking ownership of their community.

- Other PCVs have worked with community groups to do roadside and beach clean-ups and investigate how to create recycling and waste disposal systems for their communities.

Our Volunteers are now exploring how they might work with donors and agencies to support community activities to protect the beautiful physical environment, clean air, and health of Tonga.

Using effective classroom management strategies

Using effective instructional and assessment practices such as those described above is central to keeping instructional activities and students organized and productive. But there are other aspects of classroom management that must also be considered. We define "classroom management" as:

> *"How teachers organize the space, time, and material and human resources available to them to ensure achievement of objectives."*

ELFs learn how to work with counterparts to . . .

. . . ensure appropriate student behaviors by . . .
- preventing or dealing with negative behaviors, including:
    o unruly behavior,
    o disrespectful behavior,
    o lack of focus by students,
    o lack of enthusiasm/interest.
    o

- rewarding and reinforcing positive behaviors (competition, celebrations, stickers, displaying student work, Fun Fridays . . .)

. . . organize activities for effective learning by . . .
- optimizing the classroom environment (e.g., seating, noise control, reducing interruptions . . .)
- efficiently presenting and organizing activities (e.g., routines, structures, "Do Now" statements, group work . . .)

Project Goal 3: Increase Community Involvement in Literacy Activities

Our Project Goal 3 is: ***Increase Community Involvement in Literacy Activities.*** *Community members will increase their support for literacy opportunities in the community and/or strengthen their own literacy skills through participation in non-formal education.*

Under that goal, we have two objectives:

- Objective 3.1: Parents and other community members will increase their support for literacy development of children, youth, and adults in the community.

- Objective 3.2: Youth and adults will participate in learning activities that will strengthen their English literacy.

Summarized below are ways that ELFs have been tackling these objectives.

Building parent and community support for literacy development opportunities

We included this objective in our Project Framework because we understand that schools and teachers "can't do it alone." Families and community members and organizations have vital roles to play in creating and sustaining effective learning systems at the community level. Our PCVs have taken on the task of working with principals, teachers, PTAs, and community leaders and organizations to help build parental and community support for both English literacy and learning and education more generally. Outlined below is key information about the "what's," "why's" and "how's" of this objective.

"Literacy development opportunities" can include . . .

- Formal education opportunities for children, youth, and adults, including:
  - primary and secondary schools
  - post-secondary schools (e.g., University of the South Pacific [USP], occupational training programs)

- Non-formal education programs which provide various kinds of instruction which might not lead to a formal certificate/diploma. Examples include tutoring, after-school camps . . .
- Informal learning in which learners learn outside an "education" setting through application and self-study (reading at home or in the library, use of computers and video, English conversation groups).

How parents and families can support literacy development opportunities

Parents (and other caregivers) are a child's "first teachers." They can . . .

- encourage and motivate the child vis-à-vis education, making it clear that learning and doing well inside and outside school are important, setting standards/expectations for the child, and rewarding him/her for good effort and performance;
- model literacy and learning behaviors;
- provide a supportive learning environment in the home (i.e., space, materials, and equipment for learning; help with homework; good diet; good sleep habits);
- ensure that the child gets a range of good opportunities for informal, non-formal, and formal learning (e.g., camps, tutoring, technology, travel . . .)
- provide in-kind and financial supports to schools and other educational entities.

How community members and organizations can support literacy development opportunities

- Communities need well-prepared citizens to ensure the positive development of individuals, families, and the community as a whole.
- Community members and organizations can . . .
  o reinforce the idea that education and learning (inside and outside school) are important.
  o set high expectations for parents, children, and school staff.

- o provide practical in-kind and financial supports to schools.
- o advocate for education to relevant agencies and funders.
- o ensure that the community environment is safe and healthy for children.

Who are the parents and families and the community members and organizations an ELF can work with?

"Parents" include students' biological parents and other family caregivers who have varying levels of:

- • education, literacy, and English fluency.
- • awareness of the need to support children's literacy development.
- • engagement in supporting their own children's literacy development (by providing incentives and opportunities for children to develop literacy and English skills).

- • involvement in activities that support literacy education opportunities for children in the community (via PTA activities, Study Buddies/Homework Helpers, Parents' Nights, etc.)

"Community members/organizations" include Town Officers, PTAs, religious organizations, government agencies and officials, NGOs, businesses, Scholarship

Committees, Kava Clubs, and individual community leaders and members who have varying levels of:

- education, literacy, and English fluency.
- awareness of the need to support children's literacy development.
- involvement in activities that support literacy education opportunities for children in the community.

Factors that can support or block parent and community involvement

- Awareness of why it's important to support learning opportunities for children and other community members.
- Skills/expertise/self-efficacy required to support education in the home and community.
- Material resources (funding and in-kind resources) required to support education.
- Authority and/or permission to get involved.
- Time and availability required to develop expertise and then carry out the steps required to be involved in meaningful ways.
- Gender roles that can influence whether a parent gets involved and what kind of role she/he plays.

To help parents and community members/organizations support literacy development opportunities, PCVs can . . .

- establish relationships with parents and community members and organizations (and get to know what they are already doing to support education, their strengths, their limitations/challenges, their ideas . . .)
- educate parents and the community about the why's and how's of supporting education in the home and community.
- create a PTA Library (or Literacy) Committee to pilot some activities/projects.

PCVs can work with a PTA Literacy Committee to . . .

- upgrade and manage the school library.
- conduct workshops to help parents understand how they can help their children's literacy development and overall success in school.
- set up ELF home visits to meet with their students' families.
- prepare teaching materials for teachers and students to use.
- conduct in-school or after-school activities such as:
  - Reading Club/Read Aloud Program/Readers' Theater
  - drama, art, cultural, and music/singing concerts (including Christmas carols)
  - fames
  - leadership activities (e.g., Camp GLOW/GROW)
  - gardening, sports, and other English for Health activities
  - computer club
  - spelling bees and other academic competitions
  - field trips to places of interest
- upgrade the school infrastructure (e.g., water tanks, paint).
- conduct fundraising activities (e.g., concerts, movie nights) for the school.

Helping "older" community members (e.g., teens and adults) strengthen their literacy abilities

While ELFs focus most of their attention on children, our Project Framework also allows and encourages them to help "older" community members who want to improve their literacy skills. Helping young and older communities in these ways has the added benefits of (a) helping the PCV integrate in meaningful ways with community members outside the normal "school" environment; (b) helping those older community members better understand the value of education and be more likely to support the school.

Outlined below is information about who those older populations are, why they might want to improve their literacy-related abilities, and how ELFs can provide various types of supports to them.

The "youth" and "adults" whom ELFs might work with

Youth are defined roughly as young community members who are approximately 14 to 30 year old. (Typically, any younger person who is not married is considered a "youth" in Tongan society.) "Adults" are those community members who are roughly 30 years and older.

"Youth" and "adults" could meet a number of these criteria:

- are currently enrolled in or have completed secondary school;
- are enrolled in post-secondary school (e.g., training program, USP);
- have dropped out of secondary school;
- are employed or unemployed;
- are parents or caregivers; and/or
- have gaps in their English literacy skills.

"Youth" and "adults" could want to improve their English literacy to:

- meet academic goals (e.g., succeed in current studies or enroll in further education);
- meet employment goals (e.g., get a job or improve performance of current job, start a business);
- deal with personal finance or other (e.g., healthcare) responsibilities;
- meet social goals (e.g., make friends, move abroad);
- help their children with their education;

- increase their understanding of cultural, political, international issues.

"Youth" and "adults" currently improve their English literacy through:

- formal study inside (e.g., high school, USP, Tupou Technical Institute) and outside school (e.g., test prep, study groups . . .)
- self-directed learning (e.g., reading);
- immersion in use of English in authentic ways (e.g., at work, with friends and relatives);
- use of technology (computers, videos, MP3 players, mobile phones . . .)

What ELFs have been doing to help youth and adults strengthen their literacy and other related skills

PCVs have been:

- providing English tutoring for students in occupational programs;
- helping USP students strengthen their writing and other English skills required for post-secondary education;
- tutoring secondary students and adults in English and other subjects;
- Providing informal computer skills training for youth and adults.

How ELFs can explore whether and how they might provide learning opportunities for youth and adults in their communities

- Do an informal or more formal survey of youth, adults, and community leaders and community groups to ask:
    - What is currently being done to provide educational supports to youth and adults?
    - What are the results of those efforts?
    - What might be done to expand and strengthen such efforts?
    - Who might be involved?
    - How might a PCV support such efforts?
    - How might gender, age, and/or marital status impact the person's availability or motivations related to participate in educational activities?

- <u>Pilot a simple activity</u> to provide a service and guide future possible activities by the PCV and community.

A great opportunity

We at Peace Corps/Tonga have been given a great opportunity to do something wonderful. Since our English Literacy Project began at the end of 2012, our Volunteers, staff, and local and national partners have done a tremendous job of creating and assembling the pieces of an innovative national project. This Idea Book describes those "pieces" – the strategies which PCVs and counterparts are now using to achieve our project objectives.

This collaborative effort has required creativity, patience, perseverance, and other strengths. These are the qualities of effective Peace Corps Volunteers and of a high performance Peace Corps post.

Our project is not "perfect." We have more to do to create new strategies and refine the ones we've already developed, building on our strengths and responding to opportunities that emerge.   Each successive Group of PCVs is contributing to the development of our project, which is evolving into a valuable resource for Tonga and other countries.

This work is also proving to be a great opportunity for personal and professional growth for our PCVs.

Newcomers to Peace Corps/Tonga should not feel that they need to fully understand or use all of the practices described in this Idea Book. Instead, use this to build your understanding of our project objectives and of the range of activities you might get involved in. But also be prepared to be patient, listen, think critically when you get here, and learn from fellow PCVs and from staff and our Tongan partners. You can then figure out how to use the strengths you bring with you, to create a Peace Corps service that is meaningful and useful to both you and our project.

A P P E N D I X A

Peace Corps/Tonga

Collaborative Capacity Building

How ELFs Can Work with their Principals and Counterpart Teachers to Achieve Our Project Goals

INTRODUCTION

PC/Tonga's English Literacy Project has three primary goals:

1. Helping Tongan educators to build their capacity to use innovative, effective educational practices called for by the Ministry of Education.
2. Helping Tongan children develop useful English and related skills and knowledge for academic and "real world" success;
3. Increasing parental and community support for education and access to literacy development opportunities for youth and adults.

To achieve these goals, it is vital for PCV English Literacy Facilitators (ELFs) to work closely and effectively with the principals and teachers in their schools. Our Group 77, 78, and 79 Volunteers have taken this task seriously and have been figuring out how to develop positive, respectful, effective collaborative relationships. Rather than assume that ELFs have the answer to effective teaching which they are to transmit to their Tongan colleagues, we are trying to develop strategies for "collaborative capacity building" in which ELFs and counterparts build each other's capacities through sharing of ideas, peer feedback, and other activities which will raise the quality of teaching for ELFs and counterparts together.

This document presents promising strategies for collaborative capacity building identified by PCVs and their Tongan co-workers during site visits, in our In-Service Trainings, and via reports sent in by Volunteers on the Volunteer Reporting Form. We will continue to expand and refine this list over the coming year through input from PCVs and the Tongan educators with whom we are working.

**Programming and Training Staff
Peace Corps/Tonga**

July, 2015 (Fourth Edition)

Establish Positive Relations with Principals and Counterpart Teachers

PCVs can:

- <u>Get to know</u> their Principals, fellow teachers, and the plans that they already have developed for the school.
- <u>Share their expectations</u> with the Principal and fellow teachers in a written document.
- <u>Have their class schedules</u> posted on the walls of the school office <u>and their profiles included</u> in the staff profiles.
- <u>Attend teacher meetings</u>, observations, and other tasks as requested by the Principal.
- <u>Act and dress professionally</u>, to demonstrate your respect for your work and that of your colleagues, and to serve as a positive example for students.
- <u>Informally get to know counterparts</u> (especially younger ones who might be seen more as the PCV's peers) by:
  - <u>sharing meals</u> with them.
  - <u>meeting with teachers at lunch or break time and speaking Tongan</u> with them.
  - <u>baking snacks and making juice</u> for counterparts.
- <u>Be sensitive to potential barriers to collaboration between PCVs and counterparts,</u> including:
  - Language barriers;
  - Different experiences and training related to education (including what it means to be a teacher, how to teach, what to teach).
  - Different concepts of "diversity" as it applies to culture and other dimensions of diversity (e.g., gender, age, race, sexual orientation, disability).

Needs Assessment and Curriculum Planning

<u>Define "student centered teaching" and how it might be used in the PCV's school.</u>

PCVs can begin working from the start with their counterparts by talking with them about:

- How they define "student centered curriculum" (as called for in the MET's new English Language Syllabus).
- Examples they are aware of (and possibly have tried) of student centered teaching practices.
- The results so far of efforts to use student centered teaching activities.
- Challenges/obstacles they face when they've tried to use student centered activities.
- Questions they have about using student centered activities.

- Particular subjects/skill areas they might like to focus on through the use of student centered activities.

PCVs might circulate a questionnaire to counterparts to get their feedback about the above issues, to identify topics that could be covered in follow-up workshops involving PCVs and counterparts.

<u>Get to know counterparts' teaching styles and other aspects of the school.</u>

PCVs can get to know their counterparts' teaching styles (as well as the school's students and resources) by observing their counterparts' classes. To make good use of this time, the PCV and counterparts should agree on a set of written questions that the PCV can refer to and record observations on while doing the observation. This Observation Guide might include the following types of questions:

- What is the teacher trying to achieve in this lesson?
- Does the teacher make these objectives clear to the students? If so, how?
- What activities does the teacher use?
- What materials does the teacher use?
- How is the "timing" or "flow" of the activities? Is enough time given to each activity? Do the activities flow smoothly from one to the other, or are not well coordinated?
- What does the teacher do to involve all students in the activity?
- How does the teacher keep students focused in a productive way?
- What kind of tone set for the class? (Enthusiasm? Positive motivation? Fun?)
- What kind of assessment activities does the teacher use to help students monitor their progress and make needed adjustments?
- What were the strong points of this lesson?
- What are areas that could be improved?
- What other comments, questions, and suggestions do you have for this teacher?

PCVs might distribute a questionnaire to counterparts in which they rate their use of and comfort with various teaching practices and teaching styles. PCVs could review the results of this survey to identify issues, ideas, questions to follow up on in future discussions and staff training. Is there a framework on teaching styles that local teachers can fill in and pass it to PCVs so that they can identify the teaching styles of teachers?

A similar survey could be conducted to identify the particular strengths and challenges of various types of students (e.g., below average, average, advanced) in the school. This could be the basis for further discussion about strategies for serving those various levels.

After the PCV has made the observation and taken these notes, the PCV and counterpart(s) might then discuss what the PCV observed, as well as questions, ideas, or suggestions that the PCV generated from the observation. This obviously has to be done in a respectful, positive way, to help set the tone and direction for future communications between the PCV and the counterpart. (The PCV and counterpart should agree on a time to sit down and give feedback on each other's teaching and materials, so they can be improved.)

Review existing curricula.

PCVs and counterparts might sit and review the curricula (or some sample lesson plans) currently used in the school, so:

- PCVs and counterparts are on the same wave length about what is being taught, the terminology used to describe the curriculum and in the curriculum itself, how lessons are organized and presented, and what the counterpart likes and maybe doesn't like about the curriculum.
- PCVs and counterparts become comfortable talking about curricula.
- PCVs and counterparts can identify parts of the curriculum they might work on together.
- PCVs become familiar with curricula used in other subject areas (e.g., science, health, math) to determine whether and how elements of those curricula (e.g., special vocabulary) can be incorporated into the TEFL classes and vice versa, to implement the MoE's multi-disciplinary approach.

Use the school library to work with counterparts to select materials that can be used in the classroom.

Co-plan classes with counterparts.

PCVs might:

- Share lesson plan models with counterparts, to clarify different ways that teachers use to plan activities.
- Choose an agreed-upon format to use to develop one or more lessons together with their counterparts.
- Use flipchart paper, a chalkboard, or other means to brainstorm the content of the lesson plan, including:
  - Title of session
  - Objectives
  - Time required
  - Resources (teaching materials, equipment, etc.) required

- o Teaching and assessment activities
  - o Other things the instructor should keep in mind.
- Type up this lesson plan, so that the PCV and/or counterpart can field test it (possibly together or separately).
- Share assessment tools that they use, to develop an agreed-upon collection of assessment methods and tools that all teachers can use in a coordinated way.

This is an opportunity for the PCV to better understand how her/his counterparts plan lessons – and vice versa.

Co-teaching (during regular school hours and in after-school activities)

"Co-teaching" can take a number of forms, including:

- Sharing roles in the same lesson (such as when a counterpart introduces the lesson and perhaps carries out one or two activities, then hands the next activity over to the PCV who carries out that activity, etc.)
- The PCV serving as the lead teacher in the lesson, while the counterpart helps out in the background by dealing with group logistics, handing out and collecting papers, ensuring that students stay focused, giving guidance to individual students as needed, etc. (These roles can be reversed, as well.)
- Tongan counterpart providing translation help, to "Tonganize" the lesson and ensure that students understand what the students understand what they are supposed to be doing in the lesson.
- PCV modelsing pronunciation of particular English vocabulary that the Tongan teacher is focusing on in the lesson.
- PCVs or counterparts serving as "resource persons" on special topics. For example, a PCV might be brought into other teachers' classes to do activities on grammar or pronunciation or particular types of vocabulary or particular types of activities (e.g., the PCV might serve as a testing specialist).
- PCVs and counterparts running spelling bees, sports activities, and other special activities together.

Monitoring progress and sharing feedback with counterparts

PCVs might:

- Participate in some or all weekly teacher meetings.
- Store lesson plans in a folder which other teachers can access.

- Engage counterparts in discussions around such questions as:
    - What does "student centered" mean to you?
    - How can the PCV help your school?
    - How do you interact with the PCV?
    - What are you learning from the PCV?   How might her/his methods be adapted by other teachers in the school?
- Encourage counterparts to bring innovative ideas with them if they are transferred to other schools at the end of the school year.
- Speak up and provide constructive suggestions rather than keeping quiet about concerns.
- Ask the PC Program Manager for guidance on how to give constructive feedback and deal with problems that arise. (See Appendix on "How to Give Feedback" which was developed in PST by Group 78 PCTs.)

Conduct Professional Development Activities for Counterparts

PCVs can:

- Run staff development workshops, focusing on topics identified by principals and counterparts.
- Work with counterparts on a project (e.g., co-developing lessons around a particular theme) which both responds to a teaching need and helps build the expertise of both the counterpart and the PCV.
- Work with counterparts to create "resource packets" like the PCVs' "LAVA Kits" containing useful lesson plans, reading materials (including Tongan stories in Tongan and English), teaching materials (e.g., cards, posters, charts, pictures), and professional development articles to refer to and adapt regardless of where they teach.
- Help a counterpart with coursework for formal teacher training courses.
- Allow counterpart teachers to use the PCV's personal laptop for professional and personal purposes (and teach the counterparts how to use computers).
- Work with one or more counterparts to develop the library while at the same teaching Junior Librarians from the school how to organize and operate the library.

Resource Development

PCVs can work with the Principal, counterparts, and/or PTA and Town Officer to:

- Explore funding options which the school might pursue.
- Help with funding proposals.

- Serve as a liaison to other NGOs which might be willing and able to work with the community on school improvement issues.

How to Give Feedback

**Suggestions from Group 78 PCTs
at Pre-Service Training on September 19, 2013**

<u>Overall</u>:   Be constructive and create a climate for learning.

<u>More specifically</u>:

- Suggest improvements.
- Give a positive for every negative. (Start and end on a positive.)
- Ask "why did you do it that way?"
- Use a softer (rather than harsh) tone.
- Don't be condescending.
- Acknowledge there are many ways to teach.
- Be more of a facilitator than an "authority."
- Use language and cues that help practitioners be willing to take risks.
- Praise publicly. Discipline privately.

A P P E N D I X   B

The Peace Corps "Literacy Wheel"

from The Building Blocks of Literacy Resource Resource Manual