Community Literacy of Ontario

Small Talk

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR
USING SMALL GROUPS
 IN COMMUNITY
LITERACY AGENCIES

Vicki Trottier
November 2000

Small Talk

Acknowledgements

Small Talk was written in response to Community Literacy of Ontario member requests for information about small group literacy. It has been produced with fees derived from memberships as a "members-only" resource. Desktop Publishing and final editing by Lindsay Kennedy.

My Thanks To:

The Board of Directors of Community Literacy of Ontario for their belief in this project — I have always encouraged the use of small groups in community-based literacy.

Community Literacy of Ontario members who responded to my requests for information about how small groups operate in their programs. **Special thanks** to Nancy Herdman, Jane Jackson, and Mary Mills at the North Bay Literacy Council for their generosity in sharing.

My literacy colleagues in the rest of Canada and throughout the United States who responded to requests on the Equipped for the Future and the Canadian Association of Literacy Educators list serves. **Special thanks** to Jane Hugo from Laubach Literacy Action in Syracuse.

Lindsay Kennedy for reviewing and critiquing the draft versions of *Small Talk*.

Jette Cosburn for taking care of the duplication and distribution of this resource.

Joanne Kaattari—last, but certainly not least—for being a supportive program manager, for reviewing and proofreading virtually every word of *Small Talk.*

Vicki Trottier
November 2000

Table of Contents

Introduction

Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) is a sectoral literacy group serving over one hundred community literacy agencies in the province of Ontario. Each year, CLO prepares a members-only resource using fees raised from the annual membership campaign as a way of thanking our members for their valuable support. In 1999, CLO produced *A Guide to Strategic Funding Opportunities.* For 2000, CLO is pleased to present our newest membership resource, *Small Talk.*

This resource guide was commissioned by the Board of Directors of CLO to respond to numerous requests for information about small group literacy from the membership. It is not intended to be a comprehensive study of small group literacy, nor is it a "how-to" manual. We hope, however, that it will provide some background about the topic and will be of some practical help to our members as they continue their work with small groups or introduce small group learning into their programs.

Programs interested in doing more research or using more "how-to" manuals should refer to the *List of Resources* at the end of the guide. A good place to start would be with Core Literacy's *Learning Together* and Literacy Volunteers of America's *Small Group Tutoring.* Laubach Literacy of Ontario is currently working on developing a more comprehensive manual. It is entitled *Building Bridges* and should be available in mid-2001.

The first few sections of *Small Talk* provide some theoretical background about the group process. The final sections will provide some concrete suggestions for setting up and running small groups in community-based literacy programs along with some samples from Ontario programs.

Some readers may question the need for the theoretical sections and prefer just the concrete tools and samples. I preferred, however, to offer a balance of theories, methodology, and actual tools in an attempt to address a variety of needs. Without the theoretical background, it might be more difficult to understand why methods and tools work well in one situation but not in another. The underlying theory behind the small group process can help the practitioner better appreciate the experiences and consequences of small groups in action.[1]

---

[1] Engleberg, Isa N. and Dianna R. Wynn. W*orking in Groups: Communication Principles and Strategies (Second Edition).* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000. Page xxi.

When you read through this resource guide, you will soon see that there is no one "right" way to deliver small group literacy. Each program will need to determine how the small group model best fits with its own philosophies and ways of providing training. The suggestions and approaches included in this guide are based upon both experience and research, and I have found they work for me. I hope that you will also find them useful.

Vicki Trottier
Community Literacy of Ontario
November 2000

Background

Community-based literacy in the Province of Ontario has its roots in the volunteer/ learner match. Beginning in the 1970's, dozens of programs developed in rural and urban areas, dedicated to recruiting and matching both volunteers and students[2]. Programs sprung up across the province, from Kenora to Hawkesbury. Some served over one hundred learners at a time; others worked with just a few. Many were formally organized and incorporated, some were offshoots of library programs, and still others were more informal. Whatever their make-up or location, virtually all of these programs worked on the premise that adult literacy learners learn best in a one-to-one situation.

As the years went by, some community-based programs began experimenting with the concept of small groups. Sometimes small groups were used because there weren't enough volunteers to meet the needs so rather than make students wait for a match; they were given the option to join a small group. On other occasions, a program coordinator or a volunteer tutor would notice that two or more learners shared common needs, and the idea to group them together to share their learning emerged.

In 1988, the Ministry of Education recognized that small group literacy was becoming more common and offered some training workshops to help introduce the concept. The workshops met with mixed interest. While a few other programs began to experiment with the idea, most community-based agencies continued to stay with one-to-one programming. Some early research into small group literacy was published in Toronto, including work by Guy Ewing and Jenny Horsman (see *List of Resources*).

In 1991, a group of literacy practitioners submitted a proposal for a three-year project to promote and develop the use of the small group in literacy across Ontario and to provide training and resources to literacy programs wanting to start and run small groups. This group became known as The Small Group Literacy Reference Group (SMGLRG). It was hosted by ALSO, a community-based literacy program located in Ottawa.[3] From 1991-94, the SMGLRG did indeed host a number of training events throughout the province. They also produced some resources, including a Handbook and a Trainer's Manual (see *List of Resources*).

---

[2] The terms "learner" and "student" are used interchangeably throughout this document.

[3] Fletcher, Susan. *Report on Project to Promote and Develop Small Group Literacy* (1991-1994).

As the idea of small group literacy began to catch on, other groups also began researching the topic and producing resources. For example, CORE Literacy in Kitchener conducted extensive research and field-testing in small group practices and published a resource called *Learning Together* (see *List of Resources)*.

For a few years after this initial spurt of activity, interest in small group literacy seemed to wane. Agencies that had incorporated the concept into their programs continued to use it, but it seemed that its day had come and gone. With the advent of program reform and the introduction of a learning outcomes approach, however, interest in small group literacy began to revive in the late 1990's. Increasingly, community-based agencies have been requesting resources and information to support them as they incorporate small group learning into their programming. Therefore, Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) has produced this manual in the hopes of offering some background and insights into small group literacy, providing a list of resources and sharing some best practices from across the province.

> This is not a "how-to" manual because there is no one "right way" to work with small groups. We do hope, however, that this manual will provide practitioners with a useful guide and reference tool to assist them as they work with small groups in their own programs.

Why Small Group Literacy?

Small groups can be created for a number of reasons. Sometimes programs decide to try out the small group concept to test the theory that humans learn best in groups. In fact, the Small Group Literacy Reference Group wrote, "a small group, properly facilitated, has been shown to be more effective than either individualistic or competitive settings for developing critical thinking skills, communication skills and social skills."[4] A recent study on student transitions done by Project READ Literacy Network discovered that the main reason that some students working one-to-one with a tutor do not make a successful transition to classroom learning is a lack of self-management/self-direction skills[5] ... skills which are a natural fit with small group learning.

The SGLRG was not alone in its thinking. Guy Ewing described it this way:
> *"Because literacies exist in communities, literacy must be learned within a community. Reading and writing will only make sense in context. Going through the motions of decoding and encoding written language without a community to sustain this activity and give it meaning is an empty exercise ... Unless learners meet and talk with other learners, unless they get a sense of where they are and where they are sustained by the purposes, values and goals of a larger learning community, they will have difficulty learning."[6]*

Robin Millar and Joy So cite a study done in Pennsylvania that provided further evidence for the effectiveness of small groups:
> *"Collaborative Groups enhance retention in learners because participants in collaborative groups believe that their activities and perspectives constitute significant knowledge that ought to be shared and that their own lives and experiences are course of knowledge."[7]*

---

[4] Small Group Literacy Reference Group: 1991.

[5] Paul, Marianne in an e-mail November 14, 2000.

[6] Ewing, Guy. *Small Groups in the Big Picture*. RaPAL Bulletin. No. 19, 1992.

[7] Cooper, D. and D. Inverso. *Collaborative Learning: A Key to Empowerment and Participation in the 90's.* Harrisburg: Department of Education, 1994. *as cited in* Miller, Robin and Joy So. *Learning and Talking Together: Research Investigating Persistence and Retention in Adult Literacy Programs.* http://www.nald.ca/FULLTEXT/journeys/cohort.htm

Michael Pritza conducted a study in Georgia that showed that the shift to small groups increased regular attendance amongst his students.[8]

Small groups are part of life outside literacy as well! Most of our own life experience is in fact based in a small group setting—first with our family, then with friends, then perhaps with clubs or other social groups.[9] Given the choice, many learners will choose to work in a group rather than in a one-to-one setting.[10] This does not mean that the traditional one-to-one delivery method should be abandoned! Many students may start out working with a tutor and then move into a small group setting as their comfort level increases. Individual tutors may also meet learners' needs that cannot be met within the small group. As always, there is no one "right" way to deliver literacy—small groups simply offer one more alternative. Both approaches can work together and in harmony within the same program and with the same students.

Sometimes programs are simply trying to meet a practical need, e.g. there just aren't enough volunteers to provide every learner on the waiting list with a tutor! There are probably as many reasons as there are small groups, but some of the common reasons to start a group are to:

☑ Meet a common need;

☑ Encourage team work;

☑ Bring learners with similar skill sets together;

☑ Work on specific, identified goals;

☑ Prepare learners for future classroom/group settings;

☑ Save costs;

☑ Reduce waiting lists;

☑ Diminish isolation;

☑ Provide a support network;

---

[8] Pritza, Michael. *Getting into Groups. Focus on Basics.* 1998.
http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/1998/pritza.htm

[9] Tiberius, Richard. *Small Group Teaching: A Trouble-Shooting Guide.* Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1990. Page 1.
See also Imel, Susan; Sandra Kerka and Sandra Pritz. *More Than the Sum of the Parts: Using Small Group Learning in Adult Basic and Literacy Education.* Columbus: Centre on Education and Training for Employment, 1994. Page 6.

[10] This has certainly been the case in the author's own program. Once small groups were instituted, virtually all-new applicants choose the small group setting over working 1:1 with a tutor. See also Pritza, Michael. Op. Cit.

☑ Develop oral communication skills;

☑ Help build confidence / self-esteem levels;

☑ Encourage students to take more responsibility for their own learning;

☑ Foster a sense of co-operation;

☑ Build the relationship between speaking/listening and reading/writing;

☑ Enhance learners' sense of empowerment;

☑ Develop problem-solving, conflict management and coping skills;

☑ Emphasize that learning is a social process;

☑ Simulate real-life situations;

☑ Share knowledge and skills.

> Incorporating small groups into your program does not mean abandoning the traditional one-to-one learner/tutor match. Small groups can be used to supplement individual instruction or to offer an alternative. Small groups can be set up for a specific project and then disbanded. Introducing the small group concept can provided added flexibility for both practitioners and learners.

Call it small group literacy, or teaching, or learning, or tutoring; or call it collaborative, or participatory, or cooperative learning; or call it a study circle. Call it what you want—the rewards and challenges of bringing two or more people together to share the learning process are the same.

A group of people simply getting together and sitting down in the same room does not necessarily mean that a literacy small group has formed. The true small group has certain characteristics that are shared both within and outside of literacy[11]. These characteristics are that:

☑ Some type of interaction takes place;

☑ There is some type of shared purpose or goal;

☑ There is a defined membership (although members can join or leave the group at any time);

☑ The group thinks of itself as a group;

☑ The group satisfies a learning need through interdependence;

☑ Individual growth is influenced through the development of group goals;

☑ The group influences each member;

☑ The group makes decisions and acts as one;

☑ Individuals may move between and among other learning approaches, including classrooms and 1:1 instruction;

☑ The group promotes social interaction;

☑ There must be some results in terms of goals and personal development.

Not all small groups will look the same or operate in the same manner. Some may be more content focused, while others may be more concerned with the group process. Some facilitators may take more of a leadership role while in others leadership is quickly assumed by the group. Some groups will only include work done by the group as whole; others may use break-off groups or provide time for individual work within the small group setting.

---

[11] Op. Cit. Tiberius.
Op Cit. Imel et al.
See also Luft, Joseph. *Group Processes: An Introduction to Group Dynamics (3rd Edition)*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1984. Page 7.

A group of researchers from Ohio identified three main types of small group learning:[12]

Collaborative: Assumes that knowledge is socially rather than individually constructed by communities of individuals. Assumes that the shaping and testing of ideas is a process in which anyone can participate. View the facilitator not as the authority and source of knowledge but as an equal participant in the learning.

Cooperative: Shares some of the characteristics of collaborative learning but is more structured. Allows the facilitator to retain more control over the learning. The group members work towards a common goal but individual accountability is emphasized.

Participatory: Draws on learners' personal experiences as the basis for curriculum. Rather than trying to cover predetermined content, facilitator needs to help the group discover the content that is important to the group members, thereby enabling learners to determine the content.

> There is no one "right" way to incorporate small group learning into your program. What is most important—regardless of the method you choose, the number of learners in the group, or the reason for starting the group in the first place—is that there is a good fit with your overall program goals, procedures, and philosophies.

---

[12] Op Cit: Imel, Susan; Sandra Karka and Sandra Pritz. *More than the Sum of the Parts: Using Small Group Learning in Adult Basic and Literacy Education.* Page 6.

Advantages/Disadvantages of Small Group Learning

While the small group model offers many advantages, it is not the right choice for everyone. In some situations, a one-to-one arrangement or a classroom setting might be a better choice. The following chart highlights some of the advantages and disadvantages of the small group model.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Peer support	Cohesion cannot be forced—sometimes the group is dysfunctional
Meets a common need	Individual needs must be reconciled with group needs
If program has too few tutors, it can still provide programming	Volunteer tutors may not be prepared to take on a group
Can accommodate students at different levels	Too wide of a range of needs and abilities can be difficult to accommodate
Can use an activity or demonstration with more than one learner	Prep time may be greater than in a 1:1 match
Brings people together; provides the chance to learn about other cultures, etc.	Cultural differences may initially cause problems—conflicts may arise
Group setting/share learning is compatible with many learning styles	Doesn't suit all learning styles—noise levels may be problematic
Helps reduce waiting lists	Continuous intake may cause a problem with group cohesiveness
Allows for integration of academics with self-management skills	
Workplace related skills (e.g. team work, problem solving) easily integrated	

Advantages	Disadvantages
Can help build speaking and listening skills	
Eases the distinction between "teachers" and "students"	
Can provide a transition between 1:1 and classroom learning	
Provides a vehicle for sociability and friendships	
May facilitate higher retention of learned skills for some students	
May enhance attendance for some students	

It is up to each program to decide if the small group concept will work for their particular needs. Small groups provide many advantages but they don't work in every situation.

Small Group is not the same as Classroom Learning

Setting up a small group may initially appear to be the same as setting up a classroom, but there are differences. The differences don't necessarily appear in the physical setting of the small group or classroom, but rather in the way the group is facilitated. The classroom model of learning is teacher-led, whereas the small group model is group-led with the assistance of a facilitator (either paid or volunteer). The facilitator might also be called the group leader. When the small group is first established, the facilitator might have more of a leadership role but as the group grows and the individual members gain in confidence in skills, leadership is increasingly assumed by the group.

Sometimes both practitioners and learners are uncomfortable in the early stages of setting up the small group. The traditional classroom is often more familiar, and many learners are not used to assuming ownership for their own learning.

In the small group setting, there may initially be some formal instruction but generally, the group members decide on both content and curriculum and learning becomes a shared experiential process of discovery rather than the traditional method of a teacher/instructor imparting knowledge. Learning becomes integrated as the group reads, speaks, shares, and writes together. Skills are not taught in isolation. Of course, this is good literacy practice whether in small groups, the classroom or a one-to-one setting!

The Facilitator's Role

The facilitator's role is multi-faceted. Depending upon how each program decides to implement small groups, the facilitator may be called upon to:

- ☑ Recruit group members;

- ☑ Determine eligibility for the group;

- ☑ Determine the reason for establishing the group;

- ☑ Provide initial leadership to the group, including choice of content;

- ☑ Promote interdependence within the group;

- ☑ Ensure that ground rules are followed;

- ☑ Assist the process and encourage students to find their own answers, e.g., he/she may raise questions or suggest a different approach but not provide the answers;

- ☑ Be a "resource guide," helping the group to locate appropriate resources for the chosen activity;

- ☑ Allow instructional goals to change in response to group needs and wishes (within reason!);

- ☑ Act as the group's housekeeper, looking after details such as setting the time, date and location of the next session; notifying group members of a change in schedule; making sure that the meeting room is booked;

- ☑ Conduct ongoing assessments, including the development and delivery of demonstrations;

- ☑ Assist with conflict management, even to the point of removing a group member if necessary;

- ☑ Assist with closure of the group;

- ☑ Evaluate the success of the group in terms of student progress, group dynamics, logistics, etc. and possibly make recommendations for future groups.

> Participating in a small group provides an excellent opportunity for learners to demonstrate self-management/self-direction skills. Be sure to watch for improvements in attendance, application of skills in a real-life context, enhanced responsibility for own work, constructive criticism and other "soft skills."

As the skill levels of the group members increase, one or more of the learners may take on some of these responsibilities, especially in the area of incorporating demonstration activities into group activities.

The facilitator is a member of the group, not its leader. This role, at first, may be somewhat uncomfortable for literacy instructors but by watching and listening, the facilitator will soon "pick up" on the group's methods and preferences and will become increasingly comfortable with his/her new role.[13]

Some of the facilitator's responsibilities may include calling the group to order, introducing new members to the group, moderating heated discussions, and adjourning the session. Again, learners may take some of these roles on as their comfort and skills level increases.

> If the group members are hesitant about taking responsibility for choosing content and gradually assuming ownership of the group, don't despair! This is a new way of learning for everyone— practitioner and learner   alike—and it will take time to adjust. Be patient!

---

[13] Fletcher, Susan. *Trainer's Manual: Small Group Literacy Core Training Workshop.* Ottawa: 1994. pp. 59-60.
See also Cheatham, Judy, and V.K. Lawson. *Small Group Tutoring: A Collaborative Approach for Literacy Instruction.* Syracuse (NY): 1990. pp 3-5.

The Group Process

Establishing, working with and ending a small group are all components of the small group process. However, the process isn't linear, and many events, milestones, and activities happen within the timeframe of the life of a small group. Some events happen at specific times, some overlap and some happen more than once. They do not always happen in the order you expect them to happen! The following diagram helps to illustrate the events that happen within the small group.[14]

The Small Group Life Cycle
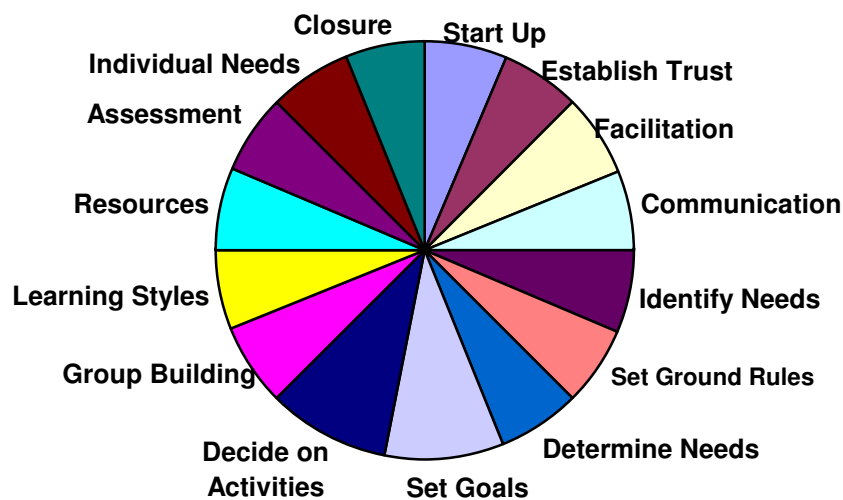
Small groups are not static. They go through a process of growth and change, as do the group members themselves. Observing the shift in the group dynamic can be very interesting! No two groups will go through the process in exactly the same way; some may take longer to work through a particular phase while others may move quickly through the initial stages to reach an early comfort

---

[14] Ibid. pg. 32 (adaptation)

level. Literacy Volunteers of America describes the five stages of the group cycle in that organization's resource, *Small Group Tutoring:*[15]

Forming Stage: The students need to get to know one another. The group needs to establish purposes and procedures. The facilitator will need to foster a sense of trust. The group members will rely heavily on the facilitator to take a leadership role.

Storming Stage: Group members will begin to openly express more emotion, including anger and frustration. There may be some conflict as learners begin to assert themselves. As the facilitator begins to transfer authority from him/herself to the group, there may be some resistance – the transfer of authority may be difficult for both the facilitator and the learners to accept. For many, it will be a completely new way of learning. Eventually, confidence will increase as will trust levels, and the group will move on to the next stage.

Norming Stage: This middle stage represents a milestone for the group. The facilitator will now be much more of a guide and less of a group leader, and the group will have assumed responsibility for choosing content and the direction of learning.

Performing Stage: The facilitator's role is now one of a supplier of resources. The group member are learning from each other, through mutual discovery and sharing. A routine is established, and the group is a cohesive unit.

Adjourning Stage: All good things must end! At this point, the group will have achieved its purpose and students will have reached their goals. Adjourning the group should not be done too quickly—the group members need time to express their emotions. This means a change, and change is always difficult. Some learners may now be leaving the program, moving on to further education or to a job. Others may have a new literacy goal and will be joining a new group. Take time to celebrate achievements and plan for the next steps.

---

[15] Op Cit.: Cheatham, Judy and V.K. Lawson. *Small Group Tutoring: A Collaborative Approach for Literacy Instruction.* pp. 10-13

Getting Started … Setting up the Small Group

Not everyone will want to be part of a small group. Before asking someone to join a group, you must first explain what it is all about and ensure that the learner really wants to join. If a small group is not an option for a particular learner, the program should be able to provide an alternative delivery method, perhaps one-on-one or classroom. However, keep the options open! As the learner becomes more comfortable, he or she may decide to join the group later.

There are two ways of introducing small groups to your program:
1. You think it would be a good idea for your current learners to start a small group (they might have even asked about it); or
2. You would like to start a small group with all new learners.

Depending on which situation you are in, your approach will be slightly different. If you are thinking of starting a small group with current learners, you will need to find out if they are comfortable with the idea of joining a group. If the learners have already approached you about group work, your question is already answered!

If some learners are hesitant about joining a group, you will need to explain what it is all about. They may be feeling that they aren't as "smart" as the others or that they will be called upon to read out loud or answer questions they don't understand. Reassure them that this is not the case, that in the small group everyone brings their own skills and all the group members learn from each other. No one will be singled out or embarrassed.

Let the learners know why you are starting the group. Perhaps you have identified a common need in your program (e.g. budgeting, punctuation skills, comprehension at Level 2). Perhaps you are short of volunteer tutors and rather than leave learners on a long waiting list, you have decided to start a small group. Perhaps some of the learners have indicated that they are feeling isolated and would like to know that they are not alone or that they would like more opportunity for interaction with other learners.

Learners currently involved in a one-to-one match with volunteers may be afraid that they will "lose" their volunteer. Depending on the situation, you will probably want to let them know that they don't have to give up their current arrangements—the group is simply providing another learning opportunity. They should also know that if they really aren't comfortable in the group setting, they can return to working on an individual basis with a volunteer.

In the second scenario, you will be recruiting new learners in order to establish a group. Again, you will want to be clear about your reasons for starting the group. Use this information in your recruitment . . . you could call your group a study circle, a working group, a reading group, a writing workshop or a computer workshop. Be clear about what you are offering so that the prospective learners understand that they will be working in a group and if there will be a specific topic. Try to explain that it is not a traditional classroom setting with a "teacher." If there is a pre-set timeframe (e.g., Mondays at 7:00 p.m. for six weeks) let people know that. As with all program recruiting, the most important thing is to be clear about what you are offering.

Once you have the group members, you will need to establish a convenient and comfortable location for the group to meet. There should be enough chairs for everyone and a table big enough to accommodate all the group members. If possible, one or two smaller tables come in handy for dividing the group into sub-groups on occasion. How will you set up the room—in a semi-circle or in a more traditional classroom format?

Consider if you will need a chalkboard, whiteboard, flip chart, overhead, or other visual aids. There should be enough copies of the activity you will be working on along with pencils, pens, paper and whatever other materials you need. Last but not least—be sure the coffee pot is on and there are enough cups for everyone!

One of the first things you will want to do with the small group is to establish some ground rules. The group can do this activity together. That way, everyone will have some input and hopefully, you can come to common agreement on how the group will operate. Ground rules should include things like showing respect, not talking out of turn, avoiding racial/cultural slurs, and "red flagging" topics for later discussion. Each group is unique; therefore, each group will establish its own set of rules.

Confidentiality in the Group
Confidentiality is an issue that literacy programs deal with on an ongoing basis.
Over the years, community-based agencies have designed policies and
procedures to address this issue. Introducing small groups into your program
can add a new twist, however.

In a one-to-one match, it is common for neither the volunteer nor the learner to
have much contact with others in the program apart from the coordinator or
perhaps the office administrator. When a learner or a volunteer joins a small
group, however, he/she now has contact with significant more people than
before. Group members may know each other outside of the literacy program. It
is essential that the importance of confidentiality be stressed (e.g., what is
discussed during group sessions is not discussed outside of the group). If group
members feel that confidentiality is being jeopardized, this could have a negative
impact on the group dynamics. Trust is an essential component of any small
group.

Multi-Levels in Small Groups
Many of the small groups that exist in community-based literacy programs
across Ontario are made up of learners with similar abilities. However, other
groups have students with literacy levels ranging from 1 to 5.

Once again, there is no one right way to set up the composition of small groups
in your program. Small programs don't usually have enough students to offer
groups by levels; sometimes they are fortunate to have enough students in one
location to even offer a small group! In this situation, there isn't much choice,
and the facilitator may be called upon to offer more individual support than
would be the case in a group of students having similar skills.

The advantage of having group members of similar abilities and literacy levels is
that it is easier to design learning and demonstration activities that focus on
specific skills. One advantage of having group members of different abilities,
however, is that the students with higher literacy levels can support those with
lower levels, thus encouraging everyone to develop new self-management/self-
direction skills along the way (including team work, accepting and offering
constructive criticism and increased participation in the program).

If your group is goal-specific (perhaps everyone wants to get their driver's license or write a resume), individual levels may not be as important as if the group is skill-specific. With a little creativity and support from the facilitator, six learners can work on the same topic using different skills at different levels.

> Whether your small group is goal-specific or skill-specific, multi-level or single-level, it must "fit" into your program. No two small groups will be alike. Each group will create its own identify based on the talents, skills and goals of the individual members.

Learning Activities in a Group Setting

There are literally hundreds of possibilities for activities that can be done in a small group setting. Sometimes activities that have been used for individual tutor/learner matches can be easily adapted for a group. Other times, the literacy instructor/tutor will have to create new activities. You are limited only by your creativity and available time, of course!

It is beyond the scope of this resource guide to provide a comprehensive list of possible activities to use in with a small group. You, the practitioner, will need to use your skills to adapt some of your current favourite activities! A good place to start is by reviewing the Small Group Literacy Reference Group's 1994 publication *Up and Running.* (See *List of Resources)* As the group members gain in confidence and other skills, they will take a more active role in the choice of themes and activities.

When designing activities for the group, remember to consider the various learning styles of the group members. You will likely have a combination of students with visual, auditory, and tactile preferences. It is important to present a variety of learning options to address everyone's needs.

Another important consideration when selecting group activities is to remember that you are trying to stimulate interaction between group members. Avoid "yes" or "no" questions—instead, ask questions that require the learner to present an opinion or describe an event. Newspapers provide an excellent resource for this type of activity. Discussion of current events (whether local or national) provides an excellent forum for debates, letter writing, and further research into the issues. Depending on the levels and interests of the group members, numeracy activities such as surveys and graphing could also be added.

Demonstrations in a Group Setting

The use of demonstration activities in Ontario literacy agencies is still a relatively new practice. Therefore, there is still no consensus as to the use of these activities in a group setting. The overriding question is—can/should the same demonstration activity be used with a group of learners, or should the demonstration activity be administered individually? Although many practitioners see this question as more relevant to the college and school board sectors, it is an important one for community-based agencies to consider if they offer small group literacy.

Why would you use a single demonstration activity in a group setting? If the learners in a group are working on the same topic, it could be considered "economical" in terms of time and energy to have everyone complete the same demonstration at the same time. In theory, all the group members would be working on the same skill sets. However, very often the students in a group are working at different levels, so this would have to be taken into consideration. Skills demonstrated, their levels and conditions of performance might all need to be adapted for individual learners.

Another reason to consider the use of a "group" demonstration activity is that it could provide closure to a particular theme or topic, similar to unit tests used in traditional school settings. Of course, you then run into the problem of the learners thinking of demonstration activities as tests. If you decide to approach demonstrations in a group from this angle, care should be taken to ensure that the learners understand the purpose of the demonstration activity.

A third reason for considering the use of group demonstrations is group cohesiveness. If the group has worked together for some time on a particular theme or topic, they might feel that it is only natural for them to do the same demonstration activity at the same time. In this case, you might even want to consider group work for the actual demonstration, although care should be taken when assessing learner performance to be sure that each individual learner actually demonstrated the skills being assessed. As with any group work, sometimes one or two students do more than their fair share while others do less.

On the other hand, if the small group has continuous enrollment, administering a group demonstration activity might be difficult because people come and go and perhaps not every learner will have covered all of the skills when you are ready to try the activity. In this case, it might be better to have only some of the group members work on a particular demonstration at one time. Remember, one of the pre-conditions for administering a demonstration activity is learner readiness!

Another reason for deciding on the individual approach to demonstrations could be if the learners have different goals or are working on different skills. Although these learners might be in the same group working on the same topic, they may actually be developing different skills. For example, one student may be focusing on speaking and listening while another student is developing grammar skills. In this situation, they would need to demonstrate completely different skills. It could be possible to use the same activity but assess it differently.

As with so many other components of small group literacy, there isn't a right answer to the question of administering demonstrations! Each program will have to assess how its own small group functions and consider the needs, goals, and levels of that group's learners when deciding how to assess progress.

> For more information about developing demonstrations, be sure to refer to *On The Level,* written by Lindsay Kennedy and published by CLO.

Whether your program decides to use paid instructors or volunteer tutors as small group facilitators, you may need to provide some initial training[16], especially if the facilitator is new to the small group approach. The training session will introduce the small group process because it will be a focused small group! Some of the topics you will want to cover will include:

- ☑ Group development process;

- ☑ Dynamics of small group interaction;

- ☑ Participatory activities;

- ☑ Learning styles;

- ☑ Setting up the room;

- ☑ Degree of learner-centeredness (e.g., just how much control will both the facilitator and the other group members have);

- ☑ Lesson planning;

- ☑ Selecting resources.

> If the facilitator is new to small groups, you might want to consider setting him/her up with a mentor. That way, he/she can sit in on some small group sessions to observe the dynamics and begin to better understand his/her role.

Sample job descriptions and report forms for instructors/tutors working in a small group setting can be found in Appendix A and B.

---

[16] Based on information in the Small Group Information Kit from Laubach Literacy Action, Syracuse.

Some Success Stories

*"It is exciting to watch the whole process of group development by the
learners unfold."[17]*

Popcorn Days[18]
Jane Selbie from the Haliburton Highlands Learning Program facilitates small
group sessions known as "Popcorn Days." She started the small group as a way
to provide extra learning time for a group of students who needed to improve
their speaking and listening skills. Jane noted that although the small group
members had already been spending a lot of time together, they didn't always
talk to each other. Once the learners came together as a group, there was a
change in dynamics.

The "Popcorn Days" group uses a schedule of video presentations as the basis for
their sessions. Themes have included how things are manufactured, recycling,
living in Canada and issues related to being a disabled person. "Popcorn Days"
ran for eight sessions (running $1^{1/2}$ to 2 hours each) with the assistance of two
volunteers and included individual assessment.

*"At first, learners thought they were getting second best by being assigned
to a group rather than having their own private tutor. However, after the
experience, most of them want to continue in the group only and not be
matched 1:1."[19]*

Timmins Learning Centre[20]
The Timmins Learning Centre currently offers a variety of group opportunities
to its learners: a large group, a small group, and a small group that focuses
specifically on computer skills. A paid staff member, with the help of volunteers,
facilitates all of the groups. Although the facilitator chooses the themes, she does
so in response to learners' interests.

---

[17] Deanna diMartile in an e-mail, November 7, 2000.
[18] Jane Selbie in an e-mail November 8, 2000
[19] Sandy Tosti in an e-mail November 7, 2000.
[20] Sheila Marshall in an e-mail November 6, 2000

The groups run year-round with continuous intake. The large group is offered weekday mornings, and the small group meets four afternoons each week. The computer small group meets one morning and one afternoon, thus making it possible for students from the other two groups to attend at least one session weekly. The Timmins Learning Centre has developed demonstration activities to accompany their group learning activities.

"In a one-on-one with a teacher or tutor, there is almost always an imbalance of power in which the teacher is the one who knows and the student is the one who needs to soak up the wisdom of the teacher. In a small group, however, there is a greater likelihood that individual student strengths will emerge and students will, in turn, take on the role of teacher or 'the one who knows'."[21]

Muskoka Literacy Council[22]
The Muskoka Literacy Council offers small group instruction to augment the work done in one-to-one matches. The small group meets once each week and is facilitated by a volunteer who develops the curriculum based on input from the learners.

Group sessions tend to focus on items of current interest—the newspaper is a frequent resource. Other resources include Laubach Literacy's *Voices from Canada's Past* and maps. Local events may also be discussed, and sometimes debates are held. Often the students suggest a topic.

A frequent activity for the small group is to read a letter to the editor, critique it, discuss the issue, and then write a better letter about the subject! Using these various resources and associated activities, the small group covers a wide variety of topics including history, geography, and map reading. Learning activities can incorporate one or more domains including communications—reading, writing, speaking and listening—numeracy, and self-management/self-direction.

---

[21] Eileen Eckert in an posting to the NIFL-EFF listserv, November 7, 2000
[22] E.W. Holmes in a fax November 30, 2000

"Literacy is a social activity and participants can learn more in a group than they can on an individual basis."[23]

North Bay Literacy Council[24]
The North Bay Literacy Council has two small groups. One meets four to six times a year to put out a student newsletter. A volunteer tutor provides support to the group.

The second group was started because there was a shortage of one-to-one tutors available, so rather than put students on a waiting list, the program decided to set up a small group. A paid instructor facilitates it, and office staff and volunteers help on occasion. When tutors do become available, group members will be matched but will also continue to work with the group. There are four people in the group because that is all that the room can hold!

Curriculum is determined by the needs of the learners. A combination of individual activities and group activities is offered. A variety of resources are used, including computers.

The North Bay Literacy Council has developed a set of policies and procedures for their small group program. It is still in development, but portions of the draft version can be reviewed in Appendix C.

---

[23] Bill Fagan in a posting to the CALE listserv, November 2000
[24] Mary Mills, Jane Jackson and Nancy Herdman, in a letter November 10, 2000

☑ Each small group will be different! Let the group establish its own "personality."

☑ It takes time for bonds to develop and members to establish trust with each other. Don't rush things.

☑ Agree on ground rules (e.g. only one person talks at a time, respect other people's opinions).

☑ Groups are made up of individuals. Some people are quiet, some people are "talkers," and some people are "thinkers." Remember the individual.

☑ Find the common ground. Use it as a starting point. For example, if everyone is interested in budgeting, make this your first theme. In fact, you might establish the group based on a common need.

☑ Consider different literacy levels. Try to make your activities flexible enough to accommodate a variety of abilities, skills, and knowledge.

☑ Involve the group in choosing themes and/or lesson materials—it's not just up to the instructor/tutor!

☑ If one individual has a specific need, schedule time for a one-to-one session. Don't single him/her out in the group.

☑ Take note of special skills, interests, etc. of group members. You might want to encourage peer tutoring or call on someone's expertise later.

☑ Rotate the role of facilitator. This gives the instructor/tutor a break and helps other group members gain new skills.

☑ Use a combination of direct instruction and shared group work.

☑ Build in time for social interaction. This will help the group develop and "come together."

☑ Be sensitive to cultural differences.

List of Resources

Print Resources[25]

Bingman, M.B., J. Merrifield, C. White, and L. White. *A Teacher in a Different Way: Group Instruction in Tennessee. ERIC Digest.* No. ED 326 672. 1990.

Cheatham, Judy, and V.K. Lawson. *Small Group Tutoring: A Collaborative Approach for Literacy Instruction.* Syracuse: Literacy Volunteers of America, 1990.

Clark, M. *Discovery and Respect: A Handbook for Student-directed Group Learning.* Seattle (WA): Goodwill Adult Literacy Center, 1991.

Cooper, D. and D. Inverso. *Collaborative Learning: A Key to Empowerment and Participation in the 90's.* Harrisburg: Department of Education, 1994.

Engleberg, Isa N., and Dianna R. Wynn. *Working in Groups: Communication Principles and Strategies (Second Edition).* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.

Ewing, Guy. *A Day in the Life of a Small Learning Group.* Toronto, 1989.

Ewing, Guy. *Background Ideas about Learning, Groups, and Group Facilitation.* Toronto, 1989.

Ewing, Guy. *Small Groups in the Big Picture. RaPAL Bulletin.* No. 19, 1992.

Fletcher, Susan (ed.) Up *and Running: Examples of Small Group Literacy.* Ottawa: Small Group Literacy Reference Group, 1994.

Fletcher, Susan. *Report on Project to Promote and Develop Small Group Literacy (1991-1994).* Ottawa, 1994.

Fletcher, Susan. *Small Group Literacy Handbook.* Kingston: Literacy Link Eastern Ontario, 1992.

Fletcher, Susan. *Trainer's Manual: Small Group Literacy Core Training Workshop.* Ottawa: 1994.

Fretz, Barbara, and Marianne Paul. *Learning Together: A Small Group Literacy Tutor Trainer Handbook.* Waterloo: Core Literacy, 1994

Horsman, Jenny; Elaine Gaber-Katz and Kathryn Zettel. *Facilitating Literacy: An Introductory Guide to Readings on Study Circles and Group Process.* Toronto: Toronto Board of Education, 1990.

---

[25] Most of these resources can be borrowed from AlphaOntario.

Imel, Susan; Sandra Kerka and Sandra Pritz. *More Than the Sum of the Parts: Using Small Group Learning in Adult Basic and Literacy Education.* Columbus: Centre on Education and Training for Employment, 1994.

Laubach Literacy Action. *Small Group Information Kit.* Syracuse (NY): 2000.

Luft, Joseph. *Group Processes: An Introduction to Group Dynamics (3rd Edition).* California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1984.

Millar, Robin and Joy So. *Learning and Talking Together: Research Investigating Persistence and Retention in Adult Literacy Programs.* Winnipeg: Journeys Adult Education Program, 199?

Olmstead, Joseph A. *Small Group Instruction: Theory and Practice.* Virginia: Human Resources Research Organization, 1974.

Paul, Marianne. *Living and Learning.* Waterloo: Core Literacy, 1993.

Preston, W. *Exploring Small Group Instruction.* Syracuse (NY): New Readers Press, 1991.

Renner, Evelyn. *Basic Literacy Tutor Survival Kit: Interactive Small Group and One-to-One Tutoring.* California: 1994.

Tiberius, Richard. *Small Group Teaching: A Trouble-Shooting Guide.* Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1990.

Activities for Learning Groups. Melbourne: Council of Adult Education, 199?

Guidelines for Organizing and Leading a Study Circle. Connecticut: Study Circles Resource Centre, 19??

Teaching Groups: A Basic Education Handbook. London: The Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, 1986.

Training and Resources for Facilitators of Small Groups in Literacy. Ottawa: Small Group Literacy Reference Group, 1991.

Web-Based Resources[26]

Ball, Charlene L. *Are you Literacy Literate? Demystifying Adult Literacy for Volunteer Tutors: A Reference Handbook and Resource Guide.* Literacy Partners of Manitoba, 1996. http://www.nald.ca/clr/demyst/chapter8.htm

Beder, Hal. *Themes from the Small Group Sessions. NCSALL Report.* No. 10, April 1999. http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/research/report10.html#beder

Beder, Hal; Patsy Medina and Marian Eberly. *The Adult Literacy Classroom as a Social System.* AERC Proceedings, 2000. http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/2000/bederhetal1-web.htm

Cassidy, Jack; William G. Brozo and Drew Cassidy. *Literacy at the Millennium.* http://www.readingonline.org/critical/cassidy

Endaya, Kathy. *Small Group Instruction in a Library Literacy Program.* Redwood City Public Library. http://www.ala.org/literacy/reference/ci/alasgil.html

Engleberg, Isa, and Dianna Wynn. *Working in Groups: Communication Principals and Strategies.* http://www.workingingroups.com

Freer, Kevin J. *Adult Literacy Volunteers. ERIC Digest*, 1993. http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed355454.html

Imel, Susan. *Peer tutoring in Adult Basic and Literacy Education. ERIC Digest.* No. 146, 1994. http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed368891.html

Imel, Susan. *Small Groups in Adult Literacy and Basic Education. ERIC Digest.* No. 130, 1992. http://www.ed/gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed350490.html

Lankard, Bettina; Sarah Nixon-Ponder and Susan Imel. *Beyond Ourselves: Activities for Implementing Ohio's Indicators of Adult Basic and Literacy Education Program Quality.* Columbus: Center on Education and Training for Employment, Ohio State University, 1995. http://archon.educ.kent.edu/Oasis/beyond/beyondindex.html

Millar, Robin and Joy So. *Learning and Talking Together: Research Investigating Persistence and Retention in Adult Literacy Programs.* http://www.nald.ca/FULLTEXT/journeys/cohort.htm

Office of Community Outreach Services, New York Public Library. *Volunteer Job Descriptions.* http://www.nypl.org/branch/literacy/jobs.htm

Peyton, Joy, and JoAnn Crandall. *Philosophies and Approaches in Adult ESL Literacy Instruction. ERIC Digest.* 1995. http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed386960.html

---

[26] url's accurate as of November 2000.

Pincher Creek Community Adult Learning Council. *Study Circles.*
http://ww.nald.ca/clr/study/study.htm

Pritza, Michael. *Getting into Groups. Focus on Basics.* 1998.
http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/1998/pritza.htm

Sarkisian, Ellen. *Working in Groups.* Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning,
Harvard University.
http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~bok_cen/docs/wigintro.html

Wagner, Daniel A. *Towards the Goal of Adult Literacy.* American Psychological
Corporation. http://www.pap.org/ed/literacy.html

Personal Contacts

DesLauriers, Laurie. Reading Routes, Napanee ON. November 2000 (via e-mail)

Eckert, Eileen. ABLE Network, Seattle Washington. November 2000 (in a posting
to the National Institute for Literacy/Equipped for the Future listserv.)

Fagan, Bill. Member of the Canadian Adult Literacy Educators listserv.
November 2000 (in a posting to the listserv)

Holmes, E.W. Muskoka Literacy. November 2000 (via fax)

Hoyle, Jennifer. Adult Literacy Council of Fort Erie, Fort Erie ON. November
2000 (via e-mail)

Hugo, Jane M. Literacy Instruction Coordinator, Women in Literacy/USA
Coordinator, Laubach Literacy Action, Syracuse NY. November 2000
(via e-mail)

Leslie, Jan. The Tutorial Centre, Vermont. November 2000 (via e-mail)

MacDonald, Darren. Instructor, Kingston Literacy, Kingston, ON.
November 2000 (via e-mail)

Marshall, Sheila. Timmins Learning Centre, Timmins ON. November 2000
(via e-mail)

Mills, Mary; Jane Jackson and Nancy Herdman. North Bay Literacy Council.
November 2000 (via mail)

Paul, Marianne. Private Literacy Consultant. November 2000 (via e-mail)

Prior, Joanne. Student Tutor Coordinator, Literacy Council South Simcoe.
November 2000 (via e-mail)

Selbie, Jane. Haliburton Highlands Literacy Program. November 2000
(via e-mail)

Torvi, Lee. Renfrew County Community Upgrading Program. November 2000 (via e-mail)

Tosti, Sandy. Solano County Library Literacy Program, Vallejo CA. November 2000 (via e-mail)

Sample Job Descriptions

LBS Instructor – Small Group[27]
(Reports to Program Coordinator)

Purpose of Position
To provide an effective program that addresses the individual training plan goal of each learner in the small group program.

Duties and Responsibilities
To deliver an effective learning program by:
☑ Assessing the ongoing literacy needs of the student
☑ Working with each student to establish learning goals/demonstrations
☑ Developing and regularly updating training plans for the area of teaching responsibility
☑ Planning and delivering programs that meet the needs of each individual in the group
☑ Participating in the development of innovative and effective learning activities
☑ Identifying or creating resources that motivate the student and help him/her attain his/her goals
☑ Assisting the student to track progress towards his/her goals
☑ Maintaining records required by MTCU and Kingston Literacy
☑ Informing the Program Coordinator of any issues or problems arising within the group

To assist in the development and delivery of other services of Kingston Literacy by:
☑ Participating in the evaluation of our services and projects
☑ Assisting with community outreach
☑ Attending staff meetings as required

To fulfill other duties as assigned.

---

[27] Job description courtesy of Kingston Literacy; used with permission.

Job Description
Small Group Tutor[28]

☑ Establish a safe environment that is encouraging and challenging.

☑ Promote interdependence within the group.

☑ Encourage learners to provide their own answers.

☑ Allow instructional goals to change in response to group and individual needs and wishes.

☑ Invite the learners into the issues of the world.

☑ See the needs of students requiring additional assistance.

☑ Review each group session after its conclusion.

Job Description
Small Group Tutor[29]

Reports to: Site Advisor

Function: To tutor a small group of basic literacy students from the program's waiting list for at least nine months.

Duties:

☑ Attend all tutor training workshop sessions and completed required homework.

☑ Tutor a small group of basic literacy students from the literacy program's waiting list for at least nine months. It is our expectation that tutoring will be so rewarding that a tutor will wish to continue beyond this commitment.

☑ Participate in periodic assessment of each student's learning; evaluate goals and set new ones where necessary.

☑ Report promptly any change in status of a student or tutor (i.e. address, phone, etc.)

☑ Attend at least one in-service training a year.

Qualifications:

☑ High school diploma or equivalent.

☑ Read, write, and speak English.

☑ No prior teaching experience is required.

☑ Complete the Basic Literacy training workshop.

☑ Even-tempered, relaxed, flexible and able to respond to the changing needs of an adult learner.

---

[28] Job description from North Bay Literacy Council; used with permission.

[29] Adapted from a description posted to the New York Public Library Adult Literacy site. http://www.nypl.org/branch/literacy/jobs.htm

Sample Forms[30]

North Bay Literacy Council Small Group Instruction Daily Report	
Class Date:	Instructor:
Subject:	Prep Time:
Book(s):	Lesson:
Absentees: (Also includes students who are late for class)	
Additional Topics and/or Materials Used: (e.g. banking procedures, directions on cereal boxes, application forms, word games, etc.)	

---

[30] Used with permission

North Bay Literacy Council Small Group Instruction Monthly Progress Report	
Month:	Instructor:
Student:	
Instructor Concerns:	
Instructor's Signature:	

Small Group Instruction Program -- North Bay Literacy Council[31]

Small Group Instruction Staff
Small Group Instruction Staff will consist of a Small Group Coordinator as determined by the Program Coordinator, Council Board of Directors, and availability of funding. The number of Small Group Instructors will be determined by the Small Group Coordinator and the Program Coordinator.
Confidentiality Policy
Small Group Instructors will abide by the Confidentiality Policy established in the Council's Policies and Procedures.
Program Length
The Small Group Program will run from September of one year until June of the following year. Small Group Instructors may tutor for all or a part of this time period as indicated by the Small Group Coordinator.
Class Schedule/Class Times
A class schedule is provided for each month of instruction. The schedule will indicate due dates for the Employment Record and Monthly Progress Report for each student. All classes are held at the North Bay Literacy Council office unless otherwise arranged. Each class will be three hours in length. The morning Small Group Instruction class begins at 9:00 a.m. sharp and ends at 12 noon. The afternoon Small Group Instruction class will begin at 12:30 p.m. sharp and end at 3:30 p.m. unless otherwise arranged. There will be one break during each 3 hour session.
Preparations
As instructors, you are responsible for your class preps and materials needed for each class. Preparation and the acquiring of resource materials for your class are to be done before the start of your class time. However, the office staff is there to assist you if needed.
Reports   **a)   Daily Reports**   Small Group Instructors will write a daily report for their respective class. It will be handed in after your class to the Small Group Coordinator or office and will be kept on file. The daily report helps to chart the class progress as well as the individual student's progress in the program. The daily report will also assist a substitute tutor or staff member to plan a lesson if you should be unable to attend class.

---

[31] Abridged version; used with permission.

b)   Monthly Reports

At the end of the month a Monthly Progress Report of each student's progress will be handed in to the Small Group Coordinator. This report is used as a basis for the Monthly Progress Report written for all Sponsored Students and Council Students who attend classes three to five days a week. The monthly report should reflect the learning outcomes of your student during the month. If not already brought to the attention of the Small Group Coordinator, any concerns or difficulties a student may be experiencing should also be noted. The due dates for the students' progress reports are indicated on the Instructor's class schedule for the month.

Small Group Instructor Attendance

Instructors are to be on time for all scheduled classes and to instruct for the allotted class time. If an instructor is unable to instruct her/her class, the Small Group Coordinator or the Council office must be notified as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made for the students. If you know that you will be away from your class, instructions regarding your class should be provided to the office or substitute tutor.

Resource Materials Used

Council Students (students who are not sponsored) may purchase the books used in Small Group from the Literacy office. When the student pays for a book, a receipt is given by the office. A label designating that the book has been purchased will be put into the book. Sponsored students have their books paid for by their Sponsor. Instructors, giving books to a Small Group student, are responsible for recording this transaction in writing and ensuring that the Small Group Coordinator has a record of this. Books borrowed from the Literacy Council Library CANNOT be written in. A library sign-out system has been established for Council books. Please follow the procedure for all library books. Borrowed books must be returned to the Literacy Library. Be sure to check off the return of your books on the sign-out sheet.

Training

Training for all Council Tutors and Small Group Instructors will be given as funding and training is available.

Small Group Instruction Program -- North Bay Literacy Council[32]

Small Group Student
Council Student A Council Student is a learner who attends Small Group Instruction on a voluntary basis.
Sponsored Student A Sponsored Student is a learner who is guaranteed a seat in Small Group Instruction. He/she is a student who is sponsored by an agency to help upgrade his/her literacy and numeracy skills. A contract will be drafted by the Council and signed by all parties.
Class Schedule/Class Times A class schedule is provided for each month of instruction. The student will record on his/her schedule the time spent in class and the times spent in independent study each day. The total hours will be recorded at the bottom of the page for each month. The class schedule will also be used to indicate absences from class. It is the responsibility of the student to record this information. The information will be collected by the Small Group Coordinator at the end of each month during the student's monthly interview. All classes are held at the North Bay Literacy Council office unless otherwise arranged. Each class session will be three hours in length. The morning Small Group Instruction class begins at 9:00 a.m. sharp and ends at 12 noon. The afternoon Small Group Instruction class begins as 12:30 p.m. sharp and ends at 3:30 p.m. unless otherwise arranged. There will be one break during each three-hour session.
Attendance Students are to be on time for all scheduled classes and to be present for the entire three-hour session. 100% attendance is expected by both Small Group Instructors and the North Bay Literacy Council. If a student is unable to attend class, the Small Group Coordinator or the Literacy Council office must be notified as soon as possible. Medical, dental, eye, agency, etc. appointments are to be scheduled outside of class time. Students are to record their attendance on their class schedules. If a student misses or is late for too many classes without good reason, he/she may lose his/her position in the Small Group Instruction Class.
Dismissal Procedures Dismissal from class may occur if a student misses or is late for too many classes without good reason. The following procedures will be taken before final dismissal occurs: ☑ Verbal discussion with Small Group Instructor regarding the problem. Note will be made on the daily report form of this discussion. ☑ Verbal discussion with the Small Group Coordinator regarding the problem. Note will be kept on file. **Continued on next page**

---

[32] Abridged version; used with permission.

☑ A written letter addressing the problem will be given to the student.

☑ A written letter of dismissal will be given the to the student and a copy put in his/her file.

An Exit Form for students leaving the program will be completed and kept in the student's file for future reference.

Preparations

Students are expected to come prepared for each class. This includes bringing school books and required writing material as well as completed homework assignments given by the Small Group Instructor.

Students are responsible for themselves.

Books/Resource Materials

Class books are purchased from the Literacy Council office. A receipt is given for each book purchased. A label designating that the book has been purchased is placed in the purchased book. Books may be borrowed from the Literacy Council Library. Students may not write in borrowed books. All borrowed books must be signed out and on returning the borrowed books students are responsible for checking off their books on the sign-out sheet.

Monthly Progress Reports

All students who attend Small Group Instruction three to five days a week will have an interview with the Small Group Coordinator at the end of each month. A Monthly Progress Report will be prepared for each student for the interview. At the interview the following will be discussed:

☑ Attendance

☑ Materials covered in class

☑ Progress

☑ Techniques used in class

☑ Instructor comments

☑ Student concerns and/or comments

The Monthly Progress Report will be signed by the student if he/she is in agreement with the report. The Small Group Coordinator will also sign and date the report. A copy of the Report will be kept on file in the Literacy Council office, and a copy will be given to the student for his/her records. The Monthly Progress Report for a sponsored student will be sent to the student's sponsoring agency after the report has been signed.

Concerns

If a student has a concern, comment or question, he/she should not hesitate to talk to the Small Group Instructor, Small Group Coordinator or Literacy Council office staff. An open communication line is important to all parties.