



In an effort to better connect to our Agency's root cause of teaching English Language skills, I asked some of our tutors to reflect upon what motivates them to do what they do. I got back numerous terrific stories about some of the challenges and high points of being a tutor and/or learner. I will continue to collect these insights and place them in our office classroom.

Consider this an invitation to all tutors and learners in A.L.P. and E.L.L. to reflect upon what motivates you to learn and teach English. Please send us a paragraph describing your experiences and feel free to talk beyond the classroom. For example, the ways in which you apply what you have learned to your life and/or how cultural differences may affect you.

Thanks for those who have already shared with us and I look forward to hearing from more of you. Please encourage your learners to write something as well. A mere word and/or sentence is the beginning of a voice that is ready to be heard.

The first reflections are from Michelle Ott, our Sterling Meadows Outreach Site tutor. Michelle and Malcolm Kenyon both teach a small group of seven or so learners who are Spanish Speakers. This Communications Skills class has been running successfully for three years. The next insights are from Calvin Bratt, an active tutor from Lynden who talks about his learner and their experiences together. Last but not least are a few words from our learners at our Roosevelt site. Thanks again for your inspiring words.

Gina Barrieau-Gonzales



Volunteer Tutors Wanted for Spring Training

As many of you know, here at WLC we train tutors three times during the year. There is a fall training, a winter training and a spring training offered to prospective tutors. We have found that summer is not a good time to offer tutor training, so our upcoming spring training on May 9 & 10 is the last opportunity for prospective tutors to be trained until our fall training next October.

With this in mind, we would like to ask for your help to promote 2 events that are geared toward tutor recruitment happening in April. On Wednesday, April 16, we will hold our regular monthly information night for prospective tutors at the Bellingham Public Library meeting room from 6pm to 7pm. The following evening, Thursday, April 17, is a special tutor information night at the Blaine Library at 6pm.

Please spread the word to friends, family and co-workers who may be interested in learning more about tutoring with Whatcom Literacy Council. So far this year, we have trained more than 80 enthusiastic new tutors, and we would like to add another 20 to 30 committed people to the ranks. Thanks for your help and your important work!

- Rachel Myers

Whatcom Literacy Council's E.L.L. Outreach Classes

All levels of English Language Learners are encouraged to attend our free, ongoing, supplementary classes. These classes are for students who want regular weekly practice, or for those who just want to drop in. Contact Gina or Charlotte for class times and locations.

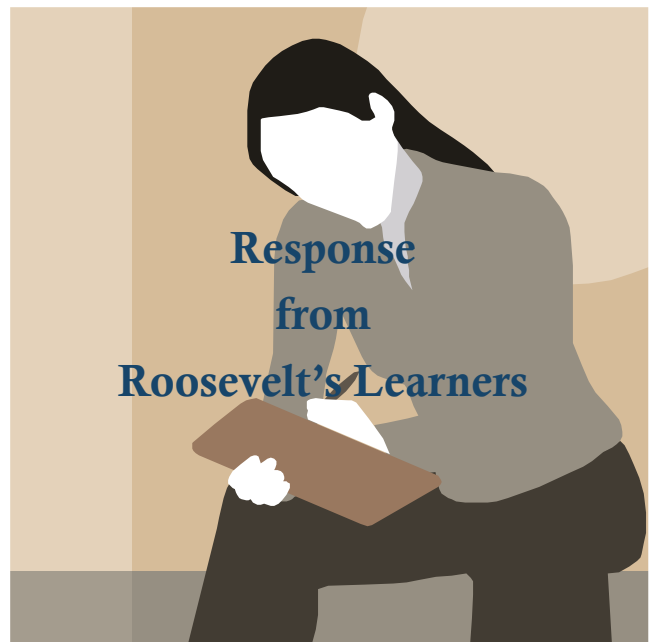
Michelle's Thoughts from Sterling Meadows

There are many reasons that I teach English, but the bottom line is: I just really enjoy it. I love being creative in my activities and watching my students really enjoy themselves. I also know how hard it is to be a foreigner. After living in Mexico for three years, my eyes were opened to how hard everyday tasks can be when you are not comfortable speaking the language. It is also frustrating to want to express yourself and make new friends, but lack the words to convey your feelings.

Our class is challenging at times. We have a small group of students who are all at very different levels. I have one student who can carry on a conversation in English sitting next to a woman who can barely state her name. We also have the added challenge of having an open class; meaning that anyone can join at any time. Just tonight I had a new woman join and now I am trying to figure out how to bring her up to speed.

I think my favorite moments are the ones in which we all forget who is the teacher and who are the students. I love getting caught up in conversation about things not even related to English learning. I have learned about their families, home countries, struggles and joys. (And every few weeks they surprise us with a Mexican Potluck!) I really think that Whatcom Literacy Council tutors and learners are together helping to bring our community closer. The more you get to know your neighbor, the less different you become.

-Michelle Ott



I want to learn English:

“For my work”

“To talk to people”

“For conferences with the teachers”

“To talk to friends, doctor, everybody”

I like the class at Roosevelt Elementary
because:

“I like speaking, writing and listening”

“I like the teachers”

“I like talking to the teacher; he is very
nice” (Must mean Alex!)

“I like everything!”

The most important thing I have learned in
class:

“The computer is good, the ABC, the
months of the year, the days of the
week, the colors, and Alex’ dog!”

Other comments:

“Para superarme, darie gracias alodos
los maestros”

“Me gutaria saber escribir en ingles”

A Letter From Lynden

Anselmo and I have been tutoring for about a year and a half. Now I consider him a friend as well as an English language learner. We meet twice a week in the Lynden Library and do whatever is most helpful to him. Often we just talk. We have worked through a simple English picture dictionary of essentials such as time, weather, types of work and places in a community.

Sometimes I help him with his assignments from a Whatcom Community College ELL class he might be taking.

Anselmo came from El Salvador and has lived in Washington since 1993. He has permanent resident ("green card") status. He works in the banquet kitchen of the Resort at Semiahmoo. He is a very diligent worker, usually starting at 5 a.m. For two months during the winter, he returns to El Salvador to see his family (his wife, his mother and four children), whom he supports financially.

I am so impressed with how determined Anselmo is to learn English. He has such a great attitude. He will sometimes exclaim "Crazy!" about the irregularities or inconsistencies of the language (compared to Spanish, which is so consistent). But he keeps making progress. He doesn't shy away from conversation, and he has become better at it in the time I have known him. He has expanded his vocabulary and improved his pronunciation.

He applied to the Whatcom Literacy Council especially to improve his writing in English. "It is the writing that is hard," he says. So we are concentrating on that area. In time, he would like

to gain American citizenship and possibly bring his family here. He is interested in learning more about the computer, and we have set up an email account so he can communicate with his family that way.



I became a WLC tutor because I found it hard to believe the statistic about the number of people in the U.S. who are functionally illiterate for one reason or another (one in six). They can be hidden from view, and it's great that the WLC offers

this service. I also tutored a Russian lady for a while in 2007. In the process of tutoring, you meet wonderful people who just happen to need this assistance to function better and achieve some of their goals.

-- Calvin Bratt ELL Tutor

WLC Calendar

APRIL

7th E.L.L. Tutor Workshop
Strategies for Teaching Grammar

Location: Our new office at 2205 Elm Street

Time: 5:45 - 8:00 pm

Facilitators:

Charlotte Ball & Gina Barrieau-Gonzales

For registration &/or questions - please contact

gina@whatcomliteracy.org, 647-3264 ext 102

charlotte@whatcomliteracy.org, ext 103

16th WLC Tutor Info Meeting
Bellingham Public Library 6PM
information and sign up for Spring Tutor Training

17th WLC Tutor Info Meeting
Blaine Public Library 6PM
information and sign up for Spring Tutor Training

MAY

9th & 10th
Spring Tutor Training Workshop
Pre-registration required
Location TBA

More Tutor's Tales

My first encounter with Jeremiah was over the phone. He had called to see if we had found a new tutor for him. I could detect a growing impatience in his quiet voice. It had been several months since he first requested one-on-one tutoring. When I told him that we had been unsuccessful in finding a match, he was polite but persistent and replied, "Call me as soon as you do!" I was impressed with his motivation to learn and hopeful that I would find an available tutor in our upcoming training.

About a dozen ALP tutors participated in that training. One of the trainees, Gabriele, was available to tutor at the same time Jeremiah could study. After sharing some information about Jeremiah as a learner and requesting that they meet at a site where Jeremiah could easily access the facilities, I asked Gabriele if she would be open to working with him. She agreed. The following is their story.

~ Jessica Hilburn

I saw Whatcom Literacy as an organization that helps non or semi literate adults create bridges into life's mainstream, opening up new opportunities for these folks as well as building on and enriching their personal strengths. WLC tutors work flexible schedules with their learners on a one-to-one or small group basis encouraging learning within the context of a relationship.

WLC offers good backup for tutors and learners, providing ongoing training, learner/tutor pairing, curriculum materials, and staff availability for questions and problems. They are also a good community resource to tap into when you encounter adults in need of literacy skills.

I like what I saw and joined up.

Though I am still relatively new as a WLC tutor (≈ 5 months), after a couple of sessions with my learner, I was reminded of how much I enjoyed home schooling my own children years ago. By building relationships in tutoring, fears and limitations are minimized and learning occurs unhindered. Several key elements present in my past experience and reinforced in our WLC tutor training prove to be very useful and naturally apparent in tutoring: Preparation, consistency, flexibility, and team work.

Jeremiah, my learner, is very motivated. He likes to be prepared by being on time, bringing his books along and having his homework completed for our sessions. I prepare

continued on next page ↗

A.L.P. Program Picks

Is your learner struggling with letter recognition and sounds? Or does he need support in reading to learn about things in his environment, like medical prescriptions. Maybe your learner is challenged by writing assignments in her Adult Basic Education class. If any of these scenarios sound familiar then you should check out Voyager from the WLC library.

Voyager is a literacy curriculum designed with the adult learner in mind. It includes 9 levels, starting with the beginning reader and ending with pre-GED material. Each level has a student book, workbook and teacher's resource guide. The student book prompts the learner to read, write and talk about what they are learning with his/her tutor. After several lessons you will find unit reviews. Answers to all lessons and unit reviews are given at the end of each book.



The workbook includes extension activities that provide more practice with the skills introduced in the student book.

The pages out of the workbook make clean copies and could be used for homework assignments.

The teacher's resource guide highlights the main learning goals for each leveled book in reading and writing. In addition, the types of activities that are found in each lesson are discussed and a rationale is given. This information is useful in developing further lessons.

Language skills are taught thematically in a context that is meaningful to adult learners. For example, Voyager 4 addresses the theme of Community. Lesson 9 teaches the skill of identifying key facts in the format of a brochure. In another exercise, the learner is asked to write a public announcement. Both of these activities could later be applied to real life situations.

Voyager's foundation is grounded in best teaching practices. It connects learning with real-life for the adult

by also being on time, having assignments ready, and tracking work done, session times, homework due and skill observed that need practice.

Jeremiah and I like to discuss our lessons using a teamwork approach. We dialogue as we go to figure out what works, what doesn't, and how we should modify or revise something to create a better fit for mastery of a particular skill or concept.

Sometime we joke around or "kick back" and do a large print word search together making a game out of it just for fun to lighten things up. Sometimes we take turns reading aloud from a book of Jeremiah's choice. This was a problem at first due to an unpleasant incident at the library, however, we put our heads together and problem solved and ended up relocating to the children's department which is more read aloud friendly. We also contacted our WLC supervisor, Jessica, and she helped us by arranging for us to use the Library conference room for our weekend sessions.

We have consistency in our meeting time and days as well as in our curriculum which is workbook based with spelling words and other practice skills generated from workbook lessons. Jeremiah and I also remain flexible in our lessons as we modify them according to his interests, learning style, and energy levels. We enrich the experience by adding "extras" to further Jeremiah's skills.

For instance, cursive writing practice, sentence structure, spelling, creative thinking and basic research were all combined in a non-intimidating long term writing assignment based on a learner interest generated topic. Jeremiah addressed the issue of "If you and a friend could go on an all expense paid vacation to anywhere – where would you go?" We did this together, piece by piece working as a team. Jeremiah chose a place and then we talked about who, what, when, etc. questions to create several topic ideas for paragraphs. From there we began to expand the main topics adding a few details to make the essay more interesting. Jeremiah wrote several drafts, getting a lot of cursive writing practice and then – off to the typewriter for another fun challenge and Presto! A masterpiece! Something to be proud of that Jeremiah had stuck with and completed. Tutoring is fun. My learner is great and we are enjoying growing and going forward together. Try it – you'll like it!!

~ Gabriele Martin ALP Tutor



Whatcom Literacy Council

Opening Doors. Changing Lives.

WLC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board President: Lorretta Palagi,
Board Vice President: Sallye Quinn,
Board Co-Secretary: Pam Kiesner,
Board Co-Secretary: Guy Smith,
Treasurer: Frances Burkhart
Members: Cliff Baacke, Elizabeth Daly,
David Ivie, Jeff Hilburn,
Pat Hite, J. Tim Shepherd, Roberta Walker

WLC VOLUNTEER ADVOCATES FOR LITERACY

Yvonne Bianchi,	Peter Paulsen
Anne Bowen	Anne Rose
Aaron Brown	Bonnie Rose
Betty Krejci	Phyllis Self
Pete Kremen	Laura Todd
Darlene McDonald	Jane Van Voorst
Glen Nardi	Alexandra Wiley

WLC Offices: 2205 Elm Street
[NorthWest corner of Broadway & Elm]

Phone: 360.647.3264
Rachel: ext 101
Gina: ext 102
Charlotte: ext 103
Jessica: ext 104
Dale: ext 100



Our website: www.whatcomliteracy.org

Mail:
BOX 1292 ❖ Bellingham ❖ WA ❖ 98227