



County of Los Angeles Public Library ■ www.colapublib.org
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Margaret Donnellan Todd
County Librarian

May 7, 2010

William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer
713 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Mr. Fujioka:

LITERACY SERVICES

The Board of Supervisors requested information regarding the possibility of operating the one-on-one literacy tutoring program with volunteers. The following is a brief description of the status of this program and options available for providing literacy tutoring.

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM

Public libraries throughout the country are re-evaluating their literacy service delivery models to determine how to provide these services more effectively. The County's literacy model was developed in the 1980's based on the State Library's literacy plan. A comparison study of the County Library's cost per capita versus cost per literacy student established that the cost per capita for library services was \$37.66 while the cost per literacy student was \$2,434.21. The present literacy services delivery model of one-on-one tutoring by a volunteer under the supervision of staff needs to be replaced with a more efficient and cost effective program that will reach more students while reducing the cost per student.

Literacy services will continue to be made available to the public in a variety of ways:

- Literacy computers with self help software will be available at each Literacy Center. These workstations include the following self study software: Rosetta Stone, Oxford English Picture Dictionary, Ultimate Phonics, and the Mavis Beacon typing program.

- Online literacy training will also be available on the public access internet computers in all libraries and can be accessed remotely at home through the Library website. A variety of language learning resources and podcasts can be used free of charge online, e.g. englishbanana.com, livemocha.com, and englishonline.net.
- English conversation classes although technically not a literacy service are very popular and will continue to be sponsored by community libraries. These English conversation classes will be expanded to additional libraries where there is an identified need and staffing is available.
- Collaboration with local agencies will be expanded.
 1. A literacy referral list will be made available at each library. Library staff has identified several agencies that provide free or low cost literacy services that are within a ten mile radius of each Literacy Center, and staff will be trained to provide referrals as necessary.
 2. Current literacy students will be referred to nearby agencies offering literacy tutoring. If no nearby alternatives exist, staff will continue to tutor some individual students until the student has completed their course of study.
 3. The Library meeting rooms will also be available for literacy tutors from other literacy agencies to use for literacy classes. Literacy staff will contact local literacy agencies to offer this space for literacy classes.

VOLUNTEERS

The County Library cannot operate a cost effective literacy program with only volunteers. Operating a volunteer literacy program would require paid staff to oversee daily operations as well as training and recruitment. At minimum the Department would need one supervisor per region and a coordinator at headquarters (six staff). For that reason, very little savings would be realized if full-time staff was required.

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Unlike other volunteer jobs available in public libraries, tutoring requires very specific skills so the recruitment pool is smaller and the screening process more rigorous. The literacy volunteer tutors are required to have at least eight hours of training and a minimum of one year commitment to guarantee the continuity of classes. Research indicates that literacy students need 100-150 hours of instruction to advance one grade level. Because of work and family demands, literacy students on average actually receive 70 hours of tutoring per year. In contrast to the 1980s, it is difficult to find qualified adult tutors who will commit to a year of tutoring sessions. The teacher-student relationship is critical to the success of the Literacy program whether the classes are one-on-one or in a group setting.

The Library uses teen volunteers for many projects but not as literacy tutors. Teens have a limited number of hours available for volunteer service and they often want their volunteer service hours to be completed within a short period of time. Using a teen as an instructor for an adult or group of adults is awkward for the student and the volunteer. Further, allowing one-on-one tutoring between a tutor who is a minor and an adult carries clear risk management issues.

NEW MODEL FOR LITERACY TUTORING

Over the next year, the Library will develop a model that is better suited for the 21st Century. The Department will identify the best practices for online adult literacy instruction and is investigating the option of providing literacy software on our website and library computers at all County libraries so that anyone can start the process. It is the Department's goal that by using on line technology every library will be able to offer literacy assistance to the public at any time in a variety of formats.

Very truly yours,



Margaret Donnellan Todd
County Librarian

MDT:cd

c: Lari Sheehan
Montessa Duckett

bc: Ex Com ✓