Introduction

Literacy Council of Norristown (LCN) was founded in 1984 in Norristown by volunteers who wanted to improve lives through literacy. LCN supports adult learners with the reading, speaking, writing, math, English, and work skills they need to access broader social, employment, and educational opportunities. Literacy empowers learners, their families, their employers, and the Montgomery County community at large. Today, the mission of LCN is to improve lives and strengthen families in greater Norristown and Montgomery County by providing adult literacy and English language programs. We serve learners from all over Montgomery County.

LCN's programs include:

Adult Basic Education (ABE): LCN was founded with this core program, providing adult learners with basic reading, writing and math skills. Learners are matched with LCN-trained tutors and these learning pairs work up to 3 hours per week together on a learning journey overseen by LCN. Tutors attend 12-hours of training provided by LCN.

GED/High School Equivalency (GED/HSE): Adult learners enroll in a combination of one-on-one tutoring and targeted classroom instruction to tailor their learning journey for success. LCN supports learners with instruction, learning materials, and covers the exam fees for learners. Instruction and testing is available in both English and Spanish.

English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL): LCN's English language classes enable students to improve their basic skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking English. Additional resources include Conversation Clubs, citizenship tutoring and support, as well as connections to legal, housing, food, health, and other forms of aid.

Community/Family Literacy Programs: LCN works with community members and organizations, including businesses, libraries, and nonprofits to bring literacy instruction directly to learners onsite. Additionally, LCN partners with multiple family literacy partners to bring free books, learning resources, and workshops directly to families in the community.

There is a clear correlation between adult literacy level and adult individual and family outcomes. 14% of adults and 19% of high school graduates in the US cannot read. 75% of incarcerated individuals did not complete high school. And literacy matters to families too: 72% of children who come from low-literate households will be low-literate in their adult years. A mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her child's future academic success. Effective education programs like LCN's alleviate food scarcity, homelessness, underemployment, poor health, and social isolation by providing a path to better employment and advanced educational opportunities. Studies show that advancing an Educational Functioning Level (EFL) can add $10,000 to an individual's annual income; adding a GED amounts to an additional $9,000. It is estimated that bringing low-literate adults to a sixth grade reading level would generate an additional $2.2 trillion in annual income in the US.

Tutor training will be provided quarterly at each location to recruit and train volunteer tutors and teachers. Following a Tutor Orientation, volunteer tutors progress through a comprehensive, trauma - informed 12-hour training that teaches adult basic reading, writing and math, GED preparation and testing in English and Spanish, English language instruction, citizenship tutoring, and cultural and diversity awareness. Once tutors complete the training they are matched with students. With assistance from LCN's Student-Tutor Coordinator, learners and tutors create goals and a learning journey map for the student and LCN provides print and digital learning materials to support the student's goals. The Student-Tutor Coordinator checks in monthly with the pair and tracks progress towards the goals, and is available to troubleshoot any issues that may arise. This collaboration plans to serve a minimum of 20 student-tutor pairs to start at each location during 2023.

In the future, LCN will coordinate the start of English language instruction at the designated locations. Taught by certified instructors, LCN's English classes are taught at three levels: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced. Students are provided with textbooks and workbooks and digital instructional materials are incorporated into instruction to further digital literacy and improve student engagement. Students will have access to an extensive referral system for legal, housing, employment, health, food, and other aid, further augmented by the collaboration of LCN and the Library.

Building on the PA Forward program, both organizations will partner to ensure access to the five key areas: Basic Literacy, Information Literacy, Civic and Social Literacy, Health Literacy, and Financial Literacy. Basing expansion on documented demand from library patrons and community need, LCN and the Library will seek additional sources of funding to provide excellent, sustainable, free adult education services effectively, efficiently, and equitably.

Tutor Registration and Training

A. Scheduling
    1. LCN will develop an annual schedule of quarterly orientations and workshops.

    2. LCN will ensure that there are 2 trainers available for every workshop. Only one person is needed for the orientation.

    3. Two trainings should be day sessions and two should be evening sessions. Avoid major holidays and times when tutors with school-age children might be on vacation.

    4. Each training currently is 4 sessions long, 2 hours per session. Home work is estimated to take an hour per session.

    5. Students can make up a class by using the ProLiteracy online training system. They must complete the module and assessment and share it with the S-T Coordinator.

B. Orientation
    1. Orientation currently has a couple of objectives: to provide background on the organization; to familiarize potential students with expectations and the students we serve; and to share information about the commitment involved.

    2. Potential tutors register online at lcnlit.org, through Volunteer Match at www.volunteermatch.org, or by calling LCN at 610-292-8515.

    3. Orientation includes a PowerPoint with information about LCN, our students, with some slides being designed to promote discussion and questions. A folder with printed information about LCN as well as literacy statistics is handed out.

    4. A tutor job description and list of future trainings is provided in the orientation workshop.

    5. The presentation will be reviewed and updated as needed.

C. Workshop

    1. Setup for each workshop session involves bringing the resource cart to the training room plus any materials specifically needed for that session. We also set out drinks and snacks for each session. For the first session, we have a resource binder, a training manual and a name card for each tutor-in-training.

    2. There is a presentation and script for the workshop (links attached). It provides the details for the topics listed in the session. Take attendance.

3. Tutors should complete their Tutor Preference Form. This form lets LCN know what kinds of students the tutor would like to work, the days and locations they can meet, as well as any special circumstances.

4. A background check form must be completed by each volunteer. LCN will process the basic criminal background check through the PA State Criminal database: https://epatch.pa.gov/home

5. Student assignments are distributed at the final session. An LCN book bag will be given to each student.

6. LCN will meet with fellow trainers to review workshop content and revise if necessary, either to reflect new research; to improve the flow of the training; to address issues that existing tutors seem to have struggled with; or to reflect feedback provided in the evaluations submitted at the end of each workshop by tutors in that training.

Student Registration and Assessment

Student assessments.

1. Student enrollment is online at lcnlit.org, by phone at 610-292-8515 or by walk-in at the location.

2. Conduct interview using the registration form and interview question list.

3. Choose and conduct an assessment based on the answers to the registration and interview questions. Assessments vary depending on student needs and goals.

4. After the student leaves, complete the scoring and write up a student summary report.

5. Assemble a file for the student, including 2 copies of the diagnostic summary (one for the tutor once one is assigned), the registration form, interview form, answer sheets, writing sample, contract, work papers from testing (generally these are the math sheets), IDP and any other relevant materials. Put into a secure file.

Matching Tutors and Students

Once Tutors have completed training, they are ready to be matched with a student. The Student-Tutor Coordinator compares the Tutor Preference Forms with the available waiting list of students and makes matches based on: location, meeting day/time, tutor background, and good personality fit.

The S-T Coordinator calls both parties and lets them know they've made a match. The Coordinator schedules the time for the student and tutor to come in together and sign the Shared Agreement. This agreement spells out the student's goals, the time and location where they will

meet, and the preferred communication method of both parties. Copies are made for each person and the original is filed in the student's file.

The S-T Coordinator follows up with the student and the tutor after 2 weeks to make sure the match has gone well. If there is an issue, the S-T Coordinator proactively works with both people to try to reach a resolution. Sometimes a match doesn't come together well or a student or tutor may experience a life change. If this happens, the S-T Coordinator will make another match.

Tutor-Student assignments and support

1. Based on the student summary report, gather materials for the tutor to use with the student. If possible, provide two copies of any study books, one for the student to use and consume/write in, and one for the tutor to use for planning. If the suggested materials include books for which we only have a reference copy, copy the text.

2. The tutor and student should meet at the LCN location for their first meeting. They will complete the Student-Tutor Agreement with the Student-Tutor Coordinator which outlines: communication information of each person; where and when they will meet; what the goals of the student are; and, any other important shared information.

3. The S-T Coordinator will be available to recommend additional or different materials over time if the tutor-student pair wants them.

4. If the tutor has difficulty making or maintaining contact with student and wants help, use some of the additional contact info in the student file (including emergency contact numbers) to try to connect on the tutor's behalf.

5. LCN asks the student-tutor pair to check in with the LCN Coordinator regularly, at least once a month. After 6 months, we ask the pair to come in and meet with us so we can re-assess the progress of the pair.

LCN links:
Tutor Orientation Presentation:
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/14Oh0g5_jopPCh_2VJVZFWQ6SwOwEn_9jsIlMt8iO_y0/edit?usp=share_link
Tutor Enrollment Form:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ezmbpo6UlrCDkXg_9Ehpf4DdnWV3mTxr/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=113682938608343110948&rtpof=true&sd=true
Student Enrollment Form:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A2x2aJtuq63fWloQW3ONyRkj-com_L9t/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=113682938608343110948&rtpof=true&sd=true
Student-Tutor Agreement:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PX64woe_56HzUl9RTZJBVuTlyzzCXGSK/view?usp=share_link

FAQs

How do I sign up?
Interested tutors and students can sign up at www.lcnlit.org or call LCN at 610-292-8515.

I've never tutored. Is there training?
Yes! There is an Orientation followed by a 12-hour comprehensive tutor training.

Will I have to pay for the books or learning materials?
No – the Literacy Council pays for all of the learning materials and testing.

What if I need to miss a day of training?
The Literacy Council has an online platform where you can complete the training you would miss that day.

Will there be someone who can help me if I need assistance?
Yes! LCN has Student-Tutor Coordinators who are available to answer questions and offer advice and guidance.

How do I get matched with a student?
During training, you will be able to share information about which educational program you would like to work with. Each tutor-student pair is unique and matched based on availability, program, and good fit.

What can I learn/tutor with LCN?
LCN will match you with a student who wants to:
- Learn to read, write and do math
- Pass their GED or Hi-Set test
- Learn English
- Become a citizen
- And more!
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Do I have to go to Norristown?
No, we are bringing our tutor and student programs to you. You will also have access to our Norristown team if you have any questions or would like to visit our center there.