

MAKING YOUR LIBRARY "LITERACY-READY"

A primary goal of library-based literacy programs is to help adult literacy learners become lifelong learners by enabling them to access *all* of the library's resources and services. To do this, make sure that your library's mission and its plan of service actively meet the needs of adult literacy learners.



ESSENTIAL STEPS

Fully integrate literacy programs into the library environment by initiative at the administrative, middle-management, and public service levels.

ACTIVITIES

The following suggested activities can help accomplish this goal:

- Establish an on-going committee of library staff at various levels to discuss long-range literacy projects, develop grant proposals, etc.
- Consider each staff development occasion as an opportunity to present literacy-related staff training.
- Invite literacy learners to participate in the library, such as presenting bilingual children's story-times, mounting displays and printing signs.
- Invite non-literacy library staff to literacy events such as "Learners Accomplishment Day" or "International Literacy Day."
- Create displays or bulletin boards about literacy in general public areas of the library (i.e., not just in the "Literacy" room.)
- Promote literacy resources and events in library newsletters, newspaper columns, media PSA's, library annual reports and any other publicity about the library.
- Communicate the literacy curriculum to public service staff: explain the library skills training received by learners and how theme-based classes may impact the learners' use of library collections.
- Anticipate the impact that the learner curriculum may have on non-literacy library staff: the need for tours, special access to collections, demand for material, etc.
- Take opportunities to sensitize non-literacy library staff to adult learner issues by sharing facts about literacy, the definition of functional illiteracy and culture awareness of the ethnic groups served in the program. Take the lead in your organization's diversity training program.
- Train a librarian at each site to serve as liaison to the literacy program.
- Ensure distribution of any current literacy information and referral tools (whether library-produced or other) to each library site.
- Make library literacy program information available at each public service station in bookmark or other handout format, in English and other languages as needed.
- Consider the needs of adult learners at all planning stages for technology, for collection development and for staff training.
- Provide staff training opportunities on Adult New Reader (ANR) and ESL collection development and usage. Invite staff to try out literacy software.
- Establish a plain language policy for all library-produced information. Literacy staff *and* learners could assist in editing publicity, bibliographies, web sites and signage for clarity.
- Encourage learners to meet library staff. Arrange for mock reference interviews as practice for learners (the librarians will be learning something, too!)
- Encourage library staff to serve as guest speakers in literacy classes.
- Encourage library staff to become volunteer literacy tutors.

(continued)

ALA American Library Association

Literacy in Libraries Across America (LILAA) is an initiative of the American Library Association (ALA) and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

For more information, contact ALA Office of Literacy and Outreach Services (OLOS), 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

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SUMMARY

There are many opportunities to promote general literacy issues, as well as specific literacy programs to library users and the public at large. First, non-literacy library staff need to have a foundation of knowledge regarding these issues and programs. Next, the staff must take advantage of opportunities to support adult learners in becoming lifelong library users. As an example, librarians often need to spend time assessing the library skills level of their clients. Interactions will be more effective and efficient when librarians know ahead of time which resources and skills the learners have been exposed to in the literacy program. Finally, staff should integrate literacy issues into the library's overall mission and planning process.

For more information, contact:

ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM

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