

# HOW RURAL LIBRARIES CAN INCLUDE LITERACY SERVICES

Rural libraries face unique opportunities and challenges in providing literacy services. As service populations become increasingly diverse, these strategies will help your library build partnerships and develop programs for your patrons.



Rural public libraries serve millions of Americans, often acting as a community center and main access point for knowledge at the same time. While patron portraits often include many similarities, rural public libraries serve every race, social class, religion and profession. As suburbs extend their boundaries, rural public libraries continue to experience increased patron diversity.

Typically, rural libraries provide many or all of their services at one site, with library staff members filling multiple roles within the library system. With this in mind, how can a rural public library extend its services further to include literacy services?

## STRATEGIES

Any or all of the following suggestions may assist libraries in offering literacy services.

- Designate a tutor/student meeting space at the library, preferably in a quiet, secluded location.
- Develop an adult easy-reading section as part of the library collection: these books are high-interest, low-level reading. Titles in this category often include books on bestseller lists.
- Purchase basic literacy skills instructional materials. (Adult literacy students respond best to adult-appropriate curriculum; avoid juvenile materials.)
- Include computer software to aid literacy instruction: a complete GED computer software program with accompanying textbooks would be ideal.
- Advertise the availability of the literacy materials to the general public on a regular basis by way of press releases to local newspapers, radio public service announcements, etc.
- Capitalize on the library patrons' love of reading: recruit literacy volunteers via posters and book-stuffers.
- Offer tutor training at the library for literacy volunteers.
- Host continuing education workshops at the library for literacy tutors.
- Network with other literacy providers in your area/state to share tutor training and/or continuing education tutor workshops.
- Provide assistance to other literacy providers in using the library to select resources as literacy texts/curriculum.
- Build an educational and instructional video and computer games collection in the library.
- Invite literacy students/tutors/program staff into existing library programs such as children's programs, book discussion groups, family read alouds, nursing home programs, etc.
- Take advantage of shared interests with local newspapers. Ask for: free or reduced-rate advertising space, coverage on literacy-related stories, features on local learners, suggest their issues include literacy students' writings. Literacy programs and newspapers alike depend on a reading public.
- Propose life-related opportunities for learners as they pursue literacy instruction and skills development: i.e., field trips, cultural events, practicing life-skills, etc.

For more information, contact:

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ALA AmericanLibraryAssociation

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