Focus Group Report

On

Volunteers In Adult Basic Ed

Focus Groups

August 2009 – May 2010

Volunteer Issues Committee

Literacy Action Network of MN

Final Report
Using Volunteers in Adult Basic Education
Focus Groups Summary

Conducted by Volunteer Issues Committee of Literacy Action Network
August 2009 through May 2010 – Regional Trainings in Minnesota

Volunteer Issues Committee's purpose in conducting focus groups with ABE staff across the state of MN was two-fold. First to clarify and discover what types of resources are needed by ABE staff when using volunteers and second to determine the barriers to effectively using volunteers in ABE. The focus group method was used to systemically obtain actual data and input from ABE staff in the field. [1]

There were 101 participants who attended one of the 12 focus groups conducted at 9 locations across the state of Minnesota from August 2009 through early May 2010. Ten focus groups were completed at Regional Professional Development trainings. One was information gathered from the Northwestern Region via email and the first group was held at the State ABE Summer Institute in St. Cloud in August 2009. All participants were active ABE staff in Minnesota's ABE program. (See Appendix A for list of locations/dates.)

Questions were initially formulated by the Volunteer Issues Committee, and then revised after review by the University of MN Extension Service and after first group was held in August of 2009. (See Appendix B for specific list of questions.)

Participant Profile Overview

Observations about participants:
- Majority were female
- Majority were 56-65 years old
- Many participants held several positions – "wear many hats"
- Majority were teachers; many teaching both ESL and ABE
- Majority had 6-15 years in Adult Basic Education

Please note the following regarding participant profile data:
- 12 participants at Summer Institute (SI) did not have age or years in ABE information reported
- Some participants may have chosen to not answer specific data questions
- Under participant's position, more than one item can be checked

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[1] The Volunteer Issues Committee developed the questions with a review by the University of Minnesota Extension Leadership and Civic Engagement educator.

Participant Profile Overview Data

Total Participants:	101		
Total number of groups:	12		
Total number of sites:	9		
Gender:	Male: Female:	15 85	15% 84%

*Age:	#	% of Total	Participant's position: Check all that apply.	#
< 25 years old	0		Manager	15
26-35	10	12%	ESL Teacher	26
36-45	17	20%	Both ABE and ESL Teacher	18
46-55	22	26%	ABE Teacher	23
56-65	34	39%	Volunteer Coordinator	21
> 65	3	3%	Para (8) or Volunteer (1)	9

*Years in ABE:	#
0-5 years	28
6-15 years	30
16-25 year	26
More than 25 years	4

Data not available for SI session (12 participants)

Number of Participants who use volunteers in their program			
	Yes	76	(75%)
Estimate # of volunteers used in your program/class over the past year			
	1-5	29	participants use 1-5
	6-20	19	participants use 6-20
	21-50	11	participants use 21-50
	50 -100	1	participant uses 50-100
	More		

Key Findings

> *"If you have the chance to use volunteers, do it! Level changes happen quickly.*
> *Once a system is in place, it goes smoothly."*
> *– Quote from Central Region Focus Group participant*

Complete listings of all findings are listed in the attached Appendices. Please note: It was our intent to find out what ABE staff across the state of Minnesota are feeling, thinking, and what their perceptions and opinions are when working with volunteers, or not working with volunteers. When we use

percentages or the words "many, few, most", etc, we are using it to reflect on the "strength" of the response, or the number of participants who mentioned it.

❖ **Benefits of using volunteers fall into three basic impact areas. These include:** Academic impact on learners and staff in classroom; Community impact on learners living in the community and on volunteers and other community members by their involvement with the learners, which includes a financial impact; Personal impact on learners, staff, and volunteers. (See complete list in Appendix C, question #4).

  o <u>Academic Impact</u> – the majority of participants mentioned this as the most obvious area of impact.
    ▪ Volunteers' extra help and skills result in an increase in learner level gains and retention of learners.
    ▪ Volunteers provide extra help and support for staff – clerical help, feedback to facilitating classroom management
    ▪ Many people in the focus group said the volunteer help was "invaluable"

  o <u>Community Impact</u> – Many of the participants recognized the benefits to the community. The use of volunteers creates an impact on learners as well as an impact on volunteers and within the community.
    ▪ Learners receive many benefits. These include: real-world connections; access to community resources; networking; "feeling of community connectedness"; exposure to diverse backgrounds, ages, and perspectives.
    ▪ Volunteers help programs financially. Includes: saving ABE program dollars; assisting with funding; providing greater visibility in the community; providing greater credibility to ABE programs.
    ▪ Volunteers are another voice, opinion, or explanation in addition to the teacher's is a benefit to both teachers and learners.
    ▪ Volunteers share experiences with their friends and family that help change community attitudes and promote understanding and collaboration. The community becomes exposed to diverse cultures and perspectives.

  o <u>Personal Impact</u> – It's a "win-win" for all: volunteers, learners and staff.
    ▪ Friendships and trusts are built and enjoyed among all three groups.
    ▪ Volunteers gain teaching experiences, expand skills which can be used on a resume, and achieve personal growth.
    ▪ Volunteers have a positive impact on learners' self-esteem.
    ▪ Volunteers bring positive energy and enthusiasm to ABE programs.

❖ **Staff feel most challenged in many areas when working with volunteers.** Three primary areas were identified: time; management skills; and proper volunteer placement, expectations and training. (See complete list in Appendix C, question #6).

  o <u>Time</u> – All groups felt that they needed more time to work with volunteers.
    ▪ Time to follow-up with volunteers about learners, for supervision and personal communications with volunteers, or to prep "guest" presenter volunteers.

- Time for documenting volunteer data and paperwork, prepping for the volunteer and listing short-term projects for the volunteer.

- Management Skills – Training is needed in management skills for the teacher/staff person responsible for dealing with volunteer issues.
    - Several participants felt that many situations develop that need intervention with someone who has management skills
    - Issues include: boundary issues; know-it-all; religion/politics; communications; terminating a volunteer; recognition of volunteers; balance volunteer needs (expectations) with teacher and student needs (expectations);

- Proper Placement/Expectations/Training – Most participants expressed that there were many areas that they felt challenged in this category
    - Help is needed with interviewing; setting clear expectations; determining commitment and reliability; finding a "good fit"/placement; scheduling/coordinating the volunteers.
    - Several types of training are needed. Topics include: pre-service training, training for a specific class, listening skills, communication skills, confidentiality and culture.
    - Miscellaneous tasks are needed, including: management of the classroom space; teachers being unable to give up control.

❖ **Participants defined what they thought would be characteristics of a "good" volunteer and a "not good" volunteer.** Good = Patient, get the "big picture", trained, positive attitude, initiative, open-mindedness, flexible, reliable, has specific skills (i.e. math). They also defined a "not good" volunteer. (See complete list in Appendix C, last part of question #6).

❖ **There are four major groups that are responsible for supporting volunteers.** All focus groups mentioned at least one of the four groups, listed below, that are responsible for volunteers in some way. The responsibilities were divided into: Recruiting; Orientation (written and onsite); Training; and Supporting. (See complete list in Appendix C, question #5).

- Volunteer coordinator – Ranked high in all areas of responsibility for volunteers
    - Ranked highest in volunteer Orientation and tied with teachers/staff on Recruiting volunteers.
    - Many of the participants worked in ABE programs that did not have a volunteer coordinator on staff, or this was part of another position.

- Teachers and/or staff – Were consistently mentioned in all areas with many teachers and staff wearing "multiple hats".
    - Ranked highest in Training volunteers and tied with volunteer coordinator on Recruiting volunteers
    - This group included AmeriCorps VISTA members, Peace Corps, volunteers, college students, or community/county members.

- Program Manager - Ranked medium in all areas, but a little higher in Training.   In smaller programs, Managers/Coordinators are responsible for many areas with volunteers.

- o <u>Minnesota Literacy Council</u> – Ranked highest in Training volunteers and also mentioned in Recruiting volunteers. They were not listed in Orientation or Support, since most of this happens on site directly with staff.

- ❖ **Participants generated an extensive list of current resources being used.** Areas of focus: Recruitment; Orientation; Training; Recognition; Reporting/Data; Risk Management; Miscellaneous. This sharing in the groups was helpful in generating new ideas to other participants. (See complete list in Appendix D, question #7.)

  - o Resources were divided into categories. The full list is in Appendix E, but the most frequently mentioned are listed here:
    - ▪ <u>Program Staff, In-house Resources, or Personal Connections</u> – Used the most often for all areas. Examples include: volunteer coordinator, classroom manual, teacher, director, volunteer mentor, handouts, etc.
    - ▪ <u>Community organizations</u> – Used only for recruitment. Examples are: churches, Volunteer Resource Organization, AAUW, etc.
    - ▪ <u>Media</u> – Used most often for recruitment. Examples include: local newspapers, radio, cable TV, websites, video, social media, etc.
    - ▪ <u>Educational Institutions</u> – Used primarily as a place for recruitment. Examples include: college student volunteers, Community Education catalog/day, high school students.
    - ▪ <u>Minnesota Literacy Council</u> – The MLC and its website was mentioned prominently as a resource in all areas and by most of the groups.

  - o Additional categories of resources were: Governmental Institutions; Businesses or Commercial locations; and "Other" resources. Some of these mentioned: County Fairs; Laundromats; AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers; Oxford Picture Dictionary.

  - o ABE staff is very creative when it comes to resources. There was lots of sharing, brainstorming, and generating new ideas for other participants.

  - o In areas such as Risk Management, there are few if any resources available or used, which can result in difficulties for staff dealing with volunteer problems.

- ❖ **Many of the NEW resources requested ARE readily available NOW. Our primary reason for doing focus groups was to find out what new resources ABE programs in Minnesota need to help them in working with and using volunteers in their programs.** Areas of focus: Recruitment; Orientation; Training; Risk Management; Recognition; Reporting/Data; Miscellaneous. (See complete list in Appendix E, question #8 with our additions on where these resources can currently be found).

  - o **Most of the participants in all Focus Groups were NOT aware of all of the resources currently available to all ABE staff in MN.**

  - o **Resources are NOT getting out to ABE staff - It was not only greater Minnesota ABE programs, but staff in the Twin Cities metro were also NOT aware of resources which are readily available.**

o   Staff have creative ideas for what kinds of new resources they want and need.

❖ **Volunteers are used in many ways by ABE programs** – When asked, "*How do you use volunteers*", one participant responded: **"*For everything!*"** (See Appendix F, question #3, for complete list.)

o   Most volunteers are used in a variety of ways in the classroom – assisting, one-on-one tutoring, leading small groups, leading part of a class, as teachers or co-teachers, as topic experts, conversation group leaders, etc.

o   Many volunteers were used creatively to help the ABE program in unique and innovative ways. Participants reiterated how the volunteers' work in the ABE program expands into the community.

Conclusions:

❖ **Volunteer Issues Committee will create a list of <u>current resources</u> needed. –** List attached to this report of where resources that were requested can be found as of this date.

o   **Distribution needs to be more extensive.** Some ways to distribute include: to participants at the 2010 ABE Summer Institute (SI); posted on Literacy Action Network (LAN) and the Minnesota Literacy Council (MLC) websites; given to the state of MN ABE Department for distribution; other venues.

o   **Volunteer Issues Committee will look at other venues of getting the information/resources out to ABE staff across the state.**

o   **Volunteer Issues Committee will address updating the information/resources.**

❖ **<u>New projects/resources</u> are needed. The Volunteer Issues Committee will compile and prioritize a list of new resources needed, addressing the needs heard across the state.**

o   **New projects will be started and presented** to all ABE programs in various venues.

o   Distribution and posting on LAN website, at SI in following years, with the MLC, and/or other means of distribution will be addressed.

o   The Volunteer Issues Committee will look at **communication of resources** and suggest various ways to reach all ABE providers and all staff in those programs across the state of Minnesota.

Additional Information:

Participants had several additional comments and suggestions they added at the end of the focus group. See complete list on Appendix G, question #9. Also include in Appendix G are quotes from the focus groups – both positive and negative about using volunteers.

Site Locations of Focus groups

Date	Location		# Attending
08/06/09	ABE Summer Institute, Collective Intelligence – St. Cloud Facilitated by Cathy Grady, Allison Runchey		12
10/30/09	West Metro Regional Professional Development Training - Hopkins Facilitated by Glenice Jones, Mary Jo Bayliss, Allison Runchey		7
11/13/09	East Metro Regional Professional Development Training – Inver Hills Facilitated by Mary Jo Bayliss, Allison Runchey		9
11/20/09	MLC Volunteer Management Conference - St. Paul Facilitated by Glenice Jones, Ruth Rodriguez		6
01/29/10	St. Paul Professional Development Training - Hubbs Facilitated by Allison Runchey, Nancy Thornbury, Glenice Jones		5
04/16/10	SE & SW Regional Professional Development Training – Mankato #1 Facilitated by Ruth Rodriguez & Glenice Jones		11
04/16/10	SE & SW Regional Professional Development Training – Mankato #2 Facilitated by Ruth Rodriguez & Glenice Jones		10
04/16/10	SE & SW Regional Professional Development Training – Mankato #3 Facilitated by Ruth Rodriguez & Glenice Jones		12
04/30/10	NE Regional Professional Development Training – Grand Rapids #1 Facilitated by Ruth Rodriguez & Mary Jo Bayliss		12
04/30/10	NE Regional Professional Development Training – Grand Rapids #2 Facilitated by Ruth Rodriguez & Mary Jo Bayliss		11
05/07/10	Mid-Central Regional Professional Development Training – St. Cloud Facilitated by Cathy Grady and Allison Runchey		4
06/01/10	NW Region – responses to email of questions Facilitated by Cathy Grady		2
	12 FOCUS GROUPS; 9 LOCATIONS		**101**

Focus Group Questions/Script

Today, we want to ask you what you think about using volunteer, challenges and benefits and what resources you need.
- We are holding these discussions at trainings so we can hear form ABE professionals from all around the state of Minnesota.
- Whether you use volunteers or not, we'd appreciate your input on this discussion.
- The results will be used to help the Volunteer Issues Committee of Literacy Minnesota develop information, forms, guides and projects that could help you efficiently use volunteers in your program, thus helping your staff and your learners to reach their goals.
- We may not be able to do everything you suggest, but we do want to hear what your ideas.

1. Let's start by getting to know each other a bit. Please tell us:
   - Your name
   - Your position in your program
   - How long you have been in ABE

2. How many of you use some kind of volunteer in your program?
   If you do use volunteers, how many do you think you used in your program over the past year?

1-5	
6-20	
21-50	
50 -100	
More	

3. How do you use volunteers?
   What roles do they have? What do they do for your program?
   - How do you use office volunteers?
   - Do volunteers help recruit learners? How?
   - Do you use one-on-one volunteers? When?
   - How do volunteers help with special projects or celebrations?

4. For those of you who have volunteers, what benefits have you seen from using volunteers?
   If you don't have volunteers, can you see a benefit for having someone helping you in the classroom or with paperwork? What benefits can you see?

5. If you have volunteers or if you think you could use volunteers, who is responsible (or who would be responsible) for recruiting the volunteers?
   - Who trains your volunteers?
   - Who orientates them and sets up a time for them to come?
   - Who supports the volunteers when they have questions?

6. What are challenges you face when working with volunteers?
   - Are there challenges finding qualified volunteers?

What is a qualified volunteer?
- Are there challenges finding training for volunteers?
- Has anyone had challenges with a "difficult" volunteer?
- Is time a challenge/an issue with having a volunteer?
- Are there other challenges that you can think of?

7. Now that we've talked about benefits, challenges and responsibilities of using volunteers, what resources do you <u>currently</u> use when you:
- Recruit volunteers?
- What resources do you use when you orient volunteers to your program?
- What resources do you use when training your volunteers?
- What resources do you use when dealing with difficult volunteers?
- What resources do you use when you thank your volunteers?
- What resources do you use reporting to your administration about your volunteers?
- Are there other things we haven't mentioned that you use when working with volunteers?

8. If you could make using volunteers easy, what new resources could you use that would help you?
- What resources do you need to recruit volunteers?
- What resources do you need to orient your volunteers to your program?
- What new resources do you need to train your volunteers?
- What resources do you need to deal with difficult volunteers?
- What resources do you need to give your volunteers recognition?
- What resources do you need to report to your administration about your volunteers?
- Are there other things we haven't mentioned that you need when working with volunteers?

9. Thank you for all of your thoughts. As I said when we started this group, we wanted to ask you what you think about using volunteers in your program. Have we missed anything? Is there anything more you want to tell us?

Focus Group Complete Compilation of Notes

Question #4 - Benefits of using volunteers

What benefits have you seen from using volunteers?

Quote from participant: *"They [volunteers] are advocates for our program and its students."*

Responses to this question fell into 3 basic impact areas: community, academic, and personal.

Community Impact- Focus Group participants said:
24-Networking, real-world connections, better access to community resources, and a feeling of community connectedness result from having ABE volunteers.
8-Volunteers save ABE programs money, assist in funding, provide greater visibility, and bring credibility to ABE programs.
8-Volunteers provide students with exposure to people from diverse backgrounds, ages, and perspectives. Having another voice, opinion, or explanation than the ABE teacher's is a benefit to both the teacher and learners.
3-ABE volunteers share their experiences that help change community attitudes and promote understanding and collaboration.

Academic Impact– Focus Group participants said:
39- Volunteers who tutor individuals and small groups, lend clerical help, give feedback on student progress, assist with multi-level classrooms, and facilitate classroom management are invaluable
11-Volunteers contribute specific skill areas such as citizenship, computer knowledge, special education backgrounds, driver's education, and career development.
4- Extra help and skills of volunteers, results in an increase in learner level gains and retention.

Personal Impact– Focus Group participants said:
9-Friendships and trust are built and enjoyed among all three groups-teachers, students, and volunteers.
5-Volunteers themselves enjoy the benefits of gaining teaching experience, expanded skills, and personal growth.
4-Volunteers have a positive impact on student self-esteem.
3-Volunteers bring positive energy and enthusiasm to ABE programs.
1-Teachers appreciate having another "staff" person in the building especially when working at smaller sites or in evening classes.

Question #5 - Responsibility for volunteer

Who is responsible for…?   **Responses:**

a) …Training volunteers?

Volunteer coordinator – 6	AmeriCorps – 1
Teachers and/or staff – 9	Unknown - 2
Program Manager – 8	Office staff – 1
MLC – 10	Multi hat staff – 1

b) ...Volunteer orientation? (Written and onsite)

Volunteer coordinator – 9
Teachers and/or staff – 3   VISTA – 1
Program Manager – 6
MLC – 0

c) ...Supporting volunteers?

Volunteer coordinator – 6
Teachers and/or staff – 2
Program Manager – 1
MLC – 0

d) ...Recruiting volunteers?

Volunteer coordinator – 15   Multi hat staff – 4
Teachers and/or staff – 15   Volunteers – 7
Program Manager – 9   Unknown – 2
MLC – 4   College – 2
                                    Peace Corps – 1
                                    VISTA – 2
                                    Community/County - 2

Question #6 - Challenges faced using volunteers
What are challenges you face when working with volunteers?

Time needed from teacher for supervision (29 people w/all 5 agree)
     Personal communication
     Follow up
     Short-term (1)
     Prep (1)
     Data/paperwork (2)
Volunteer takes over, boundary issues, know-it-all, religion/politics, overzealous (18)
Commitment – reliability (over-commit, college students, no-shows) (17 w/5 agrees)
Untrained/lack of skills (17)
     Confidentiality
     Cultures
     Chatty/gives answers/staying on track/doing work for students
Scheduling/coordinating volunteers (8)
Down times – not much for them to do (new volunteer or placed volunteer) (8)
Communications (5)
Staff – problems balancing benefits to volunteer vs. program benefits – volunteer needs vs. teacher/student needs (7)
Staff unsure of volunteer and if they will fit – placement, motivations, screening (7)
Volunteer lack of empathy – unrealistic expectations (4)
Shy volunteers – need direction (4)
Students' unrealistic expectations for their volunteer (3)
Management of classroom – space (3)

Recruitment (allowed – need more) (3)
Students unable to understand volunteer (2)
Lack of initiative
Teacher unable to give up control (1)
Teachers uncomfortable with (can't read that word) –dismissals (1)
Needs more volunteers – need diversity
How to recognize volunteer time – appropriate (1)
Inappropriate dress
Corrections (DOE) volunteers – whole new requirements
12 hr training – hesitant to attend (2)
Student attachment to volunteer
Some court-referred volunteers not allowed in class
Prep guest presenters

Qualified Volunteers

Good = mature (5 agree), patient, get "big picture", train, positive attitude, fabulous, use a log to communicate, personality, initiative, open-mindedness, cross cultural experience, flexibility, reliable, specific skills (i.e. math)

Bad = untrained, just there for their own needs, immature, bad attitude, low skills for class, sleeps, religion/politics

"What not to do as a volunteer…"
Not show up for class, or come late
Dress inappropriately
Go off topic in class
Give answers too soon when the students struggle
Expect learners to know something they don't
Talking above learners' heads
Talking about religion or politics
Reading your own book
Falling asleep
Doing the work for the students
Not staying on track

Resources Currently Being Used
Question #7 - What resources do you currently use when you….

Category…	Resources used for….					
	Recruitment:	Training:	Orientation:	Recognition:	Reporting:	Risk Management:
Community Organizations	Churches (4); AAUW; Retired Teacher parties; First Call for Help; Volunteer Resource Organization (2); Kiwanis;					
Media	Local paper (7); Web site (2); Retired teacher newsletter (2); Cable Tv (2); Radio (2); Craigslist.com;	Videos; Online trainings by Verizon; Wiki		Newsletter/Newspaper (2);		
Businesses or Commercial locations	Laundromat; Table items in a restaurant; Mall kiosk			Local businesses and volunteers donate items and students "go shopping."		
Educational Institutions	College interns and student teachers (7); Community Education catalog/flyer (6); High school class;			Flowers from College Horticultural Department.		
Program Staff, Resources or Personal Connections	Volunteer coordinator; Word of Mouth (5); Observation;	Resource file for volunteers/ classroom manual (10); On the job (2); Observation of class; Mentor by a volunteer; Ongoing (eg, DOC training academy (2); Education director (2); Teacher (2); 12-hour training at the program; Tutor roundtables every 4-5 weeks;	Interview; Teacher; Handouts; One-to-one with the director; Handbook	Student notes/recognition (4); Appreciation dinner (6); Certificates (3); Gift bags/staff (2); Thank you notes or verbal (3); Teacher feedback, include volunteers on field trips; Sharing student outcomes; Spotlight Class party (3); Spotlight volunteer of the month; Bulletin board (2); References; Knowing the names of volunteers personally (2); Badges;	Record volunteer hours; Database for recording volunteer hours with student hours; Volunteers are responsible; Don't report one-to-one;	Program coordinator (2); Volunteer coordinator; Teacher (2); Experienced volunteer; Director (2).
Governmental Institutions	RSVP; library; VISTA			VISTA	VISTA folder	
Minnesota Literacy Council	Web site;	Trainings in St. Paul and travelling trainings (9); Online trainings; Lending library; Workshops (3).	Web site;	Web site;	Web site;	Web site;
Other Resources	Flyers (2); County fairs (2);	GED Practice Tests; Lit Start Manual; Oxford Picture Dictionary; Laubach		GED graduation;		

Note: Numbers in parentheses () indicate the total # of participants who gave the same or similar responses. Resources without parentheses were identified by one participant only.

For a list of identified resources from the focus groups, go to the <u>Volunteer Issues Committee resource page</u> and click the link for "Resources for Working with Volunteers."

Appendix F

Question #3 - How do you use volunteers?

Quote from one participant: "For everything!"

Floaters/Classroom assistants/helpers in class		Help with group activities; in all areas; computer lab assistants; reading lab assistants; homework lab assistants;
Lead class, lead part of a class		(Teacher does pull-outs with students who need extra help), teacher works in small groups,
Topic experts:		Winter safety and driving; math; financial advisors; nurses; computer and technology experts
Small group leaders; Pull outs; Lead conversation groups or literacy circles		Math pull-outs; Reading group leader, Basic skills, small Break out groups – rotate groups – have stations where students move from group to group, specific skill; mini-class; in all areas; computer lab;
Special projects		Cookbook, make materials, (made games and PowerPoint; Make a PowerPoint story for the class; Citizenship Trivial Pursuit game.), type stories for "Journeys" submissions, type up writings; Focus group moderators and note-takers; edit or write for newsletter; Library maintenance;
One on one; pull-outs		Practice interviewing, interviewing skills, GED prep tutoring, math help, citizenship tutoring, Pre lit, Individual help for very low level, read with students; GED/ESL "Study-buddies"; job training; in all areas; 1/1 tutor for blind; computer lab; Conversation partners;
Learner assessments; testing; In-take support;		Analyzing CASAS test information
Clerical tasks; administrative support; Office help;		File-keeping, admin tasks, Help with GED program filing, data entry, tally monthly contact hours; make copies; clean; Track volunteer training online;
Classroom paperwork		Mark papers, Correcting writing papers, attendance on computer;
Modeling		Speak in front of the group, demonstration; role playing;
Recruitment		Other/new volunteers; learners by word of mouth; Outreach;
Student teacher		Gives teacher chance to observe the class
Special events		Set up; graduation ceremony (greet, serve, set-up/tear-down; Family Center celebrations; learning "stations"; Organizing;
Teaches; Co-teachers;		Music; teaches cooperatively with teacher; ESL, GED, Basic Reading; job skills;
Training other volunteers		Peer mentoring other volunteers;
Miscellaneous:		Board of Directors; Fundraising; Program support; test new online volunteer training programs; College students doing

		service learning project

Additional Information

Question #9 - Other Comments and Suggestions

Mandate volunteer management training.

Thankful for volunteer coordinators. Training is very helpful.

Ask VOLUNTEERS to be members of the Volunteer Issues Committee.

Need to address the time/expense put forth by volunteers: articulate how and why volunteer training and experience can benefit the volunteer.

Encourage current ESL students to become volunteers in the program or community, and describe how volunteering can benefit them and possibly lead to a teaching career.

Scholarships for volunteers to go on to college to become teachers.

Attract teachers from minority cultures.

Create a certificate/award/credential for volunteers who meet certain criteria.

Find volunteers who are ESL learners to help in children's language immersion schools.

General Quotes taken from all Questions:

Question 3: How Do you use volunteers?

"For everything!"

"I start and then let the volunteer take over. It can be something as simple as picture cards."

"I try to find their [the volunteer's] area of interest."

Question 4: What benefits have you seen from using volunteers?

"[Volunteers benefit the program by] being where I can't be."

"I couldn't handle all of our learners on my own!"

About the importance of volunteers to students: "… the students don't want to stop working with them."

"Because there is much more individualized attention for slow learners, retention is better if they are paired with volunteers."

"They learn about and become supporters of ABE; get the message out about the importance of ABE."

"They release the teacher form having to deal with each student individually so that more students get the help they need."

"They are advocates for our program and its students."

"[Volunteers] can pinpoint issues or give insight into problems that a student is experiencing."

"Students are more relaxed. They know the volunteer is only coming in to help, is not an authority figure and has something new to share."

"[It] gives learners self esteem that volunteers spend time with and care about them."

"[I] could serve only ¼ the number of students [without volunteers]."

"[It's] good to have students interact with different members of the community."

"[A benefit is the] sense of community – students feel accepted in the community."

"Some [college student volunteers] have changed their attitudes after coming here."

Question 5: Who is responsible for supporting volunteers?

"[Our Volunteer Coordinator] does a fantastic job" – all agree.

"The volunteer didn't know what to do, so [Volunteer Coordinator] brought in another volunteer to mentor the new volunteer. She felt much more confident."

"[Our Volunteer Coordinator] is the 'go-to' person."

Question 6: What are challenges you face when working with volunteers?

"Once I have a volunteer, I feel like I don't have enough time to keep them connected with training and continued communication. [They] don't stay as long."

"Planning time [to prepare the volunteer for tutoring] is unpaid – there's not enough time for it and [I] would have to take time out of class to do it."

"Prioritizing time for mentoring and training [is difficult] when volunteer management is not the only aspect of my job."

"There's not enough time to work with the volunteers to plan and prep. Talking with the volunteers before or after class is very difficult to manage along with talking with students and trying to take a break."

"I don't think that I utilize volunteers very well."

Question 7: What resources do you currently use?

"Invite tutors to take teacher in-services and tutor training online."

"[Resources used when dealing with difficult volunteers] The ABE director's head."

"Lit Start Manual – includes strategies and teaching ideas of ABE/ESL. It's purchased directly from the publisher."

Question 8: What new resources could you use?

"Screening, not recruitment, is most important. We need to have qualified people."

"We need resources on how to recognize volunteers. It needs to be quick, short and possibly on the MLC web site."

"I think the whole transitions area is a new emerging need – new need for information and resources."

Question 9: Any additional comments and/or suggestions?

"If you have the chance to use volunteers, do it. Level changes happen quickly. Once a system is in place, it goes smoothly."

"The benefits of using volunteers far outweigh the challenges."