

Developing Engaging, Effective Volunteer Training

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Nov. & Dec. 2020

First Literacy

Session 1: Train the Trainers

About Me:

Former adult ed volunteer, former adult ed volunteer coordinator, current HiSET math teacher; writer-trainer-consultant; forever brain-geek and life-long learner; gardener and novice forager.

I believe in reflective practice, my students, and color-coded spreadsheets.

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Approach:

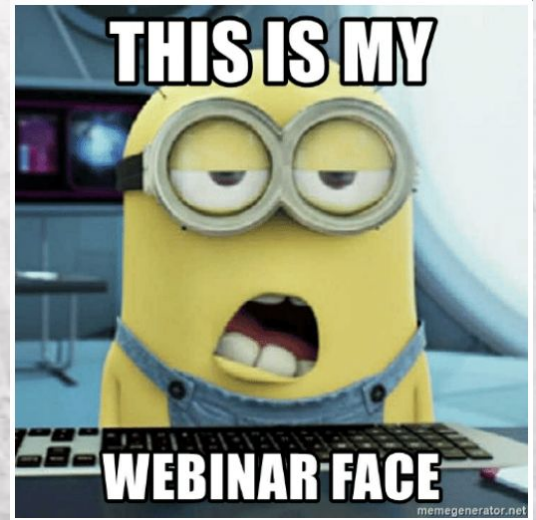
Model a few (modified) volunteer training activities
Use as a jumping off point to talk about key questions and ideas in designing your own volunteer training

Participation

This format is tough for many of us to engage ... **please try.**

I will ask for your participation in breakout rooms, the chat box etc.

Please ask questions or share ideas as we go.



Agenda

- Welcome
- Speed Dating
- Just Say No
- Readings
- Mind Mapping
- Wrapping Up



Speed Dating

Speed Dating: Procedure

- ★ I will give you a prompt then put you in break out rooms with one other person.
- ★ In your room, decide who is A and who is B.
- ★ Person A has 1 minute to talk. Person B (just/actively) listens
- ★ Then reverse roles. B talks, A listens for one minute.
- ★ We'll return to the large group for a second prompt.



Please, tell a story about...

... When you FIRST started in adult ed.

(bonus points, if you remember your first
day/week/month)



Please, tell a story about

... A favorite volunteer you've worked with in adult ed

(if you haven't worked with volunteers yet, tell a story about a colleague you hope your volunteers are like)



Volunteer Training Prompts

- ★ A time when learning was easy...
- ★ A time when learning was hard...
- ★ A time when you worked hard/struggled to reach a goal...
- ★ A mentor or other person who helped you learn/grow...
- ★ Something someone did that helped you learn...
- ★ Something that inspired, motivated or encouraged you to volunteer ...



Speed Dating: Processing

- ★ What was it like to tell your story? To listen?
- ★ Without sharing others' stories, did you hear connections or themes?
- ★ How might this experience inform your volunteer work / training?



Benefits

- ★ Set expectations/norms of participation in training
- ★ Talking about sharing and vulnerability
- ★ Building connection, acknowledging different experiences
- ★ Activating (and acknowledging!) prior knowledge
- ★ Naming and valuing “soft skills” (listening)
- ★ Defining broad ideas about learning, helping, struggle





Just Say No

Just Say No...Instructions

- ★ I'm going to give you a scenario. The answer is "no".
- ★ Your job is to come up with the words that would come out of your mouth to deliver that "no".
- ★ When the breakout rooms open, turn to your partner, imagine they are a student asking, and say what you'd say. You should each say your version of "no"



Processing with Volunteers

- Brief discussion after each scenario
- ★ “Anyone have phrases they felt good saying?”
- ★ “What questions came up?”
- ★ Offer some models or tips
- ★ As needed, explain why the policy is what it is
- ★ Share a written list of policies/expectations



General Principle: Active Learning

Make info dumps interactive to ...

... Keep it interesting

... Prompt deeper thinking

... Increase 'stickiness'

Q. Who are your volunteers?

Different groups may have different needs, interests, styles

College students, young professionals, career transition-ers, or retirees?

Previous education experience or not?



Readings

Q. What questions do you get all. the. time.?

- ★ “What if someone asks me something and I don’t know the answer?”
- ★ “Who are the students I’ll be working with?”



But also: How relevant is the answer to the role?

- ★ “Wait, I thought it was GED, why is it HiSET?”
- ★ “How are these classes funded?”

Low relevance: Share some info, then refer to resources for asynchronous learning

Effective Practice: Written “Quick Start Guides”

Deliver some high-priority, actionable info as an email

- ★ Location (address, classroom number, zoom link)
- ★ Contact info
- ★ Procedures

[Checklist Link](#)



Readings

[I Don't Know \(Book\)](#)

[TLP Oral Histories](#)

We'll work in two groups in break out rooms

Each group will get a set of readings, the training instructions that go with them, and discussion questions

Please skim the readings and procedures, then answer the discussion questions



Breakout Groups

- Group 1: Based on *I Dōn't Know* by Leah Hager Cohen

Group 2: Based on Oral Histories from learners at The Literacy Project

Readings Jigsaw

[I Don't Know \(Book\)](#)

[TLP Oral Histories](#)

We'll work in new groups in break out rooms, with a mix of participants from the previous groups

Please share a few highlights from your previous discussion

If you have time: How else might you incorporate written resources in an interactive/engaging way?





Mind Mapping

Q. What educational approach/style/tools do you want to model?

Train the trainer facilitation:

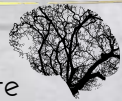
Use a teaching technique, then break the wall and explain how to do it

Drivers of Persistence Mind Map

There are 6 “drivers”, please choose 1 to read.

Think about what specific things volunteers could do in their roles, to support this driver

Driver of Persistence



Drivers of Persistence Mind Map



Q. What **don't** you want to model?

Exercise: Each volunteer gets a different list of vocabulary words from a HiSET textbook . In a circle, each person asks their neighbor “What does __ mean?” using a word from their list. The asked person answers, then turns and asks the next person a different word. Facilitator goes first to model.

This backfired... Why?



Wrapping Up

Content Checklist

What to train volunteers on may vary by volunteer role / program setting

Checklist of Common Elements

Adult Basic Education Volunteer Training & Orientation Checklist

Nearly Always Important

- Volunteer role (clear tasks, how it connects to organizational goals)
- Maintaining healthy boundaries
- Responding to student struggles or disclosures (including mandated reporting, referral to staff)
- Volunteer program policies and expectations (including training, reporting etc.)

- Organizational context: mission, services, population
- Student context: goals, relevant background
- Relevant staff and communication (who should a volunteer call? For what issues? Using what communication methods)

- Adults vs kids as learners (basic adult learning theory, what does/doesn't translate)
- Teaching techniques (chunking/pacing, checking for understanding, learner monitoring etc.)
- Instruction for teaching (simple language, delivering feedback etc.)
- Cultural competencies and differences
- Trauma informed practices



Session 2 Preview

PART 2: Training Design Work Session

Begin your training design -- or redesign! In this second part, participants will go deeper into setting training content and process objectives and matching their topics to the right interactive activities to create a training plan that's tailored to their organization and volunteers.

(tentative) Agenda

- Welcome Back
- Training Goals
- Content
- Timing & Format
- **Work Time**
- Training Activities
- **Work Time**
- Wrap Up



Pre-Survey & Follow Up

Before you leave today, please complete this brief survey. I will use the results to tailor Session 2 and plan our work groups

Survey



Homework

[Google Docs](#)

[PDF](#)

Please take some time to reflect on these questions before our next session

Developing Engaging, Effective Volunteer Trainings Homework Reflection

Think about your program and your volunteers and begin to answer the questions below. Please bring your answers when we meet again on December 4th, they will help you craft a training plan that suits your organization.

Note: You might find it valuable to think and talk about these topics with other staff or existing volunteers.

- Who are your volunteers? Do you have different groups? What particular training needs might each group have?

- What questions do you get all of the time from new or potential volunteers? Which ones are most relevant to volunteers' roles?

- What educational approaches / style / tools do you want to model for volunteers? What **don't** you want to model?



Closing Reflection:

A good volunteer training is

(1 word or phrase each)

Thanks & Stay in Touch

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