

New video training prepares adult tutors

Reading Together™ is an ideal way to harness community volunteers and give them a meaningful way to participate at school. A new video now makes it easier than ever to orient volunteers to their important job as Reading Together™ tutors.

The video presents each stage of a Reading Together™ lesson for all grade levels. Tutors can view the entire video, or jump to the chapters that apply to them. They will be able to review and refresh their knowledge of making corrections, for example, or helping tutees make predictions about the text. And best of all, they can do it on their own time, at their own pace.

A cross-age Reading Together™ coordinator can easily add an adult volunteer program in as little as one extra hour a week. In most adult programs, tutors receive an hour or two of orientation before beginning tutorials, work under the supervision of a trained coordinator, and are responsible for previewing the lessons on their own (usually by arriving a few minutes early to skim the book and script).

If your school uses adult volunteers as tutors, a complimentary review copy of the new DVD will be on its way soon. If your school uses cross-age tutors, but would like to consider an adult volunteer model, contact Customer Service toll free at 1.866.921.0000 for a complimentary copy. We're already discovering that student tutors are finding the video as helpful as the adults we designed it for!

Many thanks to the staff and students of Cortez Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada, who opened their lessons to our camera crew to make this video. Their enthusiasm shows in every frame! Thanks also to Cortez

Principal Betty Roqueni and to Dr. Susan Wright and the staff of Clark County's Title I office for their cooperation.



Free grant writing pays off for charter school

Congratulations to Carter G. Woodson State Charter School of Challenge in Winston-Salem, NC, which was awarded a \$1.9 million grant to raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of American history. Learning Together provided free grant-writing support for Carter G. Woodson's Teaching American History Grant.

Math Together™, which bases word problems on events in U.S. history, will be a major component of the three-year collaboration with 15 school districts, North Carolina Central University, Winston-Salem State University, the state African-American Education Consortium, museums and historical societies.

The Teaching American History Grant is a discretionary grant program funded under Title II-C, Subpart 4 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It supports competitive grants to local educational agencies that promote the teaching of traditional American history in elementary and secondary schools as a separate academic subject. Grants are used to improve

the quality of history instruction by supporting professional development for teachers.

Carter G. Woodson's TEACH program will target teachers in Grades 3, 5 and 9 and high school Advanced Placement teachers of the most impoverished and low-performing schools, program director L. Aynn Daniels said. Teachers will participate in a three-week summer institute, 10 core content seminars annually, interactive distance learning seminars, study groups and historic site visits. From this group, a cadre of master teachers will be established at each school to provide training and mentoring for other teachers. Biographies spanning the eras from the Age of Exploration to the present will be emphasized as teachers work in vertical and horizontal planning teams.

Funding for Reading Together™ and Math Together™ is available from a wide range of public and private sources, including 21st Century Community Learning Centers, TANF, Even Start and many more. Since applications can be complex and deadlines tight, let Learning Together help by providing a knowledgeable professional to write the grant for your school or district. To see if you qualify, contact Customer Service toll free at 1.866.921.0000.

Hurricane help

Our thoughts are with the students and schools affected by recent hurricanes. Learning Together had a close relationship with many schools in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish, and has offered assistance as those districts rebuild. We're working with districts in other states to "adopt" Louisiana schools in need of TLC. Please let us know if you would like to join this effort.

New Orleans made wonderful progress in their first implementation of Reading Together™, with scores rising more than the state average for the first time. We hope students will be back in school soon.

Word of Mouth

This is not only a good tutoring program, but it is just plain good teaching. The 5th graders, if they follow this process, may just be the best teachers the 3rd graders will ever have!

Grade Three Reading Coordinator
Clark County Schools
Las Vegas, Nevada

Hitting the halfway point

Many schools will finish the 15 lessons of Phase I before winter break begins. Hitting the halfway point is a great reminder to touch base with parents, teachers and administrators to guarantee smooth sailing for the remainder of the program.

Send progress forms

Your Coordinator Resource CD includes a Phase I progress form for parents. It takes just a few minutes to fill out the blanks and let parents know how their children are doing at the halfway point in Reading Together™ or Math Together.™ The form also reminds parents of ways they can help their children at home.

The end of Phase I also is a great time to talk with classroom teachers of tutors and tutees to share progress and get their input. A new Phase I progress form for teachers can be downloaded at www.learningtogether.com/updates.

Scheduling debriefings

You've seen how effective tutor debriefings are in polishing skills and keeping tutors motivated. In the same way, coordinator debriefing can be one of the most effective management strategies for districts. Debriefing builds a sense of community among coordinators, and gives them a peer group with whom they can discuss successes and challenges. (See letter, page 4.)

If possible, plan coordinator debriefings mid-year, and again when the program has been completed. In most cases, your Learning Together Educational Consultant can come to facilitate a debriefing. Contact Customer Service toll free at 1.866.921.0000 to schedule.

Plan Phase II/III training

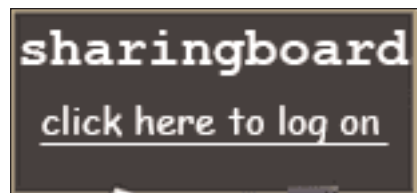
As Phase I Reading Together™ lessons are drawing to an end, it is time to start gearing up to train your tutors for Phases II/III. Assess the strengths and possible weaknesses from Phase I tutorials. Spend some time refreshing yourself on the similarities and differences between Phase I and Phase II/III (see the Venn diagram in your manual). Now is a great time to contact your Educational Consultant with questions and updates.

Plan for next year

Seems early, but the end of Phase I is a good opportunity to set the stage for a continuing program. Make sure your post-testing plans are in place, whether that is end-of-grade testing or some other measure. Anecdotal evidence from parents and teachers is important, and you can easily collect that on the survey forms included in the Coordinator Resource CD. But most districts make their expansion and renewal decisions based on test results—coordinators should collect and collate pre- and post-assessments to share with administration, if data collection is not handled on a district-wide basis. We can help you with this.

Celebrate success

Be sure to take a few minutes to tell your tutors how much you appreciate them. During their final debriefing of Phase I, give them a few extra minutes to sum up their students' progress and share their sense of accomplishment. Our coordinators have come up with dozens of ways to make sure tutors feel valued and energized to take on the final 15 lessons—one coordinator had a masseuse come in and give mini-massages. Every one of those adult volunteers came back for the spring semester, and volunteered to tutor again the next year!



New Sharing Board opens online dialog

Beginning January 3, 2006, Learning Together coordinators will have the opportunity to meet and share their experiences through the new *Sharing Board* online forum. Look for the teal *Sharing Board* button on the top of every page of our website, www.learningtogether.com, to register as a member of this community of lifelong learners. The first 50 registered users in January will receive a special thank-you gift!

There will be separate areas for reading coordinators, math coordinators, administrators and classroom teachers of tutors and tutees. You're welcome to browse in all chat rooms, but you must register as a user to post and join discussion groups. When you fill out your profile, please let us know if you are a reading or math coordinator, administrator or classroom teacher so we can tailor the *Sharing Board* to meet your needs.

We hope this online forum will provide coordinators with a way to build community, share ideas and brainstorm solutions. We hope it will be especially helpful for smaller implementations, where a single coordinator does not have an in-school support group.

We've added some forums to get you started, but we hope you'll open discussions on the topics that interest you. Over time, our coordinators have met and resolved almost any challenge you can imagine, so we know there is a wealth of information from the field to answer questions. As always, our Customer Relationship Coordinators are available to offer assistance online or toll-free at 1.866.921.0000.

Coordinators' Corner: Beyond sounding out

What happens when a tutee gets stalled by a difficult word? Tutors are trained to allow wait time before volunteering assistance, but even in a safe mentoring environment, a tutee may be reluctant to risk reading something unknown. He or she may have no other strategy than to sound it out or ask for help.

Sounding out is a good strategy, but when it is the only strategy a tutee uses, it may take so long that he or she has forgotten the meaning of what came before the unknown word. If a tutee can't sound out after a few seconds, encourage your tutors to suggest some other strategies:

- Skip ahead. Have the tutee skip over the unknown word or phrase and read ahead to try to gain meaning through the context of the rest of the sentence (or several sentences). Hearing the rest of the sentence may provide enough information to give a clue about the unknown word.
- Reread. Have the tutee go back to the previous sentence or two to look for clues.
- Predict. Have the tutor cover the unknown word with a finger and ask the tutee to predict a word that would make sense. The tutor can narrow the possible predictions by helping the tutee focus on the beginning sound of the unknown word.

Norfolk takes parents to school

Norfolk Public Schools offered 30 workshops for parents in a day-long extravaganza of excitement and enrichment. The annual Parent University builds a closer connection between parents and school, and helps parents acquire skills they can use at home with their children.

Learning Together Educational Consultant Margie Zeno presented a workshop called "Five Sure-Fire Strategies for Reading Success," which showed parents how to use predicting, activating prior knowledge, rereading, retelling and writing to help their children become better readers. Of course, those are all strategies students learn as they progress through Reading Together™ lessons! Parents left with free books and handouts.

If your district plans a similar event for parents, contact us to see if a Learning Together trainer is available on your date.



New Math Together™ Coordinator Resources

The Reading Together Coordinator Resource CD has been so popular that we've added one for Math Together coordinators. The CD includes all the sheets that must be copied for training and lessons, as well as administrative tools such as tutor applications and permission letters. The CD also includes a parent orientation PowerPoint that outlines the program benefits (for tutors as well as tutees). If you are a math coordinator, your free CD update will automatically be sent to you.

New feedback form helps tutors evaluate lessons

Some of our best program enhancements come from our customers. Thanks to the very successful adult tutor program in Montgomery County, MD, we are able to offer a form that helps tutors better evaluate tutee progress. It takes only a few moments to fill out, but provides coordinators and classroom teachers very specific input relative to Maryland's Essentials of Learning. The form can be easily adapted to meet your state's standards. Contact Customer Service at 1.866.921.0000 to get an electronic copy, or to share your own program enhancements.

*The person doing the talking
is the person doing the learning.*

G. Christian Jernstedt, Ph.D.
Center for Educational Outcomes,
Dartmouth College

*This is a great program.
I love the changes to the
coordinator manual. The
program has become very
streamlined and user-friendly.
I like the way it is totally
scripted for coordinator and
student both.*

Reading Coordinator
Clark County Schools
Las Vegas, Nevada

*The program content is very
informative, detailed, sequenced.
The tutor can't go wrong.*

Reading Coordinator
Norfolk Public Schools
Norfolk, VA

The Learning Together Mailbox

I believe that part of the success of any new innovation such as Learning Together is the support and networking that is provided to our schools, both internally from our district and also from Learning Together. Holding regular coordinator meetings has given us the opportunity to learn from each other, to problem solve, and to hear about best practices, successes and areas of concern. Principals are also invited and often attend, and it has been GREAT that someone from Learning Together has been able to join our group.

These meetings have also been so inspiring, hearing about the creative ways our coordinators are using the program to meet the varied needs of their learning communities and students. As a result of these meetings, coordinators leave feeling validated for the work they are doing and invigorated to go back to their schools and to enhance what they already have in place based on new ideas.

For me, the best part of the meetings has been hearing the voices of our children through our coordinators. The stories shared have been amazing: children not wanting to take off their T-shirts; students asking every day if the coordinators need more tutors; tutors writing letters to their tutees; the growth we have seen in both behavior, attendance and in confidence and skill as readers for many of our struggling students. The suggestion to purchase rubber bracelets with Learning Together on them came from one of our students and schools. Students, tutors and coordinators are feeling empowered to make a difference for all children!

Julie R. Smith
Director of Elementary Education
Cherry Creek Schools, Colorado

Contributors

- NEDRA BALDWIN
Customer Relationship Coordinator
- JOANN CASSELL
Editor
- AMY WERNER
Educational Consultant

The Learning Together Company
5509-A West Friendly Avenue, Suite 205
Greensboro, NC 27410
Toll-free 866.921.0000
Direct 336.852.6422
Fax 866.626.7188
info@learningtogether.com
www.learningtogether.com

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**Editor's Note: Learning Together can facilitate your coordinator debriefings.
Call Customer Service at 1.866.921.0000 for details.**