



Tutor Colin

Adult Literacy: 1 to 1

Multi-Service Centre - 2011

When asked *WHY* he became involved with the literacy program, Colin's first comment was that the program "provided the opportunity to assist an adult in fulfilling their dream of reading...and that takes courage." Colin also likes the one-to-one nature of the tutor role and the informal, comfortable and flexible context of the learning environment. He sees his greatest contribution as being that of a "cheerleader" for his student and, while he prepares for each meeting, as his the tutor training encouraged, he also concentrates on his student's greatest need (in this case, spelling). Colin generally spends about 1 hour preparing for his two hour meeting. He has come to believe that "one evening a week [helps] make a society."

Colin is aware that many individuals are intimidated by the idea of tutoring, but notes that that fear is mirrored by their students' fears in coming forward. More than anything, Colin has become aware that "we're there to help, be patient, understand and work at the student's pace."

Colin's student is very motivated, a tremendous bonus for any tutor. Sometimes, Colin has to hold his student back because the "middle [of learning] is important." Both Colin and his student agree that English can be tricky and difficult. This journey they are on together has made Colin much more aware of *HOW* to read words and the importance of vowels.

Sometimes Colin's student is tired and Colin takes this into account. He has learned to not take what he knows for granted and that maintaining a positive rapport is important. He has seen the client get more comfortable with spelling and words in general and this has been rewarding.

It is a unique role. While student and tutor do not socialize outside of the match relationship there are mutual benefits that both of them have experienced. Colin has come to admire some of the language and grammar traits of his student's culture (the student is an immigrant). The progress the student is making inspires both of them. At one time, Colin worked with children and could see how much they missed when they lacked reading skills. He has learned to be patient, aware that some struggle to achieve (he finds this a gift – one he wishes he might have had in his years of retail!).

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In this respect, Colin has found the Laubach method, used by the program and which he was instructed in, to be very helpful. It provides the “tools to address barriers” and is especially good for the “basics.” He has found that the **Skill Books** assigned to the pair have been well-suited to the match and the training and materials he has used to be “so helpful.” While the materials have universal adaptability he can also see, now that he has some experience under his belt, how he could approach students a little differently next time.

Colin feels the general public needs to be more aware of literacy issues and the fact that there are local programs that can help. He only became aware of the program at a social event in 2010 (and the program has been a part of MSC since 1987). Colin was working with children in an area school and a fellow volunteer mentioned he was also tutoring adults, tweaking Colin’s curiosity. Colin believes many individuals are not aware of how many adults struggle with not only reading but, comprehending, spelling and writing (all separate but related skills). He is now an advocate for the Laubach method because it addresses the W5 questions (who, what, where, when, why) and it is a “good system to improve comprehension.” His only other wish is that there were more books that would encourage young boys to read more!

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