

# Training Volunteer Literacy Teachers

RICHARD W. CORTRIGHT

When Unesco reports that about 70% of the adults of the world are still functional illiterates, educators wonder. Will most people of the world *ever* learn to read? Will mass media like ETV or filmstrips perhaps help bridge the gap between those who can and those who cannot read?

At the grass roots level educators feel confident that the best job will be done by one teacher teaching one or a few adult New Literates. To this end the technique of the Literacy Workshop has been developed to train volunteer literacy teachers (Literacy Teachers). Most New Literates in the United States live in the rural South, northern industrial areas, and in the different states where the migrant workers labor.

The Texas Literacy Council, a group of volunteer teachers, attacked the problem by training other volunteer Literacy Teachers. Nearly 700,000 adult Texans are functional illiterates according to figures from the 1960 Federal Census. At least eight million Americans are adult functional illiterates.

The following table summarizes the numbers of adults taught and Literacy Teachers recently trained. This training usually took place in a concentrated seven-hour period. Some Literacy Workshops lasted from 10-15 hours.

Each locality financed its own program through a local club or church. As few as two people attended one Workshop. As many as 202 attended another. Usually about 20-30 people attended.

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<i>Category</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Total</i>		
1. LITERACY TEACHERS	Volunteer Literacy tutors trained primarily through the community-sponsored Literacy Workshop or Clinic, including those also trained in university courses, institutes and seminars.	1,956		
2. NEW LITERATES	Individuals being taught now in current Texas programs.	654		
	Individuals taught during the entire period; including those now.	1,345		
	Individuals now being taught who are learning English as a foreign language.	418		
3. LITERACY WORKSHOPS and EACH ONE TEACH ONE	Volunteer Teacher training sessions held in the following 44 places:			
TEXAS:	Abilene	Caddo Mills	Harlingen	Rotan
	Alice	Corpus Christi	Houston	San Angelo
	Amarillo	Crockett	Kingsville	San Antonio
	Angleton	Dallas	Marlin	San Marcos
	Austin	Eagle Pass	Mathis	Seminole
	Ballinger	Eden	Moody	Slaton
	Beaumont	Edmonson	McGregor	Taylor
	Beesville	El Paso	Olton	Victoria
	Belton	Ennis	Petersburg	Waco
	Brazoria	Floydada	Richmond	West Columbia
	Bryan	Fort Worth	Rosebud	Wilson

61 Literacy Workshops were held in these 44 locations. 20 of these workshops were follow-up training programs.

23 Literacy Workshops were held in 10 other states:

OTHER STATES:	Arkansas	Missouri
	California	Nebraska
	Colorado	New Mexico
	Kentucky	Oklahoma
	Mississippi	Virginia

4. LITERACY COUNCILS: Local Texas Chapters affiliated with the  
*Texas Literacy Council.* 26

Abilene	Bryan	Marlin	Seminole
Alice	Corpus Christi	Moody	Victoria
Angleton	Crockett	McGregor	Waco
Ballinger	Dallas	Richmond	West Columbia
Beaumont	Eagle Pass	Rotan	Wilson
Beesville	El Paso	San Angelo	
Belton	Fort Worth	San Antonio	

To evaluate the Literacy Workshop two "test" forms were used. Form A is the Literacy Workshop Review. This Review gave the leader of the Workshop an indication of how well the attendees, most of whom were not professional teachers and most of whom had never taught, had mastered minimum information. The following results of the Review are taken from a Louisville (Kentucky) Literacy Workshop of 50-60 attendees.

Each of the 10 questions is followed by the number of right and wrong answers. The correct answer is placed in parentheses. This total is representative of the number of correct answers. Only number 3 was missed greatly. Number 2 was nearly equal in right and wrong answers.

**Results of Literacy Workshop Review Form A**

- Kentucky has about (260,000) functional illiterates.
  - Right ..... 27
  - Wrong ..... 19
  - No Answer ..... 8
- About 60% of the people of the world are functional illiterates.
  - Right ..... 15
  - Wrong ..... 13
  - No Answer ..... 26
- There are about (30,000) illiterates in the Louisville community.
  - Right ..... 18
  - Wrong ..... 34
  - No Answer ..... 2
- The name of the first book for the New Reader is (*Reading the Easy TV Way*).
  - Right ..... 39
  - Wrong ..... 8
  - No Answer ..... 7
- The blue book, stage 2, is called (*Streamlined English*).
  - Right ..... 37
  - Wrong ..... 9
  - No Answer ..... 7

6. You can obtain all needed literacy materials from (Blank Book Store).
- |           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Right     | 38 |
| Wrong     | 12 |
| No Answer | 4  |
7. There are about ( $8\frac{1}{2}$  million) adult functional illiterates in the United States.
- |           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Right     | 30 |
| Wrong     | 7  |
| No Answer | 17 |
8. The Each One Teach One Expression was popularized by (Dr. Frank Laubach).
- |           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Right     | 37 |
| Wrong     | 7  |
| No Answer | 10 |
9. (*Writing the Easy TV Way*) should be taught along with *Reading the Easy TV Way*.
- |           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Right     | 22 |
| Wrong     | 20 |
| No Answer | 12 |
10. Two states among the highest in percentages of adult illiteracy are (any of the 10 Southern States).
- |           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Right     | 29 |
| Wrong     | 3  |
| No Answer | 7  |
| One Right | 15 |

After completing the review the correct answers were given to each attendee.

This stimulated further questions and involved people more than at any other single point during the entire Workshop. In later versions of Form A, items 2, 3, 6 and 9 were more clearly stated.

The attendees were relaxed. In this atmosphere Evaluation Form B was passed out. This form asked each attendee to evaluate honestly each part of the Workshop for the benefit of future attendees. The tabulations showed success of the Workshop. Each person who missed a question or who was dissatisfied with his own answer on either Form A or B was contacted personally and helped. Questions 4, 5 and 6 were missed by most attendees. The suggestions from 9, 10 and 12 were particularly incorporated into planning for future Workshops. The leader of the Workshop gained a clear picture of the reaction of the attendees and what to do to help them.

### **Results of Literacy Workshop Review Form B**

1. I think this Workshop (has - has not) been a success, because .....
- |           |    |
|-----------|----|
| A. Has    | 41 |
| Has Not   | 0  |
| No Answer | 1  |

B. Because:

1. We became acquainted with the methods.
2. Concrete and Specific methods were presented.
3. It was practical; not too much theory.
4. It created interest and gave a background — good authorities.
5. Many people will learn to read and write from those who came.
6. It was interesting and enlightening.
7. I learned.
8. The spirit of the group and information gained.
9. I learned to teach another to read.
10. Of information, participation, future plans.
11. It brought to attention a national problem in which we can help.
12. The explanations and teaching were simple and direct; workshop well organized.
13. I learned something about the subject on which most knew nothing.
14. There was so much enthusiasm.
15. The first night was excellent, but I didn't like the second night.
16. I have become aware of the number of illiterates; the need for teaching; and that each literate can teach.
17. It was practical.
18. We organized the Louisville Literacy Council.
19. It caused visible results.
20. It was well organized.
21. So much has been covered.
22. It initiated work in own locality.
23. Of definite action taken.
24. Of activity—not only theory—evident in field.

2. I feel that I (do—do not) know how to teach *Reading the Easy TV Way*.

Do .....	41
Do Not .....	0
No Answer .....	1

3. I feel that I (do—do not) know how to teach *Streamlined English*.

Do .....	29
Do Not .....	12
No Answer .....	1

4. I feel that I (do—do not) know enough about illiteracy in this state.

Do .....	8
Do Not .....	32
No Answer .....	2

5. I feel that I (do—do not) know enough about illiteracy in the United States.

Do .....	7
Do Not .....	31
No Answer .....	3

6. I feel that I (do—do not) know enough about illiteracy in other countries.
- |                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| Do .....        | 7  |
| Do Not .....    | 32 |
| No Answer ..... | 3  |
7. I feel that I (do—do not) know how to teach *Writing the Easy TV Way*.
- |                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| Do .....        | 31 |
| Do Not .....    | 10 |
| No Answer ..... | 1  |
8. I would like to know this:
- |                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| No Answer ..... | 31 |
|-----------------|----|
- Would like to Know:
- a. How to help new writers express thoughts in a more lucid way.
  - b. Whether or not this approach will be successful with a person who has *had* but *failed* in formal education.
  - c. If cursive writing is taught.
  - d. How to find illiterates; where to teach them; goals toward which to guide them.
  - e. The amount of success in this work with the retarded adult.
  - f. How to teach *Writing the Easy TV Way*.
  - g. Special problems involved in teaching Negroes.
  - h. More about *Streamlined English*.
  - i. How to teach *Streamlined English*.
9. I feel more time should have been spent on the following:
- |                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| No Answer ..... | 21 |
|-----------------|----|

Answers:

- a. Group participation in teaching.
  - b. Explanation and practice of techniques.
  - c. Text material.
  - d. Individual participation.
  - e. Answering basic questions (what do you do if the adult does not know how to hold a pencil, etc.)
  - f. Writing and *Streamlined English*.
  - g. Practice on stories.
  - h. Organization before the workshop.
  - i. Teaching reading.
  - j. In telling more about what is being done in other lands.
10. I think less time should have been spent on the following:
- |                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| No Answer ..... | 31 |
|-----------------|----|

Answers:

- a. Breaks and speeches.
- b. Reports from students.
- c. The American Association of University Women.
- d. Getting organized the first night.

- e. Presentation of speakers.
- f. Many people talking.
- g. Testimonials.

11. I think the Workshop should have lasted (longer—shorter) by this much time:
- |                          |                   |                  |                |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Longer .. 7;             | Three hours .. 3; | Extra week .. 2; | Two days .. 1; |
| Three more periods .. 1; | Two weeks .. 1    |                  |                |
| Shorter .....            | 2                 |                  |                |
| Just Right .....         | 10                |                  |                |
| No Opinion .....         | 20                |                  |                |
12. I would like to make the following suggestions about the organization and personnel conducting the Workshop:
- |                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| No Answer ..... | 35 |
|-----------------|----|

The following tabulations from the Indianapolis Literacy Workshop reflect similar results, this time from a smaller group of 12:

- |                        |    |  |
|------------------------|----|--|
| 1. Has .....           | 12 | It has given me a much clearer picture of the scope of the project.  |
| Has Not .....          | 0  | All things need a beginning — this has been good.  |
|                        |    | I have learned more than I had hoped in such a short time.   |
|                        |    | Definitely.  |
|                        |    | We have, I think, a good start for it.   |
|                        |    | It has started a movement in Indiana towards a more literate state. Done something definitely. Because of the interest of adult education in our colleges. |
| 2. Do .....            | 8  |  |
| Do Not .....           | 2  |  |
| Not Ready ...          | 1  |  |
| 3. Do .....            | 7  |  |
| Do Not .....           | 4  |  |
| 4. Do .....            | 4  |  |
| Do Not .....           | 8  |  |
| 5. Do .....            | 4  |  |
| Do Not .....           | 8  |  |
| 6. Do .....            | 5  |  |
| Do Not .....           | 7  |  |
| 7. Do .....            | 5  |  |
| Do Not .....           | 6  |  |
| Perhaps .....          | 1  |  |
| 8. Would like to know: |    | How to do all this more effectively.   |

9. I feel more time should have been spent on: Practice in *Reading Easy Way*.  
I am unaware of the mechanics.  
Practice in *Streamlined English*.  
Reading and Writing techniques.  
Practice work.  
Setting up an Indiana organization of some sort.
10. I think less time should have been spent on: How to write for New Readers.  
Committee reports.
11. I think that the Workshop should have lasted: Right amount of time — better planned.  
This one — just right for the first time.  
Longer.  
Longer 2 or 3 days.  
About right.  
Longer 4 days.  
Longer 1 day.
12. Suggestions: The personnel who participated did an excellent job and helped stimulate our enthusiasm.  
Perhaps if there had been an advanced registration we might have had a chance to do some preliminary reading on the history and background of the Literacy movement and the problems of illiteracy.

Form B was used at a number of other Literacy Workshops and it was discovered by the training director of the Workshops that items 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 tended to be answered in the negative. As a result, the parts of the Workshop dealing with these subjects have been lengthened. A new Review form is being prepared which will attempt to evaluate inner-personal relationships within the training sessions. Moreover, greater effort is being placed on the training of attitudes of the future Literacy Teachers to the New Literates by what is locally labeled "adult psychology." This emphasis is proving popular.

Another result of the Reviews has been the preparation of three different personnel forms to be completed and returned to the training director for his use in compiling a list of available volunteers. Finally, a further use of on-the-spot introductions to emphasize the talents of available personnel has been put into effect.

In general, attendees have expressed glowing appreciation and enthusiasm for both the kind of training and the trainers. Lest the trainers become over-confident and less rigorous as well as less personable, a complete revision of the training procedure of the Literacy Workshop is now in process.

From the Form A and B evaluations, from personal interviews, and from the actual literacy teaching that has resulted in Literacy Councils and in less formal organizations, it appears that the Literacy Workshop has been accepted as an effective and popular training in procedure for training teachers of illiterates and thereby decreasing illiteracy in the United States.