Using learner volunteers in and out of the classroom

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Introduction: the impetus

• Modes of delivery
  – Learners at Pre-lim and CSWE I levels want a ‘helper’ outside class time
     (for homework and reading)
    - Learners confirm they would be interested in staying after class each Monday to do reading activities

• Mentoring: Developing a community of practice
  – Space to plan, explore, clarify, and critique
Staging of Project

- Recruitment (learners and learner volunteers)
- Training of volunteers
- Logistics (Timing, rooms, weekly delivery plan)
- Weekly supervision of volunteers (Mon 12:40 - 1:30)
- Issues and observations
- Three-way Feedback (mid-term)
- Final perspectives and issues
  - Learners
  - Learner volunteers
  - Teachers
Recruitment

• Initial oral presentations (CSWE III on-going classes
  – One morning class, one afternoon class for Monday PM after class help and daily AM in-class help
  – Use of CSWE III guidelines to plan, write and deliver presentation

• 2nd round oral presentations (CSWE IV and CSWE III on-arrival)
Oral Presentation

• Intro (volunteers in AMEP/volunteering opportunity)
• Attention-getting opening (drama)
• Statement of development (volunteering as it exists in AMEP, the need in my classroom, how you could get involved and why I think CSWE students would make great volunteers)
• Main points 1, 2, 3 and final
• Linking of main points
• Summary
• Conclusion (drama)
Outcome of recruitment

• 16 out-of-class volunteers
  – 5 CSWE IV, 6 CSWE III on-going, 5 CSWE III on-arrival

• 3 in-class volunteers
  – 2 CSWE III on-going, 1 CSWE II (word of mouth)

• 16 -18 learners, 12 from CSWE 1, 6-pre-lim
Training: Volunteers’ workshop

- To equip learner volunteers with knowledge and skills about teaching reading, so they are able to support learners develop literacy.
- To accomplish goal we will:
  - Develop an understanding of reading theory
  - Look at activities that foster reading and reading skills
  - Participate in a range of reading activities including: large screen reading, shadow reading, and reading activities that focus on building semantic, syntactic and graphophonic knowledge and use
  - Have fun learning together in a positive, relaxed learning environment
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Mantra for volunteers

• Keep learners going back to text
• Build knowledge of all 3 systems
• Enjoy reading
• Be positive
• Remember reading is a meaning focussed activity
• Have fun!!!!
Feedback before/after training

• Before training
  – Why are you interested in being a volunteer? (To help others, to develop my own English, because I want to be a teacher, to meet new people)

  – “I’d like to learn English, I think if I teach someone I have learned English more.”
  – “Simply just want too help people.”
  – “Because I want to do the same that other people did with me.”
Before

• Why do you think you would be a good volunteer? (Patient, I like to teach, kind, happy, I love helping)

  – “I really want to do it and I can understand some of their problems because I am an immigrant.”
  – “Because, I want to do it, and I love to be a volunteer.”
  – “Teachers say I have not bad pronunciation.”
Before

- Do you have any concerns (pronunciation, accent, can’t communicate, no experience, first time, no connecting, No)

  - “My fear is not able to answer all of the questions they ask.”
  - ”I think my English not good enough to be a teacher.”
Feedback/ After training

• What have you learned?
• Do you have concerns? (6)
• Do you still want to be a volunteer? (Yes, all)

  – “Simply sitting next to them and read with them is good. I don’t have to be panicking.”
  – “Worry if I’m not good enough.”
  – “I am worried if this will be successful for both of us.”
Content of session

• Volunteer given step by step lesson plan to follow
• Two different plans (readers/pre-readers)
• All plans include reading same text and activities on same text (exploring and exploiting parts of a reader)
  – Read/?, cloze, noun-group concentration, initial sounds investigation, noticing grammar features in text, reconstruction text, reading with volunteer, etc.
In-class session

• 3 Volunteers (Monday AM, Tuesday AM and Thursday AM-computing)
• Serve as teachers’ aides/ take one group of class aside to work on particular text, skill, etc. )
Issues

• “Supervision” (Say nothing-radical intervention continuum)
• Pronunciation
• Explanation
• Do I expect them to be ‘teachers’?
• Need to clarify roles and responsibilities and expectations
• Content of sessions
• Flexibility of sessions
• Pairing of volunteer with learner(s)
Observations (photos)

- Seem happy
- Reliable/flexible volunteers
- Reliable and flexible learners
- Seem connected
- Pairs look like they are having fun
- Feedback from both, positive
Mid-term Feedback

- Volunteers
  - About plan-liked plan, wanted it 1 day before
  - About learner-liked learners that seemed to improve
  - About concerns-is it useful for learners?????

- Learners
  - About content-suitable
  - About volunteer-one learner was unhappy
  - About concerns

- Teachers
  - About content-too rigid
  - About volunteer-Do I intervene?
  - About concerns-What about learners self esteem
Three-way feedback

• Learners//Learner volunteers//Teachers
  – All parties said it was a positive and useful experience and both learners and volunteers thought their English had improved because of the sessions.
  – Half said they preferred working with the same person.
  – Half of the volunteers said they would like further training.
  – 2 of 3 in-class volunteers want to continue.
  – 8 volunteers want to continue, others looking for work/pregnant (1)
  – 2 asked if they could join program.
  – 3/4 learners want to continue.
Summary/conclusion

• Learner volunteers program was successful, so will continue next term
• Need for flexibility (learner/volunteer)
• Ideally learner should be matched with volunteer who shares a common language
• Ideally learner/volunteer pairing should remain constant
• Two training sessions should be offered (part-one and part two)
Final comments

• ‘My speaking was much better than his, but I need help with my reading and writing. We can help each other.’
• ‘I would like to continue in the volunteers program until I find a job.’
• ‘It’s good to help others, I really enjoyed to be here. My classmate must practice his english all the time. He must read, talk, walk, sleep with english. He will be fine.’
• ‘This is not putting me in a pressure situation but it helps me to have a self-confident and learn more too.’
• ‘I like her. She is good teacher. I’m very happy.’