



# The National Illiteracy Action Project

Houston, TX 2007-8

## **Overview of the Houston NIAP Community Literacy Collaboration Project**

The purpose of the Houston National Illiteracy Action Project (NIAP) Community Literacy Collaborations is designed to provide English Language Development tutoring to families, K-12 students (to help lower the drop-out rate and provide English literacy tutoring to 80% of the eligible SES students not being served), and adults in the workforce.

Illiteracy is a community problem, not a school educational problem, and needs community literacy collaborations involved to help reach the families in the illiterate population. These community literacy collaborations must be comprised of businesses, faith-based organizations, and other community partners that are motivated and benefited by the economic and community achievement of functionally literate adults and families.

## **Building Capacity with Houston Community Organizations**

The goal of the Houston NIAP Community Literacy Collaboration is to enroll 200 community organizations to provide literacy tutors to about 20,000 family members in the City of Houston. The Talking Page™ Literacy Organization will provide training and materials to train the community organization's literacy tutors.

## **Costs per Organization**

The cost of the Talking Page™ Literacy Organization's reusable tutor materials, (\$1,760.00) and tutor training, (\$500.00) per organization will be funded by government and private grants and provided to each Houston Community Literacy Collaboration organization free of charge.

## **Project Sustainability**

The Houston NIAP Community Literacy Collaboration Project is designed to be self-sustainable. Each NIAP Community Literacy Collaboration member will charge an hourly fee for tutor instruction, which covers the cost of tutors and expenses. A suggested or anticipated tutoring fee for students is \$5.00 per hour and for adults is \$10.00 per hour. The TPLO tutoring program is designed to be completed in 25 hours or less.

## **Community Awareness**

We need the mayor to appoint a NIAP Community Action Project Task Force consisting of partners and action members such as, the Chamber of Commerce, the Faith-Based Community (such as One Church One School), and local community-based organizations and foundations.

## **Public Access**

The Houston NIAP Community Action Project Task Force will sponsor city-wide town hall meetings. The purpose of the meeting will be to enroll 200 businesses, faith-based organizations and other community-based organizations to participate in the NIAP project by providing tutors and sites.

## **Community Persuasion**

The Houston NIAP Community Action Project Task Force to sponsor year long public announcements to inform the community of the location of the Community Literacy Project sites and to encourage the public to participate.

## **Fulfillment: Differentiating English Language NIAP Tutor Instruction vs One-Size-Fits-All Educational Reading Programs**

In order to tutor individuals with different learning styles, the TPLO program utilizes four “learning pathways to the brain,” which are hearing, saying, seeing, and writing.

The Talking Page™ Literacy Organization’s **differentiating** English Language assessment and instruction use multiple paths so that students of different abilities, interest or learning needs experience equally appropriate ways to absorb, use, and develop skills as a part of the daily or weekly lesson learning process. It allows below basic level English Language Arts and English Language Learner students to take greater responsibility and ownership for their own learning.

The Talking Page™ Literacy Organization’s approach to tutoring instruction can be represented in the form of a “linguistics tree.” *Phonemes*, *graphemes*, and *morphemes* are the basic foundation of language and constitute the “roots” of the tree, which is where the tutoring program starts. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in language that is capable of conveying a distinction in meaning, such as the *b* in *bat* and the *m* in *mat*. A grapheme consists of all the letters and letter combinations that represent a sound, such as *f*, *ph*, and *gh* for the phoneme / f /. Next, a morpheme is a language unit that cannot be divided into smaller meaningful units, such as the *-ed* in *walked*. Once a student has mastered these three main roots, he or she can begin practicing how to say and write words and phrases, which make up the trunk of the “linguistics tree.” Sentence construction and grammar are the last elements of the program, and form the branches of the metaphorical tree.

Explicit instruction is a series of required instructional steps or procedures designed to guarantee that students understand explicitly what is expected of them and what is being taught.

Tutors speak with students before each mini-lesson about the lesson's objectives. The SONO system delivers the majority of tutoring instruction to students.

No two students are alike. No two students learn in the identical way. "Three principles from brain research: emotional safety, appropriate challenges, and self constructed meaning suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to English Language Development instruction teaching is ineffective for most students and harmful to some." Source: Marian Diamond, Professor of Neuroanatomy at Berkeley

During a TPLO lesson, a student first listens to a SONO recording where a phonemic sound is pronounced. The student then writes the letter that represents the phoneme using a clock face as a writing guide. To write the letter *g*, for example, the student would start at the number two then trace all the way around the clock back to the number four, making a circle. Then the student would pull the line straight down, rounding the line up toward the number eight. After writing the letter four times, the student says the phoneme again. By listening to the phoneme, saying it twice, hearing the pronunciation of it, and then writing it four times, each Talking Page lesson allows for **nine exposures** to a particular letter. Review is a large part of the process.

According to studies from the National Institute of Child and Human Development (NICHD), direct instruction in decoding skills emphasizing the alphabetic code results in more favorable outcomes than does a context-emphasis or embedded approach. In his 2000 address to Congress, Dr. Reid Lyon, former Chief of Child Development at NICHD, noted, "The average child needs between **four and fourteen exposures** to a new letter, letters, or words to automatize the recognition in the brain."

TPLO has patented the term "SONOgram" to describe the working set of 26 letters and 44 phonemes that are needed to write English speech on paper. Each SONOgram is numbered and then introduced and reviewed in different mini-lessons. During the first five weeks (about 15 hours) of the program, students learn the sounds of 54 SONOgrams, how to form all the letters in the alphabet, write simple sentences, and spell several hundred words. During the next four weeks (about 10 hours), students learn the remaining 16 SONOgrams, additional vocabulary words, and begin to read basic-level books.

TPLO conducts pre- and post-tests for students using two exams. First, the tutor tests the student's ability to write the 70 SONOgrams heard in English speech and simple spelling words using the TPLO English Linguistics Assessment Tests that are on the SONO Audio System.

Each of the 7 different English Linguistics Assessment Tests only require 3 minutes. Next, the tutor administers TPLO's Diagnostic Reading Test using level 1-5 and level 6-11 exams to assess the student's reading comprehension and skills.

This information is then used to develop the Individual Student Learning Plan as follows. The diagnostic tests provide tutors with an indicator of the student's weaknesses and strengths. During the testing, the student must be able to recall facts from a given passage, identify the main idea of a passage, draw conclusions, and choose the correct meaning of a vocabulary word from a particular context. The diagnostic tests employ the Fry Readability Scale to determine the student's reading level. The Fry Scale utilizes a special graph to plot the average number of syllables and sentences per 100 words in a piece of writing to ascertain the grade level of the material.

## **Differentiating Instruction**

Differentiating Instruction is also an essential tool for integrating technology, the application of scientific research integrated into English Language Development lessons and activities, TPLO's differentiating instruction uses a neurolinguistic instruction process, the way the brain processes oral and written language and the SONO audio system, which delivers consistent instruction to the student.

Differentiating is not new, the concept has been around for at least 2 decades for gifted and talented students. (Also see Instructional strategies for G&T). However, it is now recognized to be an important tool for engaging students and addressing the individual needs of all students.

The most difficult and least effective way to integrate technology is to consistently take all students in to the computer lab to work on the same activities at the same time, and this may well be true for many other subjects. This is not to say that some activities are not appropriate for all students at some times. In the interest of expediency, it is sometimes most appropriate to conduct some whole group instruction. What is important is to recognize that this is just one of many strategies and it is most effective when used at the appropriate time for common needs such as the introduction to a new learning unit.

There are generally several students in any classroom who are working below or above grade level and these levels of readiness will vary between different subjects in school. It is important to offer students learning tasks that are appropriate to their learning needs rather than just to the grade and subject being taught. This means providing 3 or 4 different options for students in any given class (not 35 different options). Readiness (ability), learning styles and interest vary between students and even within an individual over time. In a differentiated classroom all students have equally engaging learning tasks.

## **Cost Effectiveness of Grant Funding**

In a best case scenario, we will get 200 Houston community organizations involved providing English literacy services to 20,000 people in one year, with a cost of \$22.60 per person and family.

In a worse case scenario, we will get 200 Houston community organizations involved providing English literacy services to 200 people in one year, with a cost of \$2,260.00 per person and family. That is about what the Federal government spends now for participants in Evenstart family literacy and Adult Education-English Language programs.

**The Houston NIAP Community Literacy Collaboration Project  
Tutor Provider**

**The following agreed assurances are required of all tutor providers. I certify and agree to comply with all of the following assurances:**

1. Our Community Literacy Organization’s tutors will use the Talking Page™ English Linguistics Instructional Tutor Program provided under this agreement. If the organization does not use the provided tutoring materials, they must be returned to The Talking Page Literacy Organization at the address below.
2. Our Community Literacy Organization agrees to provide, at a minimum, signed Student Learning Plans of academic achievement and progress, tutoring student logs, student signed attendance sheets, and pre, and post-test for student tests.
3. Our Community Literacy Organization will collaborate to provide appropriate services for the student.
4. Our Community Literacy Organization will respect the confidentiality of student needs and progress and share this information only with parents if student is under 18 years of age.
5. Our Community Literacy Organization will provide a healthy, safe and clean environment in which to tutor students, families and adults.
6. Our Community Literacy Organization agrees to meet all applicable Federal, State and local health safety and civil rights law.
7. Our Community Literacy Organization will provide secular, neutral and non-ideological instructional content, if used in addition to TPLO English Linguistics Instructional Tutor Program.
8. Our Community Literacy Organization will certify that a Livescan background and health check is on file for each tutor before working with students, families or adults.
9. Our Community Literacy Organization will certify we have general liability insurance before working with students, families or adults.

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Signature Authorize Person Date signed

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Printed Name

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Organization

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Address

Original sent to the City of Houston and copy to the Talking Page Literacy Organization, 1738 Tradewinds Lane, Newport Beach, CA 92660