LITERACY LINK

R.E.A.D. ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM

Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library



Sharing the Holidays with Learners

The holiday season is a wonderful time to bring people together, share traditions, and learn about different family traditions and cultures. For ESL (English as a Second Language) learners, the holidays offer a special opportunity to practice English while getting to know the customs and celebrations of others.

Sharing holiday traditions can be as simple as talking about favorite foods, family gatherings, decorations, music, or special activities. Tutors and learners can take turns describing how they celebrate holidays in their own families and/or countries. ESL learners may enjoy sharing traditions from their home countries, while also learning about holidays celebrated in the United States.

These conversations help learners build vocabulary, practice speaking and listening, and feel more comfortable using English in everyday situations. They also remind us that, although traditions may be different, many holidays share common themes of family, friendship, kindness, and giving.

Most importantly, sharing holidays is about building friendships and creating a welcoming environment. By taking time to learn from one another, we celebrate not only the holidays but also the many cultures and experiences that make our community special.

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In this issue:

Sharing Holidays with	**1**
Screen Time	**1**
Tutor Talk: What is the most rewarding moment you have experienced with your	**2**
Teaching Tip	**2**

Screens have changed the way people read, watch, and experience stories. Film critic David Thomson argues that movies, television, and smartphones have made entertainment easier to access but have also encouraged shorter attention spans and more passive forms of entertainment. He poses that fewer Americans are reading books or reading for pleasure, while constant notifications, social media, and endless scrolling make it harder to concentrate on books long articles and longer television programs. According to the National Endowment of the Arts, fewer than half of all adults reported having read a book of any kind in 2022. Streaming services are responding by offering more short-form content designed for quick viewing. This shift may affect more than entertainment. As people become accustomed to brief and easily consumed content, they may be less willing or able to engage with stories that require patience, concentration, imagination, and reflections. The larger concern is that our growing dependence on screens could weaken our ability to focus and appreciate deeper forms of reading and storytelling.

Sonny Bunch, The BulwarkThebulwark+screentime@substack.com

See Teaching Tip page 2 for teaching strategies.

READ Adult Literacy Program

211 N. First Ave.
Alpena, MI 49707

989-356-6188 ext. 15
readprogram@alpenalibrary.org

Discover. Connect. Grow.

What is the most rewarding moment you have experienced with your student?

I have had many rewarding moments with my adult learner. I enjoy when he recognizes his own progress. I love how he has gained confidence in his ability to learn to read. He tells me that he can manage some functional reading tasks more independently at home. My learner works harder than any student I have had in the past. He expresses gratitude often. All of these things are rewarding. Cheryl V.

Since beginning I've really enjoyed tutoring. The person I tutor enrolled in ACC last fall. Her successes in college have been the highlights of our shared experience. From her first spelling test to an essay she got an A on to doing well on exams these have been special times for both of us. Slowly we have become good friends. Lois M.

When I hear my student read with fluency and confidence----very rewarding to me. Sue S.

It's really not a single moment but an overall connection and bonding with a person who could not possibly be more different than me. We never would have encountered each other except for the READ Program, yet we both benefit from our relationship. Bruce M.

One of the most rewarding moments was when my student received her green card. I had worked with her for weeks in reviewing the potential questions she might be asked in the interview. She was very nervous and just needed to gain confidence. When she passed her test, I knew that our time together had helped her achieve her goal. Kirstine F.

The most rewarding moments are seeing the "aha" moments when they "get" it. Lisa R.

I do not have one moment; rather every time a student makes a gain, even a small one or even if it is temporary, is a victory for that student, and I share their joy. Gail T.

The day I handed XXXXXXX their Certificate of Achievement for completing their first course book, tears came to their eyes and they said, "I've never gotten one of these before." Richard W.

Teaching Tips

The growing influence of screens presents both challenges and opportunities for adult literacy tutors. While digital entertainment may compete with reading for learners' attention, tutors can help students develop the concentration, confidence, and reading skills needed to engage with longer texts.

Practical Strategies for Tutors:

1.**Start with short, engaging reading materials**. Use brief articles, stories, or passages that connect to learners' interests and everyday lives. Gradually increase reading length as confidence grows.

2.**Build reading stamina.** Encourage learners to read for a few minutes at a time, then slowly extend reading sessions. Celebrate progress along the way.

3. **Make reading active**. Ask learners to predict what happens next, summarize a passage, discuss characters, or share their opinions. These activities encourage deeper understanding and reflection.

4. **Use technology purposefully.** Digital articles, audiobooks, and educational apps can support literacy development when used as tools for learning rather than distractions.

5. **Connect reading to real-life goals**. Help learners recognize how reading improves their ability to understand instructions, complete applications, communicate at work, and participate in their communities.