

Adult Literacy and the Volunteer Tutor

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Literacy is one little word that has many big meanings: the ability to speak and make one's thoughts and opinions understood by talking, the ability to listen to and understand others to be able to respond appropriately during conversations, the ability to read and understand the meaning of the

written words and their messages, the ability to write and clearly communicate ideas on paper by carefully choosing vocabulary and by applying the rules of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. There is more to literacy, but the above-mentioned basic skills are essential in everyday life situations.

As stated in the [Adult Literacy Skills for Success National Report \(2022\)](#)

“According to statistics Canada, 49% of the adult population scored below high-school literacy levels; 17% scored in the lowest level. Newcomer, Indigenous, and low-income populations are disproportionately challenged by low literacy. These groups have also been more impacted by the learning, employment, and financial crises that resulted from the pandemic” (page 3)

These statistics might be surprising to you, especially if you've never before thought about adult literacy in Canada. What is important to realize is that everyone can learn and improve their literacy skills, regardless of their levels.

Okanagan College (OC), has a program that pairs adult literacy learners (19 years of age and older) with trained tutors who work one-to-one to achieve the goals of the students' educational plans. This program is the



Volunteer Literacy Tutor Program (VLTP).

The VLTP is a free program servicing the needs of low-literacy adults in the Penticton and Summerland areas. Some of the literacy learners in the VLTP are students in OC Adult Upgrading classes, members of the community, and newcomers who are learning to speak English as their second language.

The process to become a volunteer tutor with the VLTP includes:

- meeting with the VLTP assistant to complete an application form and discuss the program
- attending tutor-training sessions
- waiting to be matched with an adult student

If this volunteer opportunity is one that you would like to pursue, or if you would like more information about the Volunteer Literacy Tutor Program at Okanagan College in Penticton, contact Brianne by phone at 250 492-4305 ext. 3331, or by email at BNiznikowski@okanagan.bc.ca.

If you know an adult who would benefit from free literacy tutoring services, encourage them to contact Brianne.

Visit the VLTP page on the college website at: <https://www.okanagan.bc.ca/upgrading/volunteer-literacy-tutoring>